

Nino Chikovani

Heroes and Anti-heroes in the Process of the Construction of "New Memory" in Georgia¹

Abstract

The politics of *perestroika* and *glasnost* that started in the Soviet Union in 1985 was followed by the revision of the past – one of the most important markers of collective identity. Construction of a “new past” as the source of legitimizing the new future started. Heroes of the Soviet era were rapidly turned into antiheroes. The process of creation of new heroes was launched, some of them “returned” from the past while others were born from the new reality.

The paper aims to examine the process of construction of the image of a new hero in the 1980-1990s. This is one of the first attempts to analyse the issue through the lens of collective memory. Maurice Halbwachs' theory of collective memory, Jan Assmann's classification of communicative and cultural memory, and Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* form theoretical basis of the study. Formation/transformation of the images of heroes and antiheroes are analysed in the context of characteristics identified by Thomas Carlyle and Max Weber. The research is based on the analysis of printed and electronic media sources, documentary video materials, literary texts and contemporaries' memories, that are reflected through the methods of historical research, qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis.

Construction of the image of Merab Kostava as a new national hero was based on the Georgian cultural patterns. These patterns were used for ascribing meaning to the tragedy of April 9, to the death of Merab Kostava, and for the construction of the narrative of heroism. The traumatic atmosphere created by the tragedy of April 9 and natural disasters of the subsequent period, as well as necessity to cope with them contributed to the formation of the image of a new national hero. Self-identification with this image offered the possibility of providing positive answers to the most important questions related to national identity, offered examples of dignity and courage and reinforced the legitimacy of national aspirations.

The burial of Merab Kostava in the Mtatsminda Pantheon ensured the national dimension for the image of the hero and strengthened the significance of Mtatsminda as a pillar of the collective memory of Georgians. This image fully corresponded to the historically formed perception of a hero in the Georgian imagination; this enabled to create a mental bridge between the present and the past and ensure historical continuity – one of the key foundations for collective memory and national identity.

Keywords: *hero-antihero; collective memory; sites of memory; transformation.*

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Introduction

In the second half of the 1980s, the policy of *perestroika* was declared in the Soviet Union. The Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic met this policy with a clearly defined cultural identity and, in Steven Jones's words, "with a Soviet past firmly embedded in the present" (Jones, 2013, p. 10). The so-called *glasnost* significantly weakened restrictions imposed by the Soviet system and made it possible to begin discussing previously taboo issues of the past. Recent history appeared in the center of attention for various groups of the society. Facts, events, and names that were strictly forbidden to mention during the Soviet period came to the forefront. Eric Foner notes that in periods of radical changes and transition to a new system, there comes a moment when "a new future requires a new past" (Foner, 2002, p. 77). Spontaneously, and sometimes quite consciously, reconsideration of the past – one of the most important foundations of collective identity – started, as well as the construction of a "new past" that was to become a source of legitimation for the new future. Together with the significant events, specific characters with whom these events were associated also gained special importance.

The paper aims to study the process of forming new heroes and anti-heroes in Georgia during the last years of the Soviet Union and the first years of independence, i.e. during the transition from a collapsing Soviet system to a new, still vague reality. The main part of the paper deals with the birth of a new hero.

"National heroes are a recognized cornerstone of the symbolic repertoire of nationalism; nationalism requires a touchstone of virtue and heroism, to guide and give meaning to the tasks of regeneration. Heroes provide models of virtuous conduct, their deeds of valor inspire faith and courage in their oppressed and decadent descendants (Todorova, 2009, p. XI-XII). Heroes, their deeds and sacrifices embody and legitimize the values, ideals, and aspirations of a social group (Todorova, 2009, p. 478).

According to Geert Hofstede's concise definition, "heroes are living and deceased, real or imaginary people whose characteristics are valued in a given culture and considered worthy of emulation" (Hofstede, 2011, p. 16). Their image is formed within the framework of cultural patterns – perceptions existing in a specific culture. Aleida Assmann defines cultural patterns as images deeply rooted in a culture through which members of a specific community see, perceive, evaluate, and give meaning to situations, experiences, and events. Cultural patterns unconsciously underlie the perception of events, give them form, assign meaning, and charge them with emotion (Assmann A., 2015, p. 44). Images of heroes are social and cultural constructs, their significance changes according to historical, political, and socio-cultural context.

