4797
1954/09

The Voice of Free

Georgia



APRIL, 1954

No. 5

THE VOICE OF FREE GEORGIA

PERIODICAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

Publisher: EDITORIAL BOARD

Address: N. M. KAY
1431 MADISON AVE., N.Y., N.Y.
Telephone: FI 8-1327

No. 5 New York April, 1954

30762

THE *Voice of Free Georgia* has received news from Europe of the death in Munich of the Georgian political leader,

ALEXANDER ASSATHIANI.

During the epoch of the Independence of Georgia (1918-1921) the late Mr. Assathiani was one of the founders of the National Democratic, i.e., The Liberal Party of Georgia. He represented that party in Parliament and was a member of the Praesidium of the Central Committee.

After the occupation of Georgia by the Red Army, he was able to escape to Europe, where he was one of the first organizers of the Georgian Resistance Movement against Bolshevism.

Because of his influence as the head of a political party, and through the influence of his books and his writings for periodicals, he became one of the foremost ideologists of the national emigration.

He enjoyed immense popularity in all anti-Communist emigré circles and was considered an indefatigable champion of the cause of freedom.

The *Voice of Free Georgia* wishes to express its deep sympathy to his friends and to the members of the Georgian emigration.

◇

IRAKLI ORBELIANI.

November 14, 1901—March 31, 1954.

by N. M. Kvitashvili Kay

THE PRESENT ISSUE of the Voice of Free Georgia was already in print when the death of Irakli Orbeliani was announced. Although he had been ill for a long time, it was not generally realized how serious his illness was and his death came as a terrible shock to his very numerous friends.

Irakli Orbeliani, who was born in Tbilissi, Georgia, on November 14, 1901, came from one of the most illustrious families not only in Georgia, but in the

საქართველოს პარლამენტის
ეროვნული ბიბლიოთეკა

whole of Christendom. Beginning from the 6th century of our era the princely house of Orbeliani gave to Georgia a remarkably large number of distinguished men; statesmen, soldiers. ambassadors, scientists. writers and poets. It is difficult to estimate fully the service which this great family rendered to our country.

Irakli's mother. the Princess Elisabeth of the Royal House of Georgia, Bagrationi, was the direct descendant of the Georgian kings. She was the great-granddaughter of Prince Alexander, one of the sons of King Heraclius II. of whom Frederick the Great once said: "Moi en Europe et en Asie l'invincible Hercule, Roi de Georgie." Alexander's eldest brother was the last king of Georgia—George XIII. Prince Alexander refused to recognize the Russian annexation of Georgia and, until his death in exile some twenty years later, was the leader of all the Georgian fighting for the restoration of the independence of their country.

Princess Elisabeth was an exceptionally gifted and intelligent woman. Highly cultured and educated, she translated Shota Roustaveli's great work "The Knight in the Tiger's Skin" into French and the French classics into Georgian. Her house in Tbilissi was a meeting place for all the outstanding and distinguished men in Georgia and she inspired and helped on their way many a young artist, writer or musician. She was also a great Georgian patriot and all her life was a bitter, active and open enemy of the Russian rule in Georgia. For this she was exiled by the Czarist Government and spent many years abroad, far from her beloved Georgia. In protest against her exile, Irakli's father, Prince Mamuka Orbeliani, also an exceptionally gifted and intelligent man, gave up his commission in one of the Imperial Guards Regiments and refused to serve the Russian Czar.

It is not surprising that a son of such parents also proved to be a man of exceptional brilliance and ability. When quite a young boy, Irakli showed great musical talent and already at the age of seven decided to devote himself to a musical career. After finishing with the highest honours at the Conservatory of Tbilissi he went to Germany and continued his musical education there under the famous Mayer-Mahr. Only a year after, he gave his first concert in Berlin, which was followed by many others in Germany, France, Italy, other European countries, the U.S.A., and Latin America. He settled permanently in the United States in the early thirties and a few years later became an American citizen. It was a great tragedy of his life that ill health dogged him for many years and finally compelled him to give up his musical career. In 1950 he accepted Government service and was put in charge of the Georgian Service of the Voice of America. Later he was appointed Chief of the South U.S.S.R. Branch which comprised the Georgian, Armenian, Ukrainian, Azerbaidjani, Turko-Tartar and Turkestani services. When the three last named services were abolished in 1953, Irakli reverted to the Head of the Georgian Services and remained at this post until his death.

Irakli had two countries. his motherland, Georgia and his adopted country, the United States of America. He served both with equal ability, intelligence and love. When society loses an active and useful member, it must try to replace him with another, worthy of him. Irakli's second country is rich in men; she will have no difficulty in replacing him. But we Georgians in exile from our own country—we will find it very hard to replace this loss. The Georgian society in the U.S.A. has no men of the stature of Irakli. Brilliant, intelligent, and a man with great personal charm, he was equal to the best of any country.

Irakli's parents died many years ago. His only brother remained in Georgia after its occupation by the Red Army and may also not be alive today. But Irakli will be mourned by his very many personal friends and by every Georgian who recognized his qualities and took great pride in him.

To me personally Irakli's death means the loss of a very dear and close friend and the end of a friendship which lasted for close on forty years.

Genocide

by

ALEXANDER TSOMAIA*

IT IS NO LONGER a secret to the Free World that slave labor, with millions of slaves driven into concentration camps, exists in the Soviet Union. It is also no longer a secret that mass graves of thousands of people who were tortured and executed are scattered throughout the tremendous territories of the slave states. But in the ledger of Soviet evil-doings there are many more crimes, sinister beyond imagination, and little known in the Free World. Among these is the dreadful crime committed by the Bolsheviks in the North Caucasus, a crime rare, for its calculated inhumanity, even in the history of the Soviets.

In February 1944, upon orders from Moscow, the entire native population of the following North Caucasian "Autonomous Republics," was driven to certain death in concentration camps: Ingush-Chechen—population 697,400; Kabardin-Balkar—349,236; and Karatshai—149,925. Without exception, all the natives were torn from the land where their ancestors for many generations had been born and had died, and all their belongings were confiscated for the benefit of the Government coffers. *More than one million men, women, and innocent children, were at one stroke condemned to annihilation.*

How all this happened we know from Caucasians who were able to escape this genocide and flee the Caucasus. Actually, already in the spring of 1943 the legions of the NKVD had begun to invade the North Caucasus. The people were told that this was made necessary by the proximity of the German front lines. On February 23, 1944, Red Army Day, meetings to commemorate this occasion were scheduled, as was customary. Rumor spread that, during these meetings, an amnesty would be announced and that a government decree concerning the suppression of the "Kolkhoses" would be explained. The administration stated that attendance at the meetings was compulsory, not only for men, but for women and old people as well. What happened at these meetings is described by Mr. Tokaev, one-time colonel of the Red Army, who fled from the Soviet Union after the war and is now living in Europe: "Citizens," cried a colonel of the NKVD in a loud voice, "before getting down to business, I have to tell you that the meeting is surrounded by men of the NKVD, and any effort to escape will be met by instantaneous death without further warning."

This came as a complete surprise to the people, none of whom understood what the words really meant or what was expected of them.

The colonel lifted his hand and circled it over his head. This was a prearranged signal. Bullets whistled around, to substantiate his words. Simultaneously, a group of soldiers levelled their guns at the crowd. Several men tried to leap at the colonel with drawn swords, but they were immediately laid low by bullets.

Some tried to escape the encirclement but were also immediately cut down. The colonel, holding a pistol in his right hand and the de-

*Speech made at the meeting held at the Hotel Commodore, New York, in commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the Genocide Committed in North Caucasia by the Communists.

cree of the Government in the other, continued:

"As of this moment, the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Chechen-Ingush is considered liquidated. All the native people are declared to be under arrest and subject to immediate deportation to places indicated by the Government; their lands and possessions are to be considered the property of the Soviet State.

"Then the executioner declared that the rounding up of the population who were to be deported in cattle trains to parts unnamed would begin in every town and village of the Republic. Every family was given eighty pounds of personal possessions. "I later visited the places," said Tokaev, "and was witness to the terrible destruction. Before the deportation, the NKVD bandits raped wives and daughters before the eyes of husbands and fathers.

"The deportation took place under dreadful conditions. Ordinary train travel was stopped. Convoys drove sobbing people into cattle trains, then pushed them pell-mell into the cattle cars. Mothers and children found themselves in separate compartments. Often a husband was in one place, the wife in another. Women as well as men were beaten. The doors were padlocked, and the trains were despatched under heavy guard to Siberia. Many committed suicide along the way. Many froze or starved to death. Nursing children died by the hundreds in the arms of their mothers."

This is the account of Colonel Tokaev, and his tale coincides completely with those of other North Caucasians who, during and after the war, escaped into free countries.

What happened to these people? Men, women, and children, who survived the trip, were assigned to concentration camps in Siberia. Not a single one of them has ever returned. Actually, political prisoners never do return from concentration camps. This is not a law, but it seems to be a general fact.

What was the guilt of these people and how can the Soviet Government justify such bestial behaviour? They have behaved in exactly the same fashion with other peoples—the Kalmuks and the Crimean Tatars—and on all such occasions the Soviet Government has given the same explanation; during World War II, these people supposedly gave evidence of disloyal sentiments towards Moscow.

This, then, is their guilt! And of what did their disloyalty consist? Was it that a part of the Red Army, conscripted from among these "Autonomous" satellites, having been taken prisoners by the Germans, took up arms to liberate their own people? Was not this also done by the Russians themselves, by the hundreds and thousands? Were not Vlasoff and other generals who commanded the "Russian Liberation Army" Russians? And was the whole Russian population tortured and annihilated as a result of their defection from the Reds? Of course not! Vlasoff himself was executed, but no one touched the Russian population.

Moscow adopted two courses of action: one towards the Russians, and another towards the non-Russian peoples.

In the first case, so-called criminals were punished, but the people were not held to account; in the second case, for criminal acts attributed to individual people, whole populations were tried and executed.

This was not inadvertent. It was carefully premeditated. The Soviet Government worked out in advance a plan for the annihilation of these people. Of course, it would have been simpler to shoot them on sight, and this would have been a less costly operation for the Government. But the shootings could have come to the attention of the English and the Americans, then allies of the Sovies Government, and this the Kremlin could not let happen.

The forced expatriation could have been accomplished quite easily without resort to such diabolical means. In view of the nearness of the German enemy there was a convenient reason for removing the populace to a less dangerous part of the country. But Moscow chose this cowardly and perfidious plan, this plan that so well fitted the humor of the Kremlin sadists, calculated to deceive the whole world, and likewise deceive their hapless victims.

Even the most immoral thieves and killers have some sort of ethical code; while attacking, at least they do not hide the fact that they are out to plunder and kill. But the Soviet Government has never had even the code of thieves and outlaws. They announced a meeting to celebrate Red Army Day and baptized with bullets trusting men, women, and children!

Moscow perpetrated this crime in a premeditated manner, with a definite purpose in mind, and this purpose is clear to every Caucasian.

One must remember that communism was foisted upon these people, out of hand, by military might. They naturally resisted as best they could.

After Sovietization, in no place in the USSR were there so many insurrections, and no section of the Soviet Union showed such wholehearted resistance as did the Caucasians. From the day of the occupation to World War II, units of the Red Army from the Russian central provinces were stationed in the Caucasus, and the whole life of the so-called Autonomous Republics was planned and controlled by Moscow. For twenty years Moscow meticulously and unremittingly tried to force the Caucasian peoples to renounce their individuality and, convinced that this was impossible to achieve, decided to adopt radical Communistic measures. World War II gave them an excellent opportunity to put this plan into effect.

We are told not to hold the Russian people themselves, suffering equally from communism, accountable for these acts. We have no intention of so doing. We have great respect for every nationality. We know that the Kremlin criminals do not ask the opinion of the Russian people. But the trouble is that the similarity of the policy of the old Czarist and the Soviet Government towards the Caucasian peoples is startlingly self-evident.

