
**POLITICAL REPRESSIONS IN GEORGIA DURING THE QUARTER OF
THE XX CENTURY**

**ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ РЕПРЕССИИ В ГРУЗИИ В ПЕРВОЙ ЧЕТВЕРТИ
XX-ГО ВЕКА**

**XX. YÜZYILIN İLK ÇEYREĞİNDE GÜRCİSTAN'DAKİ SİYASAL
BASKILAR**

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ABSTRACT

On February 25, 1921 the Soviet Russia had occupied Georgia. After the establishment of the Soviet rule, the country had undergone massive repressions, as the Bolshevik's had persecuted all the individuals with different political ideas. This was expressed in forms of taking citizens rights of voting away from them (Sosiashvili, 2011:49), making them exile or in certain occasions their physical liquidation. The Bolshevik terror has had struck upon the higher circles of the society. The citizens, who had been deprived of the belongings, were punished on the grounds of being "a nobleman and an enemy of the working class", they were deprived of any property, houses, livestock, etc., The sources kept at the archives gives us heavy and unvarnished information about the situation in Georgia. The Bolsheviks took away the property of the Georgian noblemen and gave it to the state. The bolshevik government also attacked the Orthodox Church along with other religious minorities (Sosiashvili, 2014:224). During the 20s of the XX century more than 1000 churches had been closed. Prior to the repressions in the country there had been approximately 1350 churches, where 1700 priests, 1527 monks and 280 nuns had served. The number had decreased to couple of dozens (Japaridze, 2009:115). The presented sources allows us to see the clear-cut picture about the repressions in the country during the I quarter of the XX century, which had had an astonishing blow on the Georgian society. Unfortunately, the Bolshevik terror had not stopped there, as it became regular to persecute citizens in the later years, whereas the "Red Terror" took away the lives of many other innocent people.

Keywords: Georgia, occupation, Bolshevik government, Shida Kartli, repressions.

ÖZ

25 Şubat 1921'de Sovyet Rusya, Gürcistan'ı işgal etti. Gürcistan Demokratik Cumhuriyeti Hükümeti ülkeyi terk etmek zorunda kaldı. Sovyet iktidarının kurulmasından sonra

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Bolşevikler tarafından farklı siyasî düşüncelerinden dolayı insanlara şiddetli baskılar uygulandı. Bundan sonra vatandaşların oy kullanma hakları ellerinden alındı (Sosiashvili, 2011: 49). İnsanlar sürgün ve benzeri olaylarla da katledildiler. Bolşevik terörü toplumun en yüksek çevrelerine kadar ulaştı. Mülkiyetten yoksun bırakılmış vatandaşlar “işçi sınıfının düşmanları” ilan edildiler ve cezalandırıldılar. Bunlar bütün mülklerinden, evlerden, hayvanlardan vb. mahrum edildiler. Arşivlerde muhafaza edilen kaynaklardan dönemin Gürcistan’ında ne kadar zor bir durumun var olduğu çok net anlaşılmaktadır. Bolşevikler, Gürcü soyluların mülklerine el koydular ve bu malları hazineye devrettiler. Ayrıca, Bolşevik Hükümeti, diğer dinî azınlıkların yanı sıra Ortodoks Kilisesi’ne de saldırdı (Sosiashvili, 2014: 224). 1920’lerde 1000’den fazla kilise kapatıldı. Baskılardan önce, ülkede 1700 papaz, 1527 rahip ve 280 rahibenin hizmet verdiği 1350 kilise vardı ve bunların büyük kısmı kapatıldı (Dzhaparidze, 2009: 115). Sunulan kaynaklar, 20. yüzyılın ilk çeyreğinde ülkedeki baskıların Gürcistan toplumuna ne kadar çarpıcı bir darbe vurduğunu net bir şekilde göstermektedir. Ne yazık ki, Bolşevik terörü bu noktada durmadı ve sonraki yıllarda vatandaşlara yapılan zulüm daha fazla yaygınlaştı, “Kızıl Terör” birçok masum insanın hayat hakkını elinden aldı. Bolşevik terörü Gürcü toplumunun yetişmiş insan gücünü yok etti. Dönemin yaraları birçok ailenin hayatını tamamen etkiledi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gürcistan, İşgal, Bolşevik hükümeti, Şida Kartli, Baskı.

