

# Soldier and Education in the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921)

**Nato Songulashvili** (Georgian Technical University)

## INTRODUCTION

The starting point of the Georgian authorities was to transform the Georgian army, not only from a military-professional point of view but also they aimed to raise their educational and national consciousness. Before that, i.e. until 1918, such a thing was unimaginable for the Georgian soldiers, who were the main backbone of the Russian imperial court and the executor of its will. The national government, in turn, focused primarily on strengthening the soldier's national self-awareness.

## CULTURE AND NATIONAL IDEA

“He (the soldier) should have at least an elementary idea of foreign countries, big states and more detailed knowledge of the geography of his homeland; he should get acquainted with the history of his nation; he should know the current economic and social prospects of his country. He is especially obliged to know the state structure of his homeland, the difference between the old and new political and social State systems. It is especially interesting to study the merits of the eminent persons of the homeland, i.e. the figures of modern Georgia, which will greatly contribute to the awakening of a patriotic feeling. Famous military actions, even of small warriors, will especially strengthen the sense of military self-confidence, which is necessary for the success of all endeavors, and at the same time will strengthen the love for the homeland in each rider” (Army of the Republic, 1918, p.6.). Georgian political and cultural elite believed that those who understood the essence of freedom could fight for freedom and independence of the homeland, so cultural work was of special importance to the army.

It was not accidental also, that Giorgi Mazniashvili estimated the improving of order and combat readiness of the army, as the merit of the Commander-in-Chief

and therefore, he considered it an honorable duty and responsibility to perform this function. For an army to be strong and patriotic, a soldier must be constantly in good form and, most importantly, have a high cultural and intellectual awareness. For centuries, a strong army has been the mainstay of any state, and Georgia has been no exception. After the restoration of independence, the revival of the Georgian army in a new form was on the agenda. The Georgian cultural and political spectrum was aware of many unresolved issues and problems threatening Georgia from all sides. They considered that the formation of a strong army was a decisive factor for the security of the country. The expression of this was, first of all, the fact that desertion was eliminated and Georgian soldiers were sent to serve in the homeland. “The Constituent Assembly of Georgia recognized the education of soldiers as necessary. They founded 2 schools of military education, which are headed by well-known among us: Colonel, Tite Artmeladze and teacher Alexander Zhorzholiani. Each brigade was given one instructor and one teacher per detachment; under their guidance, a team officer taught the men of troops reading, writing, and calculation. The teachers of the detachment teach the soldiers Georgian literature, Georgian history, and geography due to the first and second grades of public schools and talk about other fields of science. Each detachment has its own library-reading room, a theater is arranged, where soldiers systematically organize performances and lectures with the help of specially invited people. The step has been taken. Culture and education are deeply rooted in the army. We need more attention, more work, and shortly our military, with its development and education, will ensure the prosperity of our nation and the freedom gained by the revolution” (CSAG. Sheet. 20). Although at first the situation in the Georgian army was not favorable, as a result of the active work of

the government, the situation has improved to some extent. Georgian historiography focuses mainly on the fact of desertion in the armed forces, when the soldiers used to return from the war and did not have a national attitude. The memoirs of Giorgi Kvinitadze and Giorgi Mazniashvili corroborate that they were quite antipathetic towards the government, which can be explained by their nihilistic attitude towards them. Therefore, this information cannot be used as a mainstay. It's worth of interest the archival documents giving statistical information. It is necessary to reconcile the existing information and carry out the complex analysis. It should be envisaged also, that for three years it was not easy to bring the thinking of the society in general and the soldiers, in particular, within the state borders. According to the Fund of 1863, Case # 9: "The government paid great attention to promoting enlightenment work in the troops, as it was expected in the Democratic Republic, and it is worth saying that the present service of a soldier greatly differs from that of last year and the year before. I remember 1918-1919, from the life of our battalion when soldiers were enlisted in a unit to get clothes as quickly and bluntly as possible and then be recorded in the second time and then in the third where they would behave similarly and with such malice rendered service to the homeland.

