

**Chavchavadze, Zurab, *Literaturismtsodneoba, kritika, publitsistika, targmani* [Literary studies, criticism, social and political journalism, translation], Tbilisi, Mertsuli, 1993<sup>1</sup>**

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The book *Literary Studies, Criticism, Social and Political Journalism, Translation* collects articles and investigations written by prominent public figure and active member of Georgian National Liberation Movement Zurab Chavchavadze published in different magazines and newspapers between 1982-1989. The indicated period is an approximate one as some of the articles miss the concrete date of publication. Thus, they could be written before 1982 but not later than 1989 as Chavchavadze died in October 1989 on the 70<sup>th</sup> day of hospitalization after the road accident while travelling with famous dissidents Merab Kostava and Tamar Chkheidze. Merab Kostava died soon after the accident and Tamar Chkheidze was injured.

Zurab Chavchavadze was born in Tbilisi on February 5, 1953. After school graduation, he entered the faculty of chemistry of Tbilisi State University and in the third year he continued his studies at the faculty of chemistry of University of Jena. He maintained his diploma thesis in Lomonosov Moscow State University and began to work on problems of chemical kinetics and catalysis at the Institute of Physical and Organic chemistry of the National Academy of Sciences of Georgia. In 1981 he began to work as a scientific editor in the main editorial board of scientific-technical translation service and in 1984 worked in the main board of literary translation and literary relationships of the Writer's Union of Georgia. In 1986 he received a scientific degree of Candidate of Philological Sciences. In 1988 Chavchavadze became a member of board of directors of "Ilia Chavchavadze Society" and was converted into an active member of National Liberation Movement. On December 16, 2008 Zurab Chavchavadze was granted the title of National Hero postmortem by the fourth President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili.

<sup>1</sup> This review is a result of the research carried out within the project *Converging Horizons: Production, Mediation, Reception and Effects of Representations of Marginality*, funded by the National Agency of Research and Development of Chile PIA-ANID/ANILLOS SOC180045.

The main idea of the book is to represent the author's views on four main aspects of Georgian society at the end of the 80s: literary studies, criticism, social and political journalism and translation. As Chavchavadze put it, special attention should be paid to the issues of both political and intellectual nature, such as April 9, 1989 tragedy when soviet forces dispersed peaceful demonstration in the center of Tbilisi, resulting in 21 deaths and hundreds of injuries or the armed conflict on the ethnic basis in historically Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Samachablo. Interesting articles are dedicated to the investigation of the Georgian philological traditions and the author's contemporary development of literary studies and critics. Thus, Georgian political thought at the end of the XX century as well as the educational and scientific (including translational sphere) issues are the main agendas which this book intends to enter.

The main strengths of the articles collected in the volume is the multidisciplinary approach to the topics in investigation. Different issues are analyzed from distinct perspectives: literary, historical, cultural and analytical, inviting the reader to the complex scene of the Georgian history at the end of the XX century with special linkage of nation's cultural peculiarities with the concrete contexts of its development. Difficulties and controversies so apparent at the end of soviet Georgia are explained based on the arguments of nation's historical development and cultural peculiarities.

Zurab Chavchavadze identifies different directions which could be interesting for further researchers both of the XX century and the whole history of Georgia, such as:

#### **- The development of Georgian political thought**

Zurab Chavchavadze believed that the fall of the Soviet Union was just a matter of time, and that aggressive methods of defense, including suppressing peaceful demonstrations in blood or raiding them with special techniques couldn't stop the process. There were events in the history of the Georgian SSR that served to the awakening of the Georgian nation and preparing them for the fight for independence. The events of the March 1956 and the April 1978 were among them. There were young people who had a fighting spirit and wanted to cross the frontier of the Soviet Empire. However, the result was tragic. One of such events happened on November 17-

18, 1983 when a group of young people tried to hijack aircraft and trespass the frontier. For this reason, they took the crew and passengers hostage. According to the legislation of that period, the act was deemed to be a terrorist act and the convicts were sentenced to the highest penalty – execution. The Georgian public figures made a petition and asked the Georgian government to mercy the condemned. Niko and Zurab Chavchavadzes were among them. After some time, under the pressure of authority, most of the subscribers took back their petition. Niko and Zurab Chavchavadzes were among those few patriots who didn't change their decision and asked to mercy the convicts. Unfortunately, authority didn't change the court's decision and some hijackers and one religious figure were executed.