АННОТАЦИЯ

25 февраля 1921 года Советская Россия оккупировала Грузию. После установления советской власти страна подверглась массовым репрессиям, большевики преследовали всех людей с различными политическими идеями. Это выражалось в формах лишения граждан права голоса (Сосиашвили, 2011: 49), изгнания или в некоторых случаях их физической ликвидации. Большевистский террор обрушился на высшие круги общества. Граждане, которые были лишены имущества, были наказаны за то, что они являлись “дворянами и врагами рабочего класса”, они были лишены всякой собственности, домов, скота и т. д. Источники, хранящиеся в архивах, дают нам информацию о тяжелой ситуации в Грузии. Большевики забрали имущество грузинских дворян и национализировали. Большевистское правительство также напало на Православную Церковь наряду с другими религиозными меньшинствами (Сосиашвили, 2014: 224). В течение 20-х годов XX века было закрыто более 1000 церквей. До репрессий в стране насчитывалось около 1350 церквей, где служили 1700 священников, 1527 монахов и 280 монахинь, их число сократилось до нескольких десятков (Джапаридзе, 2009:115). Представленные источники позволяют нам увидеть четкую картину репрессий в стране в течение I квартала XX века, которые нанесли поразительный удар по грузинскому обществу. К сожалению, большевистский террор на этом не остановился, поскольку в последующие годы стало обычным делом преследовать граждан, в то время как “красный террор” унёс жизни многих других ни в чём не повинных людей.

Ключевые слова: Грузия, оккупация, большевистское правительство, Шида Картли, репрессии.

Introduction

On February 25, 1921 the Soviet Russia had occupied Georgia. After the establishment of the Soviet rule, the country had undergone massive repressions, as the Bolshevik’s had persecuted all the individuals with different political ideas. This was expressed in forms of taking citizens rights of voting away from them

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(Sosiashvili, 2011:49), making them exile or in certain occasions their physical liquidation. The Bolshevik terror has had struck upon the higher circles of the society. The citizens, who had been deprived of the belongings, were punished on the grounds of being "a nobleman and an enemy of the working class", they were deprived of any property, houses, livestock, etc., The sources kept at the archives gives us heavy and unvarnished information about the situation in Georgia. The Bolsheviks took away the property of the Georgian noblemen and gave it to the state. This could be imagined on the example of village Akhalkalaki, located in one of the regions of Georgia, Shida Kartli. On March 3, 1923 there had been a meeting in Akhalkalaki community, where citizen Liza Tarkhnishvili lost her house. Her house had been described as a "work of art" and due to this "reason" the house became the state property. The previous owner of the house had been given one room, in order to look after the building; however, she did not have any ownership rights over the house (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Case N 25, Description N1:22). It is paradoxical that Bolsheviks had used to lease the buildings on previous owners. During the same meeting, Makine and Petre Tsereteli's had been deprived of the house. Their property had been given to Akhalkalaki community (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Case N 25, Description N1: 68) The same decision had been made in reference to Guramishvili's house (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Case N 25, Description N1:23). Goglika Tarkhnishvili and his brothers had also been deprived of their house and respectively it had become a property of the local community (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Case N 25, Description N1:54).

Methods

The current article uses not only on the empirical, but also on pure theoretical methodology, such as generalization, analysis, synthesis, abstraction, comparison, systemic approach. Comparative-historical method and causal-effect analysis used in the research process combines all kinds of theoretical methodology listed above.

Discussion

The presidium of Executive Committee of Akhalkalaki community deprived former Colonel Estate Tarkhan-Mouravi (son of Dimitri) a house and a two-stone windmill, which after a certain time had been returned to the owner. The reasoning behind the return of the windmill to the owner was that, the owner had built it during the soviet period. Revaz Eeristavi's house had been taken from him and given to the local school in village Doesi (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Case N 25, Description N1:57). As according to the decision of the of Executive Committee of Akhalkalaki community on March 23, 1923 Gigo Javakhishvili had been deprived of his property. In the text of the decision, we read: "During the hearing, the Revolutionary Committee of village Khovle had presented a transcript about Gigo Javakhishvili's case, upon which a

decision had been made by the presidium, to seize his property in favor of the community and to leave only two rooms and a kitchen. Whereas, he had also been deprived of a grand piano and windmills and respectively turn into the possession of the Executive Committee, located in villages Tchkopiani and Zemi Khandaki in order to strengthen the communal earnings (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Case N 25, Description N1:54).

