

April 9, 1989, as a Paradigmatic Event: “The Time we Live in Now Started That Night”¹

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Abstract

The events of the late 1980s-early 1990s played a key role in the history of Georgia. April 9, 1989, was one of the most important events in this respect. It defined the shared identity and memory for a long time and determined future developments in the country. April 9 proved to be a paradigmatic event in the recent history of Georgia. The narrative of trauma and triumph was formed, being reflected in historical, literary and documentary texts, as well as in different sites of memory. Two years later, at the very place of the tragedy, the restoration of independence of Georgia was declared. The paper deals with the process of the crystallization of April 9 as a paradigmatic event. Cultural patterns that played a crucial role in the establishment of the traumatic-triumphal narrative of April 9, 1989, and in the thirty-year dynamics of the attitudes towards this event are explored. The study presents how April 9 and its resonance influenced the perception of the past, as well as further developments. Theories of collective memory and cultural trauma serve as the theoretical framework for the research, while official documents, memoirs, literary texts and various types of media sources form its empirical basis.

Key words: Georgia, paradigmatic event, trauma, triumph.

“The time we live in started that night,”² this is how, in the first person and, perhaps, most accurately, the Russian journalist Yuri Rost communicated the meaning of the tragic night of April 9, 1989³ twenty-five years later. The photos he took

¹ This work was supported by the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation (grant N FR-18-3459).

² Yuri Rost, “Stydno mne [I Am Ashamed],” *Argument*, March 26, 2014, <https://bit.ly/3FSIPEB> (Accessed 04.02.2021).

³ On April 4, a protest was held at Rustaveli Avenue, in front of the Palace of Government in the center of Tbilisi. It was aimed against the Abkhaz separatism and its supporters demanding to directly incorporate the Abkhaz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic into the Soviet Union as a union republic. Soon, slogans demanding the restoration of independence of Georgia could be heard at the gatherings; protesters went on a hunger strike. The leadership of the Republic was alarmed by the situation that was getting out of control. They asked Moscow for help. Additional forces of the Soviet Army were brought to Tbilisi. On April 9, 1989, at 4 a.m. in the morning, without any warning, the Soviet Army dispersed the protest using batons, clubs, shovels, and poisonous substances. Sixteen people, mostly women, died on the spot. Within the next few days, four more injured protesters passed away; one individual was killed during curfew. Hundreds of citizens were hospitalized with various injuries and poisonings.

on Rustaveli Avenue that night did not only lead to the recognition of the incident by the local and central authorities, but also became one of the most important signposts in the memory of April 9. Thirty years later, Nana Makharadze, the girl from Yuri Mechitov's famous photo that became a symbol of April 9, conveyed this attitude in the following way: "April 9 is the day that marked a new page in the history of Georgia, the day that was filled with tragedy and a sense of great pride."⁴

The paper aims to study the process of the crystallization of April 9 as a paradigmatic event. It explores how the collective trauma of April 9, 1989, became the reference point for future history and memory; how the declaration of independence on April 9, 1991, formed a mnemonic bridge between the present and the past, emphasizing historical continuity and strengthening shared memory and identity. Theories of collective memory and cultural trauma form the theoretical basis of the work, which is based on the analysis of the official documents, literary texts, various types of media sources, materials found in social media, and monumental sites of memory.

April 9 proved to be the "seismic historical occurrence" that shattered both the cultural and symbolic framework of the Georgian society within the Soviet system. It "turned the social reality upside down"⁵ and defined the country's shared identity and memory for a long time. The occurrence which is perceived as a key event in the national memory and almost always is caused by extreme forms of violence is termed a *paradigmatic event* by Aleida Assmann; it leaves an enduring imprint on material culture and collective consciousness.⁶ A paradigmatic event finds its meaning through "cultural processing" – its interpretation and reinterpretation, which results in the formation of the *impact narrative*. This is not a single and conclusive text, but "an amazing plethora of narratives in different media and genres."⁷ An impact narrative takes shape through the interaction of these media.

Remembrance and representation of the occurrence are based on cultural patterns. According to Aleida Assmann, these are stable motives or repetitive structures in canonized pictures or stories, "with which members of a community see, experience, value and interpret each other, situations, experiences and events."⁸

⁴ "kali 9 ap'rilis pot'odan: vpikrobdit, chveni taoba shedzlebda, ghirseulad etskhovra damouk'idebel kvq'anashi [The Woman from the Photo of April 9: We Believed that Our Generation Could Live in an Independent Country with Dignity]," *Metronome*, April 8, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3q28euA> (Accessed 10.04.2021).

⁵ Aleida Assmann, "Impact and Resonance – Towards a Theory of Emotions in Cultural Memory," in *The Formative Past and the Formation of the Future: Collective Remembering and Identity Formation*, eds. Terje Stordalen and Saphinaz-Amal Naguib (Oslo: Novus Press, 2015), 53.

⁶ Assmann, 53, 67.

⁷ Assmann, 57.

⁸ Assmann, 60.



Through them, it becomes possible to understand, analyze, and form attitudes towards phenomena that have not been experienced before.⁹

“There have been magnificent moments in the history of Georgia, and this particular moment is one of the most magnificent, when for the first time in these seventy years, in this suffering, misery, and bloodshed, the Georgian nation – unified and integrated – appeared before God as one”¹⁰ – these words, uttered by Merab Kostava before the attacks that night, laid the foundation of the April 9 narrative. They clearly communicate the Georgian cultural pattern: the “deeply rooted icon” of national unity (“the integrated, [...] unified [...] Georgian nation”) and patriotic devotion, which “highlight a sense of identity and continuity in the experience of difference and change.”¹¹

Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s speech at the protest of April 9, 1989, was a concentrated expression of the Georgian cultural patterns and of the tragic-triumphal rhetoric: „God is with us! And there will be God forever! We defeated innumerable forces with this consciousness, the forces of darkness, the empires of darkness, and we will defeat the greatest and the vilest among them. For we have St. George on our side, we have the holy blood of our martyrs who sacrificed themselves for Georgia, for Christ, for April 9. [...] Their blood joined the blood of other holy martyrs, hundreds of thousands of them. And that blood will save us [...]. This is the path of our nation; we have no other path. Our path is the path of martyrdom, of Christ, of the crown of thorns, of crucifixion and the inevitable resurrection...”¹²

The first reaction to the tragedy of April 9 was an emotional one – an amalgamation of the cultural values and practices of Georgian society – expressed through shock, pain, indignation, rage, thirst for revenge, grief and mourning. Black flags were draped over the balconies; early in the morning of April 9, one could find red graffiti all over the city: “Patiashvili¹³ the murderer,” “Gorbachev the murderer.”¹⁴ The whole country was mourning: those who died on Rustaveli Avenue came from different parts of Georgia, where they were buried a few days later. The site of the tragedy was covered with flowers the next morning. Lists of

⁹ Assmann, 44.

