



**GUIDELINES FOR THE DEPORTATION OF „TURKISH-  
MESKHETIANS“ AND VARIOUS RELATED ISSUES**

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**Abstract**

This paper discusses the so-called plans to prepare the conditions for the deportation of the ‘Turkish–Meskhetians’ (aka Ahiska Turks), which are the measures taken by Russia via its colonial policy (both imperial and Soviet) to turn the majority of the population of Meskheta into Mankurts, and turn them into the haters of Georgia and Georgians, and the worst enemies of the Georgian state.

It briefly describes the situation of the population of the mentioned region during the period of the Ottoman domination, and then the situation created there during the establishment of Russia in the Caucasus and Georgia in particular. Russia’s victory in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1828–1829, resulted in the most lamentable situation – special measures taken to weaken the Georgian element in the Caucasus. Russia, which arrived posing as a ‘protector’, threw the Georgians into such a dire state that it prompted numerous rebellions. This situation did not change, even during the Soviet period. On the contrary, Georgians became even more depleted and was completely subordinated by the ambitious goals of the Soviet state in the region, the result of which was the deportation of the Georgian Muslim

population. The role of the Armenians in this situation and the attempt to appropriate the areas almost empty of Georgians from them are exposed.

It is mentioned that due to the efforts of the famous Russian human rights and law defender, Nobel Prize laureate, academician Andrei Sakharov, who was misled, the Meskhetians were baptised as Turks and the term ‘Turkish–Meskhetian’ was established for them. What followed was the proper response of Merab Kostava, the Georgian human rights defender, and the national hero of Georgia, explaining the true history and Georgian origin, and Andrei Sakharov admitting his mistake.

In the same article, the important opinions expressed by Merab Kostava on Andrei Sakharov’s book, ‘On the Country and the World’, are given on various prominent issues, which have relevance to the current state of the world.

**Keywords:** Turkish–Meskhetian; deportation; repatriation of Meskhetians; same-religion Russia; Armenian/Russian Intelligence; desire for revenge.

## **Introduction**

The imperial machine of Russia, and then the Soviet Union, led a step-by-step plan with its colonial measures for the deportation of the Turkish–Meskhetians, ending with the resettlement of 200,000 Meskhetians to Central Asia in November 1944. This effort included the relocation of a significant portion of Meskheti’s population to Ottoman after joining Russia and the settlement of Armenians from Anatolia in their place; the artificial alienation of the remaining Georgian population from Georgia, and invitation of Khoja-Moles from the Ottoman Empire first, and then from Azerbaijan during the Soviet period to become teachers and the spread of their anti-Georgian

activity, which resulted in the weakening of the Georgian influence and element in Georgia. During the struggle for the repatriation of the Meskhetians to their homeland, they were baptised as Turkish–Meskhetians by academician Andrei Sakharov, which was followed by human rights defender Merab Kostava’s appropriate response in revealing the true history of the Meskhetians and their true Georgian identity.

### **Method**

This paper is written based on the historicism and logic of the guiding principles of scientific methodology. The material is selected, grouped and analysed using proven methodology in science. The research methods used are analysis and synthesis, comparison and reconciliation.

### **Result**

The result of the research is the creation of an in-depth study on the deportation of the ‘Turkish–Meskhetian’ people and various critical issues related to it. Despite widespread interest in the central issue, it has not been studied fully at the level required by modern historical science. In this paper, historical literature and materials ordinarily seen only in informal publications are included in a scientific appraisal. A result of this reinterpretation is a relatively complete picture of the principles of the deportation of the ‘Turkish–Meskhetians’, in which the deplorable results of Ottoman imperial policy, and later Russia and Soviet Russia in Georgia, of referring to the Meskhetians as ‘Turkish–Meskhetians’. The role of academician Andrei Sakharov and his admission of error after the explanation given by Merab Kostava regarding this point of view is also presented. Appropriate conclusions are made from the point of view of a revised understanding of this issue and its scientific–practical significance is explained.

