

Batumi shota Rustaveli state university
Faculty of Humanities
Department of History, Archeology and Ethnology

Irine Shervashidze

**Repressions in the 20-30s of the XX century in the context
of political and cultural memory**

Speciality – History

ANOTATION

of the dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Historical
Sciences.

Batumi - 2022

The dissertation is performed at the Department of History, Archeology and Ethnology of the Faculty of Humanities of Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University.

Scientific supervisor:

Tamaz Putkaradze, Associate Professor at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

Evaluators:

Otar gogolishvili, Professor at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, the Department of History, Archeology and Entnology

Madona Robakidze, Associate Professor at Akaki Tsereteli State University, the Department of History and Archeology

Nani Futkaradze, PhD of History, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

The defense of the thesis will take place on ..., 2022, at ..., at the meeting of the Dissertation Board of the Faculty of Humanities at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University.

Address: Ninoshvili/Rustaveli st.35, Batumi

The thesis can be found in the library of the Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University and the the abstract is on the website of the same university. (www.bsu.edu.ge).

Secretary of the Dissertation Board:

Maia Kikvadze, Professor at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the restoration of Georgia's independence, when memoirs entered the scientific cycle and archival materials became available, a wide arena for research was opened for historians. One of the main challenges for post-Soviet countries including Georgia was to find real facts and re-evaluate politicized Soviet history. **For modern historiography it has become relevant to study the Soviet past in the context of political and cultural memory.**

The anatomy of the Soviet regime is most vividly represented by political repression. Therefore, research into the Soviet past focuses on repression which began in the 1920s and reached a special scale in the 1930s, when repressive politics turned into a "Great Terror".

The relevance of the study is due to the difficult Soviet legacy that has not yet been overcome in the post-Soviet countries. There are basically two very different views in society - one focusing on the good and the benefits of the Soviet system and the other emphasizing the totalitarianism and tyranny of the communist system. Such views clearly show the lack of awareness of the community.

After the restoration of Georgia's independence, the memory of political repressions gradually disappeared against the background of the ongoing political, economic and social crisis. It is therefore important to study these processes in terms of political and cultural memory.

Aims and objectives of the paper: the aim of the study is to present the issues of stability or transformation of political views associated with repression, as well as to find out, on the basis of oral histories, what is the traumatic experience of a society or part of it which was hidden for many reasons and has not been studied so far.

To achieve our goals, we set several tasks - to study archival materials related to repression, scientific and fiction literature, history textbooks, periodicals. Also, collection and analysis of oral histories of the descendants of the repressed.

In addition, the study and comparison of two independent databases - official material and oral stories - provides the clearest picture of the impact of repression on the entire Georgian society.

Research objectives and hypothesis

The study is not aimed at establishing historical truth but rather describes and presents the problems associated with repressive politics at the institutional, collective and individual levels, which should answer the following questions:

1. what was the attitude of the Soviet system towards the population of Ajara?
2. What is the attitude of the post-Soviet governments of Georgia to understanding of the past and in the process of distancing from it?
3. What is the reason for an ambivalent attitude when assessing political repression?
4. What are the stressful experiences of victims in different generations, genders or social groups?

Based on the goals and objectives of the study, the research **hypothesis** was formulated as follows:

1. The Soviet authorities showed a special distrust to the population of Ajara;
2. The state policy of independent Georgia is less focused on gathering the proper knowledge that makes it difficult to review the past;
3. An ambivalent attitude of the community to the system was conditioned by lack of awareness;
4. The trauma of victims of a totalitarian regime is still incurable.

Research methodology

Several techniques of the qualitative research method are used for data processing which allows to focus on the content during the processing of the material.

We used qualitative **content analysis** when processing official documents and various text materials. In the context of the transformation of views, when developing textbooks on scientific literature and history, the main attention was paid not so much to its quantitative characteristics and how often the problem of Soviet repressions was mentioned in the text, but to its content - how the same event was interpreted in different periods and how the text repeated Soviet approaches to narration.

Using **the interview method**, empirical material was collected in the families of the descendants of the repressed which made it possible to present alternative versions of reality. In-depth interviewing allows to further explore the issue of trauma stability and transformation over generations: how the next generation shares the trauma of their ancestors, whether it distances itself from what happened, and if so, how rational this attitude is.

Comparative method is used to compare official material and oral histories.

