

**GEORGIA'S GREATEST MODERNIST POET UNDER THE SOVIET  
TOTALITARIAN REGIME<sup>1</sup>****Maia Ninidze**

Doctor of Philological sciences,  
Chief Scientific-Researcher,  
Department of Georgian Literature,  
Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University,  
1 Ilia Chavchavadze Avenue, Tbilisi 0179, Georgia.  
+995 599 40 23 86, maia.ninidze@tsu.ge  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6552-2163>

**Natia Sikharulidze**

Doctor of Philology,  
Senior Researcher,  
Department of Galaktionology,  
Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University,  
1 Ilia Chavchavadze Avenue, Tbilisi 0179, Georgia.  
+995 557 11 03 87, natia.sikharulidze@tsu.ge  
<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-7704-7700>

**Levan Beburishvili**

Doctor of Philology  
Senior Researcher,  
Department of Galaktionology,  
Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University,  
1 Ilia Chavchavadze Avenue, Tbilisi 0179, Georgia  
+995 593 16 20 44, levan.beburishvili@tsu.ge  
<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-0270-6302>

**Abstract.** The article studies the influence of the Soviet Union totalitarian regime on the famous Georgian poet – Galaktion Tabidze’s (1891-1959) life and works. The first two chapters refer to the legitimacy of using the terms “Totalitarianism” and “modernism” in this context and give a short survey of the general views about the tasks. Chapter three discusses the reasons why the Soviet leaders condemned Modernism and oppressed modernist authors. Next three chapters refer to one particular poet – Galaktion Tabidze and his efforts to survive and keep publishing his poetry. The detailed analysis of the changes made by him in his old (pre-Soviet) poems vividly reflect the directives of the Communist leaders. His failed attempt to publish a poem about the brutality of the totalitarian regime against Georgian rebellions demonstrates the strength of censorship. Galaktion Tabidze was not executed but was led to suicide step by step. We consider that literary works of other writers should also be studied from this point of view to make a full picture how the totalitarian regime oppressed writers and artists, controlled and influenced literature and art.

**Key words:** Galaktion Tabidze (1891-1959), Georgian poetry, totalitarianism, ideology, censorship

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## Introduction

After being under Russian rule for more than a century, Georgia gained freedom only in 1918. Favorable conditions for the free development of art provided by the first Georgian Republic was especially important for Modernism, which was a new and dominant literary movement at that time. Unfortunately, the republic existed for only three years. In 1921 Georgia was occupied again, this time by the Bolshevik Russia and soon the country was forced to enter the Soviet Union, which in course of time became a typical Totalitarian country (Conquest, 2000: 73-87).

Before starting to discuss the influence of the oppressive regime of totalitarianism on the 20-th century greatest Georgian poet Galaktion Tabidze (1891-1959), it is necessary to say a few words about the legitimacy of using the terms “Totalitarianism” and “modernism” in this context. There are quite different approaches towards totalitarianism among scholars but most of them admit that the Soviet Union in the period of Stalin’s leadership was a totalitarian country. e. g. Jay Bergman says that “For many dissidents, totalitarianism was a term so self-evidently descriptive of the Soviet system that they felt no need to define it or to indicate its identifying characteristics” (Bergman, 1998: 248, 254). The similar approach is demonstrated in Cassinelli’s book „Totalitarianism, Ideology, And Propaganda“. He considers that the communists more than Nazis controlled the method and content of science, history, and art” (Cassinelli, 1960: 79, 91, 92). As for the term “modernism”, we agree with Dennis Ioffe’s definition that “both Symbolism and avant-garde were part of one common cultural condition, occurring during a continuous period between 1890 and 1930, which may be traditionally referred to as modernism” (Ioffe, 2006: 24) and we also share Bela Tsipuria’s statement that in Georgia of the period it was a dominant literary movement (ts'ipuria, 2010: 15). Concerning Galaktion Tabidze’s belonging to the movement, it should be said that still before Russian annexation (in 1921) he had already written hundreds of symbolist poems and was an author of the book of masterpieces „Crâne aux fleurs artistiques“ (“artistic flowers”), published in 1919 (doiashvili, 2004: 80).