After all, this is not the first time that the Caucasus has been besieged by Russian armies. We experienced occupation by Czarist Russia and, comparing the old and the new occupations, we have come to the conclusion that the aims of White and of Red Russia are precisely alike.

Wherein lies the principal difference between the exile from the Caucasus of more than half a million Caucasians in the last century, and the exiles of our times?

What is the difference between the famous order of Nicolas I, given to General Paskiewich, when naming him Governor of the Caucasus—"conquer or annihilate"—and the decrees of the Politburo?

The breaking of treaties, the obliteration of national cultures, traditions, customs, and laws, forcible Russification, destroying resistance by whatever means, and transforming the Caucasus into a Russian colony—this is traditional Russian policy adopted and continued by the Bolsheviks.

I know that the Russian people were not consulted even before the day of the Bolsheviks, but the old and the new governments did act, and do act, respectively, in the name of the Russian State and the Russian people.

England was once called "Perfidious Albion," not because every Englishman was perfidious, but because England was judged by her foreign policy.

As long as Russian State policy concentrates all its attention on the conquest of new territory and people, Russia can not have the approval of the free peoples. If the Russians wish to separate themselves in world opinion from acts which hurt their national reputation, they must—especially in exile, where they have freedom of speech and action—speak out openly against injustice.

We Caucasians have no territorial or material pretensions towards Russia.

We wish to live as free people. We desire to be masters of our own land —Caucasia, where for many centuries our ancestors lived and died.

We do not wish to take from Russia a single foot of her territory, but we are bound in right and honor to defend our own country. We are fighting for our own freedom—not menacing the rights of others. The sooner the justice of these strivings is understood by those purporting to speak for the Russian people, the sooner it will be possible to harmonize existing differences.

The epoch of colonialism is over for good. The future belongs to the free peoples. The process of history can not stop at the gates of the Soviet Union! and this gives us firm faith that Caucasus will rise again and be free.

---

*The Tenth Anniversary of Genocide in the North Caucasus**

FEBRUARY 23 is a day of mourning for the whole Caucasus, and about one million Caucasians residing in the countries of the Near East, in Western Europe, and in the United States are commemorating this tenth anniversary of an unparalleled crime perpetrated by the Soviet Government on the peoples of North Caucasus.

This tragedy is significant not only for Caucasians and other enslaved peoples of the Soviet Union, but also for the peoples of the Free World.

In the course of the second World War and the post-war period, the Free World was given a clear insight into the politics and policies of the Soviet Union and in the process to secure some knowledge of what was going on in the USSR. On the strength of Government orders and decrees, supported by testimony of actual witnesses, statistics, and tangible facts, it has been demonstrated beyond shadow of doubt that there exists in the Soviet Union a slave system, where millions work as chattels, condemned to servitude at hard labor in concentration camps. It is a known fact that the number of victims of the unremitting Soviet terror runs into the tens of millions. It has been established that the incredible inhuman crimes of the Katyn forest were carried out with the knowledge of the Soviet Government. It has similarly been established that mass graves exist throughout Soviet

*Memorandum addressed to the United Nations and the State Department.

territory where millions of those shot and otherwise done to death have been entombed. Thus Katyn may be taken as the very symbol of the sinister situation which characterizes the entire Soviet system.

But there is a crime attributable to the Soviet Government which in number of victims out-Katyns the Katyn attrocities. This crime, upon which sentence has not yet been passed, was perpetrated in North Caucasia.

In February 1944, on orders from Moscow, by acts of cold cynicism, over a million men, women and children were driven to their death and their property was confiscated.

These events had their direct origin in a Soviet decree dated February 11, 1943, whereby several Soviet Socialist Republics were abrogated and all property real and personal declared confiscated, and the population ordered deported to Siberia.

Prior to February 11, 1943, as specified in the Soviet Constitution, the following were Autonomous Republics: Kabardin-Balkar, with a population of 359,236; Chechen-Ingush, population 697,400; and autonomous region (oblast) Karachai with a population of 150,000. As of February 11, 1943, by a stroke of the pen, these republics were obliterated and their entire populations condemned to almost certain death. Included also were their neighbors, the Crimea Tatars and the Kalmyks. The Kalmyks, according to official Soviet figures for 1939, numbered about 220,700 and the Tatars some 300,000. If all these victims are added up their total comes to over 1,700,000.

Pursuant to the 1943 decree Russian troops and agents of NKVD (the Soviet secret police) began concentrating in North Caucasia. The population were told that this concentration of forces was necessary because of the proximity of the German front lines and the strategic necessity of defending the nation's oil resources. The following year (February 1944), on the eve of Red Army Day, preparations were made for the usual Soviet celebrations. The authorities made it clear that everybody was to assemble, without exceptions. After the people had assembled in each village, an NKVD officer warned them that they were surrounded by armed troops, and then added, "The Chechen-Ingush and Kabardin-Balkar Autonomous Republics and Karachai oblast have been abolished. The entire population is under arrest and subject to immediate deportation. Lands and possessions are being confiscated by the Soviet Government."

According to eye-witnesses, this deportation took place under heart-rending conditions. The escorting troops drove before them a weeping crowd. Anyone who strayed even ever so slightly from the road was shot without warning for trying to escape.

Thousands of innocent people were thus shot on the way. The loss of property which the population suffered defies description. Mosques were desecrated, museums and libraries devestated. Bonfires blazed in the streets, fed with books, archives, and everything else that could recall the history of the North Caucasus. In the course of one day an entire people, about which history has known since the days of Strabo, was uprooted.

The deportees, many of whom died in transit of their wounds, were delivered by cattle truck to the Urals, whence they were sent under the same barbaric escort to Siberia and Central Asia.

The facts have been corroborated by scores of North Caucasians who, during and after the last war, escaped from the Soviet Union into the Free World.

What happened to the deported thousands? Those who survived—men, women, children, the aged and infirm—were scattered among the various concentration camps in Siberia. Not one of them has returned.

Of what crime were these people guilty? Of what crime can any people be guilty that would entitle government anywhere to commit genocide by wiping them out as a community and as individuals?

The Kremlin's action was not the result of war alone. War conditions were merely the pretext. Moscow knew that the proud Caucasians, reared in the traditions of freedom, were irreconcilable opponents of Marxist-Communist ideas and Moscow therefore decided to avail itself of war in order to wipe out these inveterate nonconformists.

Typically, the Soviets took their time in letting the world know that the fearful ukase of February 1943 had been carried out. Thus it was not until June 25, 1946, that the Soviet Presidium announced that these Autonomous Republics and regions had been liquidated and ceased to exist.

How has the Free World reacted to this?

In utter silence. No Government, nor any international authority, has raised its voice on behalf of those doomed peoples. The Free World has closed its eyes, its heart, and its mind to the fate that has been visited upon them. This tragedy, by its proportions and character, clamors for public inquiry.

Accordingly, this memorandum from the Caucasian Relief Society, Inc., a non-profit organization incorporated in the State of New York, comprising persons from the four Caucasian nations of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and North Caucasia, is addressed for attention and action to the authorities and committees within the State Department in Washington and the United Nations at its headquarters in New York.

It is earnestly hoped that this appeal will not go unheeded.

There can be little redress for these slaughtered thousands. There *can* be justice for the thousands of North Caucasians still in Soviet slave camps, and there *can* be protection for the millions in other nations threatened by similar obliteration.

LEON DOUMBADZE, Chairman
The Caucasian Relief Society, Inc.
200 East 16th Street
New York 3, N.Y.

The New Messiah -- Russian Imperialism

by
N. M. KVITASHVILI.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION broke out in February 1917. The Czar was deposed, his government overthrown, and a new government was formed, presided over by Prince Lvov. A young, little known lawyer and a member of the Douma (Parliament) received the post of Minister of Justice in the new government. His name was Alexander Kerensky.

Prince Lvov did not last long. He was a member of the Constitutional Democratic Party, a party favoring a restricted monarchy and a more liberal, progressive government, but he was no revolutionary, and he had no place in the great upheaval which was shaking to its foundations the social order of his country.

Kerensky became the new Prime Minister of Russia. Ambitious to the highest degree, vain, theatrical, and supremely convinced of his own talents, he quite obviously thought himself destined for great things. First of all he was going to save his country. Later—the world.

Unfortunately, Kerensky quite overlooked a few considerations fairly obvious to everyone else, such as his own infinate capacity for vacillation; complete inability to think straight or to make a decision. When he finally did make one, it was invariably one he should not have made. More than any other man, Kerensky was responsible for the complete disintegration of the Russian Army; that splendid body of men who, for three bitter years—badly armed, badly trained, and badly led—put up such a magnificent fight against the might of Germany, Austria, and Turkey.

And it was the same Kerensky who—again, more than any other man —was responsible for the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

What happened to Kerensky, to his grandiose plans and, incidentally, to his unfortunate country, everyone knows. All this has passed into history. And it seemed that the name of Kerensky had also passed, if not into history, at least into oblivion. Completely discredited, execrated and despised, he disappeared. For over thirty years his name was hardly heard of. It was known that he was somewhere in exile—France, the U.S.A.?—that he still dabbled in politics, still talked (his favorite occupation) at political meetings, still thought himself a great but misunderstood figure. Nobody paid any attention to him or to his antics. He was of no importance—an insignificant little man trying to play a ROLE.

Then, all of a sudden, Kerensky appears on the political scene once again. In 1950 or 1951, he and a few others are entrusted with the task of establishing connections with the various anti-Communist organizations of political emigration from all the

nations at present under the Soviet rule. The idea was to try to form one solid anti-Communist block or at least to get all these various organizations to coördinate their work. The choice of Kerensky was unfortunate, to say the least. It would have been difficult to find a more discredited or more ineffectual man. How did this come about? How did Kerensky get a chance to play a ROLE once again? Soon after the end of World War II, it became obvious to every thinking man in the Free World that it was useless to expect the Communists to change their spots and to abandon their grandiose and evil plans of world conquest and domination. The question arose then —what was to be done about it? It was unthinkable to go to war to make them change their spots by force. With the terrible weapons of total destruction available to mankind today, a world war would be such a catastrophe that it would in all likelihood bring to an end our civilization. No responsible government in the Free World could even contemplate such an eventuality, even if it would lead to the destruction of the worst tyranny the world has ever known. Because of this, the Western democracies were compelled to go on trying to find a "modus vivendi" with the Communists. Notwithstanding insults, rebuffs, complete lack of coöperation and good will on the part of the Communists, the Free World has unceasingly continued its efforts to bring to an end the Cold War and to establish real peace. Their hope was, and still is, that with time communism may change or at the worst will be confined to and satisfied with the areas it holds now.

But what of those areas and the unfortunate peoples who inhabit them? Were they to be left forever at the mercy of the dictators in the Kremlin? Was there not a way which would lead to their eventual liberation without starting a world conflagration?

There was and is a way. It is true that the governments of the Free World could not endorse or adopt it, because this would have led to just what they have been trying to avoid —a world conflict, but there was no reason why non-official organizations and private persons could not adopt it. This way is to utilize the forces of the peoples oppressed by Soviet Russia. There is not a single nation suffering under the Soviet régime not excluding the Russian nation, which does not hate this régime and which does not want to be rid of it. How can the forces of these countless millions be utilized? How can all these peoples be organized and strengthened to such an extent that they would be capable of overthrowing the hated régime, which is the enemy not only of those peoples but of all the human race.

The first step, naturally, would be to organize the very numerous political emigration of all the countries now included in the Soviet Union. Their experiences of communism and of fighting against it, their knowledge of the situations in their respective countries and of the desires of their peoples, would be an invaluable asset.

