

OVERCOMING OR FORGETTING? PUBLIC DEBATE ABOUT SOVIET SYMBOLS AND MONUMENTS IN TBILISI

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Abstract

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the fate of the totalitarian communist heritage was widely discussed in independent Georgia. This paper seeks to answer the following questions through a Georgian lens: Does visualization of the past promote the formation of a new collective memory? Does this process imply remembering or forgetting the past, deconstructing or preserving it? How was the Soviet past reconsidered in Georgia? This study presents the complex and controversial processes of overcoming the Soviet past and constructing a new narrative of the "shared past" as a basis for the formation of a new Georgian identity. This study is based on the analysis of monuments, symbols, and buildings, which are located in the central part of Tbilisi from Rustaveli Avenue to Liberty square.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the fate of the totalitarian communist heritage was widely discussed in independent Georgia. As in other Central and Eastern European countries, analyzing and evaluating the socialist past begun when the independent state was formed. Should the Soviet Union remain in monuments and in the facades of buildings, should they be moved to museums, or should they disappear altogether? Does visualization of the past promote the formation process of a new collective memory? Does this process imply remembering or forgetting the past, or

deconstructing and preserving it? Certainly, different countries have differing answers to this phenomenon.

This paper discusses the Georgian answer. Particularly, it considers how the Soviet past was reviewed in Georgia via analysing the complex and controversial process of overcoming the Soviet past: promoting a new memory and constructing a new narrative of the "shared past" as a basis for the formation of new Georgian identity. This study observes monuments and buildings, which are located in central Tbilisi, from Rustaveli Avenue to Liberty square. It can be explained as follows: Architecture and monumental sculpture are perceived to have a significant advantage compared to other fields as they represent a declaration of the people's mentality, while in a narrow sense, it is a political statement.

*"Whatever this statement could be, architectural and sculptural objects intervene in our lives; they change the huge decoration in which we live, change our micro world and, therefore, our worldview and even our subconscious"*¹

This explains why the debates regarding monuments were so prominent not only in Georgia but in other countries as well.

Therefore, the research question could be formulated as follows: how was the Soviet past reconsidered in Georgia?

After gaining independence, Georgia faced a plethora of problems including (but not limited to) civil war, ethnic conflicts and economic collapse, and an over all identity crisis. Representation of the past and history is one of the most important issues of identity construction process.

As the modern French historian Pierre Nora argues, knowledge of the past defines our present identity:

"Over the last twenty or twenty-five years anywhere in the world, the attitude of all social and ethnic groups toward the past has changed substantially: criticism of official versions of history, bringing to the forefront previously forgotten or hidden sides of historical process, "returning back" the stolen history, "cult of roots", growing attention to

¹¹"New Georgian Monumentality and blank Transcriptions," December 5, 2010, <<http://www.24hours.ge/weekend/story/11875-akhali-qartuli-monumentalizmi-datsarieli-transkriptsiebi>> [accessed 12.10.2016]

*memorisation, "revenge on the past"... The world was flooded with memories; devotion towards the real or imagined past became closely linked to the collective consciousness, memory, and identity."*²

According to Zaza Shatirishvili, there are two distinguishable phases in the process of formation of the "new memory": 1) construction of new memory through the "revenge on the past," and 2) construction of new places of memory aimed at the formation of civil identity. Both approaches have been used by the different governments in the independent Georgia.³

Historical Overview

As early as 1964, the magazine "Dzeglis Megobari" was issued in Georgia, in which historical and cultural monuments in different parts of the country were presented. The magazine mainly focused on architectural monuments, not sculptures.⁴ In the 1970s, the issue of protection of monuments garnered mass attention in Georgia. Vladimir Vardosanidze, a prominent specialist in urban studies in Georgia, suggest that Eduard Shevardnadze's leadership directed the youth population's energy to monument protection. The slogan "No monument without a chef!" was put into practice. "Society for the Protection of Monuments" became more active; as the number of its members increased, lottery tickets were printed, and monument defenders enjoyed different benefits and privileges.⁵

By the 1980s, the "Soviet Identity" was seemingly firmly established. Therefore, the scale of constructing new monuments to the Soviet public figures decreased. As a result of "Perestroika," the opportunity appeared as

²Нора, П. "Всемирноеторжествопамяти". *Память о войне 60 лет спустя. Россия, Германия, Европа*. М., 2005, с. 391.