As we are going to discuss influences of the totalitarian regime, it is reasonable to compare its characteristic features with the situation existing before the regime. It is widely confirmed that until the Russian invasion the capital of Georgia – Tbilisi was an ideal place for not only Georgian but foreign artists as well. “Writers and artists of various inclinations colonised the city, founding journals, holding events, and opening taverns where they could meet to discuss the latest movements in European, Russian, and Georgian art, literature, and philosophy (Hardiman, 2017: 234-235). Galaktion Tabidze, nicknamed a “chevalier in the order of loneliness” did not belong to any artistic group of the period and had to overcome all the difficulties in solitude.

As modernism was condemned by the soviet regime, a great number of modernist texts had not been published until the Union was dissolved in 1991 and it was very difficult for scholars to study Modernism history comprehensively. Therefore, the interest of the scholars towards this literary movement was greatly increased in the post-soviet period (Rougle, 1982: 387) when Modernist studies changed dramatically (Bush, 2010: 139) and it became possible to reassess Russian, as well as Georgian Modernism “in its full European context” (Hutchings, 1997). The most important novelty about Galaktion Tabidze’s heritage is that 1687 units of his archival documents that were unavailable before (as they were preserved in his nephew’s family) have been digitized and became accessible for scholars. A number of examples referred to in this article with the abbreviation GTDA (Galaktion Tabidze’s Digital Archive) are cited from those unknown archival documents.

As a great part of our study materials were unpublished manuscripts and archival documents, alongside with the historical, socio-political and cultural study methods we applied some textual scholarship, source study and corpus study ones as well. Investigation of the new material represented in the article will not only enrich our knowledge about the influence of the totalitarian regime on one particular poet Galaktion Tabidze and his works but will enable us to enhance interdisciplinary approach and make some general conclusions in the historical, social and cultural fields.

## Methods

The results obtained in the article are based on inductive, deductive, comparative and interdisciplinary methods of research.

## Results and Discussion

**1. The struggle against Modernism.** It is considered that „the hostile attitude to Modernism in the USSR was determined by ideological-political factors” (T. Simyan, 2018: 15). One of the particular reasons of this hostility was the fact that Marxists thought of Modernism “as a derivative of bourgeois life” (Bell, 1987: 127). Before we start to discuss how Bolshevik government oppressed Georgian Modernists, let’s recollect Modernism aesthetics and analyze why it was so annoying for the Soviet State. Modernism was “characterized by a shift from communication of some external reality to one that lies inside the artist” (Wohl, 2002: 601), Modernists reformed “the rule of reason by revealing the power of subjectivity, imagination, emotion, and irrational drives” (Wohl, 2002: 614) and they expressed deep-lying emotions that “represented the psychology of the artist” (Wohl, 2002: 577). Bolsheviks appreciated none of these values. Any expression of subjectivity was not acceptable for them as they were oriented at creating a homogenous, faceless, impersonal society. Modernists considered that art is unconscious, instinctive and has “an abstract language of signs” (Wohl, 2002: 577) while Bolsheviks demanded on its clarity and stability. Ambiguity and hidden sense were unacceptable for them as they were afraid of anything that was beyond their understanding. As the perception of some artistic figures requires corresponding knowledge and the experience that the soviet general readers did not have, allusions and other kinds of intertexts were incomprehensible for them. “The generation of Soviet readers (and even the professionals – literary critics) educated on kitsch and social realism sometimes did not understand “the products” of modernists (T. Simyan, 2018: 15). According to the Bolshevik party directives, a verse should have a plot, should be one-dimensional and absolutely understandable even for the uneducated masses. Besides, they demanded that poetry was by all means optimistic and praised the Soviet way of life.

Bolsheviks did not approve Modernists’ “new and unusual techniques of verbal and artistic expressive creation” (Ioffe, 2006: 24), as neither the form nor the artistic value of poetry were considered priorities for them. They also denounced the influence of the creative method on the modernist authors’ lifestyle (Ioffe, 2006: 26). Due to the aforementioned, it is no surprising that „high modernism, characterized by a striving for representational freedom, and by the quest for truth and establishing individuality was considered the main threat to Soviet demagogues” (Ratiani, 2011: XIV). As a result of such confrontation, Modernism in Georgia, as well as in other soviet republics was forcibly prevented.

