

Appendix to Documents from the KGB archive in Sukhum. Abkhazia in the Stalin years*

Translation by B. G. HEWITT

Introduction

[The text of the ‘slandorous’ letter mentioned on pages 187–188 of the above-mentioned **Documents** as having been composed by Dzidzaria, Shinkuba and Shakryl in 1947 was published in 1992 as part of a book entitled *Abxazija: dokumenty svidetel’stvujut 1937–1953* (Sukhum: Alashara, pp 531–536), which in the main reproduces KGB archival material (since destroyed when the Georgian occupying forces deliberately burnt down the State Archives and the Abkhazian Research Institute in Sukhum in November 1992) describing in great detail the transportations of non-Abkhazians into Abkhazia during the period when Mingrelian L. Beria, Svan K’. Chark’viani and Georgian A. Mgeladze consecutively led the Communist Party of Georgia during these very years¹ and vigorously pursued the now notorious attempt to georgianize the Abkhazians. Incredibly (sc. in view of the wealth of material now available), one still finds Western commentators unwilling to accept the facts at face-value. Consider the following: discussing the question of linking ‘the relative decline in the ethnic Abkhazian population in the 1930s and 1940s...with the efforts of Beria to build a strong power base in the ASSR’, Jonathan Aves (1992, p 234) appends this footnote (No. 39): ‘The “anti-Abkhazian policies” of the period, which included the closure of Abkhazian cultural institutions and the settlement of Georgians in Abkhazia, which Abkhazian nationalists² frequently imply were the expression of a Georgian nationalist programme carried out by Beria and Stalin, are **more sensibly understood in the context of Communist Party politics based on patronage networks**’ (stress added). *Central Asian Survey* readers familiar with everything recently published on its pages relating to Abkhazia may confidently be left to judge for themselves how the facts are to be ‘more sensibly understood’.

Having had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the KGB files, to which the present offering serves as a belated appendix, readers may like to see

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*In *Central Asian Survey*, 14(1), 1995, pp 155–189. Introduction and concluding remarks to this Appendix by G. Hewitt.

for themselves what at the time in question was (and, sad to say, is still widely) deemed 'slander' of the Georgian authorities, namely the presentation of simple but uncomfortable facts.]

TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE ALL-UNION COMMUNIST
PARTY (BOLSHEVIKS)
TO THE SECRETARY OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE A-UCP
(b), COM. A.A. KUZNETSOV

Soviet power, the Party of Lenin-Stalin saved the Abkhazian nation from the complete physical extinction to which it was in fact doomed in the conditions of the cursed old regime. Thanks to the wise Lenin-Stalinist nationality policy, the workers of Abkhazia took solid steps along the path towards swift and all-round development and during 26 Soviet years have achieved shining successes.

However, recently in Abkhazia there has most regrettably been created such a situation as opposes in principle and distorts the national policy of our Bolshevik party and of Soviet power.

We, as party-members, consider it our prime responsibility to inform the Central Committee about this manifestation, setting forth certain facts.

1) In the academic year 1945–46 Abkhazian schools were re-organized, i.e. teaching in Abkhazian schools was transferred to the Georgian language. Up to this time teaching in Abkhazian schools took place until Class 5 in the native (Abkhazian) language, and from Class 5 in Russian. The stated legislative enactment was promulgated in great secrecy, unless one counts the few individuals from the Abkhazian intelligentsia involved in its preparation. It was only after more than a year that there came to light an article of official character by the President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Abkhazian ASSR, M. Delba, under the title 'On the transference of teaching in Abkhazian schools to the Georgian language' (Newspaper *Apsnə Q'apš* [*Red Abkhazia*] of 29 Nov 1946), in which the motives for the re-organization of Abkhazian schools were first set out. The author of the article, underlining that 'in the matter of the development of culture in the Abkhazian ASSR we have great progress here', 'Abkhazian national cadres' have been created etc..., writes:

'We are obliged to say bluntly in the Bolshevik manner that the system of teaching which has hitherto existed in Abkhazian schools has interfered with and held back the further growth of the culture of the Abkhazian nation,' 'has pulled us backward,' 'has opposed the resolutions of the Party and government directed towards the improvement of teaching and education in schools.' The essence of this 'harmful system', according to the assertion of Delba, consisted in the fact that 'the programme in Abkhazian schools was put together "unsatisfactorily"' 'because of the teaching in three languages the pupils had great difficulty and fell

far behind in their progress for the reason that they did not have command of that language in which they were taught from Class 5' (i.e. the Russian language). For this reason, concludes Delba, 'teaching in Abkhazian schools must be transferred to the Georgian language.'

Elsewhere: 'Teaching in the native language in Abkhazian schools in all ten classes cannot in practice exist, and for the perspective of the development of the culture of the Abkhazians, the number of whom only extends to 50,000 persons [the total is significantly underestimated—Dzidzaria *et al.*], is inexpedient'...

It is typical that the relevant article of Com. Delba was not published in the Russian language.

Teaching-cadres for the re-organized Abkhazian schools, which now are called Georgian (re-organized) schools, were mobilized in the main from Georgia. As for local Abkhazian teachers, most of them found themselves outside the schools' walls.

At the same time, as a result of the re-organization the number of Abkhazian schools, especially middle schools, was sharply reduced.

For example, in the Ochamchira region—in this most important Abkhazian area at the present time only two Abkhazian middle schools function. And in the towns of Abkhazia Abkhazian schools are quite closed down, including even Sukhum's middle school, one of the best and oldest schools in the district, the history of which goes back already to the year 1865. On the basis of this school was set up the 1st Georgian male middle school.

In this way urban Abkhazian children are deprived of the possibility of pursuing their native language even as a subject.

Moreover, there occurred such incidents as, at least at the start of the first year of the re-organization of Abkhazian schools, when Abkhazian children were forbidden to enrol in Russian schools. In connection with this the following circumstance is typical. At the start of 1946 the demobilized Abkhazian teacher of the Coastal middle school (Gudauta district), Ankvab, addressed M. I. Kalinin with the request that he explain to him the extent to which the forbidding of enrolment in Russian schools to Abkhazian children was correct. Soon after this the comrade in question was arrested and sentenced to three years 'for [spreading] false information about the government', although in the trial itself the director of the Coastal school gave evidence that she did indeed have instructions from the relevant supreme organs not to admit Abkhazian children to the school. Subsequently the verdict of the Supreme Court of the Abkhazian ASSR on the conviction of teacher Ankvab was overturned by the Supreme Court of the Georgian SSR as unjust.

The teaching of Abkhaz language and literature in the re-organized Abkhazian schools is not carried out at the necessary level.

a) First of all, the number of hours set aside for the teaching of this subject is unsatisfactory. Here are the data from the teaching-plan for the academic year 1946–47:

SUBJECT-NAMES	TOTAL OF WEEKLY HOURS BY CLASS											
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	ALL
Ab. Language	4	4	4	3	3	3	2	2	—	—	—	25
Ab. Literature	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2	2	6

b) Abkhazian schools are poorly supplied with text-books on Abkhaz language and literature. For example, for the oldest classes text-books have not been published for the last 5–6 years;

c) Cadres of teachers of Abkhaz language and literature are not being prepared. The Sukhum Ped-Institute (opened in 1915), which in the main used to produce teachers for primary and incomplete middle Abkhazian schools, in connection with the re-organization of Abkhazian schools was merged with the Georgian Ped-Institute, where at first it was retained as the Abkhazian sector, but even this last was gradually liquidated. In the current academic year Abkhaz language and literature in Class 2 exist only as a subject, whereas in Class 1 they are no longer taught even as a subject;

d) At the Sukhum State Ped-Institute there is not only no Abkhaz sector, but from 1941 the teaching of Abkhaz language and literature to Abkhazian students ceased as disciplines.

e) The Ministry of Education of the Abkhazian ASSR is not involved in the additional training of teachers of Abkhaz language and literature, and what is more, in the very apparatus of the Ministry there are no relevant specialists. As a result of such organization in a series of cases Abkhaz language and literature are taught by absolutely incompetent persons.

2) In the town of Sukhum three regional newspapers appear, of which one is Abkhazian (*Apsnə Q'aps*). This, in essence the one and only, Abkhazian paper is not a full 4-page paper, whereas the other two regional Georgian and Russian papers are full and of 4-pages.

In the Gudauta and Ochamchira districts papers come out in which 50% of materials used to be printed in the Abkhaz language. However, recently the Ochamchira regional paper has all but ceased printing materials in the Abkhaz language.

3) Approximately since 1941 local radio-broadcasting in the Abkhaz language has ceased; broadcasting continues only in the Georgian and Russian languages.

4) The neglect of the Abkhaz language as one of the state-languages on the territory of Abkhazia is witnessed in the following facts:

a) In 1946 the Council of Ministers of the Abkhazian ASSR carried a resolution (not made public) to the effect that notices in state-enterprises, organizations, industries and trade-departments should be written only in the Georgian and Russian languages. In consequence over the whole of Abkhazia signs with Abkhazian lettering were removed. And meanwhile an announcement was made in the press (16-VII-46) that the substitution of notices was proceeding allegedly in view of their unsatisfactory external appearance;

b) Recently even in official franking they have ceased to make lettering in the Abkhaz language.

5) The Union of Soviet Writers of Abkhazia looks strange, which is clear if only from the following facts:

a) From August 1942 the Union of Soviet Writers does not have its own residence;

b) The Union of Writers does not have even its own publishing organ. At the start of the war, for completely understandable reasons, the appearance of the Abkhazian literary-artistic journal was temporarily suspended. After the war, Abkhazian writers many times raised the question of the renewal of the appearance of the journal before the relevant organizations. But, finally, at a meeting of the writers of Abkhazia in October 1946, devoted to a discussion of the famous resolution of the C.K. of the A-UCP (b) 'Concerning the journals *Star* and *Leningrad*, the secretary of the Regional Committee of the CP (b) of Georgia for propaganda, Com. Tuskadze, in connection with the unanimous request of the Abkhazian writers concerning the renewal of the appearance of the Abkhazian literary-artistic journal, in the presence by the way of the former editor of the journal *Friendship of Nations*, Com. Deev, declared point-blank: 'In Abkhazia at present, with the exception of 2-3 persons, there are no contemporary writers; when there will be some, then will be the time we give consideration to the renewal of the appearance of the journal';

c) Recently the Union of Writers, despite the presence of works of the best writers of Abkhazia all ready for printing, publishes nothing;

d) The Union of Writers hardly ever arranges creative evenings for Abkhazian writers.

6) In fact it is only on paper that a Palace of Abkhazian People's Art also exists. However, this establishment, given proper organization, could perform a really valuable task, if one takes into account the object of its study—the exceptionally

rich and virtually unresearched spiritual culture of the Abkhazians. It is significant that among the workers at the Palace of Abkhazian People's Art there is not a single individual who knows the Abkhaz language.

7) By any level reckoning nothing is being done in relation to the further development of Abkhazian national musical culture in the matter of the training of relevant cadres.

8) The Abkhaz-Georgian choir, which in its time used beautifully to demonstrate the best models of Abkhazian folk-music and dance, has recently changed the direction of its work in full correspondence with its current nomenclature, viz. 'The State Ensemble of Georgian Folk-Music and Dance'.

