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Thousands of Protestors disrupt Rally against Homophobia

By LIKA MOSHIASHVILI, GT

A parade marking the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia – due to be held in Tbilisi was abandoned before it started when several thousand anti-gay activists, including Georgian Orthodox Church priests, took control of the street where the rally was to take place. After achieving their initial objective of preventing the parade, the protestors broke through police barricades and pursued the people intending to join the rally, who had to be evacuated by Special Forces. At least 28 people were injured.



Gay rights activists were planning to gather outside the former parliament building on Tbilisi's Rustaveli Avenue at 1 pm on May 17 to mark the International Day against Homophobia. This would have been only the second such rally in Georgia.

But they soon had to change their plans when thousands of anti-gay Christian activists led by Orthodox priests, arrived carrying bunches of stinging nettles which they threatened to use on the gay activists. Some held placards reading, "We don't need Sodom and Gomorrah", "We should protect our children", "Stop Homosexual Propaganda in Georgia", etc.

Father Basil Mkalavishvili, a priest who was one of the main organizers of the protest, said that the anti-homophobia parade "insults people's traditions and national sentiments."

"Our main goal is to protect the Orthodox Church and fight against gays," Mkalavishvili told the Georgian Times, adding that this was "the beginning of a nettle revolution."

A day earlier, on May 16, the influential head of the Georgian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Ilia II, had called on the authorities via a written statement to ban the planned gay rights rally, denouncing it as an "encouragement" of "anomaly and disease." However, the authorities gave the green light for the gay parade to take place.

Three days earlier, Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili had said that sexual minorities were equal citizens of Georgia and that society would "gradually get used to it".

Ivanishvili had pledged to ensure the safety of the participants of the planned rally. In order to prevent any possible incidents a cordon of upwards of 2,000 policemen blocked off Rustaveli Avenue and other streets adjoining Tbilisi's central Freedom Square, which had been designated as the alternative venue for the rally. But the situation grew tense when news of the change of venue spread and anti-gay protesters, led by Orthodox priests, started moving towards Freedom Square. Only a few minutes after the parade had been expected to begin, tension boiled over and the crowd charged through the police barricades separating the two sides and swarmed into Freedom Square. The agitated crowd then engaged in a violent pursuit, beating and throwing stones at all the people thought to be supporting the rally.

Police were forced to bus approximately 30 gay activists out of the city centre to avoid further violence. However, these buses were also attacked and their windows smashed by the protestors; aggressive young men, and some priests, started chasing buses they thought were carrying participants of the anti-homophobia rally. "Kill these whores," one man shouted. Several people,

including a journalist and some policemen, sustained injuries.

"Those demonstrators were shouting at us and using bad language. They wanted to break the windows or the door and get inside; they would not allow the bus to move," said Tamta Melashvili, one of the protesters. "In the end, one of the priests saved us; otherwise I do not know what would have happened."

A few hours after the first clashes, further incidents took place near Kashveti Church, Tabukashvili Street and other places adjoining Rustaveli Avenue. Not far from Freedom Square a van reportedly carrying gay rights activists was surrounded by a large group of people, some of whom threw stones and other objects.

Near the Philharmonic Hall, which is more than a kilometer from the original hotspot, a young man and woman thought by the anti-gay protesters to be affiliated with the gay rights activists, were assaulted and obliged to seek shelter in a nearby Populi supermarket. Policemen had to be deployed to prevent a large group of people storming the place. When Georgia's Public Defender, Ucha Nanuashvili, arrived on the scene he was verbally confronted by anti-gay protesters and police had to intervene to escort him from the area. There was also an attempt to raid the offices of Identoba, a non-governmental organization which defends gay rights and was one

of the organizers of the anti-homophobia rally.

The number of anti-gay protesters began to dwindle when one senior Orthodox cleric called on them to move on to Holy Trinity Cathedral for prayer. Later that day Patriarch Ilia II then called for calm in a televised address, but also reiterated that the gay rights rally amounted to propaganda for homosexuality, which was unacceptable.

A group of six civil society and watchdog organizations (the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, Transparency International Georgia, the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy, the Georgian Democracy Initiative, the Human Rights Education and Monitoring Centre and Article 42 of the Constitution) later released a joint statement saying that the police had failed to take appropriate measures to prevent the violence.

"The impression was that the Interior Ministry was more focused on safely evacuating [anti-homophobia rally] participants from the scene than protecting the rally itself. The police did not make enough effort to provide security for the participants during the actual rally," their statement reads.

The Public Defender also issued a statement, which read that "It's a regrettable paradox that the International Day against Homophobia has become a day of expressing homophobia in Georgia."

