

# Coverage of Military Issues in the Newspaper “Georgia” (1918-1919)

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## **Abstract**

Reporting on military issues does not lose relevance in the modern media. In the Georgian press of the 20th century, this topic was given a great place. The purpose of my research was to review newspaper “Sakartvelo” (1918-1919) periodical edition of the National Democratic Party; identify how they covered military issues and how the publicists expressed their position.

Research had shown that “Sakartvelo” under the heading “War” was offering to their readers brief informational notes from various fronts of World War I. Military issues were mainly covered by extensive publications, there were analytical materials about creation of Young State's Defense System and the Reorganization of the Army.

Publicists of the newspaper “Sakartvelo” offered to the Georgian government a proper plan how to organize army. According to the newspaper's position, military forces should be regular and any kind of economizing was unjustified not to get the reverse effect and not to create anarchy instead of order.

**Keywords:** Army, Georgia, party press, war

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## Introduction

Military issues have attracted the interest of journalists of all times. Political events had always posed main challenges to the media in this regard.

In the early part of the twentieth century, during the course of World War I, the Transcaucasian region depended heavily on the fate of war due to its geopolitical location and unstable political situation. So, covering of military issues requires from journalists greatest responsibility and deep knowledge of the case. The objective of the research: newspaper "Sakartvelo" (1918-1919 years).

**Research methods:** Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods, Content-Analysis Method.

**Results:** We found out how military issues were covered during the First World War in the early 20th century in Georgian press.

As we think, this theme should be relevant for persons who are interested in the history of the Journalism.

**Discussion:** We can safely conclude that "Sakartvelo" ("Georgia") had been paying proper attention to military matters.

It should also be noted that the material published in the newspaper was mainly informative notes and chronicles, and, as for the more extensive publications, which are quite large, it is difficult to identify their attribution to any genre.

This does not mean, however, that the publications in the newspaper "Sakartvelo" ("Georgia") were not properly worded.

The periodical edition of the National Democratic Party, the newspaper "Sakartvelo" ("Georgia") was founded in 1915 and it was considered as a follower the father of the nation, Ilia Chavchavadze. National-Democrats were sure, that for newly formed sovereign republic it was very important to providing defense. So, they thought, that the basis of a strong country is an army which answers its

demands. That is why newspaper "Sakartvelo", as an edition of the National-Democratic party, was paying great attention to military matters.

"Sakartvelo" under the heading – "War" was offering its readers brief informational notes from various fronts of World War I. The military issues were mainly covered by extensive publications, there were analytical materials: about domestic politics, creation of Young State's Defense System and the Reorganization of the Army.

The newspaper agreed with the call of the executive committee of the National Council of Georgia and demanded the creation of a public police force like in Switzerland (Kikodze, 1918, p. 1). To do it, all citizens between the age of 18 and 45, except for those who already were in the military forces, had to go to their villages to study and practice how to use weapons. Military service was for men from 19 to 25-year-old, they had to spend six months there instead of three and a half years.

"Sakartvelo" ("Georgia") published: "We should start working together to create a Georgian army (Unauthorized, 1918, p.1) to protect our homeland", "The army should be a real force, not an armed crowd."

Tense relations with the Ottomans made the threat of war real, so contributors to the newspaper "Sakartvelo" ("Georgia") were paying a lot of attention to matters of proper organization of military forces.

They wrote: "Bread alone is not enough to produce war; it is necessary for any important branch of economic life not to relax and fail (Unauthorized, 1918, p.1). It is necessary to work in the first half of the day, and in the second one to practice. The military section of the national Council should be able to deploy troops not only in the barracks, but also outside.

In order to raise national consciousness, "Sakartvelo" ("Georgia") was praised by Special Homeland Heroes: "The mobilization of troops is under common enthusiasm; They refuse to be examined by a doctor, hide

their physical shortcomings, come with their own weapons, scooters" (Unauthorized, 1918, p.1).

Alongside the people's praise, the newspaper criticized the government, because they believed that body can't nothing without head: "Heads forget everything, always remembering only the class, only the party."

Government did not pay enough attention to this issue, but contributors wrote that it was surprising to see diligence from the side of military forces.

"Sakartvelo" ("Georgia") did not hesitate to appreciate the strength of Red Guards: "It is hardly ever possible for the Russian Revolution to have such an incredible power." "It should be noted, however, that this Guard had no black mark in history." According to them, if there were mistakes, that was only for the reason of faults of government.

"Sakartvelo" ("Georgia") believed that to raise such professionals government had to do everything.

In order to share its experience, newspaper "Sakartvelo" ("Georgia") was giving the examples of different countries in this field. The newspaper wrote that Buddhists from Japan were teaching their children to fight to death for their Country.