## Discussion

Strife committed by the Soviet state against the Georgian people is against the population of southwest Georgia, the years of deportation of ‘Turkish–Meskhetians’ in the 1940s, and the issues with repatriation. First of all, several anti-Georgian state efforts have been carried out in this region, which were aimed precisely at alienating the population of Meskheta and partially Adjara ASSR from their fellow Georgians, which led to harsh confrontation and hatred, after which the extreme Soviet punishment regime could justify this cruellest of anti-human action directed against the state of Georgia. The Soviet state then blamed everything on the Stalinist regime and its ‘cult of personality’. However, even after Stalin’s death, during Nikita Khrushchev’s premiership, a warmer approach to policy meant that almost all of the repressed peoples of the Soviet Union were pardoned, returned to their homelands and rehabilitated, except for the Muslim Georgians of Meskheta, who were forced to return to Georgia under the name specially created for them – ‘Turkish–Meskhetians’, and continue to fight for their basic right to return to their native land to this day. The underhand measures and repressive machinations of Soviet powers, or the ‘Empire of Evil’, were able to turn the majority of the Meskheta into Mankurts who were opposed to Georgia and Georgians and were the worst enemies of the Georgian state. Even today, its successor, the Russian state, is trying to use the Mankurts against Georgians. Therefore, it is extremely important to implement the study of the circumstances that created this situation, involving research, analysis and drawing the appropriate conclusions.

After the collapse of the United Kingdom of Georgia at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, its principalities within it did not prosper much. As a result of the fall of Constantinople, the Ottoman Empire gradually strengthened and expanded its territories, and in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it extended its suzerainty to Samtskhe-Saatabago as well. The yoke of the Ottoman conquerors turned out to be difficult for the Georgian principality of southwestern Georgia, and over the centuries it converted to Islam. This resulted in the migration of some of its

inhabitants to different regions of the former Kingdom of Georgia, and in part they got used to the rule of the Ottomans, although they repeatedly raised the flag of rebellion against them.

Upon the annexation of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti (1801), Russia broke all the agreements made with the separate parts of Georgia, its constituent principalities were deprived of their land, and the word 'Georgia' was removed from the political dictionary. Instead, Russia created the Tiflis and Kutaisi governorates as part of the Russian Empire. It laid the foundation for the policy of persecution of the Georgian language and Russification of Georgians. Indefatigable fighters for freedom and independence left Georgia, such as Alexander Batonishvili, the hero of Imereti King Solomon II, and it was Meskheti that sheltered and hosted them in Akhaltsikhe or Kotelia village (Rtskhiladze, 1977:10).

After the Russo–Ottoman war of 1828–1829, part of the former Samtskhe-Saatabago came under the ownership of Russia and there was hope for the rebirth of the national spirit in this Georgian region. During the Russo-Ottoman war, many Georgians joined the Russian army – some for positions and medals, some propelled by religious propaganda, and some even really believed that Paskevich was striving for return of Georgia's historical land.

Meskheti showed incredible heroism and dedication against the attackers. The towns of Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe were destroyed and engulfed in flames. Among those found killed in the ruins of the city were hundreds of women warriors dressed in the men's clothes (- Rtskhiladze, 1977:11; Lomsadze, 1975:170). After the defeat, thousands of Meskhetians who were forced from their homeland returned in their thousands and begged the Russian government: **“If only you resettle in our homeland and we will even accept Christianity.” And the Russian officials were still herding them to the Ottoman Empire** (Rtskhiladze, 1977:11). The servants of the will of the Russian Empire worked hard to expel a significant part of the Georgian element from this ancient historical part of southwestern Georgia, and resettled

30,000 Armenians from the Ottoman Empire instead of them, thereby significantly changing the demographics of the region to the detriment of the Georgians. Russia's goal was to prevent the strengthening of the Georgian element in the Caucasus because the Georgians, who had recently lost their sovereignty, would be threatening as they would have the most separatist tendencies. Therefore, Russia prevented the unification of Muslim and Christian Georgians as a nation. In fact, an incredible paradox was taking place – the rulers of the powerful Christian empire recruited mullahs from the inner provinces of Turkey, from Anatolia, for the Meskhetians, who further immersed them in Muslim fanaticism. **“What could not be done during the two-hundred-year rule of the Turks,” informs historian Shota Lomsadze, “unfortunately, now, in the 19th century, was completed after the accession”** (Rtskhiladze, 1977: 12; Lomsadze, 1975: 309).