The Bolshevik repressions put a hard mark on Georgian “Inteligentsia”, on scholars, writers and statesmen. They had been deprived of their belongings without any legal grounds. We have encountered an interesting document in reference to Ivane Javakhishvili, the founder of Georgian historical sciences and Tbilisi state University, whose belongings also had been confiscated. On March 3, 1923 the Executive Committee of village Akhalkalaki had deprived Ivane Javakhishvili a house in his home village Khovle. In the transcripts of the decision of the committee, we read: “A transcript of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of Akhalkalaki Community of March 3, 1923 about the case of Ivane and Giorgi Javakhishvili’s property. During the community hearing, the building of the village Khovle school, which belonged to Javakhishvili family, represented an utter necessity for the community and therefore, Javakhishvili’s had been deprived of the building and it had, subsequently been given to Khovle school, under the regulation of the Executive committee”.

The document was signed by the head of the Executive Committee Chitiashvili and secretary Mezurnovi. As according to the document, the meeting, where Ivane Javakhishvili had been deprived of his house took place on March 3, 1923, whereas the official transcript had been made on April 15, 1924 (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Case N 25, Description N1:21). We do not encounter any information about the persons, who executed the decision of the committee, however, according to other sources, we see that a special group of officials had been established, who was in charge of developing transcripts about the deprived property of the citizens. We can imagine such a situation, as according to the document, which is related to Nikoloz Tarkhnishvili house and property in Garikula, where we see that the group of officials, who had confiscated the property consisted of: the head of the Executive Committee I. Chitiashvili (the very person, upon whose decision I. Javakhishvili’s property had been seized), also instructor of the community committee comrade Arshakun, comrade Goginashvili, sent from the center of Land reform and head of the “Milicia” Baramidze.

The mentioned committee gave Mikheil Tarkhnishvili two rooms in his house due to his illness (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Case N 25, Description N1:58). It is worth noting that in one of the documents, which was a document containing information about the population of Akhalkalaki, who had been deprived of their belongings, mentions Ivane and Giorgi Javakhishvili’s, who as of the decision N 1923 III-14, of the Executive Committee had been deprived of their house. In the transcript, we read that the house had been damaged, whereas, we suppose that this detail had been added in

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order to justify the seizure of the house from Javakhishvili's. The state had adopted a special regulation in order to seize such type of houses in particular, "An instruction for the Internal Affairs and Justice Committees for the seizure and municipalization of the buildings". In the mentioned document we read, "As according to the Georgian Social Soviet Republic People's Committee's 11 decrees of June, 1923 and 15 published decrees in the "Communist N125" and according to the Article 59 of Civil Code the municipalization of the buildings had been prohibited as of June 15, 1923. The municipalization of the buildings had been allowed as of the decree of the Central Georgian Executive Committee and People's Commissioner's Council decree of September 26, 1923 about the Housings, whereas only on instances, which were deemed necessary for the state's need, and as according to the regulation of requisition of the Civil Code, articles 69 and 70, the state's need required the Housings, not be demolished and kept in good conditions, in order not to cause a Housing crisis. Therefore, keeping the Housings without proper care, leads to their deterioration, this subsequently becomes a basis for their municipalization. However the municipalization of the Housings should be closely monitored. We have to have a guarantee that the municipalization of the Housings is reasonable and has a firm ground, thus the Control Apparatus discovers the Housing to be unmonitored, which lead to its deterioration, an act should be issued, where it would be mentioned, what type of damages it contains and should later be notified to the legal owner of the housing. After the issue of the act, the Communal Unit shall issue a written notice to the owner, informing them about the conditions of the housing and also giving them certain time for the restoration, but no more than one year; in case, the house is not restored in the proposed dates, it would become an object for further municipalization. The document, which had been issued on February 21, 1924, bears signatures of People's Commissioner for Justice K. Okudzhava and People's Deputy Commissioner for Internal Affairs Talakhadze (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Case N 25, Description N1:82).

