

## THE JANUARY UPRISING AND GEORGIAN SOCIETY

იანვრის აჯანყება და ქართული საზოგადოება

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### **Abstract.**

The uprising of 1863-1864 for national freedom is the heroic page in the history of the Polish people. The aim of the rebellion against the Russian Empire was the restoration of the Polish Statehood. Unfortunately the unequal fight was destined to fail. According to the official records because of the repressions about 60-70 thousands of the Poles were deported to Russia (Siberia, the Urals, the Caucasus).

The heroic fight of the Poles had great resonance among the European countries. Of course interest to it arouse in the Georgian Society too. In Georgia, which was the colony of Russia like Poland, the information about the uprising was mainly spread via the Russian periodical press (“Kavkaz”). Also the Georgian community’s relations in Petersburg and in the other Russian cities with the progressive part of the Russian intelligentsia (private correspondence, relations with the Polish society) and probable relations with the Poles in exile in Georgia were the other important resource of the information.

The uprising of the Poles was one of the impulses to the national movement for freedom in Georgia. In the second half of the XIX century because of “Tergdaleulebi” the national consciousness in the Georgian society became to emerge. Therefore the resonance to the processes in the world especially to the fights of the oppressed people was one of the leverages by which “the Tergdaleulebi” formed the anti-Russian disposition and strengthened the national consciousness that was crucial precondition for the independence of Georgia.

The trace of the tragic uprising of the Poles was firmly embedded in the Georgian consciousness. The confirmation to it was the fact that in 1898 after the 30 years of suppression of the rebellion only the community of the Georgian students organized the sympathy protest action.

**Key words:** the January Uprising, the Russian Empire, the struggle for national liberation, Georgian society “Tergdaleulebi”.

### კახაბერ სურგულაძე

ისტორიის მეცნიერებათა დოქტორი, ბათუმის  
შოთა რუსთაველის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტის პროფესორი  
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### აბსტრაქტი.

ეროვნული თავისუფლებისკენ მიმართული 1863-1864 წლების აჯანყება პოლონელი ერის ისტორიის გმირული ბრძოლის ფურცელია. რუსეთის იმპერიის წინააღმდეგ მიმართული აჯანყება მიზნად ისახავდა პოლონეთის სახელმწიფოებრიობის აღდგენას. სამწუხაროდ, უთანასწორო ბრძოლა აჯანყებულთა მარცხით დასრულდა. ოფიციალური მონაცემებით ოკუპანტების მხრიდან რეპრესიები და შემდეგ რუსეთში (ციმბირი, ურალი და კავკასია) დეპორტაცია დაახლ. 60-70 ათასი პოლონელს შეეხო.

პოლონელთა გმირულმა ბრძოლამ დიდი რეზონანსი გამოიწვია ევროპის სახელმწიფოებში. ცხადია, მისდამი დაინტერესება გაჩნდა ქართულ საზოგადოებაშიც. საქართველო, რომელიც პოლონეთის მსგავსად რუსეთის კოლონიას წარმოადგენდა, აჯანყების შესახებ ინფორმაცია ძირითადად ვრცელდებოდა რუსული პერიოდული პრესის (“კავკაზი”) მეშვეობით. ასევე მხედველობაში მისაღებია პეტერბურგში და რუსეთის სხვა ქალაქებში არსებული ე.წ. “ქართული სათვისტომოს” ურთიერთობები რუსული ინტელიგენციის პროგრესულ ნაწილთან (პირადი კორესპონდენციებით, პოლონურ საზოგადოებებთან ურთიერთობებით და საპროტესტო მიტინგის ორგანიზებით) და სავარაუდოდ, საქართველოში გადმოსახლებული პოლონელებისგან.

