Tracing the Great Purges in Georgia Mikheil Mgaloblishvili's "1937 Memoirs of a Repressed Person" ¹

ՆԵԺԵՒᲗՅԵՐԸՊՑՐ ՉՐՉՐ ՄԵՒՐԵՐՆ ᲙᲕԵՐՉԵԺՅԵՐ. ՑՐԻՆՈՐ ՑԻՆՐՐԻՑՐՈՑՅՐՐՐՆ "ԵՐՅԵՐՆՐԵՐԵՆ ԵՐԵՐԵՐԵՐՆ 1937 ԵՐՐՆ ՑՐԵՐԵՐԵՐԵՐ

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ამსტრაქტი

მიხეილ მგალობლიშვილის მოგონებები საქართველოში დიდი ტერორის ამსახველი ორიგინალური დოკუმენტებიდან ერთ-ერთი იმ მცირეთაგანია, რომელმაც ჩვენამდე მოაღწია. ამ სტატიაში გავაანალიზებ მგალობლიშვილის 1937 წლის თბილისის დიდ ტერორთან დაკავშირებულ მოგონებებს და მის გამოცდილებას ახლად დაარსებულ შრომითგასწორებით ბანაკში "ვიატკა" ეს მოგონება დაიწერა 1972 წელს, 70 წლის ასაკში, შრომით-გასწორებითი ბანაკიდან გათავისუფლებიდან 25 წლის შემდეგ. შესაბამისად, ტექსტი საშუალებას გვაძლევს მოვახდინოთ მისი სიღრმისეული დეკონსტრუქცია და გამოვიკვლიოთ ინდივიდუალური მოგონებების ცვალებადობა, ასევე, ერთი მხრივ, გულმავიწყობა წარსულსა და მომავალს შორის და მეორე მხრივ, ხრუშოვის დე-სტალინიზაციის ნარატივი. პირადი ტრავმული მოგონებების სოციალური და კულტურული ცვალებადობის კომპლექსური ურთიერთქმედება შეიძლება დაგვეხმაროს პარტიის წევრის მიერ მოგონების მალულად დაწერის კონკრეტული მოტივებისა და საბჭოთა საქართველოს აზროვნების სპეციფიკის გააზრებაში. მოგონებები გამოქვეყნდა 1990 წელს და ამიტომ, ხელი შეუწყო საქართველოში საბჭოთა ძალის საჯაროდ დელეგიტიმიზაციას საბჭოთა კავშირის დაშლის პერიოდში.

Key terms: 1937 repressions, memoirs, GULag memory, Georgia, ego-documents.

¹ Magaloblishvili 1990. Earlier versions were presented at the conference "Literature and Culture: Modernism/ Avant-garde – Heritage and Present Day; Postcolonial Discourse and Postcolonial Reality", 26-28 April 2011. My thanks goes to the participants as well as to Dr. habil. Marc Junge (University of Erlangen) for their insightful comments and remarks. Tracing Experience of Stalin's Repressions & Trauma. Mikheil Mgaloblishvili's memoirs - 1937 – 1972 – 1990. Working Meeting: Challenges of Remembering in the Caucasus. Free University Tbilisi, 9 January 2016.

Introduction

Publication of manuscript: Mikheil Mgaloblishvilis memoirs represent one of the few original documents on the Stalinist repressions in Georgia that have come down to us so far. In 1972 - 32 years after his release from the labour correction camp in Vyatka and five years before his dead he wrote down his personal testimony. Besides all his interesting interaction with famous Georgian directors, actors and cultural personalities, he did not intend to write down memoirs about his life. The only what he counted worth to be laid down was about what happened to him in the tragic year 1937 "to overcome the rise of Kains' soul" and his Gulag experience. During Brezhnev's period of stagnation he wrote 107 pages of manuscript in secret in 1972. Still afraid that his text could cause severe reactions by the authorities, he did not tell anybody about it. By then he was 70 years old. His relatives discovered his manuscript only after his decease. His personal testimony was published only almost 10 years after his death. The newspaper Literaturuli Sakartvelo (March 4, 11, and 18) published the first fragments in 1988. They found serious attraction among the readers in the period of glasnost' (transparency). The full text was published only in 1990 in the publishing house "Merani" at the "costs of the author". In this paper I will use this issue as my main reference. The one review that I could get hold of compares Mgaloblishvili with Jonah surviving in the belly of the mythical whale.² Some shortened version has been published in the newspaper "Kviris Palitra" in 2013 (Mikheil Antadze in Mgaloblishvili 1990, 3-8; Mgaloblishvili 2013).

Mgaloblishvili described every step of the repressions he experienced from the beginning of the purges in summer 1937, his arrest until the day of his release from "Vyatlag", the labour correction camp in Vyatka. There are many important details about how the imprisoned prepared themselves for the interrogation like a survival exercise or about the life and rules in the labour correction camp. Most of all he gives about the whereabouts of 63 repressed persons, which he met in the Ortachala prison, in the wagon on his way to the correction camp and in the barracks of Vyatlag. Otherwise, their trace was lost without trace after their imprisonment. Therefore, these memoirs bear very much the character of a **memorial book** (*liber memorialis*). Certainly, we can find hardly any other egodocuments by a representative of the middle layer of the state administration. His testimony allows for unique insights into the practice of governance and the mechanisms of repression in Soviet Georgia. The book has huge documentary value. The more it is astonishing that there is no historic research on this unique source conducted so far in Georgian historiography.

Memory – collective or individual – or remembering and forgetting represent a very fluid activity influenced to a great degree by the present. Maurice Halbwachs thought that "[h]istory is beginning at that point where tradition ends, where the social memory falls apart." However, the Great Purges were remembered only individually, only few memories have been written down and were published with the costs mainly covered by relatives of the "repressed". At least the traumatic experience was kept in private and rarely shared, sometimes transmitted even non-verbally among family members.

² Reviewed on http://lib.ge/wiki/read/9 (04.01.2016, dysfunctional on 10.11.2019); see also http://lib.ge/libenc.php?a=1492 (21.04.2011, dysfunctional on 09.11.2019).

^{3 &}quot;История начинается в той точке, где заканчивается традиция, где угасает или распадается социальная память" Морис Хальбвакс.

The trauma psychologist Darejan Javakhishvili revealed in her research that traumatic experience related to "totalitarian traumas" the past is dissociated from and encapsulated within the unconscious mind of the Georgian society. Consequently, it is not mourned authentically, and causes societal regress and destructive psychodynamics. In those families who failed to deal with repression-related traumatic experience at individual level, she identified repression-trauma related problems and resilience strategies among the second- and third-generation representatives from repressed families. Based on her findings, she elaborated a psycho-socio-political model of intergenerational transmission of trauma, which demonstrates an interplay among different factors influencing intergenerational transmission of trauma at individual, family and societal levels. The model could be used as a foundation for initiation of a series of studies exploring different aspects of intergenerational transmission of trauma at individual, family and societal levels (Javakhishvili 2014 & 2017).