Results of the study:

1. The Soviet system was especially suspicious of the population of Adjara. Consequently, the attitude of the Soviet system towards Adjara was tough which was reflected in the repressive policy pursued in the region. In percentage terms, the scale of repression in Adjara was higher compared to the total population;
2. The attempt by the post-Soviet governments of Georgia to distance themselves from the past at the institutional level is as follows:

- At the very first stage of independence Georgia made drastic steps to dissociate itself from the Soviet system at the institutional level. Thus, at the initial stage of gaining independence, the community demonstrates a sharply negative attitude towards the Soviet system but later, however, due to civil wars, ethnic conflicts, economic problems, a part of the population develops a nostalgic attitude towards the recent past;
 - The steps taken by the government that came with the Rose Revolution to distance itself from the Soviet past were not always consistent and changed in accordance with the political agenda;
 - Under the current government, understanding the Soviet past is not a priority as evidenced by the well-known approach to mass graves discovered in the Batumi suburb by the eparchy of Batumi and Lazeti on April 5, 2019. More than 3 years have passed since then although the remains of about 150 people are kept in the basement of the Patriarchate's residence.
1. In the post-Soviet period, for a number of reasons it was impossible to establish the proper knowledge which was important for analyzing and overcoming the Soviet past:
 - Fragmentation of archival materials has excluded the possibility of full-fledged inquiry and as a consequence, the acquisition of knowledge;
 - The scientific literature is full of discourse characteristic of the Soviet period, when crime was viewed in the context of the biographies of several individuals. This gap is somewhat filled by modern studies;
 - The system of school and higher education actually does not provide knowledge about the "great terror". Secondary school textbooks focus on the Russian occupation of independent

Georgia and view the repression as persecution of the so-called "intellectuals";

- There is actually no memorization of political repression in fiction and art. There is only one example in Georgian cinema - "Repentance" by Tengiz Abuladze, also created during the Soviet era.
2. The study of oral histories revealed several important facts:
- Although individual stories are fundamentally different from "official" versions, in some cases alternative memory is full with official narratives;
 - The traumas inflicted by the Soviet system on almost all strata of society in various forms remain incurable and open wounds.

scientific and practical significance of research results:

The research results have not only theoretical but also practical significance. This will help young people, students and the concerned part of society to create themselves a broad understanding of the political repression and the memories associated with it. In addition, it will facilitate the study of other historical events from the point of view of memory.

As for the scientific value, it has become possible to reveal the peculiarities of political repressions of the Soviet era in Ajara. Characteristic approaches of Western and soviet historiography, post-soviet Georgian governments and Georgian society in general to this issue were identified.

In addition, existing materials and opinions on political repression were collected. Empirical, written and other materials allow for a broad theoretical generalization of many directions.

History of the issue: while working on our thesis we rely on documentary sources, which are kept in the archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The research is also based on both Georgian and foreign

literature on the subject. The paper uses various textual narratives, decisions made by the Soviet and post-Soviet governments, documents representing a part of political memory. Since it deals with the memory alteration, the study includes the study and presentation of Soviet and post-Soviet views on the basis of scientific literature and history textbooks. As a result, the forms of memory, the approaches of Western and Soviet historiography to this topic were identified.

In terms of scientific literature, one of the most significant is the book "Bolshevik Order in Georgia" by Mark Jung, Omar Tushurashvili and Bernd Bonvec, which was published in 2015 in two volumes. The authors of the book pay special attention to the specifics of terror in Georgia, the facts of the transfer of part of the penal authority from the center to the periphery and the mass trial of the society by NKVD's (the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) Troika (тройка/ made up of three officials who issued sentences to people) (Jung, 2015).

Regarding Adjara, the book "Ethnos and Terror in Georgia" published by Mark Jung, Bernd Bonvec and Daniel Muller in 2015 should be mentioned where the authors try to find out whether the political repressions were based on ethnicity (Jung, 2015b). The authors point out that the repressive policy pursued by the Soviet empire was tough in relation to Adjara. It is noteworthy that there were heated discussions in scientific circles around this study. The paper also presents a discussion between authors and historians who dispute the research findings.

Osiko Gvarishvili's book "Stalin and the Tragedy of 1937" (Gvarishvili, 2000) is also interesting in relation to Adjara; the project **"Restore History with the archive"** (Tushurashvili, 2017) of the archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs is also important; The work "Rehabilitation" by **Lili Chikovani and Nodar Tsetskhladze** is devoted to the repressions of Adjara in the 1930s- 1950s (Chikovani, 1995); **Ramaz Surmanidze's** book "The Tragedy in Batumi, 1937-38" provides information about the biographies of people shot and repressed in

Batumi (Surmanidze, 2014); The book "The Soviet Regime and Mass Repressions in Adjara" by **Otar Turmanidze** (Turmanidze, 2019) is devoted to the same topic.