A few years ago an organization was formed in the United States with just this purpose in view. It took the name of the "American

Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia," later changed to its present name, the "American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism," and its immediate aims were to create one single and effective anti-Communist block utilizing the forces of all the anti-Communist exiles and expatriates of all the nationalities of the U.S.S.R. A Coördinating Center was to be created whose job would be to direct and coördinate the work of various organizations, groups, and parties. A powerful radio station was also to be set up and indeed was set up and started its most useful work in the spring of 1953. This was a very fine achievement for which great thanks are due to the American Committee for Liberation.

However, and it is sad to record this fact, its primary objective—the creation of one single organization which would be able to coördinate the work of all the ant-Communist émigrés has not been achieved. And this is where Kerensky comes into the picture again. He, an unsavory individual by the name of Melgunov, and a few others like them, were the ones primarily responsible for this failure. When it came down to brass tacks they showed that their anti-Communism only went so far and no further. In some questions they were quite in accord with the rulers of the Kremlin; notably in the question of conquest and domination over other, smaller nations. They showed quite plainly that Russian Imperialism is exactly the same thing no matter what label it bears—Czarist, Communist or Democratic.

Years of negotiations, discussions, and conferences between the Russian organizations and the organizations of the oppressed peoples, have come to nothing. Right from the first it became apparent that the main stumbling-block to the creation of one united and effective anti-Bolshevik front was the question of nationalities. Or, to be more precise, the question of the future relationship between Russia and the non-Russian countries. The non-Russians said: "By all means let us try to get rid of communism, but immediately we achieve this, the national rights, the liberty and independence of our countries must be restored. We had these rights in the past, our people have fought for them and will not be satisfied with less, we can not renounce them now. We have neither the right nor the desire to do so." The Russians said— "Oh no! The Russian Empire has to be re-established just as it was under the Czars. Holy Russia must be one and indivisible. Why, you insignificant minorities, you do not exist and do not count. Independence? The rights of peoples? Justice? Why, all these do not apply to Russia. It is quite right and proper that the British, French, Dutch, and all the other empires should be broken up, but certainly not the Russian Empire. Quite right that India, Pakistan, Burma, Indonesia, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines etc, etc, etc., should be given their independence, but certainly not Georgia, Lithuania, the Ukraine, Armenia etc., etc., etc., nor in fact, any of those countries which formerly belonged to the Czarist Russian Empire and now belong to the Communist Russian Empire."

Men who have fought for the independence and liberty of their countries, men who would not bend

before foreign oppression, are respected and honored everywhere and by everyone, with the exception of the Kerenskys, the Melgunovs and their like. To them, a Georgian who is fighting for the independence of his country, for the restoration of the State which had 2000 years of independent existence and which was a highly cultured, Christian State centuries before the Russians emerged from their primeval forests and marshes, to them such a Georgian is a "reactionary," "fascist," an "uncompromising separatist."

Some time ago Mr. Kerensky wrote a very interesting letter to the New York Times. In it he shows a most touching solicitude for the safety of the United States. To use his words he is "...concerned for the fate of the United States." When one remembers the fate of Mr. Kerensky's own country and the part he played in bringing it about, it seems really incredible that he considers himself qualified to give advice to anybody on anything. Apparently it is his conviction that the fate of the United States depends on whether the Russian Empire is broken up or not. If it is not—all well and good, but if it is, the U.S.A. will go down in defeat and destruction. A very curious deduction, not a very convincing one, however. Incidentally, he does not say "Russian Empire;" the word he uses is "Russia." He and others like him always accuse those they call "separatists," "reactionaries," etc., of trying to break up "Russia." But they know perfectly well that no one has any intention or desire to break up Russia. The question is of breaking up the RUSSIAN EMPIRE, the empire which in Czarist times was the "prison of every liberal, progressive thought," the Empire of the Jewish pogroms, of the "Black Hundred" (Chernaya sotnia), of massacres of Polish, Georgian and other patriots, of death from starvation of its own miserable peasantry; the empire of the "knout" and of Siberia, and which today is the empire of the slave camps, of purges, of massacres of Georgian, Latvian, Lithuanian, North Caucasian and other patriots, of Tcheka and torture and murders and which still is the "prison of nations" and of "every liberal, progressive thought."

This is what we want to break up and destroy for ever. Not Russia.

Mr. Kerensky has a most peculiar argument. He says that there is no hatred between the nations of the U.S.S.R. Of course there is not. There is no hatred between the French and the Turkish peoples either. But that does not mean that either of them would be willing to be the slave of the other. The Georgians do not hate the Russians. They may look down on them and despise them a little, but that is far from hatred. They are quite ready to be the best of friends, but on equal terms. Every Georgian recognizes the services of the Russian people to human culture: Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Pushkin, Tchaikowsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, and numberless other Russians, have the same admiration and respect in Georgia as anywhere else. But even if every Russian were a Tolstoy or a Tchaikowsky, Georgians still would not want to be dominated by them.

The Georgian stand is quite clear. Georgia has had an independent existence from the 3rd century B.C. to 1801 and again from 1918 to 1921. In 1801 its independence was destroyed by the Russian Empire of the Czars, destroyed in a most cowardly and treacherous way in complete violation of a treaty signed on July 24, 1783. In 1921 Georgian independence was again destroyed by the Russian Empire, Communist this time; destroyed in the most cowardly and treacherous way in complete violation of the treaty signed on May 7, 1920.

The Georgians demand the restoration of this independence, and they are not prepared to work with any Russian organization which does not recognize their right to it.

Russians must realize that times have changed. Today's concepts of international morality and justice do not allow for one country's domination over others. The Soviet Union is the only exception. But who can doubt that sooner or later this horrible tyranny will come to an end. And when this end comes, surely freedom and justice will reign in the world.

The nations oppressed by Russia in the past and by Russia today, have the same right to freedom and justice as has any other nation.

We refuse to collaborate with the Kerenskys, the Melgunovs, etc., until they forget the dreams of Russian Imperialism. On the other hand, we are not only willing, but most eager to work with any anti-Communist organization, Russian or any other, which recognizes our right to independence. Above all, we are eager to work with the American Committee for Liberation against communism. Our hope is that sooner or later this Committee will recognize us for what we are; not "fascists," "reactionaries," etc., but men who love their country and desire to see her independent and happy.

What is Happening?

By D. Sindikeli*

SUFFICIENT TIME HAS elapsed since the signing of the armistice in Korea on July 27, 1953, to justify an appraisal of the current situation.

Korea is a case in point where the Western world decisively opposed aggression and violence and clearly indicated to the Kremlin its intention of not permitting any further invasions or seizures of the smaller or weaker nations. The Western Democracies made the decision to defend the higher principles of democracy by force of arms and in so doing they saved South Korea from Communist domination. This action confers a special significance on the Korean question as a whole, and a brief analysis of the underlying factors seems to be appropiate.

In June 1950, the North Korean troops, instigated, supported, and armed by the Soviet Union, crossed the 38th parallel in an attempt to seize the entire peninsula and to impose a Communist régime throughout

*Written in February 1954.

the country. The masters of the Kremlin were convinced that the reaction of the Free World would be, at the most, a diplomatic protest formulated in polite terms. Doubtless they had already prepared a reply to the effect that, if the Government of the People's Republic of Korea intended to liberate the population of South Korea from capitalistic oppression and to unify the country, the Soviet Union would remain a neutral observer, declaring, however, that its sympathy lay on the side of the North Korean people struggling to reject the oppression.

However, contrary to Moscow's expectations, the Western Democracies reacted to the unprovoked aggression of the North Korean forces not by verbal or written protest, but by force of arms, thus frustrating the Kremlin's hope of spreading, unimpeded, its power over South Korea. In the face of this unexpected development, the only alternative remaining to the rulers in the Kremlin was to entrust the task of "unifying" Korea to Communist China, limiting its own role to furnishing military supplies and technical aid.

By adopting this attitude, the Kremlin gave the impression of having overcome the difficulty, and in one move it gained two objectives: on the one hand, to demonstrate to the world at large and more particularly to that part of public opinion which is forever vacillating, that the Soviet Union is a staunch pillar in the defense of peace and that it pursues a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries; and on the other hand, to eliminate the possibility of any Titoist tendencies taking root in Red China (frequently mentioned in the Western press as a possible development) because upon China's entry into the Korean conflict its ties with the Free World were automatically severed, and it was pushed into complete economic and political coöperation with Moscow.

In the initial phase of the hostilities, the armed forces of the Western Democracies, under the sudden onslaught of the numerically superior Communist invaders, had to withdraw almost to the tip of the peninsula. The Kremlin, feeling confident of the rapid victory of the Chinese and North Korean troops, was proclaiming the unification of Korea to be their main objective (actually meaning the establishment of the Communist régime throughout the country).

But after the landing of the United Nations forces at Inchon, and after the resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on October 7th, 1950 (authorizing the United Nations Armed Forces to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area, to take all appropiate steps to insure conditions of stability throughout Korea and "to establish a unified, independent and democratic government in the sovereign state of Korea"), the idea of unification of Korea had passed over to the side of democracy.

The first task with which the new administration in the United States was faced was to find a way of putting an end to the shooting war in Korea, and with this aim in view truce negotiations were initiated. During the protracted negotiations, the fact that the war in Korea had for its objective the unification of the country was lost sight of and the question was not raised.

At one point Mr. Dulles said that at the forthcoming political conference the Western powers would do everything possible in order to achieve the unification of Korea, indicating that the existing partition may be a source of further incidents and that the unification is in the interests of the country itself. However, it is very doubtful whether any positive aim of this nature can be attained merely by negotiations at a conference table. Experience in dealing with Communist rulers has shown time and again that no results can be obtained by peaceful negotiations, but only by decisive action.

It should be kept in mind that in politics, and especially during an armed conflict, no fixed line of rigid policy exists; on the contrary there can always be detected a line of maximum program and a line of minimum program. Whenever one of the belligerents feel that the situation as it has developed does not provide a favorable climate for the maximum program, he puts forward the minimum program.

When this point was reached in the Korean conflict, the military action was stopped and it was agreed to sign the armistice and to call a political conference, to which a great deal of hope was attached by the Free World.

Subsequently, it became clear that the Communists did not want the conference to take place and were making considerable efforts either to prevent its taking place altogether, or at least to postpone its meeting for as long as possible. In our opinion, there is a profound political purpose underlying this course of action on the part of the Soviet Union which might be of benefit to the Communist rulers, and which thus explains their eagerness and tenacity in maintaining their stand.

The shooting war is over in Korea, but a tense military situation continues, and obviously as long as the political conference is deferred the Western Democracies cannot withdraw their troops. It is true that the allies of the Soviet Union, the Chinese Communists, are also manning their lines, nevertheless there is a considerable difference in their respective positions: first, the amount of material used and the expenditure for the upkeep of the Chinese troops is negligible as compared with the requirements for the maintenance of the United Nations forces, with the result that the Democracies have to bear a heavy financial burden, while Communist China has very little; secondly, the Chinese Communists are accomplishing a useful purpose, for them, in retaining the Western Democracies' attention in Korea, thus freeing the Kremlin's hand for action in the rest of the world.

The best illustration of these tactics is provided by the situation in Indo-China which is largely ignored by the Western World, except for the voice of France who, in view of her internal dissensions and political instability, is ineffectively trying to attract the general attention to this danger spot on the common front, but without much success.

We, as representatives of a nation oppressed by the Communists, deeply respecting every national movement aimed at liberation and because of the great sacrifices made by the Indo-

Chinese peoples in their struggle for independence, feel that it is urgent to point out the serious danger threatening the entire cause of the Free World, by the concrete efforts of the Indo-Chinese Communists to sieze power in that country. This conflict, unmistakably, was instigated and is supported by Soviet propaganda, and France, weakened as she is, is not in a position to save Indo-China from Communist invasion and enslavement by her own unaided efforts.