The transformation from individual memories into social and cultural memory was suppressed and influenced by a specific "Soviet subjectivity" (Tikhomirov 2018; Hellbeck 2000a & b) that influenced the formation of memories in Soviet Georgia under the conditions of "totalitarian communication" (Postoutenko 2010a; Erren 2010). Its consequences affect how post-Soviet Georgia is dealing with its Soviet past. Historical research on the Stalinist repressions in Georgia recently made some progress, but still lags behind (Junge, Reisner and Bonwetsch 2015). Over the last few years representatives of an urban, socially more or less secure generation born in the 1960s and 1970s are collecting life histories and ego-documents about this part of the Georgian past (source publications on Great Terror 1937-1938 and March 1956, SOVLAB initiative to locate the places of repression in Tbilisi, the government backed Museum of Soviet Occupation). However, they did not produce a new interpretation or narrative responding to the implicit demand of the contemporary Georgian transition society. The historians did not yet transform the PAST into HISTORY with a more differentiated and diverse master narrative.

Thus, my hypothesis for this paper is that there was no chance to form a collective memory on how to assess and evaluate the Stalinist past in public and survivors of the repressions had to look for other coping strategies for their traumatic experiences. Therefore, an investigation of the narrative structures of his memoirs in comparison with other memoirs and literature like Varlam Shalamov will be necessary, but cannot be conducted here (Sakharov Centre; VyatLag).

In order to trace and analyse the experience of Stalin's repressions and trauma we have to distinguish at least four different time layers in Mgaloblishvili's recollections for analytical purposes. First, there is his direct experience as a survivor of the repressions in the Ortachala prison and VyatLag (1937-1940), which is inaccessible for us today. Secondly, there is the manuscript of his eyewitness account as a victim of repressions written for the drawer in 1972 after the reversal of Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation attempts since 1964, which I could not yet locate. Thirdly, there are the first publications of parts his memoirs at the heights of *glasnost'* that appeared in 1988 in the journal "Literary Georgia" in a period of the screening of Tengiz Abuladze's movie "Repentance" (monanieba/Pokoianie, 1984/1987). Finally, in 1990 the book was published under the title "1937 – Memories of a Repressed". Without these memoirs a lot of practices of the repressions in Georgia could not be retrieved any longer. In order to trace what Mgaloblishvili experienced and why he finally decided to write these memoirs, we will analyse the book for its practical approach": "Another characteristic of practices is that they have a subjective effect - albeit differently in form and extent. It means that

in practice, subjects become actors in the sense of the abovementioned criteria of an understandable and interpretable existence in a social context. Put simply, by performing certain practices, a person, whether deliberately intended or unconscious, inevitably associates with the collective meanings that cling to practices in a particular knowledge mile" (Böth 2018, 256-257).⁴

Mikheil Mgaloblishvili's Biography: framing a Soviet life with the experience of repression - Who was Mikheil Vladimiris dze Mgaloblishvili?

Mikhail Mgaloblishvili was born on April 10, 1902 in the Gurian village Erketi (Chokhatauri municipality). His father, Vladimer, was a Gurian lower nobleman (aznauri) and farmer. In 1920 he graduated from 3rd Gymnasium in Kutaisi. His professional career started with the establishment of Soviet power in Georgia in March 1921. He became a Soviet "vydvizhenec" as one of the young leaders of the workers' club movement, where he demonstrated his organizational skills. At the end of the 1920s he was promoted as the Head of the Culture Department of the Kutaisi branch of trade union council, when director Kote Marjanishvili and other members of the Tbilisi Rustaveli Theatre helped to set up the theatre in Kutaisi. When in 1934 the State Cinema Production (sakhkinmretsvi) was established, he was appointed the first Head of the Screenplay department, where he closely collaborated with the first Georgian movie directors like Mikheil Chiaureli or Nikoloz Shengelaia, Leo Esakia, Davit Rondeli as well as a broad range of Georgian actors. In 1935 after finishing a distance course in screenplay at the Lunacharski Theatre Institute (Moscow) he was again promoted to the position of Senior Deputy of the newly established Administration of Art Affairs (nowadays Ministry of Culture), where he had to supervise the Department for Folk Art (People's Creativity), singing and dancing circles including the Symphonic Orchestra. He was closely involved in the preparations and implementation of the Georgian Cultural Decade in Moscow in 1936 and 1937. So, he was socialised in what Stephen Kotkin (1995) termed "Soviet civilization".

Anyway, he still did not have a right to live in the capital, in Tbilisi. So, he settled in little town Bolnisi, then moved to Tetritskaro (both in Kvemo-Kartli region), where he proceeded his usual professional activity until 1957. Mgaloblishvili was rehabilitated in October 1955, but only upon his full rehabilitation in 1957 he could return to Tbilisi. The Communist Party reinstated his membership in the same year. Mgaloblishvili died early in February 1977 (Mgaloblishvili 1977).

In **December** 1937 he was arrested as an "enemy of the people" (*khalkhis mteri / vrag naroda*). Based on unsubstantiated allegations he was tortured, but not executed. In January 1938 a trojka sentenced him to 10 years correctional labour and then passed all the stages of the GULag system establishing a new one in Vyaka (Vyatlag), but he survived. In 1940, a court reviewed his verdict and reduced the sentence to three years, the term he was imprisoned. Anyway, as a "counter revolutionary" he was not allowed to return to Tbilisi. So, he settled in the provincial town of Bolnisi, then moved

⁴ German original: "Kennzeichen von Praktiken ist weiterhin, dass sie - wenn auch in Form und Ausmaß unterschiedlich - subjektivierend wirken. D.h. im Vollzug der Praxis werden aus handelnden Akteur_innen Subjekte im Sinne der oben genannten Kriterien einer versteh- und deutbaren Existenz im sozialen Kontext. Schlichter gesprochen: Indem eine Person bestimmte Praktiken ausführt, ist sie - egal ob bewusst intendiert oder als unbewusste Folge - unweigerlich mit den kollektiven Bedeutungen assoziiert, die den Praktiken in einem bestimmten Wissensmileu anhaften."

to Tetritskaro (both in Kvemo-Kartli region), where he proceeded his usual professional activity until 1957 as organizing cultural events, a theatre, singing circles, and establishing the Sulkhan Saba-Orbeliani house-museum etc.