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NEWS see daily news on www.geotimes.ge

Philip Dimitrov: The Silk Road is important not only in terms of economic development but in solving political challenges

"The Silk Road is very important for supporting Georgia not only in terms of economic development but from the perspective of solving political challenges," stated Philip Dimitrov, the European Union's Ambassador to Georgia during a conference organized by the Central Asia and Caucasus Institute titled "Connection of Asia and Europe: Regional Economic Integration in the South Caucasus and Asia". "When we talk about the Silk Road, it is important for the EU because Europe is situated on one end of the road. The Silk Road is important not only in terms of economic development but in solving political challenges as well. We cooperate with the South Caucasus countries on a regional level and also on an individual basis. It is important that the individual approach be merged with the global one," Dimitrov stated. The EU Ambassador talked about the East Partnership program in Georgia and the concluding of the "Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement" between the EU and Georgia. He hoped that such agreement would be achieved with Moldova and Armenia as well. "The agreement on deep and comprehensive free trade will assist in overcoming challenges. I hope we will see more sectoral reforms related to the harmonization of legislation with the EU," Dimitrov concluded.

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Day of Mourning held in Georgia for 3 slain Georgian soldiers in Afghanistan

May 16 was declared a Day of Mourning in memory of three Georgian military servicemen killed in Afghanistan. State flags were flown at half mass throughout Georgia, as well as in all Georgian military bases in occupied Afghanistan. Georgia's Minister of Defense Irakli Alasania visited the IV Infantry Brigade which the soldiers served under on May 16. The military held a moment of silence in respect of the Georgian heroes. "Today it's a sorrowful day for the Georgian Armed Forces and Georgia. Faraway from their homeland, Zviad Davitadze, Alexandre Kvitsinadze and Vladimer Shanava sacrificed themselves for the better future of our country. It was a very painful fact for me as I celebrated Easter with them on the base "Shir Ghazay" and I knew them personally," Alasania stated. "To sacrifice your life for motherland is the fate of the worthy. Devotion of our brothers-in-arm will help us to achieve our goal which is a united and strong Georgia. God bless our Armed Forces," he added. Military servicemen in all of the country's military installations listened to the Minister's address. The remains of military servicemen killed in Afghanistan's southern Helmand province on May 13 will be transferred to Georgia on May 16. A funeral procession was held in the Kashueti St. George Cathedral in Tbilisi.

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Khatuna Gogaladze: “Application of principles of sustainable development is a guarantee of healthy environment in line with long-term economic development of the country”

By EMMA BAIRAMOVA, GT

Lack of political will in past resulted in accumulation of a number of unsolved environmental problems. Khatuna Gogaladze, Georgia's Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Protection tells the Georgian Times about the main environmental problems facing the country and the ways they can be avoided and solved.

What kinds of environmental problems exist in Georgia? What are the reasons of these problems and what will be the consequences if these problems will left unsolved?

Georgia faces many environmental challenges, while existing mechanisms to resolve either are not existent or very weak. Identifying priority areas is difficult, as there are so many environmental problems. There are sectoral issues, such as, for example, pollution of surface water, transport emissions, reduction of biodiversity and degradation of habitats. Mechanisms for proper decision-making, like monitoring, environmental permitting, enforcement, and etc. are also weak. Current legislation requires improvement and relevant amendments should be made. Lack of political will in past resulted in accumulation of a number of unsolved environmental problems. Previously existed opinion that strict environmental standards are hindering economic development of the country is not correct. In contrary application of principles of sustainable development is a guarantee of healthy environment in line with long-term economic development of the country. The solution of above-mentioned problems, along with political will, requires time and financial resources. Fortunately, the political will now exist and some progress is already evident: the institutional and functional process strengthening of the Ministry is underway. The budget of the Ministry has been doubled as well as human resources increased.

Some consider how the development of the energy sector by construction new power plants at the same time seriously threatens the environment. What measures will the Ministry take in this direction?

We can not underestimate the importance of energy security of the country. Moreover, hydroelectric power station is considered to be one of the clean green energy sources. However, it should not happen at the expense of environment. Generally, it is very important to have a common (unified) strategy in the energy sector. Our approach is to study in detail and objectively the issue of construction of each power plant, assess the environmental impact of construction risks, prevent possible environmental damage and only then to make a decision.

Starting of the construction of Khudoni HES - power plant has caused a quite a stir in society. Parts of society and environmental protection organizations oppose the project. What is your position regarding the construction of a new power plant?

The Ministry does not create artificial barriers to investment companies and does not contradict construction of power plants in general. We agree that the Khudoni plant is a complicated issue, and for more than thirty years it has been related to a lot of unanswered questions and uncertainties. With the purpose of elimination of this uncertainty and to make a final optimal decision about project, the Ministry applied to the Government of the Netherlands with a request to provide expertise. As you know, the Netherlands stands in a very high level in the field of environmental protection. The Netherlands Commission for Environmental Impact Assessment created a working group consisting of extremely high qualification experts: geologist, seismologist, hydro technologist, energy economist and specialist in social and resettlement issues. The high qualification of the international team allows us to assume that conclusions and recommendations developed by them will significantly contribute to the making of right decision. The final version of the report will be available in the coming weeks.