As we can see, Russia inherited from Byzantium not only the title of ‘Messa and Rome’, but also its unfair and corrupt policy - towards Georgia. And when it was given the power and opportunity to do so, it began to destroy the Christians or the Muslim brothers who were entrusted to it with more determination and ruthlessness. However, it should be noted here that Russia turned out to get incomparably merciless and deceptive in this matter than its predecessor ‘the first or the second Rome’ because here the Byzantine sub-vision was added to the development and destruction of the power that the Russians assimilated from the Mongols, and its final annihilation strategy and tactics against those considered as opponents.

Falling into such a situation, the converted Georgians of Meskheti could no longer separate religion and nationality from one another. For them, Georgian became a term denoting the Christian religion. To define their identity, they created a more specific term, which was ‘Yerli’ – meaning ‘local’ – or ‘Binali’ – ‘inhabitant of this country’. However, their Tatariness was somewhat limited by certain local and historical customs – ‘Yearlism’. **For example, a ‘Yerli’ woman could not marry a Tatar or a Christian.** According to the understanding of those who are ‘Yerli’, they know that they are not Turks, Kurds,

Tarakama, or “**Georgian**”, Yerli – is a Georgian muslim, the true owner and inhabitant of this country (Lomsadze, 1977: 308; Berdzenishvili, 1941: 131).

The policy of separating Georgians from Russians seems completely inevitable after ‘same-religion’ Russia abolished the ancient church of Georgia in violation of all ecclesiastical and international laws. It destroyed the autocephaly of the Georgian church, physically attacked a number of its pastors, and stole its wealth, while turning the church itself into an instrument for the fulfilment of its corrupt - political goals. Suffice it to say that many of the Russian high priests and lay priests working in Georgia served as agents to the police, so even going to confession became a problem and people avoided it. In addition, Georgia was ruled by chauvinist Russian exarchs who did not know the Georgian language and persecuted it. All of the above “discredited the Christian Church in Georgia, and laid the foundation for the religious indiscriminateness and vulgar materialistic worldview that characterised Georgia during the 19th century and until the 1980s. This is what spiritual evil, along with other evils, the chauvinist imperial policy, born out of national egoism, could bring” (Tsagareli, 1912).

The “same-religion” Russia, which arrived as a ‘protector’, threw Georgians into such a dire situation that rebellion followed rebellion. Russia had violated all agreements with Georgia and De Bulle, and its - policy of weakening and eliminating the Georgian element on Georgian land led to the destruction of several Georgian villages and regions. Today, there are many cultivated Georgian villages, in Dmanisi region, for example. In the villages of Mashavera, Akngori, Vardisubani, Didi Dmanisi and elsewhere, where purely Georgian was spoken and children went to Georgian schools, the population was still called Armenian, even though several petitions were sent to the Soviet government of Georgia for the restoration of nationality. In the 1970s, some residents of these villages regained their Georgian surname in their passports, but Russia refused to return their nationality. The district leadership told them that “we will not return your nationality

**unless there is a written instruction from the government of Georgia.”**

The author of the request letter, outraged by such an approach to the issue, asks, “I wonder what we should attribute this violation of Soviet legislation to: criminal indifference, taking bribes from Armenian nationalists, or the invading Russians. A finger-wagging from the chauvinists who lead the imperialists with the classic formula – ‘divide et impera’” (Rtskhiladze, 1977:10).

This, together with the nature of the Georgian communists, was caused by the fact that Russia tried to maintain the charge of tension in this region and the opportunity to raise claims for the Armenian - government at any time, to the detriment of strengthening the Georgian government and the defeat of their own people once again. Unfortunately, this policy continues today and it is needed (Abkhazia, the so-called South Ossetia, etc.) to fix artificial foci against the integrity of Georgia, which is the usual continuation of the treacherous Bolshevik policy. This once again assures us that “the dog's tail can never be straightened, nor will cancer walk straight“...

This policy continued for a long time, during the entire period of Russian possession in Transcaucasia. Even in 1878, after Russia's annexation of the Batumi and Kars districts, the tried and tested policy continued, “by the violent acts of the Russian authorities and the creation of terrible conditions, the Muslim Georgian population was forced to move to the depths of Turkey again”.

