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The Likhni Uprising and Giorgi Shervashidze

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Abstract

The Lihni uprising is one of the most important events not only in the history of Abkhazia, but also in the history of the Caucasus. In the textbook on the history of Abkhazia, Abkhaz historians call the Lihni uprising of 1866 a "strange" uprising. In the description of the causes of the uprising, the occupying and punitive policy of Russian imperialism is not mentioned. The people of Abkhazia, regardless of age, origin and nationality, still participated in this rebellion, which was doomed to failure. The main goal of the uprising was to remove Russian rule and restore local self-government.

The rebels put Giorgi, the heir to Prince Mikheil of Abkhazia, on the throne and asked him to lead them. Giorgi faced serious problems at a very young age. The Lihni uprising and the life of Giorgi son of Mikheil have been described and researched by many scholars and researchers. However, in modern historical studies, the historical significance, causes and consequences of the Lihni uprising, as well as the role of Giorgi Shervashidze, son of Mikheil, in the history of Abkhazia have not been assessed. Giorgi Shervashidze fought hard and

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successfully coped with this event. Nevertheless, Abkhaz historians do not want to recognize this.

The works of both Georgian and Abkhaz historians, documentary materials in the possession of Abkhaz researchers, as well as objective and impartial media of the time, documents preserved in family archives in Abkhazia were used in the study. This work is extremely important in that it is the first time in 30 years that Abkhaz scholars have been involved in joint research. Because so far there is no similar example. The spirit of the Lihni uprising, the liberation of Abkhazia from Russian rule, the preservation of national identity, traditions, language and culture are revealed in the study. The special contribution of Giorgi Shervashidze to Abkhazia is emphasized on the basis of real arguments. An objective and impartial study of the history of Abkhazia during the Likhni uprising paved the way for the revival of the forgotten history of Abkhazia.

Keywords: Georgia, Abkhazia, Giorgi Shervashidze, Likhni uprising.

Lihni Ayaklanması ve Giorgi Şervaşidze

Öz

Lihni ayaklanması sadece Abhazya'nın değil, Kafkasya tarihinin önemli olaylardan biridir. Abhaz tarihçileri tarafından Abhazya tarihi ders kitabında 1866'daki Lihni ayaklanmasını "tuhaf" bir ayaklanma olarak adlandırılmıştır. Ayaklanmanın nedenlerini anlatırken de Rus emperyalizminin işgalci ve cezalandırıcı politikasından söz edilmemiştir. Abhazya halkı, yaşa, kökene ve milliyete bakmaksızın, başarısızlığa mahkum söz konusu bu isyana yine de katılmıştır. Ayaklanmanın temel amacı Rus yönetimini ortadan kaldırmak ve yerel yönetimi yeniden tesis etmektir.

İsyancılar Abhazya Prensi Mikheil'in varisi olan Giorgi'yi tahta çıkardılar ve onun kendilerine önderlik yapmasını istediler. Giorgi oldukça genç yaşında ciddi sorunlarla karşı karşıya bırakıldı. Lihni ayaklanması ve Mikheil oğlu Giorgi'nin hayatı birçok bilim adamı ve araştırmacı tarafından anlatılmış ve araştırılmıştır. Ancak modern tarih çalışmalarda Lihni ayaklanmasının tarihsel önemi, nedenleri ve sonuçları ile birlikte Mikheil oğlu Giorgi Şervaşidze'nin Abhazya tarihindeki rolü değerlendirilmemiştir. Giorgi Şervaşidze zorluklarla mücadele edip bu olay ile başarılı bir şekilde başa çıkmıştır. Buna rağmen Abhaz tarihçileri bunu kabul etmek istememektedir.

Araştırmada hem Gürcü hem de Abhaz tarihçilerin eserleri, Abhaz araştırmacıların elinde olan belgesel materyaller kullanılmış ve bununla birlikte dönemin objektif ve tarafsız basını, Abhazya'daki aile arşivlerinde muhafaza edilen belgeler de çalışılmıştır. Bu çalışma son 30 yıldan bu yana Abhaz bilim adamlarının ortak araştırmalara ilk defa dahil edilmeleri açısından son derece

önemlidir. Çünkü şimdiye kadar buna benzer bir örnek bulunmamaktadır. Araştırmada Lihni ayaklanmasının ruhu, Abhazya'nın Rus yönetiminden kurtulma, ulusal kimliği, gelenekleri, dili ve kültürü korumaya yönelik yapılan çalışmalar ortaya konulmuştur. Giorgi Şervaşidze'nin Abhazya'ya özel katkısı gerçek argümanlara dayanılarak vurgulanmıştır. Likhni ayaklanması sırasındaki Abhazya tarihinin objektif ve tarafsız bir şekilde incelenmesi, Abhazya'da unutulmuş olan tarihin yeniden canlanmasına zemin hazırlamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gürcistan, Abhazya, Giorgi Şervaşidze, Lihni ayaklanması

Introduction

The Likhni uprising reflects one of the significant periods in the history of Abkhazia, the struggle of the Abkhazian nobility and its people for freedom and the intransigence against the invading policy of Russia. The proud spirit of the Abkhazian people is evident from the start to the end of the Likhni uprising.

