

For a political portrait of Nikoloz (Carlo) Chkheidze**ნიკოლოზ (კარლო) ჩხეიძის პოლიტიკური პორტრეტისთვის****OTAR JANELIDZE**Doctor of History, Professor of Gori State University,
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Abstract

The elite of the Democratic Republic of Georgia is decorated with many famous personalities. Among them are Karlo Chkheidze, one of the founders of the Mesame Dasi (Third Group) deputy of the State Duma of Russia of the third and fourth convocations and leader of the Social Democratic faction, chairman of the Transcaucasian Seim, and then the National Council, Parliament and Constituent Assembly of Georgia. His name is closely connected not only with the revolutionary movement and the spread of Marxist ideology in the working circles of our country but also with the history of the Georgian Democratic Republic of 1918-1921. He was one of the prominent figures among those who led and laid the foundation for the new Georgian state, inextricably rooted in Western values, parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech, self-expression, and so on. in Georgian reality.

Thanks to his professionalism, inner honesty, and moral authority, he was respected not only by members of the Social Democratic Party who headed the government but also by representatives of the opposition spectrum and Georgian society as a whole. Karlo Chkheidze was well known and appreciated both in the circles of the Russian and the international socialist movement. He was also an important figure in the Georgian political emigration, which continued the struggle for the liberation of Georgia abroad since 1921.

Keywords: Parliament; Constituent Assembly; Deputy; Democratic Republic of Georgia; Karlo Chkheidze.

ოთარ ჯანელიძე

ისტორიის მეცნიერებათა დოქტორი,
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აბსტრაქტი

საქართველოს დემოკრატიული რესპუბლიკის ელიტას მრავალი თვალსაჩინო მოღვაწე ამშვენებს. მათ შორისაა „მესამე დასის“ ერთ-ერთი ფუძემდებელი, რუსეთის მესამე და მეოთხე მოწვევის სახელმწიფო სათათბიროს დეპუტატი და სოციალ-დემოკრატიული ფრაქციის ლიდერი, ამიერკავკასიის სეიმის, ხოლო შემდეგ საქართველოს ეროვნული საბჭოს, საქართველოს პარლამენტისა და დამფუძნებელი კრების თავმჯდომარე კარლო ჩხეიძე. მისი სახელი მჭიდროდ უკავშირდება, არა მხოლოდ რევოლუციური მოძრაობისა და მუშათა წრეებში მარქსისტული იდეოლოგიის გავრცელებას ჩვენს ქვეყანაში, არამედ 1918-1921 წლებში არსებული საქართველოს დემოკრატიული რესპუბლიკის ისტორიასაც. ის იყო ერთ-ერთი გამორჩეული ფიგურა მათ შორის, ვინც სათავეში ედგა და საფუძველს უყრიდა ახალ ქართულ სახელმწიფოს, ქართულ სინამდვილეში განუხრელად ამკვიდრებდა დასავლურ ღირებულებებს, საპარლამენტო დემოკრაციას, სიტყვის, გამოხატვის თავისუფლებასა და სხვ.

თავისი პროფესიონალიზმის, შინაგანი პატიოსნების და მორალური ავტორიტეტის გამო მას პატივს სცემდნენ არა მარტო ხელისუფლების სათავეში მდგომი სოციალ-დემოკრატი თანაპარტიელები, არამედ ოპოზიციური სპექტრის წარმომადგენლები და მთლიანად ქართველი საზოგადოება. კარლო ჩხეიძეს კარგად იცნობდნენ და აფასებდნენ, როგორც რუსეთის, ისე საერთაშორისო სოციალისტური მოძრაობის წრეებშიც. იგი მნიშვნელოვან როლს ასრულებდა ქართულ პოლიტიკურ ემიგრაციაშიც, რომელიც საქართველოს განთავისუფლებისათვის ბრძოლას 1921 წლიდან უცხოეთში განაგრძობდა.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: პარლამენტი, დამფუძნებელი კრება, დეპუტატი, საქართველოს დემოკრატიული რესპუბლიკა, კარლო ჩხეიძე