I remember April 1, 1918, when we were announced that we had to leave for Batumi the next day and had to get ready. The next day not even half of the battalion came at the appointed time. Then, most of the soldiers were living in their flats, and they used to come to the battalion only for dinner. We left with about 15 soldiers and a few officers. Fleeing soldiers were found, armed with various items, at almost every station. The rifles were not left anywhere because they could be used in the family. They had not seen the enemy yet, during the Ottoman invasion in the village of Likhauri, when the soldiers of the #detachment dismantled the machine gun, dropped it on the shoulder, and set off in separate parts on the way home. All this was done with the participation of the soldiers, many of whom are still in service today. But no one can even dare to think of such behavior today. At that time, no military magazines or newspapers were received from the government, no enlightenment work was done in the units. The soldier did not understand his duty and the aim of his job. He did not know the past and future of his homeland, and assuredly, it was difficult to talk about the victory of such an army" (CSAG 1863, sheet. 90). It seems that the condition of the soldiers has substantially improved as the result of the reforms carried out by the government of the Democratic Republic, which implied primarily raising their educational level. "... Lectures are given to sol-

diers every day from 11 am to 1 am, except on Sundays. The subjects of the lectures are as follows: on Mondays and Thursdays - the current situation in Georgia, on Tuesdays and Saturdays - Georgian literature, on Wednesdays - geography, and on Fridays the history of Georgia. The Georgian military leadership tried to have the same high level of cultural and educational work in all military units. For example, the information about the Akhaltsikhe Coast Guard, preserved in the historical archives is interesting. "Recently, our detachment was visited by Captain Alexander Gorgadze, the instructor of cultural and educational affairs. From the very first day, he started to organize cultural and educational affairs in the detachment, formed a cultural-educational board, whose members are: Major Kutelia, chairman, captain Mgeladze, Archil Avalishvili and soldier Gurgenidze. The board aimed to carry out cultural work; arrange lectures, talks, and pay attention to the order of the Chief of the Coast Guard, concerning the compulsory training in literacy and its fulfillment" (CSAG 1863, sheet. 197).

## GEORGIAN NATIONAL IDEA AND ARMY

The letter of Colonel Tite Artmeladze sent to the Minister of Defense is interesting, where he outlines that for protection of the security it's important for the country to have own military forces. For this, it is necessary to create such conditions in the army, that the service to the homeland was both a duty and a title for a soldier. In his opinion, training in the army should be set so that a soldier was allowed to perform his duties to the homeland during his service and to acquire knowledge and education. For this purpose, special departments are created, which are responsible for resolving the mentioned problem. 1. Choral school. "The technical arrangement of the choir schools is the responsibility of the heads of battalions. They are also responsible for ensuring that not a single illiterate soldier is left in the battalion entrusted to them. Choral schools teach literacy and calculation under the guidance of a teacher in the battalion of officers. 2. Battalion school. This school is the second stage where the training is conducted through conversation and can develop both literate and non-literate, as well as soldiers with three or four classes education. The mentioned school will be a direct addition to Soldiers University. All the materials from the Georgian literature, Geography and History of Georgia that were preliminarily explained at the battalion school, or in the auditorium of the same Soldiers' University, will be read in the form of a lecture by the teacher. The role of this school will be the same in all other fields" (CSAG 1833, sheet. 19). 3. Soldiers' University.

It's important for the lecturer to give the necessary and precise information to the soldier and to speak in a language he understands.