There are only a few studies based on oral histories in Georgia. There are even less studies of Soviet terror in the context of cultural and political memory. There is no academic psychological research that would study the influence of the totalitarian past on repressed families or Georgian society except for the thesis **"The influence of totalitarian repressive trauma and transmission from generation to generation: the example of Georgia"** by psychologist and researcher of traumatic memory Darejan (Jana) Javakhishvili (Javakhishvili, 2017).

There are few organizations in Georgia interested in studying the Soviet past. These include the Institute for Development of freedom of Information (IDFI), the Soviet Past Research Laboratory (SovLab), the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) and the Memorial Society of Georgia .

The project " Stalin's List from Georgia" implemented by IDFI and the Memorial Society provides significant information about the victims of the Great terror in 1937-1938. In 2011, the Soviet Past Research Laboratory published a collection of discussions held throughout the year at the Goethe-Institut. The topic of discussion is comprehension of the Soviet past and touches upon many important issues.

The works of Tamar Karaya (Karaya, 2015), Giorgi Maisuradze (Maisuradze, 2013) and others are also interesting from the point of view of research in the context of the memory of the Soviet past.

The works of foreign authors including "Georgia After Stalin: Nationalism and Soviet Government" by Timothy Blauvelt and Jeremy Smith, (Blauvelt, 2015), etc. are also important for assessing Soviet ideology.

The paper is also based on the study of history textbooks, periodicals (newspapers "the Soviet Adjara", "Communist", etc.), fiction and works of art. Oral stories of the descendants of the repressed families of Adjara are used as an alternative memory.

The approbation of the paper took place at the Department of History, Archeology and Ethnology of BSU on July 28, 2021. A separate part of the paper is published as articles in scientific journals and presented at scientific conferences.

The structure of the paper - The paper includes an introductory part – issue raising, goals and objectives of the study, questions and hypotheses of the research, methodology, research results, their scientific and practical value, an overview of the relevant historiography. The main body of the paper consists of three chapters divided into sub-chapters with conclusions and recommendations. The research will be accompanied by a bibliography (90 units), a list of Internet resources and attachments.

Chapter I – History and memory

The first chapter is divided into three parts. It discusses the fundamental work from the perspective of the study of memory and the theoretical basis that specialists with an interest in memory problems adhere to - psychologists, sociologists, political scientists or historians. The levels of memory research, the relation of memory to history as well as trends in the politics of memory characteristic of the Soviet regime are highlighted.

1.1. Memory and levels of its study

This sub-chapter discusses individual, collective and institutional levels of the study of memory. These transitions from the individual to the collective and from the collective to the institutional level are unprocessed piece of the study of memory.

Collective trauma is part of collective memory . A traumatic event affects both the individual and society. The condition experienced by

trauma participants is known as **post-traumatic stress** disorder. Researchers agree that the most common way to cope with post-traumatic stress disorder is "recovering memory", for which an important tool is talking about it, creating stories, describing traumatic events (memoirs, novels, historical and popular science literature) that belong to the fields of historiography, fiction and art .

1.2. Interrelationship of memory and history

This sub-chapter covers issues of the relationship between memory and history.

Memory and history are not synonymous. History is a representation of the past based on analysis and critical discourse. and memory bearers are living social groups, therefore it is in the process of constant evolution, open for memorization and oblivion.

the third element is added to the relationship between history and memory and a triangle is formed: history - memory - politics.

Memory policy is the attempt by political elites or state institutions to influence and manipulate collective memory by wielding a certain amount of power (Verovsek,2007).

When studying memory policy, it is differentiated and divided into two levels:

1. Informal political memory, which is reflected in art, media or various actions;
2. Formal political memory which refers to the decisions made by official actors and the discourse acceptable to them.

As mentioned, history is a representation of the past based on analysis and critical approach while memory lives in individuals, in living social groups although it is also important to consider who created the story as reality is also restored by particular individuals.

1.3. Trends of memory policy in Soviet Georgia

This subsection examines the main trends in the politics of memory characteristic of the Soviet system.

The ideology of the Soviet era served the Bolshevik principles of Soviet identity, the formation of Soviet collective memory. Both secondary and higher education, youth organizations, camps, festivals, symbols or toponymy served to create common identity markers and were created in accordance with Soviet requirements.

The formation of the Soviet people and the upbringing of the next generation with socialist ideology was defined by the multilevel system of secondary education (Octobrist, Pioneer, komsomol), which helped the system to educate socialist personnel. The government also took care of the compilation and publication of textbooks, which were created in accordance with the official ideology. This is confirmed by the collection of the Institute of Pedagogic Sciences of the Ministry of Education of the Georgian SSR in 1954, "Issues of teaching history at school", which includes the works of Georgian Soviet scientists and the main idea is related to the teaching of history.