Introduction

Over the past three decades, a number of notable works have been devoted to the history of the Democratic Republic of Georgia. The cardinal issues of the reconstruction of socio-political and economic life, internal and external relations, etc. of this Georgian state that existed from 1918-1921 were studied. The "Encyclopedia-lexicon of the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921)" was prepared and published, and publications were published covering the activities of state institutions of

the First Republic of Georgia (Constituent assembly, State control, various Ministries), various aspects of the activities of individual leaders of power and the opposite spectrum and others, but we still do not have a full-fledged study that would represent the Georgian political elite of this period as a whole and deeply analyze the deeds and thoughts of its prominent representatives. This is an important and necessary task of historiography, because epochs are created by personalities, and leaders, endowed with leadership qualities, they determine the direction and content of social life. As for state activity, it is usually led by the political elite - a group of people in whose hands power and control are concentrated. The dominant and ruling political force in the Democratic Republic of Georgia was the Social Democratic Party, one of whose leaders was Nikoloz (Carlo) Chkheidze.

Karlo Chkheidze was a widely known figure of his time, but he, like other leaders of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, was forgotten by the communist regime. Because of this, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, additional efforts were needed to return the names of these people to history and the nation's collective memory. In this regard, the merit of Professor Guram Sharadze, who published the first letter dedicated to Karlo Chkheidze in the newspaper "Sakhalkho Ganatleba" (Public Education) in 1989 (Sharadze, 1989) which was later included in the book dedicated to Georgian emigration (Sharadze, 1991).

Published in 2001 G. Saitidze's book (Saitidze, 2001), refers to Karlo Chkheidze's work in the Third and Fourth State Council of Russia, and in 2019 the non-governmental organization - "Information Freedom Development Institute" (IDFI) published a memorial album, (Chkheidze, 2019) in which the biography of the Georgian political figure and his path, both in the Russian Empire, as well as in free Georgia and French emigration, are briefly conveyed with documents and photographs.

The present article, which is based on primary sources (archive documents, periodical press materials, including Georgian emigrant publications, memoir literature, etc.), is an attempt to present the political portrait of Karlo Chkheidze from a relatively broad perspective in English.

Method

The research methodology is determined by the purpose and objective of the article. Along with the principle of historicism and the retrospective method, the biographical method was used, and personal documents of Karlo Chkheidze were studied: letters, autobiography, notes, etc., which allow us to trace the life path of the Georgian figure, to note the factors that influenced the formation of his worldview and personality in different periods.

Results

The study and analysis of primary sources revealed that Karlo Chkheidze is one of the few Georgian politicians who founded the first Marxist organization in Georgia "Mesame Dasi". The public recognized his name as a talented publicist from the beginning of the 90s of the 19th century thanks to publications published in the Kvali newspaper. Articles by Karlo Chkheidze, imbued with a Marxist worldview, immediately attracted the attention of interested readers.

In 1887-1888, Karlo Chkheidze became an active participant in the student movement in the university cities of Ukraine - Odesa, and Kharkiv. Karlo Chkheidze, who from his youth was fascinated by the ideas of the famous German thinker Karl Marx, believed that "the establishment of socialism is the necessary and greatest goal of the progress of mankind," and devoted his whole life to his service.

The Georgian Social Democrats, one of whose leaders was Karlo Chkheidze, advocated a peaceful solution of social issues through reforms, in contrast to those who advocated intensification of the class struggle and revolutionary transformations.

The political talent, potential and oratorical abilities of Karlo Chkheidze were fully revealed during his deputy and chairmanship of the Social Democratic faction in the Russian State Duma (1907-1917). Karlo Chkheidze, who at that time was a member of the political elite of the empire, was removed from the general imperial leadership by further developments, but already as an authoritative figure found himself at the center of the political life of the South Caucasus: he was the chairman of the Transcaucasian Seim, and then headed the National Council, Parliament, and the Constituent Assembly Georgia.

Since 1921, in order to continue the struggle for the liberation of Georgia, Karlo Chkheidze, who emigrated abroad, continued his political activities, speaking at socialist congresses and conferences in different countries, collaborating with Georgian emigrant publications, etc. But during the years of emigration, his health deteriorated significantly. In 1926, a Georgian leader, who fell into a difficult physical and moral condition, committed suicide.

Discussions

It so happened that after the overthrowing of Tsarism, the Georgian Social Democrat Nikoloz (Karlo) Chkheidze became one of the leaders of the Russian Empire. On February 27 (March 12), 1917 he became a member of the Interim Committee of the IV State Duma, which formed the Provisional Government of Russia. At the same time, he chaired a revolutionary body, the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' Deputies, and in June of the same year, at the first congress of the All-Russian Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, he was elected as Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of said Soviet. He was sometimes called the "true creator of the Russian Republic" (Newspaper Sakartvelo (Georgia), 1917).