პოლონელების აჯანყება იყო საქართველოში მიმდინარე ეროვნულ-განმათავისუფლებელი მოძრაობის ერთ-ერთი ბიძგის მიმცემი. XIX ს-ის II ნახევარში ე.წ. “თერგდალეულები”-ს წყალობით ქართული საზოგადოებაში იწყება ეროვნული ცნობიერების გაღვივება. შესაბამისად, მსოფლიოში მიმდინარე პროცესების მიმართ აქტიური გამოხმაურება, განსაკუთრებით თუკი საკითხი ეხებოდა ჩაგრულ ერების ბრძოლებზე ყურადღების მიპყრობა, იყო ის ერთ-ერთი ბერკეტი, რითაც “თერგდალეულები” ახდენდნენ საზოგადოებაში ანტირუსული განწყობის ჩამოყალიბებას და ეროვნული ცნობიერების გაზრდას, რაც უდავოდ საქართველოს დამოუკიდებლობის მოპოვების წინა პირობა იყო.

პოლონელთა აჯანყების ტრაგიკული კვალი მკვეთრად გაჟდა ქართველთა ცნობიერებაში. ამის დასტური იყო თუნდაც 1898 წელს, აჯანყების ჩახშობიდან 30 წლის შემდეგ,

რუსეთის იმპერიაში მხოლოდ პეტერბურგის ქართველ სტუდენტთა სათვისტომოს მიერ მოწყობილი თანაგრძნობის საპროტესტო აქცია.

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** იანვრის აჯანყება, რუსეთის იმპერია, ეროვნულ- განმათავისუფლებელი ბრძოლა, ქართული საზოგადოება “თერგდალეულები”.

### **Premise**

The ongoing Polish uprising against the Russian Empire in 1863-1864 was aimed at restoring national sovereignty. Unfortunately, the unequal struggle of the Poles with the Russian Empire ended in failure. About 60-70 thousand Poles were killed in ongoing battles with the invaders, some were repressed and deported to Russia (Siberia, the Urals and the Caucasus) (Gentes, 2017, p. 78). As a sequence, the January Uprising remains one of the pages of the tragic struggle for freedom in the history of Poland.

Due to its specificity, the January Uprising will always be in the orbit of attention of researchers. The purpose of the given article is to present the position of the Georgian society in relation to the above event. We believe that the coverage of this topic will bring something new to the study of the history of the Uprising. This is also one of the most interesting facts in the history of Polish-Georgian relations.

### **Methods**

The work is written on the basis of a comparison of historical sources and data from scientific literature. The research material has been processed by scientific (material identification, system-structural analysis) and special-scientific (historical-comparative, complex and descriptive) methods. Using them in dialectical unity, it was possible to represent the activity of historical objects and persons in time and space. The research methodology is based on the principle of scientific character, historicism and objectivity. The work uses an integrated approach to formative and civilizational elements. On the basis of analysis in the general context of the era, the combination of methods and methodology allows to consider the national liberation struggle of the Poles against the Russian Empire in 1863-1864 in the social and geopolitical aspects, to show the various approaches of the internal society of the empire to the rebels and, against their background, realistically present the position of sympathy Georgian society to the rebellious Poles.

### **Discussion.**

In the national policy of the Russian Empire, the “Poland theme” was considered the most difficult issue. Russian historiography emphasizes that “Poland was a dangerous example of separatism that destroyed the foundations of Russian national identity” (Иванова, 2012, стр. 9). It is clear that this thesis is a manifestation of great-power thinking, hiding the fact of the illegal annexation-occupation of the Kingdom of Poland by Russia.

An active discussion of the “Polish issue” in the Russian periodical press begins with the January Uprising of 1863, and all legal publications are imbued with a Polonophobic spirit.

Distorting the real facts of the events, publicists tried to present the Polish liberation struggle as a “mutiny” (Яковлев, А., Лихачева, Л., 2013, стр. 116). And all representatives of society - government officials, writers, philosophers, clergy and others adhered to this point of view. This attitude was due to the government's support for the ideas of the Slavophiles and its identification with the Russian national question (Иванова, 2012, стр. 9).

М. Katkov (1818-1887), a Russian publicist of conservative views, editor of the newspaper “Moskovskie Vedomosti”, expressed the sharpest position in relation to the uprising. His point of view was unequivocal - “immediate suppression of the rebellion and the establishment of a military dictatorship in Poland” (Яковлев, А., Лихачева, Л., 2013, стр. 118). Katkov did not see the popular character of the uprising. Addressing the Poles, he wrote: “In Poland we have against ourselves not the Polish nation, which is defending its right to exist, but a long-destroyed state that cannot free itself from plans of conquest” (Катков, 2009, стр. 193). In another statement he explains: “...not all peoples can claim an independent political existence... only those peoples who can substantiate it with history and can preserve it” (Иванова, 2012, стр. 20; Катков, 2009, стр. 182).