**Armenians are still resettled in the places emptied of Georgians.**

The Georgian Muslims who remained in their homeland were again visited by Khoja-Moles, madrasahs were multiplied, and they were agitating a sentiment among them of “**you are Turks and have nothing to do with Georgians.**” Even later, during the Soviet period, Khoja-Moles were brought from Azerbaijan to Meskheta as teachers and tried to finally convert the Meskhetaians. The Meskhetaians who were confused by this policy and migrated to Central Asia produced a new, artificially created name, ‘Turkish–Meskhetaians’, and continued to brutally torture their souls in finally separating themselves from the



Georgians. This is a continuation of the Russian imperialist policy in modernised form, which takes the form of a hybrid war before Georgia and is completely written into the globalisation of the contemporary world. Everything is being done so that these people do not feel Georgian and let them be whoever they want to be...

Here is the entire content of the credible, real policy of “the same religion” Russia...

It was the grandiose policy of Russian tsarism, together with the Armenians’ insatiable appetite, which forced Ilia Chavchavadze to write ‘Kvata Ghagadi’, and Ivane Javakhishvili to dedicate an entire series to his exposés, both in the work mentioned and in the collection ‘Русский вестник’, published between 1903 and 1906 (especially the April, May and June 1903 issues) (Rtskhiladze, 1977:15; Русский... СПБ, 1903 (April, May, June)); and even the Russian author Velochko was filled with sympathy for the fate of the Caucasians, especially Georgians, during the period of Russian rule (Rtskhiladze, 1977; Величко, Кавказъ - Русское ..., 1904; Кариби, 1920).

It is known that on March 3, 1918, in the Treaty of Brest, Lenin ceded the Georgian territories to Turkey. This comprised Batumi, Artan and part of the Kars district of the Armenian territory (Rtskhiladze, 1977: 16. СИЗ., 1918), which did not belong to it at the time. Transcaucasia, which was still weak, could not repel Turkey with its own forces and asked the German government for help, so Germany sent the ‘Bavarian Division’ to Georgia. Together with the Georgians, they stopped the advance of the Turks and protected the Armenian population in the Borchalo Mazra from them (Rtskhiladze, 1977:17), while the Armenian army shamefully escaped from an enemy army one-fifth of its own size and left Kars (Rtskhiladze, 1977: 17; БСЭ., 1970: – Армянский вопрос..., 223-224).

The Georgian nation organised an exemplary send-off for the benevolent Germans, while the Armenian–Russian agency tried to harm the retreating Germans and thereby start a war between the Georgians and the Germans, but nothing came of it, because the

Dzegvi bridge was blown up when the German echelons had already left (Rtskhiladze, 1977: 17; Из истории ..., 1970). More than one crime committed by Armenians in Transcaucasia is known about, to say nothing of the year Brockhaus (Rtskhiladze, 1977: 17; Brochau..., 1966: 726) and the American encyclopaedia (Rtskhiladze, 1977: 17; The American..., 1954) proclaimed that the most ancient historical districts of Georgia, and especially the city of Batumi, are declared to be Armenian territory. However, in this regard, the latest edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia exceeds all expectations, and presents the 'Historical Map (1917-1921)' in the entry on Armenia, showing the Georgian land, historical Meskhети, beginning with south of the village of Sarpi, and the Black Sea coast located within the borders of today's Turkey finishing with Artaan-Oltis, is declared Armenian (Rtskhiladze, 1977: 18; БСЭ., 1970: 224).

Therefore, it is completely clear what policy was pursued by Soviet Union and what policy is being pursued by its successor, Russia, towards Georgia. No one in Russia has raised their voice about this yet. In Georgia, our colleague Simon Gogitidze tried to scientifically substantiate the response to this disgrace, and has received nothing but verbal support even from Georgian historians, yet his review on this issue remained unpublished. This is still the situation today, so in the dark Soviet past, who would raise their voice in defence of the Muslim Meskhetians deported on basis of the unclear and unjust accusations, and who were subsequently converted to 'Turkish-Meskhetians' through the efforts of the famous Russian defender of human rights, Nobel Prize laureate, and academician Andrei Sakharov, when he himself was misled by Odobashev-Khozrevanidze, one of the leaders of 'Turkish-Meskhetians'.