³Shatirishvili, Z. Places of memory and place of the philosopher, <http://www.nplg.gov.ge/gsdll/cgi-bin/library.exe?e=d-00000-00---off-0civil2--00-1---0-10-0--0---0direct-10---4-----0-11--10-ka-50---20-about---00-3-1-00-0-0-01-1-OutfZz-8-00&a=d&cl=CL1.10&d=HASH01f2afaba8ab215fa4f09f5c.5.3> (accessed 11.11.2016)

⁴Kordzakhia, I. "Our society is a brief overview of past years", *DzeglisMegobari*, Tbilisi, 1964, N2, p.36.

⁵Vardosanidze, Vl. "Understanding the Soviet past. Discussions 2011." Tbilisi, 2012, p.86.

a way to revise the past and discuss previously forbidden issues.⁶ "Historical truth" became a subject of reconsideration where the past became one of the main spheres of interest for the national liberation movement: "cult of roots" gained significant meaning. As early as 1987, a completely unexpected anti-Soviet action took place in Tbilisi: the grave of Philippe Makharadze – a prominent figure of early Soviet times – was blown up at the Mtatsminda pantheon, which has existed in Tbilisi since 1929 in the Mama Davit (father David) Church yard. Georgian public figures, writers, scholars, national heroes are buried there.⁷

Monuments dedicated to Lenin gradually left the public space. This process began in 1990 when statue of Lenin was removed from Tbilisi's central square. In the same year, the sculptural composition "Shroma, Metsniereba, Teknika" ("Labor, Science, Technic") – which was erected in 1958 on Rustaveli Avenue, in front of the Government Palace– was deconstructed, as well as monuments of Soviet leaders over time such as Sergei Kirov (1990,) Boris Dzeladze (1990,) Rosa Luxemburg (1991,) and Lado Ketskhoveli (1998.) It was a protest against the Soviet regime.⁸

The Parliament Building

The Parliament building at Rustaveli Avenue changed its function several times. Until the 1860s, it hosted the Caucasian army military base. In the 1859 commemoration of the Shamir's capture, the square was named after Gunib. Later on, the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral was built there and was known as the military Soboro for commemorating the Russian Empire's victory in the Caucasian Wars. In 1921, a nurse and a Tbilisi University student named Maro Makashvili, and the nine Cadets who died in the battle against the Red Army near Tbilisi, were buried in the Soboro

⁶Gvakharia, G. "Perestroika"-20, 17.04.2016, <http://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/1546483.html> (accessed 30.03.2017)

⁷Nozadze, N. "what can you see on Mtatsminda?" http://mtawminda.blogspot.com/2008/12/blog-post_3716.html 16.12.2008 (accessed 24.03.2017)

⁸Kurtsikashvili M. Culture: Regimes and Sculptures. "I am Georgian, I am Sculptor.!", 2010. <<http://7days.ge/index2.php?newsid=318>> (accessed 08.11.2016)

yard. In 1934, according to Lavrenti Beria's order, Soboro was deconstructed, and the construction of the Government building took place. The project was owned, designed, and executed by architects Kokorin and Lezhava. The top half of the building was completed in 1938, while the lower portion was finished in 1953. The Parliament building became the epicentre of Georgian political processes. The April 9, 1989, tragedy took place in front of the building. Two years later, in this same historical building where the Supreme Council of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic worked, the independence restoration of Georgia was declared on April 9, 1991. During the Tbilisi Civil War, insurgent Prime Minister Tengiz Sigua introduced an ultimatum to President Zviad Gamsakhurdia with the demand to leave the Parliament building; otherwise, they would attack the building. In Sigua's words, this cursed building should have been destroyed and a Church should have been built there.⁹ The building was significantly damaged. In 2003, the Parliament building underwent significant developments due to the Rose revolution. After the restoration, the building regained its function: until 2012, the Parliament of Georgia worked there.¹⁰ After the Rose Revolution, Parliament was moved to Kutaisi. The external facade of the building at the Rustaveli Avenue location was brought into the limelight because of the Soviet symbols; discussion of the attitude toward them is analyzed below.