Higher educational institutions were an important level of education, and the personnel trained by them joined the ranks of the Soviet so-called "intellectuals". By 1936, there were 20 higher educational institutions in the country with 21,584 students and 21,752 students in 113 vocational schools (Cultural Studies, 2017).

As known, Stalin built the Soviet Empire according to the principle of nationality. Soviet peoples should have had stories that on the one hand, strengthened their national pride, and on the other, convinced them of the truth of the path to communism. The goal was achieved by creating icons of folk or cultural heroes, celebrating their anniversaries which was Stalin's ideological tool. This process also continued afterwards (Maisuradze, 2009).

Therefore, the Soviet government actively supported the demonstration of exotic elements of the national culture of different peoples. Moscow hosted exhibitions, literary meetings and culture weeks. The works of Pushkin, Rustaveli, Shevchenko and the poets of other republics were translated and distributed throughout the Soviet Union. This tradition continued even after Stalin's period.

For the Soviet people who were building a communist society, the propaganda of atheism was important. As a result, religious holidays were canceled and themed or professional holidays were established which were supposed to become Soviet "places of memory." For example: Tea Day, Viticulture Day, Trade Workers Day, Medical Workers Day, Teachers Day, Miner's Day, etc.

Markers of Georgian Soviet identity were heraldic emblem with the image of a five-pointed star and a hammer and sickle with an inscription in Georgian and Russian: "Workers of all countries, unite!", a flag on which the image of the hammer and sickle also occupied a large place and a hymn which were established by a Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

Thus, communist ideology aimed to eliminate differences between the peoples of the empire and to form a qualitatively new "Soviet human". This goal became difficult to achieve due to the existence of the national republics but the system was able to create people who did not have the initiative, who could not make independent decisions, blindly obeyed orders and who were the tools of the government on the way to achieving their political goals.

Chapter II - Political repressions in Soviet Georgia

The products of Georgian Soviet collective memory are both historical and fictional storytelling. Observing the process of change requires demonstrating memory before and after the change. The second chapter discusses the repressive past on the basis of archival documents,

history textbooks and fiction that provide a broad picture of Soviet identity. Also, various aspects of traumatic memory remembered by people are presented.

2.1. Reflection of political repressions in archival documents

This sub-chapter examines the volume of archival documents related to the Soviet repressions in Georgia and the issues of accessibility to them. Also, on the basis of important documents, the specificity and scale of the "Great Terror" is analyzed.

As it is known, the Soviet repressions in Georgia took place in several stages: the annexation of 1921 when the anti-Bolshevik elements fell victim to the Soviet repressions; punishment of participants in the 1924 uprising; later, the unprecedented scale of the repressions of the 1930s and 1940s-50s.

Based on the study of the materials preserved in the archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, it is established that a total of 14,372 people were shot in Georgia in 1937-38 of which 1,050 in Adjara (including 11 women).

It is also known that the verdict was passed without trial or investigation at a meeting of the so-called **troika**. In Georgia, there acted **kulak** Troika (кулак- a rich peasant), Militia Troika and **national Troika** who made decisions on the death penalty and the persecution of people.

In Georgia, the repression of the kulak troika resulted in a 4.2-fold increase in the death penalty over the original quota and 5.3-fold over the limit set by the federal government. In total, 21 107 people were convicted by the kulak troika. It was the largest repressive operation in Georgia. The national troika found 494 people guilty. Of these, 115 were sentenced to death. The most severe sentence of the Militia Troika was 5 years in prison (Jung, 2015).

In Adjara, from August 11, 1937 to October 11, 1938, by the decision of the Kulak Troika 719 people were convicted of which 334 were shot, 385 were imprisoned.- 239 129, 110 from Batumi (in the appropriate

order), 136, 49, 87 from Keda region and 118, 59, 59 from Khelvachauri. In addition, there were Stalin's shooting lists according to which 36,116 people were convicted in Georgia (Turmanidze, 2019).

Documents stored in archives are one of the main forms of institutional memory. A significant part of archival documents was lost in Georgia - they were destroyed during the 1991 civil war in Tbilisi. Some of the surviving documentary materials including those related to the "Great Purification" are kept in the archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia.

Significant documentary evidence related to criminal cases and personal information is stored in the National Archives. According to the legislation, rehabilitation material from the 1950s will be available for the study from 2030. Thus, researchers do not have access to the rehabilitation records of a particular person and to process a complete list of existing cases (Daniel and others, 2016).

The verdict against the population of Adjara refers to the 8th fund of the archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs which includes 1800 minutes of the meeting of the Committee of Internal Affairs. The fund also includes information about the punishment of people of different nationalities living in Adjara during national operations.