The Communist propaganda fought not only against Modernism as a literary movement but against some particular genres of literature as well. Among them was lyrics (plotless verses, expressing the author’s feelings and emotions) (beburishvili, 2022: 189). In the Soviet poet Ilo Mosashvili’s (1896-1954) opinion Lyrics was useless as it “could not go deep into the complex and varied processes of the socialist practice” (mosashvili, 1936: 2). Another soviet critic George Natroshvili expressed the same attitude figuratively, saying that the lyrics had to leave the highlands of the proletarian literature.

The Bolsheviks didn’t start repressions of the writers as soon as they came to power. Still in 1925 the Central Committee resolution was promising to ensure a relative autonomy to art (McLean, 1962: 408). It was obvious that the Bolsheviks did not like Modernism but in the beginning, they thought that if they motivated peasants and workers to start writing poems and if they provided them with journals for publication, these proletarian poets would soon replace non-proletarian ones. Therefore they founded a number of journals: „Prolemapi“, „Kura“, „Mertskhali“ etc. that mostly published poetry of the working classes. These periodicals had legitimation to criticize anybody who had different creative methods and artistic visions.

In 1927 twelve Georgian writers, among them Galaktion Tabidze, created a literary association, different from the proletarian one, called “Aripioni” but the Soviet State did everything to close down this group of differently thinking authors. The Soviet Leaders knew it was very difficult to obey freethinking people but soon they also realized that it was impossible to make real writers from talentless workers. In 1932 first in Russia and then in other republics of the Soviet State Associations

of the Proletarian Writers were abolished and were created Unions of the Soviet Writers. No gratitude was expressed towards those members of the abolished associations who strictly followed every order of the government, including persecution and harassment of the best Modernist writers. Some of the proletarian writers who for some years had been the executors of the “party directives” were exiled or shot, among them: Kale Vekua, Grigol Khoperia, Pridon Naroushvili, Benito Buachidze etc.

In the period since 1932 the main strategy of the Soviet leaders was to intimidate and win over to their side the best writers (as well as composers, painters, actors etc.) It was the period of the strongest ideological oppression and fierce struggle against Modernism. As a result of this new strategy some of the greatest writers escaped abroad (Grigol Robakidze), some were shot (Michael Javakhishvili, Titsian Tabidze, Nikolo Mitsishvili) and some were led to suicide (Paolo Iashvili). In 1937 on the 10-th congress of the Georgian Bolsheviks, their leader Lavrenti Beria solemnly declared that all the anti-Soviet groupings and directions that existed among Georgian writers, painters and poets, had been eliminated (beria, 1937: 9). It was the most violent period and the most acute stage in the “totalitarianization of culture“ (met'reveli, 2022: 185).

In the period of the World War II the leaders of the Soviet Union realized the importance of the patriotic motivation of the population and allowed authors to write about love of homeland and the importance to defend it but soon after the war was over, a new swathe of oppressions was started (Yarmolinsky, 1960). In 1946 The communist party took a new decision against cosmopolitanism and decadence-phormalistic recurrences and started a new attack against writers, especially those who started their career and became popular before the communist regime. Writers fell under greater influence of censorship and tried to find the way out in the multivalence of literature, using allegory, satire, irony, absurd and other literary means (Clark, 2000: 12). The instinct of self-preservation and the necessity to escape from the censorship clutches sometimes made writers to create such incredibly interesting artistic images that some of modern critics named this process “the muse of censorship” (Sýkora, 2019: 10).

**2. Georgia’s annexation and Galaktion Tabidze.** Galaktion Tabidze was a reformer of Georgian verse, a founder of the contemporary poetic thinking and the greatest Georgian modernist poet. In January 1921 Georgian literary circles elected him “the king of poets”. He was one more Georgian poet lead to suicide by the soviet totalitarianism but it happened not in the years of great massacre but much later – in 1959. He lived under the regime for 38 years and underwent all those stages of repressions discussed above. Therefore, his poetry reflects the influence of totalitarianism over literature best of all. Galaktion committed a suicide six years after Stalin’s death (1953) and this period is not unanimously considered totalitarian but according to a great number of historians, the Soviet regime was continuing oppressing its citizens (Ninidze, 2011: 153) and was still trying “to reshape both the individual and the larger society” (Gleason, 1996: 27). Galaktion Tabidze had very sensitive, free-spirited and individualistic nature and it was especially hard for him to live under totalitarianism – under the regime, which had complete influence over an individual. This regime controlled not only where a person “lived and worked, who his friends were... but also the very determination of the kind of human being he should be (Bergman, 1998: 258).

