

The Reflection of Communist Ideology in the Street Naming Policy in Soviet Tbilisi (1922-1939)

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The Soviet Union, as a single state created a system to unite peoples with different identities and historic pasts. To achieve this goal and create a new Soviet citizen, long-term and diverse reforms were implemented in the organization of political life and the structure of the government, which were directly related to daily life.

This article focuses on the example of Soviet Georgia--based on the materials related to the capital Tbilisi--and presents the policy of the Soviet Union on the changing of toponyms, or assigning new names to both existing and newly-built streets, and examining how this reflected the formation of the new Soviet identity in the citizens of Soviet Tbilisi in the early Soviet period (1922-1939).

The article considers in detail the history of toponyms of Tbilisi streets from the time of their creation, and covers the changes that occurred in various periods, in order to clarify the policy of the Soviet Government in Tbilisi. This helps show the principle that guided the leadership when assigning names to central streets. Also, it explains how the Soviet authorities tried to influence the local identity by using toponymy. The topic discusses micro-toponyms that, unlike macro-toponyms usually are more conservative and less subject to political and ideological influences. However, they are not a minor part of the reform process.

To achieve this aim, the article will analyze streets divided by a few groups and discuss them in several aspects. Old and historic streets as well as those built during the period of examination were considered. Due to the fact that the material was quite vast, a certain number of streets were selected according to their location, time of establishment and their significance in response to the question posed in the beginning of this article.

Using toponyms to influence the creation of a new identity of citizens in Soviet Tbilisi was important for a few reasons. First, the idea of assigning names of honored and distinguished figures, once unacceptable for a certain society, to settlements and streets would make them acceptable, after their roles were reevaluated, and they would become members of “our” group, or “our” group was associated with those figures. Second, due to the fact that they are actively used in everyday life (addresses, maps, street names hanging in the streets, inscriptions on stamps, envelopes, urban transport) it is relatively easier to impress upon people’s minds and may influence the establishment of markers for a new identity or it may support the formation of a uniting identity. It may be said that toponyms “invisibly” exercise coercion for the formation of identity in a certain society. The article will analyze the period before the creation of the Soviet Union up to the start of the Second World War (1922-1939). These years are distinguished by extensive reforms carried out for the creation of a common Soviet Identity. After “the Great Terror,” the major part of this reform had been accomplished.

To achieve this goal, the Soviet leadership was intentionally attempting to dismantle ethnic and mental borders, creating new markers for the identification of peoples with diverse cultural and historic backgrounds. This would transform it into a united single territory of member republics with their numerous citizens, where everyone would consider themselves Soviet citizens. Hence, diverse ethnic, religious and cultural identities would be substituted by a uniting Soviet identity. To achieve those goals, the totalitarian regime got involved in all aspects of human life and especially those that were actively linked with everyday life. Changing

names of streets may be considered as one of the factors influencing daily life¹.

After the revolution, the changing of toponyms actively started throughout Russia by honoring the heroes of the revolution. This process particularly intensified after the creation of the Soviet Union in the 1920s, though the process continued in the following years after that as well. Russia was exceptionally active² but the Soviet leadership implemented a similar policy simultaneously on a Union-wide scale. (An exception was the year 1923 in Russia, when due to various reasons, mainly economic considerations, changing names was temporarily prohibited). To this point, Tbilisi was not an exception either, and renaming streets took on a massive scale. This process may be divided into two parts. The first part was during 1922-1923 and the second occurred during 1930-1934. It was especially extensive in 1934. The renaming of streets continued even during the period of the “Great Terror.” This time it concerned the persons who succeeded during the Russian Revolution or during the first years of the Soviet Union and thereafter were labeled as “enemies of the people” and became the victims of repressions. By changing the names of the streets, the leadership ensured that these people would be forgotten.

For clarity in analyzing the naming and renaming policy, the toponyms of Tbilisi streets will be grouped together. The classification of streets is as follows:

1. Streets named in honor of outstanding Bolsheviks, leaders and ideologists of the Soviet Union.
2. Streets that have the names of ordinary revolutionists and Bolsheviks, both ethnic Georgians and non-Georgians.
3. Streets named in honor of persons who had played an important role in the history of Georgia, writers and public figures whose contribution to the people is significant.

¹ Selivanovskiy S.N., *On the Issue of Historical Toponyms in Udmurtia in Modern Times* // Indakar 1 (5) 2009.

² Nikitin S., *Revolution and Geography: The Establishment of Soviet Toponyms 1918-1930s*, // Fatherland Notes, 2003, No. 2.

4. Streets names displaying a certain function. They can be conventionally called functional streets.

5. Streets demonstrating the main ideology of the communist state as well as social and class belonging. They can be described as ideological streets.

6. Streets that bear women's names.

The article will take into consideration the above-mentioned groups in order to discuss the policy of street naming from the perspective of revealing the influence of communist ideology and showing it as an instrument for creating a new Soviet identity. The following criteria will be taken in account when discussing the street naming process:

- Time of the street establishment: is it a historical street or not?
- Year when the street was renamed;
- Who is the person in whose honor the street was named/renamed?

What are the statuses of the persons in whose honor the specific streets were named and renamed? What was their merit?

Group N 1 Streets named in honor of the outstanding Bolsheviks, leaders and ideologists of the Soviet Union.