At the end of the 1980s, along with the reconsideration of the past, Soviet heroes quickly turned into anti-heroes. The process of creating new heroes started; some of them "returned" back from the past, while others were born from the new reality. According to our hypothesis, the emergence of the former was conditioned by the rise of the national movement and hope for a new future, while the formation of the latter was primarily determined by the traumatic environment created after April 9, 1989, and the need to cope with it.

Events that developed in the last two decades of the 20th century occupy a special place in all more or less important works of Georgian and foreign researchers dedicated to the history of post-Soviet

Georgia, Georgian nationalism, and issues of transition (Mcheldize, 1999; Shvelidze, 2008; Suny, 1994; Jones, 2013). However, they are not scrutinized through the lens of the theory of collective memory. Only the first steps are being taken in terms of the analysis of formation/transformation of heroes and anti-heroes in this process. The presented work is one of the such steps.

The relevance of the research topic is determined by several aspects:

- Heroes/anti-heroes are the cornerstones of collective memory; their creation and reevaluation is a constant process; sometimes it starts during the lifetime of heroes, though not ends with their death; they continue to influence society and its collective memory in the future as well. Occasionally, heroes' names become subjects of political manipulation, and groups with mutually exclusive goals and ideologies try to "appropriate" them. Therefore, it is important to study the initial stage of hero formation, the meanings embedded in their image, and their transformation.
- The period under research has not yet passed beyond the temporal horizon of communicative memory; some heroes or anti-heroes of that time are still alive today, and they strive to establish their place among the former; for this, they try to engage in the memory formation process through means available to them. Memories of different, often opposing groups sharply contradict each other regarding the meanings assigned to the main characters of events. They try to establish a version of the past that will give them the opportunity to maintain or restore the positive image of their own group. To study communicative memory is an urgent matter because this memory is relatively quickly passing, and without its analysis, the process of formation of hero/anti-hero will remain unclear.

Theoretical framework and research methods

Theory of collective memory forms the theoretical foundation of the research. According to its founder Maurice Halbwachs, memory is a social phenomenon formed through the interaction between members of a society/its constituent groups. A social group defines its identity through the image of a shared past, which plays an important role along with the other markers of identity. It is this group that offers individuals a framework that determines what and how will be remembered or forgotten (Halbwachs, 1992).

Having developed Halbwachs's concept, Jan Assmann defined memory as "the faculty that allows us to construe an image or a narrative of the past and, by the same process, to develop an image and a narrative of ourselves" (Assmann J., *Memory and Culture*, 2015, p. 328). He distinguished between two types of collective memory - communicative and cultural memory, which differ in forms of remembrance and duration (Assmann J., *Memory and Culture*, 2015, p. 332). Communicative memory is an everyday form of collective memory that encompasses all its diversity. It is characterized by thematic instability and disorganization (Assmann J., *Collective Memory and Cultural Identity*, 1995, p. 126-127). Communicative memory exists only in daily interactions, it is not institutionalized, and therefore its main characteristic is a short time horizon – approximately 80-100 years, that is three to four generations (Assmann J., *Memory and Culture*, 2015, p. 333). Over time, the number of direct

carriers of this memory decreases; many facts which are preserved in communicative memory may be forgotten, but particularly significant occurrences will shift into cultural memory. "The concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose "cultivation" serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image" (Assmann J., *Collective Memory and Cultural Identity*, 1995, p. 132). Cultural memory is formalized and stabilized by forms of material symbolization; it is distributed and circulated by institutions of learning, transmission, and interpretation; implemented by specialists; celebrated on special occasions (Assmann J., *Memory and Culture*, 2015, p. 332).