They had to be fair, just, peaceful, and to be patient, and as riders, they had to forget family and private interests when going to war (Amirejibi, 1918, p.2) "Sakartvelo" ("Georgia") believed, that the same spirit should be present in Georgian patriots as well.

The need for such self-sacrifice was driven by invasions of enemies from within or without. For example, "Sakartvelo" ("Georgia") informed about the case of Ossetians, who were eager to follow their national policy and were using the method of "taking away".

The newspaper wrote: "We do not know lands of Georgia more Georgian, than the place where Ossetians currently live." "It is possible that for uncultured and small nation it seems easy enough to bear the burden of getting involved in adventure" (Surguladze, 1918, p. 3).

News from Tskhinvali is a dangerous ghost for the future of Georgia, and it is necessary not only to eliminate it immediately, but also do it sharply as well not to allow the problem to be repeated" (Surguladze, 1918, p. 3).

So, as we can see, the problem of South Ossetia (their desire to take Georgian territory away) had been around since 1918 and the newspaper was in right position. The term "South Ossetia" is essentially incorrect. In modern reality, we must use the toponym Samachablo because of the area having been called so from ancient times.

Contributors to "Sakartvelo" ("Georgia"), however, viewed the army not as "evil", but as a guarantee of the state's strength and demanded its reform, which meant rebuilding of the army. The newspaper took into account all the nuances and dictated the right methods to the government.

First of all, newspaper was annoyed by the fact that Georgian army was still operating in Russian language. [8] As it can be seen, the newspaper claimed the event as "cynical".

"Sakartvelo" ("Georgia") opposed privileging anyone in the army on the basis of party affiliation and requested transferring of employees of Russian citizenship who were remaining there, to Georgian administration. "All non-Georgians should be discharged from the army immediately, and anyone who wishes to become one of us should immediately take an oath of allegiance!" (Surguladze, 1918, pp. 2-3) the newspaper was writing.

According to the newspaper, the introduction of Georgian form and official communication in Georgian language should make free eventually the army from Russian influence.

Having no qualified personnel was identified as the main problem of Georgian army by contributors of "Sakartvelo" ("Georgia"). They stated: "commanders, senior officers, and candidates must pass the exams and the program of exams should be thoroughly designed in

advance” (Unauthorized, 1918, p. 4). “Exams should be conducted in all over the army” (Unauthorized, 1918, p. 4).

The newspaper did not pay any attention for dissatisfied people, who discharged from the Army. This was because, in their opinion, the army should be cleaned from the incompetent people. This should happen in the same way: “All officers have to be dismissed and re-elected under pre-determined system, with only one commission being elected by the military and members of parliament” (Unauthorized, 1918, p. 4).

To eliminate the shortage of staff, by newspaper's opinion, “a military school needs to be created, which will have emergency departments - infantry, cavalry, engineering and others.”

Also, “officers should not be recruited directly, but should be recruited only for the period of 6 months, from anywhere, whether from school or somewhere else” (Sakartvelo, 1918, p. 4).

Contributors to newspaper “Sakartvelo” (“Georgia”) also were writing about the need for a military song: “It is not enough only to train a soldier; he must also experience something in addition to expect joy and pleasure in process of work and to be reliable for his homeland.” “Today the song does not fit to the word and the word to the song”, “Sakartvelo”'s contributors wrote.

On the issue of feeding of the army, the newspaper was stating: “In the newly created republic, there must be a fully-fledged and trusted quartermaster service effectively serving and satisfying the army on every side” (Deanozishvili, 1919, p. 4).

Finally, the position of the newspaper on the army was as follows: “In any case, military forces must be regular; properly organized military science equals tactics, demands” (Baal, 1919, p.2). “For the good of the country we must once and for all give up unorganized and undisciplined armed mass. That is more dangerous to our own state than to the enemy” (Baal, 1919, p.2).

So, during recruitment of troops, any kind of economizing was unjustified not to get the reverse effect and not to create anarchy instead of order.

Thus, as we can see, contributors of “Sakartvelo” (“Georgia”) offered the government a well-designed plan to reorganize the army.

It is also noteworthy that the newspaper also often published announcements for volunteers, such as announcements from Division II and division “White George”, etc. It was additional help to fill the army.

We can safely conclude that “Sakartvelo” (“Georgia”) had been paying proper attention to military matters.

It should also be noted that the material published in the newspaper represented mainly informative notes and chronicles, as for more extended publications, which were quite large, it is difficult to identify their attribution to any genre.

This does not mean, however, that publications in newspaper “Sakartvelo” (“Georgia”) newspaper were not properly worded. On the contrary, publications on military matters were based on logical reasoning and were understandable for the reader.

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