9) Abkhazian geographical appellations are being systematically transferred to a Georgian form and sometimes are being effaced altogether. Here are some examples:

a) River Xipsta (Abkhaz) is changed to Tetri Ts'q'aro (Georgian) [= White Spring—translator]

River Arzapi = > Texuri

Psirtsxa (or the place Novyj Afon) = > Axali Aponi [= New Athos—translator]

Mixel'ripš (village in Russian for Abkhaz Mixelrypš) = > Salxino, etc.

b) Ešeri (Russian for Abkhaz Ešyra) = > Zemo-Ešeri (Georgian) [= Upper Eshera—translator]

Atara (village) = > Zemo-Atara

Gagra (city) = > Axali Gagra and Dzveli Gagra [New & Old Gagra respectively—translator]

Anyxwa (village) = > Zemo-Anyxwa and Kvemo-Anyxwa [= Lower Anyxwa—translator]

Bzipta (gorge) = > Bzypis Xevi [= Bzyp's Gorge—translator]

c) To virtually all Abkhazian appellations is added the characteristic Georgian ending (suffix) -i:

River Bzyb' (Russian for Abkhaz Bzyp) = > Bzibi (Georgian)

Lyxny (village) = > Lixni

Barmiš (village) = > Barmiši

Bambora (village) = > Bambori

Tamyš (village) = > Tamyši

K'aldaxwara (village) = > K'aldaxwari

Aatsy = > Aatsi

We do not speak any longer of the fact that Abkhazian geographical names annihilated by Russian tsarism in connection with its ravaging of entire regions

are not restored even when this is feasible—on the contrary, the introduced Russian designations are altered to Georgian ones (the Sukhum, Gagra and Gulripsh districts).

d) Changed too are Abkhazian names for streets, cinemas, etc. Thus, the Sukhum cinemas *Apsnə* ('Abkhazia' in Abkhaz) and *Alašara* ('Light' in Abkhaz) have been renamed. From time to time gorges and streets are renamed 'Georgian'. Moreover, all these changes go ahead with rare exceptions without publication of the relevant official instructions and resolutions. In consequence great confusion over geographical designations is to be observed in the press.

10) Local workers from the Abkhazians are weakly drawn into the ruling Party and Soviet organs of the Abkhazian ASSR. For example, in the apparatus of the Abkhazian Regional Committee of the Party at the present time there work only five such persons, whereas in the apparatus of the Abkhazian Regional Committee of the Komsomol there is not a single worker of responsibility.

Among the first and second secretaries and the secretariat for cadres of the Abkhazian Regional Committee of the Party, the ruling body of the Council of Ministers of the Abkhazian ASSR, the first secretaries and the secretaries for cadres of the district committees of the Party, the Ministry of Education, the secretaries of the Abkhazian Regional Committee and the first secretaries of the district committees of the Komsomol, etc. there is not a single Abkhazian.

At the same time there is practised, especially since 1944, a systematic so-called mobilization of cadres from Georgia. In this way some thousands of persons have recently been directed into Abkhazia. In connection with this there has occurred a critical infiltration of population in the towns of Abkhazia as well as a partial dismissal of local workers from posts held.

Moreover, these measures were introduced at the very time when many demobilized local workers could not find employment, and some, amongst them even honoured artistes of the Abkhazian theatre, were compelled to leave their employment because of their non-possession of a flat.

11) Over the recent period 10 settlements have been constructed for immigrants into Abkhazia from Georgia. The building of immigrant settlements continues. These settlements are built in the main in Abkhazian districts—Ochamchira and Gudauta and also in the Gagra region. It is necessary to state that the density of population in these districts is no less and the presence of empty plots no greater than in other regions of Abkhazia or in certain districts of West Georgia, for example, in Mingrelia.

Very often such immigrant settlements are wedged into villages with a compact

Abkhaz population. Naturally in these circumstances the ethnographic integrity of the Abkhazian population will quickly be destroyed.

12) Approximately from 1940 even the very term 'Abkhazian people/nation'³ has 'gone out' of official usage: it is impossible to call the Abkhazians a people/nation.

It has become all but impossible to print anything on the history and language of the Abkhazians. For example, the Abkhazian Scientific-Research Institute in the name of N. Ja. Marr of the Academy of Sciences of the Georgian SSR has published nothing since 1940, although important scholarly investigations on the history and language of the Abkhazians are held and the question of their publication by the Institute has been raised more than once. The Sukhum State Ped-Institute during this period has published three collections. However, articles on the history of Abkhazia, in accordance with the instruction of the Regional Committee of the Party, were excluded from the first and last volumes.

13) For the workers of Abkhazia the 4th March, the day of the establishment of Soviet power in Abkhazia, has been a great traditional festival. But in recent times this significant date in the life of the workers of the region has not been marked. It was not marked even in 1946, the 25th year of the existence of the Abkhazian Autonomous⁴ Soviet Socialist Republic.

On this day, the day of the 25th anniversary of Soviet Abkhazia, even newspapers did not appear in Sukhum, the capital of the Republic.

1. G. Dzidzaria (Dzidzaria Georgij Alekseevich—member of the A-UCP (b), Party-ticket No. 4332941, Candidate of Historical Sciences).
2. B. Shinkuba (Shinkuba Bagrat Vasil'evich—member of the A-UCP (b), Party-ticket No. 9016732, Candidate of Philological Sciences, Poet).
3. K. Shakryl (Shakryl Konstantin Semenovich, member of the A-UCP (b), Party-ticket No. 4721101, Candidate of Philological Sciences).

25-11-1947

[On 5th November 1953 Dzidzaria and Shinkuba sent a letter to the All-Union General Secretary, N. Khrushchëv, with copies to the new Party Bosses in Georgia, the Mingrelian Alio I. Mirtsxulava,⁵ and Abkhazia, G. Z. Karchava, the text of which was published along with the preceding letter in 1992. They begin by referring to the palpable distortions of Soviet nationality policy by the former Georgian government in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia—given the extreme chauvinism that re-emerged in the internal politics of Georgia in the late 1980s, it was predictable that both South Ossetia and Abkhazia would become the focus of bloody wars as Moscow's restraining hand was removed and the international community failed completely to take seriously its responsibilities to prevent bloodshed by exerting some meaningful pressure on the Georgian governments

of Z. Gamsaxurdia (in the case of South Ossetia) and E. Shevardnadze (in the case of Abkhazia). In summation, Dzidzaria and Shinkuba asked that: (a) decisions taken by the Georgian Party in connection with their first letter be rescinded as unjust; and (b) they be rehabilitated, having become the object of organized persecution and malicious slander during the intervening 6 years (Shakryl was even expelled from Abkhazia to Moscow).

A further letter included in the 1992 volume dates from 19th April 1957 and was sent to the Presidium of the CP by President of the Abkhazian Council of Ministers, A. Labaxua, and the Secretary of the Abkhazian Regional Committee, I. Tarba. It concerned the publication of P'avle Ingoroq'va's book *Giorgi Merçule* in 1954 and the largely favourable criticism it received among leading Georgian scholars of the time for its blatant falsification of Abkhazian history, as discussed on pp 273–274 of my *Abkhazia: a problem of identity and ownership* (CAS, 12, 3, 1993). Two paragraphs are worth quoting here because of their relevance to the content of the 1947 letter translated above.

'In this book, published in Tbilisi in the Georgian language in 1954 with a print-run of 10,000 copies, a significant portion is set aside for questions on the history of Abkhazia. The author, despite being no specialist in history or a linguist, clearly made up his mind radically to distort the historical past of the Abkhazian people. The basic tenet of Ingoroq'va's book is the anti-scholarly thesis that the territory of Abkhazia and the Black Sea coast as far as Gelendzhik⁶ were allegedly basic Georgian land settled right up to the late middle ages by Georgians. As for the Abkhazians, truly the aboriginals of Abkhazia, they, according to the claim of Ingoroq'va, came here as invaders from the Caucasian mountains only in the 17th century. Ingoroq'va strives "to lay a foundation" for his anti-scholarly thesis by means of the falsification of historical documents and pseudo-scholarly linguistic exercises on geographical terms.

'The anti-scholarly distortions by P'. Ingoroq'va of the history of Abkhazia were already published in 1950 in the Georgian journal *Mnatobi* (No. 1, 3). Thereupon these distortions were straightway picked up by the Beriaite assimilators, then active in Abkhazia. These, in particular, publicized these distortions and leant upon them as supposedly on a scholarly foundation for the anti-Party politics they were conducting.'

As remarked in my 1993 article, various politicians and/or otherwise quite respectable scholars in Tbilisi have been arguing in support of Ingoroq'va and his fantasy about Abkhazians and their history since 1989. The latest, and most noteworthy, in this regrettable list is none other than Prof. Tamaz Gamq'relidze, member of the former Soviet Academy of Sciences, Director of the Oriental Institute in Tbilisi and Honorary Member of the British Academy. The original Georgian version of his article *On the history of the tribal names of ancient Colchis (On the historical-etymological relation of the ethnonyms 'Abxaz-/Abazg-' and 'Abaza/Apswa')* appeared in the journal *Macne (ist'oriis, etnograpiisa da xelovnebis ist'oriis seria)* (No. 2, 1991, 7–16). He argued that the term

'Abkhaz' is of Georgian origin, that the 'Abkhazians' were originally a Georgian [?Kartvelian] tribe who disappeared from history when today's North West Caucasian Abkhazians descended into Abkhazia some time in the Middle Ages and took over the name of the tribe they allegedly displaced. Those familiar with Ingoroq'va's fantasy will be struck by the depressingly close parallel between it and the views expounded by Gamq'relidze. The Russian translation of this article was subsequently published in the usually exemplary Russian-language linguistics journal *Voprosy Jazykoznanija* (whose editor happened at the time to be Tamaz Gamq'relidze!); the editors of the new-style German-language journal *Georgika* then deemed the article worthy of appearing in German translation in their volume 15. For my English translation from the Georgian together with my rebuttal of the opinions expressed therein see *Etudes Géorgiennes et Caucasiennes* (1990–91, Nos. 6–7, pp 237–263).

Both the 1947 and 1957 letters, translated (wholly or in part) above, have now been reprinted in a newer collection of historical documents, compiled and edited by Igor' Marəx^oba (Marxolia), and entitled *Abxazija v sovetskiju epoxu: Abxazskie pis'ma (1947–1989). Sbornik dokumentov, tom 1* (Aq^o'a/Sukhum, 1994), where the text of the 'Abkhazian Letter' from 1988, which I discussed in my 1993 contribution to CAS, may be found (pp. 383–439). From this volume I have translated below, with slight cuts, two further letters, selected to reinforce the general awareness of the nature and extent of the difficulties the Abkhazians have had to face since their forced incorporation into the Soviet Georgian Republic by that republic's best known scion in 1931. The first is a response, signed by a group of employees of the Abkhazian State Museum, to the reaction amongst the major part of the Georgian academic community, predictably hostile and all-too-typical in terms of style and content, that greeted the publication in 1976 of the 463-page book *Voprosy etno-kul'turnoj istorii abxazov* by the distinguished Abkhazian ethnographer Shalva Inal-Ipa (deceased September 1995)—N.B. the specific reaction being criticized actually appeared in the three main Abkhaz-, Russian- and Georgian-language local newspapers of Abkhazia, which is an excellent indication of the extent to which Abkhazia's so-called autonomous status within Georgia (sc. post-1931) was actually fictional, for all significant decisions were of course taken not in Abkhazia but in Tbilisi, and this negative review simply had to be published in all three papers. Inal-Ipa was a frequent and prominent (though by no means unique) target for vilification in Tbilisi for the dogged refusal he shewed throughout his career to make any concessions to Georgian sensitivities when it came to disseminating facts about Abkhazian culture and history. The climate in which those who set themselves the goal of writing objectively about Abkhazian history and culture had to work when subject to the control of the Georgian Academy of Sciences will be even better appreciated if the three paragraphs of biographical information which the late Yuri Voronov (assassinated in his Sukhum flat on 11 October 1995) added at my request as a brief introduction to the article of his that I published in 1992 are also consulted.

The second letter was sent in 1985 to the 27th Congress of the Soviet

Communist Party by three members of the Writers' Union. It reprises with exemplary simplicity and eloquence the entire history of Abkhazian disaffection with their country's annexation to Georgia.]

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE
OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION

TO THE FIRST SECRETARY OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE
COMMUNIST PARTY OF GEORGIA, COMRADE SHEVARDNADZE E.A.

TO THE FIRST SECRETARY OF THE ABKHAZIAN REGIONAL COM-
MITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GEORGIA, COMRADE
XINTBA V.M.