I think that neither Georgian nor Abkhazian historiography pays proper attention to the Likhni uprising. Accordingly, the importance of Giorgi Shervashidze's activity is not appreciated.

The purpose of this research is to prove impartially, based on facts and arguments and Georgian and Abkhazian scientific literature, periodicals, archival and other materials that despite the struggle, the sacrifice of the Abkhazian people and the tragic results, the importance of this uprising is immeasurably great. The work also aims at an objective assessment of Giorgi Shervashidze's life and work as a worthy heir. This is of particular importance considering that there are differences of opinion about Shervashidze in Abkhazia and not only in Abkhazia, the final removal of the label purposely stuck to him by the Russian Empire has not been possible until now.

The Likhni uprising was followed by interesting assessments by scientists:

Abkhazian historian Giorgi Dzidzaria writes the following in his monograph "The Uprising of 1866" was the biggest uprising not only in Abkhazia, but in the entire Caucasus. As for the causes, it was difficult for a Soviet historian to blame the Russian government directly, but the

author evaluates the uprising as an anti-feudal, anti-colonial manifestation, openly writing that it was a struggle against the Russian administration to restore the abolished Principality of Abkhazia. The rebellion was defeated, but, according to the author, for ten years the political idea of the rebels nourished the struggle of the Abkhazian people against tsarism for the preservation of national identity¹.

In his monograph “Giorgi Shervashidze”, Georgian historian Simon Janashia cites the dissatisfaction of the majority of the highest nobility titles of Abkhazia as the cause of the Likhni uprising. In his opinion, the rebellion had a political reason as well as a social one. The impetus for this uprising was given by the work of the commission tasked with examining the titles in Abkhazia².

According to the assessment of the modern Georgian historian, Bezhan Khorava, the cause of the Likhni uprising was the failure to take into account the social and societal peculiarities in Abkhazia. According to the researcher, the rough interference of the official apparatus in the way of life of the Abkhazians, the economic hardships, the administrative reform unacceptable to the local population and the preparation of the ground for the factually serfdom reform caused mass dissatisfaction of the Abkhazian population which turned into a public uprising. The rebellion covered almost all of Abkhazia which greatly alarmed the Russian administration of the Caucasus³ (Khorava, 2004).

Methodology

The methodological basis of this work is the exploration of the issue in question in the context of the discussion of the historical event from different points of view. Methods of retrospective, complex and comparative analysis are employed to fully investigate the issue. When working with sources and documents, a complex methodology is used, including their identification, selection, clarification of facts and

¹ Dzidzaria, G. A. *Vosstanie 1866 goda v Abkhazii*. Sukhumi: Abgosizdat, 1955. (Dzidzaria, G. Uprising of 1866 in Abkhazia. Sukhumi: ABGOSIZDAT, 1955).

² Canaşia, S. *Giorgi Şarvaşidze, kulturul-istoriuli narkvevi*, Sokhumi, 1946. (Janashia, S. Giorgi Sharvashidze. Cultural-historical essay. Sukhumi, 1946).

³ Khorava, B. *Apkhazta 1867 tslis muhacioba*, Tbilisi: Artanuci, 2004. (Khorava, B. Migration of Abkhazians in 1867. Tbilisi: Artanuji, 2004).

confirmation through sources. In addition, this research uses fact analysis, comparative opinion analysis and event analysis.

The main goal of the research is to study the historical facts deliberately misinterpreted by the Russian Empire at the time and then especially suppressed, to evaluate it first of all from the standpoint of understanding the Abkhazian identity.

The study of the issue relies on qualitative methods, more specifically, desk research and in-depth interviews.

At the first stage of the research, a desk review was conducted to study the circumstances, facts, and details of the Likhni uprising to identify the various trends and factors causing and contributing to the causes, consequences, accompanying events of the rebellion.

The second stage of the research included the analysis of academic publications about Giorgi Shervashidze, official documents published by state agencies and the materials kept therein. The collected information was compared and reconciled with Abkhazian informants on the basis of interviews conducted within the framework of personal contacts.

A comprehensive investigation of the issue, a thorough and accurate analysis requires the employment of more historical resources. This paper is one part of a wider research which should play a positive role both in terms of the study of history and the perspective of Georgian-Abkhazian relations.

The causes, accompanying events and consequences of the Likhni Uprising

On July 12, 1864, after the abolition of the Principality of Abkhazia and the forced exile of Mikhail Shervashidze to Russia, the status of Abkhazia was changed and it was named the Sukhumi Military District. Major General Pavel Shatilov was appointed as the commander of the District. Nominally, the Sukhumi district obeyed the governor of Kutaisi, but *de facto* it reported to the crown prince of the Caucasus⁴. From this

⁴ Khorava, B. *Apkhazta 1867 tslis muhaciropa*, Tbilisi: Artanuci, 2004. (Khorava, b. Migration of Abkhazians in 1867. Tbilisi: Artanuji, 2004).

period, the Russian aggressive policy in Abkhazia started to be actively pursued. The right to ownership was revoked.