As it had been mentioned, Ivane Javakhishvili's housing had been deemed deteriorated, subsequently leading to its seizure. The above mentioned two documents contradicts each other, as in the document issued by Akhalkalaki regional executive committee deems Ivane Javakhishvili's house as an "important" housing and ask to transfer it to village Khovle's school, whereas in the second document, we read, that Javakhishvili's housing is considered as deteriorated. From our point of view, in the second document, which states about the deterioration of Javakhishvili's housing, the state officials deliberately indicated that the housing was deteriorated, in order to justify the seizure of the building. There exists one more document, where it is indicated that Javakhishvili's housing had been given to village Khovle school by the local authorities, whereas the document has a text: "All the seized property under the regulation of the Gori Regional Executive Committee". In the mentioned document, we read, that Giorgi Javakhishvili (younger brother of Ivane Javakhishvili), residing in village Khovle, had been deprived of his housing (the very housing, which the abovementioned

two documents refer to), 2 windmills, 1 Vermorell Apparatus as according to the decision N 14 of the Lands Revolutionary Committee; the document also had a remark, that the Javakhishvili's housing had been given to village Khovle school (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Case N 101, Description N1:9).

The document is dated to 1924. The victims of the then Soviet repressions mainly were the representatives of the upper class. The document of 1923, gives us a clear picture about the Soviet repressions, which mainly affects the noblemen and upper class representatives residing on Gori administrative unit. This is the list "of the noblemen and owners from Gori administrative unit, who had been deprived of their property". We could realize the Soviet repression on the case of Ephemia Machabeli, who belonged to an upper class family, residing in Gori Administrative Unit. In the document related to Ephemia Machabeli, we read: Machabeli Ephemia, Tkviavi Community, nobleman, had been deprived of 4 days work lands, 12 days work "cultured" lands, 12 rooms, 1 basement, 3 windmills, reasoning – as a landowner, enemy to the people and not a worker;

The document had been signed by the head of the Executive Committee of Gori Administrative unit V. Kurdadze;

Head of the unit for the internal affairs S. Tskovrebashvili;

Head of the Instructional-Information unit I. Kancheli. Case N17 had been submitted to the People's Commission for Internal affairs on 12/VI 1923 (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N26; Description N1, document N416).

The Bolshevik government had remorselessly remedied not only against the noblemen, but against the wealthy peasants too. A clear picture about this issue is given in a document, a village gathering report of Tirdznisi and Tergvisi of 1926, kept at Gori Regional Archive. One of the issues on the report was an expelling of Shakro Egadze from the village. We read the following in the report: „Here, look at his past, he used to be a whipmaster and a friend of the bandits, whereas with their help he committed a murder of the members of A.L.K.K. Nika Zerakidze and Pavle Goginashvili. He had an intent of murdering comrade Psitidze and even, nowadays he is a provokator and represents an enemy to the peasants and government, and therefore should be expelled from the village“ (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N26; Reg. N3, Case N186). The Bolsheviks had dekulakized a lot of peasants, while taking their property into state possession. „They were taking not only livestock, but did not allow them to harvest and used to take the lands in their possession“ (The narration had been recorded from Vl. Mdzinarashvili, born 1915, Departed 1995). We have encountered many interesting documents related to the „dekulakization“ process, which is in reference to the village Ditsi inhabitants, Bolashvili family, who had been deprived of their possessions. On November 27, 1930 the Tirdznisi Village Council had added a new case of kulakized Bolashvili's family to the „blacklisted“ in the election commission report (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N4; Reg. N1, N101:4). During the mentioned period approximately 68