Before the annexation of Georgia Galaktion Tabidze worked as a secretary in the government office of the Georgian republic and as an executive secretary of the newspaper “The National Guardsman”. It was the newspaper in which 5 days before the invasion of Russian troops in the capital of Georgia, he published the poem “On the Premises of Tbilisi”. The poem reminded the Georgians of their past when they used to manage to defeat several times greater troops of the invaders. The last words of the poem were that Tbilisi will never fall but the author’s expectations didn’t come true. Despite the fierce and dedicated resistance of the Georgian Guardians, Russian Bolsheviks took the capital of Georgia and announced the soviet rule. Galaktion Tabidze had to escape to his native village and to burn a greater part of his archive. Therefore, among the remnants of his old manuscripts there are some lists of the poems a greater part of which have not survived.

As we have mentioned above, in the beginning of their rule Bolsheviks did not reveal much aggression towards writers. So, Galaktion Tabidze returned to Tbilisi, continued creative and social activities and tried to coexist with the new order. He became a member of some literary boards and even started to issue a periodical named “Galaktion Tabidze’s journal”.

In 1924 the communists suppressed Georgians' uprising against their rule with extreme brutality. Some of the rebels were killed in the fight, some were exiled to Siberia but the greatest part of them together with some civilians were locked in the railway carriages and shot. Soon after the tragedy Galaktion Tabidze published his poem "Recollecting the days when there was a flash" in which the rebellion of Georgians was reflected only with some hints. Before bringing the text for publication he removed from it such words as "Tbilisi", "Avlabari", "Georgian grief" (pointing directly at its real motivation), moved the action of the poem abroad and gave the heroes foreign names Lucio and Eva. Having undergone all these changes, the poem passed censorship and was published but soon after its publication somebody "recognized" the pictures represented in it ("winners were strangling captives with their savage hands / were cutting as weeds, shooting and killing in the name of people", "there was a train beyond the station full of countless dead bodies") and reported the Communist leaders that the poem referred to the suppression of the 1924 rebellion. As a result, the whole circulation of the journal was expropriated and the pages with Galaktion Tabidze's text were cut out. The author – Galaktion Tabidze was imprisoned only for a few weeks but even such a short period in the Soviet prison had crucially destructing influence on his personality. He was so frustrated and frightened that after returning home changed not only his image but voice as well – started to talk in a thin voice in order to look like a weak person who cannot be a threat for the state. Later, he started to drink and even when did not drink tried to look as a drunken. There are a number of recollections of his contemporaries that describe how Galaktion, being absolutely sober, moistened his beard with wine to make people think that he was drunken. Sýkora, Michal analyzing Philip Roth's book writes that in totalitarianism poets sometimes pretended to be a fool or a lunatic to get relative freedom as an internal exile is "an ideal form that guarantees peace for writing" (Sýkora, 2019: 5).

Galaktion Tabidze realized that if he wanted to continue writing and publish his works he had to pay some tribute to the soviet poetry. In the second half of 1920-ies among his lyrical masterpieces appear poems glorifying the revolution, dedicated to the leaders of the proletariat – Vladimer Lenin, Joseph Stalin etc. His real feelings about the "tribute" is frankly expressed in one passage from his poem: "Saying one and seeing absolutely else / how will my heart endure this dual personality" (t'abidze, 2008 a: 231).

Since 1921, alongside with opportunistic poems Galaktion wrote a great number of lyrical masterpieces with sincere feelings and emotions but after being edited for publication only little part of the sincerity remained explicit in them. Galaktion was a professional poet, he had no other occupation and therefore it was vitally important for him not only to write but to publish those written texts as well. That's why he felt some kind of self-realization even in those cases when his poems were published in deadly changed versions. Among hundreds of people praising his poetry, only few could guess what was conceived by him under some passages or how those poems might look like if there was no censorship and self-censorship. Still, Galaktion, who was used to being number one poet and to being recognized in the streets, could not live without the readers' permanent attention.

