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Historical Aspects of Georgian-Ukrainian Relations

The existence of allied countries and relations with them play a big part in the state strength of Georgia. Communication with these countries also affects their economical and cultural development.

Modern contacts cannot exist without considering preceding stages of historical processes. Applying historical experience and knowledge to practice has a great importance.

The great Georgian poet Vazha-Pshavela wrote: "History is written more for the present than for the past. It tells us about mistakes and encourages us to do better. We see our mistakes and overcome them." (Vazha-Pshavela, Unknown publications, magazine "Tsisartkela", 1970, No. 5, page 161).

From this point of view it follows that, as shown by the study and analysis of Georgian-Ukrainian relations, close communication between nations has great importance. The Ukrainian people have always been good neighbors. They have often supported us in the past, as well as now.

We have rich documentation of the historical relations of Georgia and Ukraine, which enable us to understand the question of our friendship and coexistence.

Documents indicate that communication between these countries must have begun by the X-XI centuries. Political, religious and military interests would have been the reason for developing the relations between Georgia and the Kiev principality. In that period, Georgian foremen decorated the iconostasis, walls and ceiling of the main sanctuary of the Kiev lavra. In the XII century, the Kievian prince Iziaslav married a daughter of the Georgian king (probably Demetre I), who took many Georgian servants with her. They would have had relations with the Kiev nobility. This marriage maintained close contacts between these two countries that made them stronger.

In the age of feudalism, the main cause of the breakdown of the relations between the countries were attack by foreign tribes. Because of Mongolian attack in XIII century, the relations between Georgia and Ukraine were interrupted. In addition, after the Mongolians, Georgia was conquered by the Iranians and Ottomans. Poland occupied the greater part of Ukraine and since the XV

century Ukraine had to fight with Turkey.

Georgian and Ukrainian people never acquiesced to enemy rule and fought against them. During this fight, they strove to renew communication. One example of this is the arrival of Dnepr Cossacks to develop military relations in XIII century. Unfortunately this contact was not maintained, but the fact itself has great importance.

In 1654 Ukraine united with Russia. In that period Georgian kings were searching for ways to contact Russia. It seems impossible that Georgians, who were sent to Russia, would not have been in contact with Ukrainians. The fact that the king of Kartl-Kakheti Teimuraz I knew of the union of Ukraine with Russia means we had relations with them. Georgians in Russia became familiar with the creations of Ukrainian cultural workers. The Georgian king and poet Archil translated the compositions of Petre Mogila and Dimitri Tuptalo. The next king Vakhtang VI tried to publish these translations when he was in Russia, but he could not.

In the XVIII century the Russian emperor awarded Georgian soldiers with land in Ukraine. In the 1740-ies a Georgian settlement was established there. One of the largest Georgian settlements was in Mirgorod, where the famous Georgian poet David Guramishvili lived and worked. He died and was interred there. He was the first to use Ukrainian themes in his compositions and to describe its wonderful nature. Like David Guramishvili, many great Georgians of the XVIII century, including the Gangeblidze family, considered Ukraine as their second native land.

Since 1801, Georgia gradually was united with tsarist Russia and friendship between Georgia and Ukraine developed on a stable basis. They were involved in a new life style. Georgian students studying in Russia and Ukraine were in direct contact with Ukrainian youth, future writers and cultural figures. Many Georgian specialists were educated in major Ukrainian universities and made a big effort to introduce Georgian history and culture to others, with the result that at the end of XIX century Ukrainians were greatly interested in Georgia. Correspondences about Georgia's and Ukraine's cultural life were published in newspapers of that period. "Caucasian" and "Georgian" evenings in Kharkov, Kiev, Odessa and Feodosia drew great interest. These evenings were attended by Georgian, Ukrainian, Russian, Azerbaijanian and Armenian intelligentsia and each such evening made these countries, oppressed by tsarist government, friendlier to each other.

Ilia Chavchavadze had close relations with famous Ukrainian cultural figures. His compositions were translated into Ukrainian by A. Grabovski, O. Lototski, B. Grishchenko etc. The relationship between Akaki Tsereteli and these people is also worth mentioning. He knew Taras Shevchenko and was greatly impressed by him.

In XIX century the Ukrainian writers M. Gulgak and A. Navrotski worked in Georgia and were interested in Shota Rustaveli's "The Knight in the Panther's Skin".