This group includes the most outstanding leaders of the Soviet Union and communist ideologists - Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Lenin, Lunacharsky, Kalinin, Zinoviev, Makharadze, Orjonikidze, Tskhakaia, Dzerzhinsky, Plekhanov.

K. Marx street, which is currently renamed after Tsothe Dadiani and located in the Nadzaladevi district of Tbilisi, and was established in the XIX century, initially named Cherkezovi Street. Cherkezovi is a shorten version of Cherkezishvili³, Vasili Cherkezishvili (1857-1910) was the mayor of Tbilisi in 1905 and then again from 1907 to 1910. During the period of his governance, the borders of the city were enlarged, and free compulsory education of the city population was introduced. He was considered very popular among the Georgians. Later, the street underwent other renaming⁴.

³ Tbilisi: streets, avenues, squares. Tbilisi, 2008, p. 55.

⁴ Ibid p. 343.

In 1922, it was renamed as *Sabcho* (Council) Street. In 1930, the street was named after K. Marx. In 1938, it got the name *Sabcho* Street again⁵.

K. Marx Square, which is currently Zaarabriuken Square and located in Old Tbilisi, was created in the XIX century under the name of M. Vorontsov square. (M. Vorontsov (1782 - 1856) – he was a Russian statesman, Prince, Field Marshal, Vicar of the Caucasus and Commander of the Caucasian Special Corps in 1844-1854). In 1925, it was named after Marx⁶. Vorontsov aimed at establishing Russian and European rules in all aspects of life and strengthening Tsarist power in Georgia⁷.

Engels Street, which is currently L. Asatiani Street, is located in Sololaki, Old Tbilisi, and was built in XIX century as *Baghis* (garden) Street, after which it became Bebutovis Street - Bebutovi is a shortened version of V. Bebutishvili⁸ (V. Bebutishvili, 1791-1858 - general infantry of the Russian army, participated in numerous battles with the serving Governor of Georgia. In 1812, he participated in The Great Patriotic War and served as the Governor of Imereti in 1825 and Akhaltsikhe in 1828. In 1847-1857, he served as the civil governance head of Transcaucasia. He was born and died in Tbilisi). In 1922, the street was renamed after F. Engels (F. Engels together with K. Marx, was the founder of Scientific Communism and author of the Communist Manifesto⁹.

Lenin Street, which is currently M. Kostava Street, is located in Vere, Old Tbilisi. In the late middle ages, there was a road which was renamed the “Road to Russia” in the XIX century. In 1921, it was renamed in honor of Lenin, while he was still alive¹⁰.

A. Lunacharsky Street, which is currently R. Lagidze Street in Old Tbilisi, was created in the XIX century as Theatre Street, thereafter renamed as G. Evangulov Street (the mayor of Tbilisi from 1897-1901). In 1923 it was named after A. Lunacharsky¹¹. Lunacharsky (1875-1933) was a Soviet

⁵ Ibid p. 303.

⁶ Ibid p. 79.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid p. 21.

⁹ Ibid p. 281.

¹⁰ Ibid p. 100.

¹¹ Ibid p. 104.

Statesman, publicist, and a Commissioner for Education in the Soviet Union)¹².

M Kalinin Street, which is currently I. Javakhishvili Street, Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century as Nicholas Street (after Nicholas the First). In 1922, it was renamed after M. Kalinin¹³. M. Kalinin (1875-1946) was a member of the Communist party, and president of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union¹⁴.

G. Zinoviev Street, which is currently Borbalo Street, Mtatsminda, was created in the XIX century as Ketevan Turn. In 1923, it was renamed after G. Zinoviev until 1934 then renamed as Borbalo Street (Ibid, 34). G. Zinoviev (1883-1936) was an active revolutionary, then he was a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee (1921-1926) and later – an opposition figure. Eventually, he was prosecuted by the Soviet leadership¹⁵.

The Stalin Embankment is currently the Gamsakhurdia Embankment, and there is no exact data of street creation and renaming¹⁶.

P. Makharadze Street, which is currently G. Kikodze Street in Sololaki, Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century as Institute Street. In 1923, it was renamed after P. Makharadze¹⁷. P. Makharadze (1868-1941) was a Soviet statesman and writer. He was actively engaged in the fight for the establishment of Soviet governance in Georgia. He was the main organizer of the occupation of Georgia. He was a member of the Revolutionary Committee and, since 1938, Chairman of the Supreme Council Presidium of Soviet Georgia)¹⁸.

S. Orjonikidze Street, which is currently renamed after Tevdore Mgvdeli (a historical figure killed by the Ottomans in 1609) and located in the Didube district of Tbilisi, was created in the XIX century as Andria Street. In 1922, it was renamed after S. Orjonikidze and later as K. Marx

¹² Ibid p. 301.

¹³ Ibid p. 211.

¹⁴ Ibid p. 293.

¹⁵ Ibid p. 286.

¹⁶ Ibid p. 42.

¹⁷ Ibid p. 180.

¹⁸ Ibid p. 306.

Street, before it was renamed S. Orjonikidze Street again¹⁹ (S. Orjonikidze, 1886-1937, a Soviet Statesman and party figure, organizer of the occupation of Georgia. He held several state and political positions including First Secretary of the Transcaucasian Regional Committee)²⁰.