Formation of heroes/anti-heroes is discussed within Pierre Nora's concept of realms of memory (Nora, 1989). The institutionalization of heroes as realms of memory plays an important role in forming collective memory. Establishment of these realms of memory, as well as the attitude of different social groups towards them reflects the transformation of collective memory, especially during crucial moments in the country's history.

I analyze the development of images of heroes/anti-heroes through the characteristics identified by Thomas Carlyle and Max Weber. Thomas Carlyle who dedicated a special work to heroes and the role of heroism in history, believed that heroes - Great Men - are "modelers, patterns, in a wide sense creators of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain" (Carlyle, 2013, p. 21). Among the six types of hero identified by Carlyle, we were interested in the sixth, "the most important of Great Man," who leads others and combines all forms of heroism; this is, as Carlyle mentions, "commander over men," a mentor, teacher, bearer of all earthly and spiritual virtues, "able-man," "to whose will our wills are to be subordinated" (Carlyle, 2013, p. 162). Max Weber introduced the definition of charisma – "a certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities." A charismatic person is personally bestowed and directly connected to heroism and other leadership qualities. A charisma bearer is considered a leader of people personally or by vocation; people obey them not because of morals and rules, but because they believe in the leader (Weber, 1994, p. 14-15).

When studying the role of hero in the formation of collective memory, our interest is focused on the fact as a subjective phenomenon. As P. Sztompka mentions, meanings are not invented by people but rather drew from the surrounding culture; "there is always a preexisting pool of available meanings encoded in the shared culture of a given society," and existing meanings are applied to the fact or event (Sztompka, 2004, p. 165). In this way, the fact is constructed as a cultural phenomenon and becomes a part of the collective memory.

The work is based on the sources that allow us to observe the process of reevaluation of old heroes and formation of new ones during the last years of the Soviet Union and the initial period of independence, among them: print and electronic mass media which influence the formation of collective perceptions: print media was especially important in the 1990s, accordingly, it reflects the initial stage of constructing the image of hero, while electronic media gives us an idea of the stability or fragility of these images, their periodic revival, as well as manipulation of these images for legitimizing contemporary tasks. Another group of sources consists of documentary films and videos, which clearly represent the perceptions and attitudes of different groups, authors' interpretations, and changing

context. Photographs should be also mentioned: this is a kind of "visual memory," [...] through which "we remember our own or others' lives, and the surrounding environment" (Tsubakhashvili, 2018, p. 5). Several literary texts and memoirs of contemporaries were analyzed: they reflect both the images of heroes and the moods and emotions that existed at the time of their creation, which play an important role in the formation of collective memory. Interesting information is contained in interviews recorded in different forms: they allow us to track the formation of the images of heroes and their transformation over time.

I used the historical research method, which allowed to reconstruct the social and political context of the research period. For studying various types of texts mentioned above, the qualitative content analysis method was applied, which focuses on the content of the text and represents a means of accessing the social reality constructed by the text (Tsuladze, 2020, p. 27). Through discourse analysis, it is possible to focus on the language used to describe the facts or characters in different contexts, as well as how meanings were formed through language (Rau, 2018, p. 298). Different research methods allowed us to keep an eye on the attitudes toward national heroes, the transformation of their images over time, as well as when and why they were created, and what place do they hold in the collective memory.

Results and Discussion

In the late 1980s, Georgian society, oriented towards a new, independent future, was occupied with distancing itself from the Soviet past, re-evaluating Soviet heroes, and removing them from their pedestals. This process began with an unusual and exceptional fact for Georgian culture - the explosion of the grave of Georgian Bolshevik revolutionary and Soviet functionary Philippe Makharadze (1868-1941) in Mtatsminda Pantheon in 1987. That time the Georgian Soviet Republic was celebrating 150th anniversary of Ilia Chavchavadze. Philippe Makharadze, whose name, along with other Social Democrats, was associated with the murder of Ilia Chavchavadze (1907), had been resting in the Pantheon just a few meters away from Ilia since 1941. Although the authorities restored the grave the next day, this fact turned out to be a symptom of subsequent developments. This was a starting point of the process named as *active forgetting* by Aleida Assmann (Assmann A., 2010, p. 97), and *settling accounts with the past* by Pierre Nora (Hopa, 2005, p. 391). It implies deliberate rejection, erasure, and destruction of the image of the past. Later, after the tragedy of April 9, 1989, the authorities relocated the remains of famous Bolsheviks – Silibistro Todria, Philippe Makharadze and Mikha Tskhakaia – from Mtatsminda Pantheon to the common grave of revolutionaries near Khudadov Park, later on, relatives transferred their remains to different cemeteries (Newspaper "24 Hours", 2010).