For Katkov, the Polish uprising was associated with radical human transformations in Russia. He was afraid that the uprising would affect the activation of the revolutionary forces in Russia. For Katkov, the loss of the status of a great power and the fear of its transformation into a semi-Asian state, which it had been before the ascension to the throne of Peter the Great, was the reason for the aggression against Poland (Иванова, 2012, стр. 22). In the current situation, according to Katkov, the solution was to deprive the Poles of their privileges, to suppress the rebellion and to turn the Russian Empire into a modernist state, in which all subordinate groups would be united into a single category of citizens (Тесля, 2011, стр. 4)

The only one who took a different position in relation to the January Uprising in Russia was the left-wing publicist А. Herzen (1812-1870). With the illegal revolutionary newspaper “Kolokol” published in London, he condemned the annexation-occupation of Poland by the empire. When the chauvinistic policy of the Russian imperial administration in Poland was exposed, Herzen believed that the success of the liberation movement in Russia was connected with the Poles (Яковлев, А., Лихачева, Л., 2013, стр. 11). He wrote that Poland, like Italy and Hungary, has every right to exist as a state independent of Russia (Герцен, Собрание сочинений в 30 тт. Том 7., 1956, р. 233). Or his another statement: “...The independence of Poland is our liberation! Our heads bow under the weight of the crimes committed by ourselves, and the rest assured that we want liberation from Poland no less than Poland from us” (Герцен, Собрание сочинений в 30 тт. Том 18., 1959, р. 23). Unlike others, Herzen contributed to the unification of the common struggle of Russians and Poles and created the “Slavic world” (according to Herzen) on the principle of free federalization (Герцен, Собрание сочинений в 30 тт. Том 14., 1958, стр. 35); (Тесля, 2015, стр. 333).

The heroic struggle of the Poles caused the same resonance in the European states. Since the events, taking place in Poland, concerned the restoration of Polish statehood and due to the coincidence of interests, Georgian society watched the above developments with great concern. In Georgia, which similarly to Poland was a Russian colony, information about the uprising was spread

through the periodical press of the empire (“Caucasus”), the so-called “Georgian communities” existing in Russian cities, and also the progressive part of the Russian intelligentsia, including the Polish communities and, probably, the Poles who emigrated to Georgia.

The “Polish issue” was close to the Georgian society. The struggle of various oppressed peoples for statehood has always aroused sympathy among Georgians. There were moments when Georgian politicians connected the issue of restoring Georgian statehood with the Poles. So, it was before the conspiracy of 1832, when Georgian patriots considered the anti-Russian uprising of the Poles in 1830-1831 as one of the preconditions for their victory (Khundadze, 2012, p. 82).

It is significant that at that time there were attempts to attract emigrants to Georgia or Poles to the Russian civil administration of the Caucasus. One of them was related to the civil governor of Tiflis, Peter Zavileisky (1800-1843) (Khundadze, 2012, p. 82). Also, quite a few Poles worked in the Russian administration of the Caucasus (Furier, 2009). Therefore, based on the geopolitical situation, Georgian-Polish relations already had their foundations.

The support of the rebels by the Georgians was demonstrated by providing the public with objective information about Poland in the periodical press, organizing financial donations and calling in support of the protest of the Georgian community of St. Petersburg. In this article, we would like to draw attention to the coverage of the ups and downs of the Polish uprising in the periodicals published in Georgia and present the position of the so-called “Tergdaleulebi”, the Georgian socio-political movement in the 60s of the XIX century.