When reading a lecture, the aim of the lecturer should be, on the one hand, the moral and mental development of the soldiers and the expansion of their worldview in general, on the other hand, the introduction of a sense of duty. And most importantly to facilitate the formation of an organized army. Soldiers' training at the University should be as follows:

I Separate Questions from Modern Life: 1. International War and Its Causes. 2. The Russian Revolution, its economic and national causes. 3. Two periods of revolution: The Interim Government and the October Coup. 4. Causes and consequences of the Bolshevik coup. 5. Breakdown of Russia, leaving the front by troops and the tragedy of the Transcaucasia. 6. Transcaucasian Sejm and the reasons for its incompetence. 7. The need to declare Georgia's independence. 8. Historical facts on the matter. The last days of old Georgia / Irakli II /. 9. The reasons of accession of Georgia to Russia. 10. Violation of the treaty by Russia. 11. The situation in Georgia under Russian protection during the nineteenth century. 12. Historical significance of leaving the front of Caucasus by the Russian troops. 13. Two ways: Russia and us. 14. Democratic Republic and Soviet Republic. 15. The State Work of Our Nation: The Work of the Constituent Assembly. 16. Basic laws and local self-governments. 17. Agrarian issue: possible forms of its solution. 18. A detailed explanation of our agrarian policy. Principle of Private Property and Allocation. 19. The financial state of our republic. 20. Paper money and the reason for falling currency. High prices of food and lack of goods. 21. The wealth of our country. The consequences of their application 22. Versailles Conference, the truce, and our international situation. 23. Matters, that contributed to our recognition by Europe. 24. Temporary nature of the economic and financial crisis of our state. 25. From agronomy. 26. From medicine. 27. From Cooperation" (CSAG 1833, sheet. 22).

From a separate field of science. A) Shota Rustaveli 1. A brief summary of the tiger-skin orally, 2. The first and second chapters were read by the lecturer himself, 3. A few sententia orally. B) N. Baratashvili 1. `Fate of Kartli`. Definition of significant places from the content. C. R. Eristavi 1. A poem from the life of a peasant. / Berua's complaint, Sesia's lamentation and etc. 2. Aspindza war. Oral presentation of content and sample reading of some notable places /. D) I. Chavchavadze 1. Dimitri Tavdadebuli, Kako Kachaghi, is a man a human? and a story of a beggar, / orally conveying the content and reading some important places as an example /. E) A. Tsereteli 2. Alex, 2. Bagrat the great, 3.

Tornike Eristavi, 4. Natela, 5. Natsarkekia and 6. Kikola's story. Oral presentation of the content and sample reading of some important places /. F) A. Kazbegi 82 3. Elguja, 2. Eliso, 3. Confessor, / Oral presentation of the content and sample reading of some important places /. G) Eg. Ninoshvili 1. Moses the Writer, 2. Paliastomi Lake, 3. The ordinance, 4. Gogia Uishvili, / Oral presentation of the content and sample reading of some important places /. H) G. Tsereteli 2. Kikoliki, Chikoliki, and Toffee nosed, / oral presentation of content and sample reading of some important places /.

Geography of Georgia: 1. The sky and the earth, sea, and land. 2. The Sun, the Moon, and Stars. 3. Cloud, rain, hail, snow, wind, and rainbow. 4. Heat in the heart of the earth, earthquake. 5. The face of the earth and its rotation around its axis. 6. Borders of Georgia, rivers, mountains and climate. 7. Kartli/Physical and cine-matographic review/. 8. Kakheti. 9. Western Georgia: a) Imereti, b) Samegrelo, c) Guria, d) Svaneti, e) Adjara. 10. Abkhazia. 11. A brief overview of neighboring peoples, states- Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ottoman, Russia (compared to Georgia). 12. Brief geographical, economic, and state information about the life of educated peoples of Europe and America.

History. 1. King Tamar. 2. Division of Georgia into kingdoms and principalities. 3. Shah Abbas's attitude towards Georgia. 4. The Adventures of Giorgi Saakadze. 5. King Erekle. 6. History of the agreement with Russia / in Amereti and Imereti principalities/. 7. Fight against Russia / Mtiuleti, Imereti, Conspiracy of Nobles in 1830 /. In the form of conversation. 1. Where did the army come from, what is discipline? Discipline as an express condition for the existence of an army. 2. The army and the people, their mutual relations. 3. The existence of strong discipline in the army is in the soldiers' interests. 4. The importance of instilling fear in the camp of the enemy for gaining victory 5. What kind of attack is necessary against the enemy to cause fear in the enemy camp? 6. Actions needed during repulsion. The importance of a sense of fear in a fighting army. The importance of adapting to the location and quick spreading in the plain during battle. 7. The importance of maintaining order and spiritual peace during the retreat. The crushing result of a disorderly retreat. 8. The importance of fast restoration of order, and attacking battle in maintaining the victory. 9. The importance of the prompt and correct execution of the order in the matter of saving the lives of the soldiers and etc. Chief of Staff Colonel Artmeladze (CSAG 1833, sheet. 23).