One of the most burning issues of that period in Georgia was the events of Abkhazia and Samegrelo. These two historical Georgian territories were annexed by Russia soon after Georgia declared its independence and till the present day are out of the control of Georgian government. Zurab Chavchavadze respected cultural values of different ethnic groups and didn't separate Ossetian, Abkhazian and Georgian problems from one another. The ethnic groups of Abkhazians and Ossetians were not exceptions whom Zurab Chavchavadze thought the state should take care of. Noteworthy was the fate of such small ethnic groups as were Kurds, Yazidis and others.

One of the most key subjects of the debates between the leaders of the Georgian dissident movement and later, National Liberation Movement was the repatriation of exiled Meskhetians. It is known that there were such emigres who kept the Georgian language in emigration and strived for coming back to the homeland. After the collapse of the Soviet Union one part of the leaders of the National Liberation Movement changed their mind concerning repatriation of the Meskhetians. Zurab Chavchavadze was among those small group of leaders who didn't change their mind and demanded to repatriate those Meskhetians who didn't lose Georgian identity.

**- Different historical epochs, especially related with the 70 years tragic and bloody history of Soviet Georgia**

April 9, 1989 is one of the most important dates in the contemporary history of Georgia. At present a wide range of people don't know that the events of the April 9 tragedy didn't last

one day. Everything started on April 4 when Ilia Chavchavadze Society organized a peaceful demonstration. Later it became clear that the goal of the events in April was to respond the events in Abkhazia. The demonstrators didn't have special slogans and demands such as: disintegration of Georgia from the Soviet Union, or recognition of democratic republic of Georgia. Although on April 4 the members of Ilia Chavchavadze Society organized a peaceful demonstration, it lasted only one day. On April 5 the demonstrators were led by other leaders of the National Liberation Movement. They radically changed demonstrators' demands. Besides, sit-down strike was converted into hunger strike. The April 9 Tragedy was a logical and fatal result of these demonstrations. Many people were killed, wounded and damaged. It is known that after these tragic events investigation commissions were formed in Russia and Georgia. The commissions were to investigate the fact of the attack against peaceful demonstrators, and particularly illegal methods which were applied. One of the most important questions the commission was to answer related to chemical gas that was used against people. According to the investigation, chemical characteristics of the gas that was mentioned in official documents didn't coincide with clinical and laboratorial symptoms of intoxicated demonstrators. Regarding the study of this issue, the contribution of Ilia Chavchavadze Society was huge. It tried to find out which chemical gas was used at the demonstration. Zurab Chavchavadze not only described and analyzed the April 9 Tragedy, but also investigated aftermath events and tried to expose secret information. With an abiding energy and scientific insistence chemist Zurab Chavchavadze defended public fairness and thus, did his civic duty before damaged demonstrators.

**- Cultural history with special emphasis on philological and translational characteristics**

One part of Zurab Chavchavadze's sphere of interest was philological analysis. Serving in the patriarchate of Georgia, as well as being the member of the editorial board inspired him to get interested in the humanities. Zurab Chavchavadze published scientific and popular articles, as well as critical letters concerning old and contemporary Georgian literature. His thesis was titled "Historical and Literary Analysis of the Georgian Hymnography of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century". He analyzed the lyrics of Davit Aghmashenebeli's (David the Builder) "Hymns of Repentance".

