THE NATIONAL-LIBERATION HERO OF ITALY, GIUSEPPE GARIBALDI AND GEORGIA (IN CONNECTION WITH GIUSEPPE GARIBALDI’S 130TH ANNIVERSARY)

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The paper tells us about the national hero of Italy, Giuseppe Garibaldi and the national-liberation movement Risorgimento. It shows us the influence of the legendary leader of the movement on the progressive thinkers of Georgia and we see the reflection of those events in the works of Georgian classic writers and public figures. Giuseppe’s numerous fights led to the formation of the unified Italy. He earned a considerable reputation both in Italy and abroad. Many of the greatest intellectuals of his time, such as Victor Hugo, Alexandre Duma, and Prosper Merimee showed him their admiration. Among the admirers were also Georgian classic writers: Ilia Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli, Giorgi Eristavi and others. They were fascinated by his selfless struggle for the liberation of his oppressed nation.

Keywords: Risorgimento, Giuseppe garibaldi, Clelia, Georgian classic writers and the georgian press.

Introduction

Great traditions connect the relations between the Italian and Georgian people, and they date from ancient times. In 15 BC, King Parnavaz of Iberia decided to establish friendly relations with Rome. The relations were strengthened during the reign of the Emperors – Vespasian (69-79), Adrian (117-138), and Caesar Antoninus Pius (138-161).

History retains the identity of those Georgians (Paza Iberieli, Bakuri, Pirani...), who selflessly fought near Naples, in the Strait of Protin, at the gates of Cagliari or Rome.

The friendly relationship between the two countries was intensified in the Middle Ages, during the Crusades. From the XV century, Europe established an alliance with Georgia through Italian missionaries. In the XVII century, the Italian language was taught in the schools of such Georgian cities as Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Akhaltsikhe and Gori as well.

It is important to mention the publishing of the first Georgian book, a “Georgian-Italian Dictionary” in 1629.

In the XVIII century Georgia, oppressed by external enemies, asked Europe for help. This was exactly the mission of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani, the Father of Georgia, as he was called, who visited Florence in 1714.

Given the background of these events, it was absolutely natural for Georgia to respond to the events that were in progress in Italy in the XIX century.
The Italian Risorgimento and Georgian National Liberation Movement

The XIX century is of special importance in the centuries-old history of Georgia. Oppressed by Russia, the Georgian people began anew their fight against social and national unfairness. This is the reason why the leaders of the movement kept their eye on the revolutions, the national-liberation wars, which took place in other countries of the world. From this point of view, Italy and its national hero, Giuseppe Garibaldi, deserve universal attention. From the 50s of the XIX century, publications and literary novels were issued. They were of an active, national propaganda character, and were an attempt to awaken public opinion. An important place was held by the “Resurgence” (“Il Risorgimento” in Italian: “Rising Again”). It was a liberal, nationalist newspaper, founded by Count Camillo Benso di Cavour and Cesare Balbo. It was publishing revolutionary events. It aroused great interest among the Georgian people, because the problems mentioned in “Il Risorgimento” corresponded to the situation of Georgian people and expressed the revolutionary temper of its leaders. The tendency to stir up fighting enthusiasm against tsarist autocracy (tsarism) was strongly felt here. Giuseppe Garibaldi’s fight, which was of a mass and national character, was put forward as an example. It was shown, that the fight was directed not only against national, but social injustice as well. And Giuseppe Garibaldi was mentioned as the most honored son of Italy.

Giuseppe Garibaldi in the Works of Georgian Writers and Public Figures

In 1860, Nikoloz, the son of the famous public figure, Dimitri Kipiani, asked his father to send him “Garibaldi’s Notes” and “the Life of Garibaldi”. According to the history of Georgian Journalism, this is the first case, where Garibaldi’s name was mentioned in the written documents. A year later, Nikoloz Kipiani would write to his father: “I am grateful to you for sending me these books, especially Garibaldi’s biography. I fell in love with what I had read – with his honesty and courage. If I were an Italian, I would certainly join his army”.