That is why the Western Democracies, while safeguarding the legitimate demands of the Indo-Chinese people for self-rule, must take decisive steps to prevent the triumph of Communist power in that area and the setting up of yet another puppet government on the pattern of that of Mao-Tse-tung.

Moreover, if the assumption is made that the whole episode of the Korean conflict was, to a certain degree, of benefit to the Communist rulers in their devious ways towards the conquest of the world, the Western Democracies should be aware that the conflict in Indo-China might lead to even more serious results. At present, this problem appears to be the most pressing one to be solved by the Free World, and the future of the Free World will be largely influenced by its decision in the matter of Indo-China.

A New Georgian Monastery Discovered in Bethlehem

DURING THE excavation at Bir-el-Quatt (Bethlehem) in 1953, the Rev. Virgilio Corbo of the Order of the Franciscan Brothers of the Holy Land, who was in charge of the excavations, discovered the ruins of a Georgian Monastery whose existence was unknown until then. The floor of the monastery is covered with a multi-colored mosaic and there are four inscriptions in Georgian, one intact and three damaged. Judging by the historical data, by the paleographic character of the inscriptions and by their content, the monastery and the inscriptions date from the VIth century of our era.

The inscriptions have a tremendous interest as they are the most ancient Christian inscriptions in *any language* discovered up to the present in Palestine.

Number 16, January 1954, of the "Bedi Kartlisa," a Georgian publication appearing in Paris, gives a photograph of the intact inscription and a full description of the find by the Rev. P. M. Tarkhnishvili.

IN memory of

COLONEL PRINCE AMILAKVARI,

Commanding Officer of the 13th Brigade of the Free French Foreign Legion

*DEATH OF A HERO**

by

MAJOR ALEXIS D. TCHENKELI,

of the 13th Brigade of the Free French Foreign Legion.

"Colonel AMILAKVARI—this young war leader of legendary gallantry."
General Charles DE GAULLE.

PROLOGUE...

About the end of March 1941, *the Vichy Government of France passed the following sentence, with orders for it to be widely disseminated amongst the units of the Foreign Legion stationed in North Africa, Syria, and Indochina;*

"...is sentenced to death, after being cashiered and stricken from the National Order of the Legion of Honour, the named:

AMILAKVARI, DIMITRI,

—formerly Captain of the Foreign Legion, for

Desertion and Treason...

30767

FROM MOROCCO TO MASSAWA, VIA NARVIK

IN THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION there was not an officer nor a legionary who did not know this Captain Amilakvari, a man completely absorbed in his calling—zealous, unremitting, at times stern almost to the point of ruthless severity.

A Georgian by birth, he was descended from the noble family of the Amilakhoris, a family which had given the kingdom of Georgia many illustrious military leaders before the annexation of their country by Russia in 1801.

Dimitri Amilakvari, the second son of Prince George, was born in Georgia in 1906. When he was about fifteen years of age his country was treacherously invaded by the Russian Reds without a declaration of war. He and his family were obliged to flee abroad. The Amilakvaris settled in France, fervently hoping that their exile might be brief, that a miracle would soon intervene to crush the Bolsheviks and free Georgia from their yoke.

In 1924 young Dimitri entered the Saint-Cyr Military Academy. Deeply impressed by the fate of his homeland, he was fired with but one ambition. "I wish to become a good

---

*Copyright by Alexis D. Tchenkeli, April, 1954.

საქართველოს პარლამენტის ეროვნული ბიბლიოთეკა

general and to liberate Georgia from the Reds," he said. Fortunately, at that time neither he nor any of his friends could foresee that seventeen years later, by ironic circumstance, they would be fighting as allies of those same Reds . . .From that day forward, his desire to make an actuality of his dream urged him on to daring deeds in which he always tried to surpass himself, however desperate the odds might be.



Colonel Prince AMILAKVARI, the 13th Brigade Commander.

Two years later, in 1926, he was graduated as a regular army officer and was assigned to the French Foreign Legion at Sidi-Bel-Abbes, Algeria. That was why the legionaries called him "the pure," a nickname they give to an officer who joins the Foreign Legion direct from the Military Academy. Shortly after, 2nd-Lieutenant Amilakvari was sent to Morocco, to fill one of the gaps made amongst the subaltern officers by losses in the Riff War (1925-1926). In those days the situation was far from settled; military operations were still going on in South Morocco, which was held by the 4th Regiment of the Legion, to which Amilakvari was attached. Thereafter, the young Georgian fought on every battlefield of Africa and Europe where the Foreign Legion served. Everywhere he distinguished himself by his conspicuous gallantry and valorous deeds.

"Prince Amilakvari is in all ways great," General Monclar of the Foreign Legion used to say, "his height, his carriage, his gallantry. . . I am sure he will be even greater in his death."

"Our fighting prince is our example, and we will follow him even to hell," said the legionaries, who have the reputation of being sparing of praise for their officers.

During the Moroccan campaigns, Amilakvari was several times mentioned in despatches for his matchless daring and courage, and in 1936 he was promoted to the rank of captain by selection. Although a foreigner, he was the youngest captain in the whole French Army.



Captain AMILAKVARI and his legionaries marching through the Champs-Elysees, Paris, before their departure for Norway.

AT THE OUTBREAK of the Second World War France sent a brigade of the Foreign Legion to Norway, the 13th Brigade under Colonel Monclar, at whose insistence Captain Amilakvari was assigned to his unit. The brigade landed in Norway in April 1940, with Amilakvari in command of a company of heavy machine guns. The allied forces were ill equipped; they were short of artillery, as well as of anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns; mainly they lacked air bases, which had been seized beforehand by the Germans. All these negative factors spelled the doom of the Norwegian expedition, and the decision was finally made to withdraw the troops before they were annihilated by the Germans. On May 1st to 2nd, the withdrawal of the 13th Brigade was protected by Amilakvari's machine guns. They were disposed along the beach, where they repulsed assault after assault of the Germans.

The young captain was standing in the midst of his company, directing the fire on the Germans, when Colonel Monclar passed by, exhausted and plainly out of sorts. Amilakvari regarded his commander quizzically, with his steady blue eyes. "Well," grumbled Colonel Monclar testily, "are you not glad to see me alive?"

"Not so much that," answered Amilakvari, "I just want to see how you will manage to get out of the mess you are in!"

"By his brilliant covering action, Amilakvari saved us from total destruction that day, hard-pressed as we were by the Germans," the commander said later, after he had become General Monclar.

Back at Narvik again, the legionaries and their valiant captain fought furiously during the assault of twenty-four hours, until the town was captured and the Germans were compelled to fall back. When at the beginning of June the Allies decided to evacuate all of Norway, the 13th Brigade withdrew from the Narvik area and shortly thereafter was landed in England.

The 17th of June marked the down-

fall of France, with her decision to abandon her allies and sue for a separate peace. The next day, General De Gaulle, making his famous appeal from London, summoned all Free Frenchmen to continue the fight at Britain's side. Without hesitation, Prince Amilakvari and nearly all of his legionaries—"the only men, who gave the only victory to France" —remained in England to fight.

At the beginning of 1941, Major Amilakvari, now commanding a battalion of the Foreign Legion, with his usual courage and spirit took an active part in the campaign in East Africa, mainly at Agordat, Alghera, and Keren. Here the Italians put up the most vigorous and tenacious fight that had yet been encountered. At Massawa, by a daring rush through the town, Amilakvari with his battalion managed to reach the harbor, where they captured two Italian destroyers and a large number of prisoners, including the admiral commanding the Italian fleet in Eritrea and his whole staff.

After this campaign, by special order of General Catroux, Commander-in-Chief of the Free French forces in the Middle East, Amilakvari was made Lieutenant-Colonel and Commander of the 13th Brigade, and this on the very day that the Vichy Government issued his death sentence for "desertion and treason."

BROTHERS—ENEMIES

A FEW MONTHS later, at the beginning of June, the British and Free French forces, including the 13th Brigade, were to cross from Palestine into Syria, in order to prevent the Germans from securing a hold on that country with the connivance of Vichy. In fact, despite the assertion to the contrary of the French High Commissioner, General Dentz, and even his word of honor, this French mandated territory was filled not only with Axis military and civilian commissons, but the Syrian airfields and harbors were in the hands of the Luftwaffe and the Kriegsmarine.

The British and French commanders, Sir Henry Maitland Wilson and General Catroux, anxious to inflict as few casualties as possible upon their former allies, ordered their troops not to use force except where absolutely necessary. Thus the beginning of the Allies' march was supported only by leaflet-dropping planes, and at first no resistance was encountered. This seemed to confirm the opinion of many high-ranking officers who said that, if brought face to face, Frenchmen would not fight against one another. Only Colonel Amilakvari disagreed with this opinion. He warned persistently during the war council that, in contact with the Free French, the Vichy French would fight—and desperately —and he requested that he be sent to Lybia with his Brigade.

"As for me," he said, after his request had been denied, "I flatly refuse to take up arms against my former legionaries, come what may."

Nevertheless, the British and French troops marched into Syria on June 8th. Very shortly, a considerable resistance was encountered in many sectors, especially at Merdjaoun, and this slowed down the advance towards Damascus. By June 18th, however, the encirclement of Damascus was almost complete, and the 13th Brigade had penetrated into the gardens which surround the city. The advance became more and more arduous. By a stroke of ill luck, the sector attacked by the 13th Brigade was held by the Vichy Foreign Legion. From one side of the front line to the other one could hear invective and such sallies as:

"Braun, you're a traitor, but I'm reserving a hot welcome for you!"

"Lay down your arms, Werner, and come on, let's have a drink."

These and similar invitations were enforced with the stirring roll and rattle of musketry and machine guns.

Smoke blended with the mist which surrounded the palm trees, and the brilliancy of the morning was streaked with tongues of fire like lightning flashes. Towards Damascus there was a great commotion in the smoke; the machine guns did not slacken, but rather increased their furious firing. The legionaries of the 13th Brigade, fallen to the ground, were awaiting orders to move forward, when all eyes were simultaneously drawn towards the brigade commander.

Wrapped in his wide dark cape, wearing his new colonel's kepi, his stripes shining, forward strode Amilakvari, straight as an arrow, his strong face impassive, his half-closed eyes heavy from lack of sleep. Looking straight ahead, he walked on, silently and unhurriedly, towards the raging machine guns.

"Colonel," shouted Captain de Saint. H., "please, for God's sake, shelter yourself!"

Amilakvari made no reply. Bullets were whistling and singing all around him, but he walked steadily on. Suddenly, his men, taut in their prone position, noticed that a stir had begun to run through the Vichy legionaries; they had ceased firing, and were falling back, abandoning their dismantled machine guns.

Colonel Amilakvari glanced indifferently at de Saint-H., as much as to say: "You see, it isn't worth while to bother with trifles." Then he gave orders to resume the advance.

At the next—the last—stand, the same thing took place, and the 13th Brigade, led by its colonel, reached the Syrian capital, Damascus.

"Thank God," exclaimed the legionaries, more relieved for their colonel than by the fall of the city. Hearing their words, Amilakvari simply smiled in his reserved noncommittal way.

