

Georgia“S European Choice: 1918-1919 Publications Of The „Republic Of Georgia” Newspaper For The Relations Between The First Democratic Republic Of Georgia And Germany

Maia Bregadze¹ and Nana Amiranashvili²

Abstract

Georgian-German relations hold particular relevance today, especially considering Germany's position as a prominent member of the Big Seven and traditional Europe. While Germany's history includes aspirations for hegemony during the First and Second World Wars, Georgia maintained a largely positive attitude toward Germany, particularly during the period of our interest. We must contemplate what might have changed for our country if the German side had emerged victorious. Could it have spared us from the events of February 25, 1921? Was Germany a colonizer cloaked in charming European attire? An examination of these factors, we believe, is both intriguing and vital. The Georgian press meticulously monitored ongoing developments in Germany, as well as Germany's political stance toward our nation. It conveyed its sentiments and devoted considerable space to several relevant events. It's worth noting that the Georgian intelligentsia held a deep appreciation for German culture, diligently reporting to the German press, and closely tracking its global political involvement. In our study, we aim to address these pivotal questions. By employing thematic analysis of articles published in the government newspaper "Republic of Georgia" from 1918 to 1919 and reviewing the relevant literature on this topic, we seek to shed light on this important historical perspective.

Keywords: Republic of Georgia, Culture, Germany, Colonizer, Global Political Involvement

INTRODUCTION

In delving into the discourse of Georgian-German diplomatic relations, it becomes imperative to acknowledge significant global political events that piqued the interest of European countries in our state.

At the onset of the 20th century, amidst the global realignment, two powerful and opposing coalitions emerged in Europe—the "Union of the Three" and the "Entente." The former comprised Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy, with the latter being later joined by the Ottomans and Hungary at the onset of the First World War. The core of the "Entente" consisted of the most influential colonial powers of that period: Great Britain, France, and Russia. Preparations for the impending war were underway, intensifying the confrontation among Europe's major states. For Georgian patriotic groups, the pressing concern was determining Georgia's orientation in this critical situation—a topic fraught with danger and an unpredictable outcome. However, given Germany's objective to liberate countries conquered by the "Entente" and its alignment with the aspirations of Georgians, the Georgian intelligentsia unequivocally expressed support for Germany and exhibited optimism regarding its potential victory in the war.

THE METHODOLOGY

The research methodology entails the examination of sources pertaining to the research topic, the retrieval of materials, and their subsequent analysis and processing. For this paper, grounded in its content factor and historical specificity, we gathered **secondary data** and employed **qualitative** research methods. This approach is particularly relevant for delving into the study of the historical past, given that this type of research emphasizes analysis and comprehension.

In the realm of qualitative research, we employed content analysis of textual materials, along with **thematic analysis**. This methodology facilitated the interpretation of patterns and meanings embedded within the data.

¹ PhD Student of Mass Communication Doctoral Educational Program of Caucasus International University

² Associated Professor of Caucasus International University, PhD of Philology E-mail: nana_amiranashvili@ciu.edu.ge

In addition, **the discourse analysis** method was employed. As an integral facet of qualitative research, discourse analysis entails a meticulous examination of textual material.

Considering the diversity of the research topics and the nuanced and contextual understanding of the problem, the interdisciplinary research **method** of exploring the relationship between media and politics, as proposed by **Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini, proved** to be particularly intriguing. This theory delineates a polarized and pluralistic model, providing insights into the media environment during the post-totalitarian period in various countries. Specifically, it introduces three types of media systems: the polarized or pluralistic model observed in Mediterranean countries, the model of democratic corporatism prevalent in Northern and Central Europe, and the liberalism and Anglo-Saxon model predominant in Canada, the USA, and Great Britain. The methodology hinges on key criteria such as the characteristics of press development in individual countries, political parallelism, the level of journalistic professionalism, and the role of the state in the information system. In our assessment, although this concept is tailored to contemporary processes, it can be readily applied to other eras and diverse media environments to scrutinize their distinctive features.

European Choice Of Social Democrats

The decision to align with Germany did not occur abruptly or thoughtlessly; rather, it was a meticulously considered process by the Georgian intelligentsia. The Georgian press played a pivotal role in shaping this choice.

The newspaper "Republic of Georgia" consistently provided daily updates to the people of Georgia on significant matters. Naturally, the readers were informed about the intricate relationship between the fledgling republic and powerful Germany, which had achieved notable success on the Western front during the mentioned period.