Only in **October** 1955 – more than two years after Stalin's death - the South Caucasian Military Tribunal **fully rehabilitated** him and reinstalled his citizens' rights. Only in 1957 he was allowed to return to Tbilisi. In the same year, he became a member of the Communist Party. Then he continued to work for "Georgia Film" (Kartuli pilmi) as major editor (1959-1962) and later as responsible secretary for the screenplay and editorial team. He worked next to the young generation of Georgian directors as Rezo Chkheidze, Tengis Abuladze, Otar Ioseliani, Lana Ghoghoberidze, Eldar and Giorgi Shengelaia, M. Kokochashvili etc. Finally, in 1957 he became a member of the CPSU. Mgaloblishvili died in February 1977 (Antadze 1990, 3-8; Mgaloblishvili 1990, 76-78).

SUMMER 1937 - The Repressions Take off

There is no formal structure or thematic outline of the text, which mainly follows a chronological order of narration. Mgaloblishvili starts in June 1937 describing the atmosphere when the first arrests occurred. He and his friends realized the increase of arrests of responsible "workers" starting in 1936 and especially in 1937, but did not question its legitimacy even when there occurred arrests of close acquaintances. They always assumed a legitimate reason for the arrest. "Probably they are really not so innocent? The Soviet power would never arrest a person, if he is innocent [ალბათ იყო, ძმაო, გარეული რაიმეში, აბა ტყუილად ხომ არ დაიჭერდნენ, ვის უნდა აინტერესებდეს ეს?]" (Mgaloblishvili 1990, 9). Given all what Mgaloblishvili was about to describe on the following pages, the uncritical trust in the party can only be explained by a self-soothing strategy from the standpoint of a "Soviet subjectivity" presented in a "narrativity of trust". Its repercussions are felt in the memoirs (Tikhomirov 2018, 278-281).

Together with the arrest of his superior, the "slow and ill", but "erudite Bolshevik" Akaki Tatarishvili, we learn a lot about the practice of governance and the importance of personal networks and bonding with friends of some shared origin (mainly from educational institutions) for a joint promotion with their patron. Mgaloblishvili demonstrated his loyalty to the Communist Party, when he shared his worries about the relocation of party officials to state positions with his superior and close school mate Borya Gordeladze, who himself was in direct contact with Lavrenti Beria. Gordeladze replied to his worries: "Lavrenti [Beria] knows everything and he does not fail in anything!" [ლავრენტიმ ყველაფერი იცის და მას არაფერი შეეშლებაო] (Mgaloblishvili 1990, 11). The party had to send loyal workers, in order to clean the Soviet organizations from "harmful" elements, the younger staff in the TsK should be educated by experienced hands of party members. Mgaloblishvili concluded that Beria, Stalin, Ezhov and others knew that the arrested people were innocent. However, he did not ask himself for the reason. He certainly did not know about the execution lists approved by Stalin and Central Committee members, known today as "Stalin's Lists" that are nowadays made available online by "Memorial" in Russia and IDFI in Georgia. Instead, he poses a rhetorical question: "Probably he [Beria. OR] threw out his special fishing rod, but did he even believe that these people were destructive?" ["ალბათ თავისებურ ანკესს აგებდა, მაგრამ ნუთუ მასაც ჯეროდა, რომ

ეს ხალხი მავნებლები იყვნენ?"] It is impossible to tell, if he really believed in this or if this was an expected ritualized practice of demonstrating loyal behaviour by party and state officials, who had to implement and execute Stalin's orders.

Here Mgaloblishvili was wrong. Under the new sense of party loyalty, they were not innocent, i.e. they were not executed indiscriminately or arbitrarily. He was stuck in the interpretative framework of de-Stalinization of the 1960s, which Khrushchev cleverly offered to the post-Stalinist cadres. Putting all the blame on the tyrant and the NKVD alone was an exemption strategy for the entire society. It relieved the collaborators, denunciators or by-standers that contributed to the terrible climate under Stalin from their responsibility. Most of those that escaped tried to "forget" that Stalin's totalitarian mass mobilization regime did not allow for "neutral" observers.

Mgaloblishvili remembers the evening of September 5, 1937. Together with his colleagues - Borya (Ermile) Gordeladze, his personal secretary Kote Bakhtadze, Valiko Bokuchava – since 8 PM they were working at the Administration for Art Affairs on new cultural measures. At about 10 PM the government phone or "vertushka" (вертушка) was ringing. Party secretary Lavrenti Beria called Borya Gordeladze for a meeting. Gordeladze sent his colleagues home, who walked down on Rustaveli Avenue, family rested in Kobuleti; Boria Gordeladze had a dacha (agaraki) in Okroqana.

On **September** 6, 1937 – a public holiday as Mgaloblishvili emphasized – he finished the work on the new projects at 6 PM, listened to the Gurian singers under *Varlam Simonishvili* at the radio station on Kirov Street. He joined *Lado Gegechkori* for a dinner at the canteen of the Peoples' Creative Work Cabinet on Makharadze Street, when the conductor *Evgeni Mikeladze* and his wife, the doctor *Tamar Mikeladze* joined them. They informed him confidentially in a corner about the arrest of his colleagues, Gordeladze and Bokuchava, last night. This indicates the atmosphere of fear and kind of private solidarity, in expectation that the next one might be yourself.

According to "Stalin's Lists" from Georgia dated October 21st, 1937 (IDFI 2018)⁵ Boria (Ermile) Gordeladze was already arrested on March 17 (and not on September 5th). For being an active member of a right-wing counter-revolutionary organisation the *troika* under Goglidze, Tsereteli, Talakhadze, sentenced him on November 13 to be executed and his personal property to be confiscated as noted by the troika secretary Morozov. They shot him the next day. Only on September 14, 1944, he was declared dead because of liver cancer. The Military Tribunal of the Transcaucasian Military District adopted a ruling on July 7th, 1956, which annulled his sentence and suspended the case due to lack of signs of crime as a kind of posthumous rehabilitation. For Valerian (Vasiko) Bokuchava the "Lists" did not indicate the date of his arrest, but of his death sentence and execution by shooting: November 9th and 10th, 1937.

"After the hand-over from Akaki Tatarashvili of the rightist counter revolutionary organization V. P. Bokuchava engaged in harmful acts in the Georgian art industry and attracted new members to the organization. The accused Bokuchava pleaded guilty (IDFI 2018).

This statement in his file clearly indicates that the previously arrested Akaki Tatarashvili denounced him as well as Gordeladze and probably others as members of this allegedly counter-revolutionary group. Like a snowball system they might have denounced others.

Mgaloblishvili could not believe in the arrest, because Boria Gordeladze was very close to Beria,

⁵ АП РФ, оп. 24, дело 412, лист 28, http://stalin.memo.ru/spiski/pg04028.htm (10.12.2020)

appeared with him in public and they even played billiard together; rumours said that Gordeladze was about to replace *Merkulov*. By highlighting that Gordeladze was a loyal party member, he signalled that the closeness to power did not provide any security or protection from arrest. However, he could not identify any patterns in the procedures of arrests. Convinced of the honesty and innocence, Mgaloblishvili for the first time doubted the righteousness of the ongoing purges and recalls *Karl Radek*'s remarks from the Show Trials in Moscow⁶ to emphasize that he was not aware of any guilt or failure. Thus, he in advance identified himself with an accused Communist.