M. Tskhakaia Street, which is currently renamed after V. Beridze, is located in Sololaki, Old Tbilisi, and was established in the XIX century as Bebutovi Street. In 1923, it was renamed after M. Tskhakaia²¹ (M. Tskhakaia, - 1865-1950 - was a member of the Communist Party and Soviet statesman. He was also one of the founders of “*Mesame Dasi*” (the Third Generation) and Chairman of the Central Committee Presidium of Soviet Georgia²².

F. Dzerzhinsky Street, which is currently renamed after P. Ingorokva, and is located in Sololaki Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century as Peter Street (in honor of the 200th anniversary of the founding of St. Petersburg)²³. In 1923, it was renamed after L. Trotsky (L. Trotsky, 1879-1940, was an active revolutionary and major participant of the 1917 revolution. He was Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, head of the revolutionary committee, a member of the Politburo from 1919-1926. In 1927, he was expelled from the Communist Party and in 1929, he was exiled from the Soviet Union, and killed in Mexico by Soviet special forces)²⁴. In the 1930s, the street was renamed after F. Dzerzhinsky (F. Dzerzhinsky was a Polish revolutionist and Soviet state figure. He was Head and Organizer of the Soviet punitive agencies)²⁵.

G. Plekhanov Street, which is currently renamed after D. Agmashenebeli and located in Kukia, Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century as Mikheil Street. In 1918, it was renamed after G. Plekhanov²⁶ (G. Plekhanov - 1856-1918 – was a Russian theorist and

¹⁹ Ibid p. 87.

²⁰ Ibid p. 313.

²¹ Ibid p. 33.

²² Ibid p. 347.

²³ Ibid p. 92.

²⁴ Ibid p. 328.

²⁵ Ibid p. 349.

²⁶ Ibid p. 55.

Marxism propagandist, a literary critic. He was an active participant of Russia and the international workers' and social movements²⁷.

An analysis of the street renaming cases mentioned above reveals that in most cases the street names of the political elite were assigned to the central streets of Old Tbilisi while these individuals were still alive.

Also, it is noteworthy to discuss whose names were replaced as street names. In most cases these were the names of Russian Emperors, Nobleman, Governors of Caucasia and Generals of the Russian Army. They were replaced with the names of Soviet Statesmen and authors of Communist ideology. As is evident from the above mentioned, not all of them had a connection with Georgia, though assigning the names of Marx, Engels and Lenin to streets, squares and avenues was a characteristic feature throughout the whole Soviet space. Especially in Russia, many settlements were attempting to find a way to rename streets or even settlements in honor of Lenin. Assigning K. Marx's name was also a widespread practice and even today hundreds of streets, avenues and squares still bear this name in Russia²⁸). An additional topic for discussion is the time when the renaming occurred. Streets bearing the names of central figures were established at the time when the Soviet Union was being formed in 1922-1923. Taking into consideration that this process was conducted on a Union-wide scale, we may assume that this was one of the ways to influence local identity.

The streets bearing the names of Bolsheviks and revolutionists can be identified as a separate group. Particularly, this group includes such names as Otsdaekvsi Komisari, Kamo, Alaverdov, Ketskhoveli, Dumbadze, Dzeladze, Volodarsky, Kochetkov, Balmashev, Kaliaev, Babushkin, Bebel, Miasnikov, and Fioletov.

Otsdaekvsi Komisari Street (Twenty-Six Commissioners Street), which is currently renamed after H. Gonashvili, is located in Avlabari, Old Tbilisi, and was established in the XIX century as Khojavank Street (which is the name of church and cemetery located in this area)²⁹. In 1934, it was

²⁷ Ibid p. 316.

²⁸ See Federal address information system, <http://fias.nalog.ru/Public/SearchPage.aspx?SearchState=2>, (accessed 5.8.2015)

²⁹ Tbilisi: streets, avenues, squares. Tbilisi, 2008, p. 47.

named Otsdaekvsi Komisari street (Twenty-Six Commissioners, or they also known as Baku Commissioners – they fought for the establishment of Soviet governance and were shot in 1918.)³⁰.

Kamo Street, which is currently renamed after D. Uznadze and is located in Kukia, Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century and at the end of the century named as Nicholas Street. In 1922, it was named after Kamo³¹ (Kamo Ter-Petrosyan, 1882-1922, was a professional revolutionary. He participated in the workers' demonstrations and strikes organized by the Tbilisi committee. He carried out the expropriation of the State Treasury several times for the financial support of the Communist Party. He became Head of the Transcaucasian Council unit.³²

S. Alaverdov Square, which is currently renamed after L. Gudiashvili. and is located in Old Tbilisi, was established in the XVIII century and named Abasabad Square (Abasabad is historical name of Ganja the second-largest city in Azerbaijan). In 1923, it was named after S. Alaverdov³³ (S. Alaverdov -1888-1920 – was a member of the revolutionary movement in Georgia and Armenia. He was one of the leaders of the uprising in Armenia in May 1920. He was killed together with other revolutionists³⁴.

L. Ketskhoveli Street, which is currently renamed L. Gudiashvili Street and is located in Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century and named as Atamani³⁵ Street. In 1922, it was named after L. Ketskhoveli³⁶ (L. Ketskhoveli - 1876-1903 – was a professional revolutionist. He was the founder of one of the Leninist organizations of the RSDLP in the South Caucasus. He was killed in Metekhi prison.³⁷

L. Dumbadze Street, which is currently renamed after S. Dadiani, and located in Sololaki, Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century and

³⁰ Ibid p. 263.