The Building of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism (IML)

The façade of the building of the former Institute of Marxism-Leninism (IML) now serves as the front door of the "Millennium Biltmore" hotel. The building of the former Institute of Marxism-Leninism (IML) could be considered as a classic example of how political interests could influence the fate of a particular building, not withstanding its historical and aesthetic importance.

⁹Tengiz Sigua's ultimatum to President Gamsakhurdia, "Tbilisi Civil war". Georgian TV. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6OdxkJ8HzM8Y>outobe, 21.11.2015

¹⁰Elisashvili, A.. *How Tbilisi has been changed?* BakurSulakauri Publishing House, 2013, p. 112-114.

The history of the IML building began in 1934; three years before, in 1931, the Institute for Study the Scientific Heritage of Marx and Engels, and the Institute of Vladimir Lenin were united, and the Institute of Marx, Engels, and Lenin was founded.

In 1933, Lavrenti Beria initiated the establishment of the Institute of Stalin, aimed at studying Bolshevik Party history in the Caucasus and Stalin's contribution in these developments. In 1934, the building's construction began at the corner of Rustaveli Avenue and Kursants' street. Eventually, the Institute was renamed as the Marx-Engels-Stalin Institute. In 1938, the construction was completed. The aforementioned Institute, the Tbilisi branch of Lenin's Museum, and the Party archive were housed there.¹¹

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, in 1992-1995, the Parliament of Georgia occupied the building. On August 25, 1995, the Constitution of Independent Georgia was adopted there. Later, the Constitutional Court operated in the building. In 2007, the building was transferred to private investors due to damage-related reasons. In 2016, it became the hotel "Millennium Biltmore," which belongs to the Sheikh Mubarak Al Nahyan of The United Arab Emirates.¹²

As an architect, Vladimer Vardosanidze considers, the IML building is a classical example of how architecture and ideology are intertwined. From his perspective, the building is one of the most interesting cases for two main reasons: (1) it was a victim of the Bolshevik regime itself, and (2) it became a victim of the "monument-fighters"¹³ in the Soviet period. It fell under the Soviet repressions in terms of the merging architectural styles, which entails Stalin's empire-style front façade of the building built on the rear facade of the constructivist style. Bas-reliefs on the facades of the building, which were decorated by famous Georgian sculptors Jacob

¹¹Elisashvili, A.. *How Tbilisi has been changed?* BakurSulakauri Publishing House, 2013, p.141-143.

¹²"The hotel "Millennium Biltmore" will be opened in the nearest future in Tbilisi", [www.bpi.ge](http://bpi.ge). July 13, 2016. <http://bpi.ge/index.php/tbilisshi-sastumro-milenium-biltmori-uakhloes-periodshi-gaikhsneba> (accessed 08.11.2016)

Nikoladze and Tamar Abakelia, did not fit in the constructivist style either. Sculptures named “From the History of the Transcaucasian Bolshevik Organizations,” and “Peaceful Construction in the Soviet Union” were created by Nikoladze in 1934-1936, whereas the figures on the frieze (“The Demonstration in Batumi,” “The Industry of Georgia,” “Agriculture in Georgia”, “October in Georgia,” and “Happy Life” (1936-1937) belonged to Tamar Abakelia. These sculptural compositions were damaged in 1990 during the national movement period. At present, there are several compositions preserved, although they are not maintained in their initial shape.

The Freedom Square

From the beginning of the 19th Century, the square in the center of Tbilisi, currently named Freedom Square, played an essential role in the memory formation process in Georgia. Its name changed several times.

Until 1801, Freedom Square was called “Garetubani” (“outside district,”) which reveals that it was a suburb. In different times, it was also informally known as “Sheshisubani” (“Firewood District,”) and “Shtabis moedani” (“Headquarters square.”) In 1828, the Russian army under the command of Colonel Paskevich, released Yerevan from Persian garrison. To celebrate this fact, the square was named after Paskevich-Erevanski. In 1917, immediately after the overthrow of Nicholas II, the Revolutionary Party leaders decided to name it Freedom Square.¹⁴

In 1922, the Bolshevik government renamed the square as “Zakfederation Square” to celebrate the creation of the Transcaucasian Federation. In 1934, it was decided to erect the monument of Lenin there. In 1940, the Square was named after Lavrenti Beria. In 1953, after the execution of Beria, the Square was renamed again as Lenin’s Square.