"Our international orientation changed long ago as we aligned with Germany, entering the international community of free nations and states." (Republic of Georgia, 1918)

The commencement of Georgian-German relations can be traced back to the period preceding the First World War. During this timeframe, the "Committee for the Independence of Georgia" was officially established, aligning its interests harmoniously with the direction of German foreign policy. The agreement signed between the "Independence Committee" and the German authorities explicitly states: "In the event of victory, Germany would not only recognize and acknowledge Georgia's independence but also support its sovereignty actively and defend it." (Zosidze N., 2021)

In the official documents, it is discerned that the Georgian government viewed German orientation as the sole viable option for self-establishment within the European family, ensuring the physical survival of the nation and providing an escape from the imperial policies of the Ottoman Empire. Articles further reveal that this strategic move served as a deterrent to the nefarious plans of Russian Bolshevism.

Moreover, Georgia held a profound conviction that the outcome of the First World War would favor Germany. This Aryan country, with its distinctive faith, ancient traditions, and stoic character, was anticipated to soon alter the course of world politics.

Articles predicting the outcomes of the war have come to our attention, and once again, we are struck by the resolute stance and attitude of the Georgians: "Regardless of the course of events, irrespective of the war's trajectory and the nature of the international situation, our republic must, above all, fortify and consolidate its state structure and freedom." This perspective is gleaned from the "Government Report" in the 1918 issue 57. (Republic of Georgia, 1918)

This is evident in nearly all articles published in 1918 whenever the topic of Germany is discussed. Additionally, it is important to note that the newspaper "Republic of Georgia" serves as a governmental printing body, and the events and perspectives reflected in its pages constitute a comprehensive representation of the thoughts of the highest leaders and patriots operating in Georgia during that period.

We examined all the issues of newspapers from 1918, and the unwavering belief of the Georgians in the triumph of the Germans is consistently highlighted wherever the topic is discussed. Furthermore, if any foreign or Georgian newspaper casts doubt on this belief or offers a contrary forecast, the Georgian press readily expresses sympathy towards Germany and responds with sharp criticism to the authors of such questionable articles. As stated in one of the publications in the 1918 issue number 78, the people of Georgia regard contemplating the defeat of Germany as nothing short of a fairy tale.

What was expected of Georgia during this stage? While we will delve into Germany's interests in our country in more detail in this paper, it is essential to note that during this period, Georgia committed to preparing an anti-Russian uprising on its territory.

Benefits and Liabilities of German-Georgian Relations

At the beginning of the First World War, while the entirety of Russia was swept by anti-German hysteria, our magazines and newspapers exhibited a Germanophile mood. This is confirmed by the articles published in the "Republic of Georgia."

The mutual interest between Germany and Georgia is evident in the newspaper publications of "Georgian Moambi" that we studied. It is apparent that the enlightened representatives of the Georgian nation were well acquainted with German culture, and Georgians held in high regard the admirable qualities of the German people, such as "resolute fulfillment of duty, national self-respect, and reliance on one's own efforts." (Avaliani, 1990)

We have examined the official document dated September 14, 1914, preserved in the state archive, which serves as the foundation for Georgian-German relations. In the event of Germany emerging victorious in the ongoing war (which the Georgian side fervently supported), Germany is prepared to initiate the following actions on the territory of Georgia:

1. Georgia will attain independence as a sovereign state, with neither Russia nor the Ottomans retaining any sovereign rights.
2. The territorial boundaries of Georgia will encompass regions in the Caucasus that are historically or currently deemed part of Georgia's territory.

The status of Adjara as part of Georgia is also defined.

Subsequently, the "Independence Committee" progresses to the phase of executing its assigned tasks. Initially, it advocates for the concept of Georgia's independence through various channels, with Mikheil Tsereteli overseeing this particular matter.

Secondly, the reciprocal dependence between Georgia and European countries is coordinated. Giorgi Machabeli, who possesses strong connections with representatives of influential circles in Germany, France, England, Belgium, and Switzerland, is responsible for overseeing this activity.

Finally, a conspiratorial organization operating in Germany establishes a connection with the national forces of Georgia, successfully.

In 1918, during an interesting period for us, representatives of German trade and industrial firms emerged in Georgia. The Germans were actively examining the economic resources, valuable minerals, and wealth of Georgia. It is noteworthy to mention that Germany showed significant interest in Georgian manganese and copper deposits.

In his article, the researcher Giorgi Astamadze formulates the expectations of the German side into points:

Manganese from Chiaturi, which is a necessary raw material for war.

The Georgian army, which will fight on the side of the Germans, depending on the need.