He visited Gordeladze's personal assistant *Kote Bakhtadze* at his home, who confirmed the arrests that he learned from his driver. Some "*D.U.*" – a "famous person" who is only presented in initials only - has taken Gordeladze to the Commissariat of Internal Affairs HQ. D.U. was in charge of arresting all high-ranking party members and Soviet state officials, indicating a clear differentiation between party and state. Bakhtadze was sitting in the dark awaiting his arrest as well. "We have all been crushed." Having spent most of their time together, they expected their arrest for the next day or night. [15]⁷ As we can see from his reflections there existed **preparatory strategies in expectation of his own arrest** that he shared with his readers in a flow of thoughts: he should send for his wife and children, who were on holidays in Kobuleti. When somebody was arrested and his family was not at home at that moment, it has been locked for family members, which then had to spend nights on the street. It was also known that no one would dare to help them because everyone, even close relatives were afraid. However, he could not go himself, because this would cause suspicion of hiding. So, he sent his brother-in-law (*kvisli*) *Lado Gegia* to take his family back to Tbilisi. From this practice, we can learn about that, even the extended family providing help, esp. male representatives also faced the danger of being arrested. He also talked to *Lado Gegechkori* about the arrests.

"That was the atmosphere then: fear, help-lessness, betrayal, provocation and all sorts of morality" (Mgaloblishvili 1990, 15).

Mgaloblishvili has been living in fear awaiting his arrest for another three months. Every day he woke and was not sure that slept at home. It was very difficult to know that they will arrest you, but you do not know when. In the meantime, a new head of Art Affairs Administration was appointed, *Beniamin (Beno) Vasilis dze Gogua*, who had no idea about culture and lacked any intellectualism. He did not trust the old staff, where two leading workers appeared to be "people's enemies". This stigma that the institution seemed to be contaminated with "hostile elements" [16] in the end did cost Mgaloblishvili his position as the head of a department. His superior transferred him director to the People's Creative Work Cabinet, where he organized a Folk Song and Dance Olympiad in November 1937. Only carefully, he indicates the disruptive effects of the purges on state institutions. [17] When he defended Kote Bakhtadze, whom his new head of administration wanted to fire, Gogua read passages of a letter denouncing him as a counterrevolutionary. He assured Mgaloblishvili of his satisfaction with his work (so far), but also disciplined him with such compromising material.

Karl Radek, international Communist leader in the USSR, he was accused of treason during the Great Purge of 1937, and confessed, after two and a half months of interrogation, at the "Trial of the Seventeen", the so-called Second Moscow Trial from January 23-30, 1937. Sentenced to 10 years of penal labour he died in 1939. "მე მეცოდებიან ის მილიონები, რომლებიც ჩვენთან იყვნენ და ამის შესახებ ზოგჯერ თვითონაც არ იცოდნენ. [I'm sorry for the millions who were with us and sometimes didn't even know about it.]"

⁷ In this article I use square brackets with page numbers to refer to Mgaloblishvili's memoirs.

It turned out that the NKVD arrested Bakhtadze the previous night. [18] Gogua advised not to use the phrase "საქმის კურსში" [to be up to date], because this can be considered as bad influence. Such kind of regulations of speech are - like in Victor Klemperers' diaries reflecting on the misuse of German language during Third Reich – an indication of the totalitarian character of language use and communication in Soviet Georgia.

On 5th **December** 1937 he was responsible to organize on behalf of the Central Executive Committee (TsIK) a folk concert to celebrate the first anniversary of the new Stalin constitution in Tbilisi. Beria has already been promoted to Moscow, when *Valerian Bakradze*, a leading party official, was told that not the whole ensemble was on stage, because some of them were drunk and Mgaloblishvili could not prevent this. For Mgaloblishvili in retrospection this defamation was the reason for his arrest the coming night (6th December 1937). One from the government staff said: "We have to check this man".

ARREST and PRISON

In a very impressive and tragic scene, Mgaloblishvili describes the episode [19-20]. After the concert at 2 AM someone knocked on the door. NKVD officers asked for his documents and told him that they have an order to arrest him. His wife and little daughter woke up and started to cry. At this moment, he tried to calm his family, giving a stereotyped explanation to them: "It's a misunderstanding, I'll go and come back. At the same time, he himself did not believe in his return, because he knew that nobody did so. His wife had to prepare one blanket and some underwear. When he tried to investigate the reason for his arrest, the officers only replied that he will have to answer at a proper place. So he was questioning himself [21], if he was a "big enemy" or a little one ("tail" or "kudi"). They took the "big" ones directly to the NKVD headquarters. Since he was taken to the Ortachala prison, he concluded to be a "little enemy". He was worried about his three little daughters (10, 3 years and 11 months), because often the wives of enemies were also arrested. More than two months he did not do anything about his family's situation and learnt only afterwards that they were normal.

Mgaloblishvili describes the humiliation they felt due to the cool hearted attitude from the head of the prison not adhering to any human dignity, nor elementary rules and laws. He continued to elaborate on the relations among the prisoners themselves and between prisoners and prison guards. Forty prisoners were sitting in one little cell, the camera, with two sharing one bed. Some were sleeping right on the floor. Those who were arrested some months ago, felt very isolated from the country's life and the fate of their families. Being well informed, he became a source of information for them about what happened outside the prison. They said: "You are probably a lucky man, because you have seen Stalin with your own eyes!" Misha was shocked. These people were five minutes from death and still idolized Stalin, the reason and main player of their demolished lives. This irrational faith was strange and he could not explain. Mgaloblishvili here ascribes the main responsibility to the "Beladi" and not the wilful executioners or all the bystanders and denunciators, who contributed in creating the cruel atmosphere of the purges. This is a first hint that Mgaloblishvili is aligning his memoirs with Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation from 1956.

Everyone inmate was carrying his own tragic history. For example, after a short conversation,

Mgaloblishvili recognized an old man as his neighbour and was surprised that the young man looked that old after sitting for five months in prison and confessing all the unreal fictional allegations, but did not receive any sentence. Even after three weeks in prison Mgaloblishvili was not informed about the reason for his arrest. This kept him speculating about his wrongs, if he might have said something anti-Soviet. These introspections followed his conversation with Valodia Gelashvili about the different forms of repression in order to sign incredible confessions. [22-23] Upon their arrival in Ortachala prison the ordinary criminals or "bytoviki" cursed the political prisoners. He was afraid that Beria might want to exterminate all persons bearing the family name Mgaloblishvili (gvari), since Germane Mgaloblishvili was arrested as a "foreign spy". Some details like him smoking the papirosy "Rekord", which tasted much better than "Pamir" offered by a Gurian inmate, occurred as well.