According to the contemporaries, since the real power was in the hands of the Soviets, Chkheidze could have easily become the leader of the interim government if he had wanted to, but he had no such desire. The February Revolution of 1917 produced new heroes, "Knights" as they were then called: Karlo Chkheidze, Alexander Kerensky, Irakli Tsereteli ... In the circles of workers and soldiers, these people were worshiped, praised, and Dithyrambs were dedicated to them. Everyone spoke about them, and they were considered the saviors of Russia. "Chkheidze's name became a symbol of the struggle for democracy and socialism among the broad masses of Russian workers, who saw him as their leader and defender" (Journal Brdzola (Struggle), 1926). Shortly after the revolution, the publishing house "Свободная Россия" (Free Russia) published and distributed a large edition of the biography of Karlo Chkheidze, with a portrait painted by the famous Russian artist Isaac Brodsky

(Newspaper Ertoba (Unity), 1917). A postcard series by artist S. Kushchenko, with portraits of Russian political leaders, including that of Karlo Chkheidze, was also published (htt). American writer John Reed called Karlo Chkheidze an “old eagle.” (Рид, 1957) In March 1917, Karlo Chkheidze was elected as an honorary citizen of Tbilisi (Journal Teatri da Tskhovreba (Theater and Life), 1917).

The Georgian figure managed to achieve all this at the age of 50. He was born in 1864 in the village of Puti, Shorapani district, Kutaisi province, to the family of nobleman Simon Chkheidze. After graduating from the four-grade pre-gymnasium in Kutaisi in 1882, Karlo Chkheidze entered the classical gymnasium of the same city. He was not able to graduate, as, before moving to the eighth grade, in 1887, he was forced to stop his studies due to health problems. The following year, he was allowed into the examinations, but to no avail. In 1888, Chkheidze enrolled as a free listener at the University of Novorossiysk. This name was given to the imperial higher educational facility founded in 1865 in Odessa. Many Georgians studied at this university, which was geographically closest to Georgia, and became united in the Georgian community of Odessa, with its common fund and library, where they developed and read papers on various important issues. Numerous young Georgians were also involved in the student movement, which was initially limited to activities related to academic matters, but which gradually acquired a socio-political angle. The students opposed the bureaucratic formalism prevailing in the high schools of the Russian Empire, they were against the police measures, protested against the restriction of students rights by the university charter, and organized rallies. Karlo Chkheidze, a freshman at the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics, was expelled from the university for participating in such a rally. That same year, he entered the Kharkov Veterinary Institute as a free listener, but he could not finish his studies there either – he was again involved in student rallies and was expelled from the school (Члены Государственной думы, 1913).

In the following period, he could not allocate time for studies, and thus remained a “man of letters” with secondary education or unfinished higher education¹ (htt1) Yet, this did not prevent him from distinguishing himself in another field – the political arena. He was fascinated by the ideas of the German thinker Karl Marx, got acquainted with them thoroughly, and thereafter devoted his whole life to the service of socialist principles. It was the knowledge of Marx’s teachings that created the basis for his “party name” – Karlo.

Karlo Chkheidze was one of the prominent members of the circle that appeared in Georgia as an apologist for the Marxist worldview. The spread of working-class ideology, Marxism, began in Georgia in the 1890s. Due to the fact that the factory industry was not widely developed in Georgia at that time, and the number of workers was not large,² it seemed that Marxist ideology would not take hold, but the opposite happened.

In the Georgian reality, the first group of Marxist or social-democratic directions was formed by the young people gathered around writer Egnate Ninoshvili: Silibistro Jibladze, Isidore Ramishvili, Noe Zhordania, Karlo Chkheidze, Vladimer Darchiashvili, Mikha Tskhakaia, and others. In 1892, as a

¹ There is some information that he graduated from the Austrian Mining Academy.

² According to the 1897 census, the number of workers employed in industrial enterprises barely reached 30,000.

result of meetings in Zestaponi, and in 1893 in Tbilisi, they founded a social-democratic organization, which Giorgi Tsereteli called the “Mesame dasi” (Third Group). In this circle, “Karlo was considered an authority and was approached to solve difficult issues. ... Karlo’s words and thoughts had great power and significance. They were always authoritative and invoked a thirst for new knowledge in us,” Noe Zhordania later recalled.