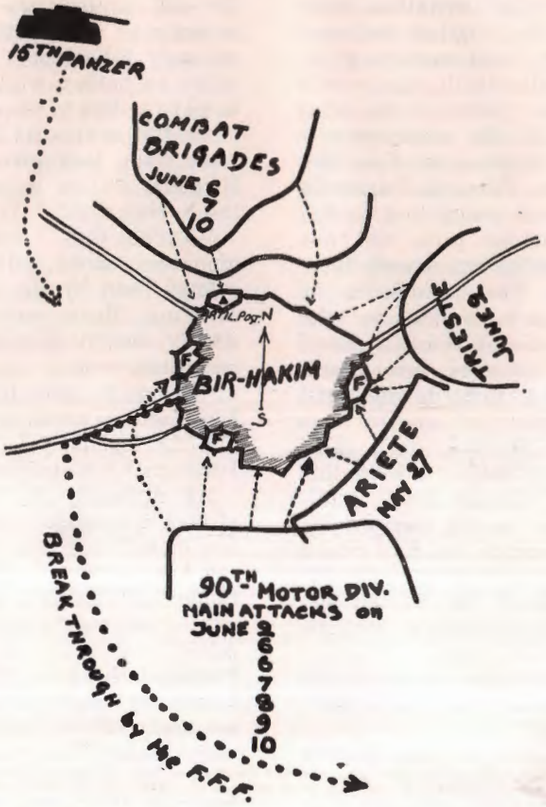
"When I recognized the prince, I refused to press the trigger," said a Vichy legionary later. "You know, I was with him in Morocco."

At midnight on July 12th-13th, after a five-weeks' campaign, hostilities ended in Syria.

"The most I have suffered," Colonel Amilakvari said of this episode, "was when I met my former African friends with the Vichy Foreign Legion. The legionaries joined me spontaneously, but many, too many, of their officers remained with Vichy. That I never expected. 'You are sentenced to death,' they told me. Well, they could be right; we may receive no more reinforcements until Africa is free. Until that time all of us are sentenced to die sooner or later...but of course, we will sell our lives as dearly as we can."

THE BIR-HAKIM EPIC

AFTER THE SYRIAN campaign Colonel Amilakvari worked hard with his brigade in Egypt. With the legionaries who had joined him at Damascus he organized four battalions, mobile and especially armed for independent operations. He also worked out an anti-tank fighting system of his own, and personally directed the training of his men according to this system. However, his ideas were criticized by many, generally by staff officers, who had never before met with the colonel's stubbornness. One day, in the presence of French and British officers, Amilakvari displayed his brigade to demonstrate his methods, especially that of fire concentration in front of a battalion position under attack by light and medium tanks. These methods were approved by only a few of those present, but later they were to be highly appreciated and praised by—General Rommel.



In 1941 General Rommel took command of the Axis forces in Cyrenaïca and from that time on the situation of the British 8th Army was seriously imperiled. By the middle of January 1942, Rommel had not only out-manoeuvred the British, but by driving his Panzer columns unremittingly he had slashed his way to Egypt through Bengazi, Agedabia, Barce, and Mekili.

To stop him the British established a line heavily protected by minefields, running from the coast west of El-Gazala to the desert post of Bir-Hakim. The defense of Bir-Hakim was entrusted to the Brigade-Group of General Koenig, an officer of the French Foreign Legion, which had taken over in this area in February of 1942.

This unit consisted of 3,600 men with—

4 battalions of the 13th Brigade under Colonel Amilakvari

2 battalions of colonial troops

1 medium artillery regiment, and

1 battalion of the Marines, in charge of the anti-aircraft defense.

The stronghold of Bir-Hakim was in the form of a huge rectangle; its eastern, southern, and western sides were defended by the 13th Brigade, the colonial units holding the northern line.

As soon as his unit was established, Amilakvari organized his three-sided front in a skilfully planned system of field positions and small defense works, all surrounded by dense mine fields and so disposed that the approaches could be swept with grazing fire of all arms. For nearly three months he was occupied improving the established position, and his legionaries were constantly at work digging holes, deep narrow trenches, and laying new mine fields; most of the vehicles were half buried in the ground. On each front of his brigade Amilakvari erected a fort to shelter units kept in readiness for either sorties by force, or counter-attacks inside the position, in case of the enemy's irruption...As a matter of fact, when Bir-Hakim had fallen and Rommel inspected the shattered remnants of the fortress, he found nearly one thousand combat positions, and it was for this reason that the German 90th Motorized Division had to wage such a bitter struggle... Besides these works, the "long range desert groups" of the 13th Brigade daily carried out harassing operations behind the German and Italian lines.

By the middle of May, with the weather improving, signs of increased activity behind the Axis front gave evidence that Rommel was ready to start his second offensive. On the afternoon of May 26th he put his forces into motion. While in the north the Italian divisions launched a deceptive attack against the Gazala line, Rommel's striking force moved on, with 10,000 vehicles made up of—

2 Panzer divisions

1 German motorized division

1 German reconnaissance division, and

2 Italian armored divisions.

Rommel's plan was to outflank Bir-Hakim, while the Ariete Armored Division, following up, was then to liquidate it quickly, afterwards pushing on to the coast to cut off and destroy the British in the Gazala area.

Thus the success of Rommel's whole manoeuvre depended on the quick fall of Bir-Hakim, which would save time and clear the road to Tobruk, Alexandria, and the Suez Canal.

On May 27th the battle of Bir-Hakim flared up.

That day, at 9 a.m., in a swirling cloud of dust and sand, seventy medium tanks of the Ariete Armored Division appeared suddenly in battle array on the eastern front. At the same time, Amilakvari's tall, unmistakable form appeared, striding calmly towards the forward defenses. But a change had come over his face; it expressed such concentrated decision as is shown by a man who comes face to face with someone whom he had expected with eagerness. The lackadasical air, the deceptive lethargy, had vanished completely, and his keen blue eyes looked disdainfully ahead. Stretching out his arms, he said:

"At last! They are here!" And he walked from one gun to another, giving his last-minute instructions.

A few seconds passed, long as centuries. Then, turning to his artillery men, Amilakvari nodded.

"Fire!"

The desert was rent with lightning flashes and soon more than twenty tanks were afire, but six others, pushing forward, managed to draw near the fort. Soon they, too, were ablaze. The rest of them gave up the assault and took cover behind the sand hills, leaving on the spot thirty-two tanks wreathed with black smoke. The "flying squads" of the brigade, dashing out from the fort, captured the Italians who had abandoned their armor, among them the Italian colonel who commanded the tank regiment. This attack cost the Ariete Division about seventy tanks in fifteen minutes. After this heavy fighting the enemy kept respectfully quiet.

Towards 6 p.m. a convoy of Italian supply vehicles, arriving from Mekili, drove quietly into the fort, as though nothing had happened. The convoy commander and his drivers showed great surprise when they found themselves surrounded by the legion-

aries. Later it was learned that, according to the plan of General Rommel, Bir-Hakim should already have fallen that very morning.

At twilight Colonel Amilakvari was walking with General Koenig along the southern front to check the damage inflicted by the pounding of the enemy artillery, when the alarm captain (Captain E.) passed by.

"Well," the general called out, "How are you, old rabbit?"

"Much better than this morning, sir, when I was in a state of great fear," replied the captain. Then, as though ashamed of himself, he cleared off.

"Lucky dog," said Amilakvari with envy, and he went on, as if talking to himself, "All my life I have been fighting, and I have never known fear. I shouldn't like to die before I know it."

During all this time, Rommel's striking force was surging forward, and its repeated assaults destroyed the British armor which was thrown piecemeal into the battle. When the last British defense had fallen at Got-el-Ualeb, the German operation zone was cleared except for the Bir-Hakim area. Despite the fact that it had been cut off on three sides—west, north, and south—the raiding parties of the 13th Brigade were continually making sorties, laying mines and ambushes along the tracks, and destroying the German supply columns to such an extent that the Germans were forced to use armor and self-propelled guns for their protection.

For all these reasons, Rommel now focused his whole attention on Bir-Hakim; the destruction of this southern anchor of the British system was essential to the full security of his flank and rear, and with increasing intensity he concentrated on this point tanks, infantry, artillery, and dive-bombers. From then on a battle of extraordinary fierceness went on, despite heavy casualties, for ten whole days. Both sides performed superhuman feats.

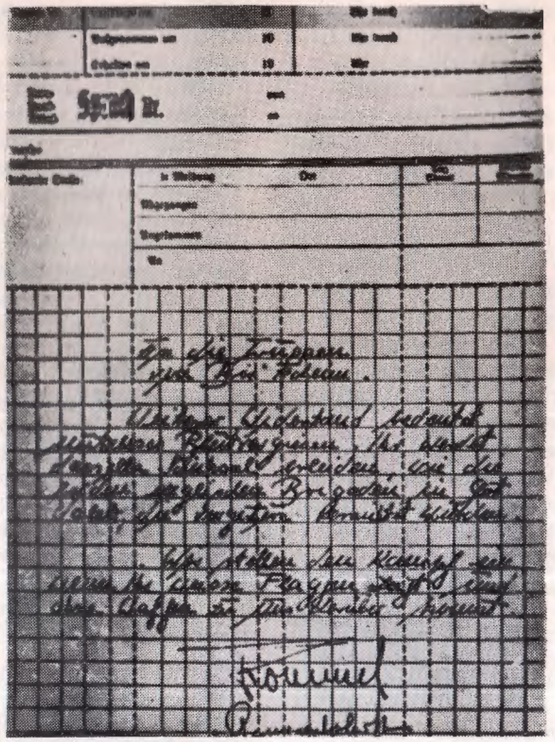
On the night of June 1st, two crack divisions, the German 90th Motorized Division (consisting of 15,000 men, 250 anti-tank guns, 36 medium artillery pieces, and 2,600 vehicles) and the Italian Trieste Armored Division, of nearly equal strength, moved against Bir-Hakim, which was thus shut off from the east, and completely cut off from the outside world. Before launching the attack under his personal leadership, General Rommel sent an Italian general with an ultimatum to surrender.

"We have enough ammunition," was the brusque answer of Koenig and Amilakvari.

"You are great soldiers, signori," rejoined the Italian officer before leaving in his car which flew a white flag.

At midday, June 2nd, after a heavy barrage and air bombardment, the Trieste Division stormed straight from the north and the east, and the 90th Motorized Division from the south and southeast. Yet for all the enemy's dash, the legionaries hung on grimly to the end in their narrow trenches, spewing out a hail of fire from all arms. Despite the fact that Rommel himself had taken over command of the attacking forces, and despite their stupendous efforts, assault after assault was halted, and in the evening Rommel called off the attack.

Once again next day, before resuming his assault, Rommel sent an ultimatum, handwritten, which ran as follows:



General ROMMEL's ultimatum.

To the troops of Bir-Hakim—

Any further resistance will only serve to uselessly shed more blood. You will suffer the same fate as the British Brigades which were exterminated at Got-el-Ualeb the day before yesterday. We shall cease firing when you raise the white flag and come towards us without arms.

ROMMEL
Colonel General

General Koenig handed it to Amilakvari, and they looked at one another.

"Well, my old rabbit," said the general, "Rommel is thundering."

"Let him come," said Amilakvari, "our guns will take care of him. Anyway, that's the only answer."

After a short while, the artillery of Bir-Hakim opened fire on all the enemy units that tried to approach the position.

On June 4th, 8 a.m., two British soldiers, captured the previous day, came to the eastern gate, sent by Rommel with another ultimatum (written in English) demanding surrender. The same answer was given as on the day before.

After the three-day pause in the fighting, Rommel resumed his fierce assaults, supported now not only by the non-stop attacks of the Luftwaffe, but by fresh auxiliary units drawn from the African Corps. It was apparent that the German general, who had drawn much criticism for the failure of his tactics, had decided to fight to the finish.

On June 6th, early in the morning, Bir-Hakim was attacked simultaneously from the north by the fresh units, and from the south by the 90th Motorized Division. Both of these attacks came to a halt with heavy

losses. At 11 o'clock, the 90th Division resumed its assault and its spearheads managed to approach within half a mile; but there the legionaries' fire tore wide gaps in their ranks, and by late evening the attack had been definitely halted. During the night, however, the assailants approached under cover of darkness to within a short distance. They stormed at dawn, after a terrific artillery and air bombardment. Again Amilakvari's legionaries fended off the attack by the fire of all available arms. Only in the north did the enemy succeed in capturing the observation post of the French artillery.

During the night, to exhaust the defenders, the Germans fired flares continuously from the air and the ground, and the position was peppered with machine-gun fire.