It could be assumed that the Square is perceived as an “Imagined” center, from where political messages have been delivered to society.

Monument to Vladimir Lenin

¹⁴Elisashvili, A.. *How Tbilisi has been changed?* BakurSulakauri Publishing House, 2013, p. 68-71.

In 1934, the newspaper "Komunisti" announced the following:

"This is how the monumental statue of Lenin, which will be erected at the Zakfederation Square in Tiflis will look like. The foundation of the monument will form a great platform for [a] few dozen of people. The monument will be built from hewn marble."¹⁵

In 1934, a platform where Lenin's monument would have been erected was constructed, but the statue was not erected until 1956. Earlier, in 1950, the platform was deconstructed. Symbolically, a seven meter-high statue of the Great Leader was unveiled the day before Vladimir Lenin's 86th anniversary (April 21st.)

As early on as the period of "Perestroika" policy, when the Soviet restrictions were considerably softened, "the struggle against monuments" increased. In 1990, the aforementioned monument to Lenin was demolished. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, during the Zviad Gamsakhurdia presidency, the title of the Freedom Square was restored. This could be assessed as an attempt of stressing the Square's symbolic meaning and "bridging the present and past." A concept of "discursive continuity" offered by Eviatar Zerubavel could be applied as well, which implies that reconstruction of the old name could refer to connecting with the past. In this case, it was aimed at "overcoming" the Soviet memory and forming a new one. Political forces often use history in order to legitimize their power.

During Eduard Shevardnadze's presidency, symbols as ideological messages for transferring information garnered less public attention. "Speaking with the public through Symbols" started after the Rose Revolution of 2003 when the new government tried to distance itself from the old one in efforts to build the new Georgian state. Uncoincidentally, on November 23, 2006, the St. George Statue known as the Liberty Monument was erected at Liberty Square. At the place of Vladimir Lenin's monument, the statue was considered as a symbol of freedom and victory over the enemy. After the 2012 elections, the discussion regarding the afore

¹⁵Elisashvili, A. Liberty square, February 12, 2011,<
<http://sovlab.ge/ka/blog/freedom-square-history-by-aleksandre-elisashvili-from-the-soviet-tbilisi-project-sovlab>>(accessed 24.05.2017)

mentioned monument was initiated in the social network at-large. The poll was conducted on “forum.ge,” and the question was formulated as follows: “Should the monument be maintained at the Liberty Square?” 414 people participated in the survey, and the votes distributed as follows: a) The monument should be taken away from Liberty Square – 23.43%; b) It should be moved to another place - 11.35%; and c) The monument should be maintained at the same place - 65.22%.¹⁶ Respondents considered that monument as having no aesthetic value – as one of the users mentioned, “This monument looks like bijouterie.” This topic was also discussed from the Orthodox Christian Church perspective. Some people mentioned that the Orthodox Church does not accept the erection of monuments of Saints. Supporters of maintaining the monument stressed that the main point was replacing Lenin’s monument should be completed with the one that highlights the idea of freedom; that is why it should stay at Liberty Square. It can be assumed that the political meaning of the statue was more important than the aesthetic one.

Museum of Occupation

The Museum of Occupation is located on Rustaveli Avenue, in the Simon Janashia Tbilisi State Museum building. The Museum hosts approximately 3,000 exhibits, which depict the periods occupied by the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921,) and occupation by Bolshevik Russia, anti-Soviet struggle, and the National Liberation Movement (1921-1990.) Photo, audio, and video materials, as well as, manuscripts are on display.¹⁷ According to Mikheil Saakashvili's (the President of Georgia at the time) statement at the opening ceremony, "This museum is devoted to the great patriot Kakutsa Cholokashvili and his brothers-in-arms. This is dedicated to the many underground organizations,

¹⁶ Tbilisi Public Forum.

27.10.2012 <https://forum.ge/?f=29&showtopic=34454510&st=60> (accessed 31.03.2017)

Museum of Occupation website www.archive.security.gov.ge.

