

## Towards the Assessment of Viceroy Mikhail Vorontsov's Cultural-enlightenment Policy

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**Abstract:** The assessment of Viceroy Mikhail Vorontsov's (1844-1854) "Caucasian policy" differs diametrically – from highly positive (D. Qipiani, A. Tsereteli, M. Shcherbinin, M. Makievski-Zubok, A. Jorjadze, M. Tamarashvili, Sh. Amirejibi, S. Qubaneishvili...) to extremely negative (N. Avalishvili, M. Katkov, V. Kotetishvili, L. Asatiani, G. Abzianidze, R. Chkheidze, N. Vakhania...). A special study of the issue has shown that Vorontsov arrived in the Caucasus with a basically thought out reformist plan, envisaging the political and economic merger of Georgia (and the Caucasus in general) in the Russian empire, and at the same time revival of Georgian culture through Europeanization. The practical implementation of the Viceroy's plan in 1840-1850 brought about highly significant transformation of the social and cultural enlightenment life of Georgia, and intensive and irreversible Europeanization of the country.

A purposeful and planned cultural-enlightenment policy, launched with Vorontsov's support and the decisive participation of Georgian public figures, gave rise to a process that was crowned with the creation and establishment of a national ideology, based on the world view and literary principles, clearly formulated by I. Chavchavadze (generally by the "Tergdaleulis") in the 1860s.

**Key words:** *Vorontsov, "Caucasian policy", Europeanization, the "Tergdaleulis".*

From the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the determining feature of Russia's state policy in the Caucasus was consideration of the newly conquered region (*krai*: the outlying region of the empire: *okraina*) as a single territorial administrative space for the implementation of assimilative manipulations. At the same time, one circumstance of crucial significance was neglected, namely that the Caucasus was the homeland of peoples of different history, culture and differing national individuality. In Georgia proper the above-cited political course was clearly formulated in the attitude of the Viceroy Aleksei Yermolov 1816-1827) to the Caucasian problem: "Georgia will not exist, and neither will the Caucasian question exist" [4, p. 30].

Such solution of the Caucasian problem was sought with more or less "success" through a rigid and straightforward policy by subsequent governors of the Caucasus (I. Paskevich, G. Rozen, E. Golytsin, A Neidgart). However, in the 1840s the situation changed drastically, and this basic change is linked to Mikhail Vorontsov's "Caucasian policy".

In the early 1840s the situation in the Northern Caucasus became extremely tense, where Shamil won impressive victories in a row over Russian troops and Muridism gained in strength and zeal. On the other hand, the servile attitude of the Georgian nobility and gentry to the political regime paved the way for south Caucasia, in general, and Georgia in particular, to change from the military to a civil system of government, turning the same Georgian nobility and gentry into an ally and mainstay of imperial policy in the Caucasus. In these circumstances, Nicholas I decided to entrust the rule of Caucasia to a person in whom political, administrative, military and diplomatic gift and practical abilities were combined. In December 1844 the emperor's choice fell on Count Mikhail Vorontsov (1782-1856), who was by the time a famed general in Russia and Europe, Member of Russia's State Council, Honorary Member of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, Governor-General of Novorossiisk and plenipotentiary vicegerent in Bessarabia. At the same time, Vorontsov was a highly educated statesman endowed with diplomatic talent. Back in the 1800s he served under Pavel Tsitsianov

in Georgia and was familiar with Transcaucasia and its peculiarities [12, pp. 8-22].

Educated in Britain and reared on British political and diplomatic experience, Vorontsov believed that linguistic and cultural diversity were the source of the might of the empire rather than an indication of its weakness. He arrived in the Caucasus with a broad and fundamental plan of reforms, envisaging, on the one hand, the painless political and economic merger of Georgia (and in general of the Caucasus) into Russia's single and indivisible state space, and on the other, revival and development of Georgian culture through Europeanization.

During Vorontsov's nine-year rule, on his initiative or his decisive support, Russian and Georgian theatres, an Italian opera, a ballet group, the public library, the literary magazine *Tsiskari*, the Caucasian Museum, the Caucasian Department of the Geographic Society of Russia" (with its own periodical publication), the educational region of the Caucasus were founded; the obligatory teaching of the Georgian language and literature assumed new forms and content (including for the children of non-Georgians and those servicemen who resided in the Caucasus temporarily), 160 grants were created for young people in Russia's higher educational institutions at the expense of the treasury, gymnasias were opened in Tbilisi (commercial) and Kutaisi, schools were set up throughout Georgia (Bichvinta, Ozurgeti, Tianeti, etc.). Vorontsov gave special attention to the education of women. To this end he founded women's educational institutions named after St. Nino in Tbilisi and Kutaisi, and imparted real content and function to the "Transcaucasian Womens Institute" founded in Tbilisi in 1840 (by data of 1855 various types of 147 schools with 6023 pupils already existed in Georgia – 3, pp. 298-300).