On the morning of June 8th, the renewed attack of the 90th Division was again repulsed with undiminished energy, and the storming units suffered grievous losses. The next day, to support the assault of the 90th Division, Rommel urgently drew another fresh unit from the Africa Corps.

Since the previous evening the balance of forces had been dipping in favor of Rommel. The garrison of Bir-Hakim had begun to run short of ammunition, supplies, and especially of water and dressings for the increasing number of wounded.

The next morning, June 10th, fresh German units succeeded at long last in widening the gap on the northern side, in spite of the desperate resistance offered by the colonial troops. The legionaries, rushing in at close quarters, closed the gap and drove back the enemy, while in the south and east Amilakvari's positions remained unshaken.

By now Rommel had begun to doubt that he could overcome the defenders. In the afternoon, he ordered the 15th Panzer Division to move post-haste to Bir-Hakim for an all-out attack set for the morning of June 12th.

But during the night of June 10th, the bulk of the Free French garrison broke out and, under the protection of the 13th Brigade—which had fought for hours to break the surrounding ring—succeeded in joining up with the British main forces.

In the early morning of June 11th, the German 90th Division, taking note of the unusual quiet inside Bir-Hakim, advanced towards it, only to discover that the garrison had broken out, leaving behind about 600 graves and 53 demolished guns.

This remarkable achievement, following a fifteen-day epic resistance, cost the German and Italian divisions—in close-range fighting alone—90 tanks and armored vehicles, 7 dive bombers, and 279 prisoners, besides the grievous losses they suffered in men and material in the long-range fighting.

"General Koenig, remember to tell your men that all France is watching, and that you are her pride," wired General de Gaulle.

General Rommel himself praised the "remarkable achievement" of the defenders, and in particular the skilfully planned system—"the excellent defense system"—established by Colonel Amilakvari.

To be sure, it would be unworthy to minimize by one iota the role and responsibilities of General Koenig, who was in command of the whole Bir-Hakim defense operation. Had the battle been lost, it is he who would have had to bear the brunt of criticism and dissatisfaction, just as in the case of General Rommel.

On the other hand, Colonel Amilakvari was not only the real fighting symbol of that epopee, but the heart and soul of a fifteen-day grimly fought struggle. Against crushing odds, he with his brigade defended the front which bore the main shock of the whole battle, and he succeeded in holding his position intact.

"From June 6th onward," said his men, "he surpassed himself beyond all limits of human possibility; day and night he was in our midst, sleeping not at all, resting not at all, but giving orders, leading counter-attacks, always in the thick of the fighting. We wondered how he could hold his head up."

General Rommel frankly admitted that "seldom was he given such a hard-fought struggle," as when, on June 2nd, he attacked the south front of Bir-Hakim with the pick of his army.

IT MUST BE SAID that the battle of Bir-Hakim has never received the attention it actually deserves. More interest has been shown in the critical developments following its fall than in the achievements which paved the way for later success at El Alamein, still later in French North Africa, and finally in Asia and perhaps elsewhere.

The bare facts speak for themselves:

1—On May 26th, when Rommel launched his full-scale offensive, his striking force consisted of 4 armored and 2 motorized divisions. The battle of Bir-Hakim not only occupied 2 armored divisions (Ariete, Trieste, and later the 15th Panzer) and 2 motorized divisions (the 90th and the combat groups) but it had impeded the arrival of supplies, and thus diminished the fighting power of the rest of the striking mass which was operating against the British. But even with this reduced strength, Rommel succeeded in destroying the British armor and completely clearing the operation zone.

If Rommel had had available the divisions which were tied up at Bir-Hakim for ten to fifteen days before it fell, his offensive undoubtedly would have scored far more terrifying achievements. Here is the irrefutable proof of it:

After Bir-Hakim, when Rommel was at last able to throw his whole weight into one concentrated blow, the result was disastrous for the British 8th Army.

On June 18th, the El-Adem and Rezegh strongholds had fallen; on the 21st, after a single day's battle, Tobruk, the strongest fortress in North Africa, with a garrison of more than 3 divisions, and substantial stores, had fallen to the Germans; on the same day they captured Bardia; on June 26th, Capuzzo, Sollum, Halfaya, and Sidi-Barrani. Moving eastward in full strength, and swinging his armor to the south to threaten the British with encirclement, on June 19th Rommel took Marsa-Matruh, the Egyptian fortress with its excellent water supply and its road and rail connection.

By July 1st, he had reached the El-Alamein line, only 60 miles from Alexandria, the British naval base. Nearly exhausted by the grim resistance of Bir-Hakim and the ensuing engagements, Rommel stopped there, although he was very impatient to reach the Nile Valley...That 16-days' delay was to be fatal to him.

2—The El-Alamein line, running from the sea at Tel-el-Aissa to El-Himeimat southward, was established in 1941 astride the gateway to the Nile Delta. At this position, the depleted British 8th Army's right flank was guarded by the sea, and its left flank by the depression which the soft sand renders impassable for vehicles, if not for men.

When Bir-Hakim was surrounded, the attention of the British High Command was focussed on this line, to stop Rommel's headlong advance. But the 8th Army was desperately in need of time to strengthen itself by all available reinforcements. That was why General Koenig was requested to hold Bir-Hakim for at least ten days. Instead of ten days, Bir-Hakim held out for sixteen days—without any major relieving attacks, and this period gave the British time not only for strengthening their

position, but for the arrival of reinforcements and supplies, which were flowing from the U.S.A. and Great Britain.

The epopee of Bir-Hakim cost the French grievous losses; the enemy action made tremendous gaps, mainly in the ranks of the Foreign Legion. Thus, with the remnants of his brigade, Amilakvari succeeded in forming only two small battalions, with skeleton headquarters...

"Didn't I tell you we were sentenced to death," he used to say when directing the training of his legionaries in Egypt. "Our turn is coming, mark my words."

It was indeed, although he could not then have known how close it was.

During the latter part of August Rommel resumed his assault with the rising of the moon, and having gained a very useful mountain position at El-Himeimat on the southern flank, he stopped again.

The strongly entrenched Mount El-Himeimat, on the crest of which the enemy had established an important observation post with a subterranean telephone*, emerges like a German helmet from the lip of a rocky plateau. Its ugly mass is surrounded by crumbling cliffs, yellow and vertical, cracked by the scorching sun and burning sands...

TWICE KILLED BEFORE HE DIED

IN THE BRIGHT still moonlight of October 23rd, at 9:40 p.m., some 1,260 guns of Montgomery's artillery ranged along a front of six miles, one gun to every 20 yards, opened fire with a terrific roar. So heavy a gun barrage had never been put up since Verdun. For many hours a hell of fury was let loose on the German positions, covered and lit with deafening explosions.

Thus began the battle of El-Alamein, which turned the tide of war in Africa (and consequently that of the whole war) against the Axis forces, thanks to the Bir-Hakim epic. At 22:00 hours, the British assaulting divisions advanced to the attack. Montgomery's idea was to concentrate the whole weight of his attack in the northern sector, and to break through with his armor, while in the south the other units were in charge of a diversionary attack to attract the enemy's attention.

The 13th Brigade of Colonel Amilakvari, at the extreme south, had to occupy the plateau of El-Taga, and the mountain of El-Himeimat, both of them held by the Italian Pavia Division and the German Kiel Armored Brigade reinforced by the 2nd motorized group.

It is interesting to recall that Rommel's break-through plan, which he intended to carry out later, consisted in moving his striking mass to the southern part of the front and then, rushing in a headlong thrust to the sea, to outflank the 8th Army. Consequently, his units were concentrated along the front according to this plan. Thus there was not very much to be gained by the diversionary attack in the south, and there was no point in sacrificing Amilakvari's brigade to the crushing odds. If permitted, Rommel had the intention of manoeuvring as Montgomery wished him to, and the clashing zone between the Panzer Army and Amilakvari's Brigade had thus to be found in the El-Taga—El Himeimat area.

Late in the morning of October 23rd, 1942, Amilakvari was ordered to move from the southern ridge of Deir-el Munassib into his assembly area at Qor-el-Labban, with every possible precaution against observation; then he would deploy his Bri-

*Later, during the battle, this post reported to the artillery on the advance of the 13th Brigade to the El-Himeimat and the El Taga positions; this explains the unusual accuracy and efficiency of the enemy fire.

gade and join the general offensive of the 8th Army. At about 18:00 o'clock he alerted his unit, and having given orders to the sappers and battalion commanders, moved on cautiously, one hour later. The night was bright, and under a ghostly moon the legionaries advanced in silence; Colonel Amilakvari wrapped up in his wide cape, walked like a shadow, without a helmet, from one battalion to the other, accompanied by his staff-officer, and his old batman.

By 23:30 the brigade had reached Qor-el-Labban, a crested hill. After a pause, the colonel sent the sappers, with the 1st battalion in support, towards the south edge of El-Himeimat, to clear a passage through the mine fileds. This having been accomplished successfully without arousing the enemy's attention, the second battalion followed, and by midnight the brigade was deployed at the end of the cleared gap. At 6 o'clock of a chilly and damp morning, October 24th, the assault was ordered. The 1st Battalion rushed the eastern ridge of El-Tago. Instantly it was met with a heavy fire of all arms: machine guns, mortars, 88 mm and 105 mm guns. In spite of this wall of fire, the legionaries charged up the plateau with such a dash that they left many of the enemy nests behind. A little while later, the second battalion, with Amilakvari at its head, stormed the plateau from the south. Suddenly appearing from the northern and western side of the rise came 10 American tanks escorted by the same number of armored vehicles. The legionaries, taking them for friendly armor, got up, and many of them advanced cheering, when a vast terrific fire swept the plateau, cutting them down by entire groups. These tanks and vehicles were those that Rommel had captured at Tobruk and pressed into the service of the Kiel Armored Brigade. Suffering heavy losses the battalion fell back. Methodically, still under the withering fire of the tanks, Amilakvari collected his men behind a spur just as the infantry of the Pavia division, rushing from the El-Taga range, joined the battle. The 13th Brigade had with them no guns powerful enough for the task, as they could not be got up the crumbling slopes of the plateau. Nevertheless, the fire of its available anti-tank weapons, and "tank hunters" obliged the enemy to stop and withdraw, leaving on the ground 2 tanks and 5 vehicles set ablaze. Seeing that his heavy weapons could not join the brigade over these slopes and soft sand, Amilakvari ordered his men to descend and make for the foot of El-Himeimat and then for the Qor-el-Labban area. Watching his legionaries retreating, he stood motionless in kepi and cape, with deliberation, as if to give the impression that there was no need for haste. Again, unexpectedly, Mount El-Himeimat and the El-Taga plateau whistled with rage, and a salvo of shells fell into the middle of a platoon. The legionaries fell like leaves to the ground. Amilakvari's face was ashen but his blue eyes remained impassive. He turned towards the summit of El-Himeimat, scanning it questioningly.

The early morning breeze had died down, and a new day was being born with a marvelous display of colors. Again several salvos came whizzing from the same direction as before. Amilakvari moved slightly and glanced at his men passing by.

"Crouch down," he ordered, in a metallic voice. His command was followed by deafening explosions all around him. Instinctively, his hardy men of Bir-Hakim crouched; he alone remained motionless, still standing, as if there were no menace for him in these projectiles.

By 8 o'clock, the shattered 13th Brigade had crossed the mine fields, and the rear guard approached the place where the colonel was standing.

"Was anybody left behind?" he asked the commanding officer.

"We lost no prisoners, sir," was the short reply.