What can you say about the so-called problematic plants, the working of which causes discontent of the local population? Are people who protest being reasonable? (For example, the village Ingiri, etc.)

Every citizen has the right to live in a healthy environment and to have access to full information about the state of the environment. Consequently, their objections are entirely justified if plants existing in their living areas really pollute the environment. As for our future work in this direction, the Ministry of Environment established the Department of Environmental Supervision, one of the main directions of which will be inspecting the compliance of plants with existing environmental standards. I will stress (emphasize) again our goal is not to create artificial barriers to the private sector or punish anyone, but to ensure the constitutional right of all citizens to live in a healthy environment. The Department will develop the methodology of inspection priorities; the preliminary planned inspection will be implemented, also, there will be inspections in response to citizens' complaints. We also plan to create an information system regarding the legislative amendments in order to provide each entrepreneur with the opportunity to work in compliance with legal requirements in a timely manner and bring them into full compliance with concrete object and working processes.

There is another problem - the indifference to the environment. Thus, for example, the press does not care about environmental problems. How does the Ministry of the Environment work in this direction?

The role of media in building an environmentally friendly civil society and contributing to solving the problems is considered as a crucial pillar for the process. Hence, raising awareness of media representatives and encouraging coverage of environmental issues is imperative for achieving the desired level of public participation in environmental decision-making. Unfortunately in Georgia we are experiencing a lack of environmental reporting skills and knowledge, thus many important issues are not being properly covered.

The Ministry plans to implement a number of media oriented activities aimed at raising environmental awareness of media representatives by providing access to information and increasing motivation focusing on cross-sectoral issues, presenting environment as a part of the economic, and social and political development of Georgia. The newly established unit under the Ministry - Environmental Education and Information Centre - will facilitate this process as one of the functions of the centre.

What about the forests? What is the situation regarding the sale of forests, under what conditions does this now happen?

Considering the numerous problems in the field of forestry, the Ministry (before its reorganization) has prepared a concept of forest management, as well as the Forest Policy and Strategy document is in development process. In addition, the forest inventory is planned as a result, of which the ministry will have a fair idea about the situation in this sector, which is necessary for implementation of the effective measures for problem solving. By the way, a forest inventory has not been done since the 1990's. For the first stage, in order to improve the physical protection of forests, we have increased the number of forest rangers. The major forestry activities are already planned which are the precondition for sustainable forest management (example forest inventory, maintenance activities and so on). A Forestry Policy unit has been established in the central apparatus of the Ministry, along with the National Forestry Agency, a system which will help to separate the policy functions from the physical management of forests, which is considered to be the best practice in developed countries. The sale of forests has never occurred, and the privatization of forest funds and lands is still prohibited by law. As for long-term use, special logging licenses were auctioned. In the future, we plan to strengthen the role of the state in forest management and ensure balancing ecological, social and economic

(where possible) functions of forests.

What is the threat of massive forest cutting? Are there regeneration efforts of the forest after deforestation?

If you mean the sanitary cutting, it is required felling of old trees in order to keep the sanitary condition of the forests. Considering that at present forest cutting is implemented only by license holders, cleaning of cutting area and following the sanitary norms is in their duty. But checking the compliance with the current license conditions will be implemented by the new Department of Environmental Supervision of the Ministry. As for the clear cutting, of course, it might have a direct influence if scale is large and finally, have a negative impact on soil (landslides, avalanches), cli-



mate and air condition.

As we all know, the Ministry took some of the measures regarding the problem of air pollution from vehicles. Can you briefly tell us about this?

Air pollution, especially in large cities, is one of the most important and urgent problems in Georgia. Approximately 70 percent of the country's total air emissions are from vehicles. For example, in the formation of the air quality of Tbilisi by 95 percent depends on transport sector. The ministry has prepared a concept for the reduction of environmental pollution from ve-

hicles. A special governmental inter-agency commission has been established and will prepare a program to “support measures for reducing of air pollution from vehicles in Georgia”. The program will include specific measures to improve the technical condition of the Auto Park, gradual renewal of the old Auto parks, fuel quality improvement and creating its (fuel) control system, reducing the number of vehicles and traffic intensity, the development of public transport, raise public awareness to ensure the monitoring of air quality and health.

Thousands of Protestors disrupt Rally against Homophobia

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“Despite the MIA having been informed several days before that two protests would be held in the same location, and also about the expected threats, representatives of the LGBT community and their supporting organizations were prevented from exercising the right to freedom of assembly granted to them by the constitution. Despite mobilization of the patrol police cordon, the police failed to sustain it,” he continued. Nanuashvili described the day's events as “deplorable” and added that it was obvious from all the footage that the anti-gay protestors, including the ecclesiastics, had behaved aggressively from the very beginning by running after the protesters. “Their aim was not to peacefully protest, but to physically abuse the protesters; there were cases of extremism and hatred,” his statement reads.

A similar rally in Tbilisi last year, albeit at on a much smaller scale, was also short-lived and likewise ended with a scuffle.