¹⁰ Merab Kostava’s Speech on April 9, 1989, *Myvideo.ge*, April 9, 2014, <https://bit.ly/31CGl3a> (Accessed 22.09.2020).

¹¹ Assmann, “Impact and Resonance,” 60.

¹² Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s speech on May 26, 1991, Tbilisi, *YouTube* (upload date is not indicated), <https://bit.ly/3FXZEmi> (Accessed 09.04.2021).

¹³ Jumber Patiashvili – the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia in 1985-1989.

¹⁴ Nomad Bartaia, *erovnuli modzraobis dghiurebidan. 1988-1993* [From the Diaries of the National Movement. 1988-1993] (Tbilisi: Intelekti, 2020), 41.

the dead and injured were posted in different neighborhoods of the city.¹⁵ April 11 was declared as a day of national mourning. With black ribbons wrapped around their heads, young people stood outside of the Palace of Government, holding flags also decorated in black. People kept coming. It was a collective funeral for the deceased. Lots of people joined the procession on the days of funerals. The images of mourning have been preserved in photographs – most notably, in the works of Giorgi Tsagareli and Yuri Mechitov, whose photo icons imprinted April 9 in the collective memory.

The tense and ambiguous situation was exacerbated by the fact that this form of mourning was completely incomprehensible for the Soviet soldiers who were enforcing the curfew announced in the capital about two hours prior to the tragedy. They clearly felt the negative attitude of the population. After several days of disagreement and debate, it was decided to end the national mourning on April 28.¹⁶ The flowers were moved to the Sioni Cathedral courtyard, photos of the deceased were plastered on the walls, and visitors lit candles in front of them.

This, sometimes overly theatrical mourning, in which government officials also participated,¹⁷ enabled the shocked public to articulate their trauma. The multiplicity of poems pasted on the plane trees on Rustaveli Avenue and read by silent passers-by clearly displayed this fact. These white sheets are among the few images, along with “the sea of tulips and daffodils,” that the contemporaries still “remember from that April, thirty years ago.”¹⁸ Famous poets also wrote poems about the tragedy, among them also those “who until then sang praises to Lenin or Stalin. [...] Even those who had watched the April 9 massacre from their windows eventually joined the collective “chant.” [...] Faces of poisoned and injured boys and girls became the main artistic symbol of 1989. [...] Their photos circulated everywhere.”¹⁹ It was this kind of mourning that made it possible to express the trauma, to make it public, to share it, and to determine the perpetrators and the victims.

All this led to the articulation of the narrative of April 9 as a paradigmatic event that combined the feelings of shock, pain, helplessness, injustice, and confusion. Aleida Assmann points out that emotions of love, sorrow, and suffering,

¹⁵ Bartaia, 42.

¹⁶ Bartaia, 52.

¹⁷ Eduard Shevardnadze, the then Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, whose function was to defuse the tension, laid flowers on the site of the tragedy with Givi Gumbaridze, the new First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia.

¹⁸ Eka Kevanishvili, “erovnuli modzraobis dghiurebidan. 1988-1993 [April 9 Poetry – Poems Posted on Trees],” *radio tavisupleba* [Radio Liberty], April 8, 2019, <https://bit.ly/32Udp7a> (Accessed 15.02.2021).

¹⁹ Gogi Gvakharia, *tsremliani satvale* [Tearful Glasses] (Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri Publishing, 2013), 218.



which contain socially established cultural meanings, bolster remembrance.²⁰ „April 9, 1989, was imprinted in my memory more in sound than in images,” Zaza Bibilashvili recalls thirty years after April 9. “First of all, this is the sound of Lado Asatiani’s poem performed by the ensemble of the blind women against the backdrop of the slow groan of tank convoys moving towards the people. [...] One more sound that will accompany the night of April 9 is silence. Genuine, sublime silence overcome with one idea, terrible, crowded. [...] None of this have I heard with my own ears. This is all my civil, historical memory – part of my civil identity, if you will.”²¹

The meaning that was ascribed to April 9 and contributed to overcoming the trauma had a connotation of triumph. It united the elements of self-sacrifice for the homeland, trampling down death through death, and resurrection. A music video of the song created the next day after the tragedy, “Let’s Give Each Other Tulips” (lyrics by Moris Potskhishvili, music by Jemal Sepiashvili),²² and performed by fifty Georgian singers, was recorded by the Georgian broadcaster. Thanks to the burst of emotion, both the song and the video immediately emerged as the symbol of April 9. Patriotic self-sacrifice and trampling down death through death as the motives of the triumphal narrative also took shape on the trail of the massacre in Ana Kalandadze’s poem published in the newspaper “Literaturuli sakartvelo” (“Literary Georgia”).²³

The representation of the tragedy as an act of heroism and self-sacrifice helps to transform death into a symbol of immortality, reinforces notions about the uniqueness of the group, sacrifice for which is an honorable mission. The trauma experienced in this way gives meaning to the future struggle.²⁴

The image of the Battle of Didgori²⁵ became the cultural pattern of patriotic devotion which is still used to legitimize the victims: “When they ask why we should celebrate April 9, I want to tell them: we celebrate the victory of the Didgori Battle. Didn’t people die there as well? April 9 was a victory” (Nemo Burchuladze).²⁶ “On April 9, I understood how Georgians went to war in ancient

²⁰ Assmann, “Impact and Resonance,” 42-43.

²¹ Zaza Bibilashvili, “Salagobo,” *Forbes Georgia*, April 9, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3qVoo0Z> (Accessed 13.04.2021).

²² “vachukot ertmanets t’it’ebi [Let’s Give Each Other Tulips],” *YouTube* (upload date is not indicated), <https://bit.ly/3zxWpj7> (Accessed 11.09.2020).

²³ Ana Kalandadze, “rom prtebs upore dzlierad vshlidit [We Spread Our Wings Wider],” *9 aprili [April 9]*, compiled by Guram Gverdtseteli (Tbilisi: Merani, Sabchota sakartvelo, 1990), 30.

²⁴ Gilad Hirschberger, “Collective Trauma and the Social Construction of Meaning,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 9 (10 August 2018), 6.

²⁵ In the battle of Didgori, on August 12, 1121, the king of Georgia David the Builder defeated the army of the Great Seljuk Empire.