The Soviet authorities showed a special distrust of the border regions which is confirmed by a number of historical facts. This was the reason for the resettlement of the population from the border regions in the 50s, the so-called issue of Turkish-Meskhetians. In the case of Adjara, the border location was compounded by a historical past, a different religion, and agitation and propaganda activities of the Turkish side in their favor causing distrust of the Soviet government.

This is confirmed by the report card written by the Chairman of the State Political Division of Georgia Lavrenti Beria to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia Mikheil Kakhiani, which reflects the ongoing processes in Adjara in 1920-30s. L.

Beria describes in detail how the Turkish side works with the help of local agitators, tries to win over the population of Adjara and offers a house, land and a number of benefits in exchange for resettlement to Turkey. Before making repressive decisions against agitators Beria demands to send responsible authorities of central bodies to Adjara (an Archive of Ministry of Internal affairs(II), F. 14. disc.3, box 7, file 43; Kartsivadze, 2017).

Thus, the figures indicating the toughness of the repressive policy of the Soviet regime in relation to Adjara are quite reasonable.

As it is known, **The "limits" of arrests and executions for mass operations were set by the Center however, judging by the archival materials there are many cases when the regional "leadership" asked the center to increase the "limits" of repression.** An example of this is a letter sent by Deputy Head of NKVD of Adjara S. I. A. Kuteli to Deputy Head of NKVD of Georgia SSR A. N. Rafava which tells us about the mechanisms for selecting a contingent for the Kulak Troika.

Thus, several important issues were identified - the meetings of the so-called "Threesome" were a completely formal process; Soviet Georgia often exceeded the "limits" set by the "center"; In percentage terms, the scale of repression was higher in Adjara compared to the total population.

2.2. Reflection of political terror in history textbooks

This sub-chapter covers the issue of including history textbooks in the process of forming a memory policy and describes the dynamics of their change.

The interpretation of history over the past decades and the formation of a new collective memory are in line with the country's political agenda and ideology.

As it is well known, during the Soviet period especially in the early 1940s the Stalin regime began to use history as an instrument of politics and ideology. In 1934, writing the first standardized textbook in the

history of the USSR began. In the process of writing history on the one hand, nationalism was encouraged and on the other hand, Russia's role in the USSR was highlighted. As a result, there was an active propaganda of nationalist and patriotic sentiments in the Soviet republics (Kartsivadze, 2019).

The goals of Georgian historiography have also changed. The official narrative of the history of Georgia presented the formation of the Soviet Union as a progressive event and instilled in the public memory a positive view of its membership.

Historical narratives in school history textbooks have also changed in line with Soviet challenges with friendly relations between Russians and Georgians being paramount. The focus was on the 19th century when Erekle II turned to "co-religionist Russia". The "Great October Revolution" was seen as an event of world importance and the beginning of a new era.

Publicity became part of the transformation policy during the ruling of the Soviet Union by Mikhail Gorbachev. Publicity touched upon, among other things, problems and contradictions in Soviet historiography which was followed by extensive study and re-evaluation of history.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the restoration of independence, one of the main goals was to restore the historical memory "forgotten" under the communist regime which, first of all, involved promoting the history of the Democratic Republic of Georgia and showing the criminal nature of Soviet management. Historians were involved in the process.

In post-Soviet Georgia, there are three distinct generations of school history textbooks. The first generation of history textbooks was an updated version of Soviet textbooks where only symbols and terms were changed. Second-generation textbooks were with a dissident mood aimed at awakening patriotic feelings and third-generation textbooks

where the beginnings of critical analysis are more pronounced (Reisner, 2019).

As part of the study, we reviewed ninth- and tenth-grade public history textbooks in Georgia. It was revealed that the Soviet narrative was preserved in the textbooks when repressive politics were considered in the context of the biographies of several individuals with an approach typical of the historiography of the 90s, where the main focus was on the persecution and repression of the so-called "Soviet intellectuals".

Thus, updating high school history textbooks in Georgia is an accompanying part of the political, economic and socio-cultural transformation of the state and consequently, events take place in parallel in different areas.

The reform of the education system in 2004-2009, which aimed to encourage critical and independent thinking, the introduction of new teaching methods and the development of skills along knowledge will hopefully, in the long run, also have a positive impact on the creation of an official historical narrative.

2.3. Reflection of political repressions in fiction and art

This sub-chapter of the paper discusses how political repression was reflected in art and fiction, why we do not remember the Soviet past in cinematographic art where Tengiz Abuladze's film "Repentance" is a precedent, and in general, what happens to art in conditions of political terror.

After 1921, all areas of art fell under ideology. Everything creative outside of socialism died followed by the repressions of 1937 and subsequent events.