COMMENTS ON MAY 17 EVENTS

Bidzina Ivanishvili, Prime Minister of Georgia, con-

demned the violence against the rally participants and vowed that the perpetrators “will be dealt with according to the law”.

“The right to gather peacefully and freely express one's opinion is fundamental to our democracy. Every Georgian citizen benefits fully and equally from this right. Acts of violence, discrimination and restriction of the rights of others will not be tolerated, and any perpetrators of such acts will be dealt with according to the law,” the PM's statement reads.

Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili commented that the government must not allow violence. “I am deeply concerned about the violence in the centre of Tbilisi. No matter what the motives of the violence were, this cannot be the face of Georgian society. I don't agree that today's violence was the result of police activity, that it was their fault. This is about political responsibility,” the President stated. “The government must not just reject what is happening, it must not allow violence to take root in society and not allow it to spread by granting obscure amnesties, as it did when it let criminals out of prison for political motives,” he continued.

The EU Ambassador to Georgia was dismayed by the violence. “Freedom of expression is a basic human right, which should be available to all. Naturally I am disappointed that this right of expression was violently blocked today by counter demonstrators,” declared Philip Dimitrov. He added that the people who blocked the streets evidently do not understand that no one is demanding that they either like or adopt one type of sexual behavior or another.

“According to the present standards of civilization it is normal to allow anyone to express the way they are. What is not normal is violence and brutality against people who feel differently to yourself,” commented Dimitrov, emphasizing that “Georgia has committed itself to these standards and this understanding of normalcy and it is a shame to be unable to meet these commitments.”

An Interior Ministry spokesperson later said that an investigation into the disturbances was ongoing and an unspecified number of proceedings under both the criminal and civil codes were being initiated.

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TOP 25 Companies in Georgia

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This list of companies is in alphabetical order

- Bank Constanta
- Bank of Georgia
- Company Aversi
- Company Natakhtari
- FlyGeorgia
- Gas-Energy
- Geocell
- Geoplant
- Georgian Industrial Group
- Georgian American Alloys
- Georgian Beer Company
- Georgian Carriage Building Holding
- Georgian Sugar
- Georgian Water and Power
- Goodwill
- Healthy Water
- PSP Group
- Rustavi Azot
- Rustavi Metallurgical Plant
- Sarajishvili
- Smart Retail
- Socar Energy Georgia
- TBC Bank
- VTB Bank Georgia
- Wissol Group

“Unfortunately, these will not be the last victims”

In light of recent Deaths, Georgian War Veterans reflect on Soviet-Afghan War

By LISA TONAKLANYAN, GT

On May 16, 2013 Georgia bid farewell to three more of its soldiers. Since 2004, when the first Georgians were sent there, twenty-two Georgian soldiers have been killed while serving in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. Ironically the latest deaths coincided with the 25th anniversary of the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, which was completed on May 15, 1988, in which Georgians also participated.

Georgians have been fighting in Afghanistan since the 18th century, when some 2,000-3,000 were sent under the command of King Giorgi XI, who was a vassal of the Persian Shah. These Georgian troops succeeded in temporarily halting Afghan tribes' raids into Persian territory.

In 1979 the Soviet 40th Army, officially named the “Limited Contingent of Soviet Forces” (LCSF), crossed into Afghanistan. Though initially 81,100 strong, the contingent had increased to 120,000 strong by September 1986 as fighting had intensified and an exit strategy was sought.

Nugzar Kakhniauri, Chairman of Afghan Veterans' Union of Georgia, says that the first Georgians arrived in Afghanistan on December 24, 1979 and took part in capturing the palace of Afghanistan's then-President Hafizullah Amin, who had been suspected by Moscow of collaborating with the CIA. Amin ruled Afghanistan from September 14 to December 27, 1979 – the day he and his two young sons were killed in the Afghan capital's Tajbeg Palace during the special operation “Storm 333”. The palace became the 40th Army's

headquarters until the end of the conflict.

“Our conscription began on April 19, 1986, but even before arriving in Afghanistan we knew we would be serving in the Special Forces (Spetsnaz) and what sort of operations we would most likely participate in. Our task was to interdict and destroy weapons caravans, which were being transported from Pakistan to Afghanistan. The guns were destined for the Dushmans (Mujahideen) and we had to prevent them reaching their destinations as they would be used against us,” Kakhniauri told the Georgian Times.

Initially the Soviet draftees under took six months' training with the Uzbek Airborne Force as the nature and terrain of the Uzbek Soviet Republic were similar to those of Afghanistan, though it was not as hot there. They were then transferred to their postings. “160 Georgians were sent at that time and we were all deployed in different parts of the country. I personally served in Kandahar until 1989,” Kakhniauri continued, adding that the Georgians were distinguished soldiers, who always completed their tasks successfully and were distinguished by their risk taking and valour. **“We are good warriors when it comes to other people's wars,” Kakhniauri said, half in jest.**

However, Kakhniauri believes that the Georgian soldiers contributed to Afghanistan having a better future. “During those ten years 5,000 Georgians served there, while, for instance, Armenia only sent 2,800 troops. **We lost 128 soldiers in Afghanistan; seven are still missing, and we have never had any information about them,** although in the 1990s we found

one, Archil Kopadze, when he was released from captivity. We went there to stop the violence and prevent the spread of arms, although today we have been forgotten in Georgia and have almost no advantages from the social point of view,” he emphasized.