[24] Mgaloblishvili was obviously well connected and informed about who was arrested, mentioning the contents of the show trials in Sighnaghi, Adjara and Abkhazia. As a "cognizant" man – what can also be read as socialised in the Soviet civilisation (Kotkin 1995) - he was a valuable source of information for the other inmates, most of them being arrested during the summer. He recalled his excitement during his visit to Moscow at the Decade of Georgian Culture at the turn from 1936 to 1937 including a meeting with Stalin in the Kremlin. He identified several acquaintances as coinmates, with whom he exchanged information about who was arrested:

"All of us were convinced that there happened a big mistake, but the party will today or tomorrow correct it and the people still will continue on the right way towards communism. This belief was still unchanged among all of us. We did not even know that the leading workers had already been eliminated." (Mgaloblishvili 1990, 25)

Datiko Tabidze as the "patron of the cell" "joked" on two newly arrived arrested: "If you are a peasant, just sit there, or if you are from the gentry, come over here to us." Even presented as a "joke" it hinted at the still existing social divisions. One of those two new inmates was Volodia Gelashvili, former secretary of the Executive Commission of the Young Communist League (TsiK Komsomola). Before his arrest, he served as secretary of the Gori party raikom, and was Mgaloblishvili's very close friend, who grew very old in prison and looked like a "Siberian peasant". He was accompanied by Davit Pantsulaia, the first party secretary of the Gori raikom, both were transferred from Gori to Tbilisi five months after being imprisoned. [26] After 17 days in prison his interrogation started. Assessing his own life "objectively as well as subjectively" for any connection to anti-Soviet or anti-party activities or contacts with arrested persons, even if "unconsciously", "if I did at least in my thoughts anything non-partisan." Gelashvili explained him all the different "forms of repression." Instinctively Mgaloblishvili started to search for **potential reasons of his arrest**. Firstly, as director of the People's Creative Work Research Cabinet he dealt with the famous philologist [27] Vakhtang Kotetishvili, who was arrested about one month before him. In fact, Kotetishvili is on the "Stalin List" from 22 November 1937. For assumed counter-revolutionary activities at Tbilisi State University his office was sealed and Mgaloblishvili used his contacts with NKVD officers like Ovian for the investigation of the office. Ovian denied talking on the phone and summoned him to the NKVD HQ. Waiting at Ovian's office, he witnessed the transfer of arrested and identified one of his distant relatives, Severian Mindadze, the former party secretary of the Kaspi raikom, whom he knew from childhood. He smiled at Mgaloblishvili, who did not dare to smile back or even to talk to him. Scared of his presence he

asked another NKVD officer *Pankov* for a place to sit: - Acquaintances are looking at me and I am embarrassed - I said." Pankov offered him a chair in his office. There are no words to comment on these open forms of dissociation with the victims and the bystanders' open ignorance. Later Pankov opened Kotetishvilis' sealed cabinet and told him to take what they needed, then he would close the door again. Mgaloblishvili was astonished about this approach: "They probably know that here is nothing and that is why he behaved superficially." [28] Another reason in his introspection was that as director of the Georgian Choir and Dance association he had to sign a transfer of 3.000 (instead of 9.000) Rubels for a concert conducted by the German Stirde. This concert did not take place in summer 1937, because the orchestra was playing elsewhere. Later "there were rumours" that the Georgian conductor Evgeni Mikeladze was arrested for contacts with a German spy (according to the Stalin List of 22 November 1937 he was accused of conspiring as a member of a right wing anti-Soviet organisation with M. Orakhelashvili in Moscow). Mgaloblishvili was somewhat involved in both incidents. However, "more experienced" friends like Gelashvili explained to him that the whole procedure is not about concrete allegations, but only about the arrested answering two questions: who introduced you to a counter-revolutionary circle and whom did you introduce. Thus, the reason for investigation and interrogation is denunciation of others to get names for the list and some of the inmates were aware of this. This kind of introspective practices might have been ways to adapt his "Soviet subjectivity" to the changing party demands for demonstrating loyalty and in return receive "the trust of the party". To understand the logic of such in- and exclusion became a necessary skill in order to survive (Tikhomirov 2019, 273). [29] "A lot will happen to you, until they will get a satisfactory answer from you." Gelashvili advised him on naming people as counter-revolutionaries that the interrogators indirectly proposed to him. Counselling on the behaviour during interrogation reminded Mgaloblishvili of the inquisition. [30] He assumed that the time period until the first interrogation was given on purpose. The cellmates should prepare the arrested for the interrogation, not to lose time. In his case, he had to wait for his turn roughly three weeks until 24th December 1937. In the meantime, new inmates entered into their cell: old Besarion Mikadze, Archil Mikadze's father and the well known pediatrist Mikhako Chkhenkeli with 30 years of work experience, who was convinced being arrested because somebody wanted to get his flat and because of his brother, the Menshevik Akaki Chkhenkeli. After Mgabloblishvilis returned from exile he learned that Mikhako died in prison. Another new entry was the state cinema production worker Khavtasi, who told Mgaloblishvili about his torture during the interrogation wearing only a pyjama.

THE PROTOCOL

On 24th **December** 1937 he was told at 10**h**00 to prepare for his transfer. [31] Before his departure the inmates again advised him how to behave – for how long they will torture him, he should try to confess as little people as possible. Mgaloblishvili did not see these people again! They were transferred to the "Internal Prison" at NKVD HQ with a tougher regime. A cell for seven people was filled with 34. He could not find any acquaintances. The "starost" (i.e. an elected representative of a big cell to the administration, in summer 1938 this Tsarist tradition was abolished and replaced by an interlocutor appointed by the prison administration, Rossi 1987/91:278) was *Gogi Tsulukidze*. More than half of

the inmates were ill. Mgaloblishvili's only thoughts were about who would be his investigator. Since his time in the Komsomol from 1921, he knew many of them and later met them on the streets in Tbilisi. Then after midnight, at 12h30 or 01h00 they took him to the interrogation floor, where he heard curses and painful cries. He was brought into Armenak Ovvian's office, where he had been just some weeks ago. In December 1936 and January 1937 Ovian accompanied him to the Decade of Georgian Culture in Moscow. Another person was sitting in the corner and writing. The interrogation was conducted in Russian without any concrete accusations given. Instead, they asked Mgaloblishvili for self-accusations. When he referred to their personal acquaintance, Ovian proposed him a direct confession to the "file/okmi": "Come on, let us directly write your file, there is no need for preparatory talking, otherwise we will make you talk." The alternative was torture. [33] Mgaloblishvili first rejected the proposed confession of any counter-revolutionary activity. Ovian called "Peokhar" to torture him and Mgaloblisihvili lost his consciousness. [34] When regaining it, Ovian once again asked for his confession, but Mgaloblishvili could not speak, stayed silent and was taken back to his cell. He heard how Ovian called for Mikhail Plitin, the former party secretary from the Kinostudia as next person. Together with Alavidze, who was tortured at the same time, he returned to the cell, where the "cell active" under the lead of the starost prepared already cold tea and a relatively warm bed. Probably the only form of solidarity that the inmates were able to. On the second day the interrogation was not continued. In his memoirs Mgaloblishvili introduced Gogi Tsulukidze with whom he would spend the coming three years in the work-correction camp of Vyatka. He turned out to be a brother-in-law of his friend Kolja Chikovani, Head of the Khashuri Railway Station Communication Unit. Being an engineer and not a party member, he was arrested for participating in a "pur-marili" [35] supra in Kvishkheti with Giorgi Kalmakhelidze, the former Khashuri party secretary, who was arrested as "enemy of the people" a year later. All supra members were suspected of being members of his counterrevolutionary organization. After "heavy repressions" Tsulukidze signed his confession and the troika sentenced him to three years of correctional work for accepting a counter-revolutionary programme.