Among a hundred poems published by Galaktion in an issue of *Mnatobi* in 1925, one is named "The houses are smiling". The poem evokes only positive feelings: cosiness and peacefulness but as the autograph reveals the first copy of the text was absolutely different. Comparison of the words struck out in the autograph by the author himself with those ones, overwritten by him reveal the main essence of self-censorship. Here are some examples. On the left of the slash are given first variants and on the right – final ones: "The snake is fussing in the leaves" / "The wind is fussing in the roses"; "The sun makes the days tasteless / Nothing makes the days tasteless anymore"; "The houses are devastated" / "The houses are smiling"; "There are sighs, starvation and cold" / "Starvation and cold have disappeared"; "Little, hungry dogs control dark streets and lanes" / "Peaceful dogs devotedly defend streets"; "Nobody has a shelter and even hope is neighbourless" / "Everybody found a shelter who was neighbourless"; "We had a fairy-tale of peace and the world dies calmly" / "A fairy-tale of the past disappeared and now it's time for the world to calm down" (t'abidze, 2016: 483) As the first and the second titles of the poem were "finis" (the end) and "The first Autumn", its first version should be written in the first Autumn after Georgia's occupation by the Bolshevik Russia, in 1921. If we didn't consider the political situation of the period, we might think that the author changed his views but it would not be right – in that case the poet would simply write new poems and not remake the old ones. Galaktion had inexhaustible creative energy, he was one of the most prolific writers and

it would be much easier for him to write something new than to overwrite each stanza of old poems. Therefore, we consider that the changes made in the texts are demonstrative and deliberately representing the traces of rough, forcible intervention.

The poem “The native ephemera” was dedicated to the ephemeral independence of Georgia (1918-1921). The author made fewer but more essential changes to make this poem publishable. He deleted the phrase: “Georgia in front of the threat” and words of dedication to the great patriot, a member of the National-democratic party main committee and a deputy member of the Georgian constituent assembly Shalva Amirejibi (1887-1943). For the censorship disorientation the author falsified the date, indicated that the poem was written in 1915, years before the Russian intervention. Galaktion could not remake in the similar way his symbolistic poems that were published before 1921. Therefore, he simply “forgot” most of them not to let the party leadership have more claims against him but in case of the most well-known masterpieces of the period he had to look for some other ways of self-justification. The texts of some diaries reveal how consistently Galaktion worked to make the party propagandists think that his poems had nothing hostile towards the soviet order and that, on the contrary, were absolutely acceptable for them. One of the diary entries says: “Let’s try to give “Blue horses” realistic foundation” (t’abidze, 2008 b: 26). “Blue horses” was a symbolistic poem written by the poet in 1916 and it was a symbol of Galaktion’s poetry in General. So, the poet had to defend this text from critics by some imaginative pseudo-scholarly basis. Besides, it is known how Galaktion encouraged critics to look for the revolutionary ideas in his well-known symbolistic masterpiece “Me and night”.

In 1936, working on the first volume of his collected works, Galaktion wrote in the diary that the whole material should be looked through to make corrections. In the same note he specifies what kind of corrections are meant. One of them is to cut out religious themes and images (angels, churches etc.) (t’abidze, 2008 c: 351). A good example of such corrections is the poem “Masons” in which Galaktion replaced the phrase: “Christ stood up, you can’t see secret strength under his arm” with this one: “People stood up, now you will see secret strength of his muscles (GTDA 353)”. In one of his diaries he painted a church in a jail cell and made the inscription “10 years since sovietization” (GTDA 61). The communists fought against all religions as their ideology was like a faith and didn’t leave space for other religions.. Bolsheviks shaved priests by force, ruined churches or used them as buildings for a bathhouse (Nadzaladevi’s church in Tbilisi), a juvenile detention centre (New Athos Monastery in Western Georgia) an abbatoir (in Dighomi church), a warehouse, a stable, a shop etc. and the Soviet Government demanded that writers shared this strategy.

According to the above-mentioned diary entry another thing that Galaktion was going to replace in his poems was “nationalistic elements”. In this regard he has made changes not only in the texts but the titles too: the title “The Native language” was changed into “Revolutionary hyperbolic language” (GTDA №213) the title “A Georgian woman” into “A woman was fighting at the barricades” (GTDA №339). Even the names of the Georgian writers and public figures were replaced with those of the socialism ideologists, e. g. in the poem “Go, walk on!” the person to whose direction the poet appeals readers to walk is changed from Georgian writer Akaki Tsereteli (1840-1915) to Carl Marx (GTDA №359).