Despite the fact that by the order of Mikhail Shervashidze, the population of Abkhazia 'surrendered' to the establishment of Russian rule without excesses, this process did not end without bloodshed. It wasn't even a year and a half after Mikhail's expulsion that an uprising broke out in Abkhazia. The activity of the commission that worked on examining the rights and duties of the ranks of the Abkhazian nobility gave impetus to the uprising.

The new commission that arrived in Abkhazia in July 1866 was headed by Prince S. Bagratov (Sul Khan Bagrationi). Captain-Lieutenant Korganov and clerk Cherepov were also members of the commission. The administration stated that they intended to carry out a reform of the dismissal of the subordinate social status in Abkhazia. The conditions of the reform caused dissatisfaction in all strata of society. The thoughtless actions of the commission, especially of Cherepov, became the reason for the irritation of the population of the Bzif District. Tsarism operated through its typically rude, rigid and ignorant officers and officials. The unforgivable, blatant mistake of the administration was that they did not take into account the local peculiarities. The peasantry were not happy with the news that it had to be freed from the former landlord, that is, they had to buy the land which they already considered their property. The peasants believed that the land belonged to the people who had cleared it and cultivated it - all Abkhazians without exception! Russian official Izmailov asked the crowd to talk to him after tipping their hats. One of the rebels named Mikabka answered:

"We only take off our hats in church, but we do not know Izmailov yet."

Dzidzaria, G. *Prisoedinenie Abkhazii k Rosii i ego istoricheskoe značenie*. Sukhumi: ABGOSIZDAT, 1960, gv. 71. (Dzidzaria, G. The accession of Abkhazia to Russia and its historical significance. Sukhumi: ABGOSIZDAT, 1960, p. 71).

Mikabka was arrested for a rude answer⁵. Aggressive actions of Russian officials made this situation even worse. Dissatisfaction arose in the aristocracy. There were pro-Turkish people in Abkhazian society who tried to stir up an anti-Russian mood in the population and convince the peasants not to cooperate with the commission and ask the Sultan for help. It was difficult for the Sultan of Turkey to give up his status in the Caucasus and the Russian Empire was trying to strengthen its power. The Abkhazian people became victims of the political interests of these two big states and were sacrificed to their political interests.

The official cause of the uprising was the discontent of the majority of the highest nobility ranks. In any case, it is clear that in addition to social factors, this uprising was also based on political factors.

The main reasons for the uprising in Abkhazia were the neglect of Abkhazia's interests in public and political life, the intrusive interference of Russian officials in Abkhazia's domestic affairs, and the extreme hardships caused by these factors. Added to this was the rigidity towards the population of Abkhazia in the process of the implementation of the rural reform. Discontent of the population soon turned into a large-scale uprising and led to one of the largest peasant rebellions in the Caucasus. The rebels unanimously demanded answers to the questions of why Mikhail Shervashidze was forcibly exiled without asking for the public opinion regarding the fact that his successors were deprived of power.

"This uprising had a pronounced anti-colonial and national liberation character," wrote the Abkhazian historian Stanislav Lakoba⁶. The rebels demanded from the person sent by the administration to deliver the following message to Colonel Konyar, who was in charge of Abkhazia's autonomy at the time:

⁵ Bgajba, O. Lakoba, S. *Istoria Abkhazii s drevneyshikh vremyon do nashikh dney*. Sukhum, 2007. (Bgazhba, O., Lakoba, S.. History of Abkhazia from Ancient Times to the Present Day. Sukhum, 2007).

⁶ Lakoba, S. *Očerki političeskoj istorii Abkhazii*. Sukhumi: Alaşara, 1990, s. 66. (Lakoba, S. Essays on the political history of Abkhazia. Sukhumi: Alashara, 1990, p. 66).

“The Abkhazians are unhappy that the prince of Abkhazia was taken away without consulting them; why didn't they ask the people whether they wanted the heirs of the former prince to remain in Abkhazia as landlords or not?”

The Abkhazian people were against colonialism. As well as this, they demanded the restoration of the old rule of government and the approval of Giorgi Shervashidze as the Prince⁷. The Likhni uprising was also preceded by an unfavourable social background, the failure of the corn harvest due to which there was a shortage of food until 1865. This was provoked by the fact that before the arrival of the new harvest, a grape disease destroyed the entire crop and a smallpox epidemic spread throughout Abkhazia (Family Archive of Abkhazia).

The uprising started in the village of Bichvinta on July 17, 1866 and quickly spread to the Bzif District. The administration's attempt to eliminate the situation failed. On the 25th of the same month, a meeting of the rebels was held in the village of Likhni, where 7,000 armed people gathered. The majority of them were peasants. Colonel Konyar decided to take special measures. Accompanied by the prince's heir Giorgi and the prince's brother Alexander, he arrived in Gudauta and summoned the residents of the village of Likhni, the former residence of Prince Shervashidze. Besides the rebels, the meeting was also attended by women, old and young people. The latter hoped that the meeting would provide answers to their questions. The rebels presented their demands. At first it was not intended to use weapons. The rebellious peasant Osman Shamba said during his speech that the peasants were dissatisfied with the new administration and expected more understanding from them. The new government established new circumstances, a different culture, language, customs and traditions, all of which clashed with the ancient ones established among the Abkhazians. A strange and foreign culture began to painfully break the old way of life.