During the Soviet period, the living literary processes that took place in the Georgian literature of 1910-20 were categorically stopped. In 1932, the Writers' Union was founded, which finally banned literary groups. Writers who were followers of trends and ideas characteristic of Europe at that time were physically destroyed by the events of 1937 or became

afollowers of "socialist realism". (In 1937, about 120 writers were exterminated in various forms).

Soviet propaganda occupies an important place in Georgian literature of 1917-1920 and the entire subsequent period. In Soviet Georgia, it is generally difficult to name a writer who has nothing dedicated to the Soviet system. The anthology of Georgian Soviet poetry covering the period from 1921 to 1971 vividly reflects the period that has passed in Soviet society.

Total control of the literature began in 1922 when the Soviet government established the "Main Literature Division". for literature and publishing. Its censors decided whether to publish or ban Soviet or foreign books.

Although censorship became relatively loyal after Stalin's death, it was not completely abolished until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In addition to fiction, the Soviet terror affected all areas and fields of public life including theater and cinema. It is the consequence of this great terror that explains Polykarp Kakabadze's "The Marriage of a farmer", which is expressly ideological and completely different from his impressionist plays such as "Before Dawn" written before 1918.

Nor did the Soviet system neglect the role of filmmakers in forming Soviet identity. As a result, Soviet cinema turned into a mass performance.

A number of films have been banned on formalism charges. Some of the directors were forced to stop filming.

In the works created in the post-Stalin period, the problems of political terror were somehow lost due to the emphasis on the personality cult since the heirs of Stalin themselves were at the forefront of repression. During Gorbachev's rule and in the era of the so-called "transformation", Tengiz Abuladze's film "Repentance" became a symbol of publicity, exposing the past repression of the Soviet Union and the desire for dictatorship. After the collapse of the Soviet Empire, the

problem of political repression again attracted the attention of creators and scientists, but the scale of the crime after the repressions of 1937, which remained as a "killed soul" in the history of Georgia, was uncertain.

2.4. Political repressions in periodicals

This paragraph describes what the media looks like in a propaganda service some of which have also sacrificed their lives for repressive policies.

Collective memory manipulation tools have worked well since the Soviet era and governments have made extensive use of the media which has become a major contributor to campaigning. This was the case in the Soviet Union as well.

In 1956, the Tbilisi Television Center began operating in Georgia which like the broadcasts of other Soviet socialist republics was used to popularize Soviet ideology and corresponded to the decisions of the central government in thematic terms.

The print media also served propaganda, especially political magazines and newspapers: Communist, "Партийная жизнь/party politics" „Правда/truth" and others.

In 1921, a socio-political newspaper was established in Batumi which changed its name several times. Initially, the newspaper was called "Agencies" and was part of the political department of the Revolutionary Committee of the Batumi region and the 11th Red Army. From 1929 it was renamed into "Workers' battle", from March 29, 1923 - "battle", from March 18, 1924 - "Poor", from March 17, 1929 to February 6, 1936 - "Soviet Adjaristan" then "Soviet Adjara", which existed until 1990 and was a member of the Adjara Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, the Supreme Council of the Ajarian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and the Council of Ministers.

The articles of "Soviet Adjara" give us an idea of how the process of formation of the Soviet identity took place: "Only people loyal to

communism should be employees of the newspaper. A true Bolshevik journalist can not defend rotten neutrality. He is obliged by all means to make his words in defense of the party heard. "(Soviet Adjara (1937), July 28).

The narratives in the Soviet media changed depending on the policies pursued at different stages of the Soviet system, and were fully consistent with the official decisions taken by the Soviet authorities.

2.5. Family narratives in the cultural memory of people

This chapter discusses the oral histories that were collected at different times from the descendants of the repressed in the Adjara region and used as an alternative memory.

The documents preserved in the 8th fund of the archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which are historical sources, do not correspond to the information preserved by the group of victims. It is often the case that family members do not even know what happened to their family after the mass arrests. In 2019, some became aware of the execution of their ancestor, when the alleged graves of those who were shot in Adjara during the Soviet terror were discovered in the suburb of Batumi and their list was published on the website of the eparchy of Batumi and Lazeti.

This fact can be considered as an attempt to talk about the trauma which reminded the society, including the group of victims, of the tragedy that took place in the form of "Great Terror" and as a result of which their family members, close relatives and a large part of the society were repressed.

Based on the empirical material we have obtained, it can be said that individual stories are fundamentally different from the "official" versions. It should also be noted that the individual memory significantly reflects the narratives disseminated by the regime which created an ambivalent attitude towards both the ruling high society and ordinary officials.

Speaking about the descendants of the repressed, the presence of *post-traumatic stress* disorder should be noted. Among the symptoms of the trauma is an *unconscious fear* that still haunts the family members of the repressed. The characteristic symptoms of traumatized memory, judging by our respondents, include *fear of the future* manifested in the constant expectation of a disaster which is revealed in respondents in the second and third generations.