Many progressive thinkers had a dream to join Garibaldi’s army as volunteers, because they were attracted by his fame and bravery. Among them was Ilia Chavchavadze, the XIX century prominent Georgian classic writer, public figure, and a leader of national-liberation movement. His desire to join Garibaldi’s army is proved by many Georgian sources. During his student years in St. Petersburg, he got acquainted with Giuseppe Garibaldi’s works and was fascinated by his selfless struggle for the liberation of his oppressed nation. The liberation of any enslaved nation is a restoration or resurgence of nature’s violated harmony, and, naturally, it arouses admiration in the heart of any patron.

In May, 1860, Garibaldi’s successful voyage to Sicily, which is known under the name of the legendary “Thousand Redshirts”, had a great response in the whole of Europe. Alexander Dumas responded by publishing the novels: “Montevideo or New Troy”, and “Viva Garibaldi!” Victor Hugo praised Garibaldi and the heroism of his fighters in his essay. Prosper Merimee wrote about him, as well as the newspapers of Paris, London, and the whole of Europe. The news reached Georgia, and the young Ilia Chavchavadze, who was occupied by the Georgia’s future fate, which was in the hands of Russian Tsarism, kept an eye on the events, that were in progress in Europe. He was keen on revolutionary movement that burst out in Italy, and the Italian people’s fight against Austrian invaders was an inspiring example to him. He was attracted by the leader and his personality. In May-July, 1860, Garibaldi’s legendary force set Sicily free and defeated the Neapolitan army. On July 29, 1860 the Georgian writer greeted the victory of the Italian people and dedicated his poem “I hear, I hear”. He wished he heard the same voice of breaking the fetters of slavery in his native land. From the memories of Ilia Chavchavadze’s colleagues, it is clearly seen, that the victory of Italy in 1859-1860, and its ideas inspired him to write another poem “Spring”, and the drama “Mother of Kartli”. It is completely understandable that Ilia Chavchavadze was well aware of the fact that the expansion of a consciousness of national identity had to occur only as a part of the larger national self-awareness of all mankind.

The reflection of Garibaldi’s movement is also felt in the works of another great Georgian classic writer – Akaki Tsereteli. He dedicated his poem “Salamuri” (The reed pipe) to Garibaldi. This writer, like
other progressive public figures, always responded to all the public events of the youth. He wrote that Giuseppe Garibaldi became an ideal for all intelligent patriots. In the biography of this writer, there is information, which is worthy of attention: as a sign of solidarity with the Italian hero, he was wearing a so-called Garibaldi’s hat, which is still kept in the museum of Venice. Police officers tried to arrest him for such behavior. The hat, which had the shape of Garibaldi’s hat, became a symbol of freedom, and Georgian people, lovers of freedom, used to wear that hat.

As a great Georgian thinker, Ilia Chavchavadze also respected and adored Garibaldi, a patron of the oppressed, and his enlarged photo was hung in the most prominent place in his study. It was a symbol of the hero who had to become an example for all Georgians. Unconfirmed anecdotal reports say that at the request of Ilia Chavchavadze, the legendary Giuseppe Garibaldi’s photo was tracked down in Cambiajo’s studio (a famous Italian architect, who worked in Georgia).

The XIX century Georgian Press about Giuseppe Garibaldi

Ilia Chavchavadze translated and published “Father Alessandro Gavazzi’s Preaching” in the first issue of the magazine “Sakartvelos Moambe” (Georgian News), in 1863. Alessandro Gavazzi was an active supporter of Garibaldi’s battles.

It was a firm message for the reader to let him know that freedom was possible to obtain only by struggle and revolution. Ilia Chavchavadze added to the work 87 notes, in which he revealed great sympathy towards Garibaldi and his deeds. In these notes he particularly disguised the information, which the censorship did not give him the permission to publish. This is how in 1886 Ilia Chavchavadze appreciated the fight for the unification of Italy, and its heroes Giuseppe Garibaldi and Camillo Cavour: “No nation showed such an example of impressive generosity and selflessness as was shown by the Italian heroes, who wished to see their country united. Many famous people of Italy died for their country; many of them gave their happiness for such a huge undertaking as unification; their merit and bloodshed for their country were not in vain, today Italy is united and represents an important country. The performers of the unification were two men: Cavour and Garibaldi. The first was the head of Italy and the second –its sword.”[5, V9, p.89-90]

In 1862, the High School pupils issued a handwritten magazine “Taiguli” (Bouquet), where they repainted Garibaldi’s picture from the London’s “Illustrated magazine”. This is another proof of the fact, that the fire, ignited by Garibaldi, went beyond its original boundaries.