Fridon Burjaliani, another participant of Afghan War, maintains that the Soviet leadership brainwashed the soldiers by telling them that serving in Afghanistan was the Soviet people's “international duty” and that they must help the “friendly Afghan nation”. **“It was a lie; no one there needed our help.** We can't deny that since the spring of 1979 [then-head of state Nur Muhammad] Taraki had on numerous occasions appealed to the Soviet Union for assistance in the fight against the Mujahideen rebels, but it's commonly believed that Taraki was loyal to the USSR, as he had risen to power through Soviet interference,” Burjaliani told GT.

Records demonstrate that the Soviets were extremely apprehensive about sending troops to Afghanistan but after Taraki was murdered by Amin suspicions began to grow over Amin's policy. When Soviet soldiers in Afghan military uniforms attacked the Tajbeg palace Amin asked Moscow for assistance, not wishing to believe that the assailants were actually Soviets in disguise sent to kill him. Amin was replaced with Babrak Karmal, who had been in exile in the Soviet Union until December 1979, when the Soviet Union entered Afghanistan.

“This was not an occupation of Afghanistan by Soviet forces, as it's referred to today. **We were no more occupiers than the NATO forces are today.** The world was divided into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sides then – we



were considered the bad guys, though as LCSF troops our rights were quite limited. We had no right to open fire unless we saw a caravan transporting arms or the Dushmans were shooting at us. I served in the 186th Spetsnaz Unit in Zabul province from April 1986 to November 1988 and saw American instructors training the Mujahideen, along with French, Japanese, English... My unit was the first to discover that American Stingers (infrared homing surface-to-air missiles) were being used. Part of a Soviet plane shot down by one of these was sent to Ronald Reagan as proof of the American presence in Afghanistan... **The entire world was against us, and all the great powers were fighting in Afghanistan, like they are now.** In 1980s, the situation was almost the same as it is today, but then we had Soviet soldiers doing what NATO troops are doing now, and they could only have been called an occupation force if they had remained in Afghanistan longer than the

10 years. The withdrawal of Soviet combatant forces began on May 15, 1988. The last Soviet soldier left the country on February 15, 1989,” Burjaliani said.

Nugzar Kakhniauri also doesn't agree that the Soviet presence was an “occupation”. **“We fought the same people America and its NATO allies are fighting now.** A few days ago I read the Taliban's statement, and it is clear that the group which planned and carried out the attack on the Georgian base in Helmand province on May 13, 2013 was led by Afghan Mujahideen leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who we fought back in the 1980s. Then he was supported by the Americans and Osama bin Laden, and he took part in battles in which I also fought,” he declared.

In Kakhniauri's opinion, now that the rest of the world is withdrawing troops from Afghanistan Georgia also follow this example. **“We should leave behind only a hundred soldiers, as initially agreed, but not in**

Helmand. Some people are advocating increasing the number of Georgians in the “hotspots” such as Helmand province, but as we have seen the deaths of over a dozen Georgian servicemen,” Kakhniauri noted, warning that **“unfortunately, these will not be the last victims”.**

During the 1979-1989 war in Afghanistan a total of 620,000 Soviet soldiers served in the Limited Contingent of Soviet Forces, around 14,000 being killed and upwards of 50,000 injured. Seventy-one were awarded the decoration Hero of the Soviet Union and over 200,000 various medals.

Today Georgia has around 1,570 troops in Afghanistan, making it the largest non-NATO contributor to the International Security Assistance Force. During the past nine years, this small Caucasus country with a population of roughly 4.5 million has lost 22 troops. A total of 3,305 foreign soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan since the US-led war began in 2001.

Georgia Straddles between NATO, Russia and Reality

By DR. VAKHTANG MAISAIA, GT

After Georgia's 2012 Parliamentary Elections, the topic of NATO membership is again in focus, as many are currently questioning the new government's perspective on integration into the alliance and other Euro-Atlantic structures at large. Regardless, it may be too early to predict where Georgia actually stands in its foreign policy orientation.

There are also diverse and often contradictory opinions within the ranks of the ruling Georgia's Dream coalition, and the continued debate over the benefits of full-fledged membership for the country in light of changing dynamics, and political realities at home and in the region results in added conten-

tion.

Some of the political parties that belong to the coalition, especially the Republican Party and Our Georgia - Free Democratic Party, continue to fully support Georgia's integration into NATO. However, others in the coalition are less optimistic, such as Industry Will Save Georgia and to a lesser degree, the National Forum party. However, during the Rose-Roth NATO Seminar, held in Tbilisi in late April, Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili came out in direct support of continuing the path toward NATO membership. He went as far as to call for the unanimously backing for the Euro-Atlantic integration for Georgia. The PM also reiterated that the policy of his government is to gain NATO Membership Action Plan status at the alliance's next summit in 2014.