Besides this, changes are made in some situations and images represented in the poems, e. g. the title “Bouquet” is replaced with “The worker in thoughts before the machine” (GTDA №171), the address to a woman “Beauty” with the address to a machine; the phrase “tenderness of the shy flowers” with “The strength of your wheels”, “love” – with “brotherhood”, “faded feeling” – with “fighting feeling”, “secret whisper of nature” – with “Ambushed sound from the barricades”, “song of a giant mountain” with – “bitter song of grenades”, “weakened heart” – with “strengthened heart”; words appealed to the nature “greatness of your beauty” are replaced with “greatness of 1917” (The year of the Russian revolutions), “secret whisper of the breeze” – with “The charm of fire and storm” (GTDA №213), “far away a nightingale is singing its tunes” – with “far away the factory is rattling” (GTDA №228). Pessimistic words are replaced with optimistic ones or with those, expressing fighting spirit. The phrase “pain and suffering” is replaced with “devoted fight”, (GTDA №346) “tears flow” – with “dews flow”, “cold-bloodedness” – with “warm-heartedness” (GTDA №210); “I know this boat will break” – with “O, this boat will never break”, “I can’t fight against the waves” – with “you can fight against these waves” (GTDA №359). „being laughed at, condemned and humiliated – with

“Another victory in the struggle” (GTDA №359). “suffering and groaning” – with „inspiration” (GTDA №366) etc.

In the poems of the period foreign names, places and entourage, are replaced with local ones: “gondolier” – with “boatman” (GTDA №344), “London” with “Mtatsminda” (a hill in Tbilisi, GTDA №355) etc. In order not to accentuate the author’s personality, the passages written in the first person singular are changed to either plural or second and third person singular: “I was moaning and complaining” is replaced with “What you were complaining for?”; “I couldn’t” – to “you couldn’t”, “caws above me” – to “runs after him cawing” (GTDA №345); “my consolation” – to “people’s consolation” (N363); “my yell and my song” – to “your favorite song”. GTDA №366), “Nobody can hurt me as I am strong” – to “again I felt what a great strength is in us” etc. If a poem represented something unpleasant, present tenses were replaced with the past: “I cannot” – with “you could not” (GTDA №345) everything negative connected with future was also replaced: “tomorrow’s bitter fate” is replaced with “tomorrow’s strong fate” (GTDA №205). In the pessimistic poem (GTDA №204), which was ending with the words of the lyrical hero that “he doesn’t care about anything” two lines were added saying that the lyrical hero doesn’t mind anything but “the fight together with the masses”.

The manuscripts that have undergone these changes are written in different years in different notebooks or on various kinds of paper. They are written with different colors of ink or pencil but all the corrections are made with red ink. Of course, red ink is often used for corrections for the better visualization but other kinds of changes made by Galaktion are generally made with different inks. Therefore, we consider that red color was chosen deliberately and demonstratively. It is the color of the Soviet Union flag and Bolsheviks were called “reds”. For the poet all these changes enforced by the political situation should look like constrained “reddening” of these texts.

As the Soviet regime was absolutely uncompromising in regard to critical views about its shortcomings, in those poems that reflected negative sides of the Soviet life Galaktion tried to move action abroad. In 1935 he participated in The Paris Antifascist Congress. It was the only case when the Soviet Union intelligence agency permitted Galaktion to leave the borders of the country for a few days and he was under strict control all the time. After returning home he wrote a series of poems ostensibly representing situation abroad but in fact criticizing the Soviet way of life. Thus in the poem “To the foreign poet” Galaktion shows the terrible conditions in which the Soviet poets lived. Aesopian language is used by him in the poem “Grandma’s spectacles” created according to the well-known fable “The wolf and the lamb”. He changes the dénouement of the fable. The final reason why the wolf eats the lamb is the following: the lamb says that, in its opinion, the round yellow thing in the sky is the moon and having by the lamb its own opinion is annoying for the wolf. Such critical attitude towards the Soviet way of life is confirmed by a great number of diary entries and satirical poems that were never published and were found in the poet’s archive only after his death.