²⁶ Eka Mishveladze’s TV Program “pirveli studia [Studio One],” Public Broadcaster, 2014, *YouTube* (upload date is not indicated), <https://bit.ly/3G8VIPK> (Accessed 04.03.2020).

times, why they sacrificed themselves for the country, for their faith... This suppresses and vanquishes fear. Of course, once we learned about the victims, the joy subsided, but it was still a victory over the enemy. Could you imagine going to the Battle of Didgori and fearing that people would die?"²⁷ (Akaki Asatiani²⁸).

Along with loss, triumph continues to be emphasized in the memories and personal stories, even after thirty years: "Nobody died on April 9, they are not dead. On April 9, people fell with dignity. If we speak from a Christian perspective, why should we understand death as the end?"²⁹ (Irakli Tsereteli, leader of the National Independence Party);³⁰ "Despite the great tragedy, April 9 is not only a day of mourning, but also a day of joy, a day of sacrifice for the homeland and a day of salvation" (Eter Kavelashvili, participant of the April 9 protest).³¹

Thus, this cultural pattern formed the basis for giving meaning to and dealing with the difficult experience; it "created continuity across rupture."³² The pattern of Georgian culture, embodied in rituals, contributed to establishing the place of April 9 in a historical series of "glorious moments."

Aleida Assmann talks about the *resonance* of paradigmatic events. This refers to the interplay of occurrences that take place before and after the main event, which consciously or unconsciously guide and form the latter.³³ April 9 summoned back from the repressed and nearly erased memory important and painful events of the past, which were linked to the same place where the April 9 tragedy unfolded. In the process of remembrance, April 9 as a *resonance* connected old and new events to each other and, whether consciously or unconsciously, earlier experiences contributed to the formation and definition of the new trauma.

One such event was the tragedy of March 9, 1956, that occurred on Rustaveli Avenue and near the monument of Stalin on the riverbank.³⁴ The Soviet Army carried out a bloody retaliation against citizens gathered near the Stalin monument to protest against the criticism of the cult of personality. No official report exists, though several dozens, if not hundreds of protesters were killed; others were wounded, injured and arrested. The authorities did not allow people to mourn the

²⁷ Jimsher Rekhviashvili, "9 aprilidan 9 aprilamde [From April 9 to April 9]," *radio tavisupleba* [Radio Liberty], April 9, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3EXpVQs> (Accessed 10.04.2021).

²⁸ Akaki Asatiani – the First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia in 1990-1991, the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia from April 18, 1991, to January 1992.

²⁹ Mishveladze, "Studio One."

³⁰ Mishveladze, "Studio One."

³¹ Rekhviashvili, "From April 9 to April 9."

³² Assmann, "Impact and Resonance," 63.

³³ Assmann, 45.

³⁴ The name of the Mtkvari bank at that time.



dead, they were buried immediately and unnoticed, under the supervision of the security services. Their names were not mentioned, they were known only to their close relatives. According to Volkan, when it is impossible to mourn the trauma, the mental representation of the shared traumatic event is stored in the memory and passed to the next generation(s) to mourn the loss and restore the injured self-image. The historical truth about the event becomes less important for the group members; what is important is that the shared trauma links them together and becomes an inseparable part of their identity. This thread of the “canvas of identity [...] may not be evident for a long period of time;” however, it can be reactivated under the influence of different circumstances. In this case, a time collapse occurs, emotions related with trauma are activated, and the trauma is experienced “as if it has happened only yesterday.”³⁵ March 9 is just such a case. It turned out that the repressed recollection of March 9, 1956, was still preserved in the communicative memory, and it was quickly revived in the aftermath of another traumatic event. Those who had witnessed the massacre started speaking about it. The film director Givi Vepkhvadze, who was a participant of the tragedy himself and had been trying to gather information on March 9 since the 1960s, made a documentary called “March 9” in 1993. The film is based on the memories of eyewitnesses and the parents of the deceased.³⁶ Every year, on March 9, family members of the victims gathered to honor them on the river bank where Stalin’s statue has been replaced with a memorial informing the passers-by that a monument dedicated to the victims of March 9 will be built.³⁷ If we borrow Aleida Assmann’s words, this is a clear example of an instance when memory moved from an informal to a public form.³⁸ April 9 had a “therapeutic effect,”³⁹ and March 9 re-established itself in the narrative of the past.

The April 9 resonance also impacted other events that took place on Rustaveli Avenue: the struggle against the Red Army on the outskirts of Tbilisi in February 1921, and the burial of the fallen fighters at the same site where the Palace of Government would be built later; the demonstration of April 14, 1978, as a result of which the Georgian language was preserved as a state language.

³⁵ Vamik D. Volkan, *When Enemies Talk: Psychoanalytic Insights from Arab-Israeli Dialogues*, Zigmund Freud Lecture (Vienna: 1999), 13-14.

³⁶ Nino Kapanadze’s interview with Givi Vepkhvadze, *chemi kharagauli* [Mykharagauli], March 9, 2018, <https://bit.ly/3eYfTUq> (Accessed 16.01.2021).

³⁷ Jimsher Rekhviashvili, “1956 ts’lis mart’is t’ragedia [The Tragedy of March 1956],” *radio tavisupleba* [Radio Liberty], March 9, 2010, <https://bit.ly/3zBfbWE> (Accessed 10.04.2021).

³⁸ Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt, “Memory and Political Change: Introduction,” in *Memory and Political Change*, eds. Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 9.

³⁹ Assmann and Shortt, 7.

For its part, the collective trauma of April 9, 1989, became a reference point for future history and memory. Temur Koridze, an active member of the national liberation movement, called this day a historic crossroads, after which the Georgian man no longer was part of "a new anthropological type – Homo Sovieticus."⁴⁰ A new, non-Soviet future was becoming clearly visible on the horizon, also demanding a "new past."

After the first shocking days of April 9, the communist government of Georgia became increasingly accommodating towards the national movement and, in general, towards the demands of those who felt "no longer a Homo Sovieticus." Against the backdrop of the government's silence, and at times with its participation, names, facts, and events erased from memory during the Soviet period were first brought to life through communicative memory and then gradually transferred to the sphere of cultural memory in the form of texts, memorials, monuments, celebrations, and rituals.