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peasants had been deprived of their property (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N4; Reg. N1, N95:24). The peasants ostracized by the Bolsheviks had asked help on several occasions with the intent to return their property. They had even asked the head of the CEC Filipp Makharadze for help, but in vain (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N4; Reg. N1, N84:134). An ad-hoc commission had been sent to Ditsi to investigate the case of Bolashvili family on behalf of Filipp Makharadze. The commission had made an act, (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Case N 101, Description N1:113), but Bolashvili family was not able to return their property. According to one of the documents, later on they had addressed the State Prosecutor for Eastern Georgia, but that attempt also went in vain (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Case N 101, Description N1:51). The „kulakized“ peasants had also addressed the „Kolxoz Center“ (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Case N 101, Description N1:75). From this letter, we get a clear picture that the local government had used the „poor“ peasants against the „kulakized“ peasants, subsequently flaring the civic confrontation. In the last document, we encounter information that the government had returned part of the property to Bolashvili family, in particular: 1. 1 building, 3 rooms and a basement, two oxes along with the plough, approximately 3 hectares of the land, also one cartload and 35 kg-s of grain per person. (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Case N101, Description N1:117). During the Bolshevik era in Georgia, the rights of the citizens had been trampled, as the elections for executive councils of villages had been held under constant governmental pressure. In one of the documents kept at Gori archives, which refers to the elections in one of the villages, we read: „about the importance and obligations of the council members, comrade N. Archuaze made remarks and reminds his colleagues about the importance of the elections, on how they should mobilize only those comrades, who are truly interested in the development of the working class“ (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Case N 101, Description N1:117). The bolshevik government also attacked the Orthodox Church along with other religious minorities (Sosiashvili, 2014:224). During the 20s of the XX century more than 1000 churches had been closed. Prior to the repressions in the country there had been approximately 1350 churches, where 1700 priests, 1527 monks and 280 nuns had served. The number had decreased to couple of dozens (Japaridze. 2009:115). The Revolutionary Committee of Georgia had adopted a decree on April 15, 1921, whereas according to its articles 14 and 15: „No ecclesiastic and religious societies have a right to own property. They do not possess a right of a legal entity, whereas the whole property of the religious societies in Georgia is declared to be a state property“ (Vardosanidze. 2009:71). The Bolsheviks had left the church without any right, consequently prohibiting religious societies to have a legal status. The activists of the communist part had begun to loot the Orthodox church, whereas the Bolsheviks also proceeded with persecuting the ecclesiastic officials. In 1922 the Catholicos-Patriarche Ambrosi

Khelaia had addressed the Geona Conference, where 29 states and British dominions had participated. In his address, the patriarche had informed the conference participants, the civilized world, about the abominations that the Soviet government had done in Georgia, whereas also mentioning the awful state in which the church and in whole the Georgian society had been (History of Georgian Diplomacy, 2004:547-550). The Bolshevik government had arrested the Catolicos for a certain period of time.

Other ecclesiastic officials had also become targets of repressions. On July 29, 1023 Catolicos-Patriarche had had a meeting with the Secretary-general of the Committee of Workers of England “Hands of the Soviet Russia”, Cotes, where Catolicos had openly expressed that: “I do not consider my situation that important, I worry about the state of the nation, church and the society in general, as because of my fault the members of the council and other officials had been tormented in jail for 7 months and as a result the Administrative-governing apparatus is dismantled. All this torments me and does not give me any peace” (Shiolashvili. 2012:289-290). The mentioned interview fully describes the terror in Georgia, which the Soviet Russia had conducted against the orthodox church and their followers. The campaign that had started against the Georgian Orthodox church had hysterical appearance.

With the establishment of the “Union of Godless” the Bolsheviks had started a vicious fight against the Orthodox Church and ecclesiastic officials. The heads of the regional administrative units and representatives of revolutionary committees had acted harmoniously with the government in terms of discrediting the church and seizing its property. The people’s Committee for Internal Affairs had submitted a special circular to stop the actions of the party activists (Sosiashvili. 2013:451). The anti-religious politics had left a hard mark on one of the regions of Georgia-Shida Kartli. One of the documents, kept at Gori archive refers to the terror against the ecclesiastic officials: “To the executive committee of the Gori administrative unit. As of your circular of May 22 N 3/39, we hereby inform you that in the entire community 3 priests have been haved upon their will, 6 of them left the position as according to their written notice, all the churches are closed in the villages and respectively no religious service is conducted” (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Description. N1, case N38, p. 22). In the upper circles of the government, there had been secret letters about the conditions of the ecclesiastic officials and the future actions against them (Sosiashvili, 2013:62).