The Third Group adhered to the ideological visions of Western European social democracies, thus distinguishing themselves from the other groups of Russian social democracy which emerged in the Russian Empire. They advocated a peaceful, reform-based solution to social issues, in contrast to those who advocated for the strengthening of the class struggle and revolutionary transformations. In the words of scholar Stephen Jones, “Despite Georgia’s poverty, backwardness, and physical isolation from Central and Western Europe, European Social Democracy had a far greater impact on the Georgian Social Democrats than the doctrines of socialism originating from Russia” (htt2).

For the propagation of Marxist ideas, the Third Group used the newspaper Kvali (the Furrow), invited to do so by Giorgi Tsereteli. In 1898, he sold the newspaper to them altogether.

From the early 1900s, the Third Group fraternized with the Russian Social Democrats, effectively merged with them, and in 1903 become part of the Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party (RSDWP). Upon creation, this party was divided into two wings – the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. Most of the Third Group, including Karlo Chkheidze, joined the Menshevik wing. He collaborated with the newspaper Kvali, and later in other social-democratic publications, using pseudonyms – “N. Ch.” and “K. Losiantkheveli.”

Karlo Chkheidze lived in Batumi from 1894, where he was elected to the City Council from 1898 to 1906. At the same time, he headed a local hospital. Together with Isidore Ramishvili, he was engaged in educational activities for the workers and established a Sunday school for the workers of the Batumi enterprises and illegal social-democratic circles, on the basis of which he also formed a local party organization.

On October 22, 1895, he, as a representative of Batumi society, greeted the famous poet Raphael Eristavi in Tbilisi on his 50th anniversary. Unlike other speakers, Karlo Chkheidze emphasized the attitude of the venerable elderly artist towards the working people and noted that “love of the homeland and the nation, for us, as elsewhere, was a necessary feature of a real artist, and I am absolutely convinced that this precious feeling is burning with no lesser intensity in the heart of Prince R. Eristavi, but what is remarkable here is that he conveyed this feeling to that part of our nation which is called the lower, working people. ... Love for the lowly people is the strongest feeling of our poet, and precisely here is the greatness of his nature” (Newspaper Kvali (the Furrow), 1895).

During the first People’s Revolution of Russia, Chkheidze led the demonstrations of workers and peasants in Batumi and Guria. He took an active part in mitigating the bloody Armenian-Tatar conflict and, for some time, he had to go underground to avoid the repressions of tsarism. In 1907, Chkheidze was elected to the Tbilisi City Council. In the summer of the same year, he was nominated by the Social-Democratic Organization as a candidate for the Russian State Duma from the Tbilisi

Governorate. According to some sources, Chkheidze was also a delegate to the Helsingfors General Party Conference of the RSDWP IV, and in August 1912, he was elected as a member of the Joint Committee of the same party.

In September 1907, Karlo Chkheidze delivered a speech on Mtatsminda at the funeral of Ilia Chavchavadze. His speech was an attempt to evaluate the life and work of a great figure from a class standpoint, which was an unusual style for a Georgian funeral ritual.

“We are eager to give you the last worldly respect and to celebrate our love for you, but there is love and there is love,” he said. “It will be very far from the truth if someone were to say that we all look upon your past in the same way, and that we all respect and appreciate your work the same way. Let the nobility, the part of our society that lives on the fruits of the labor of the working people, grieve you. Let the local representatives of power come and pay respect to you as a supporter of the principle of the modern state. Let the chauvinists praise you as a patriot. We, of course, will not join such praise, and we will most clearly celebrate what was precious to us. ... The work of your poetic talent has helped to bring to light a new generation that recognized class struggle as the main driving force, the main axis of public life. Incidentally, for this youth, at that time, the fruit of your creativity became the first stage of their mental and moral growth, on which this new generation had to flourish, so as to diligently pursue and realize the great doctrine which teaches us that establishing Socialism is the greatest goal and absolute necessity for achieving human progress. ... as much as you, through your creative work at that time, contributed to the awareness of our society so that we would love this doctrine; as much as you have awakened in our young soul feelings which are absolutely necessary to sincerely serve the great future of socialism, precisely for that much do we want your name to be immortalized” (Newspaper Chveni Gza (Our Way), 1907).

The Duma elections were held in October 1907. Karlo Chkheidze defeated his direct rival Luarsab Andronikashvili by five votes and won an MP mandate. A total of 19 members from the Social Democratic Party were elected to the Duma. They united into one faction and elected Chkheidze as chairman. This continued the tradition established in the first and second Duma: The Social-Democratic factions were headed by Georgian MPs (in the first Irakli Tsereteli, in the second Noe Zhordania).