As A. Diener and J. Hagen note, the revival of national identity is reflected in the urban landscape: revised and reified national cultural-political narratives are crafted by preserving, rebuilding, or creating historical landmarks that emphasize unity and historical tradition.⁴¹ In 1989-1990, to highlight national history and national identity,⁴² historical names were restored or, conversely, names of popular Georgian public figures were given to cities, district centers, streets, squares, and metro stations that had previously been named after revolutionaries and communist party leaders.⁴³

Similar to other countries, the dismantling of the statues of Soviet figures and of monuments that were symbols of the Soviet system was the manifestation of active forgetting and a form of revenge on the past. Some of them were demolished publicly, and sometimes with enthusiasm, while others disappeared from urban squares and gardens quietly. The monument of Sergo Orjonikidze, the famous Georgian Bolshevik who led the establishment of Soviet rule in Georgia, fell victim to the April 9 tragedy: on the morning of April 10, Tbilisi residents found the giant grey statue standing at the intersection of the two avenues in the central part of the

⁴⁰ Temur Koridze, "k'atsi ar q'vela sts'oria [Not Everyone is a Man]" (Tbilisi: Intelekti, 2016), 59; Jimsher Rekhviashvili, "sakartvelos damouk'idebloba - ori 9 ap'rilis p'irmsho [The Independence of Georgia – The Child of Two April 9s]," *radio tavisupleba [Radio Liberty]*, April 9, 2019, <https://bit.ly/31A52gt> (Accessed 16.01.2021).

⁴¹ Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagen, "From Socialist to Post-Socialist Cities: Narrating the Nation through Urban Space," *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 4 (2013), 489.

⁴² Derek H. Alderman, "Place, Naming, and the Interpretation of Cultural Landscapes," *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, eds. Brian Graham and Peter Howard (Routledge, 2008), 195.

⁴³ Giorgi Mchedlidze, *ist'oria udist'antsiod (mghelvare 1988-1995 ts'lebis kronik'ebi)* [History without Distance (Chronicles of the Emotional Years of 1988-1995)] (Kutaisi: 1999), 188, 237.



capital with its hands painted red, littered with broken eggs and garbage. After the incident, the authorities first erected a fence around the statue, and then removed it without much fuss. Guram Tsibakhashvili captured the whole process on a photograph – “the monument, covered in paint, fenced and knocked down, is a manifestation of falling monuments.”⁴⁴ This episode was soon followed by the dismantling of a huge sculptural composition standing in front of the Palace of Government on Rustaveli Avenue, bearing the strange name “Labor, Science, Technique.”

On August 29, 1990, by a decision of the Presidium of the Tbilisi Council of People’s Deputies, the monument to Lenin was dismantled from Lenin Square. The townspeople, gathered in the square, greeted the demolition with applause and cheers. An August 29 interview in the “Tbilisi” newspaper with the then chairman of the presidium of the city council, Niko Lekishvili, clearly demonstrated the efforts of the communist government to maintain control over the process:

“A large section of society has been demanding the removal of the monument of Lenin from the main square and the reconstruction of this area. It is no secret that Tbilisi has become a city of monuments. One can rarely find so many monuments of the same person elsewhere. [...] There have been several attempts to remove the monument, as a result of which the pedestal of the statue was damaged. [...] The place was guarded by militia units who had been detached from their primary responsibilities. [...] The dismantling started yesterday evening and ended late at night. Lots of people gathered on the square, and they also helped the representatives of the Executive Committee to take the monument down.”

And again, Aleida Assmann’s *resonance* comes to mind: Niko Lekishvili used March 9, 1956 as the argument for reminding the population of an unpleasant moment which probably no one remembered: “One factor to consider: the erection of the monument on Lenin Square is directly linked to the bloody affair of March 9, 1956, and this was irritating for people, causing painful associations among Tbilisi residents.”⁴⁵ After Tbilisi, Lenin’s monuments disappeared one by one from the squares of other Georgian cities and villages, but also from the courtyards of state institutions.

In 1990, the famous sculptures on the façade of the Marxism-Leninism Institute created by the renowned Georgian sculptors Iakob Nikoladze and Tamar

⁴⁴ Guram Tsibakhashvili, *100 pot'oambavi. 80-ianebi* [100 Photostories. The 80s] (Tbilisi: Artanuji, 2018), 115.

⁴⁵ Eka Tsamalashvili, “rodesats tbilisma uari tkva leninis dzezglze [When Tbilisi Abandoned the Lenin Monument],” *damouk'ideblobis gak'vetilebi - momavlisk'en ts'arsulis gaazrebit* [Lessons of Independence - Towards the Future through Comprehension of the Past] (upload date is not indicated), <https://bit.ly/3qXNBPK> (Accessed 16.10.2018).

Abakelia, were sacrificed to the *revenge on the past*. They symbolized the revolutionary movement and the building of socialism in the country. Unlike many other monuments, they had significant historical and aesthetic value; the building of the Institute itself was an important site of Soviet memory. One could surmise that this action reflected the trauma of April 9. On the other hand, it echoed the traumatic memory of the Soviet past.

The vinyl records "April Morning", released in 1991, can also be considered a resonance of April 9, 1989. The album compiled patriotic songs by famous Georgian composers, written on the basis of the poems of famous Georgian poets, including "Let's Give Each Other Tulips." *Radio Liberty* dedicated a special program to this album, called "±21 April Morning: The Story of One Album,"⁴⁶ where composers and performers recalled the emotions of the time, among them, those evoked by the songs written and performed in those days.

Thus, as often happens during the transition period, the counter-memory that existed in the Soviet era was gradually replaced by a generally accepted and officially recognized normative memory.⁴⁷ Suppressed and almost forgotten voices came to the center of public attention and became a part of common memory. The "old" Soviet memory, reflected in some monuments and rituals, which not so long ago captured the public's attention, quickly lost its emotional appeal and shifted from the sphere of memory to the realm of history, becoming the "property" of historians and an object of scholarly research.

On the two-year anniversary of the tragedy, on April 9, 1991, on the very spot where the Soviet Army attacked the peaceful demonstrators, the restoration of Georgia's independence was proclaimed. As noted by E. Zerubavel, "constancy of place is a formidable mnemonic tool for establishing a strong sense of historical continuity, shared memory and identity"; it "also allows us to virtually 'see' the people who once occupied the space we do now." This method, named *the same place* by Zerubavel, is widely used in identity rhetoric.⁴⁸ Zviad Gamsakhurdia's speech clearly highlighted this moment of continuity: "It is symbolic that the restoration of the independence of Georgia was declared on April 9, as the fate of Georgia was decided on this day. The souls of the April 9 martyrs look down upon us and rejoice in the heavenly light, because their will, the will of the Georgian nation, has been fulfilled."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ "± 21: ap'rilis dila: erti albomis ist'oria [±21: April Morning: The Story of One Album]," *radio tavisupleba* [*Radio Liberty*], April 11, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3eWBm0e> (Accessed 12.04.2021).

⁴⁷ Assmann and Shortt, "Memory and Political Change," 8.