Information about the January Uprising was disseminated in Georgian society mainly through the Russian periodical press. At that time, not a single Georgian newspaper was issued. In 1863, only the social-literary journal “Sakartvelos moambe” (Herald of Georgia), was published in Tbilisi, edited by Ilya Chavchavadze (1837-1907). Although the journal was an organ for disseminating the political and literary ideas of the Georgian, the censored format did not allow political issues to be presented in it. As for the press, this refers to the newspaper “Kavkaz” (1846-1918), the official periodical of the Russian government in the Caucasus, published in Tbilisi. There was an attempt in Russian historiography to justify the progressiveness of the newspaper (Лучинский, 2019, стр. 309), but the arguments given are not true. For our part, we can add that it was a typical reactionary periodical that expressed the interests of the Russian Empire; its purpose was to zombify the non-Russian population in the Caucasus with information on internal and external topics, acceptable to the central government. Our position is strengthened even by the correspondence about the Polish uprising, published in the newspaper.

Almost all issues of the newspaper “Kavkaz” of 1862-1864 reflected current events in Poland. The published correspondence either did not have an author or had different initials: “Русск. ИНВ.”, “СПВ. Почта”, “С'ПВ. В.” and others. It is impossible to determine the real source or author of the correspondence from these initials. It could be an excerpt from another magazine (for example, the newspaper “Russian Invalid”), or a text compiled by an official, or a troll invented by the editors. Publication of correspondence under different initials is a cunning technique adopted in journalistic practice. Information about the uprising was presented in the News from Russia section of the newspaper, thus cementing it as an internal affair of the empire. One thing is for certain, since the

newspaper was the official mouthpiece of the central government in the Caucasus, so its editors published only negative correspondence acceptable to government circles.

It is these conditions, that can explain that the information about the January Uprising published in the newspaper does not contain a discussion of those social and national problems (loss of sovereignty, social oppression, the negative side of the peasant reform...) that Poland was experiencing at that time from the side of the Russian Empire. Moreover, the reasons for the uprising, the successful battles of the rebels, etc. are not mentioned or discussed. The newspaper presents the events in such a light, as if, despite the good will on the part of the empire, the rebels, by their reckless actions, did something harmful to the people and the country itself. It is clear that the purpose of the editorial office of the newspaper, which expressed the interests of the empire, was to arouse distrust of the uprising among other small peoples living on the territory of Russia. This was supposed to be a warning to everyone - any action against tsarism is doomed to failure! (Kamkamidze, 2013, p. 149).

The newspaper "Kavkaz" began to immediately notify the population about the uprising with the publication of January 27 ("Кавказ", 1863). As for the events that preceded the uprising, the newspaper refers to the high-profile facts of 1862: the attack on the Marquis of Wielopolsky (1803-1877), the confrontation of Archdeacon Belobzhesky in the case of a military court, the activities of the so-called "Party of unrest", etc. (Kamkamidze, 2013, pp. 139-149). It should be noted that all information about the rebellion in the newspaper "Kavkaz" in 1863-1864 had a fragmented appearance and tendentious content. According to the newspaper, the Russian Empire had only good intentions towards the Polish people. Tendentious information zombified the reader and did not allow him to get to the heart of the matter.

It is clear that the newspaper "Kavkaz" had readers who shared its spirit. However, despite the bombardment with tendentious information about the Polish uprising acceptable to the empire, sympathy for the Poles appeared in Georgian society. This was determined by several factors. First of all, both Poland and Georgia were annexed and occupied by the Russian Empire. This fact was exacerbated by the empire's continued economic and social oppression in both regions. The situation was aggravated by the failed peasant reform and religious discrimination. Thus, the concurrent circumstances of both peoples created the conditions for mutual sympathy.

The January Uprising occurred simultaneously with the national liberation movement unfolding in Georgia under the leadership of I. Chavchavadze and the "Tergdaleulebi" (A. Tsereteli, P. Nakashidze and others). This was a generation educated in Russia, which in the 60s of the 19th century, with a half-concealed opposition to the system, tried to introduce novelty into the social life of the Georgian people.

The activities of "Tergdaleulebi" coincided with the strengthening of the Russification policy in Georgia. The authorities of the empire banned the word "Georgia" and replaced it with only the mention of Tiflisi and Kutaisi "provinces". Against this background, the Tergdaleulebi's program provided for the national and social liberation of the Georgian people, first gaining autonomy within the Russian Empire, and then creating an independent national state.

“Tergdaleulebi” began its anti-imperial policy with literary activity at first. It was in this context that I. Chavavadze founded the magazine “Sakartvelos moambe” (Herald of Georgia), which largely determined the public opinion of Georgia in the 60s of the 19th century.