His **second interrogation** on the second day at 16h00 or 17h00 took place at Ovians' office again in a calm and quiet atmosphere. Ovian talked for one hour, not like in an interrogation, but about the Georgian Culture Decade, their visit to the Kremlin and the meeting with Stalin. [36] He asked, if Gordeladze was a "verbovshchik", what caused Mgaloblishvili to respond in the following way:

- "— How does he show me that he has done anything to me?
- Yes! He and six other men.
- Six men I don't know who it is. Maybe they are my personal enemies. As for Gordeladze, please tell me where I got my mouth? Where else was he himself, that I was too sure?

Ovian then moved on to another, as he was told by Moscow news. Finally he told me:

Good, now go to the cell/camera, I will write myself what is necessary, then I will call you
and you will sign it."

After five days without sleeping well (maybe an intentional hint to his troubled conscience), on the 31st December 1937 around midnight, they brought him again upstairs. There were no painful cries, but a "strange atmosphere" with lots of activity. Only Ovian and a typist were present in the office, he observed the same water can in the corner like last time. Ovian gave him five manuscript pages to read and sign each page, while still writing the sixth page. Mgaloblishvili realized that the pages were

written in the style of show trial stenogrammes with only the names and locations changed. It said that Gordeladze introduced him to a [37] "rightist Bukharinist organisation." Mgaloblishvili claimed that he categorically rejected to sign this testimony referring to what his grandchildren might think of him, when they will read these unbelievable allegations. Ovian told him:

"— If you do not sign, you will be shot as a secret enemy, I have no time to talk. I told him: — It does not matter, this testimony is still [sufficient] for shooting, then it is better to shoot me without my confirmation."

After the typist had beaten him with a stick, lying on the floor, Mgaloblishvili signed the testimony and realized that there Gordeladze has introduced him to an anti-Soviet group, but he did not introduce others. He took it as a sign for hope. [38] Mgaloblishvili assumed that at New Year's Eve a session of the troika committee decided on the fate of each prisoner – and he was right. In the Archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, we found the "Protocol No. 79" signed by the Troika members of the fourth department UGB NKVD GSSR on December 31, 1937. The troika accused him of being a member of a counter-revolutionary right-wing organisation, recruited in 1936 by the "active member" Yermolai (Boris) Gordeladze, on whose instruction he conducted "harmful actions" in the field of arts. They sentenced him to ten years labour-correction camp starting from December 7, 1937. The 6-page testimony signed by him was missing.⁸

Mgaloblishvili continues to tell about several other fates like the five young trade unionists (Gegechkori, Kuchava et al.) from Tbilisi State University that expected their execution, the homesick restaurant owner *Akaki Menabde*, who returned from Harbin (China) after 25 years with his whole first class restaurant, *Aprasion Jibuti*, the head of the Subtropical Department of the People's Commissariat for Agriculture. Both were waiting for their interrogation for six months. On 31st December *Apolon Kutateladze*, a former exiled Socialist-Revolutionary, whom they arrested because of another sentenced Kartsivadze's confession, was transferred to the prison. [39-40]

On January 1, 1938, the NKVD did not work and the prisoners had a day to rest "at least physically." On the next day, they expected the troika sentences and their executions. In the morning at 11 o'clock a soldiers' car left to prepare the mass graves, officer Zarginava - the "messenger of death" - announced the names of those to be taken out in the evening. [41] At midnight, the soldiers entered the cell corridors taking the inmates out. In Mgaloblishvili's cell it was Apolon Kutateladze, who disseminated his packages of "Temp" cigarettes for the inmates and the better "Rekord" ones for those to be executed. Aprasion Jibuti was taken out without having been interrogated. [42] Mgaloblishvili as well had to leave his cell and expected to see a judge or at least someone who would tell them the sentence. Instead, in his office Ovian opened him his troika sentence of eight years of exile to a labour-correction camp. The troika considered him a clever man, who will be transferred to a prison and then send somewhere, "from where you have to return with a Lenin medal!" [43] Ovian warned him: "Don't tell the other inmates, that I told you the troika decision! This is not allowed, but I could not stand it to tell it to you!" Mgaloblishvili felt like being resurrected from death, when - to the astonishment of the other inmates – he was returned to his cell. Only in the night, he told the trusted inmates what had happened to him. Menabde remarked that over the last five months he was the first one whom they told his sentence. [44] Thus he survived, but according to the Stalin List from

⁸ Archive of MIA 1937: Mgaloblishvili case

January 3, 1938 at least 316 others were executed and buried in an unknown mass grave (Memorial 2019). As a comparison with the Stalin List showed, not all the names of those executed mentioned in Mgaloblishvili's memoirs were on that list.

Mgaloblishvili continued to give evidence about the people he met along his way in the prison, the retired English teacher Tsintsadze, an exiled revolutionary sentenced to 12 years "katorga" in Siberia after 1906, who he fled to Australia and returned only after the revolution in 1921. He was arrested on the street, on January 2, 1938, interrogated during the whole night. [45] Accused of spying for the Japanese secret service back in 1906, he also mentioned that maybe on Rustaveli he has seen Mgaloblishvili's face. Mgaloblishvili was furious, because you do not name a person without any reason behind to the interrogators. [46] Fortunately in the evening of January 3, Mgaloblishvili was transferred to the building for sentence at Ortachala prison. Having undergone "common procedures" (search/requisition, medical assessment etc.) he was put into Cell No. 4, which united several rooms with about 250 inmates. Instead of beds, there were 12 times 30 cm broad lines on the floor per person. From January 3 until March 5 he stayed there. Prison life consisted of a daily bread norm of 600 gr., ordinary criminals as "parasite elements" cursed "us, the contras" [47] and tried to steal bread and sell it to "contras". He also he describes the pyramids of authority up to the "starost" inside the prison [48] and the election of the honourable Misha Pirveli (former director of Soviet farm and raikom secretary of Kutaisi), who replaced Adamashvili and organised the dissemination of food. However, upon his protest he was taken to the kartser and returned only after a week. Then he declined being a starost and his predecessor Adamishvili was re-elected. [49]

At the end of January, beginning of February the VKP (b) party CK plenum criticized "slanderers" or "defamators" (*tsilismts'ameblebi*), which caused joy in the cell: finally, the party realized the truth and all expected to be released. One cell paid 750 Roubles for the newspaper "musha" (Worker) with all the materials from the plenary to the hairdresser, who asked them to return the issue to him, so that he can pass it on to the next cell and thus made a fortune.