Since the late 1980s, monuments of Soviet leaders who fought for establishing and strengthening the Soviet rule were removed from the cities and towns of Georgia. They represented symbols of the Soviet system and were intended to establish them as heroes in the collective memory. Some of these monuments were demolished publicly and ceremoniously, while others quietly disappeared from squares and parks. Monuments are important sites of memory that transmit historical memory and serve to preserve the past in the present (Carrier, 2000, p. 15). Changing toponyms was one more manifestation of active forgetting: historical names were restored, or names of famous Georgians and

historical figures were given to cities and villages, streets, squares, and parks that bore the names of revolutionaries and Communist Party leaders. "Naming is a powerful vehicle for promoting identification with the past. Renaming represents a way of creating new connections between the past and the present (Alderman, 2008, p. 195).

Old heroes were replaced by new ones. Previously forbidden names quickly returned to collective memory – first and foremost, these were fighters against the Soviet power: the Junkers who died fighting against the Russian Red Army near Tbilisi in 1921; the student of Tbilisi University Maro Makashvili who went to the front as a nurse; one of the leaders of the 1924 anti-Soviet uprising Kaikhosro (Kakutsa) Cholokashvili, etc.

April 9, 1989, meaning of which was shaped based on the Georgian cultural patterns, became a paradigmatic event in the recent history of Georgia. It determined future development of the country as well as the vision of the past. The formation of the narrative of April 9 as a cultural trauma started on the very day of the tragedy – initially on the emotional level (handwritten poems on the white sheets pasted on plane trees of Rustaveli Avenue, songs, a sea of tulips and daffodils in front of the then Palace of Government, inscriptions on building walls, photos of the deceased and their collective mourning), and later on through legal, aesthetic, media and scientific means of institutionalization of collective trauma (Sztompka, 2004, p. 166). Thus, April 9 turned out to be the "seismic historical occurrence" that "turned social reality upside down" (Assmann A., 2015, p. 53) and determined shared memory and identity for a long time.

Aleida Assmann talks about the *resonance* of paradigmatic events. This concept refers to the interplay of occurrences that take place before and after the main happening, which consciously or unconsciously guide and form the latter (Assmann A., 2015, p. 45). The resonance of April 9 turned out to be strong and long-lasting. It called forth unmourned traumas from repressed memory of the past, strengthened interest in previously taboo topics, determined attitudes not only towards old heroes but also created a framework for the formation of new ones.

About ten days after the tragedy on Rustaveli Avenue, on April 19, a landslide in Upper Adjara, village Tsablana, completely engulfed the village and killed twenty-three people. Hundreds of families were left homeless and more than a thousand were forced to relocate to other regions of Georgia (Tragedy in Khulo, 1989; Gorgiladze, 1989). A few days later, on April 29, 1991, a strong earthquake occurred in Racha, which, along with accompanying landslides, caused great destruction and casualties in Racha itself, Imereti and Shida Kartli (The Strongest Earthquakes in Georgia, 2016; The Strongest 7 Magnitude Earthquake in Georgian History Occurred in Racha, Near the City of Ambrolauri, 2019).