All things considered, and distancing from recent political rhetoric, the real issue at hand appears to have been decided very positively. Moreover, the decision on that stance was determined by a double-referendum held in Georgia on January 5, 2008 together with the call for early presidential elections for the following year. One question addressed at the time was a binding referendum on whether to bring forward the 2008 parliamentary elections from October to May 21 of that year. The second was a non-binding advisory referendum on joining NATO.

Notwithstanding some allegations of voting irregularities in 2008, snap presidential elections and the May parliamentary elections marred in election fraud, both proposals were approved by over 75 percent of the electorate. It is worth noting that this all was prior to the 2008 Georgian-Russian war and consequent

new political and economic realities.

During a recent press-conference on May 14, The PM mentioned that “Regaining the breakaway regions, joining NATO and being “friends” with Russia are all “manageable” tasks for Georgia,” and “I will persistently repeat that we will do both: on the one hand improve relations with Russia and on the other hand pursue Georgia's NATO integration path”. It is clear that Georgia faces immense challenges in its efforts to achieve all three objectives, not to mention simultaneously, and they are not weighted equally in importance. However, Georgia has three main options in complying with these foreign policy imperatives.

First Option: Georgia could recognize the independence of the breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and afterwards within the framework of

all Georgian territories seek integration into NATO and somehow stabilize relations with Russia during the process.

Second Option: Georgia agrees to the creation of a common statehood by having a “Confederation State of Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia” and subsequently brings the state into NATO by persuading those living in the breakaway regions that membership with the alliance offers positive implications that Russia cannot match. It is conceivable that relations with Russia could be balanced via reconciliation efforts by those living in Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

It would be necessary, however, to have a common shared vision for such an initiative as the Kremlin would have to accept, as a policy decision, a paradigm shift – so that it would cease in what Tbilisi considers Russia's aggressive stance toward

Georgia's eventual membership into NATO, as was the case with the three Baltic states during Yeltsin's presidency in Russia. The Baltic states successfully joined NATO without any apparent harm to their national interests. However, unlike Georgia, these states did not have separatist regions, where thousands of Russian troops were stationed.

Third Option: Russia alters its foreign policy orientation and to seeks full-fledged membership into Euro-Atlantic structures. Incidentally, in his first days of the presidency, Vladimir Putin acknowledged and expressed interests toward Russia's integration into the Euro-Atlantic integration in similar manner as when the Soviet Union's Foreign Minister Viacheslav Molotov announced in 1955 the Kremlin's quest for full membership into the NATO alliance.

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AMAZING SOCAR-MCDONALDS ON THE BLACK SEA COAST IN BATUMI

2013 Georgian Presidential Election may turn out to be a Horse Race

By LIKA MOSHIASHVILI, GT

Giorgi Margvelashvili, First vice Prime Minister and Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, has been named by the ruling Georgian Dream coalition (GD) as its presidential candidate for the country's upcoming elections to be held in October 2013.

Media and analytical circles were discussing several persons from the Georgian Dream coalition as potential candidates for presidency long before the Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, Georgia's Prime Minister and leader of GD made his choice public. Other possible candidates including the currently serving Defense Minister Irakli Alasania, former Foreign Minister Salome Zourabichvili, the Minister of Energy Kakha Kaladze and even former Parliament Speaker Nino Burjanadze were discussed among the lineup of possible candidates.

While announcing the candidate, the PM noted that Margvelashvili has good management skills and political experience and also is a good expert and analyst. However, individual rather than collective interests often dominate the Georgian political scene, and often political parties seldom outline their leaders. This is a deeply rooted problem in the Georgian political landscape.

The PM told that "Giorgi Margvelashvili has all the good skills to be a president," at a press conference on May 11, adding that Margvelashvili was "unanimously" selected by the leadership of the GD coalition.

"Whenever I come across difficulties I always call Giorgi

and ask him for advice; there are two or three such persons with whom I can sit down and talk about any issue or problem," Ivanishvili said.

Margvelashvili, 43 was a rector of the Tbilisi-based Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA) from 2000-2006, and again from 2010-2012, before being appointed to Education Minister in 2012. In the early 1990s, Margvelashvili, who holds a doctoral degree in philosophy from the Tbilisi State University, worked as a mountain guide a Caucasus Travel, a Tbilisi based travel agency. He joined the National Democratic Institute's Tbilisi office as a program consultant in 1995 and worked there prior to becoming the rector of GIPA.

"This is a person who helps employees learn, develop and have freedom of choice. Margvelashvili always take on huge responsibilities in his work and takes care of the people he is working with," Maka Ioseliani, GIPA's current rector told the Georgian Times. She had been working with Margvelashvili for more than 10 years.