We, a group of scientific workers at the Abkhazian State Museum, consider it our duty to draw the attention of the Department of Science of the Central Cte. of the CP of the USSR to the editorial article 'On the profound scholarly study of the history of Abkhazia', published in the local papers *Apsnə Q'apš* ['Red Abkhazia' in Abkhaz], *Sovetskaja Abxazija* and *sabč'ota apxazeti* ['Soviet Abkhazia' in Georgian] on 14 May 1977. The article's supposed aim was to sum up the discussion of Prof. Sh. D. Inal-Ipa's book *Questions of the Ethno-Cultural History of the Abkhazians* (Sukhum: Alashara, 1976) which took place in the hall at a meeting of the Abkhazian Institute of History, Language and Literature (named after D. Gulia) jointly with the Faculty of History of Sukhum's Soviet Pedagogical Institute (named after M. Gorky) on 5 March of this year. This article can only conditionally be styled editorial since representatives of the press of the autonomous republic did not attend the discussion, and the article itself has no signatory. It is difficult to establish to whom indeed authorship belongs.

Unfortunately the fact has to be stated that the editorial article not only failed in its task but embarked upon the course of discrediting the author of the said monograph and also of the achievements of the scholars and orientalists of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Moreover, the publication of the relevant article with its tone and character simply does not correspond to the norms of positive criticism of which the Soviet press has always boasted but is an attempt to alter public opinion in the egotistical interests of certain people. In journalistic circles similar phenomena are qualified as nothing other than manipulation of public opinion, which has always been alien to the fundamental principles of scholarly arguments and discussions in the pages of Soviet journals and newspapers. On the other side, there can be no doubt that the appearance of the editorial article is also an attempt on the part of certain scholarly circles in the area of the humanities in Tbilisi to exert pressure on those scholars who conduct honest scholarly research.

In truth there is a need to mention yet again that certain historians of Georgia

have absolutely no wish to reconcile themselves to the positive improvements that have been taking place in the republic following the publication of the well-known Decree of the Central Cte of the Soviet CP (1972) *On the organisational and political work of the Tbilisi City Cte of the Georgian CP for the implementation of the decision of the XXIVth congress of the Soviet CP*, for the eradication of negative phenomena in the economic and social life of the republic. It is well-known to us all that within the Georgian SSR Lenin's norms and principles in Party, State and social construction have been ignored for many years, and that protectionism, dogmatism and a revelry of scheming individuals have flourished in direct transgression of Soviet laws. All this could not have failed to cause a devaluation of those values in our society which have been created by the working class, the peasantry and the intelligentsia of Georgia, Abkhazia, Ajaria, and South Ossetia, nor could it but have facilitated a distinctive erosion of ideology in the Soviet republic. Concretely, this has begun to manifest itself in a national conceit, in a corruption of ideological education, in a kindling of chauvinist sentiments among the Georgian population in relation to other peoples, in the non-recognition of the role and services in the historical fortunes of the country played by the other peoples of the Georgian SSR, and in direct falsification of history. In their studies the youth, students and school-children have for decades been brought up on course-books in which the role of the Georgians in history is never-endingly exalted—quite often facts pointing to a nation in love with itself emerge...All these manifestations have been subjected to justifiable criticism and have been discarded as unacceptable to our society. The appearance of the above-mentioned article, in our opinion, represents a new kind of relapse into those methods and that abuse which have taken place in scholarly thinking within the Georgian SSR in the past.

It is well-known that, as already alluded to above, the publication of the editorial article was preceded by a debate on the monograph at the Abkhazian Institute, which took place in conditions of unusual secrecy. Suffice it to say that Prof. Inal-Ipa, Deputy Director of the Institute and author of the book under discussion, learned of the forthcoming meeting only on the evening the night before the discussion. Neither was advance warning given about the impending academic activity to the employees of the Institute, the Abkhazian State Museum or of the other scholarly establishments of the republic. A certain circle of people gathered who were obliged to deliver their "expert" verdict on a historical volume on which the author had worked for many years.

But why in a state of secrecy? Whose interests did this serve? After all, aren't scholarly achievements public property? Especially if a work is written by an erudite historian, an honest individual and upright citizen! All these questions remain to this day unanswered. Nothing is said about this in the editorial article. Its reverend authors didn't deem it necessary to inform their so ill-esteemed readership as to how the discussion was conducted or about the lack of observance not only of academic but, even more, of elementary etiquette.

However great the reluctance to rush for comparison, yet somewhat involuntarily there flow into one's head thoughts of Giordano Bruno and the bonfires of the Inquisition, and of the persecution of Galileo and Copernicus. We are far from thinking of asseverating that Prof. Inal-Ipa revealed global truths to his fellow-countrymen, and of course no one lit bonfires in the hall of the meeting. But everyone present, including ourselves, employees of the Abkhazian State Museum, who miraculously found ourselves present at the Institute, became witnesses of a special type of Inquisitorial sentence, which some of his opponents thus sought to construct against their colleague. Nevertheless, despite the intolerable atmosphere (unworthy of so academic an auditorium) that was reigning in the hall, the book received deserved recognition as a weighty scholarly contribution to Soviet Abkhazian studies. In the words of Prof. Z. V. Anchabadze, main opponent of the author's said monograph, Inal-Ipa's work merits 90% approval...It would seem that in this he voiced the opinion of all attending the debate.

Reading the editorial article, we were astounded at the position adopted by the editorial boards of the aforementioned papers. It is unclear to us which characteristic is most prominent in it—pseudo-scholarship, disinformation, provocation or demagoguery.

First of all, when reading the editorial article the impression is certain to form in the mind of the uninitiated reader (which is what, by the way, the article's authors so strove after) that the views of the participants in the debate, whose names are listed, fully coincide in precisely the negative evaluation of the book, which completely fails to accord with reality. The absolute majority of scholars were in favour of a positive assessment. It is far from the truth to allege that "a file of participants in the debate voiced their disagreement with the editor of the book when he asserts in his Introduction that the work of Inal-Ipa is a kind of encyclopædia on the problems of the ethnogenesis and cultural-political history of the Abkhazians". Only one person, Prof. Z. V. Anchabadze, adheres to this view. Alone also stands the opinion of this latter, who judges that the "historiographic aspect is one of the weak sides of the book". What is concealed behind this "historiographic aspect"? The author of the monograph is also taken to task because he (just imagine it!) did not use in due measure the leading works of Georgian historical scholarship. As it happens, Prof. Inal-Ipa cites, compares and adduces in his work extracts from the works of more than 70 Georgian historians, to say nothing of representatives of Russian, Soviet and foreign scholarship!

As to these last, it has to be stated point-blank that their luck seems to have run out: Academician Korostovtsev, Profs. D'jakonov and Turčaninov, scholars Grantovskij, Ardzinba and others have been branded non-specialists and dilettantes. All the works of the leading specialists in the field of oriental studies at the Soviet Academy of Sciences were placed under suspicion. In the debate even

the ancient chroniclers came in for fierce criticism. It would seem that 1,000 years ago Byzantine and Russian chroniclers already so failed to treat their important mission seriously and so misunderstood their colleagues from ancient Iberia that as a result of this such regrettable errors crept into history. For this reason it is necessary to place one's faith only in Georgian chroniclers rather than in the perfidious Byzantines and the unsophisticated Russians. All this was being expressed from a raised academic platform, possibly not in such a hypertrophied form. Of this, it goes without saying, in the editorial article there was said not one word. Sometimes by way of proof of their conclusions conversations which took place in private discussions were adduced, of the type: "...Lavrov one day told me that he rejected his own former opinion..." or such as: "...he acknowledged that in this question he had been deluded...", without the slightest reference to either those or other works of the scholars being spoken of. There is no need to say that corridor-discussions, unsupported by the authority of an academic product, cannot be taken into consideration—to say nothing of the fact that this is simply unethical. Such was the form in which the debate on the book was conducted.

But what represents the true academic state of affairs? Here is one of the points of the accusation: "...in the book Inal-Ipa incorrectly expounded the question of the ethnic affiliation of ancient Colchis. True, at one time in scholarship the view was widespread of a migration from south into the Caucasus firstly of the Abkhazo-Circassian and subsequently of the Georgian [read Kartvelian—translator] tribes, but at the present moment the hypothesis of their autochthonous status in the Caucasus and their settlement already from the most ancient of times of the territory of western Caucasia has come to be considered as beyond dispute".

It is not clear why the authors of the newspaper-article deemed it necessary to, as the English say, flog a dead horse. Prof. Inal-Ipa in general does not deny the autochthonous status of the Georgian [sc. Kartvelian—trans.] tribes in the Caucasus and, in particular, in western Transcaucasia. He merely specifies the locality in the Caucasus of the latter and confirms the widely known hypothesis that "the territory from the central part of the North Caucasus as far as the southern Black Sea littoral throughout the IIIrd and almost the whole of the IIrd millennium BC was occupied in the main by Abkhazo-Circassian and their kindred Abeshlo-Kask tribes, whereas the Kartvelian element penetrates into the eastern and southern Black Sea littoral significantly later than the Kasks" [p 117]. Incidentally, just such an opinion is shared by the famous Soviet historian Prof. I. M. D'jakonov, who in his book 'The Pre-history of the Armenian People' writes the following [p 13 of this 1968 book]: "Truly Georgian [sc. Kartvelian—trans.] tribes, carriers of the ancestor of the Mingrelo-Laz language, penetrated here (i.e. the south-eastern Black Sea littoral—authors), as it seems to us, after the Kasks", that is to say after the ancestors of the Abkhazo-Circassian tribes.

How come, then, that the authors of the article take such exception with regard to Prof. Inal-Ipa? They do not try to substantiate any opposing hypothesis but simply judge D'jakonov to be a dilettante. In this connection one may read in the article the following: "...Inal-Ipa should not have adduced in his book the opinion of non-specialists...", etc. *passim*.

Is it possible that Inal-Ipa and D'jakonov are alone in their opinion? Not a bit of it. Thus, the Georgian scholar R. V. Gordeziani, in the footsteps of Academicians I. A. Dzhevakhishvili, S. N. Dzhnashia and A. S. Chikobava, affirms that in western Georgia (today's West Georgia is meant—authors) in the (e?)neolithic era and up to the end of the IIIrd millennium BC "it is clear that it was basically dialects of the Abkhazo-Circassian type that were disseminated, to which the presence of Abkhazo-Circassian roots in the oldest Kartvelian toponyms and ethnic terms of West Georgia bears testimony" (pp 8–9 of the 1975 Russian publication 'The Caucasus and the Problems of the Ancient Mesopotamian Languages and their Cultural Relations'). Just such a view is shared also by the archæologist R. M. Munchaev in his book 'The Caucasus at the Dawn of the Bronze Age', which appeared in 1975 (p 414). The only difference resides in the fact none of these scholars suffers an embargo against expounding similar "seditious" ideas. Judging by similar criteria, it is possible to range in the category of non-specialists and dilettantes also Prof. O. M. Dzhaparidze as well as Academicians S. N. Dzhnashia, I. A. Dzhevakhishvili and A. S. Chikobava [all Kartvelians—trans.].

To avoid making unsubstantiated charges, it may be convenient for purposes of comparison to adduce two scholarly hypotheses belonging to two different scholars.

1. "Kartvelian tribes, it is clear, were already settled prior to the Kuro-Arax culture in Central Transcaucasia, where, as has been indicated, the process of establishing this culture unfolded. In the IIIrd millennium these tribes occupied, apparently, eastern Georgia. On the territory of western Transcaucasia at this time were settled Abkhazo-Circassian tribes".

Thus reasons the archæologist O. M. Dzhaparidze in his monograph 'On the Ethnic History of the Georgian [sc. Kartvelian—trans.] Tribes (according to the data of archæology)', published in Tbilisi in 1976. Furthermore, Dzhaparidze writes the following: "The Abkhazo-Circassian and, possibly, their related Hattic-speaking tribes after the split of the pan-Caucasian unity predominantly occupied the western part of the Caucasus. Circassian-speaking tribes basically occupy the area around the River Kuban, whereas Abkhazian tribes occupy the western part of Transcaucasia" (pp 339–440).

