

Salome Lomouri

Tbilisi State University

Tbilisi, Georgia

Georgian poetry in the face of repression in the 1930s

The 1930s is one of the most tragic pages in the history of Georgian literature. As a result of Bolshevik rule, Georgian poets had to give up the search for versification and artistic-stylistic forms and, instead of developing modernist trends they almost wholly confined themselves to proletarian themes. In the 1910s-1920s, the highly enriched Georgian verse nearly stopped evolving.

The poets who failed to fit into a common pattern and tried to preserve their individuality were declared the "enemies of the people". They were faced with the choice of either to write Bolshevik poems or to be physically destroyed.

The poetry was focused on the theme of revolution and building of communism. Proletarian literature rejected patriotism and replaced it with internationalism.

Despite the threat of physical destruction, some Georgian poets still managed to adhere to the main path of the development of ancient Georgian poetry in the 1920s and 30s. Along with the older generation, a new generation of poets (Lado Asatiani, Mirza Gelovani, Aleksandre Sajaia, Giorgi Napetvaridze, etc.) appeared on the scene in the early 1930s. These poets were able to revive the forms of national versification under the guise of Soviet internationalism. They adapted the traditional long-meter (20- and 16-syllable) textual structure to the verses on patriotic theme.

The genre of ballad which occupies a worthy place in the works of the poets of "Our Generation" was also revived. Young authors turned poetic folklore into a source of creativity, and literary verse again came in close contact with folk poetry.

This is especially important because these poets managed to breathe new life into the traditional Georgian verse forms at a time when the Bolshevik regime was leading a broad struggle against "formalism."