⁴⁸ Eviatar Zerubavel, *Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past. Time Maps* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 42.

⁴⁹ "zviad gamsakhurdia – sakartvelos damouk'ideblobis gamotskhadeba [Zviad Gamsakhurdia – The Declaration of Independence of Georgia]," *YouTube*, March 31, 2017, <https://bit.ly/3G4KP1f> (Accessed 10.02.2021).



The choice of April 9 as the day of the declaration of independence was not an accident: overlapping important dates that are already imbued with historical significance is an established social practice, which Zerubavel calls *the same time*.⁵⁰ It is aimed at “building a mnemonic bridge”⁵¹ and at maintaining *discursive continuity*.

There was another option for the date of the declaration of independence – May 26, the day of the first independence, especially because of the fact that in 1991, independence was restored on the basis of the Act of May 26, 1918. Akaki Asatiani recalls: “I asked [Zviad Gamsakhurdia] whether it could coincide with May 26, to avoid doubling. He responded with the same words he would publicly state later: how else can we honor the memory of those who died on April 9; only by doing this; for the sake of those who died for independence on this day, we will declare our independence.”⁵²

The mnemonic bridge with the past was also established through the emphasis on historical legacy and continuity in the first paragraph of the Act of Independence. Thus, to use Zerubavel’s term again, the *legato narrative*⁵³ of the history of Georgia, distorted during the Soviet era, was now restored:

“The statehood of Georgia, that dates back to ancient times, was lost by the Georgian nation in the 19th century, following the annexation of Georgia by the Russian Empire, which suppressed Georgian statehood. The Georgian people have never accepted the loss of freedom. The suppressed statehood was restored on 26 May 1918 by the declaration of the Act of Independence. [...] In February-March 1921, Soviet Russia violated the peace agreement of 7 May 1920, between Georgia and Russia, and, by an act of aggression, occupied the state of Georgia, previously recognized by Russia. This was followed by the actual annexation of Georgia. [...] The Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia, elected on the basis of a multi-party system and democratic principles on October 28, 1990, based on the unanimous will of the population of Georgia, expressed in the referendum of March 31, 1991, hereby establishes and proclaims the restoration of the independent state of Georgia, on the basis of the Act of Independence of May 26, 1918.”⁵⁴

Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s speech was an attempt of imbuing the traumatic narrative of April 9 with a triumphal content: good overcame evil, death vanquished

⁵⁰ Zerubavel, *Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past*, 46-48.

⁵¹ Zerubavel, 44.

⁵² Rekhviashvili, “From April 9.” There are still different opinions regarding the date of celebration of the Independence Day.

⁵³ Zerubavel, 34-36.

⁵⁴ “Act of Restoration of State Independence of Georgia,” *Legislative Herald of Georgia*, April 9, 1991, <https://bit.ly/3zZ4V1c> (Accessed 04.09.2021).

death. By doing this, the value of the sacrifice made in the name of freedom would be emphasized once more, and the tragic sequence of events since 1921 (with the exception of April 14, 1978) would result in a triumphal ending.

The feeling of triumph was clearly evidenced by the six-minute applause and ovation that followed Zviad Gamsakhurdia's speech given in the meeting room, which was followed by the ceremony of signing the Act of Independence, the restoration of the flags of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, and the performance of the state anthem ("Glory"). The signing of the Act of Independence was broadcast live. In the blink of an eye, a lot of people gathered on Rustaveli Avenue. They congratulated each other on the victory, danced, sang, and rejoiced. The emotions expressed by the signatories of the Act reveal this feeling of triumph:

"When I signed, I felt as if I paid my dues to my grandparents and ancestors, those who stood at protests before, to thousands of people who could not sign the document, but who had chosen freedom, to the heroes of April 9" (Akaki Asatiani).

"My signature is the largest one, since I was nervous, I could not control my emotions ... Ilia Chavchavadze himself could not witness independence, and you [...] could sign the document and become one of its authors. [...] It is truly unbelievable. Each signature is Ilia's dream come true!"⁵⁵ (Nemo Burchuladze, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council).

"I signed [...] on behalf of each and every person who preserved and passed this idea on to us. I remember I signed very slowly, my last name is long too, and I had a feeling that I was completing a truly important task. But I also couldn't stop wondering if we were worthy of signing the Act of Independence."⁵⁶ (Davit Berdzenishvili, Member of the Supreme Council).

"This is how 'April 9' acquired a double meaning, combining both the blood-bathed dedication of April 9, 1989, and the triumphal victory of April 9, 1991. Moreover, the events that transpired between the two April 9s largely determined the logic of the next thirty years," Jimsher Rekhviashvili notes.⁵⁷ As to the extent to which April 9, 1989 is perceived today as a factor in the restoration of the independence of Georgia and its subsequent fate, our research showed the following: About half of the respondents agree with the idea that, in the absence of April 9, 1989, Georgia would not have become independent; among them, respondents from the older generation outweigh those born after 1985; emotion, as one of the defining factors of memory, seems to play a role here, as well as lived memory,

⁵⁵ Rekhviashvili, "From April 9."

⁵⁶ Rekhviashvili, "From April 9."

⁵⁷ Rekhviashvili, "From April 9."



which is more diverse and loaded with emotion compared to the institutionalized forms transferred to the realm of cultural memory, which are simplified and unambiguous, in order to become conventional and transferrable.

The chosen trauma – the mental representation of an event that caused drastic losses, feelings of helplessness and victimization⁵⁸ – complemented the collective identity and became one of its important markers. Its dramatic transformation into “a chosen victory” reinforced the feeling of overall success and triumph. April 9 is “the sunny night of our history, [...] it is the day of victory, since we gained independence on this day two years later, in 1991” (Giorgi Kalandia);⁵⁹ “We live in this kind of country, a country that was born from tragedy. [...] This country is the child of April 9” (Nona Kobalia).⁶⁰ These phrases are key components of the traumatic-triumphal narrative of April 9. And yet, the night of April 9, 1989, still overshadows April 9, 1991 – the day of the restoration of state independence – in the collective/cultural memory. This is facilitated by the wide-scale and multifaceted institutionalization (photos, poems, documentaries, songs, memoirs, memorials, celebrations, parts of museum exhibitions). From this perspective, April 9, 1991, looks more modest from the point of view of memoirs, video shots and photos, featuring less prominently in historical works and textbooks. Even during the annual commemoration of April 9, the emphasis is on sacrifice and heroism, candles are lit in memory of the victims, flowers are laid on the site of the tragedy. Since 1991, the day of national independence is celebrated on May 26.