**3. The politics of carrot and stick.** It is obvious that remakes of old symbolistic poems and a pair of opportunistic new ones was not enough to maintain the position of the first poet in the Soviet republic. Galaktion had to attract attention of the communist leaders with something more efficient and to gain their confidence. In 1928-1930 he wrote long narrative opportunistic poems “The Epoch” and “The Revolutionary Georgia”. The Communist party leaders got sure that the best Georgian poet of the period, Galaktion was already on their side and decided to create for him the image of the Georgian Soviet poetry founder. In 1933 they gave directions to solemnly celebrate 25-th anniversary of his literary career, he was awarded the title of “People’s poet of Georgia” and it was decided to publish a full collection of his works in several volumes. Three years later Galaktion was awarded even “Lenin Order”.

The Soviet critics started to divide his literary activity into two big periods: before the socialist revolution and after it. Individualism, pessimism, mysticism and decadent moods characteristic to the first period, were excused by his petty-bourgeois origin and disappointment connected with the defeat of the 1905-1907 revolution. According to their vision, after the 1917 revolution Galaktion’s pessimism gave way to optimism and to the passion for struggle. Generally literary heritage of poets is divided into periods according to the real stages of their development but in this case it was on the contrary – the division model created by the Soviet critics preceded and while preparing volumes of his literary works Galaktion had to “olden” (by means of date falsification) his works to move all pessimistic and irrelevant for the Soviet state poetry to the first period.

Though Galaktion did a lot of work to make his poetry acceptable for the party leaders, in everyday life he was less obedient as was not good at shamming and hiding his tune. A vivid confirmation of this was his attitude towards the Lenin Order. From a great number of recollections of his contemporaries we know that the attitude was disrespectful. Once, when he was in a pub and didn't have money to pay the bill, he dropped this order into the mug with beer and left it to the server. Another time he told some people in the street that if they told him where the toilet was, he would give them his Lenin Order. The logical ending of such negligence was that one day he lost the order. It is also known from recollections that when somebody asked him about the consequences of this loss, he answered that Mikhail Kalinin (a member of the Politburo) will give him a new one and if he will not, let him hang it on the dog's tail (sikharulidze, 2019: 246).

Good attitude of the governors and peaceful life never lasts long in Totalitarian countries. In 1946 when central committee of the communist party began a new wave of aggression against "senseless", "unprincipled", "apolitical", "bourgeois art" (k'omunist'uri p'art'iis tsent'raluri k'omit'et'is dadgenileba zhurnalebis "zvezda" da "leningradi" shesakheb, 1946: 4) soviet critics again started to mention Galaktion in negative contexts. In 1947 Sandro Shanshiashvili in his article "Talents and their fans" (shanshiashvili, 1947: 4) wrote that it was absolutely unacceptable to praise Galaktion's book "Artistic flowers" (published in 1919), which was full of modernistic poetry. In 1948 the head of the Georgian Writers' Union – Simon Chikovani blamed Galaktion for being under the influence of the 19-th century classic authors and of the European decadence (chikovani, 1948: 2). So, the attitude of the critics towards Galaktion's poetry fully depended on to the current tendencies of the Communist party.

**4. Galaktion's Suicide and the path to it.** The Soviet Union created favorable conditions only for those, who fully obeyed their rule. In his letter to the People's Commissar for Education – Gaioz Devdariani in 1931 Galaktion describes his life with the words: "Unemployment, permanent persecution, homelessness, starvation and terrible cynicism" and adds: "such life might break not only me but even a giant" (Museum of Georgian Literature, D-61). Later on, he lived in considerably better conditions, got a flat in Tbilisi and received a pension but always had problems in getting fees for publications, was denied to build a house in his native Kutaisi and could not finish building a cottage in Sukhumi. Galaktion lived in permanent tension and fear. His diary entries are full of wary comments on the people's behavior around him: Was Meladze's speech cynical? Why Benito spoke about my sketchiness? Are these the first steps against me? Why did the newspaper name only me? was this a provocation? If Meladze wanted to say something good about me, he would do it as soon as he opposed Mushishvili... It is betrayal... All the cards are exposed... The way how to defame someone... etc.