Vorontsov personally directed the study and popularization of Georgian history and Georgian culture, the restoration of historical monuments, churches and monasteries (often at his own expense; in 1849 he sent P. Ioseliani to the Georgian monastery on Mount Athos to study the antiquities preserved there; he invited

Russian and foreign scientists and scholars (M. Brosset, G. Abich, I. Bartolomei, A. Muravyov, N. Khanikov, and others), gave moral and material support to the revival and development of literary processes; at his personal request, D. Megvinetukhutsesishvili studied Uplistsikhe archaeologically, and so on. It is worth noting that in 1854 when, owing to ill health, Vorontsov was obliged to ask the Emperor to be allowed a long-term leave (after which he failed to return to the Caucasus), he gave special instructions to his successor General Read according to which special care for Georgian culture should not diminish in the Caucasus [1, pp. 99-100].

Vorontsov emphasized his respect for the Georgian language, history, culture, customs and mores (incidentally for the members of the former royal family of Kartli and Kakheti). He appears to have believed that the linguistic and cultural uniqueness of the Georgians should form the basis for the establishment of a political-administrative unit enjoying autonomous rights within the single and indivisible Russian empire. In Sargis Kakabadze's view [Vorontsov] was paving the way for Georgian autonomy within the Russian empire [5, p. 126].<sup>1</sup>

It should be stressed that Vorontsov considered Europeanization of Georgian socio-political, socio-economic, cultural-educational and literary life as the only way to the revival of Georgia. This view was radically opposed to Russia's state and ideological policy: the Russian monarchy considered Russian culture, the Russian way of life and thinking to be the only source of Europeanism in Georgia. (I focus attention on Vorontsov's cultural-enlightenment policy, to say nothing of his economic reforms, which, owing to the impotence of Georgian nobility and gentry caused its degradation as a class, and facilitated the formation of

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<sup>1</sup> The researcher seems to have implied political (or containing political elements) autonomy, for, as it is, Georgia had administrative autonomy (within Tbilisi and Kutaisi gubernias). This is noted by S. Kakabadze himself: "As the viceroy (*namestnik*) of the Emperor, he (Vorontsov - T. J.) was subordinated not to the ministers but directly to the Emperor and was invested with special rights to tackle Caucasian affairs [5, p. 119].

Armenian bourgeoisie in Georgia. This process is described in Georgian literature: G. Eristavi, Z. Antonov, L. Ardaziani. Neither do I touch upon Vorontsov's policy in the religious sphere, yet a few words should be said to the effect that, on the one hand, he acknowledged the religious and historical contribution of the Georgian Church, but on the other, by the tolerance of Islam, unusual by that time, Vorontsov won the loyalty of the Muslim population of Transcaucasia to the political regime, wresting an ally and basis from the hands of Shamil and Turkey in the Caucasus.

In the view of Archil Jorjadze, "The appointment of Vorontsov as Viceroy for the Caucasus proved very useful and profitable for the new revival of Georgian culture. The dormant nation awoke, as it were, and the social organism, brought to disorganization, was seized with the hope of healing and recovery... the Vorontsov era turned into one of revival of Georgian culture... Vorontsov's policy was one which Georgian political thought looked for in vain for centuries in the government circles of Russia: loyalty and close ties with Russia, and in return, ensuring the national-cultural revival of the Georgians under Russia's protection... Vorontsov was the first who boldly revived this hitherto unrealized hope. The national culture of the Georgians and Russia's protection – this dream turned into reality ..." [18, pp. 104-105]. At the same time, Jorjadze adds: "There is no doubt that Vorontsov would have failed to create a theatre or periodical press in this country, had there not been the needed elements for this in the society itself" [19, pp. 104].