All the demands of the rebels were ignored. People didn't expect that. In response to threats and demands to exile the rebel

⁷ Canașia, S. *Giorgi Șarvașidze. Kultura – istoriuli narkvevi*. Sukhumi, 1946, gv. 14. (Janashia, S. Giorgi Sharvashidze. Cultural-historical essay. Sukhumi, 1946, p. 14).

commanders, the first shots were fired. The shooting was preceded by the speech of Osman Shamba:

“No, Colonel, we cannot fulfil your demands, enough is enough, our hearts are filled with patience, leave us alone”⁸.

After this announcement, the rebels called out to those who had taken an oath to join them and a riot broke out. Konyan considered the best decision to hide in the Prince's palace, where he and his officers disguised himself as Abkhazian soldiers. People shot at the Prince's former palace with guns and a fight broke out.

Giorgi tried to calm the people down from the window of the palace. The latter shouted from below: "Doesn't it bother you that we are organizing your father's funeral service?" Other Abkhazians in the palace tried to discharge the situation and spread the rumour that Giorgi was killed. Their response was – so what, his father was also killed. Apparently, people did not like Giorgi remaining in the palace. The situation was made even worse by the relatives of the Abkhazians killed by the Russians. People followed their appeal and shouted: Giorgi, come out, otherwise we will kill you too. Being quite young (he must have been about 20 years old at that time), Giorgi Shervashidze chose to stand by people in this unplanned, difficult situation. The fact that Giorgi and Alexander left the palace to stand with people opened the way for the latter and they entered the palace. The Russian official Cherepov, whose insulting speeches were one of the reasons for the uprising, was killed; Izmailov, the executive of the Bzif district, other Russian officials and Kazakhs were also killed. Finally, Konyan, who was found crouching in the fireplace, was also killed⁹. During the Likhni uprising, Giorgi Shervashidze's position became the determinant of his fate. The Russian Empire did not forgive this choice of the Abkhaz prince, although they could not break his unshakable will.

The rebels announced 20-year-old Giorgi Mikhailovich Shervashidze-Chachba as the heir:

⁸ Canaşia, S. *Giorgi Şarvaşidze. Kulturul – istoriuli narkvevi*. Sukhumi, 1946, gv. 15. (Janashia, S. Giorgi Sharvashidze. Cultural-historical essay. Sukhumi, 1946, p. 15).

⁹ Canaşia, S. *Giorgi Şarvaşidze. Kulturul – istoriuli narkvevi*. Sukhumi, 1946, gv. 14. (Janashia, S. Giorgi Sharvashidze. Cultural-historical essay. Sukhumi, 1946, p. 16).

"They met Giorgi as their prince. He was accompanied by dignitaries, members of the Council consisting of four people and elected by the people. The army sang a song to the young prince praising the heroism of Likhni (Likhni) and Giorgi's revenge for his father killed by Russia"¹⁰.

The rebels addressed Giorgi: "Now you are our leader, wherever you go, we will follow you, we will die with you." That's how people swore loyalty to Giorgi. They made the flag of the principality (on a piece of red cloth referred to as qumasi with a sword embroidered on it)¹¹. Fighters were called from all communities, it was decided to seize Sukhumi. The situation put the the young heir in a difficult situation. The overflowing river Gumista stopped the rebels, they were forced to attack the village of Gumista from a bypass. This allowed the Russian administration to hold back and call in additional military forces to Sukhumi. On the night of July 27, the rebels took a part of Sukhumi and set fire to the city. On July 28, the military army that arrived by sea pushed the rebels back. On July 29, Giorgi and his uncle Alexander joined the rebels. Giorgi joined the rebels as their chief, accompanied by honorary dignitaries and guards. At dawn, on July 30, the rebels attacked the Sukhumi fortress, but were repulsed. Rebels kept attacking Sukhumi until August 5 as published in the press of that time (Sukhum-Kale)¹². After the arrival of additional troops in Sukhumi, the rebels were forced to retreat, they could not wait for the rescue squads and disbanded. The rebellion was also suppressed in Tsebelda, where discontent erupted in parallel to Likhni uprising¹³.

The population was disarmed and several commanders were shot in front of the rebellious people. Giorgi was exiled to the Russian city of Orenburg. Thirty thousand Abkhazians were exiled to Siberia, including Princes Zausakhan Marshania and Eshak Kvadzba, who resisted with

¹⁰ Canașia, S. *Giorgi Șarvașidze. Kulturul – istoriuli narkvevi*. Sokhumi, 1946, gv. 16. (Janashia, S. *Giorgi Sharvashidze. Cultural-historical essay*. Sukhumi, 1946, p. 14).