2. Here is the second opinion: "As for the ethnic situation on the eastern and south-eastern Black Sea littoral in the IIIrd-IIInd millennia BC, practically the

entire broad coastal strip, approximately from today's Sinope as far as Abkhazia and further to the north-west, was settled by Hattic-speakers, Kask-Abeshlas and proto-Abkhazo-Circassian tribes, who, it would appear, were related to them". So thinks Prof. Inal-Ipa (p 111). As we see, these two views are identical, if no attention is paid to the way they are lexically composed. It is remarkable that Dzhaparidze and Inal-Ipa arrived at this conclusion quite independently of each other. The fact is that Dzhaparidze's monograph appeared in the windows of book-shops when Inal-Ipa's book was being type-set at the printers.

In the editorial article they upbraid Inal-Ipa on the grounds that "he should not have adduced in his book the views of non-specialists who have absolutely no basis for their assertion that, allegedly, only Abkhazians were Colchians and, specifically, the creators of Colchian culture. Justifiably criticizing those authors who entirely exclude the role of the Abkhazians in the formation of Colchian culture, Inal-Ipa in reality lapses to the opposite extreme".

So how does the affair stand in reality? We turn to the author of the monograph, and on page 203 we read: "In a word, if in new and old statements of this kind [Inal-Ipa is referring to those who completely identify the Colchians with the Abkhazians and Circassians—authors] we find a definite exaggeration of the role of the Abkhazian element, it is equally mistaken, it seems to me, completely to ignore it in the ethno-cultural history of the enigma that is Colchis".

As we have ourselves become convinced, it is clear from the cited source that Inal-Ipa himself completely views with disfavour those authors who asseverate that exclusively the Abkhazians were Colchians and the creators of Colchian culture. And so, the authors of the editorial article miss the mark in directing their criticism and simply misrepresent the opinions of the scholar on this problem.

It was to thorough-going distortion that the views of Inal-Ipa were subjected in the editorial article also as regards the ethnic affiliation of the 'Obezy' of the Russian chronicles: "In the work of Inal-Ipa one meets other cases of inexactness too. In particular, there are no grounds for asserting that it is the Abkhazians proper who are meant under the term 'Obezy' of the old Russian chronicles".

Is such a statement correct? It does not correspond to the actual state of affairs. Again we turn to Inal-Ipa's monograph. There the following is written: "In the Russian chronicles are several times mentioned a people 'Obez', 'Obezane' and a land 'Obez' (sometimes one meets the designations 'Abazki', 'Abazgi', 'Avogazy' etc.). By means of these terms were at first designated the Abkhazians together with the Abazinians and their land Abkhazia. And the close resemblance between the ethnonyms 'Obezy' and 'Abaza', 'Abaziny' and 'Abxazy' is not accidental. In the opinion of specialists, the Obezy of the chronicles are the Abkhazians and they place them in Abkhazia or in direct

proximity to it. In this connection M. I. Skripil' writes: 'By the term *Obezy* in Ancient Rus, as is well-known, the Abkhazians were designated' (p 416). 'Academician M. I. Tixomirov also identified the *Obezy* with the Abkhazians' (ibid.)'.

Ipal-Ipa is here referring to Soviet historians who assert that the *Obezy* of the old Russian chronicles and the Abkhazians are one and the same. If the authors of the editorial consider the parallel assertion to be some sort of innovation of Inal-Ipa, then they are grievously mistaken. In this case the authors of the article should address themselves to the cited historians as well as to Prof. L. I. Lavrov, who goes even further, declaring the *Obezy* to be the Abazinians, i.e. one of the Abkhaz-speaking sub-divisions.

In a word, Prof. Inal-Ipa in his book (pp 36, 271, 416, 417) never mentions and certainly does not asseverate that the *Obezy* of the old Russian chronicles are exclusively Abkhazians. The editorial article is itself already in error in the information provided to its readers when it states that "in all cases where the term *Obez* is used in these chronicles, beginning from the IIIrd century, it is Georgia as a whole which is meant (exclusively—authors)"! Deliberately distorted are the correct phrases of the author on page 417: "By the word *Obez* they at first named Abkhazia, and by *Obezy* the Abkhazians were named in general, in the broad sense of this word. In the course of time at a definite historical period they started to use *Obez* to refer to Abkhazia and Georgia together, without any distinction", that is to say "...the original signification of the term *Obez* is altered...in the sense of broadening—for designating the whole of Georgia". And further: "Thus *Obez* signifies Georgia, when the Russian chronicler tells of the Polovtsian prince, Otrok, fleeing from Vladimir Monomax to the Georgian king, David the Builder, through the Daryal Pass (to quote the actual words 'into *Obez* across the Iron Gate')".

From the quoted extracts it is plain that Inal-Ipa does not wholly identify the *Obezy* with the Abkhazians exclusively, and the authors of the article are literally breaking down open doors in the hope of uncovering parallel 'inexactnesses' in the monograph and incriminating the scholar in ideas not belonging to him.

Further, in the words of the article, Inal-Ipa adopts "an uncritical approach to sources", i.e. there was no value in his referring to the information provided by the foreign XIV–XVth century author Johannes Schildberg to the effect that worship among the Mingrelians and Abkhazians was conducted in their own languages, since, in the view of the authors of the newspaper-article, the Abkhazians did not possess their own system of writing. "In the works of many authors," we read in the monograph, "the Abkhazians and the Georgians are mentioned as ethnically distinct peoples, each possessing their own names, their territories, language and culture. Thus, the foreign Bavarian author, Johannes Schildberg, in the XIV–XVth centuries, when listing the peoples who confessed

the Greek faith, points out also the languages in which worship was conducted at that time: Greek, Russian, Walakhian, Venetian, Bulgarian, Yas [Ossetic?—trans.], Gothic, Zikh (Circassian), Abkhaz, Georgian, Mingrelian” (p 396).

Why on earth should Prof. Inal-Ipa have gone against this report? No scholar with any self-esteem has the right not to take into consideration those reports which have been left behind by contemporary travellers and missionaries, since the bits of evidence related by them are important and often the unique sources according to which it is possible to form for oneself a definite idea of the relevant distant epoch. To put it bluntly, the authors of the editorial article for some reason do not like the simple fact of the mentioning by a certain Johannes Schildberg of the conducting of services in the aforementioned languages. For this reason they declare his report to be undeserving of trust, and from this it is easy to draw the conclusion necessary to the editorial article that in Inal-Ipa’s book “there is an air of uncritical approach to sources”! If only there had been mention in the materials of the ill-starred traveller of worship being conducted exclusively in the Georgian language, then glory be! But, by the way, Prof. Inal-Ipa adduces this fact only to underline the hypothesis of the existence of Christianity and Christian culture among the Abkhazians, observing also in this regard that oral worship could be conducted in the Abkhaz language (understood throughout, and indigenous to, Abkhazia).

In the editorial article the question is raised of the ethnic affiliation and identity of the Abazg Grammarian. We quote: “There are no grounds for reconsidering the question and identity of the Abazg Grammarian, under which title it is most convincing to see the famous Georgian philosopher overseas in the XI–XIIth centuries, Ioane P’et’rits’i, rather than any Abkhazian proper...”.

What then is written about this philosopher in Inal-Ipa’s book? On page 307 we read: “Up to recent times the identity has remained unknown of the Abazg Grammarian, to whom was addressed a letter by I. Italos. N. K’ech’aghmadze considers that: ‘The Abazg Grammarian and Ioane P’et’rits’i are one and the same person’. This fact she established by means of a comparative analysis of the text of the letter and the philosophical and grammatical works of P’et’rits’i himself”. Consequently Inal-Ipa too advances the following hypothesis: “...when I. Italos calls his close friend *Abazg*, it is possible to interpret this uniquely in its direct sense, which is in the sense of a fellow-champion of true Abkhazian, and, even more exactly, Abazinian ethnic origin”. For, “as is well-known, in the Middle Ages it was often the practice to call a person according to his name accompanied by his tribal affiliation or place of origin. So it was in Georgia too. For example: John the Laz (the same John the Eunuch and Ieroteos [the Holy?—trans.]), 5th century thinker from the Laz tribe, teacher and friend of Peter the Iberian (author of the so-called Areopagite books); John the Meskhian, the Georgian bilingual writer from the Moskh-Meskhian tribe (VI–VIIth century), author of *Balavariani* and *Limonarion* in the Georgian and Greek tongues;

Euthymius the Iberian, Georgian philosopher of the X–XIth centuries, author of the Greek metaphrasis *The Wisdom of Balavar*”.

“Taking all this into consideration,” writes Inal-Ipa, “it is difficult to doubt but that the Abazg Grammarian, whom K’ech’aghmadze identifies with the Georgian philosopher I. P’et’rits’i, is by his ethnic origin and by his tribal affiliation an Abkhazian, which the roots of his genealogy lead to the western Abkhazian tribe of the Abazinians”.

As we see, there is here nothing criminal from the academic point of view. Inal-Ipa is simply establishing, or trying to establish, the ethnic affiliation of the Abazg Grammarian, which any scholar has a right to do, including also the author of the said monograph. Inal-Ipa is not declaring that the Abazg Grammarian (the self-same I. P’et’rits’i) was an Abkhazian philosopher. He is advancing the hypothesis that the Georgian philosopher, the Abazg Grammarian, or I. P’et’rits’i, might have been Abazinian, i.e. Abkhazian, according to his origin. We adduce an analogical historical example: the noted Russian architects Rastrelli Senior and Rastrelli Junior were by origin Italians, which is contested by no one. Such approximately is the flow of Prof. Inal-Ipa’s thoughts in relation to the Abazg Grammarian.

In the editorial article the historical fact that Anakopia was the capital of the Abkhazian Kingdom is placed in doubt: “...in the sources there is no reference to Anakopia ever being the capital of the Abkhazian Kingdom”. We turn to the Georgian historian and geographer of the XVIIIth century, Vakhush’t Bagrat’ion. In his work *History of the Kingdom of Georgia* (1976 edition) on page 221 we find: “...the Greeks set their *eristav* [king, governor—authors] on the throne in Anakopia and styled him the Abkhazian *eristav*, and the *eristavs* resided here in succession to one another”. Apropos the Abkhazian king, Leon II, himself and the capital of the Abkhazian Kingdom, the author further impresses upon us the widely known fact that “the (Leon) built the city and fortress Kutatisi [Kutaisi—authors] and made it the throne (capital) of the king of the Abkhazians, second after Anakopia”, i.e. Kutaisi became the second capital in place of the first, Anakopia. In the book of Prof. A. V. Anchabadze, *From the History of Abkhazia in the Middle Ages (VI–XVIIth centuries)* we also find lines on “the transference of the capital of the Abkhazian Kingdom from Anakopia to Kutaisi” (p 306). The only thing that is unclear is why at the time of the debate on Inal-Ipa’s monograph Anchabadze deemed it necessary to reject his very own assertion that Anakopia was capital of the Abkhazian Kingdom.

In his work Inal-Ipa thoroughly analysed also the anthropological material of V. P. Alekseev, I. P. Ladaria and others, and he came to the conclusion that “on the basis...of anthropological similarities between the Abkhazians and the Mingrelians and Adzharians, there rests no Kartvelian layer in the ethnogenesis of the Abkhazians, but, on the contrary, there is a very old Abkhazian (Abkhazo-Cir-

cassian) ethnic substrate on the territory of modern western Georgia...” (p 105). But to us it is quite unclear why indeed it should be impermissible to search for an Abkhazo-Circassian substrate, which is proclaimed to be a sinking to the extreme by the newspaper article. Searches for what particular ‘substrate’ do the authors of the article propose on the territory of Abkhazia in the most ancient period?