In 1919, the Board of the Officers' Economic Society decided to nationalize the clerical work in the community so that correspondence and reporting could be in the state language. To achieve this goal, the board

dismissed up to 20 employees due to ignorance of the state language (CSAG 2016, sheet. 188).

**Culture, Education and Army.** Theatrical performances served to raise the cultural awareness of the soldiers. For example, "A group of student-actors from the Moscow Art Theater stopped in Tbilisi for a few days and expressed a desire to have some free performances there specifically for local garrison soldiers. The desire and idea of the actors were gladly received by the board of propagandists and the actors organized a performance for several days ... The performances took place on July 14 in the hall of the Real School, on July 15 in the Vera Political Club, and on July 16 in the hall of the People's House. Before and after the performance, talks were held; the panel speakers described the importance of theater. The performances had great success and the soldiers were very satisfied. Everyone expressed great desire to organize performances often, because they have great cultural and educational significance" (CSAG 1840, sheet. 55)

On July 12, 1917, a library-reading room was opened, which housed more than 2,300 books of various denominations. According to the catalog, all books include 14 sections: 1. Political Economy - 98 titles; 2. Law, state structure, political parties - 525 names; 3. History of Culture and Sociology \_ 186; 4. The issue of workers, the state of the working class, the movement of workers \_ 300; 5. Agrarian issue \_ 150; 6. History of the Revolutionary Movement \_ 175; 7. Collections and magazines \_ 350; 8. Criticism, publicism, bibliography \_ 50; 9. Biography, Memoirs, Records \_ 90; 10. Fiction \_ 100; 12. National Question \_ 35; 13. The issue of women \_ 25; 14. Cooperation \_ 10" ((CSAG 1840, sheet. 55).

Alexander Zirakishvili, the priest of the Georgian Cavalry Regiment, sent a letter to the senior priest of the Georgian army: The letter received on January 28 of the headquarter officer of the day of the Georgian corps informs that I was assigned to the Georgian Spare Cavalry Regiment stationed at Tukurmisha. The military government ordered the commander of the mentioned regiment, Colonel Natsvalov, to take over all the property of the Tversky Cavalry Regiment in Tukurmisha and, consequently, the Molk Church, but to this day, parish priest, Al. Tuberozov is still enrolled in the Tversk regiment and serves in the above-mentioned Tukurmish parish. It depends on his will when I can have liturgy and prayer.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of this year, on the day of the transfiguration of the Holy Spirit, in liturgy at the Regiment Church, the priest Al. Tuberozov, during his sermon, cursed the Georgian nation and called them: savages, beasts, etc. ... He called on the Russian parishioners not to obey any orders of local and national govern-

ments, not to obey government orders or decrees, and to pray for the restoration of Russian sovereignty in Georgia and etc.

He never mentions the Georgian government, the Catholicon-Patriarch, or the bishop, etc. Instead, he prays again for the Russian autocracy and the chief priest Shavelski..." (CSAG 1863, sheet. 40).

Activating the education factor in the army was aimed at raising its national and political awareness. "Only those who know what freedom is can protect freedom. Our young republic will be defended by an army of Republicans. Therefore, if we want to achieve the goal, military training and cultural work in the army must be carried out in the same way. It should be obligatory for the leadership of the army to know well the army, to introduce academic knowledge to them. Making thorough republicans from them is another question. The time has gone when nobody willed to humanize the soldiers when their self-awareness was averted when blinding books, magazines and newspapers were distributed to the soldier calling to die for the king and homeland, but instead of explaining the essence of those words, they were called up to fight for strengthening the old regime. Today is a completely different situation. It is true that the morning discipline, obedience is necessary and unavoidable, but not blind. It must be based on another consciousness of duty and the result must be mutual love and respect. The army and the schoolboys are one and the same. If a soldier is convinced that the Chief loves him and at the same time the chief is loyal to the homeland, I assure you, that the soldier will love him too" (CSAG 1830, sheet.1-2).