While we learn that the news from the outside world entered the prison, we also understand once again that Mgaloblishvili was an "insider" to the political system, able to decipher the hidden messages in between the lines. He was not so optimistic, assumed a decline in arrests and repression, but not their release. [50] The party resolution did not mention the thousands of arrested people in a campaign conducted in the whole Soviet Union. He concluded that there would be no official recognition of the repressions. He discussed the resolution with his close inmates Platon Danelia and Nikoloz Amiragov. The latter stated in full awareness of the party leadership's behaviour:

"You are right, there have been many such documents in the history of our [party] apparatus, just recall the article 'Dizzy by Success" or other earlier examples. This document is designed to blame someone else for their own mistake. Now, a few more men will be arrested as slanderers and the case will be over." [51]

Stalin's speech "Dizzy with Success" (*tavbrudakhveva c'armatebisagan*) was published in the *Pravda* on March 2, 1930. The Soviet leader called for a halt to the allegedly successful policy of collectivization, what actually meant an abysmal failure at a terrifyingly high human and social cost. Again, we can track these party or state workers' insider knowledge and skills to interpret the messages sent out from Moscow.

VYATLAG - Surviving in the labour correction camps [52]

The last part of Mgaloblishvili's memoirs is related to his experience of the labour correction camp in Vyatka/Kirov (Vyatlag). During the night of March 5, 1938 Mgaloblishvili was transported from Ortachala prison to the Navtlughi Railway Station. [53] Obviously nobody knew where they would go and so some guessed they were about to go to Siberia, others to the Far East or Komi Republic. Wherever they had to go, they believed that it would be better than in the Tbilisi prison, in moral as well as in physical terms. "For the death, however, it doesn't matter, where we would die, in Tbilisi or somewhere in the ice" Thus did he conclude his introspection, where we today cannot tell what is fact and what fiction.

On March 22, 1938 they arrived in the middle of nowhere without any buildings around, leaving the train in 1.5m high snow. With this insecurity about their future – execution or labour camp – "they wanted us to lose any hope", as if experts specialised in sadistic methods provided recommendations on how to treat them. After roll appeal, they had to marsh some 1.5 - 2 kilometres to some wooden huts, where they found some shelter. He recognised the former *starost* from the Tbilisi prison, Gogi (Giorgi) Tsulukidze and asked him where they were. Tsulukidze replied to Mgaloblishvili that they are now in the Vyatka Labour-Correction Camp (*Vyatlag*). The local historian Viktor Berdinskikh (2001), who investigated the history of Vyatlag. dates its beginnings in fall 1937 with the preparations. It was officially established by NKVD decree only on February 5, 1938, so that Mgaloblishvili's arrival coincided with the opening of operations in Vyatlag.

Mgaloblishvili refers to Alexander Herzen's autobiography "My Past and Thoughts/*Byloe i dumy*", who spent three years in exile in city of Vyatka (renamed 1935 into Kirov; Rossi 1987/91:54), but not like him in a forest. Comparing himself as a "political prisoner" with the Russian populist intellectuals of the 19th century, he indicated his Soviet socialisation including the cultural memory of Tsarist repressions, which became more common among "political prisoners" from the 1960s to 1980s as they often presented themselves in the Samizdat press after Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation (Putz 2016). [54] In that time, Mgaloblishvili concedes retrospectively as the writer of his memoirs, he did not have a chance to reflect or draw any conclusions, but tried to survive. After three-four days in the Vyatka Dissemination camp with approximately 3.000 people, they were disseminated in brigades with 150-200 inmates each to the group camps (*lagpunkt*) located in the taiga without any chance to escape. Therefore, only three guards accompanied them on a full-days' marsh to their final camp. Upon arrival, they received food rations for several days and had snow to drink. Next to some small barracks for invalids, they had to set up their tents in the cold. [55]

The guards conducted a special roll appeal of inmates by name, then they had to reply with their first and fathers' name, birthday and the article of their charge before they could enter the tent one by one. Once a Jewish Russian accountant from Tbilisi tried to shorten the long row waiting in the cold and directly went to the officer reading the names aloud, but they punished him for this misbehavior and assigned the status "kre". While some have a figure after their article 50, which

^{9 &}quot;Kre" is a colloquial version of "k-r" for counter-revolutionary political prisoners. First the Criminal Codex and the Correctional-Labour Code distinguished between "workers" and "non-working elements", but later they began to distinguish only by articles for "k-r" and ordinary criminals (bytoviki). The "Statute on ITL" (1930) classified the "k-r" as the worst category of prisoners, who

indicates the offense you are sentenced for (Art. 58.1 Treason of the homeland, 58.5 Terrorism, 58.6 Espionage, 58.7 Wrecking, sabotage, 58.10 Counter-revolutionary activities, etc.) "Kre" was applied to those inmates, whose charges were even worse than Art. 58 Criminal Code. "What kind of crime did we commit that even the Criminal Code was not sufficient? But who would have answered our question?!" Before entering their tent, they had to collect wooden planks and branches as flooring to set up beds on them. They received some tools for it, but had to leave the tie-strings of their shoes. [56] After that work, they fell asleep like dead without feeling any cold. On the second day, they formed six brigades of 25 inmates each. Mgaloblishvili noticed that the camp administration appointed only ordinary criminals (bytoviki) to all the administrative posts. "[W]e, the political [prisoners]" only got assignments in the sphere of production. This is exactly Mgaloblishvili's position as a Soviet state workers and party members - outcasted by the Party as alien counter-revolutionary elements - were distancing themselves from "ordinary criminals". The party used them as "socially close" elements in the informal governance of the camps, which became the origins of the "criminal world" with the "thieves-in-law". Due to memoirs by vocal intellectuals research neglected this social group of the Gulag until lately (Putz 2007). Together with the construction of the camp, improvement of their living conditions Mgaloblishvili describes their experience of denigration from these "Elements of Criminal Justice" [57], where he applies a strategy of verbal de-humanisation in response to the real, physical one. On the other hand, he describes the internal group cohesion based on ethnic grounds. [58] More than 500 out of a total of 1.500 prisoners he assumed to be Georgians. That would have been one third. The working brigades of ten often were formed according to ethnic origin, where the Georgians were not assumed to run away and were let out to their work assignments in the woods without a guard. The local historian Viktor Berdinskikh (2001), who investigated the history of Vyatlag since its beginnings in fall 1937 does not mention the Georgians at all. It was officially established only on February 5, 1938, so that Mgaloblishvili's arrival coincided with the opening of Vyatlag.