Friendship that lasted for centuries produced yet another famous poet, Lesia Ukrainka, who lived and worked in Georgia.

In the years 1918-1921, many Georgians who were in Ukraine took part in the Russian civil war that broke out on the territory of Russian Empire. V. Kikvidze, V. Tskipurishvili, L. Kartvelisvili, T. Zhgenti, K. Sajaia were among them.

After the civil war in Ukraine and Bolshevik intervention in Georgia in 1921, Soviet power was established in both countries. Later in 1922 both of them were united in Soviet Union as socialistic republics. After this new period of development and communication of these two countries started. Contacts between Georgia and Ukraine in politics, economics and culture became varied. In 1923 Ukrainians founded a relief fund to help to rebuild Gori, which was demolished during an earthquake. Although Ukraine itself went through the First World War and Civil war and suffered devastation, it found resources to help us. In the same period the Georgian agricultural artel and "House of Eastern People" were established in Kiev, uniting representatives of the Georgian colony. We must mention that approximately 500 Georgians lived in the capital city of Ukraine.

In 1929, during the accomplishment of the first 5-year plan, Donbas miners greatly helped Georgians to work the bituminous coal basin in Tqvarcheli. Contacts between Georgian and Ukrainian workers were expanded. Agricultural workers had their own part in this process. A good example of this was the socialist productivity challenge between the villages Rovno (Genichesk region, Kherson, Ukraine) and Shroma (Makharadze region, Georgia), which started in 1938 and continued until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Relations in literature and art during the same period of time were also quite interesting and widespread. Georgia began publishing Ukrainian literature and Ukraine did the same for Georgian literature. Literary masterpieces of these two people became available to the wide public; also the writings of the modern writers were systematically printed in both countries.

This friendship between the Georgian and Ukrainian people was so solid because during the Great Patriotic War these peoples fought together against the fascist invasion. Many Georgian soldiers fought in combats for Ukraine's liberation, and many of them met their death on Ukrainian soil. Meanwhile Georgian workers were morally and materially helping the Ukrainian people.

In the years after the war this historical friendship grew tighter. Social-political and economical-cultural contacts became more frequent. This suste-

nance between the Georgian and Ukrainian people became more distinct during the Chernobyl tragedy in Ukraine in 1986, when Georgia did everything to help the Ukrainian friends, one more contribution to this everlasting friendship. Likewise the whole Ukraine was aghast because of the natural disaster in 1987 in Georgia and the workers of Kiev, Poltava, Kheson, and other cities and regions gave a friendly hand to comrades from Georgia.

The progressive intelligentsia of Ukraine rejected the tragedy organized by the reactionary forces of Russia in Tbilisi in April 9, 1989 and voiced solidarity to the National movement of Georgia. For its part the Georgians acclaimed the National movement initiated in Ukraine in 1990-1991.

In the period prior to the breakdown of the Soviet Union and restoration of independence, on November 30, 1990 the representatives of the governments of Georgia and Ukraine signed an agreement in Kiev concerning cultural and economical cooperation during the years 1991-1995.

On 1991 the Supreme Council of Georgia presided by Z. Gamsakhurdia, on the basis of a referendum proclaimed the independence of Georgia. The first country to recognize the independent Georgia was Ukraine, which at this time was striving for independence itself.

At the end of December 1991, on the basis of the so-called "Belovezhi Agreement" the Soviet Union was dissolved. Former Soviet Republics became independent states, but at the same time, with the compulsion of Russia a new association, the NIS, was created and both Georgia and Ukraine entered it. It should be noted that problems that accumulated during the Soviet rule among the former Soviet republics came up after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, and caused armed conflicts in many of these republics. Ukrainian people retained their historical friendship to Georgia during these hard times and at the time of the war in Abkhazia, Ukraine proved to be a very good strategic ally and friend. Many Ukrainian soldiers fought among Georgians and the Ukrainian sailboats regularly transported Georgian population from the unsafe places, while other neighboring former Soviet republics, such as Russia or Armenia, took an antagonistic stand towards Georgia.

After the '90-ies new relationships with new standards and form were established between Georgia and Russia. The Ukrainian embassy was opened in Tbilisi and the Georgian embassy in Kiev.