As researchers note, although such catastrophes are natural phenomena, their perception is mediated by cultural imagination of the society (Furedi, 2007, p. 484, 487). Culture determines how a catastrophe will be interpreted and socially constructed (Webb, 2018, p. 109-110). In other circumstances, the above-mentioned natural catastrophes would have been understood as natural events with severe consequences, especially since natural disasters are not uncommon in Georgia. However, the traumatic context of April 9 led to their connection with the country's tragic history and national identity. If the past was imagined as a history of constant confrontation with enemies, in the case of natural disasters,

nature and fate were considered the adversary. The meaning of natural disasters was defined based on the same cultural patterns that formed the basis for understanding the April 9 tragedy – self-sacrifice for the homeland, unity, trampling down death by death, and resurrection. Like those who were killed, wounded or poisoned on April 9, the victims of avalanches and landslides were also referred to as martyrs. Here, the resonance of April 9 was clearly evident.

In such circumstances, on October 13, 1989, Merab Kostava, a distinguished leader of the national liberation movement, died in a car accident. This fact proved sudden, unexpected, unbelievable, and shocking for Georgian society traumatized by April 9. The idea immediately emerged that the car accident was not accidental and was orchestrated by security services. "It was not a calf that ran over Merab on the road, it was the empire!.." (Mgvdiashvili, 2019), wrote a poet in 1990. These words clearly express the belief that the communist government dealt with Merab Kostava.

The expression of suddenness, confusion, uncertainty, and tragedy was evident in Merab Kostava's funeral services at his home on Rustaveli Avenue, where countless people gathered for several days. On the initiative of representatives from various political unions and public organizations of the national movement, it was decided to bury him in Mtatsminda Pantheon, which met no resistance from the Soviet political leadership of Georgia; after the April 9 tragedy, they were particularly careful to avoid escalating situation. Giorgi Maisuradze considers that Merab Kostava's burial on Mtatsminda was recognition of the national movement as the dominant political force in Georgia (Maisuradze, 2011, p. 102).

During the mourning process, cultural patterns gradually emerged through which the tragic fact was understood and the heroic narrative was constructed. These were the same patterns that the narratives of April 9 and natural disasters were based on. As A. Assmann notes, cultural patterns are always open to new uses, new contexts and meanings (Assmann A., 2015, p. 60).

The process of forming the hero's image begins with Merab Kostava's funeral ceremony. On October 21, his body was transferred to Sioni Cathedral, where Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II held a funeral service "in memory of the soul of Merab Kostava, martyred for the homeland" (Bakhtadze, 1992, p. 11). From Sioni, men dressed in traditional "chokha" carried the coffin adorned with the flag of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, while mourners in the procession carried lowered flags. A black horse with a black "nabadi" (felt blanket) accompanied Merab Kostava to Mtatsminda. After a brief prayer at the Pantheon, a mourning rally was held. The funeral was crowned by the Svan "Zari" (funeral hymn), and songs "Georgian, Take Up Your Sword" and "Shavlego" (Bakhtadze, 1992, p. 11), which was constantly played during street processions in 1988-89 as a symbol of uncompromising struggle against the enemy, and afterward became long associated with Merab Kostava's image.

The cultural patterns are clearly evident in the farewell speeches delivered at the mourning rally:

- a) Spiritual closeness to ancestors and continuation of their work: "Iveria² awakened by you is beside you, brother. You have established yourself next to great Ilia" (Zviad Gamsakhurdia) (Bakhtadze, 1992, p. 13); "Another sacred grave appeared on Mtatsminda next to Ilia and

² A name of the ancient Georgian kingdom, often denoting the whole Georgia.

Dimitri Kipiani, "In future [...] another shadow will step forward from Mtatsminda's to address us daily [...] with these precious and familiar words: 'Forever and everywhere, Georgia, I am with you!'" (Temur Koridze, member of Georgian Helsinki Union board, member of Georgian National Salvation Main Committee) (Bakhtadze, 1992, p. 16-17); "As long as Georgia lives, [...] generations and small children will grow up on it just as we grow up on the example of Tsotne Dadiani, Demetre the Devoted, and all those Georgian martyrs and Georgian heroes who sacrificed themselves for the freedom of homeland" (David Turashvili, member of Tbilisi State University Student Press Club) (Bakhtadze, 1992, p. 23).