Thus, April 9 was established as a paradigmatic event, while that section of Rustaveli Avenue emerged as a place of paradigmatic meaning – “our agora,” “where the history of Georgia has been written for thirty years,” as politician Salome Samadashvili mentions.⁶¹ “Possession” of this space equals the possession of power. Important festive events were being held here: the traditional presidential swearing-in ceremony, which has been discarded since, the Christmas chant with the attendance of parliament members, children’s fairs, exhibitions dedicated to important events, etc. Significant protests were also held there (the November 1988 hunger strike; April 9, 1989; the December-January Tbilisi War of 1991-

⁵⁸ Volkan, *When Enemies Talk*, 13.

⁵⁹ Giorgi Kalandia, “9 ap’rili chveni mziani ghamea [April 9 Is Our Sunny Night],” TV Program “imedis dghe [Imedi’s Day],” *TV Imedi*, April 9, 2019, <https://bit.ly/3q2zklu> (Accessed 05.10.2020).

⁶⁰ Patsatsia, Salome. “es kveq’ana 9 ap’rilis shvilia – demonstrant’ebis mogonebebi 29 ts’lis shemdeg [This Country is a Child of April 9 – Memories of the Protesters 29 Years Later],” *radio atinati [Radio Atinati]*, April 9, 2018, <https://bit.ly/3F28Kgz> (Accessed 10.02.2021).

⁶¹ Jana Akopashvili, “erti ts’eli gavrilovis ghamidan – ‘sirtskhvilia’ 20 ivnisis aktsiistvis emzadeba [One Year after Gavrilov’s Night – the ‘Shame Movement’ Prepares for the Protest of June 20],” *mtavari arkhi [Main Channel]*, June 5, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3nSyyIU> (Accessed 03.02.2021).

1992; the 2003 Rose Revolution; the 2007 and 2011 anti-government rallies; the August 12, 2008 protest against the Russian occupation; the anti-government mass-protests before the 2012 parliamentary elections; the protests against the special operation carried out in Tbilisi clubs in May 2018; the demonstrations of June 19-20, following the "Gavrilov Night",⁶² and, a year later, the protests against the 2020 elections, etc.). Occasionally, tents are being set up and dismantled (by the supporters of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia in 1991, against President Mikheil Saakashvili in 2011, by the seekers of truth and justice – e.g., those protesting the killings of Dato Saralidze (on December 1, 2017) and of Temirlan Machalikashvili (on December 26 of the same year, during a special operation in Pankisi).

In the words of Emzar Jgerenaia, the area in front of the Parliament of Georgia "is a kind of sacred place in our national memory"; "all major national-scale dramas have played out in this space"; "for those living in Georgia, this area is a site of memory, where society makes important decisions."⁶³ "Anyone who has stood on Rustaveli Avenue at least once, will definitely feel the spiritual connection with the heroes of April 9, their support and protection in the battle for independence, but those who have used even so-called "legitimate force" against the citizens gathered on Rustaveli Avenue, at least once, would have felt its frostiness and heaviness,"⁶⁴ notes Jimsher Rekhviashvili.

As April 9 itself, this space, too, became associated with martyrdom. This meaning was determined by its *resonance*, which linked the chain of events with the blood of victims who died in the fight for the independence of their country. "[April 9, 1989] is our history, and a hagiography at the same time."⁶⁵ This kind of perception proves the quality of April 9 as a paradigmatic traumatic event.

The mental representation of April 9 is reflected in different forms of institutionalization (religious, aesthetic, legal, scientific, and in the field of mass media).⁶⁶ It acquires a certain mnemonic inviolability, and its ignorance is perceived as an

⁶² On June 20, 2019, the appearance of the Russian MP, Sergei Gavrilov, a member of the Interparliamentary Assembly of Orthodoxy, in the seat of the Head of the Georgian Parliament, was followed first by protests from several Georgian parliamentarians and then by a large protest outside of the Georgian Parliament. Police used force against the protesters, as a result of which several protesters received various degrees of injuries.

⁶³ Jimsher Rekhviashvili, "evroremont'i sak'ralur adgilze [Refurbishing the Sacred Place]," *radio tavisupleba [Radio Liberty]*, July 20, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3HJxEmV> (Accessed 16.01.2021).

⁶⁴ Jimsher Rekhviashvili, "shemoghobili da dausrulebeli 9 ap'rili [Fenced and Unfinished April 9]," *radio tavisupleba [Radio Liberty]*, April 9, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3eZdE3h>.

⁶⁵ Niko Nergadze and Shio Khidasheili. "ra (ar) vitsit 1989 ts'lis ap'rilis aktsiebze [What We (Do Not) Know about the 1989 Protests]," *radio tavisupleba [Radio Liberty]*, April 9, 2019, <https://bit.ly/3qPLQUs> (Accessed 03.02.2021).

⁶⁶ Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," in Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Neil J. Smelser, Bernhard Giesen, Piotr Sztompka, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2004), 16-17.



insult to the sanctity of the event. As James Wertsch explains, once a narrative is formed and “embraced by a mnemonic community, the idea that there might be legitimate alternatives is likely to be dismissed as heresy.”⁶⁷ For example, in November 2018, Yuri Mechitov’s comment in a film produced by Al Jazeera was met with a harsh reaction. Mechitov is the author of several famous photographs taken on the night of April 9 and after it, one of which, a girl with the flag of independent Georgia, became a symbol of April 9. In his statement, he contradicted the dominant narrative of April 9 and its established meaning: “The protesters were mostly between 13 and 25 years old. Only young people. Eighty percent of the participants had gathered because April 9 was a show, and they wanted to be part of it. It was a criminal act on the part of the organizers, designed to achieve those results. It was a plan to seize power. No one wanted to kill anyone. They all died in a stampede. Twenty women died of asphyxiation. They did have wounds, but they were not intentionally killed,”⁶⁸ he mentioned.

Among others, the girl who became the symbol of April 9, Nana Makhradze, responded to Mechitov: “Many forget that on April 9, with lit up hearts and eyes ablaze, clean hands and national spirit, we gained the most valuable thing we own today – freedom! [...] To the question whether the girl on his famous photo was brave or stupid, I will say that she was stupidly brave, just like many other people on that day, who were violated, poisoned, and trampled!!! [...] This bloody day will always remain a symbol of freedom, along with the names of those heroes whose memory we, the participants of the “show,” will pass on to posterity!”⁶⁹ There were even harsher reactions: “Mechitov and those like him are pawns in Russia’s hybrid war that is geared against the independence and success of Georgia. These pawns are brought out when needed.”⁷⁰

Mechitov felt it necessary to apologize: “It hurts me terribly that I have caused so much pain to my compatriots with my statement. [...] This pain does not leave me. This event happened 29 years ago, it all happened [in front of our eyes. [...] I caused pain to my friends as well, who did not expect that I could say something like this. It would be good if my sincere apologies could alleviate the anger I have caused. [...] The most important thing is to act so that all this is not in vain; to build a state where we can all live proudly and happily.”⁷¹

⁶⁷ James V. Wertsch, “Deep Memory and Narrative Templates: Conservative Forces in Collective Memory,” in *Memory and Political Change*, eds. Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 182.