Obviously, the Georgian society could not remain indifferent to the uprising of the Poles. Under conditions of strict censorship, the magazine Herald of Georgia tried to convey to the public the first real information. In such a situation, I. Chavchavadze chose a “correspondent” for himself - P. Nakashidze (1838-1895), who was instructed to travel to Poland and get acquainted with the situation on the spot. Petre Nakashidze was Chavchavadze's comrade and confidant. His candidacy was not chosen by chance. He was a professor at Moscow University and probably had contacts with Polish secret organizations operating there and Polish student circles (Kalandadze, 1963, p. 80). For the purpose of conspiracy, Nakashidze went to Warsaw in a roundabout way, bypassing St. Petersburg. Only a part of his Polish impressions was published in the journal Herald of Georgia (Nakashidze, 1863, გვ. 40-50). “Letters of a Traveller” is an essay written in the spirit of sympathy for the Polish people. The publication was warmly received by the Georgian society. This was the reason why, in order to avoid unnecessary complications, the authorities closed the journal “Vestnik Gruzia” in the same year (Ratiani, 2008, pp. 90-93).

It is indicative that, despite the closure of the journal “Herald of Georgia”, in the Georgian society the idea of supporting the Poles was actively promoted in various forms. For example, in Tbilisi volunteers collected financial assistance, which the wife of a certain doctor Sobolshchikov sent to the revolutionary committees operating in Poland, bypassing the city of Odessa (Khutsishvili, 1959, p. 23). The information about the names of the volunteers and the exact amount of donated money have not reached us. The fact is that the Georgians still tried to express their support even under conditions of strict censorship.

It is in this context that one of the leaders of the national liberation movement of Georgia, the poet A. Tsereteli (1840-1915) appeals “Let's help Poland!” (Tsereteli, 1961, p. 605). Tsereteli was an extremely influential figure in Georgian society. It can be seen that, thanks to the giving of a universal solidarity towards the Poles, at the turn of 1863-1864 the poet was actively involved in this work (Ratiani, 2008, p. 92), what at that time was indeed equivalent to heroism.

Unfortunately, due to pressure from the Russian empire, we will not find other evidence of support for the rebels, but the truth is that sympathy for the participants in the tragic January Uprising has been preserved in the minds of Georgians. An interesting gesture as a sign of respect for the Poles was made by the St. Petersburg Georgian student community. When on November 8, 1898, in Vilnius, with the consent of Emperor Nicholas II, there was erected a monument to M. Muravyov (1796-1866), the organizer of the genocide in Poland, with the inscription “The Earl M. Muravyov 1863-1865”, thus emphasizing his role in the Polish tragedy, then only Georgian students of St. Petersburg University protested against this fact. The Georgian public and political figure S. Pirtskhalava (1872-1952) personally wrote an appeal of sympathy for Polish students, which was illegally distributed in Warsaw by the St. Petersburg Georgian student community (Pirtsckhalava, 1988, p. 27).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that the January Uprising was a resonant event in the Russian Empire. Official circles, politicians, the military, the intelligentsia, Slavophiles, radicals, etc. - all tried to fix a completely Polonophobic attitude towards it. Despite this fact, the uprising became a turning point in the public consciousness of the peoples living in the Russian Empire. After the uprising, national problems were actively discussed in government circles and in the periodical press, what determined the issue of national self-consciousness of the small peoples that were part of the Empire.

The uprising of the Poles became one of the impetuses of the ongoing national liberation movement in Georgia. In the second half of the 19th century, thanks to the so-called "Tergdaleulebi" in Georgian society, national self-consciousness begins to awaken. Drawing attention to the struggle of the oppressed peoples was one of the levers with which the "Tergdaleulebi" formed anti-Russian sentiments in society and increased national self-awareness. Georgian support for the rebels was manifested by providing the public with information about Poland in the periodical press, participating in a charity event in support of the rebels, and organizing a protest action by the Georgian community of St. Petersburg.

The position of the Georgian society regarding the uprising of 1863-1864 in Poland is one of the interesting pages in the history of Polish-Georgian relations.

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