Ioseliani went on to compare Margvelashvili with Václav Havel, first president of the Czech Republic who oversaw the peaceful division of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia and led his nation in the wake of the collapse of communism.

"The Czech Republic is a happy country because it had Václav Havel and it's time for Georgia to have a president like him-Margvelashvili comes from the political group that prepared Georgia's 2003 Rose Revolution. He was a member of the team of



"reformers" who were led by Zurab Zhvania, the then Speaker of the Georgian Parliament. Margvelashvili was part of the political team along with his current opponents from the United National Movement (UNM) Giga Bokeria, Givi Targamadze and Vano Merabishvili.

Photos were spread on social networks of Margvelashvili together with Giga Bokeria not long ago. This may be an attempt by some to discredit the presidential candidate based on his close association with Bokeria, a close advisor to President Mikheil Saakashvili, and well known for his political rhetoric.

"I want to thank the coalition for this trust. Of course this is a huge honor and responsibility for me," Margvelashvili commented. "I hope I will be able not to let down the hopes of the Georgian Dream and will also be able not to let down the hopes of Georgian voters in the future."

Soso Tsintsadze, a Georgian political expert thinks that Margvelashvili has both strong and weak sides. "His strong side

is that he is not contentious, not aggressive, but tolerant and intellectual. His weak side is that he has little experience in life and he is a very pro "Georgian Dream", while a president should be neutral," he explains.

According to the National Democratic Institute, (NDI) public opinion poll held in March of this year, Giorgi Margvelashvili, who is not a member of any political party, came in the last place in terms of popularity amongst cabinet ministers. It is surprising to many why he was then selected to be the coalition's presidential candidate. However, the same poll shows that 58 percent of the population wants GD candidate as the next Georgian president and only 8 percent said they would like to see the UNM candidate as the new president.

Based on these figures it seems obvious that Margvelashvili will win the presidential race. However, there is still much time before the October election and the full list of presidential candidates is not known yet. It is even conceivable that a third party

candidate could come out of the blue and be elected – a dark horse candidate. Others pundits content that the choice of this person is a ploy to swing the election in favor of the UNM so as to give the impression that multiparty democracy is alive and well in Georgia.

Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili has compared GD's decision to ancient Roman rule, weighing in with an intellectual comment.

"I will say nothing specifically about Margvelashvili, but generally speaking, when the Roman Emperor decided to demonstrate his dominance over society, he appointed his horse to the senate," he said.

The situation remains unclear regarding the favorite of Saakashvili's UNM party. The minority has distinguished three well known figures - Davit Bakradze, leader of parliamentary minority, Vano Merabishvili, general secretary of the party and once powerful Interior Minister, and MP Giorgi Baramidze. The UNM's presidential candidate will be decided after internal debates and through a primary vote.

Meanwhile, Nino Burjanadze, a former parliament speaker under the previous government, broke her silence last week and openly declared her intention to return to the big political arena. "I hope there will never be a situation in the country when participation in elections loses any meaning," stated Burjanadze, emphasizing that her party will take part in the elections.

As Salome Zurabishvili, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs commented on Sunday at a briefing in Poti, a port city located on the eastern Black Sea coast of Georgia, she is ready to present her candidacy as an independent candidate for the presidential election.

She declared, "I am ready to

run for the President of Georgia, if I feel the support of people I intend to become an independent candidate."

Meanwhile, Shalva Natelashvili, the leader of the Labour Party, has already filed paper to run for the office of President of Georgia. The party was formed in 1995 and while enjoying limited success at the national level has performed consistently well in local elections.

Georgia, a former Soviet Republic, regained independence following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Zviad Gamsakhurdia became the first democratically elected president of the country. However, Gamsakhurdia's presidency was short lived and he was soon overthrown in a coup by opposition militias, which in 1992 installed former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze as the country's new leader. Shevardnadze resigned in 2003 as a result of mass-protests against his rule in what became known as the Rose Revolution.

Its leader, Mikheil Saakashvili, was subsequently elected as Georgia's president in January 2004, and won a second term in a snap presidential election in January 2008, called for in response to opposition protests. All three presidents oversaw disastrous civil wars during that left the Georgia increasing fractured territorially.

PM Ivanishvili's Georgian Dream coalition won control of parliament in October last year, defeating the UNM party of Saakashvili, whose second term ends in October 2013. According to the constitution, the president is to set the exact date of the elections. A new constitutional provision, which will go into force after the new president is inaugurated, will significantly increase the PM's authority at the expense of presidential powers.

Legal Whitewash for former Deputy Interior Minister

By LISA TONAKANYAN, GT

First high-ranking "victim" of the new government or just an attempt to toss dust into the eyes of Georgian society – former Deputy Minister of Interior Affairs Gela Khvedelidze accused of disclosing personal secrets - was released on bail despite calls to lock him up by the Prosecutor's Office. The Prosecution's motion was turned down by Tbilisi City Court on May 15.