³¹ Ibid p. 171.

³² Ibid p. 294.

³³ Ibid p. 49.

³⁴ Ibid p. 256.

³⁵ Ataman - appointed or elected heads of villages or the Cossack army with military, police and administrative functions in pre-revolution Russia.

³⁶ Tbilisi: streets, avenues, squares. Tbilisi, 2008, p. 49.

³⁷ Ibid p. 295.

named as A. Veliaminov Street³⁸ (A. Veliaminov -1785-1838 - was a lieutenant general of the Russian army, head of the Caucasian army main division)³⁹. In 1922, it was named as Dumbadze Street, (L. Dumbadze was a member of the Caucasian Regional Committee of RSDLP. He was the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the City Council. Later he became a victim of mass repression) and in 1932 as the Federation of Trans caucasia Street⁴⁰.

B. Dzneladze Street, which is currently renamed after Tabukashvili and located in Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century and named as Mesangreta Street (Sapper, entrenchment – some divisions were located on the street). In 1934, it was named after B. Dzneladze⁴¹ (B. Dzneladze - 1901-1923 – was one of the founders of the *Komsomol* of Georgia. He was a chairman of “Spartak” (an organization he had founded himself). He was then appointed Secretary of the Central Committee of the Young Communist League in 1920. The Republic Youth Palace was named in honor of Dzneladze.)⁴².

V. Volodarsky Street, which is currently renamed H. Abashidze Street and is located in the Vake-Saburtalo district of Tbilisi, was established in the 1930s and named Lviv Street, and thereafter renamed after V. Volodarsky⁴³ (V. Volodarsky– 1891-1918 – real name M. Goldstein, was an active participant of the Russian revolutionary movement. He was a member of the Central Committee Presidium. He was killed during demonstrations⁴⁴.

I. Kochetkov Street, which is currently renamed after A. Benashvili, and located in Kukia, Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century. In 1934, it was named after I. Kochetkov⁴⁵ (I. Kochetkov– 1877-1928 – was an active participant of the revolutionary movement. He participated in

³⁸ Ibid p. 55.

³⁹ Ibid p. 280.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid p. 83.

⁴² Ibid p. 349.

⁴³ Ibid p. 11.

⁴⁴ Ibid p. 284.

⁴⁵ Ibid p. 31.

workers' demonstrations and strikes in Baku. After the Sovietization of Georgia, he became a member of the Regional Control Commission and the Georgian Communist Party Central Control Commission⁴⁶.

S. Balmashev Street, which is currently renamed after V. Gabeskiria and is located in the Chughureti district of Tbilisi, was established in XIX century and named as a Trdato Street. In 1923, it was renamed after S. Balmashev⁴⁷ (S. Balmashev, 1882-1902, was a Russian revolutionary-terrorist. He was hanged for killing the Minister of Internal Affairs Sipiagin in Petersburg⁴⁸.

I. Kaliaev Street, which is currently renamed after Bishop Gabriel and located in Avlabari, Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century and named after P. Tsitsianov (P. Tsitsianov /Tsitsishvili – 1754-1806 – was the Infantry General of the Russian Army, Head of the Government in the Transcaucasia and head of the army. He was killed in Baku and buried in the Sioni Cathedral, in Tbilisi⁴⁹. In 1923, the street was named as I. Kaliaev (I. Kaliaev – 1877-1905 – a Russian revolutionary-terrorist, who was punished with the death penalty for killing the Governor of Moscow⁵⁰.

I. Babushkin Street, which is currently renamed after Peter Gruzinky, and located in the Gldani-Nadzaladevi district of Tbilisi, was established in the 1930s and named Imereti Street. In 1938, it was renamed after I. Babushkin⁵¹ (I. Babushkin -1873-1906 – a Russian revolutionary-terrorist, Bolshevik, and member of RSDLP (Russian Social Democratic Labor Party) Lenin called him "the pride of the party"⁵².

A. Bebel Street, which is currently renamed after Irakli II and located in Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century. The name of the street was changed several times. In the beginning, the street was named Governor's Square, thereafter as Exarch Street in 1885. In 1922, it was

⁴⁶ Ibid p. 298.

⁴⁷ Ibid p. 41.

⁴⁸ Ibid p. 261.

⁴⁹ Ibid p. 347.

⁵⁰ Ibid p. 293.

⁵¹ Ibid p. 49.

⁵² Ibid p. 261.

renamed A. Bebel Street⁵³ (A. Bebel - 1840-1913 – was a member of the German and International Workers' Movement and founder of The Second International⁵⁴.

A. Myasnikov Street, which is currently renamed after Vakhtang Gorgasali and located in Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century and given the names of Yerevan and Vorontsov Streets. In 1922, it was named as Komunaluri, thereafter as A. Myasnikov⁵⁵ (A. Miasnikov– 1886-1925 – was a Soviet Statesman and Party worker. He was the Editor of the newspaper “Zarya Vostok”. He died in a plane crash in Tbilisi⁵⁶.

I. Fioletov Street, which is currently renamed after Nikiphore Iribakhi and located in Avlabari, Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century and named as Petre-Pavle Street (it was near the Petre-Pavle Church)⁵⁷ (I. Fioletov – 1884-1918 – was a member of the Russian revolutionary movement and was shot as a Baku commissar⁵⁸.