- b) Tragedy as sacrifice and resurrection; here too, as in the April 9 narrative, religious rhetoric strengthened the cultural pattern: "The martyr's path of a great patriot has ended" (Zviad Gamsakhurdia) (Bakhtadze, 1992, p. 12); "...Today Georgia walks the path of Golgotha. Whether it raises the cross of Georgia's freedom and victory on Golgotha, or they crucify Georgia on this cross, depends on how brave we will be, how honest and how wise. You showed an example of this bravery, wisdom and honesty. [...] Like Christ, you willingly chose the Golgotha path of fighting for the freedom and independence of the nation" (Akaki Bakradze, President of Rustaveli Society) (Bakhtadze, 1992, p. 14); "I looked at the Holy Gospel and saw something amazing. Where the nine beatitudes are mentioned, I read through and found that all nine suit you and your life lived. You are blessed nine times, Merab!" "In the twentieth century, the gates of ascension have never been opened so wide for anyone" (Avtandil Imnadze, member of Georgian Helsinki Union, member of Georgian National Salvation Main Committee) (Bakhtadze, 1992, p. 18).
- c) Non-reconciliation with harsh fate and hope for the better future: "Why does Georgia need a referendum when the entire Georgian nation has recognized the glory of the knight fighting for independence, when the entire Georgian nation has escorted Merab to the dwelling of ancestors, saints and great men. [...] Your image will illuminate our path in the fight for the freedom and independence of Georgia." "He (Merab Kostava - N.Ch.) will make us hear his heroic "Shavlego" again, will make us hear and will overthrow the enemy again and liberate Georgia" (Zviad Gamsakhurdia) (Bakhtadze, 1992, p. 13); "We are deeply convinced that even the last Georgian, if they survive, will carry this flag and raise it as a symbol of victory" (Akaki Bakradze) (Bakhtadze, 1992, p. 14); "The flag of Merab Kostava, fallen on the battlefield, is now held by some 16-17 year old beardless youth [...] 'The wolf cubs will still grow up in Algeti, they won't be exterminated before they take revenge on the enemy'" (Avtandil Imnadze) (Bakhtadze, 1992, p. 19).

The same cultural pattern appears earlier, on the second day after Merab Kostava's death, in the bulletin "Matsne Chronicle" (N 1) of "Georgia's Independent Information Agency Matsne": "Our grief is wordless like a Svan "Zari". The 'Shavlego' of Merab Kostava, sacrificed for all Georgia, will resound even more powerfully in our homeland. The longed-for freedom is coming! 'Shavlego' is coming!" (Bakhtadze, 1992, p. 10).

Connecting Merab Kostava with the victims of April 9 created a unified line of new heroes fighting against the empire: "This day is equal to April 9. [...] A great Georgian has risen and illuminates Georgia

like the martyrs of April 9, and calls us to sacrifice" (Bakhtadze, 1992, p. 12), Zviad Gamsakhurdia stated in his farewell speech. "Your murder cannot suppress the Georgian spirit directed towards freedom, just as the April 9 massacre could not suppress it" (Bakhtadze, 1992, p. 19), Avtandil Imnadze noted. All this was still a manifestation of the April 9 resonance.

Special reverence for Merab Kostava developed during his lifetime. He was imagined as a hero who stood above worldly vanities. This attitude and perception of his uniqueness is clearly reflected in Nomadi Bartaia's memory of one of the public meetings with Kostava: "As Merab began his speech, the fog began to descend. Merab wore white pants and a black shirt. We could barely distinguish each other at one meter. Merab's voice could be heard, and only his upper body was visible thanks to the black shirt. It was as if he stood in the clouds, between heaven and earth" (Bartaia, 2020, p. 41).

