

# South Ossetia - Abkhazia

---

Mgr. Zinaida Shevchuk

18.4.2011.

# Structure

- Soviet ethnofederalism
- Political landscape in Georgia
- Abkhazia
- South Ossetia

# Soviet ethnofederalism

- Central in content, federal in form.
- The communist Party - main instrument of rule.
- The new Soviet state was an asymmetrical federation - ethnoterritorial units.
- Union republics - Soviet Socialist Republics, SSRs.
- Autonomous republics - Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics, ASSRs.
- Autonomous oblast - autonomous regions, AOs.
- Autonomous okrugs.

# Soviet ethnofederalism

- Union republics were instituted for the Georgians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis.
- Inside Georgia: The South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast, the Abkhazian ASSR and the Ajarian ASSR.
- The Nakhichevan ASSR.
- Nagorno-Karabakh AO.

# Soviet ethnofederalism

- In April 1990 a new law - ASSRs and AOs had the right, by means of referendum, to decide whether they would secede together with SSR or remain in the Soviet Union.
- Between April 1990 and August 1991, the law provided considerable incentives for the ASSRs and AOs to intensify their separatist intentions from the SSRs.

# The political landscape in Georgia

- Mikhail Gorbachev - perestroika and glasnost.
- National independence movement in Georgia - slogan of independence from the Soviet Union.
- 9 April, 1989 - the moral death of the Communist regime in Georgia.

# The political landscape in Georgia

- In May 1991, Zviad Gamsakhurdia was elected as a president with 86 per cent of the vote.
- This period defined Georgia's political agenda, its public discourse and the character of its political institutions. The agenda was dominated by two ideas: **nationalism and democracy.**

# The political landscape in Georgia

- Gamsakhurdia's rule embodied a paradox typical of many young and immature democracies: it had a strong popular mandate but was very soon denounced as authoritarian. The fact that Zviad Gamsakhurdia was a strong ethnic nationalist who openly called the slogan „Georgia for Georgians“ greatly fuelled the tensions.



# The political landscape in Georgia

- Adding to the difficulties in achieving political pluralism was the problem of ethnic pluralism.
- The Georgian national liberation movement lacked a clear idea about how to deal with the issues of the autonomies.
- Radicalism and aversion to compromise were as widespread among the Abkhaz and Ossetian nationalists as among their Georgian counterparts.

# Abkhazia

- 45% Georgians, Abkhaz made 17.8%, 14% were Russians and 14% Armenians.
- Abkhazian language is different from Georgian, it belongs to the North-Caucasian linguistic family and is akin to Chechen-Dagestan group.
- You can find both Orthodox and Muslim believers among Abkhazians.
- Abkhazia was one of the wealthiest regions of the Soviet Union and enjoyed a far higher standard of living than the rest of Georgia.

# Abkhazia

- In 1921 Abkhazia received the status of a Soviet Republic allied with Georgia by a special treaty.
- In February 1931 - autonomous republic within Georgia.
- Declaration of Lyckhny 1989 - secession from Georgia.
- The intention of Georgian government to divide the University of Sukhumi into two parts, one of which was to become a branch of Tbilisi state university - 16 people were died and hundreds were injured.

# Abkhazia

- In August 1990 to the declaration of sovereignty by Abkhazia.
- After Gamsakhurdia's overthrow in January 1992 the situation in Abkhazia deteriorated further . The war which broke out in 1992-93 was the peak of the conflict between Abkhazia and Georgia, characterized by the aspirations of the Abkhaz to secede from Georgia and by the desire of the Georgians to achieve territorial integrity.

# Abkhazia

- The peace negotiations were held in the Russian Sochi, in the summer of 1993. 27 July 1993 signed a document called the Agreement on a ceasefire in Abkhazia and the mechanism to ensure compliance. Only on the basis of the interruption of firing, a Russian - Georgian - Abkhazian monitoring group to supervise the ceasefire, the return of Abkhazian parliament in Sukhumi and an agreement on the deployment of UN observers in the region. In August of that year, then the UN Security Council Resolutions No. 849 and No. 854 has been deployed in Abkhazia, the UN Observer Mission - UNOMIG, active on its own territory of Georgia. Its mandate was renewed several times until June 2009, when Russia blocked a further extension.

# South Ossetia

- In South Ossetia, according to the 1989 census, Ossetians accounted for approximately two-thirds (66.61%) of the population and Georgians the other third (29.44%). The remaining 4% are made up of Russians, Armenians and Jews.
- Ossetians and Georgians basically share orthodox Christianity.
- Ossetian language belongs to the Indo-European group and is distinctly related to Iranian (Farsi) but uses the Cyrillic alphabet with Ossetian modifications.

# South Ossetia

- 1988 Ademon Nykhaz - the South Ossetian Popular Front. In the spring of 1989, the leader of Ademon Nykhas, Alan Chochiev, published an open letter, declaring his groups support for the Abkhazian campaign against the opening of a Georgian branch of Tbilisi university in Sukhumi, Abkhazia. This triggered the first clashes between Ossetians and Georgians in South Ossetia. Furthermore on 26 May, the anniversary of the declaration of Georgian independence in 1918 clashes between irregular groups of Georgians (encouraged by Zviad Gamsakhurdia) and local Ossetians took place.

# South Ossetia

- In August 1989, the Supreme Council of Georgia put forward a Georgian language program.
- This program involved not only increased use of the Georgian language, but also, for example, a Georgian language test for entry into higher education, programs for the promotion of Georgian history, the institutionalisation of previously unofficial Georgian national holidays, creation of republican military units comprising only Georgians, and the resettlement of Georgians in areas dominated by minorities.



# South Ossetia

- In September 1989, Ademon Nykhas - protesting that the Georgian language programme was antidemocratic and unconstitutional.
- In November, the Supreme Council of South Ossetia passed a resolution demanding that Ossetian should be the official language of the Autonomous Oblast. Moscow and Tbilisi refused this both.
- In August 1990 - an election law.

# South Ossetia

- On 20 September 1990, the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast declared independence as the South Ossetian Democratic Soviet Republic.
- In response to this and as a manifestation of their independence from Tbilisi, the South Ossetians held elections to their parliament in December 1990. According to Ossetian sources, 72% of the population of the republic took part in the election, which exceeds the percentage of the Ossetian population. The Georgian response was swift. Within days the Georgian Supreme Council cancelled the results of the election and voted to abolish the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast as a separate administrative unit within the Republic of Georgia.

# South Ossetia

- On 24 June 1992, in the Russian city of Sochi, Russian and Georgian leaders, Boris Yeltsin and Eduard Shevardnadze signed ceasefire agreement.
- The Sochi Agreement also set up the Joint Control Commission (JCC), a quadrilateral body with Georgian, Russian, North and South Ossetian representatives, plus participation from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.
- In 1996 the parties signed a Memorandum to Enhance Security and Confidence Building Measures and agreed to step-by-step demilitarization of the zone of conflict and reduction of the number of JPKF frontier posts and guards.