Unconscious fear and distrust is a symptom characteristic of almost all social strata. Most of the respondents know who reported their family member, but avoid talking about it.

In the Adjara region, for the reasons stated above one of the main accusations was membership in a pro-Turkish party which was undoubtedly considered an anti-Soviet act but on the other hand, this could also be seen as anti-Georgian activity. It is true that in the course of general rehabilitation those repressed by the Soviet system were acquitted but the entry in archival documents, which may not be entirely correct, still leaves questions for the descendants of the repressed. This issue is especially emphasized in the study of oral histories.

Thus, based on a number of reasons and examples, it can be concluded that the traumas inflicted on society by the Soviet system in various forms are still an open wound that does not allow us to distance ourselves from it and give an objective assessment.

Chapter III - A reassessment of the Soviet past at the institutional level

This chapter reviews attempts to reevaluate the Soviet past at the institutional level including attitudes towards rehabilitation issues of the repressed, which may have become grounds for additional trauma.

3.1. Changes in legislation, an issue of lustration

The sub-chapter is devoted to the assessment of the Soviet system and issues of distancing from it at the institutional level after the restoration of independence.

Attitudes towards the Soviet past in the early stages of independence are quite negative although events developed differently after the military coup and the civil war. Shevardnadze, who came to power, had a much more positive attitude towards the Soviet regime and Stalin. Clearly, the attitude of the government was reflected in the political course pursued by them.

After the Rose Revolution a new stage begins when the emphasis is shifted to the creation of places of memory of the Soviet past. Since 2005, the creation of new monuments, museums and memorials has begun. The process became particularly active after the August war when the government that came to power through the Rose Revolution exhausted all resources for establishing diplomatic relations with Russia (Karaia, 2015).

In 2011, the Georgian parliament approved the Freedom Charter which includes a set of anti-terrorist measures including lustration and a ban on Soviet symbols. In 2013, several amendments were made to the law aimed at eliminating the communist totalitarian symbols in the country although the law has not yet been enacted.

All governments have been trying to pass a lustration law for twenty years. The issue became relevant not in accordance with the public interest but in accordance with the political agenda and in response to a specific political event.

Thus, despite the measures taken, **the process of distancing itself from the Soviet past by post-Soviet authorities has been inconsistent and has evolved in line with the political agenda.** A clear example of this is the inadmissibility of the lustration law, which is still a relevant issue for the Georgian society.

3.2. Issues of the rehabilitation of the repressed

The sub-chapter describes how the process of rehabilitation of the repressed in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods took place.

In Georgia, the process of rehabilitation of victims of repression in the 1930s and later began in 1989. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia adopted rehabilitation legislative acts but it was not possible to provide rehabilitation opportunities for all victims, especially those deported. At the request of the European Court, Georgia introduced a rule of monetary compensation, but this process could not be completed due to the small amount of monetary compensation, incomplete awareness of citizens, bureaucratic difficulties in obtaining archival documents and other reasons.

The formal attitude and the small amount of compensation caused additional trauma for the repressed and their descendants. In addition, in 2005, Part of the package of social benefits, except for the pension supplement, became invalid due to the adoption of a new law on social assistance.

For the success of the rehabilitation process, we consider it expedient to bring within the law those part of the deportees on ethnic grounds who have already obtained the status of victims of Soviet repression. At the same time, it is necessary to increase compensation, set minimum and maximum thresholds, raise public awareness about memorialization of places of remembrance and political repression.

For the success of the rehabilitation process, it is advisable to involve in the framework of the law that part of those deported on ethnic grounds that have already received the status of victims of Soviet repressions. In addition, it is necessary to increase compensation, establish minimum and maximum thresholds, and raise public awareness about memory sites and political repression.

3.3. Graves of the victims of repression

This sub-chapter discusses the issues and challenges that accompany the process of finding the graves of victims of repression.

By combining archival information and oral stories, it became known that the execution in Georgia was fully carried out in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi and Sukhumi.

The most important thing should be considered the discovery on April 5, 2019 by the Batumi and Lazeti eparchy of the place of mass execution in the vicinity of Batumi, where the remains of about 150 people were found, however, the events around this fact somehow damaged the scientific research interest since the process was carried out without the involvement of specialists. The high public interest was also not taken into account. Three years have passed since but the remains are still stored in the basement of the Batumi Cathedral of the Mother of God.

Another possible burial place that may exist on the territory of Adjara is the so-called Beria's summer-cottage in Salibauri, from which several secret tunnels passed.