As in the case of the previous group, there is the same tendency in this group - replacing the names of Russian Emperors, Nobleman, Governors of Transcaucasia and Generals of the Russian Army, also the name of persons connected to the history of Georgia, or to the religion with the names of ordinary revolutionists, Bolsheviks, and fighters for the establishment of Soviet power. In most cases, the names of the above-mentioned persons were assigned to streets located in the center of Tbilisi, however these were not main streets. There seems to be a link between centrality and the status of the persons whose names were assigned.

The next group includes the streets that are named in honor of historical figures that are recognized to have played an important role in the history of Georgia, like writers and public figures whose contribution to the people is considered as significant.

Z. Chichinadze Street, which is located in Mtatsminda, Old Tbilisi, was established in the 1830s and named as G. Rozen Street (1782-1841 – a

⁵³ Ibid p. 66.

⁵⁴ Ibid p. 263.

⁵⁵ Ibid p. 76.

⁵⁶ Ibid p. 306.

⁵⁷ Ibid p. 130.

⁵⁸ Ibid p. 333.

Russian military figure, infantry-general, Governor of the Caucasus and Commander of the Caucasian Special Corps, who fought against Caucasian highlanders)⁵⁹. In 1923, it was named after Z. Chichinadze (Z. Chichinadze - 1854-1931 – a public figure, researcher of Georgian literature and history, publisher. He contributed to the collection of Georgian manuscripts, books and in the publication of these materials. He was buried in the Mtatsminda Pantheon⁶⁰ .

I. Machabeli Street, which is located in Sololaki, Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century and named as *Baghi* (Garden) Street. In 1923, it was named after I. Machabeli⁶¹ (I. Machabeli - 1854-1898 – was a writer, publicist, translator, public figure, and member of the “Samocianeli”⁶² (Sixties), one of the founder of modern Georgian literary language. He is broadly known as the best translator of Shakespeare's works in Georgian. He left home and never returned in 1898⁶³.

Sulkhan-Saba Street which is located in Sololaki, Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century and named as Irakli Turn, thereafter as Freilin Street. In 1923, it was named after Sulkhan-Saba⁶⁴ (Sulkhan–Saba - 1658-1725 – was a writer, scientist, public figure, and played an important role in the history of Georgia)⁶⁵.

A. Tsereteli Street, which is currently G. Tabidze Street, and is located in Sololaki, Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century and named Gani Street (Senator Gani had possibly lived on that street)⁶⁶. In 1923, it was named after A. Tsereteli (1840 - 1915 – a public figure, one of the reformers of the Georgian literary language, member of the Tergdaleuli (the same as “Samotsianeli”)⁶⁷.

⁵⁹ Ibid p. 321

⁶⁰ Ibid p. 208.

⁶¹ Ibid p. 114.

⁶² “Samocianeli” - People who crossed the river Tergi and were educated in the Russian Empire in the 1860s

⁶³ Tbilisi: streets, avenues, squares. Tbilisi, 2008, pp. 303-304.

⁶⁴ Ibid p. 165.

⁶⁵ Ibid p. 313.

⁶⁶ Ibid p. 169.

⁶⁷ Ibid p. 350.

Vakhushti Bagrationi Street (Didube) was established in the XIX century. It was first named Sheremetev Street in 1898 (S. Sheremetev S – 1837-1896 – was the general-adjutant of the Russian army, count, governor of the Caucasus and Commander in Chief of the army in 1890-1896⁶⁸ then named as Vakhushti Bagrationi in 1923 (Vakhushti Bagrationi – 1696-1757 – a historian, geographer, cartographer, who collected important data about the population of Georgia, their traditions, culture etc., and a founder of the Moscow State University⁶⁹).

K. Marjanishvili Street, which is located in Kukia, Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century and named as Kirka Street. In 1921, it was named after Jean Jaurès (Jean Jaurès - 1859-1914 – a member of French and International Socialist Workers Movements and the author of the book “Socialist History”)⁷⁰. In 1938, it was named after K. Marjanishvili (K. Marjanishvili– 1872-1933 - Director, People's Artist, Georgian theater reformer. He worked in the cinema as well and educated a group of distinguished actors. He is buried at the Mtatsminda Pantheon⁷¹).

P. Melikishvili Street which is located in Vere, Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century and initially named as Tskneti Road. In 1924, it was renamed after P. Melikishvili⁷² (P. Melikishvili – 1850-1927 – was a chemist. He was one of the founders and the first Rector of Tbilisi State University in 1918, and the founder of Georgian Chemistry, he greatly contributed to the creation of Georgian terminology in Chemistry⁷³).

Shio Mghvimeli Street which is located in Vere, Old Tbilisi, was established in the XX century. It was initially named Ananuri Street. In 1923, it was renamed after Shio Mghvimeli⁷⁴ (Shio Mghvimeli - 1866-1933 – was one of the founders of Georgian children’s literature, an honored writer⁷⁵).

⁶⁸ Ibid p. 342.

⁶⁹ Ibid p. 283.

⁷⁰ Ibid p. 318.

⁷¹ Ibid p. 303.

⁷² Ibid p. 115.

⁷³ Ibid p. 306.

⁷⁴ Ibid p. 124.

⁷⁵ Ibid p. 309.