⁶⁸ Tamuna Varshalomidze, “The Soviet Scar: Legacy of USSR Architecture in Georgia,” *Aljazeera*, 10 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/3HHdhql> (Accessed 03.02.2021).

⁶⁹ Facebook user Nana Nani Makharadze’s post, November 12, 2018, <https://bit.ly/3t6I0JI> (Accessed 03.02.2021).

⁷⁰ Nana Nani Makharadze’s post, November 12, 2018.

⁷¹ “iuri mechitovis bodishi [Yuri Mechitov’s Apology],” *YouTube*, November, 15, 2018, <https://bit.ly/33eskZX> (Accessed 03.02.2021).

The rally of May 2018, which followed the special operations in the clubs “Bassiani” and “Gallery,” displayed an obvious struggle for this place of sacral significance. On the second day of the protest, on May 13, members and supporters of certain aggressive nationalist groups (“Georgian March” and others) gathered in front of the National Youth Palace and tried to occupy the space in front of the parliament building for a few hours, during which time they physically retaliated against the protesters and removed them from the location.⁷² The strong reaction that followed a dance of one of the protesters, Ani Subeliani, on the April 9 memorial also revealed the struggle for maintaining control over the sacred event and place: “an insult to national dignity,” “an insult to freedom and history,” “an insult to the April 9 heroes, everyone must be punished,” “the April 9 memorial is not simply a random monument, it is as sacred as a temple.”⁷³ However, Ani Subeliani believed that the individuals who had gathered outside of parliament felt like they were continuing the April 9 battle: “Dancing on the memorial was an act of freedom for me. [...] What followed my actions – the aggression, hatred, and threats against me and my family – is not the right way for protecting sanctity.”⁷⁴ Two years later, recalling the events of May 2018, she explained: “When I stood on the memorial and danced, I felt a strong energy. It felt like I was invincible and could turn the fight around, and this brought a huge sense of happiness.”⁷⁵ In April 2021, Nini Gogiberidze, the granddaughter of Tina Enukidze, who died on April 9, declared: “A girl danced on the April 9 memorial a few years ago, and many were outraged. Tina sacrificed herself so that someone could dance on Rustaveli.”⁷⁶

In April 2019, on the 30th anniversary of April 9, 1989, a controversy ensued following the presentation of a new video of the song “Let’s Give Each Other Tulips” on Imedi TV’s “Prime Show.” The composer had recorded a new video, for which only male singers were invited. This provoked a protest from a part of the society: “Let’s give each other tulips without the seventeen women who were

⁷² “ani subeliani ambobs, rom 9 ap’rilis memorialze tsek’vis gamo emukrebian [Ani Subeliani Says She Is Being Threatened for Dancing on the April 9 Memorial],” *Liberali*, May 16, 2018, <https://bit.ly/3q3ZXGT> (Accessed 23.01.2021).

⁷³ “ana subeliani: memorialze tsek’va chemtvis tavisuplebis akt’i iq’o [Dancing on the Memorial Was an Act of Freedom for me],” *TV Imedi*, May 13, 2018, <https://bit.ly/3eXtefS> (Accessed 03.02.2021).

⁷⁴ “ana subeliani: memorialze tsek’va chemtvis tavisuplebis akt’i iq’o”.

⁷⁵ “rodesats monument’ze videki da vtsek’vavdi, titkos, dzalian dzlevamosili viq’avi’ – ana subeliani aktsiidan 2 ts’lis shemdeg [When I Danced on the Monument, It Seemed Like I was Powerful’ – Ana Subeliani Two Years after the Protest],” May 15, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3eXtefS> (Accessed 20.01.2021).

⁷⁶ “nini gogiberidze, romlis bebiats - tina enukidze 9 ap’rils nichabma imskhverp’la [Nino Gogiberidze, Whose Grandmother, Tina Enukidze, Died on April 9],” *Formula*, <https://bit.ly/3F5CMQH> (Accessed 07.05.2021).



killed?”⁷⁷ “We call on all people for whom the seventeen women are a symbol of defending the country, [...] this is an insult to those seventeen and many other women who sacrificed themselves for their homeland.”⁷⁸ The composer responded: “We believe that man is the strength of the family, he is the defender of the country. Because of that, these twenty-five men will sing this song.”⁷⁹ This was met with even greater outrage: “How do you spit in the face of so many heroic women? What are you saying to little girls?! That their love, respect, and devotion for the country is nothing, compared to the devotion of a man?” “In a country where the Mother of Kartli proudly stands with a bowl in one hand and a sword in the other, such statements are ridiculous if not heart-breaking!”⁸⁰ The outrage quickly subsided: the new video was played only two or three times and was soon forgotten.

The “Gavrilov Night” of June 20, 2019, brought April 9, 1989, back to the collective memory: “I woke up on June 20 and saw that [...] in the parliament building, near the April 9 memorial, the seat of the speaker of the Georgian Parliament was taken by [Sergei Gavrilov], a leader of the parliament of that country [...] which painted Rustaveli Avenue in red in 1989,” wrote a young person. “I was ashamed of myself and my country, ashamed of the deceased who in 2008, in 1990, and in 1989 sacrificed themselves for the nation and politics, for which we were now being shot at.”⁸¹ In the words of Archbishop Zenon, the authorities’ ruthless actions reminded the people on that day of “how the enemy’s punitive units were hunting down our freedom fighters” on April 9, 1989.⁸²

A decision of the city mayor to renovate the area surrounding the parliament in 2020 was perceived as an attempt to seize the sacred place and to disrupt and take over the traditional site of protest. Such a perception had some basis and a precondition: shortly before the start of the works, on December 20, 2019, the City Hall dismantled Malkhaz Machalikhvili’s tent, under the pretext of putting

⁷⁷ Nino Bidzinashvili, “‘vachukot ertmanets t’it’ebi’ – simgheris akhali versia mkholod k’atsebis monats’ileobit da p’rot’est’I [‘Let’s Give Each Other Tulips’ – Protesting the New Version of the Song Performed Only by Men],” *Netgazeti.ge*, March 29, 2019, <https://bit.ly/3HKpudU> (Accessed 02.02.2021).