In April 1993 the government delegation of Georgia, presided by the Head of the Government E. Shevardnadze, arrived in Kiev. This delegation signed the expanded state agreement, which was countersigned by the president of Ukraine Leonid Kravchuk. This agreement became the basis of further political-economical and military-strategic relations, which were subsequently developed between these two countries. In 1997-1998 the state and military delegations of

Ukraine visited Georgia. President E. Shevardnadze had several meetings with the president of Ukraine L. Kuchma. Many documents defining the political-military, economical and cultural relations were signed and ratified. But it should be noted that interfering factors accompanied the Georgia-Ukraine contacts in '90-ies. These were Russia, the economic crisis, political instability and many more. All these factors had their impact on these relations, but the historical relationships between Georgian and Ukrainian people, which is based on a very strong foundation will expand in future and play a useful role in strengthening these two countries.

ქართულ-უკრაინულ ურთიერთობათა ისტორიული ასპექტები (რეზიუმე)

საქართველოს სახელმწიფოებრივი ძლიერების საქმეში, დიდი როლი ენიჭება მოკავშირე ქვეყნების არსებობას და მათთან ურთიერთობებს, რაც ამ ქვეყნების ეკონომიკურ და კულტურულ ცხოვრებაზეც აისახება. უდიდესი მნიშვნელობა აქვს ამ მხრივ ისტორიული გამოცდილებისა და ცოდნის პრაქტიკულ დანიშნულებაში გამოყენებას.

გენიალური ქართველი პოეტი ვაჟა-ფშაველა წერდა: – „ისტორია იმდენად წარსულისათვის არ იწერება, რამდენადაც აწმყოსათვის; იგი გვაფრთხილებს შეცდომებისაგან და გვაქეზებს კეთილისაკენ“.

ამ თვალსაზრისით, საქართველოსა და უკრაინის ისტორიულ ურთიერთობათა ღრმა შესწავლას მომავალ თანამშრომლობისათვის განსაკუთრებული როლი ენიჭება. ქართველები და უკრაინელები ოდითგან იყვნენ კეთილგანწყობილი ხალხები, რომლებიც მრავალჯერ მდგარან ერთმანეთის მხარდამხარ, როგორც შორეულ, ასევე ახლო წარსულში. მათიანეთა მოწმობით, ამ ორი ხალხის ერთიმეორესთან გაცნობა-დაახლოება X-XI საუკუნეთა მიჯნაზე უნდა მომხდარიყო. მოგვიანებით, ქართულ-უკრაინული კონტაქტები უცხო ტომთა – მონღოლთა, ოსმალთა და პოლონელთა შემოსევებმა შეაჩერეს. შემდგომში, რუსეთის იმპერიის შემადგენლობაში შესული ეს ხალხები კიდევ უფრო დაუკავშირდნენ ერთმანეთს. XIX ს. საქართველოში მოღვაწეობდნენ ცნობილი უკრაინელი მწერლები – მ. გულაკი, ა. ნავროცკი, ლ. უკრაინკა...

უკრაინელებმა სოლიდარობა გამოუცხადეს 1989-1991 წ.წ. საქართველოს ეროვნულ მოძრაობას, რაც ნათლად აისახა 1990 წლის 30 ნოემბერს ეროვნული მთავრობების კიევში ხელმოწერილ შეთანხმებაშიც. 1991 წელს საქართველოს უზენაესმა საბჭომ ზვიად გამსახურდიას ხელმძღვანელობით საყოველთაო რეფერენდუმის შედეგების საფუძველზე აღადგინა საქართველოს დამოუკიდებლობა. სწორედ უკრაინა იყო ერთ-ერთი პირველი ქვეყანა, რომელმაც სცნო საქართველოს სუვერენიტეტი და შესაბამისად, ასევე აღიარება ჰპოვა საქართველოსაგან.

1993-2000 წლებში რატიფიცირებული იქნა მრავალი ქართულ-უკრაინული სახელმწიფოებრივი დოკუმენტი, ამ ქვეყნების პრეზიდენტებმა მიიღეს მრავალი შეთანხმება, თბილისსა და კიევში, შესაბამისად, გაიხსნა უკრაინისა და საქართველოს საელჩოები. თუმცა, უნდა ითქვას, რომ ბოლოდროინდელ კონტაქტებს თან სდევდა ხელისშემშლელი პროცესებიც – რუსეთის ფაქტორი, ეკონომიკური კრიზისები, პოლიტიკური არასტაბილურობა და სხვა.

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