<http://archive.security.gov.ge/OLD_SITE_TEMP/okupaciis.php> (accessed 12.11.2016)

which had been created during the Soviet years. This is dedicated to the priesthood, the best part of which was annihilated. This museum is dedicated to my great-grandfather Nikusha Tsereteli, who was deported to one of the camps in Siberia for many years."¹⁸

With regards to the memory construction process, the importance of the Museum lies in its educational function. February 25, 2010 was officially declared as a Day of Remembrance of the Soviet occupation.

Soviet symbols

The problem of Soviet symbols sparks heated debates. Attitudes toward these places of memory frequently cause protest in Georgian society, caused by the fear of memory loss.¹⁹

In 2009, the minority party Parliament members under Gia Tortladze initiated a law that consists of several parts: Law of Lustration (place working limits for former authorities of the Communist Party in the public space,) and the Prohibition of totalitarian symbols, which was controversial. Scientific and political elites were the most active participants of the discussion. Before the adoption of the law, it was discussed at the HBS Center, Caucasian House, and at the Club of Historians.²⁰ The Association of Young Lawyers also expressed their perspective. Criticism was caused by the vague, unspecified content of the law: it was unclear whether or not the Soviet symbols prohibited from the public space or the private sector would become part of the norm. Eventually, the law was limited to public space. It is important to mention

¹⁸The day of Soviet occupation and Museum of occupation. February 25, 2011
<<http://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/2320441.html>>(accessed 12.11.2016)

¹⁹Shatirishvili, Z. Places of memory and place of the philosopher,
<<http://www.nplg.gov.ge/gsdll/cgi-bin/library.exe?e=d-00000-00---off-0civil2--00-1---0-10-0---0---0direct-10---4-----0-11--10-ka-50---20-about---00-3-1-00-0-0-01-1-0utfZz-8-00&a=d&cl=CL1.10&d=HASH01f2afaba8ab215fa4f09f5c.5.3>>(accessed 11.11.2016)

²⁰History club(ზეგმეთ გიწვეროს Club of Historians).Should we fithg against Soviet symbols? November 10, 2010.
<<http://geohistoryclub.blogspot.com/2010/11/blog-post.html>>(accesed 16.02.2017)

that the wider society did not participate in the discussion about Soviet symbols. In an interview with "Radio Tavisupleba," Historian Lasha Bakradze mentions that the media was inactive in this discussion; it did not pose questions and did not promote expression of alternative view points. Mark Mullen, the chairman of "Transparency International -Georgia" considers that in this case, the discussion is more important than the law itself; there should have been a public debate on the issue, but the Georgian community is not accustomed to discussing decisions, which are made by microgroups.²¹

Finally, on May 31, 2011, the Georgian Parliament adopted "The Charter on Liberty," which came into force on January 1, 2012. "The purpose of this law is to take preventive measures against communist and fascist ideologies, to eliminate totalitarian symbols, buildings, monuments, names of streets, avenues, villages, and cities. Apart from it, prohibition of totalitarian and communist propaganda is a matter of significance."²² The law also aims at promoting the efficient functioning of Georgian legislation and legal norms, and at strengthening national security. Taking preventive measures against communist and fascist ideologies is vital.

Mark Mullen and Lasha Bakradze use opposing terms while discussing Soviet symbols: "forgetting history" (Mark Mullen) versus "overcoming history"(Lasha Bakradze.) As Lasha Bakradze implies, for overcoming history, it is important to recognize the fact of the collaboration of the Georgian society with the Soviet power. This makes possible to avoid the attempts of certain political parties to use history for legitimization of their purposes. Mark Mullen points out that the commission was created at the Ministry of Internal Affairs for decision-making on totalitarian symbols. From his perspective, this could be

²¹Chaganava, D. Communism in the Humans heads, June 2, 2011, <<http://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/24213165.html>>(accessed 17.02.2017)

²²The Charter of Freedom, website matsne.gov.ge May 31, 2011. <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/1381526>>(accessed 09.11.2016)

assessed as an attempt not to rewrite or analyze the history, but to hide the visual exposures; this claims the Soviet way of thinking is still alive.²³

A group of experts supported the bill. Irakli Shengelaia notes that symbols represent forms of expression, which is characteristic of the concrete political system, but at the same time, it clarifies the government's will. "Government sometimes should go against public opinion, if his actions are motivated by the interests of the future. Removing "Great Soviet" symbols from public spaces and placing them in the history museum is important for the freedom of thinking of next generations. If the statues still exist indifferent cities and no one is going to touch them, how can we explain to young boys and girls that the founding fathers of the Soviet system were misanthropic people?"²⁴ Similar opinions were expressed by some members of the parliament, both from the majority and minority.