¹¹ Gazeta "Kavkaz", №70, Tiflis, 7 sent, 1866, (Newspaper " Kavkaz ", (E. Schwartz, Ed.), №70, 7 Sep 1866).

¹² Gazeta "Kavkaz", №70, Tiflis, 7 sent, 1866, (Newspaper " Kavkaz ", (E. Schwartz, Ed.), №70, 7 Sep 1866).

¹³ Gazeta "Kavkaz", №68, Tiflis, 14 iyun, 1868, (Newspaper " Kavkaz ", (I. A. Slivitsky, & S. A. Slivitsky, Ed.), №68, 14 Jun 1868)

arms during their capture¹⁴. There is no archive for this period of George's life. After suppressing the rebellion, the authorities began disarming the rebels which continued until September 1866.

After suppressing the rebellion, tsarism began to prepare an administrative reform that would strengthen administrative control over Abkhazia. On August 11, 1866, the emperor approved a new regulation regarding the management of the military department, according to which the military department of Sukhumi (Abkhazia) was divided into Okrugs (Districts) Bichvinta, Dranda, Tsebelda Okumi. Sukhumi was included as a separate administrative okrug. Major General P. Shatilov was appointed as the head of the Sukhumi military okrug¹⁵.

On July 30, 1866, the attack was launched under the command of Kutaisi Governor-General Svyatopolk-Mirsky. The newspaper "Kavkaz" wrote in N 68 of 1866. However, since the Abkhazians are amazing masters of using the terrain and hiding behind the trees, it was not easy to drive them out of there.

The active participants of the uprising affected by the first stage of the exile, were mainly the population of Tsebelda-Drand. The surnames of some of the exiles have been preserved in the family archives of the population of Abkhazia. They were Kwaj Zurab - Ipa Marshan, Tatlastan Tengiz – Ipa Marshan, Pskhubey Sasad Ghaz - Ipa Marshan, Qazilbek Marshan, Miran Bey Marshan. (Family Archive of Abkahzia).

The uprising of 1866 played a major role in raising the awareness among the Abkhazian peasants and of course, delivered a major blow to Russia's colonial policy. Peasants did not obey those nobles who failed to protect them. In addition, in 1867 the interrupted reform of 1866 continued which further deepened the opposition between the peasants and the princes. Grabbing of lands and forests increased.

¹⁴ Bgajba, O. Lakoba, S. *İstoria Abkhazii s drevneyşikh vremyon do našikh dney*. Sukhum, 2007.

¹⁵ Khorava, B. *Apkhazta 1867 tsliş muhaciroba*. Tbilis: Artanuci, 2004. gv. 82. (Khorava, B. Mahajirism of Abkhazians in 1867. Tbilisi: Artanuji, 2004, p. 82)

The landlords started moving to Turkey together with the peasants. On March 16, 1867, Tolstoy, the new head of the Sukhumi Division, wrote to the Governor-General of Kutaisi:

"From May 1, 270 peasant families were planing to move from Tsebelda. Traditions and family ties obliged the peasants to follow the migrating landlord"¹⁶.

In the 80s of the 19th century, the governor of the Caucasus, the Governor-General of Kutaisi Svyatoslav-Mirsky, head of the Caucasus and the head of highland administration Starolevsky were mainly responsible for the population exile.

The exile was carried out in two stages in 1864 and 1867. On October 27, 1866, the Governor-General of Kutaisi Svyatoslav-Mirsky wrote to Starolevsky, head of the administration of the Caucasus highlands: "For me, there is only one radical way to eliminate any kind of threat from the Sukhumi region - this is the exile of the people living in Abkhazia to Turkey." The emperor's order was to start immediately. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Ignatiev reported, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey Ali Pasha was against this process at first. It is a fact that the Turkish authorities were already afraid of accepting the Caucasian 'mountainous masses' into the empire. This period coincides with great financial turmoil. Therefore, it took the Russian Embassy a lot of work to convince them. The emigration in 1867 was mostly based on violence.

Realizing its wrong decision, in 1867 the Russian Empire, Alexander II, canceled the decision of the Council of Ministers made in 1862 to relocate the population of the Western Caucasus highlands to Turkey after the Turkish government officially notified the Russian government on April 5, 1865 of its refusal to accept the Caucasians without the prior consent of the Turkish government. The resettlement of the population was canceled by order of the emperor, the reason being the lack of

¹⁶ Dzidzaria, G. *Makhacirstvo i Problemi İstorii Abkhazii XIX Stoletia. Sukhumi: Alaşara, 1982.* (Dzidzaria, G. Mahajirism and Problems of the History of Abkhazia of the 19th Century. Sukhumi: "Alashara", 1982).

military and political necessity and the fact that the population of Abkhazia was trying to "get used to the Russian government".

Zausakhan Jemal Khan-Ipa Marshan and Tara and Eshak Kvadzba were among the first Abkhazians exiled to Siberia after the uprising of 1866 who resisted employed arms during the occupation. They were sent to Western Siberia via Tambov. On April 6, 1867 the newspaper "Kavkaz" wrote: by the verdict of the military field court, the defendants Khanasha Kalgi, Kakuchal-Ipsa and Kyzilbeg Marghani were executed by shooting.