The Georgian political spectrum was well aware of the importance of a strong army, but did not believe only in its military training and armament, and gave the education of soldiers a great role. "International conditions forced us to create a state. The state is unimaginable without an army. Armed forces are needed. If we did not have an army, we would appear in a terrible situation. But the main thing is what the army is like. If our army was undeveloped, it would be in constant fluctuation, it would fall on one anchor today and on the other tomorrow, and would ruin not only themselves but ruin hopes of wife, children, siblings, relatives, comrades, and friends. The development and resilience of the army has so far saved our nation from many calamities and, along with its physical existence, preserved the freedom gained through the revolution. The tireless work of the leaders of the democracy of Georgia and the brave struggle of the army have won many victories for our nation, but all this needs to be strengthened and patronized.

Today, the education of most of our armed forces is not satisfactory for our future hard work. Therefore, the Constituent Assembly of Georgia recognized the need for military education. It founded 2 schools of military education, which are headed by the well-known among us: Colonel Tite Artmeladze and teacher Alexander Zhorzholiani. Each brigade was assigned one instructor, and one teacher per detachment. The team officer under the guidance of a teacher taught literacy and calculation. The teachers of the detachment teach Georgian literature, Georgian history, and geography to the soldiers through the Baas in the first and second - grade schools, as well as other fields of science. Each detachment has its own library-reading room, a theater is arranged, where soldiers systematically organize performances and lectures with the help of specially invited people" (CSAG 1830, sheet. 20)

Authorities sought to inform the soldier about national issues. "The Artillery Brigade of the People's Guard of the First Mountain Battery has always been on the front since its inception, and with arms in hands stood a faithful watchman over revolution and freedom. Recently, the leaders of the mentioned battery saw that the weapon alone was not enough, they also felt the need for development-awareness along with the weapon and therefore decided to establish a book-reading library. To this end, they elected a commission tasked with resolving the case. The Commission appealed to organizations as well as individuals for assistance. They collected money with donations and opened a reading room. In memory of the famous former head of this battalion Valiko Sharashidze" ( CSAG 1830, sheet. 20).

As I have already mentioned, for the development of the soldier's national, cultural consciousness, the government purposefully tried to take measures and implement them in practical terms, for strengthening their spirit. "On January 18 of this year, according to the order of the government of the republic, our battalion was taken to the Treasury Theater, where they were to be shown for free of charge the opera" Absalom and Ether ". At two o'clock in the afternoon we were at the mentioned place. I would like to briefly mention how the opera affected the soldiers. B. Potskhverashvili explained the content of the action. The curtain rose and after a while the soldiers were eagerly exclaiming it was really worthwhile for our motherland to go through a thousand hardships and sacrifice your life/give life if required for its interests. We were told about the Georgian culture and our great ancestors but now we have discovered what it was like, said the village soldiers, who have not attended such a great performance once, and it is not surprising that these people are interested in seeing the performanc-

es. Now we have to work hard so that the enemy does not deprive us of a dignified homeland," said the soldiers sitting next to me" (CSAG 1830, sheet. 31-32).

As expected in the Democratic Republic, the government paid great attention to promoting educational work in the army units, and as the contemporary noted, "it must be said that the service of a soldier today is very different from that of last year and that of the year before. I remember 1919 and 1918 from the lives of the battalion when the soldiers were enlisted in one unit to get their clothes as fast as possible so that they could be registered in the second unit, where they used to act similarly, and then in the third, and with such malice render service to the homeland" (CSAG 1830, sheet. 90).