And, finally, the question of mutual Abkhazo-Georgian relations. Here the authors of the editorial article have given free rein to their feelings and have accused Inal-Ipa of deliberate distortion of Abkhazo-Georgian relations. We adduce an extract from the article: “The preceding discussion has shown that the work of Prof. Inal-Ipa, written without essential scholarly profundity in the resolution of academic problems, especially those touching upon the history of the development of nations (!) and nationalities, but also other circumstances connected with the publication of the relevant work do not facilitate progress in scholarship”. The article further contains the cry: “In the preparation and publication of works impinging on national and international relations with the aim of strengthening friendship between peoples it is necessary to exhibit severe sensitivity, forethought and tact; here dilettantism and superficiality are let in”.

For a start we shall say that the ‘severe sensitivity and tact’ of the authors of the article did not prevent them from calling their colleague (a professor, doctor of historical sciences, who has devoted his entire life to the study of the history, ethnography and folklore of his people) a dilettante and superficial scholar.

In the first place, Inal-Ipa was not analysing in his work the history of the development of nations! The authors of the article in their uncontrollable striving to disgrace the name of a scholar baulk at nothing.

How exactly did lack of ‘sensitivity, forethought and tact’ manifest itself in the preparation of Inal-Ipa’s monograph, impinging upon ‘national and international relations’? One must suppose that the authors of the article had in mind the formation of the Abkhazian Kingdom in the VIIIth century and the annexing to it of adjacent Georgian lands by King Leon II, although there is no open talk of this in the article. The light thrown on precisely this question in Inal-Ipa’s book provoked the greatest indignation among certain historians. How precisely did Inal-Ipa transgress against scholarship? How do the authors of the editorial article try to portray this?

His crime resides in his having his very own notions on the question of the formation of the Abkhazian Kingdom and consequently the unification of Georgia under the auspices of the above-mentioned Kingdom, about the paths by which Egrisi (Mingrelia) and Kartli became united with Abkhazia and a united Abkhazo-Georgian state came to be formed. Such was the actual flow of historical circumstances in Abkhazia and Georgia at that distant time. By the

way, all this was by no means the revelation of Sh. D. Inal-Ipa. The famous Georgian historian, Academician G. A. Melikishvili, shares this self-same opinion. In his words, the Abkhazian kings “in the VIIIth century stood before us as the unifiers of the whole of West Georgian” (*The Political Unification of Feudal Georgia and Some Questions on the Development of Feudal Relations in Georgia*, 1973, p 144), and further, the unification of the whole of Georgia took place under the hegemony of the Abkhazian Kingdom (pp 133–134).

It has to be stated that among Georgian scholars themselves there is no common opinion on the matter of the formation of the Abkhazian Kingdom and the unification of Georgia. Alongside conscientious historians who deal with this period there are also the likes of M. D. Lordkipanidze, who are minded to deny the ethnic individuality of the Abkhazian people and to cauterize from the historical annals the said historical fact or to falsify it. How then does Prof. Lordkipanidze, for example, reason? Here is her commentary included in the Introduction to the Georgian chronicle *The Annals of Kartli* (Tbilisi, 1976). “In the 80s of the Xth century takes place the unification of the greater part of Georgian lands under the power of ‘the king of the Abkhazians and Georgians’ (i.e. the king of the western and eastern Georgians)” (p 6). Since when have the Abkhazians been ‘western Georgians’? Of course, one may pardon poor Columbus for suggesting when discovering America that he had found the way to India and, without seeking the permission of the aborigines for it, styled them Indians. But what of the discovery of Columbus in comparison with that of Lordkipanidze, who even without completing a round-the-world voyage, discovered ‘West Georgia’ within Abkhazia and styled the Abkhazians ‘Georgians’, similarly without asking their agreement? True, fortune rather shone on America: although they began calling it West India to distinguish it from the real India of the east, the facts later became clear and the muddle was removed—they began to call the country America. But nothing like this, unfortunately, happened in the case of Abkhazia. In the historical tracts and maps of Prof. Lordkipanidze and some others it is still referred to as ‘West Georgia’. Sometimes even with this authoress there is manifested something akin to a moment of lucidity, but only then as far as naming Abkhazia ‘Egris-Abkhazia’. The norms of the Russian language contain no other designation for referring to the promised land on the shores of the Psou, Bzyp, K’odor and Egra (Ingur) apart from its current name ‘Abkhazia’.

It is right here that it is possible and obligatory to speak of the absence of sensitivity and tact on the part of Lordkipanidze in relation to the Abkhazian people, the more so since at the beginning of 1978 at a republican conference of Abkhazian workers interested in the methodology of conducting tourist-excursions she demonstratively declared that two peoples, Georgians and Abkhazians, represented Abkhazia’s aborigines (?!). But, regrettably, such ‘discoveries’ do not suffer the necessary rebuff, and in consequence such myths as ‘the West

Georgian Kingdom', which is mentioned in not a single primary source, turn up in treatises on history.

It is fully understandable why Inal-Ipa's book caused such wrath with the authors of the editorial article—how could the Abkhazians, as he claims, unite Georgia, and through the use of force to boot?! And without finding any counter-arguments, they go on a spree and see their way out in accusing the author of lack of tact in his relations with the Georgian people and in not demonstrating in his book "the multi-faceted close ties, traditional friendship and brotherliness between the Georgian and Abkhazian peoples".

Such a reception is nothing new, but is a well-trying weapon of demagogy, when under the flag of general comments on the friendship of peoples the authors of the article seek to purvey political contraband and ascribe to Inal-Ipa political errors. To put it kindly, they display an intentionally or unconsciously surprising ignorance of the basic laws of the sociology of international relations. Here it is necessary to know and understand with what concrete historical material Prof. Inal-Ipa was dealing before blaming him for the absence in the work of any demonstration of the traditional friendship and brotherliness between the Georgian and Abkhazian peoples. The authors of the editorial article would have found it useful to find out that in Soviet historical scholarship a sharp boundary is set between the history of international relations up to 1917 and after 1917. Specifically, after the development of the world's first socialist state, the USSR, there developed a new type of international relations, and only then did the notion 'friendship of peoples' become established as an authentically historical category.

To project upon the VIII–Xth centuries modern concepts of the close economic and friendly ties between peoples, without which we simply cannot give an accurate representation of today's level of relationships between the peoples of the USSR and the socialist countries, is as absurd as if one were to assert that the peoples of the Stone Age knew how to use atomic reactors. Friendship of peoples is not some concept given from on high—it was a conquest of historical development, and its prerequisites were forged in the epoch of the development of the industrial proletariat.

As Marxist-Leninist sociology of international relations shows, starting from slavery and ending with capitalism, it was a history of wars, annexations, expansions, and there was no state which in its very essence would have said 'no' to war. In this concrete circumstance, the history of the mutual relations between the Abkhazian and Georgian peoples represents no exception. The rulers of these peoples hatched bloody wars and then entered into unions, if they felt general weakness in the face of some third, more menacing opponent, such as might have been the Persians, Byzantines or Arabs. That apart, time and again there arose feudal civil wars, and fratricidal wars were conducted. If, further-

more, there were also short periods of calm, this was only for the preparation for succeeding wars and conquests and was not a kindly wish for relations between peoples in circumstances when the aggression of one side could only be paralleled by counter-aggression.

In conclusion it is desirable to sum up what has been set out above and to draw up a list of conclusions, which with utter inevitability flow from the analysis of the editorial article:

1. The authors of the article with premeditation distort the opinions of Prof. Inal-Ipa on the historical problems touched upon in the book. Views are ascribed to him which he did not express on the pages of his monograph, which leads opponents into illusory disagreement with the author of the book.

2. In the editorial article there is not so much a criticism of the professor's work as attempts to discredit the author himself and to build obstructions for him in creating false ideas about him. There are no academically based refutations of the author, mere falsifications of statements made by Inal-Ipa on this or that problem.

3. The author of the monograph is charged with political crimes only because he adheres to his own persuasions in connection with a series of questions on the formation of the Abkhazian Kingdom and Abkhazo-Georgian relations in the VIII–Xth centuries.

4. Seeking to subject to criticism the stances taken by Inal-Ipa on the formation of the Abkhazian Kingdom in the VIIIth century, the editorial article along with certain Georgian historians makes use of a malevolent, pseudo-scholarly circular form of logical reasoning: they begin by postulating the actual existence of that which they wish to prove. In the given case, the existence of a 'West Georgian Kingdom', which in similar fashion is not fixed in the historical annals but is a blatant myth of modern Georgian historiography. The editorial article proposes, in similar vein, not the study of the history of Abkhazia and the Abkhazian people but its substitution by the history of the 'West Georgian Kingdom' and tries to transform the concept 'Abkhazia' into a purely geographical term, depriving it not only of ethnic but also of political content!

5. As has already been stated above, Inal-Ipa's monograph was given a completely positive assessment at the discussion in the Abkhaz Institute—in the words of A. V. Anchabadze 'it merits 90% approval'. So why in the editorial article is nothing said of these 90% positive aspects of the book, whilst there is an attempt to puff up 10% of non-existing 'errors' to such a degree that in the final analysis the authors of the editorial article reach the wrong conclusion that the work of Inal-Ipa "does nothing to facilitate progress in scholarship"?! How is this to be interpreted? It is not the appearance of Inal-Ipa's book but the publication of a pseudo-scholarly editorial article which facilitates regression in scholarship and a return to obsolete methods of exerting pressure on one's opponents. If progress in scholarship consists in giving satisfaction to certain individuals who work in the academic field and pervert the history of Georgia

and Abkhazia and preach the superiority of the Georgian nation over other peoples and deny the cultural and historical achievements of the Abkhazians, the Ossetians and the other peoples of the Caucasus, then, of course, this is just it.

6. Unable convincingly to argue with the author of the monograph on a profound scholarly basis, the editorial article does not flinch from demagogic statements merely in the hope of belittling the value of the book, its academic worth and reality. Doleful indeed is the regret the authors of the editorial article express in connection with the publication by the editorial boards of the papers *Apsnə Q'apš* and *Sovetskaja Abxazija* in their numbers of 4 January 1977 of the entirely positive reviews by scholars of the Oriental Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences on the alleged grounds that the reviewers "by virtue of their academic expertise have no direct links with the history of Georgia and Abkhazia...". Here, as we see, the authors of the article remain true to themselves: best to brand everyone as non-specialists, and then, who knows, maybe the inexperienced reader will believe it...

7. The appearance of such an article on the pages of Abkhazia's regional papers brings another thought into focus. It's a secret to no one that over the last 40 years in relation to Abkhazia there have been conducted politics which are in reality very far removed from proletarian internationalism and friendship between peoples. Someone took a fancy to renaming some toponymical and geographical term on the territory of Abkhazia, and, lo and behold, it is at once transformed according to the Georgian pattern, in conformity with the norms of the Georgian language. One does not have to look far for examples. After 1937 the capital of Abkhazia *Sukhum* was altered to *Sukhumi*; the Institute of Sub-tropical Farming, located on the territory of Abkhazia, all of a sudden became known as The *Georgian* Institute, etc. There is such a multiplicity of examples similar to this that they would distract us from the problem under investigation. The conclusion forces itself upon us—is it not a continuation of the self-same politics that has been manifested in relation also to Inal-Ipa's book? Or rather, this is one of the elements of the forcible assimilation of the Abkhazians, to which there is as yet no end in sight. In summation, we are speaking not merely of the monograph of Prof. Sh. D. Inal-Ipa but of the falsification of the historical past of the Abkhazian people.

We trust that the Academic Section of the Central Cte. of the Georgian CP and the Abkhazian Regional Cte. of the Georgian CP will understand us properly and react appropriately to our letter by directing the Soviet Academy of Sciences to prepare a scholarly based, objective review of Inal-Ipa's monograph *Questions of the Ethno-Cultural History of the Abkhazians*. In truth one cannot foresee any other way out of the crisis that has now developed in the field of Abkhazian studies.

June 1977

Signed by:

Abregov, A. N., Gitsba, T. Sh.
Adzhindzhal, E. K., Argun, Ju. G.
Marxolia, I. R., Shenkao, N. K.