Suddenly a terrible shock, a mighty fire ball flashed towards his right, and in the same instant a noise as of a thunder clap shook the colonel. Before falling to the hollowed ground he hesitated a little, then, as if to make a correct military salute, he lifted his right arm towards his head and sank down. He made a desperate effort to get up, but succeeded only in crouching on his knees and elbows, both of his hands holding his head, on the right side of which a small, deep hole was seen, with blood flowing from it. The legionaries hastened back, picked up Colonel Amilakvari, and carried him down to a knoll, which was sheltered by a tank. Laying him upon it, they rushed the tank to an ambulance standing at the edge of the mine field.. On its way back the ambulance received a direct hit, and was destroyed. When Colonel Amilakvari was removed from the twisted remains of the truck, there were two more wounds in his head...

"He was twice killed before he died," said his legionaries, picking up his kepi, torn by the splinters, and his cape, stained with blood...

Thus ended the life of Colonel Amilakvari, a Georgian noble, and an officer of the French Foreign Legion...

"I should not like to die without knowing fear," he had said at Bir-Hakim, and his friend, General Koenig, commented sadly when told of his death:

"I am sure the splinters crashed into Prince Amilakvari's head before he had yet known fear."



Here lies Colonel AMILAKVARI, DIMITRI, of the Foreign Legion...

"Cowards die many times before their death—The valiant never taste of death but once." *Shakespeare*

Queen Thamar the Great and Shotha Rusthaveli

By SIMON KVITACHVILI

JUST BEFORE the beginning of World War II, Georgia solemnly celebrated the 750th anniversary of the appearance of the famous poem of the great Georgian poet, Shotha Rusthaveli—"The Knight in the Tiger's Skin."

Georgian newspapers and magazines, as well as those of all the nationalities which comprise the Soviet Union, carried many articles devoted to the poem and its creator. Meetings were held and lectures given in honor of the poet all over the Soviet Union. New and revised translations of the poem into the Russian and other languages appeared, and a special postage stamp was issued to commemorate the occasion.

During one of the meetings, that of the Association of Georgian Writers held in the capital city of Georgia, Tbilissi, Mr. Ingorokva, Professor of Literature at the State University of Tbilissi and one of the best qualified commentators on Rusthaveli, spoke about the poem and its author. In the prologue to his lecture he said: "Centuries separate us from the time of Rusthaveli, but his immortal poem continues to stand as the magnificent work of an accomplished genius, and its influence remains as powerful as ever. The era during which Rusthaveli lived and created was the era when Georgia reached the height of her political power and cultural development. It is impossible to understand Rusthaveli's great work without a deep knowledge of the magnificent, original culture of Georgia of the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries. And, in reality, where did the universal philosophy and the humanism with which the poem is impregnated come from? The answer, of course, is that the great cultural movement known as the Renaissance began in Georgia centuries before it came to Western Europe."

Professor Ingorokva is quite right. Rusthaveli, who unquestionably occupies one of the foremost places among the great creative geniuses of the world, wrote a poem which, like a mirror, reflects the culture of the Georgia of his day. The poem is first of all the expression, unique in form and style, of the great ideas of humanism on which were based the political and intellectual life of medieval Georgia. Rusthaveli's genius reveals him as protagonist of these great ideas.

But let us first of all speak of the personality of the poet. Who was he? The enigma of Rusthaveli still exists, even though in recent years much has been discovered about him and the principal questions about his life have been solved.

Rusthaveli was one of many great noblemen who surrounded the re-

splendent court of Queen Thamar the Great, who reigned in Georgia from 1184 to 1213. The Lord of Rusthavi in Southwest Georgia, he took the name of Rusthaveli, which in Georgian means "one who comes from Rusthavi." There is not the slightest doubt that he was the man who wrote the "Knight in the Tiger's Skin." In the concluding lines of his poem the author says:

"..I sign my name,
A Meskhi from Rusthavi."

"Meskhi" in Georgian means a man from Meskheti, the province of Georgia where Rusthavi is situated.

When did Rusthaveli live and when was his poem written? To these questions as well, the poem itself gives the answer. In the prologue, the author dedicates his poem to Queen Thamar and speaks of her as his contemporary. Now, the only Queen Thamar known to Georgian history is precisely the famous Thamar the Great, who became queen in 1184 when her father, George III, abdicated in her favor. This and other historical facts prove that Rusthaveli lived in the second half of the 12th century and the first half of the 13th. His poem was written between the years 1184 and 1207. The exact date is not known and neither are the dates of his birth and death.

After receiving a good education in Georgia, Rusthaveli went to Athens (the Paris of his time) and completed his education there. His poem proves beyond any doubt that, for his times, Rusthaveli had an astounding erudition. He spoke several languages, he traveled extensively in Asia and Europe, he knew thoroughly the cultures, the arts, and the literature of all the civilized countries of his age. His poem is full of quotations from Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and other philosophers, poets, and writers of Greece and Iran.

It can be seen that Rusthaveli was well prepared to play a part in the service of his country. And, in effect, he received an appointment as Great Chamberlain (some sources say Chief Treasurer) to Queen Thamar the Great. The tragedy of his life begins from this moment. The queen was beautiful and Rusthaveli fell desperately in love with her. All his genius is given to the task of singing her beauty, her charm, and her virtue.

"Let us sing to the great Queen Thamar," says the poet.
"I dedicate to her my chosen odes,
Odes written with tears and blood.
I sing of the one of whom I have always sung.
She is all my life, even though she has no more mercy for me, than a rock.
I sing her glory in the lines which follow."

Thus the poet ends the prologue to his poem.

What was his further fate? We have nothing authentic to go by, but legend says that the poet abandoned public life, became a monk, and spent the rest of his days in one of the Georgian monasteries in Jerusalem. It was there that his tomb was discovered centuries later, with his effigy and a simple inscription—"Shotha Rusthaveli."

BEFORE CONSIDERING the "Knight in the Tiger's Skin" and defining the role which the poem has played in the history of Georgia and the life of the Georgian people, it is necessary to give a short account

of Queen Thamar who had such a tremendous influence on Rusthaveli.

Queen Thamar the Great was the only daughter of King George III, who abdicated in her favor in 1184. She died in 1213. Her reign was the most brilliant in the history of Georgia and her age is justly known as the "Golden Age" of her country. Neither before her reign nor after did Georgia attain such political power and such cultural development. It was thanks to her that Georgia became a great empire which comprised the whole of the Caucusus up to the southern borders of Russia, the northern provinces of Iran up to Kasvin, and a large part of Asia Minor. She was instrumental in the foundation of the Empire of Trabizond which, during the whole of its existence, was a virtual vassal of Georgia. The population of the Georgian Empire reached fifteen million souls—an enormous number for those days. The population of England in the 12th century did not exceed by much the two million mark.

Queen Thamar reigned for twenty-nine years and fully justified the confidence of her father. Richly endowed with intellectual and moral qualities, with a splendid education, familiar with affairs of state from her early childhood, Thamar proved herself a sovereign of the highest order. Far from being a simple instrument of various political factions, she reigned as a real monarch and exercised to the full her authority. She raised the prestige of Georgia to a degree never attained before nor after and gave her country, besides great political power, a refined civilization. The relations of the neighboring states with Georgia were based on respect for her military might and on the splendor of her culture.

The throne of the great queen was surrounded by a pleiad of brilliant men: poets, many no less eminent than Rusthaveli, scientists, wise statesmen and glorious military leaders. Thamar contributed personally to the magnificent spread of Georgian culture and directed the affairs of state in all her domains. In the 12th century she was a partisan of representative government, a movement in favor of which was in evidence in Georgia of her era. Not only did she abolish capital punishment (in the 12th century), but even corporal punishment was outlawed, as being humiliating to the dignity of man. She did all in her power to encourage trade and develop the agriculture of the country. Vestiges of an ingenious and widely spread system of irrigation exist to this day. Great progress was made in the domain of education. The Universities of Gelathi and Ikaltho became among the foremost in the contemporary world. Thamar strengthened greatly the military power of the kingdom. In war, she went with her armies and in difficult moments appeared at the head of them with a cross in one hand and the Holy Bible in the other. She gave her subjects a constant example of diligence and charity. The people adored her for her goodness and her unceasing care for widows and orphans, for the aged, the weak and the unfortunate. Her whole life was an expression of charity and kindness. The people called her "Thamar the Divine" and the Church canonized her as a saint.

Besides her intellectual and moral

accomplishments, the queen was exceptionally beautiful. Every contemporary historian, every poet and writer, speaks with rapture of the beauty and charm of the young queen.

More than seven and a half centuries have passed since the death of Thamar, but the memory of their great queen still lives in the hearts of the Georgian people and will live as long as a single Georgian remains alive. The people have created innumerable legends about her and passed them on from generation to generation, even to our own day.

BUT TO RETURN to Rusthaveli's great epic. It consists of more than fifteen hundred stanzas telling story within story of love and valor:

Rostevan, the aged King of Arabia, renounces his throne in favor of his only daughter, Thinathin. During the festivities of her coronation and the court hunt which follows, the slaves of the king perceive a young man, dressed in a tiger's skin, sitting by a river and sobbing bitterly. His interest aroused, the king orders the man to be brought before him, but the stranger refuses and when the king's men try to seize him, he falls upon them, scatters them, and escapes when he sees the king himself approaching. Rostevan, very mystified and piqued, orders a search, but to no avail. The stranger has disappeared. The king is very afflicted; he considers the episode as a bad omen for himself and for his kingdom. His daughter Thinathin, seeing that there will be no peace of mind for the king until the mysterious stranger is found, sends for young Avtandil, Commander-in-Chief of the Arabian Army. Thinathin loves Avtandil and he, in his turn, is desperately in love with her, his king's daughter. Thinathin asks him to go in search of the stranger and promises him her hand upon his return.

Like a true knight, Avtandil is only too glad to do his lady's bidding. He departs, and after a long and difficult search finds the man in the tiger's skin. The two knights become friends and Avtandil hears the stranger's story:

Tariel (such was the name of the man in the tiger's skin), belonged to the Royal House of India and held the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army. He was in love with the king's daughter, the beautiful Nestan. Plans were made for their marriage, but one day Nestan is mysteriously kidnapped. Tariel goes immediately in search of her. He travels all over the world, but can not find a trace of his beloved. Desperate, weakened, and full of terrible grief, Tariel loses all joy in life, renounces the society of human beings, and lives like a hermit among the beasts of the wild. And because the grace and beauty of a tiger remind him of his beloved and lost Nestan, he wears a tiger's skin as a sign of his undying love.

Avtandil is profoundly moved by this tragic story. He tries to cheer Tariel and vows to aid him in his search for his lost beloved. But before starting on his search he returns to Arabia and recounts to King Rostevan and to Thinathin his meeting with Tariel and his story. At the same time, he tells them of his decision to aid the man in the tiger's skin in his search. The king is opposed to this plan. He wants Avtandil to stay in Arabia, but with the consent of Thinathin, Avtandil escapes and starts on his search.

After long peregrinations and many adventures full of interest and poetic inspiration, during which Avtandil shows his brilliant intelligence, ingenuity, bravery, and diplomacy, he finds Nestan. She is alive, but is held a prisoner in an impregnable castle by the Kadjis, who are the incarnation of "evil." Avtandil rejoins his friend, Tariel, and informs him of what he has found out. The joy of the man in the tiger's skin knows no bounds. He throws off his apathy and his despair and becomes again the powerful man of action he always was before. His only thought now is to combat and defeat his enemies.

After a council of war with Avtandil and Pridon (the third hero of the poem), he decides to attack the Kadjis and to take their castle by assault. The castle appears to be impregnable, but clever strategy and the irresistible courage of the three knights and their men overcome the resistance of the Kadjis. The castle is taken, Nestan liberated, and the forces of evil defeated forever.

The poem ends with the marriage of Tariel to Nestan and of Avtandil to Thinathin and with the ascension of the two couples to the thrones of India and Arabia respectively.