The families of the ecclesiastic officials were not allowed to own lands and as a result the clergy had no option, other than to leave the churches (Sosiashvili, 2013:457). According to the sources at Gori Archive, we encounter information about the vicious fights against the clergy on behalf of the representatives of the regional executive committee in 1923. On November 23, 1923 the People’s Commission of the Georgia Soviet Socialist Republic adopted a regulation, whereas: “1. The property of the closed churches went into the state possession, in particular to Executive Committee’s possession. 2. The treasure from the seized

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property that had historical importance had been given into the possession of the People's Educational Museums. 3. The remaining part of the property shall be used by the local executive committee for the needs of the locals" (Vardosanidze, 2009:105). It is evident in the report of the Commission for Ecclesiastic Affairs of November 3, 1923 that the government allowed the preservation of the property on behalf of the museums, whilst the rest of the property could be used for the local needs (Sosiashvili, 2013:227). As we noted, the government had expressed violent measures against the ecclesiastic officials, whereas such behaviour has changed over the years, but the Bolshevik's oppression of the clergy was still visible.

The clergy had to agree with the government the movement of the Bishops, whereas this is described in the document kept at Gori Archive, which is signed by Catholicos-Patriarche Kristofore (Tsitskishvili):" To the Gori Regional Executive Committee, the governing Bishop of Urbnisi-Matskveri has been released of his duties in Urbnisi Eparchy due to his transfer to Kutaisi-Genati Eparchy, whereas Ephrem had become an acting Bishop at Urbnisi-Matskveri Eparchy. The abovementioned shall be informed to the Executive Committee". Catholicos-Patriarche of Georgia, Kristofore (Tsitskishvili), 1930"(Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N4; Description. N1, Case N10:105.). The Bolshevik government had tried to abolish Christian traditions among the population and instead to install the communist rules. The Christian christening had been replaced by a communist one, whereas the newspaper "Red Kartli" presents us with an interesting information related to this matter. In the letter of V. Kitskheli, we read about the communist christening in village Karaleti. "On November 16, this year, the members of the village council S. Beniashvili and K. Davidovi had visited village Karaleti. They summoned a meeting, where the entire population was present. Comrade Beniashvili explained to the locals in a plain language, the difference between the past and present christenings. The population listened to the presented with great attention and later on the christening has been launched. In the beginning of the christening the local youth band performed "International". Approximately 50 children have been christened, whereas most of them have been named after communist leaders. One of the christened children was named Varlenin, the second was named Spartak, afterwards the children were given presents. We would like to express our gratitude to the members of the council and we hope that our bond would become strong. V. Kitskheli"(Newspaper "Tsiteli Kartli", N13, December 7, 1924:2). The repressions from the atheist government had also affected Armenian and Catholic churches, part of the Jewish Synagogues had also been closed.

It is a well-known fact that during the centuries members of the different religious minorities were able to freely express their religious beliefs and consequently practice their religion. Georgian society never discredited religious minorities, however, this attitude has changed after the "sovietization" of Georgia. All the religious confession had been deemed inapplicable to the soviet government. The situation around the Orthodox church and other religious minorities had been tabooed for a long period in Soviet historiography. Due to the communist

ideology, research of this issue had been stopped (Sosiashvili, 2013:35). On February, 1920 the earthquake in Gori had destroyed several churches. On March 10, 1923 the local government made a decision to destroy the churches affected during the earthquake in Gori, whereas the materials left would be distributed to the locals for building purposes.