Noe Zhordania described Karlo Chkheidze’s work in the Russian Duma as follows: “When Karlo was ascending to the tribune of the Duma, the deputies would move down from their chairs so as to be closer to the tribune; so as not to miss a word of the orator” (Journal Brdzola (Struggle), 1926). “The Duma platform allowed Karlo to fully unleash his talent, to reveal his high mental and moral faculties. Karlo – MP became a great political figure not only in Russia. His sharp voice often reached Europe; world democracy; global socialism knew him, fell in love with him, and embraced him,” – wrote Evgeni Gegechkori.

The years of work of the third State Duma coincided with the era of reactionaries in Russia. The deputies then did not have immunity. The left-wing MPs’ perspective in particular “was a jail in Siberia, ... their career – a path to Golgotha,” but Karlo Chkheidze was not afraid of such a fate. The

notes of Evgeni Gegechkori about his activities in the Duma in 1907-1912 are preserved. According to them, Chkheidze “did not like to speak impromptu. ... Only during general battles would he set up on the tribune a large-caliber cannon and fire at the enemy positions. ... Karlo was particularly despised by the right-wingers, and at the same time they respected him the most, while his comrades simply adored him, including members of the faction and the group of ‘advisors’ working with him” (Journal Brdzola (Struggle), 1926).

“Dear Karl, Son of Simon, I am taking the liberty to express my gratitude to you for not only the political but also aesthetic pleasure I receive from your speeches,” Lev Trotsky (Троцкий, 1922) wrote the Georgian MP who, at that time, had sympathies for the Mensheviks. Despite the difficult situation in which Karlo Chkheidze and his party comrades had to work, the Fifth Conference of the RSDWP (December 1908-January 1909) considered the faction’s activities to be successful in attracting the attention of the masses to political issues and promoting social democracy (Меньшевики, 1996).

In the elections of the State Duma of the fourth convocation, in the fall of 1912, Karlo Chkheidze won again in the Tbilisi Governorate, again surpassing Luarsab Andronikashvili, and received 23 positive votes (white ballots) from 44 voters in the second round of elections, and thus retained his MP mandate (Journal Klde (The Rock), 1912); (Newspaper Закавказская речь, 1912).

During the election process, it became known that Chkheidze was running in St. Petersburg as well, with the “qualification of apartment tenant”, but to no avail. There was an attempt to consider the dual participation in the elections as a violation of the election law, with the intention to revoke his mandate obtained in Tbilisi, but the Duma did not consider it so and approved Chkheidze as an MP (Newspaper Закавказская речь, 1912).

The Georgian MP was re-elected as the chairman of the Social Democratic faction, which initially had 14 members before splitting into Bolshevik and Menshevik factions. After the six Bolsheviks registered as a separate faction in November 1913, Chkheidze chaired the Social Democrat Menshevik faction of eight. He was a member of the Council of Elders of the Duma, and a member of the Permanent Budgetary and Temporary Agricultural Commissions of the Duma. Among the issues initiated or supported by him were: the introduction of universal suffrage in Russia, the establishment of administrative self-governing unit (Eroba) in the Caucasus, the implementation of judicial reform, the establishment of a higher education institution, and refugee issues. The Social-Democratic Faction submitted to the Duma a bill on the abolition of temporary obligations³ in the Caucasus, as well as an issue concerning the rights of the Georgian language in schools.

His speech in the Duma on the issue of “terrorist acts in the Caucasus” (December 10, 1908) was sharp and critical (Речи, 1917). He discussed the plight of peasants and refugees due to landlessness, the matter of the colonization of the region by foreigners, the difficult situation in the Georgian Church after the abolition of autocephaly, the mayhem caused by the administration, the corruption of state officials and police, atrocities committed by the covert “Russian Patriotic Organization,” and many

³ The former lordly peasants were considered with temporary obligations; while exempted from slavery through the peasant reform, they still paid feudal taxes for the use of the land before they could redeem the land.

other problems; relying on concrete facts and sources, he exposed the vices plaguing not only the Caucasus, but the entire rule of the empire. Chkheidze called the punitive measures taken by the government in the region after the defeat of the People's Revolution "the second conquest of the Caucasus" (Речи, 1917).