The recollection of a famous Georgian writer and playwright, Giorgi Eristavi, is of great interest. In his travel diary “My trip to Europe” (1862), he writes that while travelling in the town of Navara, the conductor pointed at Magenta. The Italian passenger explained that Garibaldi won the victory and the flag was “fluttering” [9, p. 358] in that place. It is noteworthy, that in the XIX century, when Georgian journals and magazines actively begin to publish Georgian translations of the masterpieces of Italian literature, Giorgi Eristavi was the first who translated the poem of Petrarch, “Blessed be the Day”. (It is also noteworthy, that in this period, the interest of the Georgian people in Italian culture and art considerably increased, but that’s another topic for discussion).

Myth or Reality?

In 1862, an announcement was made in the magazine “Tsiskari” [7, № 10, p. 178], which said that the magazine would begin to publish information about Garibaldi’s life. It also regretted that it had not yet had the chance to tell the reader about the man “who was famous in the whole world for his generosity and exemplary activities, and was fighting for the unification and well-being of Italy”. The magazine promised to discover information about Garibaldi from the world’s different newspapers and give them to the reader. It was also reported in the magazine, that Garibaldi was wounded and found in captivity. His twenty-year-old son was also wounded. The magazine reported that doctors from different countries were invited to cure him.
A rumor was spread, that one of the doctors was from Georgia, from the family Turmanidze. And after a serious operation, he saved Garibaldi’s leg from amputation by using his medical ointment. The truth is that this ointment was widely used in medicine, and it was used not only in Georgia. The story may be some people’s fantasy, who just wished it were true, though the legend carries conviction, when we read the reminiscences of Georgian Catholic priest, Mikheil Tarkhnishvili, who worked at the Vatican court. The details of this were published in 1974. The magazine also tells the reader about English people, who supported him (Garibaldi), and demanded that he be freed from captivity, and restored to his work for the unification of Italy.

In the same magazine, an extract from Giuseppe Garibaldi’s appeal to the English people was published. In the appeal, the author sounds not only like a fighter, but as a progressive thinker as well. He demands from all the representatives of different countries to unite and fight against oppression, to fight for the progress of mankind. He appeals to the English government, he calls for the Parliament to unite people against the bloodshed, and he hopes that other sensible world states will join this idea.

Another of Garibaldi’s appeals to his co-fighters, published in the magazine “Tsiskari” arouses interest. It says: “We must leave our children a heritage, which is free from the enemy’s oppressing claws.”

The next issue of the magazine reports Garibaldi’s recovery and expresses the hope, that he will continue to fight for the unification of Italy. There was also some information that volunteers from Garibaldi’s army participated in the liberation of Greece. To our mind, it was another important message that served to awaken Georgians’ national self-consciousness.

Anton Purtseladze, a famous Georgian public figure wrote, that the magazine “Tsiskari” had been highlighting Garibaldi’s life on its pages since 1863. Anton Purtseladze was an author whose stories were of a fantastic character, such as the following story. Anton Purtseladze considered symbolic to celebrate the 2nd anniversary of Italy’s liberation from Austrian slavery (in 1863) on Giuseppe Garibaldi’s birthday. There was thunder and lightning when he was born, and actually, all his life was full of troubles, and each time his heart was leading him towards danger. The heroic deeds of Giuseppe Garibaldi’s early years were also told in the magazine. It was told how as a nine-year old boy, who worked as a ship cadet on the warship “Castellet”, he saved the mentioned ship from the attack of Moroccan pirates. For such heroism, the king made him a nice present: he was admitted to the military school. At the age of thirteen, he saved his coeval from drowning in the sea. It was also told about Garibaldi’s unsuccessful love and wedding. Near Italy, in the Black Mountains, he fell in love with Earl Ramsburg’s daughter – Margaret. They had a son. Soon Margaret died. Garibaldi painfully endured the loss of his wife.