D. Kipiani Street, which is located in Mtatsminda, Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century. From the beginning, it was named after Kipiani ⁷⁶ (D. Kipiani 1814-1887 – was a public figure and the leader of the Tiflis Nobles. He was the Mayor of Tbilisi from 1876-1879 and one of the initiators and the first chairman of the Literacy Society of Georgia from 1879-1882. He fought against Tsarist russification and the colonial policy, and was exiled to Stavropol and treacherously murdered⁷⁷).

G. Tsereteli Street which is located in Avlabari, Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century and named after P. Kotlyarevsk (General P. Kotlyarevsk -1782-1852 – was an infantry-general of the Russian army, distinguished during the 1804-1813 Russian-Iranian war. He had lived on this particular street). In 1923, it was named after G. Tsereteli⁷⁸ (G. Tsereteli– 1842-1900 – was a writer, publicist and public figure. He was one of the leaders of the national-liberation movement of Georgia and greatly contributed to the Literacy Society⁷⁹).

The figures, whose names were originally on the streets chosen for renaming, were persons who played an important role in the history of Georgia, and all of them fought for strengthening national identity. So, if one takes into account that the Soviet Government aimed to clear ethnic and cultural lines between Soviet people to create “Homo Sovieticus,” it looks logical that they would introduce such a policy in their street naming process – renaming these streets in honor of Communist leaders (such as Lenin, Marx, Ordzhonikidze etc.) and Georgian public figures simultaneously. At first, the Soviet Government was trying to mix local and Soviet identity. And then, step by step, replace it with the Soviet one. At the same time, it may be considered as an aim of the Soviet Government to overcome the Tsarist past as well.

A separate group we discussed contains the so called “functional streets” - streets showing a certain function (streets from this group were given certain names according to the specific activity taking place on that

⁷⁶ Ibid p. 183.

⁷⁷ Ibid p. 340.

⁷⁸ Ibid p. 202.

⁷⁹ Ibid p. 350.

particular street). Particularly, this group includes names such as Kramiti (tile), Mitingi (Demonstration), Saeklesio (Church), Turbina (Turbine), Ingineri (engineer), Metalurgia (metallurgy), Ortklmavali (Locomotive), Zeinkali (locksmith).

Streets with functional names are mostly located in the suburbs of Tbilisi (Gldani, Nadzaladevi) and most of them were established in the XX century.

Kramiti (tile) Street, which is currently renamed after D. Beriashvili and located in the Didube district of Tbilisi, was created in the XX century. In 1934, it was named in honor of the tile factory located on it⁸⁰.

Mitingi (demonstration) Street, which is located in the Gldani district of Tbilisi was created in the XX century. It was previously named Saeklesio (Church) Street, and later as Mitingi Street (demonstrations were regularly held on that street)⁸¹.

Turbina (Turbine) Street, which is currently M. Khvingia Street and located in the Gldani district of Tbilisi, was established in the 1930s. The name was given for a mechanical workshop located there⁸².

The Ingineri (engineer) Street, which is currently S. Virsaladze Street and located in Old Tbilisi, was created in the XIX century. The name was given in honor of an engineering division located there⁸³.

There are also some streets like Metalurgia (Metallurgy), Ortklmavali (Locomotive), Zeinkali (locksmith) etc.⁸⁴.

All the streets in this group were appeared in the 1930s and are located in the suburbs of Tbilisi. There is no exact information explaining why the street had such names, but it is possible that some divisions or factories had been located there or they were residential areas assigned to workers in a specific field. I think that the selection of such names for these streets is somehow related to the process of industrialization.

⁸⁰ Ibid p. 33.

⁸¹ Ibid p. 122.

⁸² Ibid p. 209.

⁸³ Ibid p. 77.

⁸⁴ Tbilisi: streets, avenues, squares. Tbilisi, 2008

Another group for street renaming consists of streets established in the XX century and mainly located in the suburbs of the city - Gldani-Nadzaladevi, Isani-Samgori. The names of these streets mainly express the ideology of Communist, social and class-related belonging. For example: Industrialization, collectivization, komkavshiri (Komsomol), Aghmaskomi Streets (Executive Committee), Komunisturi Shromis Street (Communist Labor), Cooperation (Kooperatsia) Street, Proletari (proletarian) Street, Stakhanov street, Tsitelarmieli street (Red Army), etc.

The analysis of the idea behind the renaming practice related to the ideology, social and class-related belonging reveals that streets with names signifying industrialization and collectivization were created in the 1930s. Collectivization was the most important reform of the Soviet Government and faced many difficulties. Although the reform ended in around 1932, it took quite a long time before the results were visible. So, I think it is very symbolic that the name Collectivization was given in 1934. The name Industrialization was given in the same period. Together with these streets there was also the establishment of Khutsledi Street (the street of the Five-Year Plan - The first Five-Year Plan was implemented between 1928 and 1932). Such street names emphasized the importance of the reforms and showed how the Soviet Government tried to have an influence on their citizens, creating acceptable and unacceptable things. The street of Komkavshiri (Komsomol – the All-Union Leninist Young Communist league, which was the youth division of the Communist Party) was established in the XIX century and named Komsomol in 1923.

The street of Kolektivizacia (Collectivization) which is currently E. Bejanishvili Street and located in the Gldani district of Tbilisi, was established in the 1930s. In 1934, it was named as Kolektivizatsia (Collectivization) Street⁸⁵.

Proletari (proletarian) Street, which is currently E. Zakaraia Street and located in the Gldani district of Tbilisi, was established in the 1930s. In 1934, it was named Proletari Street⁸⁶.