In Gori, only three churches were left: Okona, Armenian Church and “French” Church. In the decree of the Executive Committee, the Catholic church in Gori is mentioned as “French” church (Alimbarashvili. 2012:105). As, we mentioned in the beginning, the Bolsheviks started to fight against the Catholic church along with other religious confessions, whereas in 1923 the government had closed the Catholic church in Gori due to sanitary violations in the church and also for having lesser number of followers. The head of the Catholic church in Gori had been named as the enemy to the Soviet state, whereas the Executive Committee submitted a written notice to the People’s Commission for Internal Affairs with the purpose of expelling cleric Konstantine Saparashvili from Georgia. In the report of the meeting, we read: “Report N27, of the presidium meeting of the Executive Committee of Gori Administrative unit. October 22, 1924. Present at the meeting: comrades, Siamashvili, Badriashvili and Sakvarelidze, head of the commission V. Kurdadze, secretary (could not be read – G.S.), point N17 – about the Catholic Church. Due to the fact that the Executive Committee possesses evidence of the anti-sanitary in the Catholic church and that they have less number of followers and also, that the leader of Catholic church is known for his counterrevolutionary actions, we deem necessary to ask the Commission for Internal Affairs to close the church and expel Saparashvili from the country, as a non-subordinate to a communist regime (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Description. N1, Case N23:157). As, it is indicated, the document dates back to 1924, and we read about closure of the Catholic church, however we have other written sources, that attest the closure of the Catholic church took place in 1923. This is attested by the letter of Vatican City delegate dated to September 16, 1923, which is addressed to Sasha Gegetchkori, People’s Commissioner for Internal affairs, in the document we read:

“To the Commissioner for the Internal Affairs, Sasha Gegetchkori, in Tbilisi
Mr. Commissioner!

I have addressed you on two instances. About the Catholic church in Gori, which has been closed against the will of the parish, who on their behalf, submitted a written notice about the issue.

After that I had to travel for two months in Russia. I had a hope that the church would have been given back to the Catholic Church, while, this is not the case, I hereby ask you again to reconsider and make a decision in favor of the Catholic parish of Gori.

Sincerely,

Adrianus Smets, delegate of the Vatican City. September 16, 1923 (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Description. N1, Case N23:18).

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“To the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the GSR,
a correspondence of the head of the Gori Catholic Church, Konstantine Saparashvili,

About three months ago, the representatives of the local government along with the “Militia” had conducted a description of my room, including furniture, in order for them to take it from me. A few days ago, I was deprived of the rest of the furniture, in particular a carpet, table, chairs, etc., I have a working table among some other staff, which soon will also be taken from me.

Due to the fact that these materials are not the property of the local government, rather it is a property of the charitable organization established near the Gori Catholic church, the so-called “Catholic Brotherhood” and which is left under the possession of the head of the Catholic church to serve the parish of our institution. I hereby ask you to consider a possibility to return the furniture.

I also urge to investigate the case of the closure of Gori Catholic church, despite the fierce protest of its parish.

We hereby ask you to open the Gori Catholic church and return of the property (upto this day, I have not been given a list of the deprived materials), due to the fact that the seizure of the materials did not proceed in accordance to the statute of the Government of August 10, 1923.

Sincerely,

Priest Konstantine Saparashvili, September 10, 1923, Tbilisi, Akimovi St. N16” (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Description. N1, Case N23:77).

Konstantine Saparashvili’s statement had been directed by the deputy Commissioner of Internal affairs Talakhadze, to People’s Commission for Justice and Prosecutor of Georgia – Vardzieli. (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Description. N1, Case N23:8).

On September 22, 1923 the Georgian Bolshevik government had made a compromise, by allowing the so-called “closed” churches to exist in the regions. They allowed along with the Georgian Orthodox church, other religious minorities to establish religious societies. Catholic parish, who resided in Gori submitted a petition to open up Gori Catholic church and to return the church belongings to the head of the Gori administrative unit Executive Committee. The petition was signed by 69 representatives of catholic parish (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Description. N1, Case N23:66).

According to the regulation of September 22, 1923 in order for the religious organizations to be registered, they were supposed to have at least 50 members, whereas during that time the Catholic parish had consisted of 250 persons over the age of 18, part of them had resided in Borjomi and Khashuri (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, # 3; Description. N1, Case N23:69). Priest Konstantine Saparashvili had served to the catholics resided in Gori region, who originated from Tbilisi. Apart from the clerical activity, he had also served as a teacher (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Description. N1, Case N23:117). The

catholics residing in Gori region had summoned a gathering on December 29, 1923 (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Description. N1, Case N23:66).