A member of the Parliamentary minority, Davit Darchiashvili claimed before passing the law: "When you establish a symbol, you should think a lot and decide, does it undoubtedly deserve to be a symbol? What should be prohibited and what should be accepted? Hopefully, this bill will become a law for everyone; it will be applicable to all symbols, including the statues to the creator of a totalitarian system- Joseph Stalin."²⁵

Parliament majority member Levan Berdzenishvili explained the main purpose of prohibiting Soviet symbols: "We often use the international terms –‘communist, totalitarian’, and this applies not only to the symbols but also the Soviet totalitarian heritage as a whole. In the public sphere, this kind of symbols must definitely be prohibited precisely as the fascist ones."²⁶

²³Chaganava, D. Communism in the Humans heads, June 2, 2011, <<http://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/24213165.html>>(accessed 17.02.2017)

²⁴Shengelaia, I. Symbols.. Emblems...etc..January 16, 2011. <<http://www.tabula.ge/ge/tablog/65209-simbolika-emblematika-mentaloba-dasxva-amgvvari>>(accessed 18.02.2017)

²⁵Maestro Television. Communist Symbols(2013) //Youtebe 01.11.2013 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xy-9k3wRcug>>(accessed 07.11.2016)

²⁶Maestro Television. Communist Symbols(2013) //Youtebe 01.11.2013 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xy-9k3wRcug>>(accessed 07.11.2016)

Another Parliament majority member Soso Jachvliani did not share this idea. In his opinion, Soviet symbols should be maintained as a part of history. He did not see any threat of potential nostalgia. He believed that Communism and Fascism are in comparable to each other because Nazism is the biggest cruelty the world has ever seen.²⁷

From historian David Jishkariani's perspective, if symbols are considered to be eliminated, the issue should be widely discussed before coming to a decision: "First of all, we should efface the Soviet ideology and Soviet way of thinking in our consciousness."²⁸

Neither before nor after adopting the Law could Georgian society come to a clear consensus on the attitude toward Soviet symbols. After passing the afore mentioned Law, the star was removed from the building of the Academy of Sciences. However, the sickle and hammer on the Galaktioni bridge as well as some other symbols remain intact. Generally, historians and art critics do not assume that overcoming the Soviet mentality is possible by eliminating Soviet symbols. As Tamar Amashukeli argues:

*"The struggle with Soviet mentality does not really begin or end with the destruction of Soviet symbols from the buildings. We only destroy the architecture with these measures. What has been actually changed? Have we come closer to the European democratic values just by removing the star from the building of the Academy of Sciences?"*²⁹

In a personal Facebook discussion on Soviet symbols the following questions were posed to friends: 1) In your opinion, is it right to prohibit Soviet symbols in Georgia? 2) Do some restrictions and regulations help us history? 3) Why do you think it is significant to analyse the Soviet past? These questions were answered by 15 students and one teacher.

²⁷Jachvliani, S. Netgazeti.ge, Soso Jachvliani on the Soviet symbols (2013) [Interview with SoSo Jachvliani about the fate of totalitarian symbols in Georgia] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4RfydWUOns/> // youtube 25.12.2013.)

²⁸Akhlobeli Media. Symbols VS Ideology (2011) // Youtube 04.03.2011 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IckUvsYTIVc>> (accessed 07.11.2016)

²⁹Maestro Television. Communist Symbols (2013) // Youtube 01.11.2013 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xy-9k3wRcug>> (accessed 07.11.2016)

The answers were predominately similar. One of the responses mentioned that analysing Soviet history is important in order to understand state interests and historical mistakes. Soviet symbols should be clearly presented in order to clarify the characteristic points of the Soviet regime. Respondents are against the destruction of IML and other Soviet buildings. They think that Soviet aesthetics disappear following demolition. They are against Soviet symbols disappearing from public space. As for analysing the Soviet past, in their opinion, it can be critically reviewed. Prohibiting symbols by law is a populist measure, because history cannot be hidden by censorship. From a personal perspective, drawing the distinction between friends and enemies is crucial and can be achieved by analyzing the past, of which discussions should be more public and intensive.