A German springboard in Turkey and India, also to initiate a war against the British.

From the articles and various studies at our disposal, we can answer the question of why the Germans singled out Georgia among the Transcaucasian states. The reason is quite clear - it was facilitated by the territorial arrangement of our country and the several years of selfless work that the "Independent Committee" did in Berlin.

On June 8, 1918, Friedrich Schulenburg and Professor Ernst Zugmayer arrived in Poti on a special mission with their own headquarters. The newspaper "Republic of Georgia" became more active during this period. There are many articles containing propaganda. We find many examples of recognition and a positive assessment of the activities carried out by the German side.

We became acquainted in detail with their views, periodically printed in many issues of the "Republic of Georgia" over the course of three years, and provided an overview of the results of the conducted works and experiments.

During the analysis of media texts, it was revealed that more attention is paid to railway and marine transport. The reason for this interest can be clearly seen in the analysis of media texts. The Caucasian railway was of great importance to Germany because, without the railway, achieving economic and political gains would be impossible. The well-developed railway in Georgia was the main transport artery in the Caucasus. Therefore, control of the transit network, which was crucial for Germany, had to be implemented through our country.

Through our seaports, which would be the main gateway to the Caucasus, Germany would have free access to the means of communication.

Researcher Mamia Balakhadze notes in his book that "controlling the circulation of cargo and economic activity in the Caucasus region would allow Germany to have the key to its own production."

From the materials we have studied, it can be observed that the "Republic of Georgia" is involved in a large-scale promotion of German orientation among the public. This is particularly evident in articles that highlight Germany's significant contribution to Georgia's independence.

The "Government Herald" repeatedly emphasizes the significant event of May 28, 1918. An agreement was reached between Germany and Georgia, and Germany effectively acknowledged the Act of Independence of May 26, 1918, recognizing the independence of Georgia. However, formal recognition by Germany was delayed until September 24, 1920.

In addition to the aforementioned aspects, the articles reveal the significance of education within the context of Georgian-German relations. From the published materials, three initiatives implemented in this direction can be discerned: the opportunity for Georgian students to receive education in the German language in Georgia, sending outstanding Georgian students to Germany, and inviting German professors to the university.

During the analysis of media texts, we conducted a theoretical examination of the mentioned issue. As a result, it becomes evident that the three components mentioned above created the opportunity for European-oriented education for Georgians. Georgians were provided with an unprecedented chance to receive German education locally. Germany devised a long-term program to fund students' studies in Europe, primarily in Germany, and the faculties at the university were reinforced to enable comprehensive education.

An in-depth examination of the issue revealed that the primary mission of the students sent to Germany during the mentioned period was the recognition of the uniqueness of Georgian culture and history in the scientific and cultural sphere. In this manner, they sought a path to the European future of our country and aimed to distance themselves from the political influence of Russia.

THE CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, after 1921, these genuinely important initiatives gradually ceased. Now let's discuss to what extent the German expedition fulfilled its political mission and how much expectations were met. It was not possible to create a strong army in Georgia in such a short period of time.

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The utilization of Caucasus resources was excessive from the beginning, and due to the sudden defeat in the war, Georgia did not serve as a springboard for Germany.

"It should be noted that even in the worst social situation in Germany after the defeat in the war, the Germans did not entertain the idea of their economic and political expansion in the Caucasus. Georgia was considered a unique country where Germans had a positive reputation for future economic and political activities." (Astamadze, 2017)

We encountered a similar sentiment in the November 1st edition of the 'Republic of Georgia' in 1918. Apprehensive about the withdrawal of German troops, the Georgian intelligentsia expressed concerns that Georgia might still lack the strength to stand alone in the face of surrounding threats.

"Georgia declared its independence on May 26, and in a critical moment when our country was on the verge of collapse and becoming ungovernable, it reached out to Germany, which, with its assistance, saved the country from the Ottomans. Germany safeguarded our independence and refrained from interfering in our domestic affairs." (Republic of Georgia, 1918)

While Germany's interest in the Republic of Georgia was not selfless and had its own goals, none of its interests undermined Georgia's sovereignty. It is evident that Germany considered Georgia as its partner and aimed to establish bilateral cooperation that would be beneficial for both states.

"Georgia will never forget the good deeds and results that were manifested in Germany's intervention here, in saving the country, and in providing general assistance." (Republic of Georgia, 1918)

This is how the Georgian people expressed their gratitude and concern that the relationship between these two benevolent states did not materialize, despite mutual wishes.

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