⁷⁸ “kveq’nis sidzliere mamak’atsia - simgheras ‘vachukot ertmanets t’it’ebi’ mkholod k’atsebi shearsruleben [The Strength of the Country Lies with Men – The Song ‘Let’s Give Each Other Tulips’ Will be Performed Only by Men],” *Tabula*, March 29, 2019, 2019, <https://bit.ly/3zxxgXs5> (Accessed 02.02.2021).

⁷⁹ Nino Bidzinashvili, “Let’s Give Each Other Tulips.”

⁸⁰ “The Strength of the Country Lies with Men.”

⁸¹ “gavrilovis ghame – nik’usha [Gavrilov’s Night – Nikusha],” *Imitom.ge* (upload date is not indicated), <https://bit.ly/3n75xpM> (Accessed 12.01.2021).

⁸² “dghes 9 ap’rili gagvaxsene – mtavarep’isk’op’osi zenoni khelisuplebas [You Reminded Us of April 9 Today – Archbishop Zenon to the Government],” *On.ge*, June 21, 2019, <https://bit.ly/3F3HgqW> (Accessed 16.02.2021).

up New Year decorations for children. The tent had been standing there since 2018, when Machalikashvili set it up, demanding the investigation of his son's murder.

Due to the renovation process, for the first time in thirty years, it became impossible to celebrate the April 9 anniversary in 2020. The government representatives went up to the green fence that surrounded the Parliament and honored the memory of the victims by placing the traditional red tulips on the ground. "The government reacted to the April 9 anniversary, but the people could not commemorate it. [...] For the first time since that tragic night, people did not gather in front of Parliament at dawn, as a curfew was imposed⁸³ again, just like in those April days,"⁸⁴ recalls Giorgi (Gogi) Gvakharia. The President of Georgia, Salome Zurbishvili, did not go to Rustaveli Avenue, yet she reiterated the traditional April 9 narrative ("April 9: triumph and tragedy"), emphasized the historical significance of the date,⁸⁵ and explained her absence by invoking the restrictions imposed due to the Covid pandemic, which prevented many individuals from going to the memorial.

The renovation and restoration works, which began in January 2020, were completed in August. The historical stone slabs that were part of the original April 9 memorial were returned to their initial place. The monument also remained unchanged, but the space was surrounded by lawns. These changes were deemed to be an erasure of the sacred site and "an attempt to occupy the area." However, as Emzar Jgerenaia notes, "no such attempt will change the importance of this place, and it will remain the area where citizens will always have their say. People will always manage to gather here."⁸⁶

The part of Rustaveli Avenue in front of parliament still remains a place where the modern history of Georgia is written. As for April 9, this paradigmatic date has been commemorated, since 1993, as a holiday and as the day of "Georgia's national unity, civil consent and remembrance of the victims who died for their homeland." Resolution # 211 of the Parliament of Georgia, adopted on April 8, 1993, states: "April 9 is a very important day in the recent history of Georgia. On this day, the Georgian nation unanimously and clearly expressed its aspiration for freedom and independence. On this day, the innocent blood of patriots who sacrificed themselves for their homeland was shed. On this day, the independence of

⁸³ The curfew was imposed by the authorities because of the Covid Pandemic.

⁸⁴ Giorgi Gvakharia, Program "April 1989-2020," from the program series "anareklebi [Reflections]," *radio tavisupleba [Radio Liberty]*, April 12, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3K1o9Sf> (Accessed 10.02.2020).

⁸⁵ Natia Kenkadze, "salome zurabishvili – me ar mivsulvar 9 ap'rilis memorialtan [Salome Zurbishvili – I Didn't Go to the April 9 Memorial]," *ITV*, April 9, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3G6X91c> (Accessed 16.02.2021).

⁸⁶ Rekhviashvili, "Refurbishing the Sacred Place."



Georgia was declared. Thus, this day is not only a symbol of the national liberation movement, but also the day of Georgia's unity and progress."⁸⁷

The collective trauma of April 9 as a paradigmatic event conditioned and determined the meaning of many subsequent events in the future history of Georgia. It reinforced and established the "Georgian political rhetoric and the whole symbolic world of national consciousness, along with the images of the enemy, the friend, the traitor and the national hero."⁸⁸

Rezumat

Evenimentele de la sfârșitul anilor 1980 și începutul anilor 1990 au jucat un rol crucial în istoria Georgiei. Ziua de 9 aprilie 1989 a marcat unul dintre cele mai importante evenimente în acest sens. Această zi a definit identitatea comună și memoria colectivă a georgienilor pentru o perioadă îndelungată, determinând și evoluțiile ulterioare din țară. Data de 9 aprilie s-a dovedit a fi un eveniment paradigmatic în istoria recentă a Georgiei. A fost creată o narațiune a traumei și triumfului, narațiune care s-a reflectat în diverse texte istorice, literare și documentare, precum și în diferite locuri ale memoriei. Doi ani mai târziu, în același loc în care s-a întâmplat tragedia din 9 aprilie 1989, a fost declarată restabilirea independenței Georgiei. Articolul analizează procesul cristalizării datei de 9 aprilie ca un eveniment paradigmatic. Sunt examinate tendințele și codurile culturale care au avut un rol crucial în consolidarea narațiunii traumatic-triumfaliste a zilei de 9 aprilie 1989, precum și în dinamica, elaborate treptat în următorii treizeci de ani, legată de atitudinile în raport cu aceste evenimente. Studiul descrie modul în care 9 aprilie și rezonanța acestei date au influențat percepția trecutului, dar și evoluțiile ulterioare. Autorul folosește teorii ale memoriei colective și ale traumei culturale drept bază pentru cadrul teoretic al cercetării. În același timp, documentele oficiale, memoriile, textele literare și diverse tipuri de surse generate de mass media reprezintă baza empirică a articolului.

Cuvinte-cheie: Georgia, eveniment paradigmatic, trauma, triumf.

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⁸⁷ "Resolution of the Parliament of Georgia on the Declaration of April 9, the Day of the Adoption of the Act of Restoration of State Independence of Georgia, the Day of National Unity, Civil Consent and Remembrance of the Victims Who Died for Their Homeland," *sakartvelos sak'anonmdeblo matsne* [Legislative Herald of Georgia], April 8, 1993, <https://bit.ly/3qYMIX8> (Accessed 11.04.2021).

⁸⁸ Giorgi Maisuradze, "dghesasts'auli, romelits mudam chventanaa [Celebration That Is Always with Us]," Giorgi Maisuradze, *chak'et'ili sazogadoeba da misi darajebi* [Closed Society and Its Guardians] (Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri Publishing, 2011), 6.