The last decade of Galaktion's life was designated in the Soviet literary policy as the period of the fight against the "bourgeois nationalism". It started in 1951 with the article "Against the Ideological Perversions in Literature" published in the communist party central newspaper "Pravda". It criticized Ukrainian poet Volodymyr Sosiura's poem "Love Ukraine" because the text did not specify, which Ukraine was to be loved – the Soviet one or the historical. As a result, the author was condemned for his "bourgeois nationalism" (Pravda, 1951: 1). As a rule, the directive published in the central press was followed by corresponding steps in the republics. In Georgia the most damaging in this aspect were Communist Party first secretary Akaki Mgeladze's speech on the 15-th congress of Georgian Communist party on September 15, 1952 and Sergi Chilaia's article "About the remnants of nationalistic prejudice". Chilaia criticized Galaktion Tabidze for his poem "Ephemera" in which he says that there is not in him even a drop of blood "non-Georgian" and a thread of nerve – non-poetic (ch'ilaia, 1952: 3). The Soviet critic declared that there can't exist Georgian blood and that it is nationalistic nonsense.

In 1954 on the 4-th congress of Georgian writers, delegates were chosen for the all-union congress and Georgia's best poet – Galaktion Tabidze's name was not in the list. In his main speech Karlo kaladze said that some of the Georgian poets, such as Galaktion Tabidze and Ioseb Grishashvili (1889-1965), still are under the influence of symbolism and recurrences of decadence (k'aladze, 1954: 133-134). Galaktion was very upset, wrote a poetic reply and read it to the participants of the congress who made this decision. The poem was called "Clean Conscience" (t'abidze, 2008 b: 247). It said that



for the clean conscience the sky is blue and snow is white but there are people who try to drag everything to darkness. By using polysemantic word “ukhsenebloba” (On the one hand it means “not being mentioned” and on the other – “being a snake”) he refers to the fact that he was not mentioned among the delegates and that it was not a human decision – it was like a snake’s sting.

In March 1959 a young literary critic Giorgi Margvelashvili published an article “Galaktion Tabidze” (margvelashvili, 1959: 94) in which he presented him as a disciple of two great poets: Georgian – Akaki Tsereteli and Russian – Alexander Block (1880-1921), paying no special attention to Galaktion’s poetic novelties and uniqueness. Of course, it should be very upsetting for the poet.

Galaktion Tabidze was extremely sensitive to every humiliating action, undeserved reproach, cynical remark, inattention and neglect. We are not aware of one particular fact that led him to the suicide but the whole environment around him was poisonous. There were no severe repressions before his death but there was a great number of less talented but ambitious poets and critics, encouraged and supported by the soviet leadership that were leading him to death. Besides, Galaktion had very unhappy personal life. His first wife – Olia Okujava was exiled in 1936 and shot by the Bolsheviks in 1941 and the next two wives were too egoistic to comfort him and not to make him feel lonely.

On March 17, 1959 Galaktion was in the hospital. He had a heart disease and from time to time needed treatment. He was not attended by anybody, was absolutely alone. The doctors told him that there were no free beds in the wards and they were going to place him in the corridor. Standing and waiting for the attention he saw how a big group of Georgian writers came to participate in the ceremony of moving the body of another Georgian writer – Shalva Dadiani (1874-1959), deceased two days before in the same hospital, from the mortuary to his house. They did not shake hands with Galaktion and some of them even did not look at him. This was the last straw... Galaktion drew a chair to the window, opened it, stood on the pane and fell down.

In the Soviet Union not only suicide but even pessimism was denounced as it was propagated that all the soviet people should be happy. Therefore, media didn’t announce Galaktion’s death immediately. They had to consult party leaders. It was decided not to speak about the reasons of his death. Investigators of his suicide made his family members to sign the document saying that Galaktion had suffered from nervous alcoholism for years and that his suicide should be caused by his addiction to spirits (samartali, 1992: 51-52). After Galaktion’s death the government and all those colleagues that couldn’t get used to his priority during his life and always tried to diminish his virtue, pretended to be his most affectionate supporters and even admitted his genius.

### Conclusions

In the present article we tried to analyze the influence of the Soviet Union totalitarian regime on the famous Georgian poet – Galaktion Tabidze’s life and works. Nobody can say what his poetry would exactly look like if there was not this system and its oppression but it is absolutely obvious that even in such conditions he managed to create a considerable number of masterpieces. As for his opportunistic poetry and remakes of old romantic and symbolistic poems, they are vivid witnesses of censorship and self-censorship.

After the Collapse of the Soviet Union scholars returned to the topics that could not be objectively studied during the 70-year period of its existence. We consider that the poetry and literary works of other writers should also be studied in this aspect to make a full picture how the totalitarian regime oppressed writers and artists, controlled and influenced literature and art.

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