In the organizational regulations they had included the rights, which should have been granted to all Catholics joining the organization (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Description. N1, Case N54:127).

Lastly, on February 10, 1924 the religious union of Catholics of Gori had been given a mortared stone house in Gori and their furniture had also been returned. A special agreement had been signed between the Gori Catholic religious organization and the representative of the Gori Executive Committee-S. Tskhovrebashvili (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Description. N1, Case N54:136).

As we mentioned the Bolsheviks had also closed Synagogues of the Jewish population in Gori Administrative unit. The Jewish parish had asked for the return of their Synagogues and as a result the government had made a compromise. On October, 1923 the head of the unit for internal affairs of Gori Executive Committee S. Tskhovrebashvili had addressed the head of Kareli Executive Committee with the request to consider a possibility of the return of Jewish Synagogue back to the Jewish religious organization (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Description. N1, Case N27). It seems that Jews residing in Kareli had adamantly asked for the return of the Synagogue, which resulted in a decision of the Ecclesiastic Affairs under the Georgian Communist Party decision, as according to which the Kareli Executive Committee had been assigned to return the Synagogue to the Jewish population residing in Kareli (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Description. N1, Case N37:67). Alike, the Jews in Kareli, Gori Jewish parish had also requested the return of the Synagogue and establishment of the religious organization (Sosiashvili, 2014:37).

On November 5, 1923 there had been summoned a meeting of the Jewish parish in Gori, which aimed at establishing a religious organization and a Synagogue. During the meeting a presidium had been elected, where: Ela Atanelovi, Mordekhdavarashvili, Meme Koenishvili, Abram Magalovi and Iokhai Krikheli had been elected (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Description. N1, Case N54:17). Approximately 97 members of the Jewish parish had become a member of the Jewish religious organization.

The presidium had adopted a set of regulations for the organization (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Description. N1, Case N54:16), whereas according to the correspondence of the head of the presidium Iokhai Krikheli, they had asked for the return of the lands for the organization (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, # 3; Description. N1, Case N54:6). Their request had been successful, which resulted in an agreement between the organization and Gori Administrative unit's Executive Committee, according to which head of the Executive Committee S. Tskhovrebashvili had given the Jewish religious organization a building and set of

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materials for an infinite period of time on January 17, 1924 (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Description. N1, Case N54: 8-9).

The Jewish parish had been prohibited to carry out any type of negative propaganda against the Soviet government. The building given by the Gori Executive Committee had been given under the supervision of Mordekh Davarashvili and Iokhai Krikheli, whereas the religious activities had been carried out by Kohen residing in Gori – Bene Krikheli. The return of the Synagogue to the Jewish parish in Gori region, is attested in one more document, a report of the Georgian Communist party of December 11, 1924. It seems that the points discussed during the meeting had been related to the return of the property to the Orthodox, Catholic, Gregorian and Gori and Kareli Jewish parish. The ecclesiastic commission had given an assignment to the Gori Executive Committee to return one church, or instead a building, that could be used as a shrine (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Description. N1, Case N52:11).

The Executive Committee had refused to give the Jewish parish the synagogue and instead, gave them private houses. In reference to this issue, Gori Executive Committee had addressed the central government:

“In reference to the Jewish parish in Surami, they had been given a right to establish religious organization. Kareli Jewish parish were allowed to establish an organization as well, however they were refused to return the Synagogue, because the Young Communist league are using it as a club and therefore, we deem it necessary not to return the Synagogue. We have received your direct order, on the return of their shrine, however we gave them a private house to use as a shrine and deemed necessary not to return the Synagogue. Now, we have given out specific order to return their shrines in Kareli, as well as in Surami” (Regional body of Georgian National Archives, Gori Archive, Fund, N3; Description. N1, Case N52:7).

Conclusion

The presented sources allow us to see the clear-cut picture about the repressions in the country during the I quarter of the XX century, which had had an astonishing blow on the Georgian society. Unfortunately, the Bolshevik terror had not stopped there, as it became regular to persecute citizens in the later years, whereas the “Red Terror” took away the lives of many other innocent people.

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