TO THE XVIIth CONGRESS OF THE SOVIET COMMUNIST PARTY

Hardly had Soviet power been established in the region, when the Revolutionary Cte. of Abkhazia set out in a letter to Lenin and Stalin the decision of its deliberations, which amounted to the following: "First: Abkhazia should be declared a Soviet Socialist Republic. Second: Soviet Abkhazia should enter *directly* an all-Russian federation".

On 28 March 1921 the Batumi conference of the Caucasian Bureau of the RCP (b) unanimously decided to declare Abkhazia an independent Soviet Socialist Republic.

The Constitution of Abkhazia (1925) legitimized the legal position of Abkhazia: "The Abkhazian SSR, united on the basis of a special treaty of Union with the Georgian SSR, enters through it the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Republic".

In February 1931 Abkhazia became an autonomous republic within the composition of the Georgian SSR. To whom and for what purpose this autonomy was necessary the Abkhazians soon began to sense and continue to sense to this day. After a few years there set in the times of the Beria-regime, which in Abkhazia had its special characteristics. Here it did not leave even peasants who could have stood up for themselves and their fellow-countrymen.

In these years the Abkhazian people was decapitated. It was determined to deprive the survivors of all marks of self-awareness and to assimilate them. Georgian nationalists proceeded to the final stage of the annihilation of the Abkhazians as a nation, making use at the same time of the slogans of friendship and brotherliness. At the close of the 30s they began to settle Abkhazia, already suffering depredation and drained of blood, with Georgians [Kartvelians—trans.].

The trust *Transmigration Construction* forced a wedge of Georgian [Kartvelian—trans.] settlements into places with a particularly compact Abkhazian population. Large parts of the transmigrants were resettled up against the very border of the Abkhazian ASSR with the Russian Federation in order to demonstrate even there their 'ancient' presence, so as to cut Abkhazia off from the RSFSR and to defend on this distant frontier their own nationalist interests.

The fears were proved correct of the Russian historian who at the start of the century in his brochure *Abkhazia is not Georgia* forewarned the Abkhazians that in their offensive manœuvring the Georgian chauvinists would amputate Abkhazia's Samurzaq'ano (today's Gal Region of the Abkhazian ASSR).

B. G. HEWITT

This happened. Almost all the inhabitants of the Gal Region were assigned passports and other documents with surnames transformed into the Georgian model and with the registration 'Georgian' in the column for nationality. This took place in other regions too.

In this way the Georgians [Kartvelians—trans.] secured for themselves a significant numerical majority in the Abkhazian ASSR and took into their own hands the fundamental levers of government. Meanwhile the insidious finale grew ripe under Beria—this was to complete the genocide and remove the Abkhazian question from the agenda.

Already in 1941 at the Sukhum State Ped-Institute teaching of the Abkhaz language and literature ceased; preparation of cadres for Abkhaz schools was halted. In this were delineated the outlines of a future crime.

It was in such a situation that the Great Patriotic War found Abkhazia. But there was no halt to the repression even after the war. To the front-line wounds were added the moral ones: Abkhazian schools were shut. Teaching in them was obligatorily transferred to the Georgian language—in all classes and in all subjects. The Abkhaz language in fact existed with the rights of someone under arrest. Thousands of Abkhazian teachers were left without a job.

The Abkhaz language became prohibited. Children were punished and beaten for speaking in their native tongue. Many of those children today are representatives of middle-aged Abkhazian intelligentsia and keep to themselves the pain of these humiliations.

Resettlements began afresh. New tens of thousands of Georgians [Kartvelians—trans.] packed the territories that had been liberated.

Georgian historian-nationalists did not stand on the side. They looked after the migrants. After all, it was essential to provide a historical justification for the resettlement-programme into Abkhazia, so that the settlers should feel themselves master here.

And lo! a list of Georgian scholars according to a scheme already elaborated by the Georgian Mensheviks set about writing a new history of Georgia. In this new history they elevate Georgia above all the peoples of Transcaucasia and the Caucasus in general. The mediæval history and culture of the Abkhazians was entirely appropriated. As for Abkhazia itself, it was declared to be ancient Georgian land.

These works exist to the present day. No one has banned them. They are assiduously reprinted. References are made to them, and new generations are reared on them.

The fermentation of military Georgian chauvinism will not cease for its spores are preserved under the covers of numerous books on the history of the Georgian people composed by Georgian scholar-nationalists. Little wonder they make no attempt to translate these books into Russian.⁷

These historians declare the Abkhazians to be not a people but at best 'West Georgian tribes' and the Abkhaz language (which has nothing in common with Georgian) to be one of the 'West Georgian argots'. Even the existence of the anthropological type 'Abkhazian' has been denied.

The Central Cte. of our Party has been kept constantly informed of these outrages of Georgian nationalism in Abkhazia. In particular, in 1947 a letter was sent to it signed by G. A. Dzidzaria (currently Director of the Gulia Abkhazian Institute of History, Language and Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the Georgian SSR, Corresponding-member of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, Professor), B. V. Shinkuba (eminent activist of the Soviet state, President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Abkhazian ASSR 1958–1978, Deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR 1958–1962 and again from 1972, Abkhazian People's Poet), and K. S. Shakryl (Doctor of Philological Science).

In 1957 a new letter was sent to the Presidium of the Central Cte of the Soviet CP about new excesses of Georgian nationalism which enjoyed the direct or covert protection of even certain leading-members of the Central Cte. of the Georgian CP. This letter was signed by the President of the Council of Ministers of the Abkhazian ASSR, A. M. Labaxua (since then for 30 years only Georgians [Kartvelians—trans.] have occupied the post of president of the Council of Ministers) and the Secretary of the Abkhazian Regional Cte. of the Georgian CP, the famous poet I. K. Tarba.

In that year public disturbances took place in Abkhazia. These were repeated in 1967. Then again in 1978, after which the Central Cte. of the Soviet CP and the Soviet Council of Ministers adopted the resolution, historic for the autonomous republic, 'On measures for the further development of the economy and culture of the Abkhazian ASSR'. This resolution is not being realized in its full dimension, and information about the course of its fulfilment deviates from the actual state of affairs.

Take as an example just the construction of a tele-centre in Sukhum. We know that a tele-centre is no innovation for autonomous republics within the composition of the RSFSR, but in Abkhazia every nest of culture is built only through

incredible efforts on the part of the whole people. Every journal, every printed page published is the result of struggle.

Not a single progressive individual can suppose that the loss by a people of its native language is a normal phenomenon. "True love towards one's country is inconceivable without love towards one's native language. A person who is indifferent towards his language is a savage. His indifference is explained by complete indifference towards the past, present and future of his people". These words belong to Paustovsky. They are taken from a textbook on the Russian language for 5–6th classes of Russian schools.

Konstantin Simonov (appositely for the Abkhazian problem) said that "loss of language is loss of self-awareness".

Abkhazian children today are losing their native language within Abkhazia itself. It is almost never heard in the street and in the school (unless the lesson is on the Abkhaz language and its literature). It is almost never heard in state-offices.

At the same time Georgian [Kartvelian—trans.] children are not losing their language [sc. Georgian—trans.] within Abkhazia. They complete the programme for middle schools entirely in their native tongue; they watch cartoons in Georgian on the television and children's spectacles.

Abkhazian children (who, as representatives of a small people, are in need of this to a much greater degree) do not have this possibility. For Abkhazian children to the present day there hasn't been opened any puppet-theatre; not for them any spectacles, cartoons, or ordinary films. There are no school pedagogical materials, no visual aids; the needs of national kindergartens are extremely badly served.

Kindergartens are necessary for the Abkhazians most of all in order that children might there at any rate hear the Abkhazian language and be prepared for Abkhazian schools.

Is it really on such a basis that the natural merging of socialist nations should proceed?!

If in the first Soviet decades business in Abkhazia's organizations and institutions was of necessity conducted also in the Abkhaz language, today there is no such practice in a single urban institution (the only exceptions are in some rural ones).

In the Constitution of the Abkhazian ASSR (article 70) it states: "The Abkhazian ASSR guarantees the all-round development of the Abkhaz language and

facilitates its usage and that of other state-languages in state- and general organs, in institutions of culture, education and others”.

True, in accordance with the Constitution the Abkhaz language is a state-language within the Abkhazian ASSR. But in what resides this status, if it is absent even on the official seals of the Abkhazian Regional Cte. of the Georgian CP, the Komsomol Regional Cte., Sukhum's Party City Cte. and the Komsomol's City Cte.?

Over the 65 years of the existence of Soviet power in Abkhazia the printing of an explanatory dictionary of the Abkhaz language or of an Abkhaz-Russian dictionary has proved impossible to realise [N.B. a 2-volume explanatory dictionary, including Russian equivalents, appeared finally in 1986—trans.]; to the present day there has been no self-primer for the Abkhaz language. In compensation there is the resolution, adopted by the Abkhazian Regional Cte. of the Party following the Central Cte. of the Georgian CP on the improvement of the study and teaching of the Abkhaz language.

As to the real situation in which the Abkhaz language finds itself in the Abkhazian ASSR, the most eloquent testimony comes from the absence of the Abkhaz language from diploma-booklets at the Abkhazian State University, from record-books of all higher and middle special educational establishments, from student- and pupil-tickets, from all attestations (including the attestations of Abkhazia's creative councils), from all official forms.

All entrance-tickets in the system of the Ministry of Culture, of the Houses of Culture, of parks of culture and rest, in squares of attractions—all these are only in the Georgian language.

All departmental announcements, instructions, and placards in the system of pharmacy-control, the Health Ministry, the railway, and all voluntary societies, as in the case of the afore-mentioned tickets, are prepared in Tbilisi and sent from Tbilisi, although their preparation is quite feasible in Sukhum too. However, they print them in Tbilisi in order that it might be possible to ignore the Abkhaz and even the Russian languages.

In a constant stream there flow into Abkhazia bureaucratic correspondence, edicts and telegrams in the Georgian language. And all this when the Georgian language is known to a certain extent essentially only by those Abkhazians who learnt to read and write it under fear of repression. The impression is given that in Tbilisi there is even now nostalgia for the times when Abkhazian children, choking with tears, used to repeat Georgian words they could not understand under the cudgel of the Beriaite 'enlighteners'.

“An alien tongue is spread not by means of the sabre and conflagrations, but by virtue of its innate richness and excellence” (A. S. Pushkin).

We would wish to forget that period, but we cannot. There is too much around us to remind us of that time. In Abkhazia there live and constantly reminisce people who participated in the closure of the Abkhazian schools, who took and take an attitude of scorn towards our culture, who were and are irritated by our language.

Many of these people are honoured teachers of the republic, outstanding individuals in the field of public education, personal pensioners. Here the ideals somehow came strongly to diverge from actual practice. And this is one of the causes of the unhealthiness in the moral-psychological climate within Abkhazia.

Georgian nationalism, holding its ground even now, does a great deal even today to bring about a situation whereby the Abkhazians know their own history only in the form in which it is served up by certain ‘scholars’ from Tbilisi.

Two years ago there was published in Tbilisi the encyclopædic handbook *The Georgian SSR*, in which the history and culture of the Abkhazian people are mangled. Abkhazian society was perturbed at this assault. Our scholars and representatives of the creative intelligentsia informed the highest bodies of this. Everything remained in its place. Moreover, this encyclopædic handbook was given the distinction of a grade-1 republican diploma as well as a financial prize. Thus are our feelings of indignation answered in Tbilisi.

The toponymics of Abkhazia remain in their former state as deformed by Beria’s disciples. And everyone knows that a promise was made to the Abkhazian people to correct this. The commissions set up to reveal the original appellations presented their materials to the government of the Abkhazian ASSR 6 years ago. They are locked up in a safe.

In Abkhazia in 1926 (when it was still a union-republic) Abkhazians made up around half the total population. Today as a result of the practice of resettlement, of the growth of tourist and industrial building, and of the continuation of the transference of Georgians [Kartvelians—trans.] (in connection with the inadequacy of manual labour that has allegedly developed), Abkhazians constitute only one fifth of the population of the autonomous republic.