Thus, the formation of a new hero started; he did not "return back" from the past, but was a part of the present and, at the same time, fully corresponded to the historically formed image of a hero. Consciously or unconsciously, this process utilized techniques of building mental bridges between the present and the past (Zerubavel, 2003, pp. 1-6, 11-54): "the same place" (Mtatsminda – the resting place of Dimitri Kipiani, Akaki Tsereteli, and especially Ilia Chavchavadze); historical analogy (with historical heroes who sacrificed themselves for the homeland's freedom); discursive continuity (from past through present to future). The scale of the funeral ceremony granted the new hero a national mandate of heroism (Maisuradze, 2011), while burial in the Mtatsminda Pantheon, which represents a symbol of Georgian national identity, contributed to the institutionalization of the new hero. Soon after, one of Tbilisi's central streets, which bore Lenin's name, was renamed after Merab Kostava: the main figure of the Soviet past, who had moved from heroes to the gallery of anti-heroes, was replaced by a new hero, followed by similar renaming in various cities and towns of Georgia, which represented another step towards the hero's institutionalization.

It is known that collective trauma damages the basic fabric of social life, the unifying bonds of society, and the sense of unity. The new national hero turned out to be one of the pillars for restoring national identity damaged by the collective trauma. The emotional background caused by the April 9 tragedy significantly contributed to the formation of Merab Kostava as a hero. As Aleida Assmann notes, emotions are an amalgam of cultural significations and social relations that charges actions with specific energy. Emotions are repositories of such energy (Assmann A., 2015, p. 42). Kostava's actions and speeches – before April 9, during the April days, and afterward – were distinguished by sincere emotionality. This emotion-laden memory, along with the emotions of sorrow and mourning caused by April 9, came together in the socially significant practice of creating a new national hero.

There were several factors that contributed to attributing special significance to Merab Kostava's death and his transformation into a national hero. First and foremost this was his difficult past – dissidence, imprisonment, irreconcilability with the Soviet regime, personal losses, which fully corresponded to the Georgian cultural pattern of a hero. Added to this were his courage and oratorical distinction, as well as his ability to successfully contact all the opposing wings of the national movement and to be trusted by all of them. There was another person – Zurab Chavchavadze, one of the most prominent leaders of the moderate wing of the national movement – who was also involved in the car accident

together with Kostava. He lived for just over two months after the accident and, when the most difficult period seemed to have passed, suddenly died. This was a heavy loss for the national movement. Despite his role as a highly educated and balanced young man, he had much less influence in the national movement. He was less visible at rallies and demonstrations, including in the days leading up to April 9; although the rally that began on April 4 was initiated by the Ilia Chavchavadze Society, of which Zurab Chavchavadze was one of the leaders, but soon the reins of the rally passed into the hands of more radical, and Zurab Chavchavadze moved to the background. His figure was not charged with emotion. His "academic" biography also corresponded less to the cultural pattern mentioned above. Therefore, his death did not acquire the dimension of a national loss.

From my point of view, legitimacy of Merab Kostava as a leader was determined by the second of Max Weber's three foundations – charisma, the authority of a person who is bestowed and directly connected to heroism and other leadership qualities. In Weber's words, this might be an elected commander or plebiscitary ruler, a great demagogue or political party leader (Weber, 1994, p. 14). Merab Kostava was neither a plebiscitary ruler nor a party leader, though he certainly was a "demagogue" – a person whose speeches and actions influenced the emotions of ordinary citizens and gained their support, regardless of the presence or absence of rational arguments. People supported him because they trusted his sincerity and life journey. Among Thomas Carlyle's six types, Merab Kostava corresponds to the sixth – "a Great Man," a leader, commander over men, bearer of earthly and spiritual virtues, "to whose will our wills are to be subordinated."