"The elements needed for" national-cultural revival did exist in Georgia in the early 1840s, and here mention should first be made of the "Programme of National Salvation", drawn by Dimitri Qipiani, newly returned from exile in Vologda. His programme was based on liberal ideology of enlightenment put forth by the nobility and gentry that envisaged the revival of Georgian and culture and general-national self-consciousness through spreading education within the Russian empire. The first steps were indeed taken to this end. In particular, in 1842 D. Qipiani founded the "Private Library of Tbilisi" – the first social-cultural and educational institution based on

social initiative; its members were A. Chavchavadze, N. Baratashvili, G. and V. Orbelianis, M. Tumanishvili, Z. Palavandishvili, and others [16, pp. 74-95]; mention should also be made of Manana Orbeliani's literary salon, where quite a few ideas of national significance originated and were elaborated (the setting up of a professional Georgian theatre, the foundation of the "Tsiskari" magazine, etc. [2, pp. 181-190]

The plans of the progressive part of Georgian figures and those of Vorontsov coincided and such concord created a firm basis of cooperation between the authorities and public, with a highly positive outcome. It should be said that in order to implement his administrative and cultural-educational reforms Vorontsov chose Dimitri Qipiani as his principal collaborator and mainstay. According to Baron A. Nikolai's confidential report to the imperial government, Qipiani was considered to be "a dreamer for autonomous Georgia" [17, p. 227]. S. Kakabadze too calls him "a prominent lover ... of the idea of autonomy" [5, p. 126]. For his part, D. Qipiani maximally aligned the radical changes implemented in the Caucasus to the national-cultural interests and needs of the Georgians [15, pp. 23-26; 18; 8, p. 307].

The assessments of Vorontsov's "Caucasian policy" in Georgian sources and literature are diametrically opposed - from highly positive (G. Orbeliani, D. Qipiani, P. Ioseliani, A. Purtseladze, I. Meunargia, A. Jorjadze, M. Tamarashvili, Sh. Amirejibi, S. Qubaneishvili, and others) to extremely negative (N. Avalishvili, V. Kotetishvili, L. Asatiani, S. Gersamia, A. Kalandadze, R. Chkheidze, N. Vakhania, and others). In Vakhtang Kotetishvili's view, "The Vorontsov era should be considered an episode of the systematic reaction carried on by tsarist Russia in relation to Georgia ... Vorontsov did a great service to Russia, but what protection did he render Georgia - there does not seem to be any. True, he took up care for our country's culture energetically, - took the lead, as if, but he was doing his business, and if he occasionally took interest in the Georgian cause, it was an eye-wash and cover ... he created centres

where national degradation occurred at a rapid pace and methodically ..." [7, pp. 171-172].

N. Nikoladze's attitude to Vorontsov was contradictory: this is especially true of A. Orbeliani in whose works two mutually exclusive views are stated: "That period of Vorontsov in Georgia was quite a different time for deceiving us – inexperienced as we were ... he pretended to show us his magnanimity, especially towards those who acted in Russia's interests. ... Prior to Vorontsov we distanced ourselves from the Russians, and he mixed us up with the Russians, this sly diplomat joined us to the Russians [11, pp. 54-57]; on the other hand, in Orbeliani's words, [Vorontsov] gave us a Georgian theatre, a Georgian literary magazine – "Here you are, have it for eternity and take pleasure in your good language of your ancestors"... Prince Vorontsov was a broad-minded man, fully developed and truly wished good for us [10, pp. 129-130].

The negative attitude to Vorontsov's "Caucasian policy" in Georgian scholarly and publicistic literature was largely based on two sources: a) the above-mentioned first view of A. Orbeliani (though his second view - exclusive of the first - is ignored) and b) Vorontsov's report of 1849-1851 submitted to Nicholas I, which reads: "A theatre has been set up, literature has revived, books are printed - all this makes me think that Your Imperial Majesty will deign to consider that this outcome will have a highly beneficial influence on the spread of education, development of the taste, refinement of morals and customs and the merger of the natives with the Russians [1, p. 881].

Obviously, Vorontsov could not write to the Emperor that he wished to separate the Georgians from the Russians and, which is most important, he had no such intention. On the contrary, the objective of Vorontsov's "Caucasian policy" was, as said above, integration of Georgia in Russia's state, political and economic space but with doubtless preservation and revival of the linguistic and cultural originality of the Georgians. It should be stressed that, proceeding from the specificity of the time and situation, such a prospect proved fully acceptable – the more so that all this was done

through Europeanization of our social life and national culture. In one of his works devoted to Dimitri Qipiani, the leader of the then socio-cultural life of Georgia and a prominent Europeanist, A. Jorjadze notes: "Yes, we are subjects of Russia and Georgians at the same time, Qipiani thought. We want to enter the cultural arena with our Georgianness. But we know well that "Georgianness" requires the existence of Georgian social institutions, guaranteed use of the Georgian language in schools and the church. If you do not allow us this, our Georgianness will be infringed upon and if Georgianness is encroached, the feeling of our loyalty will also suffer. At that time the question could not be raised in a broader sense ... " [19].