THE POEM IS read with great interest which does not weaken all through the long narrative. The plot is ingenious and artistically worked out, the poem is full of the powerful and profound sentiments of its heroes and it is written with a beauty and force of poetical expression rarely equalled in any poetical work of any nation. The moral and social ideas are expressed in the poem with such power that they remain indelibly in the mind of the reader.

The heroes of the poem are the three knights, Tariel, Avtandil, and Pridon. Although equal in intelligence, nobility of character, chivalry and courage, yet each presents an individuality all his own. Tariel is the incarnation of powerful activitiy, He makes his decisions without hesitation and does not flinch before any obstacle. He is dominated by a passion which in his character can be more powerful than reason. Avtandil, equally resolute and intrepid, has more flexibility, ingenuity, and capacity of weighing his actions. Because in him reason usually takes precedence over passion, he is invariably successful in whatever he undertakes even when the case seems hopeless. Chivalrous Pridon, most attractive incarnation of a true friend, has the characteristics of both Tariel and Avtandil. He is as if a synthesis of them both, in a form slightly less pronounced, and perhaps a little closer to Avtandil than to Tariel.

The types of women are no less interesting. Nestan, beautiful and tender hearted, is at the same time audacious and active. She encourages Tariel and drives him on for the final triumph of their love. Thinathin the radiant, clever and charming, is not only the object of adoration of Avtandil, she is also his precious friend, capable of giving him wise council and aiding him in anything he undertakes.

Asmath, a servant, devoted to Tariel like a sister, and capable of total abnegation of herself. Fatman,

the play-girl, pretty and easy-going, but at the same time good and kind and a devoted friend.

THE POEM of Rusthaveli has played a tremendous role in the life and history of Georgia and in the formation of the character of the Georgian people. The poem was and still is, read, studied, loved and revered in every class of Georgian society from the nobility and intellectuals down to the humblest peasant.

It was printed for the first time in 1712, during the reign of King Vahtang VI, the Lawgiver. Up to that time it passed from hand to hand in the form of manuscripts and was therefore not easily available to the masses. The remarkable thing is that this did not prevent the poem from spreading among the whole people and from being passed from mouth to mouth and from generation to generation. The aristocracy, the middle classes, the peasantry, all were united by a sentiment of national unanimity in their admiration and love for the great poem. For the people it has always been an unfailing source of wisdom and kindness. They attached such tremendous importance to it that every young girl received a copy of the poem on her marriage, and the children learned their "ABC's" by it. During all festivities —marriages, fairs, and national occasions—singers and minstrels sang and recited the beautiful verses of the poem, many of which have enriched the Georgian folklore.

The influence which the poem has exercised on the development of Georgian literature is tremendous. Rusthaveli's poetry is an inexhaustible spring in which the poets and writers have sought and always found inspiration and creative power.

Why is it that centuries have passed, yet the tremendous attraction and influence of "The Knight in the Tiger's Skin" remain as strong as ever? It can not be explained by the purely poetic greatness of the poem alone. It is of course true that Rusthaveli occupies one of the foremost places among the world's greatest poets, but nowhere has a poet had such a tremendous influence on the life and character of his people as Rusthaveli has had on the Georgians. The answer is that besides being a great poet, Rusthaveli is also a great humanist, without peer among the great men of the Middle Ages. His poem is not only an expression of the powerful creative impulse of a poet; it is also an expression in their highest and purest forms of the sentiments of humanism and of the ideals of humanity. The whole poem is a hymn dedicated to the dignity and honor of man and a noble thought for man's spiritual and physical well-being.

Rusthaveli's beliefs — ideological philosophic, social, and artistic—put him centuries ahead of his times and his poem shows the amazing development of the culture of Georgia in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries of our era. Rusthaveli's poem is the reflection of this culture. And it is this culture which made possible the creation of his great work.

Is it to be wondered at that the Georgian people have made a real cult of their great national poet, the man who, several centuries before the Renaissance came to Western Europe, preached the great ideas of humanism: the liberty of individuals and nations, brotherhood and friendship, universal solidarity, the abolition of slavery, social justice, charity towards the unfortunates, equality of sexes and the full emancipation of women.

These were the ideals which Rusthaveli sang with incomporable artistry. And these are the ideals which are deeply imbedded in the heart and soul of the Georgian nation. Pure love, beauty, friendship, chivalry, sacrifice of self for the sake of high ideals, the love of one's country, the dignity and nobility of man—Rusthaveli believed in all these sentiments and knew how to express them.

And that is why, seven and a half centuries after his death, the memory of this great and noble man, still holds first place in the heart, soul, and affection of every Georgian.

The National Republic of Georgia

ON APRIL 1st, 1926, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the American House of Representatives discussed the question of recognizing the Independent Republic of Georgia. The resolution to this effect was proposed by Mr. R. Walton Moore of Virginia.

In the twenty-seven years, which have passed since then, the Moscow tyranny has increased greatly and countless numbers of Geoorgians have been executed or sent to concentration camps. In spite of this cruel persecution, the Georgian nation has not given up its fight for independence and continues to defend valiantly its territory, language, culture, and religion. This is why the arguments used in the Foreign Affairs Committee for the recognition of the Georgian Republic are even more valid today than they were then.

In the discussions which took place in the Committee, Mr. John A. Stewart, a prominent American public figure, took the stand for the recognition. Following is his speech, which gives a very true picture of Georgia, its people, and its fight for liberty and independence.

Mr. Stewart:" Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the committee; outside of Eastern Europe, and particularly among the nations of this hemisphere, Georgia is but little known. To most of us it is not even a name, and yet the people of Georgia stand practically alone in an accomplishment which finds only one parallel among the nations of the world. The history of Georgia antedates the invasion of the Trans-Caucasus by Alexander, 400 years before Christ; and successively after Alexander's time this little nation was inundated by the Romans, the Arabs, by the Mongols, by the Tartars, by the Persians, by the Turks, and, finally, by the Russians. In the course of 2,500 years

this people has fought over 125 wars. It is a wealthy land. Its hills and valleys contain practically every mineral that is found in the United States. The Trans-Caucasian Isthmus stands first in its quantity of oil that lies around Baku and in North Caucasia awaiting exploitation. It has enormous deposits of coal and limestone...

It has, under the authority of Professor Fessenden, who was a member of the Ontario Water Power Commission, a horsepower in its mountains approximating 120,000,000, and hence because in its mountains are manganese, gold, silver, steel, copper, iron, etc., the nations of the world have regarded it as a fair prey for exploitation under force of arms.

But despite the fact that, year after year this people has been decimated by the onslaughts of predatory forces, and despite the fact that in the long wars between Persia and the Turks, on the one side, and Georgia on the other, during which two out of every three fighting men and women were killed, the Georgians have maintained their racial identity and their institutions; they have preserved their language and their hold upon the soil which God gave them. There is no other nation on earth which has so glorious a history as the Georgians.

Their population today is in the neighborhood of 3,000,000, which is almost entirely a native population. Just think of it! A reputable statistician, a man who understands insurance computation, has computed that in the course of 2,000 years the Georgians have lost in battle, fighting to maintain their land, something like 8,000,000 or 10,000,000 of their people, yet there they are today, where the Creator planted them. Some 1,700 years ago they adopted Christianity, and for 1,700 years they have fought to maintain that Christianity. In the fourth century, under the direction of Constantine the Great, the Bible was translated into the vernacular, having its origin in the Zendish, which is a member of the Sanscrit family of languages. Today, standing over against Russia, with its 96% of illiteracy, stands little Georgia, with 96% of literacy. It has a long-established literature; it has an ancient art. It has within its population some of the greatest scholars of the world. There is no land that, facing such conditions as Georgia has faced, has maintained itself so well against vastly superior forces.

Under Catherine the Great a convention of friendship and amity was entered into between Russia and the Georgian kingdom, a treaty afterwards incontinently violated by that Same Russia, in natural due course when occupied by Russian troops. Afterwards a vice-royalty was granted. It is significant that, owing to the inherent honesty of these people. their unswerving integrity, their probity, their courage, and their great intelligence, the Czars, suspicious of their own people, always surrounded themselves with Georgians. Let me illustrate something of the natural integrity of the Georgian people. I have in New York a friend who in due course of business visited Georgia and remained there for many months. He told me that one morning he purchased a large basket of raspberries from a peasant

girl standing on the platform of a railroad station; went into the car to empty the basket, and while there heard some rather loud talking outside. He heard his name mentioned in English and went out and found the peasant girl arguing with a soldier who was on guard. He called the soldier, who had been in America, and said "What is the matter? Did I underpay the girl?" The soldier replied, "Quite the contrary; she said that you overpaid her five times and she wants to give you back your change, and insists on it." This gentleman said that, even coming from America, which is supposed to be reasonably honest, he was deeply impressed with such treatment at the hands of a girl of her class; and being an American he gave her not only that which he had paid her originally but considerably more besides.

Through the ages the Georgians have been noted for their honesty, also for their courtesy, and I have been told by people who have visited them that there is no more charmingly hospitable people on earth than the Georgians. It is a part of the Georgian social creed that when one has a guest he must defend the integrity of that guest and safeguard him even with his own life.

Now, what made Georgia the target of surrounding nations, the Persians and the Turks, is that Georgia was a Christian nation; hence she has had to defend her Christianity through the deaths of hundreds of thousands of her people.

Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the committee, if America has any reputation at all in the world, if it has any reason for pluming itself upon its reputation, it is because always America has been sympathetic with little people struggling to maintain their racial integrity and their independence. Georgia stands precisely where America stood in 1776. Perhaps it was meant by God that little nations should have no standing in the world; perhaps it was meant that little peoples ever should be exploited by greater peoples who have the force to carry out such ruthless exploitation as the Russians have been doing in Georgia for the last four years. Georgia gained her independence. She established a democratic republican form of government. She was included arbitrarily by the Soviet government as one of the Soviet States, but that was entirely without her volition -- she had no voice in the matter -- there was no method by which that act could have been stopped. Obviously, a nation like Russia has a right to write into her constitution anything she pleases, even though it arbitrarily includes an implied authority over neighboring States. But also in the Russian constitution there is included the recognition of the independence of Georgia; and the declaration is therein made -- and we have the text with us -- that Georgia has the right to withdraw from the Soviet Union, a union into which she never entered. It is also stated therein that she has the absolute right of independence. And yet, after this convention, or rather, after this constitution was written, after these statements were made, the Bolshevist Government of Soviet Russia, true to form. hurled a Red Army into Georgia and took temporary possession of her; but shortly after, when the Georgians had rallied their for-

ces, the first Red invaders were driven out. It is the splendid history of this little country that the Russians, under the Czars, were never able wholly to conquer the Georgians, who defended themselves in their mountain fastnesses. The Russians have acknowledged that the only way they could have taken possession of Georgia was by waiting until the Persians and the Turks had so weakened the fighting forces of Georgia that the Georgians did not have the strength to resist; and they accepted the situation as best they could.

Georgia has no claim to make upon the sympathies of the American people except that claim of sympathy which America has always accorded to a Christian people struggling for independence..."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. In Memoriam	*by N. M. Kvitashvili Kay*	1
2. Genocide	*by A. Tsomaia*	3
3. Memorandum to the U.N.	*by Leon Dumbadze*	6
4. The New Messiah	*by N. M. Kvitashvili*	9
5. What is Happening?	*by D. Sindikeli*	13
6. A Georgian Monastery		16
7. Death of a Hero	*by Major A. D. Tchenkeli*	17
8. Queen Thamar...	*by Simon Kvitashvili*	31
9. National Republic of Georgia		38

Printed by RAUSEN BROS. 417 Lafayette St. New York



The Editorial Board wishes to express its thanks to all those friends and well wishers, Americans, Georgians and others, whose voluntary and generous contributions have made the publication of the "Voice of Free Georgia" possible.

However, more is needed and the Board wishes to remind all those who are in sypmathy with its aims, that, although there is no fixed subscription fee, all contributions, no matter how small, will be gratefully received.