He sent his son to Marcel to grow up, he himself left for Egypt. However, he was not able to reach Egypt. He stayed in Tunis, where Sultan Dais offered him to lead the naval warship. Garibaldi accepted the offer on the condition that he would not change his Christian religion. It was known that Dais did not employ Europeans if they were not ready to change their religion. Garibaldi’s new love affair with the Sultan’s wife, Leila, was also told in this magazine. His immediate departure from the country was explained by this love affair.

In the above-mentioned story it is difficult to distinguish the truth from the myths and legends, created by the people about the hero they worshipped. That is not the aim of our research. We wish to show the spirit of Georgia during Garibaldi’s epoch. If we take into consideration the fact, that it was the first attempt to write Garibaldi’s biography [12, p.154] (not only in Georgia, but in Europe as well), it appears to be of great importance.

The magazine also tells the episodes from his numerous wars, and tells about his heroism and selflessness, which he showed in the wars. Once Garibaldi was told that the army, where his wife, Anita, was fighting, appeared besieged. He responded coldly: “In such case, I am sorry for the enemy”. Soon, Anita’s part of the army joined Garibaldi’s army without any losses. It is noteworthy, that Anita, who was fighting by her husband’s side, was not an exception. There were many women fighting in the Garibaldi’s army, dressed as men.

One of the articles tells us, that Garibaldi used to tell his soldiers, that they might be thirsty, cold or hungry, but despite this, the number of his co-fighters did not diminish. It can be explained by the fact,
that Garibaldi showed examples of heroism many times. He did not look for fame, or money, or respect; he considered his service as his moral duty, and he refused to accept any awards. He could give his selfless service for the freedom of Italy. Adorned by these qualities, he was able to entice foreigners to help make Italy free.

One of the traveler’s impressions are also told in this magazine. He was fascinated by the love that was expressed towards Garibaldi. The wounded and sick joined him in his fights without complaint. The information, that Garibaldi had an overpowering lust for opera, is probably of interest. There were cases in Italy when Italians (falling under the spell of Nabucco’s opera) felt the urge to go to the battlefield directly from the Opera House. A famous Georgian critic, Akaki Bakradze, seems to have taken into consideration this fact, when he was writing that together with Garibaldi and his warriors, Italian music played the greatest role in defeating Austrian Empire.

It is obvious, that narration of Garibaldi’s heroic deeds filled the Georgian reader with hope and belief and called for a struggle against national and social oppression.

Many different writers wrote about Giuseppe Garibaldi: for example, the famous Georgian writer Giorgi Tsereteli, and the publicist and educator, Iona Meunargia.

Monograph “Giuseppe Garibaldi “and Georgian Reality

Ivane Gomarteli, a famous XIX century Georgian public figure, begins his book “Giuseppe Garibaldi”, published in 1905, with the following words: “At present, the whole of Italy represents a big, strong and intelligent State, but it was not so several years ago. Everyone, who observed it at that period, wished to cry”.

The author compares the situation in Italy, when it was conquered by Austria, the oppression of people, poverty and dissension with the situation of Georgia. He names discord and dissension to be the main reason of the failure of both countries. This is the reason why he describes with much happiness the awakening of the national movement, and tells Georgians about the life of one of their heroes, Giuseppe Garibaldi. Ivane Gomarteli writes, that Garibaldi “was born among people, who suffered from slavery and were thirsty for freedom. He gave his whole life to the fight against country’s enemies and unification of his motherland. Inspired by the history of the ancient fame of Italy, he looked at the future of his country with hope. Here is an extract from Garibaldi’s letter: “When Christopher Columbus …heard the rejoicing word “land”, he was not at that moment as happy as I am, when I hear the name of my motherland. Thus, there are people, who strive for the liberation of Italy”. These words are the proof of Garibaldi’s inspiration and experiences. In fact, when Garibaldi believed that his enslaved nation would free itself by revolution, he swore that he would sacrifice his life for the well-being of his country.

There are many heroic stories told in Gomarteli’s book. Giuseppe was extremely responsive. It is vividly seen in his attitude towards people, who were sick with cholera; or in the story of how he saved people’s lives from a sunken ship...The author pictures for us his fights and tells us about the wounded Garibaldi’s fearlessness. He also tells us how his clothes were shot through, but he himself was survived by some miracle. He also tells us, that Italians met their honored hero with much excitement and admiration, wherever he appeared. We also find out, that as a sign of great love for him, people harnessed themselves instead of horses and took him for a ride in the towns of Italy.