As in the past, in the Abkhazian ASSR the economic problems continue to be decided to the exclusion of the cultural problems of the Abkhazian people. But, as we all know, one must see not only construction-sites on Abkhazian soil but also the Abkhazian nation. We need a holistic approach here.

Georgians [Kartvelians—trans.] and Abkhazians live in one republic, in one, it

would seem, socio-economic and cultural milieu. At the same time the difference in our development and in its dynamic speaks of an unjust, feudal division of resources.

The 1959 figures for those who had completed middle education per 1,000 individuals were:

Georgians [Kartvelians—trans.]	140
Russians	113
Armenians	91
Abkhazians	78

In this way the Abkhazians occupied 4th place in the republic according to the given statistic and lag behind the Georgians [Kartvelians—trans.] by a factor of two.

According to the 1970 census an average of 42 out of every 1,000 for the Union as a whole had completed higher education; for the Georgian SSR it was over 50, but for Abkhazia it was 31.

On this index our republic lags behind both the pan-Soviet and the general Georgian level.

Even within the Abkhazian ASSR according to the given indicator Abkhazians significantly fall behind the Georgians [Kartvelians—trans.]. In 1970 in Abkhazia's public agriculture the number of specialist-workers was: 6,913 Georgians [Kartvelians—trans.] with a higher education, which represented roughly 1 specialist per 30 Georgians [Kartvelians—trans.] living within Abkhazia. As for Abkhazians, there were 1,772 workers with higher education, which constituted 1 specialist for every 45 people. In a word, Abkhazians need around 1,000 more specialists so that within the Abkhazian ASSR they might equal on this indicator the Georgians [Kartvelians—trans.].

Despite this state of affairs, neither the government of the autonomous republic nor the Abkhazian State University is disposing of a plan for the balancing of these indices; they are not taking measures for the liquidation of these instances of backwardness. In these circumstances they even find it possible inappropriately to apportion the reserve-places [sc. in educational establishments—trans.] and distribute them not according to nomination. And everyone is aware that these reserve-places are given precisely to conceal the facts of us being behind.

The lagging behind of the Abkhazians is also observed (and these cases are important) in connection with intermediate special education. It is significant that almost all the intermediate special educational establishments of the Abkhazian ASSR are subordinate to the relevant ministries of the Georgian SSR.

The Abkhazians lag behind according to the rate of growth of population and according to the rate of urbanization. The cultural and socio-economic development of the Abkhazian people deserves academic study, and the problems of their development need a principled decision that cannot be postponed. This is all the more urgent for just such or approximately such facts of disproportion are revealed in all spheres.

Number of scientific workers (1975)

Georgians [Kartvelians—trans.]	22,673	From population	3,245,000
Abkhazians	249	From population	83,000

Calculation shows that the number of scientific workers amongst the Abkhazians in relation to the total population is 0.3%. At the same time amongst the Georgians [Kartvelians—trans.] this index is more than 2.5 times higher and constitutes 0.7%!

That is, if today amongst the Abkhazians there are 249 scientific workers, a further 330 are necessary to equal the Georgian [Kartvelian—trans.] level.

Representatives of the Abkhazian intelligentsia have repeatedly sent reports to the Central Cte. of the Soviet CP about similar infringements along with concrete figures and tables. These problems remain unresolved to the present day, although a decree of the Party and Government has aimed at resolving them in connection with Abkhazia. Up to the present day no alteration in the direction of real improvement has been noticed.

In the Republic of Georgia especially in the realm of international relations the theory and practice of national politics often find themselves in contradiction—verbally we have the principles of Lenin’s friendship, whereas in practice time and again it is quite the opposite.

Let us take the data on the national composition of members of the CP for the Georgian SSR from the book of E. A. Shevardnadze *Soviet Georgia* (1982, p 97) and compare the number of communists of each nationality with the figure for this nationality in the republic (see *Countries and Peoples*, 1984, data for Georgia from pp 32–33). We receive the following picture:

	Total	Party-membership
Georgians [Kartvelians—trans.]	3,433,000	279,348
Russians	372,000	17,958
Armenians	448,000	22,776
Azerbaijanis	256,000	8,924
Abkhazians	83,000	5,836

Of what do these comparisons speak? Of this: Russians in the Georgian SSR require a further 12,283 members to be in proportionately equal representation with the Georgians [Kartvelians—trans.] in the Party-ranks of the republic. This is roughly 40% of the number of current Russian Party-members in the Georgian

SSR. The Armenians need a further 13,578, the Azerbaijanis 11,907, the Abkhazians 918.

In Abkhazia itself the preponderance of Georgians [Kartvelians—trans.] begins with the bureau of the Abkhazian Regional Cte. of the Party. There are even fewer Abkhazians represented among those who control the majority of regional committees and regional executive committees. In the local government of the Gal District Abkhazians are traditionally not represented at all. It transpires that Abkhazia is a Georgian autonomy within the Republic of Georgia. That it is more a Georgian than an Abkhazian autonomy is clear in everything. The very formation of an Abkhazian Autonomous Republic has been deprived of any sense. And, so constituted, it cannot solve the socio-economic and cultural problems of the development of the Abkhazian nation. This is demonstrated by practical reality, to which the figures we come up against everywhere bear witness.

Today one almost never hears on the radio or television or reads in the central newspapers the terms 'Abkhazia' and 'the Abkhazian ASSR'. We are only referred to under the designation 'West Georgia', which has rendered completely null and void the name of our country, our Abkhazia.

Chekhov, on a visit to our region in 1888, wrote: "I am in Abkhazia!". This was in tsarist times, when Russia was known as the prison of peoples.

Today in our Soviet land, in a family of Soviet peoples which enjoys equality of rights, the name of Abkhazia has for some reason started to be consigned to oblivion. Karelia is called Karelia, is it not? We hear it, we read it. We hear also the name Komi. These autonomies are constituent-parts of the RSFSR and preserve their appellations. Meanwhile, Abkhazia, a constituent-part of the Georgian SSR, amongst other losses has lost even its name. This is a poor foundation for friendship.

The public disturbances which took place in Abkhazia in 1957, 1967 and 1978, and numerous personal and group-letters of Party-representatives or the community or the scientific and creative intelligentsia have consistently underlined that the subordination of Abkhazia to Georgia has not only failed to justify itself but has demonstrated the utter harmfulness of this subordination.

In creating at the time the Abkhazian SSR, the Bolshevik-Leninists started out from an assessment of local particularities, from the necessity of defending Abkhazia from the encroachments of Georgian nationalism [vid. Carl Eric Bechhofer *In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus 1919-1920*, London, 1921 for an Englishman's contemporary evaluation of this nationalism—trans.] This was a more important consideration than the number of the Abkhazian nation. This was a principled Bolshevik solution to the national question.

Practice has shown that this defence was removed prematurely and that the Abkhazian people have paid a heavy price for this.

To restore the Abkhazian nation to its rights (in cultural and political spheres) and to correct everything which has been distorted here by enemies of the people can only be achieved on one condition—the restoration of Abkhazia in the form of the Abkhazian Soviet Socialist Republic, such as it was up to 1931.

In connection with what has been set out above we ask for:

1. the creation of a special commission from the Central Cte. of the Soviet CP for the verification of the fulfilment of the Resolution of the Central Cte of the Soviet CP and the Soviet Council of Ministers 'On Measures for the Further Development of the Economy and Culture of the Abkhazian ASSR' (1978);

2. the creation of a governmental commission to examine the question of the restoration of Abkhazia with the status of a Soviet Socialist republic, such as it was up to 1931;

3. the creation of a commission to look into the activity of individual Georgian historians in connection with the kindling of anti-Abkhazian sentiments;

4. the annulment in the Constitution of the Abkhazian ASSR (just as in the case of the Constitution of the Georgian SSR) of the paragraph on the state-language, since this goes against Lenin's purpose;

5. the renewal of the work of Soviet scholars on the summarizing investigation *A History of the Transcaucasian Peoples from the Most Ancient Times to Our Day*, which was charged with deciding some unresolved questions in the realm of the history of the peoples of the area.

6. In the apparat of the Central Cte. of the Soviet CP, of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, of the Council of Ministers of the USSR there is no Abkhazian. Such representation, by the way, would answer both the spirit and the letter of Lenin's national politics and Lenin's principles of election and placing of personnel. We request a special investigation into this question.

At the time we very much liked the stances adopted by Ju. V. Andropov in his speeches about the necessity "of consistently ensuring that all the nationalities which exist in this or that republic are appropriately represented in the different layers of Party and Soviet organs". And "our final aim is clear. This, to put it in the words of V. I. Lenin, is not only the rapprochement of nations but their merging. The Party well understands that it is a long road which leads to this goal. Here under no circumstance is it possible to rush forward, just as it is impossible to allow the reversal of processes already ripened".

Taking full responsibility for our approach to the Congress of the Soviet CP, we

simply could not refrain from reporting to the Congress on those questions which deeply perturb us and which are set out in the present letter.

28 October 1985

Sukhum

G. Sh. Alamia

R. X. Smyr

D. K. Chachxalia

(Members of the Union of Writers of the USSR)

[Anyone who bothers to examine the problem of Abkhaz-Georgian relations soon comes to realize that the roots are deep and that, as described with such clarity in the immediately preceding letter, aggravation has been piled on aggravation. The calls from Abkhazia in the last years of the Soviet regime for restitution of the republic's status in the 1920s were no new phenomenon. The difference today is that this surely legitimate demand for a reassessment of their republic's political status is no longer being airily dismissed just by a succession of Kremlin-leaders, unwilling to right one of the multitude of Stalin's wrongs, but by the so-called 'world-community' in the shape of the United Nations (whose Secretary General displayed the nature of his neutrality when he accepted an Honorary Doctorate from Tbilisi State University in November 1994 at the very time when he was expected shortly to be chairing a summit-meeting between the presidents of Abkhazia and Georgia) and its individual member-states, a group of whose most important members (including the British Government) constitute the *Friends of Georgia* (FOG), an organization which works behind the scenes in seeking to ensure the interests not of the peoples of this troubled republic but of the Shevardnadze regime, which, theoretically at least, controls it. Since, as we have seen, it was through the machinations of the most infamous Georgian in history that Abkhazia found itself in the position of a mere autonomous republic within Georgia when the USSR disintegrated, the UN and its member-states are seen to be in effect nothing more than the executors (60 and more years on) of Stalin's whim by refusing to countenance any reconsideration of this status, even though insisting that Abkhazia give up its gains (chiefly *de facto* independence) from the 1992-93 war which Shevardnadze inflicted upon it places the very survival of the Abkhazians as an ethnic group in very real jeopardy, as must be beyond dispute to anyone who has read the preceding pages.

It is, thus, perverse in the extreme to sweep aside every scheme that has been activated over the decades against the interests of the Abkhazians by various governments in Tbilisi and to delude oneself into supposing one is making a valuable contribution to the debate by merely regurgitating the line propounded by the Georgian propaganda-machine⁸ in simplistical assertions to the effect that the Abkhazians, incapable by inference (at least since the 1930s) of knowing their own minds, permit themselves time and again to be manipulated, puppet-like, by 'anti-Georgians' in the Kremlin into staging agitation against Georgian interests. This to give Russian imperialists an excuse to interfere in 'internal'

Georgian affairs, most recently in the guise of peace-keepers in their 'near-abroad'—for the latest example of this see David Braund's letter published in *The Times* on 2 December 1995.⁹ Such parroting of propaganda is regrettably not limited to the letters' page of the one-time 'Thunderer'. Paul Henze has written (1992) most movingly of the 19th century struggle by the Circassians against the attempt, which achieved final success in 1864, by the Tsars to gain control of the North West Caucasus—the Abkhazians, let it not be forgotten, as cousins of the Circassians as well as of their immediate northern-neighbours, the Ubykhs, around Sochi, were the only people of Transcaucasia to participate in this armed defence of North Caucasian independence, and he has also publicly expressed outrage at Yeltsin's barbaric assault on the Chechens because of their drive for self-determination. But consider Henze's latest contribution to the debate on Abkhazia, which is to be found in the edition of *Eurasian Studies* (an English-language journal published in Turkey) for the summer of 1995: '[Gamsakurdia's] extremism gave moderates among the Abkhaz and the Ossetes no alternative but to fall in behind their own extremists. [...] Abkhaz separatists, supplied and encouraged by conservative, Russian military leaders and neo-communist imperialists, persisted in their efforts to gain control of this rich and attractive region. Shevardnadze's substantial abilities to compromise and negotiate with the Abkhaz were continually frustrated by the military actions of Georgian warlords, over whom he had minimal influence and no control.' Henze even goes on to talk of the 'regrettable but understandable reasons' which lie behind Shevardnadze's support for Yeltsin's militarism in Chechnia—such is the extent to which he seems to have been blinded to the reality of Georgian chauvinism by naive Western sympathy for the notorious anti-Russianism that every visitor knows to be so pervasive among the Georgians; and the reality is that Shevardnadze and Yeltsin are the most compatible of bed-fellows, each inflicting war on their respective local North Caucasians, who in both cases have suffered for decades at the hands of either Tbilisi or Moscow (or both!), as the case may be.

