

### Tragic History from the Archive Materials

**Abstract:** In 1932 in the German town of Tübingen Grigol Robakidze's novel *Megi* initially titled "Medea's Plaits" was published by Rainer Wunderlich. Later the Georgian writer wrote to Hans Haso Veltheim, - My friend Reinhold Chakert who is named as a translator of this book, does not know Georgian... From the very outset the original text of *Megi* was created in Russian" (Robakidze IV, 2012:673). Little was known about one of the translators of *Megi* into Georgian. We have made more exact the details of his tragic biography according to the extended criminal case of Reinhold Chakert which contains several files.

**Keywords:** Grigol Robakidze, *Megi*, tragic, translation.

Reinhold Chakert was arrested by the officers of People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs of Transcaucasian Federation on April 21, 1935 (see, fond 6, Archive #3599, vol. 1/14, box 54. R.R.Chakert's case). According to the form filled in 1935, 23 April, Reinhold Chakert was born in Tbilisi in 1893. He was a teacher by profession with a higher education, had a wife and two children (a daughter and a son). Together with him Viktor Ivanov's and Simon Prisman's case was considered. The resolution indicated that all these persons were recruited in German Consulate General for espionage purposes led by a German subject Bruno Franke.

According to the documents kept in the case, Reinhold Chakert after sovietization of Georgia worked as a teacher at a local German gymnasium which was supported by one of the foreign countries (Germany). The arrested was accused for counterrevolutionary and nationalistic propaganda among the students since 1925. In the verdict of guilty it is indicated that R.Chakert got in touch with an official from one of the foreign countries and under his leadership he was engaged in intelligence activities including 1935: reported on inner-party state of the SDLP-G, investigated different attitudes of various parts of population and transferred the information to one of the foreign country.

The record of interrogation from 22 April, 1935 also reflects another side of Reinhold Chakert's activity. One of his main missions was to establish close contact with Georgian nationalist intelligentsia which was in opposition to the Soviet authority. As soon as Reinhold Chakert started to work at the Tbilisi State University, he managed to get in touch with the representatives of Georgian intelligentsia.

According to the record of interrogation, Reinhold Chakert evaluates the general credo of the well-known Georgian scholars and writers in the following way: "with the establishment of a German protectorate Georgia's prosperity would be guaranteed both from economic and cultural viewpoints. Georgia will never accept the dependence from the Soviet regime". The investigators seems to get interested in the relations between Reinhold Chakert and Konstantine Gamsakhurdia that is evidenced from the minutes of interrogation of the accused done on 22 June, 1935. From its text it becomes known that after a success of Grigol Robakidze's *The Snake's Skin* in Germany, K.Gamsakhurdia asked Chakert to translate his novel *The Smile of Dionysus*. It is indicated here: This "novel was not accepted by the German Diderich publishing house. In the period of translation of the novel (1927-1928) I frequently met Gamsakhurdia and talked to him".

The same criminal case preserves R.Chakert's testimony "the theme of my conversations with some representatives of Georgian "intelligentsia", which points out to the fact that the accused was always interested in Georgia's history, literature, art, archeology, ethnography. "I often traveled around Georgia, made the sketches of the frescoes ornaments, archeological monuments or took pictures. I was sincerely surprised at how small the interest of Georgians to their own history was".

Of numerous documents related to Reinhold Chakert particularly interesting is the ) record of interrogation dated 17 June, 1935, a great part of which considers the relationship between Reinhold Chakert and Grigol Robakidze. The accused deals with German translation of the novel *Megi* and states that he was translating the novel in parallel with the writer's creative work. His royalties for a translation were symbolic. "For the entire translation I got 100 rubles... At that time Robakidze strongly needed. Here, he almost did not publish his works and lived on the salary of the chairman of the Union of Writers of Georgia".

The investigators also got interested in the fact of Grigol Robakidze's departure to Germany. The accused told that "He never spoke about this but frequently emphasized that it was difficult for him to leave Georgian nature, Georgia, "Georgian land". Moreover, he promised me to bring a number of new books from Germany".

Reinhold Chakert's ultimate fate can be again traced from his criminal case. In 1935, 13-16 July, under the name of the USSR, the military tribunal of the Transcaucasian military district at the closed court session considered the case of R.Chakert and of the other accused and with account of the mentioned accusations in totally secret condemnation was sentenced of extreme penalty – to be shot, with confiscation of the property (fond 6, Archive material #35199, v. 12/14, box 56 Chakert R.R. and others).

Chakert's case also preserves two applications from 30 August, 1935 in which the accused repents of his actions and appeals for clemency. Despite this, nothing changed: they carried out a sentence of Reinhold Chakert's death in 1936, 14<sup>th</sup> February. After close examination of the corpse, he was buried at the place of execution that is confirmed by the act preserved in the case.

The same criminal case preserves a written statement addressed to the Chairman of the military tribunal from 1935, 17 December, which belongs to Reinhold Chakert's wife, Erika Chakert. It turns out that the latter with two children were evicted, their belongings and the children's piano were confiscated. After appeal of the case on 8 May 1936, the property confiscated by the court was returned to them (including the children's piano which amounted to 2000 rubles).

The case also preserves written request of R.Chakert's wife, Erika Chakert dated 8 March, 1962 (from the town of Jambul in Kazakhstan) which evidences that she was arrested in 1938 and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. Ms.Chakert requested: "My husband and I have been punished unfairly, therefore I ask you to revise our cases and rehabilitate us".

Erika Chakert's request was not satisfied. The applicant was informed that "they did not have the ground to revise this case and rehabilitate you and your husband".

Reinhold Chakert's extended criminal case deserves attention in various aspects. Taking into account the unknown documentary material preserved in it will contribute to the objective and in-depth understanding of the contradictory events of that time.

## **References:**

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