We see Garibaldi from another side as well, when we read that he kept his mother’s photo on the wall by his bed. He showed it with great affection to all the guests who came to him, and he used to go to his mother’s grave.

The author also tells us about Giuseppe’s legendary and fearless wife, Anita. Before her death, she left the following will to her husband: “Serve your motherland till the last beat of your heart, take care of your children and let them stand firm on the land, in order to fulfill your objective”. Anita reminds the author of the Georgian women, who sacrificed themselves and their children for the country’s freedom. We also read about Giuseppe and Anita’s first son, Menotti, who had a congenital disfigurement near his eyebrow. It is difficult to distinguish between what is truth is and what fantasy in some of the author’s
anecdotes. But, one thing is clear - all this filled Georgian readers with an immense sympathy. Giuseppe Garibaldi “is not only the son of Italy, but the son of the whole universe”. It is with these words, that Ivane Gomarteli finishes his story.

**Novel “Clelia” by Giuseppe Garibaldi in Georgian**

Once more we imagine a figure of a tireless fighter for goodness, when Tedo Sakhokia, translator of Garibaldi’s novel *Clelia*, tells us how Giuseppe bequeathed the King of already united Italy, Vittorio Emanuele, to take care of the country and people. Giuseppe Garibaldi’s views are clearly seen in his novel “Clelia”. Each line is penetrated with love of his motherland, history and people. “Is it possible for death to settle down in the heart of Italy?” The author poses this question in the novel, where he severely reveals the evil, immorality and treachery that prevailed at that time. Giuseppe Garibaldi writes that “the once powerful and omnipotent country – Italy – now was discredited and depraved, and the nation without conscience was dead”. He reminds the reader, that the history of Rome is “the history of giant heroes”. But the author does not search for relief only in the past. The fact, that “the majority of Italians die heroically, rebel Italians die with a smile on their faces, and feel bliss while fighting for the country’s freedom”, imbues the author’s belief that “mankind constantly and progressively moves forward to success, everyone can predict that such an omnipotent and historical country can’t be in a disgraced situation forever.” This is where Giuseppe Garibaldi’s dream is emphasized - to see a liberated and united Italy! Giuseppe Garibaldi’s attitude about the past and future was very close to that of Georgians, and maybe, that’s why he became their favorite hero. Generally, the judgments were made correctly in Georgia, and the complex questions of the national liberation movement and unification of Italy were explained correctly.

The point of view of the modern Georgian writer and critic, Aka Morchiladze, is also very interesting. He compares Giuseppe Garibaldi with his contemporary public hero, Arsena Odzelashvili, who was fighting against serfdom and Russian colonial policy, and like Giuseppe Garibaldi, his name was immortalized as a hero and freedom fighter [16, pp. 75-83].

**Response from Gori**

Giuseppe Garibaldi died on 2 June, 1882 on the island of Caprera (Kingdom of Italy). The whole of the progressive world responded with grief. Among them was our native town – Gori. The intelligentsia admired the Italian fighter – hero, and after his death, they sent a letter to Rome with the following contents: ” With respect to the great liberator of people, the greatest citizen of all times, Giuseppe Garibaldi, we offer our condolences to the whole nation of Italy. The death of the genius and tireless fighter for human rights causes us despair, as much as it does to the kind nation of Italy.” [8, №105]

The letter was much appreciated in Rome and the Italian government sent a thank-you note, but as Gori (a town with a great history, but very small in Georgia) appeared to be unknown to them, they sent the mentioned note to the Ministry of Russian Foreign Affairs to pass it along to Georgia. The Russian Ministry was anxious about the behavior of the “impertinent intelligentsia” that had dared to send a letter of condolence abroad. Giuseppe Garibaldi was “a dangerous man” in the eyes of Russia. They began to pursue those who were involved in this activity, in order to punish them.

June 2, 2012 is the 130th anniversary of Giuseppe Garibaldi’s death. His name is still a symbol of fighting for freedom, and “the lion of freedom” – Pe, as he was called in his native land – will be immortal for all progressive mankind.

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