There is a document in the archive of the Oryol District (the Russian Federation) entitled "List of Abkhazians of Sukhumi District who are administratively exiled to European Russia" due to the uprising in Abkhazia in 1866. Cossacks and the people who attacked the palace in the village of Likhni, as well as those who participated in the attack on Sukhumi, were among the deported.

In January 1867, there were 'thirteen detained Abkhazians' in the Stavropol transit prison. The attached list of rebels speaks of "their strict protection". Documents – N 5, N 8 and N 12 mention Dzagan Ipa, Kanyaga Machin-Ipa (Kobakhia) and Maf Ams-Ipa, who gave a sign with a shot to the attackers of Konyan and Cossacks. Kobzach Tsakhtir-Ipa also called for rebellion, and the peasant Gid Dbarma is mentioned in documents N 6 and N 7. Other prominent 'rebels' were also locked up in the Stavropol prison. In November 1866, one of the princes who actively participated in the Tsebelda resistance, the staff captain Shirin Bey Marchania and a hundred-year-old 'rebel' Kyagu Kutsba were also imprisoned. He was the oldest 'rebel'. The youngest, fifteen-year-old Cams Kaba, was arrested in 1867 "on charges of concealing firearms and acting contrary to the orders of superiors." He spent fourteen years in exile and was allowed to return to Abkhazia only in 1880¹⁷.

¹⁷ Bgajba, O. Lakoba, S. *İstoria Abkhazii s drevneyshikh vremyon do nashikh dney*. Sukhum, 2007.

The role of Giorgi Shervashidze in the Likhni Uprising and his fate after it

Giorgi Shervashidze-Chachba wrote about the rebels: "Their proud spirit did not want to yield to the oppressive system of the Russian government. They did not allow their customs to be violated, and rebelled against the then Russia with the traditions and weapons refined for centuries. Many died for their motherland Abkhazia, thousands of them were in Russia in November, many tens of thousands went to Turkey in desperation, but they did not bow their proud and honest heads to the oppressor". The Russian government later pardoned Giorgi and allowed him to live in St. Petersburg, where he befriended the Tsar's son, later Tsar Alexander III. Despite the promotion, Giorgi left the king's court and returned to Kutaisi. He lived in Kutaisi and was actively involved in public life. During the visit to Kutaisi of Alexander III, the governor asked Giorgi Shervashidze to leave the city together with Niko Nikoladze and other "unsavory/untrustworthy" persons (the Likhni rebellion established Giorgi's 'unsavory' reputation forever in the Russian Empire). In response, Giorgi refused the rank of an aide-de-camp:

"Since your government does not trust me so much that it considers it dangerous even to be in my homeland at the time of your arrival, please remove this palace rank of an aide-de-camp"¹⁸.

This was equivalent to the declaration of war for the government, which ended in the complete severance of Giorgi's relationship with them.

Later, in the speech delivered by Niko Tavdgiridze at Giorgi's funeral, which was printed by the magazine "Theatre and Life", it is mentioned that Giorgi was one of the exceptions among the heirs, who did not surrender to the oppressive and powerful state of his nation dominating his people, while many noble families would consider it a great happiness. It is also said there that Giorgi was very unhappy as he

¹⁸ Niko Tavdgiridze's speech at Giorgi Shervashidze's funeral, magazine Theatre and Life, July 7, 1918, p. 5. (Shervashidze's funeral, magazine Theatre and Life, July 7, 1918, p. 5)

desired to have a little land in his country while Giorgi's relatives, the younger Shervashidzes of the royal house, were the closest people to the Russian government (meaning Alexander's descendants). Giorgi was also forbidden to stay in Abkhazia for a long time. Only in 1905 he was allowed to live in Abkhazia with limited rights. Giorgi said that the Russian government destroyed their family morally and materially¹⁹. Giorgi maintained his proud position until the end of his life. In the 80s of the 19th century, the probability of a German-Turkish war appeared in the world. Abkhazian and Circassian emigrants sent a message to Giorgi from the Ottoman Empire and promised they would collect the army, and asked him to be their leader; they said with the help of Georgians they would drive the Russians out of the country. Giorgi took this matter seriously. He took a big loan and sent men to Ottoman and Western Georgia to get ready for the war. Sadly, the German-Turkish war did not happen. In the 80s, the Russia-England conflict reached its peak due to the issue of Afghanistan. The real threat of war was being ripened. Giorgi Shervashidze, Giorgi Tsereteli and Dimitri Mikeladze appealed to the British Prime Minister Gladstone to put the issue in the field of international law policy. The appeal resulted in Gladstone's diplomatic advice in the form of a document to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This must have happened in 1884 or 1886. Giorgi was a well-educated man for his time. We do not know exactly in which school he received his education, we only know that he studied in Russian. He had been to Europe several times and had an excellent knowledge of French, English, Georgian, Russian, Latin, Abkhazian and Megrelian languages.