The Ministry of Defense established a cultural section and opened a cultural-educational department at the General Staff of the People's Guard. "It is not long ago that the mentioned cultural department was established, but during its short existence it has done a great job. Literacy schools were set up in the army and in the permanent parts of the Guard, and a library-reading room was opened, where soldiers and guards received almost all periodicals. There have been opened the evening courses, public universities and some more are to be opened. Dramatic performances, operas, cinematographic films and more are held especially for the army and guards. And here we are already seeing a big drawback of this work. The army of our Republic is not entirely like the army of the time of self-government. Our army knows perfectly well and understands his duty to the homeland. He knows what and who he is protecting, he knows that he is defending the independence of the homeland, freedom, peace, the past. By doing so, he protects the working people, his fathers, mothers, children, sisters, brothers, families, and thus enables us to better organize and develop our lives. In short, our army together with the physical armed force possesses a cultural force, and no one can deceive it and exploit it. Everyone can distinguish well between enemy and friend. Our army fights against the enemies of all kinds of the homeland and at the same time lazily pursues self-development. Thus, going to the army today is no longer scary. On the contrary, during the one year and two months that should be spent in military service, our young people can pay their debt to the homeland and return to their own affairs prepared" ( CSAG 1830, sheet. 2). "During its long history, the Georgian nation has been surrounded almost continuously by numerous and powerful hordes of enemies, who sought to destroy it from behind. There was nothing left for little Georgia but to fight for maintaining its existence. There were moments when the Georgian nation was

forced to bow before a brute force, suffer from many persecutions from a powerful tyrant; Enslaved people dreamt only of liberation. Such an almost uninterrupted belligerence, of course, could not contribute to the creative work of our nation, cultural advancement, development of science, the flourishing and beautification of the language. All these required the development and flourishing of our political and public life, but we, except for a couple of short epochs, were otherwise deprived of. Within the last 117 years, since our lives and bad luck were connected with Russia, the situation changed for the worse. The harsh Russifying policy of old Russia deprived the Georgian language of the opportunity for natural development. The Georgian language was forced out of schools. It was prohibited in state and civic institutions and even restricted in churches, shortening wings. It would be better for us to face up the reality and admit that we could not resist the implementation of this evil policy enough and it bore its terrible fruit by dominating the Russian language over the Georgian language. Our students were educated in Russian, studied Russian science and literature, got to know the life, morals, history, geography, and economy of the Russian people better than the core nation, and thus were psychologically connected and assimilated to it" (CSAG 1830, sheet. 2).

## CONCLUSION

The material corroborates that the government of the Democratic Republic carried out many efforts to strengthen the Georgian army and make it the main pillar of Georgian statehood. Despite many problematic and contradictory questions that may arise quite rightly, we have to take into consideration the fact that within three years, it was not so easy to form a centralized and nationalized army due to objective reasons, which we have already discussed.

## Sources

- Journal, Army of the Republic, 1918, # 1, p. 6
- CSAG 1863, census 1, Acts. #9, sheet. 20
- CSAG 1863, census. 1, Acts. # 9, sheet. 90
- CSAG 1863, census. 1, Acts. # 9, Sheet. 197
- CSAG 1833, census1, Acts. #1072, sheet. 19
- CSAG 1833, census1, Acts. # 1072, sheet. 22
- CSAG 1833, census1, Acts. # 1072, sheet. 23
- CSAG 2016, census 1, Acts. # 65, sheet. 188
- CSAG 1840, census 1, Acts. # 1, sheet. 55
- CSAG 1840, census 1, Acts. # 1, sheet. 55
- CSAG 1863, census 1, Acts. #680, sheet. 40
- CSAG 1830, census 1, Acts. # 9, sheet. 1-2
- CSAG 1830, census 1, Acts. # 9, sheet. 20
- CSAG 1830, census 1, Acts. # 9, sheet. 20
- CSAG 1830, census 1, Acts. # 9, Sheet. 31-32
- CSAG 1830, census 1, Acts. #25, sheet. 90
- CSAG 1830, census 1, Acts. # 52, sheet. 2