One of his most important activities that was the result of his inextinguishable energy and young enthusiasm was that he got interested in the personality of Grigol Peradze. While at present the life and activity of this great patriot, archimandrite Grigol Peradze are studied and well-known, few persons knew about this martyr in Georgia when Zurab Chavchavadze got interested in this issue. Zurab himself went to Warsaw and produced a short documentary film about Grigol Peradze's life and activity. Besides, he provided Rezo Tabukashvili with documentary materials when Zurab learnt that he worked on the same subject. His film would have been enough to arise public interest. However, he was not satisfied with it and published a translation of Henry Paprocki's letter in *The Literary Georgia*. This letter was about the candidate of theology of the Berlin University, doctor of philosophy of the University of Bonn, founder and the first head of the Georgian church in Paris, assistant-professor of philology of the University of Bonn, professor of petrology in the University of Warsaw and martyr, archimandrite Grigol Peradze. This translation was very important not only as a translation, but also for popularization because *The Literary Georgia* was very popular newspaper among people and had many readers, including translators and humanitarian specialists.

Based on the mentioned above, I would recommend this book to the large audience of professional researchers and readers interested in the history of Georgia, with special attention to the XX century studies without losing the perspective of understanding a wide variety of cultural issues such as the fascinating essay dedicated to the study of XII century Georgian hymnography.

**Debray, Laurence, *Mon roi déchu: Juan Carlos d'Espagne*, París, Stock, 2021, 270 pp.**

Por Bartholomé Benoît  
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Antes de empezar la reseña siguiente, cabe señalar unos puntos claves sobre la vida de la autora Debray Laurence. Hija de padre teórico marxista y de una madre historiadora venezolana cercana a Fidel Castro, ha sido durante casi una década, la historiadora y periodista a seguir en sus escritos sobre Juan Carlos I de España. Se dedica pues especialmente estos últimos años a la vida del rey emérito, al ofrecernos al principio en 2013, su primera biografía del rey, Juan Car-

los d'Espagne<sup>2</sup>, publicada en las ediciones Perrin. Con este libro aparecido el 6 de octubre de 2021 en Francia, la historiadora nos ofrece un punto de vista propio, al utilizar un « yo » narrativo e incluso, un enfoque sin pretensiones a la admiración que ella a profesado durante varios años. No obstante, el libro no es un estudio en profundidad, está escrito de forma novelesca, pero con un enfoque histórico y periodístico desde el año 2013 a nuestros días. La ausencia de fuentes en las notas a pie de página es comprensible; sin embargo, la obra se basa en el contexto histórico y político, las múltiples controversias por el que atravesaron el rey emérito y sus súbditos hasta su abdicación en 2014 y por fin, su "exilio" en Abu Dabi en los Emiratos Árabes Unidos en agosto de 2020.

La autora retoma las crisis políticas y económicas de España entre 2007 hasta la pandemia de COVID-19 de nuestros días pero cabe señalar que empieza su libro con una introducción dedicada a la vida del rey, a resumir su vida prestamente desde su nacimiento, pasando por el período de la Segunda República, el franquismo, la transición a la democracia, su reinado y por fin, su abdicación y abandono del país. Esta introducción conlleva detalles importantes, entre ellos, una cierta glorificación del rey durante la transición a la democracia, presentándolo como la figura que había evitado el 23 de febrero de 1981 el regreso a la dictadura con el putsch de Antonio de Tejero. También menciona las controversias múltiples del rey a partir de los años 2000, sobre todo, durante la crisis de las hipotecas suprime en 2007 y las repercusiones económicas en España y el paro, sus infidelidades con su "amiga" Corinna Zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, sus problemas fiscales, sus safaris en África en 2012, donde cazaba elefantes e, incluso, sus relaciones a veces complicadas con su familia y en particular con su hijo, el actual rey de España, Felipe VI.

Algo interesante que se nota en la obra de Laurence Debray, es que no deja de comparar a Don Juan con jefes de Estado extranjeros, en particular con François Mitterand. Además, no cesa de hacer comparaciones entre los franceses y los españoles, sin perder el hilo del testamento personal que nos ofrece y de su relación que puede tener con Juan Carlos I durante más de una década. Si hace esta comparación es porque su corazón oscila entre España donde vivía y Fran-

<sup>2</sup> Debray, Laurence, *Juan Carlos d'Espagne*, París, Perrin, 2013.