⁸⁵ Ibid p. 33.

⁸⁶ Ibid p. 79.

Tsitelarmieli (Red Army) Street, which is currently Z. Anjafaridze Street and located in the Isani-Samgori district of Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century and named Saldati Street (Russian soldier – the name was given because of some divisions of the Russian army located on the street). In 1930s, it was named Tsitelarmieli Street (Russian army divisions were changed to Red Army divisions)⁸⁷.

A. Stakhanov Street, which is currently S. Ksovreli and located in the Gldani district of Tbilisi, was established in the XX century and initially named Elmavali (Locomotives) Street. In 1938, it was named after A. Stakhanov⁸⁸ (A. Stakhanov– 1905-1977 – was a miner and a Hero of Socialist Labor,⁸⁹ he had mined 102 tons of coal in less than 6 hours. After that, the Stakhanovite movement began during the second Five-Year Plan in 1935 as a new stage of socialist competition).

A more interesting case in this group is presented by Otsdakhuti Tebervali Street (February Twenty Five Street, commemorating the day of the occupation of Democratic Republic of Georgia in 1921), which is currently G. Tovstonogov Street and located in Old Tbilisi. The street was established in the XIX century. In 1923, it was named Otsdakhuti Tebervali Street. It worth noting that later this street was renamed as May Twenty Six Street (the Independence Day of Georgia)⁹⁰.

Khuti Dekemberi Street (December Five) appeared in the XIX century and previously named Saldati (Soldier) Street, since retired soldiers lived here. Thereafter it was named as Reiteri Street (A. Reiter –was a Tbilisi commandant and Lieutenant-General). The name was changed again to Germaneli (German) Street in 1922 and thereafter to Khuti Dekemberi, in 1939 on the occasion of the adoption of the Constitution of the Soviet Union on December 5, 1936⁹¹.

The above mentioned group describes the main aspects of communist ideology and the long-term goals of the Government.

⁸⁷ Ibid p. 20.

⁸⁸ Ibid p. 180.

⁸⁹ Ibid p. 325.

⁹⁰ Ibid p. 170.

⁹¹ Ibid p. 194.

A separate group contains the streets named after women. The women in the honor of whom streets have been renamed are the following: Eristavi, Gabashvili, Clara Zetkin, and Gelfman.

Anastasia Eristavi Khoshtaria Street (which still bears this name) is located in Old Tbilisi and was established in the XIX century, initially named after G. Artsuni⁹² Grigor Ereimiayi Artsuni, 1845-92, was an Armenian publicist, writer, and critic living in Tbilisi. There was a theater named after him. He was a propagandist of Greater Armenia and demanded the establishment of a university in Tbilisi where the media of instruction would be Russian and Armenian⁹³. In 1922, it was named after Anastasia (Taso) Abashidze (1881-1958, actress, People's Artist. She starred in the movie *Khanuma*) and from 1930 it was given the name Anastasia Eristavi-Khoshtaria Street (Anastasia Eristavi-Khoshtaria (1868-1951) was a writer and public figure. She wrote children's stories and her novels reflected the life of Georgian society. She was a defender of women's rights⁹⁴.

Ekaterine Gabashvili Street, which is located in Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century. Previously, the manor of the Gabashvilis was located there, so it retained the name to a certain extent. In 1923, it was named after Ekaterine Gabashvili⁹⁵. Ekaterine Gabashvili – 1851-1938 – was a writer and public figure who had a big role in developing Georgian children's literature⁹⁶.

Clara Zetkin Street, which is currently Tsinamdzgvrishvili Street located in Kukia, Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century and named as Elisabed Street. In 1922, it was named after C. Zetkin⁹⁷. Clara Zetkin, 1857–1933, was a German Marxist theorist, activist, and advocate for women's rights. In 1911, she organized the first International Women's Day⁹⁸.

⁹² Ibid p. 67.

⁹³ Ibid pp. 258-259.

⁹⁴ Ibid p. 281.

⁹⁵ Ibid p. 41.

⁹⁶ Ibid p. 268.

⁹⁷ Ibid p. 202.

⁹⁸ Ibid p. 347.

Gelfman Street, which is currently Gelati Street and located in Old Tbilisi, was established in the XIX century and named as Surb-Minasini Street, bearing the name of the local church. In 1923, it was named after Gelfman. In 1938, it was renamed Gelati Street⁹⁹. Gesya Mirokhovna Gelfman (1855-1882) was a Russian Revolutionary terrorist (*Narodnik*) who participated in the assassination of the Emperor Alexander the II¹⁰⁰.

Like in the case of the streets named in honor of Georgian public figures, the streets named after women were a case of ethnic and Soviet elements mixed on purpose by the Soviet Government. Besides, the group presents the gender situation in Soviet Tbilisi.

The Main Square and Avenue of the city also need to be examined in terms of name changes.

Freedom Square, which is located in Mtatsminda, Old Tbilisi, is the main Square of the city. It carried the name Yerevan Square in 1828-1918. In 1918-21, during the time of the existence of the First Democratic Republic of Georgia, the place took the name “Freedom Square.” In 1922, after becoming the capital of the Transcaucasian Federation, the Square was renamed to Transcaucasian Federation Square. In 1938, it was renamed after Lavrent Beria and in 1953 after Lenin. In 1990, it was reassigned the name Freedom Square¹⁰¹.