Elepter Tsintsadze (ელეფთერ ცინცაძე) dies, commander of the 6th Georgian territorial legion, Head of Military Department of Tbilisi City Council; the following three years no Georgian died in the Vjatlager', Georgians had beds, luggage (bargi) and sleep, the Russians generally not, higher death toll, contacts and food from families from their homeland, without this additional food parcels many inmates died of hunger, illness and depletion (Mgaloblishvili 1990, 60)

After one year they started the construction of a paper mill/fabric Elefter Tsintsadze dies, commander of the 6th Georgian territorial legion, Head of Military Department of Tbilisi City Council; the following three years no Georgian died in the "Vjatlag", Georgians had beds, luggage

[&]quot;cannot be hired to any administrative-economic positions" (C3 22: 248, Art. 16). For "k-r" any early release for good work was first limited, then completely cancelled. In 1943 and 1948 for some "k-r" categories camps have been established with a specially strict regime (K.T.R.; spetslag). In 1947, a secret instruction of the minister of Internal Affairs forbade the use of "k-r" by their profession; they could only do general work. As a rule, "k-r" were ineligible for Soviet amnesties (Rossi 1987/1991,121).

[&]quot;Dehumanization is viewed as a central component to intergroup violence, because it is frequently the most important precursor to moral exclusion, the process by which stigmatized groups are placed 'outside the boundary in which moral values, rules, and considerations of fairness apply.' (Opotow 1990, 1). Groups that are morally excluded do not count in a moral sense. Consequently, anything that is done to someone who is morally excluded is permissible, no matter how heinous the action." (Goof et al. 2008, 293)

and sleep, the Russians generally not, higher death toll, contacts and food from families from their homeland, without this additional food parcels many inmates died of hunger, illness and depletion (ibid. 61)

The Vyatlag report for 1939 admits the total economic failure of forced labour in the camp:

"The annual result of the camp's economic activity is completely unsatisfactory. The main reason for not fulfilling a very realistic plan and having big losses is that the system of economic management was not based on economic growth from top to bottom. This naturally led to the failure to fulfil the plan, unprofitable work and the monstrous licentiousness of the plant workers' majority in a rational use of labour, the creation of cultural and living conditions for the workers, then they on their part will not show the slightest initiative for the introduction of a simple mechanization.
» // «Годовой итог хозяйственной деятельности лагеря совершенно неудовлетворителен и основной причиной невыполнения вполне реального плана и больших потерь является то, что система хозяйственного руководства сверху донизу не была поставлена на основы хозяйственного роста, что естественно привело к невыполнению плана, убыточной работе и чудовищной распущенности большинства хозяйственных работников в деле рационального использования рабочей силы, создания культурно-бытовых условий для рабочих, когда с их стороны не проявляется ни малейшей инициативы по введению простейшей механизации.» (Государственный Архив социально-политической истории Кировской области (ГАСПИ КО). Ф. 5991. Д. 1143. Л. 6/н. Quote Belykh 2010, 47).

Self-justification against his signed confession: After Ezhov's replacement by Lavrenti Beria as head of NKVD some prisoners, also Georgians were released and rehabilitated; MM also entrusted to write a letter of complaint to appeal for release, where he explained how his confession was written and corrected the false "accusations" (of leaving one squire without funding, staff cut at the National orchestra by seven staff only after collective decision). He firmly stated in his letter that after his explanations he could not see any kind of sabotage in his behaviour, since he only implemented his, Beria's, decision. Not knowing the effect of his complaint in December 1939 he received the decision/resolution of the Georgian NKVD that his file has been checked again and his sentence has been reduced from ten to three years, so that in a years' time he would be released. At the end the testimony states "Tbilisi, 1972" (Mgaloblishvili 1990, 72-75).

Conclusion: The Consequences of de-Stalinisation for Europe

During the repressions in 1937-38 about 682 000 people were shot, 2 million were detained, an average of 1,000 executions a day, 221 members of the Academy of Science were among the repressed, 510 PhD professors, 574 scientists were killed only in Moscow. In Georgia – there were at least 3,600 people executed. After Stalin's death on March 9, 1953, the question was how to cope with this legacy arose on the party level, but also on the private level of those who survived the repressions. Jörg Baberowski, historian at Humboldt University of Berlin, dealt with the developments in politics and society in the Soviet Union after Stalin's death. He ascribed Nikita Khrushchev, party leader from 1953 until 1964, a central place as the "Father of

de-Stalinization" in order to cope with the serious human violations of Stalinist repressions as they have been described in Mgaloblishvili's memoirs. In addition to the necessity to restore the capacity of the party and government to act after Stalin's despotic autocracy, Baberowski designated de-Stalinization also as a project of morality. Khrushchev did not want to continue living with (even his own) guilt. The methods of the Red Terror, the "Game of Death" inside the leadership had to find an end, be (openly?) discussed and sentenced. For him the de-Stalinization represented a "civilizational achievement" and "peace mission" hardly acknowledged in the West. In favour of his thesis, so Baberowski, would speak that Khrushchev, if he would have been alone about his own power, could have acted differently. The public accusations against senior party comrades like Beria, Kaganovich, Molotov and himself might have put at risk his support among the functionaries. The reforms made many comrades fear for their posts, so that Khrushchev's support waned and he was eventually deposed in 1964, but stayed alive even enjoying some privileges. The Ukrainian would have been similar to Gorbachev, a tragic figure in the history of the Soviet Union. He represented a forgotten leader, while Stalin's memory is easily revived again.

The de-Stalinization under Khrushchev would stand for the revitalization of the Communist Party, the strengthening of the judiciary with a simultaneous loss of power of the secret services and the renunciation of violence. Because of the success of these efforts, Khrushchev was able to leave the Kremlin alive as a free man with a service car. Such a process would have been impossible under Stalin's reign. In his commentary, the writer Gerd Koenen accused the Russian society of its inability to deal with its own history. Why did the society assess Khrushchev's reforms not positively? Why does the relevant literature on the subject originate from abroad instead of Russia? As before, the "senseless" repressions under Stalin, the victims, the suffering and the unresolved grief would serve as a justification for the victory.

Until today the history of the perpetrators in the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs and the State Security Service (KGB) in Georgia are not critically assessed. Only a dictionary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs provides some biographical information about the heads of the security service (Tushurashvili and Jakhua 2013). That is by far not sufficient for academic purposes and public reflection on this traumatizing period. "Memorial" presents the so-called "Stalinist lists" of people convicted with Stalin's and his closest associates in the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks personal sanctions to overwhelmingly executions.

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