In one of his speeches on approving the budget of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Karlo Chkheidze took a sharply opposing position, expressing complete distrust in the king's government and calling on the population to fight decisively against it. In his speeches, he defended the rights of the Jews and supported the autonomy of Poland and Finland. "As one of the most prominent leaders of his party and chairman of the Social Democrat parliamentary faction, he never deviated from the path which, on behalf of the entire working people of Russia, exposed the political course of the autocratic government (Saitidze, 2001). He often threatened the government with a new revolution and hoped that the Russian people would gain true freedom".

According to Irakli Tsereteli: Karlo Chkheidze's words, "full of sharp irony and sarcasm when he was exposing the evils of tsarism, imbued with fervent faith when he was predicting the inevitable victory of the revolution, expressed his deeply felt suffering and the struggle of his native oppressed people" (Journal Brdzola (Struggle), 1926).

There were situations when Karlo Chkheidze was expelled from the plenary session of the Duma due to his noisy speech; sometimes the faction itself would leave the hall as a sign of protest. The history of the Fourth State Duma remembers the "Chkheidze case".

Speaking at the plenary session of the Duma on March 11, 1914, Chkheidze said: "The most suitable regime for the renewal of the country is a democratic regime, a parliamentary regime, and if you want an even more precise definition, a republican regime." Due to these words, a criminal case was initiated against the Georgian MP for calling for the overthrowing of the existing system. This fact had a great resonance, and, as a sign of solidarity with Chkheidze, about 80,000 workers went on strike in Moscow and St. Petersburg factories. All factions of the Duma, except the right-wing ones, came out against the trial of the leader of the Menshevik faction, and the government was forced to sweep the "Chkheidze case" under the rug and close it (Kupatadze, 2005).

In the periods between Duma sessions, Karlo Chkheidze would visit his homeland, traveling to villages and towns, meeting workers and peasants, answering questions and listening to their opinions. He said during one such meeting: "I am not Karlo Chkheidze alone, my identity does not mean anything. I am merely a person you elected to office. ... You have armed me with such a sharp sword that nothing can stand uncut, and only because of this does deeply enlightened humanity listen to my words. Otherwise, gentlemen, who am I?! Just a random person, Chkheidze from Shorapani. Why would my words have any weight? ... Whenever I spoke from the Duma tribune, addressed a private meeting of Russia or Europe, everywhere I spoke on behalf of the people" (Newspaper Tanamedrove Azri (Contemporary Thought), 1915).

During the First World War, Karlo Chkheidze held a “centrist” position⁴ (Тютюкин, 2002) The Social Democrat faction condemned the bloodshed while blaming the ruling powers of the warring states, saying that the government should not have the support of the people, as the people were being dragged into the “predatory war” against their will. (Меньшевики, 1996). Chkheidze did not support the allocation of military loans to the government, demanding instead an end to the war and “a dignified truce without any conquest or annexation.” Karlo Chkheidze’s speeches in the Duma were published as a separate book in Petrograd in 1917 (Речи, 1917).

As mentioned, in the days of the February Revolution of 1917, Karlo Chkheidze was entrusted with the chairmanship of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ Deputies, and was later elected chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies. In August 1917, he took part in a state meeting in Moscow, and the following month he chaired a democratic meeting in Petrograd on his own initiative, which was attended by representatives of socio-political organizations.

This is how one of his contemporaries and eyewitnesses characterized the work of Karlo Chkheidze, who headed the Russian revolutionary government in 1917: “Extraordinary simplicity, not a single drop of vanity or pride. Absolute devotion to the cause of the working class and that deep sense of responsibility! ... Sometimes it seemed to me that he was physically bending under his heavy cross. It takes a great deal of conscience to feel in this way the responsibility of such a high official position” (Journal Brdzola (Struggle), 1926)

Karlo Chkheidze facilitated the arrival of Lev Trotsky home from the United States; and he met Vladimir Lenin at the railway station and greeted him when he was returning from a long emigration to Petrograd, but he tried in vain to convince the latter that Russia was not yet ready for socialism (htt3).

After the Bolsheviks won a majority in the Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, Chkheidze resigned and returned to Georgia, leaving Lev Trotsky to take over the chairmanship.

Chkheidze reacted negatively to the October 1917 coup, but did not lose hope of Russia’s democratic development until the very last. He was elected as a member in the Constituent Assembly of Russia from the Menshevik faction of the RSDWP. Further developments ousted Karlo Chkheidze from the leadership of the empire, and he was positioned at the center of the political life in the South Caucasus: in November 1917 he became a member of the Georgian National Council, and from February 1918, he was Chairman of the Transcaucasian Seim.