Merab Kostava's name was frequently mentioned during the traumatic 1990s, especially during the period of civil confrontation. In 1991, the poem "Reconcile Georgians, Merab!" (by Tinatin Mgvdiashvili) was written, featuring a white horse awaiting its rider, Basiani, Didgori, virtue, angel, Virgin Mary; the first and last strophes of the four-stanza poem end with the plea: "Step down from Mtatsminda, I beg you, reconcile the Georgians, Merab!" (Mgvdiashvili, Reconcile the Georgians, Merab, 2010). Zurab Mzhavia also wrote a song based on this text full of pathos, emotion, and tragedy (Mikiashvili, 2010). Kostava's image was reflected in documentary films, historians' works, mentioned in textbooks, TV programs, and interviews. "The most acute and powerful emotional discourse of trauma" has now faded, and it is conveyed to society through the above-mentioned realms of memory (Alexander, 2004, pp. 22-23). The 2017 album by Niaz Diasamidze and "33a" titled "Georgian" can be considered a realm of memory as well. It included a reworked version of "Shavlego" (Diasamidze, January 29, 2019), dedicated to Merab Kostava. The melody plays against the background of Merab Kostava's photo portrait, accompanied by the inscription: "Georgian dissident, musicologist, poet, public figure, leader of Georgia's national liberation movement, **National Hero** of Georgia" (emphasis mine - N.Ch.). The melody is accompanied with a fragment from one of his speeches: "Unfortunately, we, Georgians, only unite and stand together at decisive moments, when we are on the brink of destruction. But regarding the next stage, when it is no longer about the nation's survival but about revival, our Promethean pride resurfaces, and we drift apart again." These words are often recalled and repeated today when discussing the country's difficult situation and future prospects.

Thus, Merab Kostava occupies a central place in the new narrative, which created a "new hero" as one of the foundations of our group. He was called "the unbreakable conscience of Georgians" (Vakhtang

Bakhtadze) (Bakhtadze, 1992, p. 5), "Georgia's naked dagger" (Akaki Bakradze) (Bakhtadze, 1992, p. 14), "our flawless knight and moral guardian" (Nodar Natadze) (Bakhtadze, 1992, p. 15). In a severely traumatic environment, self-identification with this hero provided an opportunity to give positive answers to questions – Who are we? Where did we come from? Where do we want to go? – which, as Jeffrey Alexander notes, are perceived as fundamental ones for members of traumatized society (Alexander, 2004, p. 10).

Conclusion

At the turn of the 1980s-1990s, when the Soviet Union was counting its last months of existence and the contours of the country's independent future were still vague, a process of reconsideration of the past started in Georgia. Old heroes – the pillars of the Soviet identity – gradually disappeared from public spaces following the desire to distance from the Soviet past: some through "active forgetting" and "revenge on the past," and others more quietly. In parallel, new heroes emerged. Some of them "returned" from the past, while others grew from ongoing processes. During the rise of nationalism and building an independent state, when the need for national heroes particularly increased, the image of the new hero offered society examples of dignity and courage and strengthened the notion of the legitimacy of national aspirations.

Research on the process of establishing Merab Kostava as a new hero showed that it was based on cultural patterns that were recognized and shared within Georgian culture. These were the ideals of devotion to homeland, spiritual connection with ancestors and continuation of their glorious deeds, irreconcilability with fate, and hope for the future. Based on these patterns, both the tragedy of April 9 and the fact of Merab Kostava's death were comprehended, and a heroic narrative was constructed. The traumatic environment created by April 9 and subsequent natural disasters, and the need to cope with it, contributed to the formation of Merab Kostava as a new national hero, self-identification with him provided the opportunity to give positive answers to the most important questions related to national identity. In a situation where the Communist Party still in power avoided aggravating the situation and tried to maintain control over it, Merab Kostava's burial in the Mtatsminda Pantheon gave his heroic image a national dimension and strengthened the significance of Mtatsminda as a pillar of Georgian collective memory. An important step toward the institutionalization of the new hero was the naming one of Tbilisi's main streets after him, which previously bore the name of Lenin - the main hero of the Soviet time.

The resonance of April 9 played a decisive role in shaping Merab Kostava's heroic image, as well as his biography, which ensured his place in the gallery of martyrs for the homeland. His image as a new hero fully corresponded to the Georgian conception of a hero, which provided the possibility of building a mental bridge between the present and the past and maintaining historical continuity, which is one of the important foundations for strengthening collective memory and national identity based on it.

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