The attitude to Vorontsov's "Caucasian policy" was not uniform in Russia either. His course came under fire in the years of his rule in Caucasian administrative as well as in the central administrative spheres of Russia. And later, Mikhail Katkov, an influential figure in Russian political circles and virtual leader of Russian great-power-chauvinistic ideology in the 1860s-1880s, called Vorontsov an ignorer of national interests in the name of liberalism, a governor of non-Russian self-consciousness and supporter of separatism in the Caucasus, charging him directly with betrayal of Russia's state interests; at the same time he asserted that it was Vorontsov's policy in the Caucasus that turned Russians in the Caucasus into humiliated and insulted, virtually second-rate persons [6, p. 554].

Vorontsov is a prominent figure in Akaki Tsereteli's works (poems, journalism, memoirs, his poem "Vorontsov"). In Akaki's works Vorontsov's image is depicted as a person and ruler who inculcated brotherhood and love in Georgia ("Grandmother's Story"), sharer of the woe of a nation suffering from injustice ("A Georgian in Front of the Statue"), "One who had paternal affection for the Georgian people", in whose hands Georgia "had a respite" ("Vorontsov's Statue"), "Superman ... sent from Heaven", who spread literacy in Georgia and "instilled genuine love" ("Vorontsov"), governor "who ecstatically loved the Georgians, held their past in

high esteem and had hope in their future" ("The Story of My Life"), supporter of Georgian literature and selfless carer for it ("A Short Note"), and so on. Akaki polemizes with those who consider Vorontsov's care to be hypocrisy and he noted: "It is not his fault, if his graft withered in other's hand" ("Vorontsov's Statue").

To the end of his life, Akaki preserved his sincere respect for Vorontsov and, I believe, he gave the most laconic and precise assessment of Vorontsov's "Caucasian policy": Vorontsov considered the future Georgia as "politically Russianized, but with her own religion, language and national colour", and he did this by taking the correct European path" ("The foundation of the Georgian theatre in Georgia – 14, p. 458). Tsereteli repeats an analogous view in his "Essay" of 1912 ("My journey to Racha-Lechkhumi" – 14, p. 492).

I believe Vorontsov's "Caucasian policy" and the ensuing cultural-literary processes were directly related to the social and literary situation in the 1860s, and in this respect, K. Ninidze's view seems correct: "This stratum (of the "Tergdaleulis" – *T. G.*) took shape as a result of Vorontsov's educational policy" [9, p. 68]. The point is that almost all language and literature problems, raised by Ilia Chavchavadze and elaborated in one or another form in the 1860s, had already been posed, with more or less profundity and intensity, in the preceding decade (the need for democratization of the Georgian literary language, realistic reflexion of life and the social purpose of literature, Europeanization of Georgian literary thought, policy of translation, and other issues).

In short, by the 1860s the way had been paved for the creation and implementation of a national ideology based on clearly formulated world view and literary principles meeting the new demands of the time. I. Chavchavadze, as a thinker and leader of socio-political life was sent to the country precisely at the beginning of the 1860s, when Vorontsov's political course oriented to the upsurge of loyal, civic and cultural life was being relegated to the past and the implementation of the imperial policy of Russification began in new forms. In such conditions it would be very difficult (if not impossible) to create novel cultural-ideological systems with

monarchic-conservative outlook and unconditional loyalty proclaimed to the political regime of Vorontsov's epoch and with the available cultural-intellectual resources. Hence, the national energy that by the time proved viable and effective gave rise to Ilia Chavchavadze just in time when a vital need for this arose, and what Ilia stated generally in his programme work in "Georgia's Herald": "A genius is the fruit of his time" (under "genius" he implied "leader") should be extended to the author of these words: Ilia Chavchavadze was the fruit of the "times" whose roots should be sought – apart from the national, socio-political and cultural-literary traditions – in Vorontsov's "Caucasian policy" as well.

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