Conclusions and recommendations:

Thus, the study of Soviet repression in terms of political and cultural memory was carried out on the basis of archival materials, scientific works, textbooks, periodicals, fiction and cinematographic art. The doctoral dissertation also presents individual stories related to political repression that were collected in the families of the descendants of the repressed and used as an alternative memory.

Civil confrontation and economic destruction in Georgia in the 1990s made the problems of the Soviet past secondary and made it difficult to comprehend the Soviet past. During the same period, a fire in the building of the Security Committee destroyed a significant part of the archival materials, and in addition, the removal of the archives of the USSR State Security Committee from Georgia did not allow a full-fledged study and determination of the scale of repression., as well as complete rehabilitation and lustration. A factor hindering scientific

research has also been the continued influence of the Soviet “intellectuals” on the discourse of history in the post-Soviet period. Ultimately, it was impossible to establish the proper knowledge that would facilitate an adequate assessment of the past.

The study of archival materials and modern research confirms that for a number of reasons, the attitude of the Soviet system towards the population of Adjara was tough. The special control of the Soviet government in Adjara and the severe repressive policy were conditioned by the region's historical past, border location and ambivalent attitude towards identity.

When studying the oral history, many cases were revealed when a group of victims showed a number of symptoms (unconscious fear, excessive vigilance) characteristic of traumatic memory. PTSD has become an everyday problem for people.

Persons experienced repression to themselves needed special attention from the state and society, which was to be achieved through a worthy process of rehabilitation, through lustration and the creation of sites of memory. The Freedom Charter, adopted by the state only in 2011, has not yet been enacted. The Museum of Occupation founded in 2006 serves to portray the country as a victim rather than an understanding of the Soviet past. Forgetting the period of terror is also facilitated by the education system which provides only fragmentary knowledge about this period.

Political repressions in post-Soviet Georgia were not mentioned either in art or in literature. Even those writers who experienced this pressure avoided writing about terror. There are only a few works in the literature on repressive politics. There is only one example in Georgian cinema - this is Tengiz Abuladze's "Repentance" created in Soviet times.

Thus, it can be said that the positive attitude of a not so small part of the society towards the Soviet regime is conditioned by low awareness

and less access to individual stories, while the totalitarian traumas in the group of victims are unspeakable.

We can say that that part of the modern world that withstood the pressure of the Soviet system has moved on to a new stage of overcoming trauma. Poland started and today several countries are actively using negative examples to overcome this problem. Museums and other spaces are being set up to show the crimes committed by the country's representatives, which can be compared to Germany's attitude to the **Holocaust**. This process has not started in Georgia yet. The "Soviet Past Research Laboratory" in Tbilisi made some attempts when it decided to place memorial plaques on the houses of people involved in the Soviet system but the fact met with some opposition from local authorities.

Thus, despite the fact that more than 80 years have passed since the repressions and Georgia is counting three decades since the restoration of political independence, many questions still remain unanswered. As time goes on, against the background of the lack of information and stereotypes the issue becomes even more vague.

To fully understand and distance oneself from the Soviet past, it is desirable to:

1. Complete the rehabilitation process, provide decent compensation;
2. Pass a lustration law;
3. Create sites sites by acknowledging responsibility and using negative examples;
4. Improve the quality of access to archival documents through the implementation of relevant legislative changes;
5. Improve high school curricula to better understand the Soviet past;

6. The need to develop master's and doctoral programs in higher education institutions in this regard;
7. Activate oral history research, which should also be supported by the state;
8. To pay more attention to the crimes committed by the Soviet upper circle in order to share responsibility and objectively understand the recent past;
9. The need to create memorial books, movies;
10. Identify graves found in the suburbs of Batumi and arrange a common cemetery as a site of memory.

Published works of Irine Shervashidze:

1. Reflection of political repression in Georgian historiography, International Scientific Electronic Journal („History, Archaeology, Ethnology”), ISSN 2449-285X, IV, 2020. URL address: <http://sciencejournals.ge/index.php/HAE/article/view/63>

2. Soviet repressions in Adjara and its international political aspects, Archive Division of Adjara, South-West Georgia (History, Archaeology, Ethnology), Papers of the International Scientific Conference- VIII, Tbilisi, 2018, p.:159-179;

3. Reflection of Political Repressions in Scientific Literature, "Humanities in the Information Society - III", Papers of the International Scientific Conference, BSU - 2019.

Conferences:

1. For the study of political repressions in Adjara Archive Division of Adjara, South-West Georgia (History, Archaeology, Ethnology), International Scientific Conference- VIII, Tbilisi, 2018;

2. Political Repressions in Scientific Literature, International Scientific Conference "Humanities in the Information Society - III", BSU - 2019.