In the article “Destroy Lenin” published in the newspaper “24 saati,” author Oleg Panfilov argues that it is vital for post-Soviet states to heal from the disease called the Soviet Union. Destruction of the statues of Lenin is a matter of considerable importance:

“After any single destruction of statues of Lenin soft-hearted members of ‘Intelligentsia’ (Elite) appeared who pretended that history should be treated reasonably and tidily. So should we acknowledge that Soviet oppressions and Holodomor are absolutely reasonable and ordinary processes? And neither Lenin nor his followers participated in these processes? This is very much like a doctor’s idea proving that ectomy of cancer is not necessary because it is a normal and natural process for the sick person. But who really wants not to ectomy the cancer from the body? This is exactly the case of Lenin. He must be destroyed and disappeared like cancer cells, like a very dangerous epidemic, like tuberculosis bacillus that hinders the society from briefing quietly and freely.”³⁰

Summary

Different attitudes toward monuments and symbols could be observed during the post-Soviet period in Georgia. This is true with regards to governmental bodies and in Georgian society.

³⁰Destroy Lenin, www.24saati.ge June 6, 2010 <<http://www.24saati.ge/weekend/story/7154-gavanadgurot-lenini>> (accessed 22.10.2016)

In fact, the destruction of Communist totalitarian symbols failed to fulfil the essential role in the following: the critical re-consideration of the Soviet memory, naming facts and processes, and the formation of a new memory which is directly related to the national identity. There must be (1) a careful approach to the principle visualizing the past, and (2) an explanation of the need to rethink how Soviet history could garner better results than deconstruction and hiding the past.

How was the Soviet past reconsidered in Georgia? From this study's analysis, this process is still in progress. There were attempts, discussions, different opinions and perspectives. Due to these discussions, there is a law but there is no concise public consensus.

Alternative views could be promoted through different means. However, restrictions and deconstruction typically cause protests and misunderstandings. Further discussions on the problems presented in this paper could be viewed as vital steps toward finding efficient solutions.

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**ՀԱՂԹԱՀԱՐԵԼ, ԹԵ ՄՈՌԱՆԱԼ. ԹԲԻԼԻՍԻԻ ԽՈՐՀՐԴԱՅԻՆ
ԽՈՐՀՐԴԱՆՇԱՆՆԵՐԻ ԵՎ ԿԱՌՈՒՑՑՆԵՐԻ ՎԵՐԱԲԵՐՑԱԼ
ՀԱՆՐԱՅԻՆ ՔՆՆԱՐԿՈՒՄԸ**

Ամփոփագիր

Սոֆիո Բիլանիշվիլի

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***Բանալի բաներ.** Կոլեկտիվ հիշողություն, ինքնություն, կառույց,
մոռանալ, խորհրդային խորհրդանշաններ, Թբիլիսի*

Խորհրդային միության փլուզումից հետո կոմունիստական տոտալիտար ժառանգության ճակատագիրը լայնորեն քննարկվում էր անկախ Վրաստանում: Այս հոդվածը վրաստանյան խոսույթի ուսումնասիրության հիման վրա փորձում է պատասխանել հետևյալ հարցերին, թե արդյոք անցյալի վիզուալիզացիան խթանում է նոր կոլեկտիվ հիշողության ձևավորումը, արդյոք այս գործընթացը նշանակում է հիշել, թե մոռանալ անցյալը, քանդել այն, թե պահպանել, և թե ինչպես խորհրդային անցյալը վերանայվեց Վրաստանում:

Այս ուսումնասիրությունում ներկայացվում են խորհրդային անցյալի հաղթահարման ու որպես վրացական նոր ինքնության ձևավորման հիմք «համատեղ անցյալի» նոր պատումի ձևավորման բարդ ու հակասական գործընթացները: Այս ուսումնասիրությունը հիմնվում է կառույցների, նշանների ու շենքերի վերլուծության վրա, որոնք տեղակայված են Թբիլիսիի կենտրոնական հատվածում՝ Ռուսթավելիի պողոտայից մինչև Ազատության հրապարակ: