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## Leaders of Post-Soviet Georgian Nationalism: The National Movement on the Road to Independence

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**Annotation:** The Georgian people were not used to Soviet Russia conquering their country, and they began fighting for independence the day the Soviets arrived. Throughout the period 1921-1992, forces in Georgia and abroad inevitably fought in the guise of Georgians using a variety of methods, including violent and intellectual warfare.

**Keywords:** Nationalism, Leaders, Independence.

Throughout the period 1921-1992, forces in Georgia and abroad inevitably fought in the guise of Georgians using a variety of methods, including violent and intellectual warfare.

Armed demonstrations are known to have typified the twentieth century's 1920s, and the fight in the form of cultural, national ideology becomes more obvious from the 1930s onwards. In this aspect, Georgian emigration is very active. The Georgians' battle took many forms during the years indicated, but the goal remained the same: freedom.

The phenomenon of independence and the struggle for freedom have, of course, always been part of Georgian reality; however, according to the challenges of the time, attitudes and methods of struggle changed, but the goal remained the same: an independent, free Georgia.

Throughout the Soviet Union's 70-year history, not only the states under its dominion, but also distinct social strata and social groups had their own attitudes regarding the Soviet regime. It revealed itself in the opposition of all perception and fight methods and approaches.

An armed insurrection or a national ideology developed by a cultural and political elite that reached out to the general populace through proclamations, the print media, and illegal literature affected the struggle for freedom in several situations.

Dissident movements arose in the 1970s in the, including dissident movements in the Georgian SSR. In Georgia, the Helsinki Union, a human rights organization, was founded in 1974. The Georgian dissident movement was notable for focusing not only on the defense of human rights but also on the popularization of the concept of Georgian independence. The distribution of illicit anti-Soviet material became the most visible face of Georgia's dissident fight. This case was handled by Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Merab Kostava, and the results were published in the 1970s in the journals *Sakartvelos Moambe* and *Golden Fleece*. Gamsakhurdia and Kostava were detained for dissident actions in 1977. Georgian dissidents also attempted to persuade Western countries to vote in favor of the Soviet government. Victor Rtskhiladze, Avtandil Imnadze, and Valentina Failodze were detained for their involvement in similar operations.

A large-scale demonstration was staged in 1978 to defend the Georgian language's constitutional status. Dissidents also actively emphasized the problems of environmental protection and historical monument protection in the 1970s. In the 1970s, dissidents objected to the Metekhi Church being



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converted into a youth theater, while Zviad Gamsakhurdia actively urged the closure of the Soviet military training site near the Davitgareja monastery complex.

The 200th anniversary of Georgievsky's treatise was marked by open protests by dissidents in 1983. The Caucasus Mountain Railway project was approved by the Politburo in May 1984. The railway was supposed to be the quickest way to connect Moscow and Tbilisi. It required 11 tunnels, 15 corridors, and 85 bridges to cross the Caucasus Mountains. The railway's final endpoint was Transcaucasia. Develop the economies of the former Soviet republics and, if necessary, make it easier for Russian soldiers to enter the region. Georgian intellectuals, protectors of historical and cultural monuments, and environmentalists all spoke out against the initiative. They claim that the train will depopulate Georgian mountain villages, harm Georgia's environment, and poison Tbilisi's water supply. The Georgian Communist Party was forced to cancel the initiative after a six-month campaign protest.

In the mid-1980s, two forms of nationalism emerged. The ruling echelons of the Communist Party of the Georgian SSR backed one, while street populist nationalism backed the other. Economic independence, self-government, cultural rights, and the preservation of historical sites were among the demands of the opposition. The Communist Party's local leadership, led by Jumber Patiashvili, supported laws that extended citizens' rights to vote on bills and opposed Gorbachev-initiated constitutional reforms that limited the Georgian SSR's ability to leave the USSR. Patiashvili, on the other hand, was unable to adapt rapidly to the changing environment due to his conservative approach. Publicity Following the news, new informal groups arose.

Tbilisi State University created the University Press Club in February 1988. Only four of the 38 rallies and demonstrations held in 1988 were officially sanctioned. Since the same year, there have been demonstrations of nationalism directed at Georgia's ethnic minorities. The Communist Party attempted to use fear to control the situation. From March, limited demonstrations were permitted, and the Tbilisi Hippodrome was set aside for gatherings in September. The Ilia Chavchavadze Society was created in October 1988 by Zurab Chavchavadze and Merab Kostava. After the Communist Party, it was the first political group. The Supreme Soviet of the Georgian SSR rejected Gorbachev's constitutional revisions in November. Mukhran Matchavariani, a nationalist, was elected chairman of the Writers' Union of the Georgian SSR by the Communist Party.

The Communist Party attempted to appeal to patriotism. He published the "Georgianization" schedule of state and cultural institutions in November 1988. A panel was established in January 1989 to rehabilitate persons who had been repressed under the Stalinist terror. The program for the protection of Georgian historical sites was published in February 1989. Topics such as the Soviet annexation of 1921, the national rebellion of 1924, the corruption of the 1960s, and other issues were discussed in the party press. The Communist Party's strategy allowed the opposition to be divided into moderate intellectuals and radical dissidents who were content with change. Nevertheless, the Communist Party lost control of the moderate groups as well.

Instead of the party's servile Irakli Abashidze, Akaki Bakradze, a lifelong critic of the Soviet leadership, was elected chairman of the Rustaveli Society, which called on the people for independence, pluralism, the establishment of private property, and the formation of political parties. Dissidents protested the 68th anniversary of the Soviet annexation of Poland in 1921 in February 1989. The protest's organizers were detained. The Communist Party's reputation suffered as a result of the dispersal of these and previous demonstrations. The Communist Party was finally disgraced in March when ballot papers from the People's Assembly were falsified.

On April 9, 1989, a watershed moment occurred, putting an end to the Communist Party's already shaky credibility and strengthening the push for independence. Military forces dispersed a peaceful march and hunger strike in Tbilisi's Rustaveli Avenue on April 9, killing 21 people and injuring 427 others. The deadly repression of the April 9 demonstration shattered relations between Georgian



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moderate organizations and Gorbachev's perestroika, reminding everyone that the Soviet Union was a police state. Since April 9, no one has been held accountable. The government's inactivity sparked a worldwide desire for independence. After April 9, demands for political independence, free elections, and the withdrawal of the Red Army took precedence.

Political parties were founded under the leadership of Gamsakhurdia, Kostava, Chavchavadze, and Giorgi Chanturia, the leaders of the April rallies. Negotiations for free and democratic elections began with the Communist Party. The progressive breakdown of the Georgian Communist Party and the waning of its dominance, the development of tensions and confrontations between opposition parties, and the emergence of the first signs of inter-ethnic conflict marked the period from April 1989 to October 1990.

Givi Gumbaridze, who had been appointed to replace Patiashvili, attempted to reorganize the Georgian Communist Party on April 14, 1989. In August, the party announced the commencement of a state program in Georgian. It was declared property, and the Georgian SSR was given complete responsibility over the republic's borders and administrative units. Private property and enterprise were legalized, as were non-governmental groups. The Georgian Federation of Journalists severed links with a higher union body, founded separately in February 1990, and the separation of Georgian groups from union organizations began. The Georgian Football Federation, a distinct trade union from the trade unions, was dissolved by the Komsomol in March 1990.

Georgia's Supreme Council elections were slated for March 1990. A conference of Georgian dissident movements was held in the same month, at which dissident organizations deliberated whether or not to run in the elections. Between the two existing positions: moderate and radical, the radical position, which urged an electoral boycott, won. Elections have been postponed until later in the year. There was a rift in the radical opposition between Zviad Gamsakhurdia's supporters and Giorgi Chanturia's supporters in April, which was followed by shootings. Gamsakhurdia's leadership formed the Round Table - Free Georgia political bloc, which committed to run in the upcoming official elections. He was boycotted by the "irreconcilable" parties of Chanturia, Irakli Tsereteli, and others.

De facto annexation was officially declared in February 1921. Despite internal party changes, the opposition was the driving force behind the national movement. In the spring of 1990, the public destruction of Soviet monuments began. The memorial to Sergo Orjonikidze was demolished for the first time in Saburtalo. The Supreme Council adopted laws on alternative military conscription, economic sovereignty, and the ability to create political parties in June 1990, and established direct state links with the Baltic countries. The Georgian Communist Party criticised Lithuania's economic blockade. Gumbaridze's attempt to nationalize the party was thwarted by the Soviet Union. He was unable to break his ties with the Soviet Communist Party and remained a hidden Soviet Union adherent.

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