With the disappearance of all the restrictions that applied during the Soviet era to Western involvement in the Caucasus a number of organizations (sc. in addition to the oil-conglomerates scrambling for a share of the riches that are destined to flow from the Caspian reserves) have recently sprung up, garnering funds supposedly to bring the benefits of Western 'civilization' to a region they deem ripe for Western involvement (?exploitation). One might even welcome some of these efforts if those who have newly discovered the Caucasus took the trouble to educate themselves about the region, its peoples and their concerns before plunging into their various activities—but do they? One such grouping is a branch of VERTIC, which, to quote from their publicity, 'is a non-profit making organization of scientists conducting research into the monitoring of arms control and environment agreements and sub-national conflicts'—the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust has specifically funded, it would seem, 'VERTIC's project on Conflicts and Confidence Building'. This latter quotation is taken from the brochure *The Birth of a Georgian State: Giving Georgia a*

Second Chance, produced in 1994 by Dennis Sammut, who has charge of the organization's interest in Georgia. As an illustration of Sammut's depth of knowledge of the Abkhazian problem, let us consider the following, which appears on p 5: "...the conflict in Abkhazia, although often articulated in ethnic terms, can be attributed more to the confusion reigning in Georgia on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the weakness of the new Georgian Republic. The conflict also has its roots in the arbitrary creation and re[-]creation of constitutional entities in the first years of the USSR. An autonomous region of Abkhazia was created after the territory came under communist rule. In the reorganization of 1936, Abkhazia became an autonomous republic within the Georgian SSR. The Abkhaz are a Caucasian people, **predominantly Muslim** and inhabitants of the region for many centuries. Their numbers however are small. **So small in fact that in the Second World War Stalin exempted Abkhazians from serving in the USSR Armed Forces for fear that they might become totally extinct. According to Georgians, this exemption was an incentive for other people to declare themselves Abkhazs thus artificially swelling their numbers**" (stresses added). How could one adequately describe such blatant distortion of history?—Abkhazians were given NO exemption in the fight against Nazi aggression! Even if they had been, how could such an absurd explanation as the one here advanced be considered remotely credible by anyone with a scintilla of understanding of the phenomenon of Stalin and the effect of his policies on the Soviet, specifically Caucasian, peoples?! The levelling of this accusation, which in itself is a gross insult to the memory of those Abkhazians who laid down their lives or who suffered in other ways for their homeland, must raise grave doubts about the *bona fides* of an organization that reveals itself capable of such reckless disregard for facts¹⁰ in its eagerness to publish (perhaps in the hope of establishing for itself a niche in the new 'market' of caucasology?). Given its stance on the question of Abkhazia since 1992, it will surprise no one that the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office is mentioned by VERTIC as a project-funder. One cannot help but recall the words of the first Briton (actually a Scot) to take an active interest in North West Caucasian (specifically Circassian) affairs, David Urquhart. Writing in 1853, he warned, some years after his advocacy of British intervention in Circassia to prevent Russia taking control of this whole area had fallen on Palmerston's deaf ears: 'When she [England] proclaims herself the lover of peace at the expense of honour, when she asserts herself the friend of the powerful and the ally of the aggressor, she ceases to have a situation among mankind, not because her fleets are disarmed, but because her character has sunk'. *Plus ça change...*].

Corrigenda: The following corrections should be made in my 1993 CAS contribution: the original source for the individual population figures for Abkhazia in 1886 quoted on page 272 is not available to me, and the figures given came from an unpublished paper *Spravka ob étničeskoj i demografičeskoj situacii v Abkazii v prošlom i nastojaščem* by V. E. Kvarčia and T. A. Ačugba. As a result of a correspondence on this topic with Daniel Müller, who pointed

out certain minor inconsistencies in the figures as presented in this latter article, I discovered some slight differences in another recent publication, namely *Istoriya Abxazii* (1991; 2nd edition 1993), that refers to the same 19th century source and gives the figures (p 208) as: Abkhazians 58,963 (85.7%), Kartvelians (incl. 3,558 Mingrelians and Laz) 4,166 (6%), Greeks 2,149, Armenians 1,049, Russians 971, etc., to give a total around 69,000. Clearly, no substantial difference results from the minor discrepancies as far as the overall picture for Abkhazia in 1886 is concerned. The Unrepresented Nations and People's Organization (UNPO), mentioned on page 293, is not in fact a UN body. On page 295 read 'Aydgylara' (not Aydyglara). In footnote 103 reference is made to a non-existing second footnote 103, wherein the following bibliographical entry should have appeared: W. Feurstein *Mingrelisch, Lazisch, Swanisch: Alte Sprachen und Kulturen der Kolchis vor dem baldigen Untergang*, in G. Hewitt (ed.) *Caucasian Perspectives*, 285–328, Lincom Europa 1992.

Notes and references

1. Beria left Georgia to take over from Yezhov as head of the Soviet secret police in 1938, being succeeded as Georgian Party Boss by Chark'viani, who remained in post until removed in the wake of the so-called Mingrelian Affair of 1952; he was still alive in Tbilisi in 1989. Mgeladze's brief reign in Tbilisi lasted only until 1953; during the 1940s he had been Party Boss in Abkhazia, where he implemented the measures detailed in the letter below.
2. Since this is the universal view amongst Abkhazians, who specifically is meant here by the term 'nationalists'? Or does Aves think perhaps that all Abkhazians are *ex vi termini* nationalists?
3. The Russian word is narod.
4. In fact, Abkhazia only became an *autonomous* republic within the union-republic of Georgia by *fiat* of Stalin in 1931—translator.
5. Mirtskulava held this post for only a brief period in 1953 before Vasili Mzhavanadze took over, to stay in charge until ousted in 1972 by Eduard Shevardnadze. Like his predecessor, Mgeladze, and of course Beria himself, Mirtskulava does not merit a mention in the 11-volume Georgian *Encyclopædia*.
6. A further example of the way Georgian governments have claimed as historical Georgian territory land belonging to neighbouring states was mentioned by C. E. Bechhofer in his *In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus 1919–1920* (1921) when on page 11, referring to the contents of an anonymous Georgian pamphlet of 1916 written in English and entitled *Georgia and the War* as an illustration of 'the usual propagandist claims', he remarked that 'a map of Georgia includes territory as far remote as Lazistan and Trebizond'. And Western politicians visiting Georgia after the First World War were evidently no less susceptible to having the wool pulled over their eyes than a host of modern-day (ex-)politicians, journalists, diplomats and self-proclaimed 'experts' following more recently in their footsteps in the wake of the collapse of Soviet communism, for on page 53 Bechhofer says of a report prepared in 1920 by Ramsay Macdonald: 'The whole of Mr. Macdonald's article is a farrago of unchecked Georgian propagandist assertions, many of them patently absurd', a description which could all too sadly apply to much that has been written about Georgia since 1989.
7. [This is reminiscent of Voronov's observation in his 1992 review of Lordkipanidze's *trilingual* (Georgian, Russian, English) publication that the Russian and English versions are not, as would be expected, simple translations of the Georgian original but are tailored to meet the needs of the different readerships—trans.]
8. The lack of compunction with which certain (in this respect, at least, pseudo-) scholars in Tbilisi can rewrite history in the interests of Georgian nationalism was stressed above in the letter by Abregov *et al*. The latest attempt that I have seen to argue that Kartvelians ante-dated Abkhazians as residents of Abkhazia was published in Georgian in the Bulletin of Kutaisi University (No. 1, 1995), pp 25–32 (*bič'vintis tavdap'irveli saxelc'odebis sak'itxisatvis* 'On the question of the original designation of Bič'vinta'). The Georgian abkhazologist, Teimuraz Gvantseladze, applies his philological talents to an etymology of the North Abkhazian resort known universally as Pitsunda, arguing that the word for 'pine' in one of the Kartvelian languages (Zan-Svan) will have been the source (through calquing) of the name *Pityoús* that the Greeks gave to their colony here in the first half of the first millennium BC—if the ancient Greeks formed a calque on a Kartvelian toponym (and this is the goal of the whole enterprise), the

residents must have been Kartvelians, not Abkhazians, when the Greeks arrived. One is tempted to muse that a Georgian blunting of Occam's razor (*entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem* 'entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity') might read something like: *etymologiae sunt multiplicandae propter necessitatem ibericae faciendae* 'etymologies are to be multiplied because of the necessity of manufacturing an Iberian one'. As it happens, my own etymology may be consulted in *Revue des Etudes Géorgiennes et Caucasiennes* 6–7, 1990–91, pp 205–209, where I present a detailed defence of the more traditional derivation of the Greek toponym from the Greek word *pîty's* 'pine' (a root with an impeccable Indo-European pedigree), the site being remarkable for a particular variety of pine which grows here in abundance. The Greeks, not unnaturally, named their colony 'place of pines'. The Abkhazians call the resort *á-mza-ra* (= Georgian *pič'v-nar-i* from *pič'v-i* 'pine') 'pine-plantation' from *a-mzá* 'pine', which could be calqued on the Greek (or the Greek could have been calqued on this, for that matter), whereas the Georgian *bič'vinta* is most easily explained as a direct borrowing from the accusative singular case-form of the Greek toponym *pityoúnta* (cf. the Georgian *krist'e* 'Christ' in the nominative singular, which is a direct loan of the vocative singular of Greek *Xristós*). Gvantseladze's argument relies heavily on his opinion that the Greeks first simply employed their substantive for 'pine' as toponym, pointing out that such a model for toponyms exists in Kartvelian tongues but not in Abkhaz. One need examine the argument no further, for the author has palpably failed to notice that Greek *Pityoús* 'Pitsunda' is not in fact identical to Greek *pîty's* 'pine'!

9. The letter reads thus: "The sad truth about the Abkhazian question is that Abkhaz separatists chose to ride a tiger when they allowed themselves to be used by Russia against the emerging Georgian republic. Now that Georgia has been brought back into the Russian sphere, not least under the pressure of Abkhaz separatism, the tiger has turned on them. The only hope for Transcaucasian nationalists of all persuasions lies in co-operation within the region, not recourse to imperialists from outside. Unfortunately, throughout the post-communist world there is scant respect for human rights, or for any form of laws". It was written in response to another, published on 30 Nov 1995, from Prof. Richard Clogg, who characterized the general Western attitude to Abkhazia as "a clear case of blaming the victim". By choosing to publish Braund's comments, couched in phrases which lay the twin sins of separatism and nationalism exclusively at the door of the Abkhazians (what of Georgia's rush to divorce itself from the USSR in the late 1980s in the heady days of Gamsakhurdia's chauvinism?) as the final contribution to the short correspondence on its pages, *The Times* lays itself open to the charge of committing the self-same error that Clogg was criticizing in the first place.
10. Interestingly, Jonathan Aves, Tamara Dragadze and the Tbilisi-born Mingrelian political philosopher, Gia Nodia, are thanked at the start of the brochure for reading the first draft.

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