On May 26, 1918, Karlo Chkheidze, as a member of the National Council, signed the Act of Independence of Georgia, and on May 29, 1918, he was elected as Chairman of the National Council of Georgia instead of Noe Zhordania. Chkheidze retained the post of head of this legislative body of the republic even after the transformation of the council into a parliament, and in March 1919, he was

⁴In relation to the war, in general, several groups emerged in the RSDWP – “Oborontsi,” “Centrists,” “Internationalists,” and others.

entrusted with the chairmanship of the Constituent Assembly in absentia (the deputies making this decision unanimously) (Constituent Assembly of Georgia, Vol. I, 2019).

Since the Presidium of the Constituent Assembly of Georgia was elected for a one-session term in accordance with the regulations, on March 16, 1920, the elections were held again. The candidacy of Karlo Chkheidze, who was nominated as the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly, was supported by 44 deputies. Two abstained and two votes were annulled, “because they were not properly filled out” (Constituent Assembly of Georgia, Vol. I, 2019).

In January 1919, Karlo Chkheidze was sent to the Paris Peace Conference as the head of the official delegation of the Democratic Republic of Georgia. Irakli Tsereteli was also included in the delegation. Due to the popularity of both in the country, as Zurab Avalishvili writes, there was a misconception in the “broad strata of the democracy” of Georgia that nobody would refuse “our Karlo” and “our Kaki” in Paris in their request to recognize Georgia’s independence. Indeed, the names of these politicians in Europe were still remembered by many from the time of the Russian Revolution in February. “Primarily, they were remembered as ones opposing the Bolsheviks. ... On the other hand, these famous names, which were connected with the political disagreement of the Russian parties, confused the foreigners. They were known as Russian figures who appeared on the huge stage of the Russian Revolution visible to everyone... and it was not easy to understand why they appeared now as Georgian” (Avalishvili, 1925).

In December 1920, Karlo Chkheidze returned to his homeland and became actively involved in the workings of the Constituent Assembly. In the words of Giorgi Gvazava, under Chkheidze’s leadership “the Constituent Assembly drafted the Constitution and built the beautiful edifice of a free republic” (National Archives of Georgia, Central Historical Archive) Unfortunately, the “Free Republic” was not destined to exist for much longer. In February-March 1921, it fell victim to Soviet Russian military aggression. Karlo Chkheidze left his homeland together with the Presidium of the Government of the Democratic Republic and the Constituent Assembly and emigrated to France. They had an important mission to continue the fight for Georgia’s independence from abroad.

Karlo Chkheidze started fulfilling the assigned mission with gusto. He participated in socialist congresses and conferences, met with prominent political figures from different European countries and tried to gain their favor and support in the fight for the de-occupation of Georgia. In September 1921, an extensive interview with Karlo Chkheidze was published in the central body of the Finnish Social-Democratic Party Social Democrat, where the Georgian figure asked for support and warned his Finnish comrades: “What happened in Georgia can also happen to you if the European socialist parties refuse to help, and thus provide the Bolsheviks with a carte blanche to attack other neighboring countries with the same impunity. Refusal on the part of the socialist parties to get involved in the support of the enslaved Georgian people would open the door to the recklessness of the Bolsheviks” (Journal Tavisupali Sakartvelo (Free Georgia), 1921).

Karlo Chkheidze remained, from abroad, one of the leaders of the Georgian Social-Democratic Party, was the chairman of the delegation of Georgian political parties, a member of the parity board,

a member of the editorial board of the newspaper Brdzola (Struggle), and wrote articles for Georgian émigré publications. He opposed the anti-Soviet armed movement in Georgia, and after the defeat of the uprising in August 1924, supported the revision of the course of action of Georgian political emigration and the change of tactics in the struggle for freedom. He always thought and dreamed of returning to a free homeland, saying: “If I could only gaze from Bakhmaro – where the sun is above and the clouds below.”

Karlo Chkheidze was the first of the prominent political and state figures of the Democratic Republic of Georgia in emigration to pass, committing suicide in June 1926. In the midst of the political turmoil and segregation that existed in Georgian emigration, in order to avoid further controversy and dispel suspicions, this entirely decent man took necessary precautions and left a suicide note on the table in the room he died, which read: “No-one should be blamed for my death.”