This was followed by the reply of Merab Kostava, the national hero of Georgia, in which the problem was characterised as: "Thousands of Crimean Tatars and 'Turkish-Meskhetians' are in prison... - Who are these 'Turkish-Meskhetians'? Where did they come from in Central Asia, Azerbaijan, and North Caucasus? Where did this made-up word come from?" (Kostava, 1977: 93-107) asks the author, and

presents the real history of the Meskhetians, their great merit to the Georgian state, and finally, finally adds heartbroken: “the millstone must have turned over the heads of these people, to be called Turks” - (Kostava, 1977: 96). Then he continues with the stories of the many troubles that befell this region during the Ottoman domination, including the events created after the Russian–Ottoman war of 1828–1829 in the Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki regions, which he describes as “The millstone turned over the heads of these people. Georgia itself being tied, hand and foot, was no longer able to re-commune with the core of its own culture and that of the injured fellows. As soon as it was rejoined, the Great Russian chauvinism stifled the Georgian culture in every possible way, forbade the native language in schools, and spread its filthy hands in the soul of Georgia, taking its own decisions on the issues vital for Georgia. The autocephaly the pillar of the Georgian nation and the support of the Georgian Church, was - taken away, thus shaking the pillar of national strength. It was with the Meskhetians that the Russians’ treacherous policy began, which aimed and still aims at the assimilation of Georgia” (Kostava, 1977:96).

Regarding the origin of the term ‘Turkish–Meskhetians’, Kostava discusses its various aspects, finally making the completely expected and correct conclusion that “when they say Meskhetian, it is nothing to do with Turks, and on the contrary, it is nonsense to use these words together. Meskhetian is an ancient Georgian tribe, currently expelled from its own land and fighting selflessly to return to their native land, that is why these words need to be used correctly in any context” (Kostava, 1977:100). Kostava then discusses national oppression and its causes in the Russian Empire, and after analysing and understanding its many aspects, compares it with ‘the West’.

“The Westerner is more rationalist in nature, the function of the mind in the West always comes before the heart. The West brings with it a huge culture of speculative philosophy...a kind of coldness of Anglo-Saxon pragmatism. The Slav, on the other hand, cannot handle the chaos of emotions. The primacy of feelings is obvious with him...a

Western European is more cosmopolitan than a Russian” (Kostava, 1977:105-106).

Here however, experience and common historical practice dictate that the Western European, and one might say, the Westerner in general, is a cosmopolitan pragmatist who never forgets oneself; whereas, a Russian claims and uses cosmopolitanism to achieve his own goals. That is why his worldview is primitive and fake – in short, it is limited to his level and anything else is incomprehensible to him, because he cannot imagine any primacy other than his own interests.

The West applies thousand types of “makeup” to its face and negative aspirations in the regions considered to be in the sphere of its interests and exploitation. Its goals are not much different from Russia’s naked expansionism and Great Russian chauvinism. Therefore, the West is more cunning and dangerous than Russia, because it is disguised by the shadow of benevolence and charity. That is why it is much more difficult to expose and fight it. In addition, this is where the famous old method comes in: ‘there is time to scatter stones and time to collect’, which is successfully used in modern times, and with such hypocrisy, they try to paint the rest of the world as ungrateful, to whom no one should doubt the justice of the reckoning.

Finally, Merab Kostava writes about the multifaceted nature of the national feeling and says: “Any political extremism is the result of a combination of unsophisticated emotions and low, practical utilitarian thinking”, from which it is possible to get rid of with “the fire of conscience set in the hearts of men...better the fire of a national shame to rouse the citadel of national messianism and totalitarianism from within, rather than be mercilessly eroded by some other, cruder force from outside. Then the world revenge will be terrible” (Kostava, 1977: 106–107), says the national hero, and suddenly the modern one, today’s sad reality permeated with mutual hostility and the desire for revenge will appear before our eyes. Yes, it is only one small aspect of the highly sensitive pulse feeding the world’s global injustices.

## Conclusion

Researching the aspects discussed in the work on the deportation of 'Turkish-Meskhetians' is an interesting and future-oriented activity, which once again clearly shows us that it does not bode well for the future of nations that have been under the yoke of imperial states for a significant period of time. On the contrary, even for the ancient nations with historical memory, which are aiming for normal development in the future, colonial rule creates dangerous relapses, and it can become the biggest problem for the prospective statehood of this nation. Therefore, its scientific study and drawing appropriate conclusions is an important task for a country full of hope for the future.

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