After the Likhni uprising, Giorgi was forbidden to live in Abkhazia. Having escaped from Abkhazia, Giorgi tried to save his life by selling his estate, which had become his property or he had acquired co-ownership together with other family members during his father's lifetime. The proof of this is a number of documents preserved in the central archive of Kutaisi. Power of attorney issued by Giorgi Shervashidze in the name of Mikhail Ambarson, in 1879, by notary Berman Samoelovich Gurovich in Odessa, according to which Mikhail

¹⁹ Gazeta "Kavkaz", №125, Tiflis, 4 iyun, 1910 g, (Newspaper " Kavkaz ", (A. Belinsky, & V. Stratonov, Ed.), №125, Tbilisi, 4 Jun 1910)

Ambarson is authorized to sell the entire property jointly owned by Giorgi, Tamara and Varvara Shervashidze. For this service, the authorized person should receive a 15% fee. There is also a second power of attorney, certified by the same notary in the name of Mikhail Ambarson, in order to sell the remaining property with full rights²⁰.

It is also worth noting that after Mikhail Shervashidze's forced exile from Abkhazia, the Russian government administration completely described and auctioned the entire real estate owned by him²¹. The Russian government exacted a price for the last years of Mikhail Shervashidze's life, evaluating these years as evil and dirty activities. This is how the administration of the Russian Empire explained why they banned Shervashidze from Abkhazia, thereby preventing the behavior unbecoming and unworthy of the rank of adjutant general. This document (case No. 413) not only had to glorify past events, but also would not raise any questions about future policies, such as the complete auction of Mikhail Shervashidze's real estate. (as a punishment for disobedience) because of the debts that the latter owed to the Russian authorities (certainly in the opinion of the Empire).

November 4, 1883, was named the day of the auction according to the information published in the newspaper "Kavkaz." According to this document, we can easily find out that none of Mikhail's heirs received an inheritance from his father's remaining property. It was confiscated. It doesn't matter if the Russian Empire called this process an auction, a trade, or something else, it was a punishment for love and loyalty to the motherland. The expulsion from the homeland and complete confiscation of the princely property was one of the characteristics of the abolition of the principality of Abkhazia. Later, in 1911, Baron Alexander Meidorf, the husband of Barbara (Babo) Shervashidze, the youngest daughter of Mikhail Shervashidze, published the work "Property rights of the ruler of Abkhazia, Mikhail Shervashidze", in which he appealed this action of the Russian Empire, but in vain.

²⁰ kalak Kutaisi tsentraluri arkivi. Pondi N186, *anatseri N1*, *sakme* N93 (Central archive of the city of Kutaisi. Fond N186, inscription N1. Case N93)

²¹ kalak Kutaisi tsentraluri arkivi. Mepnatsvlis kantselariis çanatserebi, *sakme N 413*. 1883 tsli 24 oktomberi. (Central archive of the city of Kutaisi." Records of the Viceroy's Chancellery, case N 413. October 24, 1883)

When exploring this period in the history of Abkhazia, Mikhail's younger heir, his father's namesake Mikhail, remains neglected. At the time of his father's exile, the young heir must have been three years old. According to this report, his date of birth is 1861. Mikhail (junior) was brought up in the village of Gupu, Ochamchire district, by the Marshanias, as soon as he was born. During the exile, the father was allowed to take his young son along with several maids, but Mikhail left his son with the Marshanias in the hope of returning to his homeland soon. As Mikhail could not return, his elder brother Giorgi had to take care of the little heir. The main focus was on Giorgi, as the heir to the princely throne of Abkhazia, who had a lot of support and love from the people. After that, Mikhail (junior) is mentioned in the records of the Chancellery of the Russian Governorate only in the death certificate. There is no other record in official documents of the 19th and 20th centuries created with Russian "inspiration". The search for Mikhail's traces leads to Abkhazia. Taking into account the 30-year Georgian-Abkhazian political history, it is difficult to allow a Georgian researcher to freely familiarize himself with the documents in Abkhazia, against the background of already scarce materials. However, there are still people in Ochamchire who have information (for obvious reasons, which we are not allowed to name), who know the fate of the younger heir by tradition. Research in this direction will continue.

We think that one of the reasons for the scarce information about Mikhail is, on the one hand, his young age and, on the other hand, the life and work of Giorgi Shervashidze. He, as the heir to the princely throne of Abkhazia and a constant puzzle of the Russian Empire (this is how Giorgi remained for the Russian Empire until the last day of his life), overshadowed the other heirs of Mikhail Shervashidze.

After the suppression of the Likhni uprising by the Russian Empire, the main target is Giorgi Shervashidze. During this period, Giorgi was not married (Giorgi Shervashidze married Eva Andrevskaia later in 1873), it is unclear how far he was able to escape the repressions. That is why the Abkhazians were starting to take care of Mikhail's rescue. At the age of about five years, Mikhail was taken from Marshania and given to a family of one of the peasants (the choice on the family of this status was deliberately made) in the village of Ilori in Ochamchiri region.