Rustaveli Avenue, which is located in Old Tbilisi, was named as Golovin Avenue since around 1841. In 1918, it was renamed after Rustaveli. The name change was requested by the people demonstrating against Turkey in 1918. It was an initiative of the young writers and poets of that time. The city officials could not refuse the demand of the protesters and the name of this avenue has not changed since then¹⁰².

It is symbolic that the main square of the city was named Freedom Square – it was always associated with the Georgian struggle for independence. So, in 1922, after Soviet power was established in Tbilisi, it

⁹⁹ Ibid pp. 42-43.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid p. 270.

¹⁰¹ Ibid pp. 83-86.

¹⁰² Ibid pp. 145-148.

was immediately renamed as the Transcaucasian Federation Square. The name totally excluded any connection to the local, national, cultural, or historical values. As for the main avenue, it may be considered like the above-mentioned streets as one named after a historical figure – Rustaveli, who belongs to the remote past of Georgia, and was a great intellectual of his time, but not a political figure.

Besides the groups discussed, other tendencies were revealed in the street-naming process. One of them is that the streets were given names indicating ethnicity, such as streets named German, Greek, Tatar, Russian, and Armenian. Streets used to be given the names of the capitals of Soviet Republics and socialist states. Particularly, streets were given such names as Kiev, Baku, Moscow, Yerevan, Riga, Ljubljana, Tashkent and Budapest. Another tendency was seen in streets with geographical terms, using the names of geographic places in Georgia. Some of the names did not change and a part of them were named in the 1920s. For example Batumi Street, named after city in the Western part of Georgia, did not change¹⁰³. Borjomi Street, also named for a city in Georgia, did not change¹⁰⁴. Other streets that remained the same were Algeti Street (a river in the Eastern part of Georgia), Shavnabada Street (a mountain in the Eastern part of Georgia), and Zugdidi Street (a city in the Western part of Georgia). The following names were given to streets in the 1920s– Ananuri Street, (a village in the Eastern part of Georgia), Afkhazeti (Abkhazia) Street (a historical-geographical part of Georgia) Gori Street (a city in the Eastern part of Georgia), Natakhtari Street (a village in Mtskheta) etc.

Thus, in case of each group, the symbolic changes are obvious in the street naming process. In most cases, the names of Russian Emperors, Nobleman, Caucasus Governors and Generals of the Russian army, were replaced by the names Soviet Statesmen and authors of Communist ideology, ex., Bebutov was replaced by Engels, Cherkezov by Marx, Vorontsov by Marx, Evangulov by Lunacharski etc. At the same time, there were several cases of naming streets after distinguished Georgian figures that fought against russification and for independence of Georgia.

¹⁰³ Ibid p. 27.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid p. 34.

During the Soviet period, at least until the Second World War, it seemed that the concept of “toponymization” of the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi, had several conceptual directions: There was a tendency to 1. Use anthroponyms – more than 90% of names of streets are anthroponyms; 2. Reduce the historical past of Georgia, Tbilisi, in particular (there was almost a complete absence of names with a historical reference, except, perhaps, Rustaveli, Vakhushti Bagrationi (1696-1757), Sulokhan-Saba (1658-1725), and D. Kipiani (1814 -1887), all of whom were intellectuals. There was a complete absence of names of political, military and government officials (the names of the Georgian kings, generals, real and mythical heroes of the early and classical Middle Ages), and an absence of even a hint of important historical dates, actions, events for Georgia and Tbilisi, except, perhaps, May 26 from the period of modern history. It can be said that such use of toponyms deprived Tbilisi of all of its historical past and began the study of history of Georgia from the Soviet period. 3. Replacing Tsarist values with Revolutionary, and Soviet ones. 4. Ideologizing of toponyms, primarily through the introduction of the names of revolutionary leaders, as well as symbols of Soviet life (Stakhanov, Komunisturi Shromis, Tsitelarmieli, industrialization, collectivization, etc., which later became a symbol of Soviet repression). This helped establish the new values of Soviet power, but not of Communist ideology. Since the new names of the places were actively used in everyday life (addresses, maps, street names hanging in the streets, inscriptions on stamps, envelopes, urban transport, was mentioned in the names of schools, etc.), naturally and without too much effort, it damped the Georgian historical past in the minds of the citizens of Tbilisi giving priority to Plekhanov, Marx, Lenin, 5 December etc. The process of street naming, being supported institutionally, played a role in strengthening the Soviet and international identity of the citizens of Soviet Tbilisi.

**Կոմունիստական գաղափարախոսության արտացոլումը
Խորհրդային Թբիլիսիի փողոցների
տեղանվանաբանության մեջ (1922-1939)**

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Փողոցների անվանումները մեծապես արտացոլում են Խորհրդային երկրի գաղափարախոսության և ազգային ինքնության էությունը: Կոմունիստական իշխանությունը պետական կառավարման վերահսկողության պայմաններում խրախուսում էր իր գաղափարախոսությունը փողոցների անվանացանկի միջոցով նաև: Հոդվածը Խորհրդային Վրաստանի օրինակով, ինչպես նաև հիմնվելով մայրաքաղաք Թբիլիսիի վերաբերյալ նյութերի վրա կներկայացնի 1922-39 թթ. տեղանվանափոխության առանձնահատկությունները. անվանափոխությունները, կամ նոր փողոցների հիմնումը: