

**April 9, 1989**

**Telegram from First Secretary of the Georgian  
Communist Party, Dzhumbar I. Patiashvili to the  
Central Committee (CC) of the Communist Party of  
the Soviet Union (CPSU)**

**Citation:**

"Telegram from First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party, Dzhumbar I. Patiashvili to the Central Committee (CC) of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)", April 9, 1989, Wilson Center Digital Archive, TsKhSD. F. 89. Collection of documents, Xerox copy, published in Istoricheskij Arkhiv 3 (1993), pp. 97-98. Translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/117175>

**Summary:**

Patiashvili reports on demonstrations in Tbilisi and army attempts to subdue them which resulted in the death of 16 people. Patiashvili requests to impose a curfew in the city to maintain order.

**Credits:**

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

**Original Language:**

Russian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

Incoming enciphered message No. 220/sh

From Tbilisi

Received 9 April 1989

10:25 a.m.

In Tbilisi after 21:00 p.m. on the night of 8 April 1989, in spite of all measures being taken by the Party, government, and the forces of law and order, the situation at a demonstration of about 15,000 people at the Republic Government House and also in other parts of the city began to be inflamed by extremists and got out of control. Besides anti-Soviet, anti-socialist, and anti-Russian exhortations, appeals began to be spread by extremists for physical violence against Communists, leaders of the Republic, and members of their families. The demonstrators, among whom were many drunks and drug users, were called upon to organize the entire population of the Republic to strike, commit civil disobedience, and violence against those who did not support them. Groups of extremists began to be delegated together with demonstrators to nearby cities and rayons of the Republic. An attempt was made in the city of Rustavi to seize a metallurgical works.

The leaders of the so-called "National Liberation Movement" have begun to publicize their plans to seize power in the Republic. In order to ensure public order and prevent unforeseeable consequences in this situation, a decision was made at 4:00 a.m. to use force to clear the square and Government House of the demonstrators. Subunits of the Republic MVD and the Transcaucasian Military District were used in accordance with a plan developed earlier by competent authorities. As they approached the place where the demonstration was being held, its participants were called upon by leaders of the Republic, members of the CP CC, Party and government activists, and also the Catholicos of Georgia Ilya II[i] to stop the demonstration and peacefully disperse. However, the demonstrators did not react to this. In turn, the organizers of the demonstration inflamed passions to hysteria, calling upon them not to spare their blood or their lives to confront the forces of law and order.

The MVD subunits and ZAKVO [sic] troops did not use small arms or silent weapons [kholodnoye oruzhiye][ii]. Instructions about the cautious treatment of women and adolescents were strictly observed. As the first ranks of the demonstrators were driven back, accompanied by fierce resistance of extremists using sticks and stones, the crowd began to become disorderly and moved toward a youth lying on a sidewalk who had declared a hunger strike. Moreover, there were quite a few provocateurs in the crowd who were using silent weapons. As a result of the crush which had formed, 16 people died (13 young women and 3 [young] men) and more than 100 received injuries of varying severity, among whom were 22 servicemen (13 of them were hospitalized). First aid was given to the victims.

At the present time the square at Government House has been cleared of demonstrators and has been taken under guard by troops. The necessary measures are being taken to detain and arrest the ringleaders of the disorders and prevent new demonstrations. A governmental commission has been formed headed by the Chairman of the Georgian SSR Council of Ministers, Cde. Z.A. Chkheidze.[iii] in connection with the tragic consequences of the measures which were taken.

A plenum of the CC GCP is planned for today to review the current situation and identify the measures ensuing from it.

We request your agreement to introduce a curfew in the city of Tbilisi beginning today in order to prevent mass disorders and to stabilize the situation.

Secretary of the CC GCP, D. Patiashvili

[i] Iliya (Il'ya) II (I. G. Gugushauri-Shiolashvili), since 1977 Catholicos-Patriarch of all Georgia.

[ii] Translator's note: This term denotes weapons other than firearms, such as bayonets or clubs.

[iii] Z. A. Chkheidze, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Georgia.