Mikhail grew up in this village and died here. He did not live not like the son of Mikhail Shervashidze, but like an ordinary Abkhazian peasant in the village of Ilori. He left one heir, Arzaqan. It should be noted that Mikhail's second name is Arzaqan. As it was said, he was his father's namesake. Giving father's names to children is an unchanged tradition among the highland people, and not only among them. At first it was characteristic of the elite, but later it spread more widely. Many similar examples can be named.

The eldest of Mikhail's daughters, Tamara Shervashidze, was married to Prince Paghava in the village of Bandza in the Martvil district. The younger, Barbara (Babo) Shervashidze lived with great honor at the court of the Russian emperor as a representative of the princely branch. She was first married to Prince Tsulukidze, and later she married Baron Alexander Meidorf. History also knows of the eldest son of Mikhail Shervashidze, Nikoloz Shervashidze, who moved to Bulgaria but the history of his heirs is obscure. According to the documents, Nikoloz, Giorgi and Babo had no children. No one remembered Mikhail, who was raised among the peasants. It is hard to believe that all three of Mikhail's three children were childless. Presumably, this claim is part of a Russian policy to establish a new history. Growing up among peasants, Mikhail was not ambitious. As for all Abkhazian peasants of that period, survival must have been the main issue for him. The population remembers the stories of their fathers and grandfathers about how times have changed and how their grand prince's son was their friend, played and grew up next to them dressed in the clothes of a poor Abkhazian peasant.

Giorgi Shervashidze was acquitted in 1875 and allowed to return but he did not return to Abkhazia until 1905. After his acquittal, the Russian Empire decided to pursue a "loyal" policy towards him. The empire recognized Giorgi as the successor of Mikhail (junior). The annual 700 manats is meant here, which was assigned to Mikhail, as the prince's heir, like other heirs. He never took advantage of this money, and nobody mentioned Mikhail either. After the return Giorgi needed funds for his life which the empire knew very well, and they also knew very well that Giorgi would not accept this money, so they found a supposedly "legal" heritage for him. They did not grudge him Mikhail's

money. Part of Giorgi's heritage was confiscated, and part was sold by himself.

The non-acceptance of the inheritance by Giorgi can be explained by a number of reasons. This was a protest against the "mercy" of the Russian Empire, and he also knew about the existence of Michael's successor. The same period coincides with the court dispute between Giorgi and the creditors. The archive record of July 14, 1901 reveals that a trial was held (March 22, 1901 case N 527), based on the decision of which Giorgi was ordered to pay 452,040 manats and 50 kopecks in favor of creditors, without interest to be distributed equally among the creditors. Each cost 1272 roubles and 45 kopecks. Since Giorgi had no funds to meet the obligation, he was declared insolvent by the district court and his case was sent to St. Petersburg where there was a single base for debtors. Giorgi Shervashidze was registered in the register of debtors as the case No. 42. Against the background of these circumstances, George refused to take Russian "mercy", which is another clear example of his attitude towards the empire.

Despite such financial pressure, the Russian Empire did not give up its political intrigues. On August 28, 1901, in letter No. 60, General Kutaisov wrote to the Russian emperor Mikhail Nikolozovich: "I have the honor to inform you that Prince Giorgi Shervashidze, a retired colonel currently living in Kutaisi province, supports and actively cooperates with his uncle, Major-General Grigol Shervashidze". Grigol Aleksandrovich Shervashidze was the ruler of Abjui, as well as a well-known defender of school education in Abkhazia; as a fan of the Abkhazian language, he actively participated in the opening of schools and cultural activities in Abkhazia, and fought to protect the national interests of Abkhazia. Grigol Shervashidze gained great influence in Abkhazia after the Likhni uprising and Giorgi's expulsion from Abkhazia. Rumors spread with the support of the Russians also said that Grigol and Giorgi Shervashidze were not opposed to robbery in order to increase their influence on Abkhazia. Prisoners who escaped from prisons in Kutaisi, Sukhumi, and Zugdidi were used for this purpose. "Furthermore, the Shervashidzes tried in every possible way to lower the prestige of the Russian administration among the people," reported General Kutaisov with full loyalty and respect.

Conclusion

As a result of this research, it was unequivocally revealed that the Likhni uprising was of great importance for the survival of the Abkhazian nation and for stopping the Mohajir process for good. The uprising once again convinced the Russian empire that its conquering policy in Abkhazia would not last long. Finally, the Likhni uprising provoked the Khalde rebellion in Svaneti.

The results of the Likhni uprising, the retaliatory actions of the Russian Empire and the fate of Giorgi Shervashidze confirm the conquering and punitive policy of Russian imperialism. Although the Likhni uprising did not achieve its goal, it was not a homogeneous social composition; the participants shared an attitude - to protect Abkhaz customs, laws of justice, traditional norms and freedom.

To summarize and conclude, we should follow the footsteps of the Shervashidzes, first of all, those of Giorgi Shervashidze. Giorgi Shervashidze, as a worthy son of his people, remained faithful to his beliefs until the end. His tragic life and his irreconcilable politics, despite the hardship, provided a proper answer to all the questions of history.

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