Karlo Chkheidze’s funeral was attended by around 700 people at the famous Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris. Besides Georgian emigrants, politicians and statesmen in exile from Georgia’s neighboring nations, leaders of Communist International, socialist parties in Europe, and others came to pay their respects. Leon Bloom, Pierre Renodel, Alexander Khatsov, Ali Mardan Beg Topchibashev, Giorgi Gvazava, Alexander Kerensky, Irakli Tsereteli, and others spoke at the funeral. Telegrams were sent by the socialists and workers’ parties of Italy, Japan, Spain, Finland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Ukraine, the Netherlands, and other countries.

Irakli Tsereteli explained the tragedy of Karlo Chkheidze as follows: “When he lost direct contact with the people, he lost the power of resistance. Even a mighty oak dies when uprooted by a storm from a nourishing ground. That’s how Chkheidze died” (Journal Социалистический вестник, 1926) According to Giorgi Gvazava, Georgia was fighting relentlessly against the Bolsheviks. “In order for Europe to see this struggle and feel more strongly the tragedy that is now unfolding in Georgia, Chkheidze turned a knife to his throat. This act is a real self-sacrifice, a sacrifice of his life on the altar of the deity called world consciousness and intelligence. Such a sacrifice will not go unnoticed” (National Archives of Georgia, Central Historical Archive).

In his farewell speech, Alexander Kerensky said: “Chkheidze left after fulfilling a tremendous task – not only for Georgia, but for the whole of Russia. And when his body is buried in his homeland, let us also bow before the one who was a friend of our homeland and your son” (Journal Tavisupali Sakartvelo (Free Georgia), 1921).

According to his fellow party members, “Karlo was a being of the highest morality. He has never had vanity, envy, or pride in him. He led great endeavors, but he tried to put others in front and to stand behind them” (Noe Zhordania); “Chkheidze was the most educated Marxist in the Caucasus,” (Julius Martov).

Karlo Chkheidze was highly appreciated not only by his party members but also by the representatives of the opposition. Giorgi Machabeli, one of those who emigrated after the overthrow of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, drafted a plan for the de-occupation of Georgia and identified

some of the members of the country's future coalition government. He considered Karlo Chkheidze from the Social Democrats as a candidate for this government (Kedia, 2007).

“Karlo Chkheidze was not an accidental man in his party. His name was a symbol of Georgian Menshevism and will remain so in the future. ... he was an inseparable companion and leader of this party” – the Georgian Soviet newspaper *Komunisti* (Communist) noted in the days following Karlo Chkheidze's death (*Newspaper Komunisti (Communist)*, 1926). According to the same newspaper: “Karlo Chkheidze was one of the first to establish the Georgian Social-Democratic Workers' Party. From the first day of the establishment of the Georgian Social-Democratic Party until June 12 of this year, he worked diligently to implement the Menshevik principles.”

Moscow's response to the death of the famous Georgian political and state figure was particularly bitter. The newspaper *Pravda* wrote: “Chkheidze ended his life – lonely, frustrated, forgotten, hostile to the cause of the revolution. He did not understand the significance of the great historical events that took place against the wishes and aspirations of him and likeminded people. ...Useless to anyone in the face of his shattered illusions, spited by history, the counterrevolutionary emigrant ended his own life with his own hands” (*Newspaper Правда*, 1926).

This portrait of Karlo Chkheidze can be concluded with the words of French socialist Severak: “French socialists will add the name of the great Georgian socialist Nikoloz Chkheidze to the names of those who died for socialism. He fought for us to the last of his abilities, and he remained a worthy man even in the face of death” (*Journal Brdzola (Struggle)*, 1926).

Conclusion

The name Nikoloz (Karlo) Chkheidze, a prominent politician and statesman, recognized leader of Georgian social democracy, is closely connected to the revolutionary movement and the spread of Marxist ideology in the working class of Georgia (he is considered "the most educated Marxist in the Caucasus").

The personality of Karlo Chkheidze is also inseparable from the history of the Democratic Republic of Georgia since he was one of the outstanding figures among those who headed and laid the foundations of the new Georgian state in 1918-1921. If anything distinguished the First Georgian Republic in terms of progress and democracy, it was its multi-party parliament and constituent assembly, which were headed by Karlo Chkheidze. Due to this, the name of Karlo Chkheidze entered and established itself forever in the history of Georgian parliamentarism.

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