Gela Khvedelidze was charged with breach of privacy rights involving the leak of a secretly recorded threesome sex video involving journalist Giorgi Paresishvili, who had been openly critical of Khvedelidze, along with Lasha Natsvlishvili Deputy Chief Prosecutor, and Gia Khukhashvili the Prime Minister's Advisor. It is alleged that the filming was illegal and was being done in an effort seize con-

trol over businesses, some of which were previously run by former government officials. The journalist also blamed Natsvlishvili for hindering an investigation into last year's Lapankuri special operation in Georgia's Lapota Gorge which

left several servicemen and seven Chechen militants dead.

Soon after the arrest of the former Deputy Interior Minister, Eliso Kiladze, the Editor-in-Chief of the "Kronika Plus" newspaper released a secretly recorded audio file in which Kh-

vedelidze talked about Khukhashvili's attempt to seize control over the egg import business while simultaneously aiming to diminish or destroy Georgia's domestic egg production.

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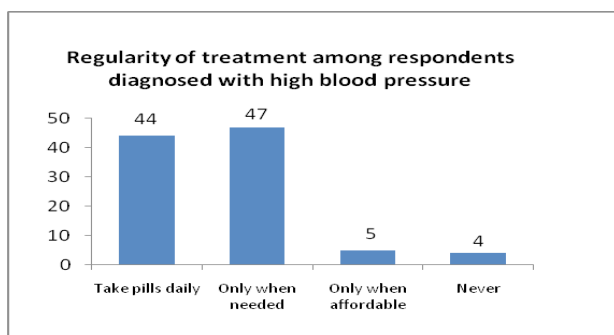
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NEW RESEARCH: IRREGULAR TREATMENT OF HYPERTENSION IN GEORGIA

Last month the European Union and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine published a series of public health papers based in part on research conducted by Georgian Opinion Research Business International (GORBI). These papers include a brief discussion of the things we discovered, as well as policy recommendations for improving Georgians' health.

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is common in most modern societies. Georgia presents especially high numbers, as we live in a country with a perfect blend of risk factors: a diet high in salt and carbohydrates, resulting obesity, very little exercise, and very much alcohol. What's worse, many Georgians don't know they have hypertension, and those that do often don't take their prescribed medication regularly. Below find more detailed findings along with policy recommendations for addressing the leading cause of death in Georgia.

Circulatory diseases are the leading cause of premature death in Georgia, and high blood pressure (hypertension) is the main risk factor. Effective treatment can significantly reduce the risk of serious complications from hypertension if regular medication is taken daily. However in Georgia, new evidence suggests that patients are not taking hypertension treatment regularly and this has serious consequences for their health.



An urgent policy response is required to prevent irregular treatment of hypertension. As well as the human suffering caused by hypertension-related diseases, the economic impacts are substantial. Chronic diseases and their risk factors cost countries up to 6.7% of their GDP¹ – 1.6 billion lari in the case of Georgia.

This policy brief provides results from a nationally-representative household survey of 2,200 randomly selected people in 2010

from the Health in Times of Transition (HITT) study (<http://www.hitt-cis.net>). Further details on the research can be found in the sources listed below.

KEY STUDY FINDINGS

Less than half of respondents diagnosed with high blood pressure were taking medication daily.

This figure is alarmingly low, and there has been very little improvement between 2001 and 2010 (using directly comparable data from a related 2001 study). In 2010, almost half of respondents took drugs for high blood pressure “only when I feel I need them”, reflecting poor awareness of the need for daily treatment. There are also financial barriers to taking hypertension medication, with 5% of respondents only taking the medication when they can afford it.

Additionally, just 24% of respondents in 2010 reported that they had been diagnosed with high blood pressure. This figure is much lower than the national prevalence of hypertension, which is 51% according to WHO (based on measured blood pressure). It is therefore likely that many hypertensive people are unaware of their condition.

Younger age groups, heavier alcohol users and those without symptoms are least likely to be taking daily medication. They are therefore at greater risk of complications caused by untreated hypertension. The young and physically fit may be less likely to take regular treatment for their hypertension because they are unaware that they are still at high risk of complications.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Public awareness campaigns can educate the public on the dangers of hypertension, the need for regular checks for hypertension, and the importance of regular hypertension treatment for preventing death and disability. Campaigns should also promote lifestyle changes that can be used to manage or prevent hypertension, such as exercise and dietary change. Specific campaigns should seek to improve access to high risk groups, such as younger age groups.

Adherence support. To improve the quality of hypertension management, it needs to be ensured that clinical guidelines reflect best practice in adherence support and that providers follow guidelines fully. This may take the form of financial incentives, such as performance related pay, or regulation and monitor-

ing. Health care providers should also be made aware of the low rates of adherence of patients with hypertension, and receive training on counselling patients in a non-judgemental manner to help patients adhere better to treatment schedules. Patients need to be taught how to deal with missed doses, and what to do if drugs have adverse effects.

Prescribing practice. Health care providers must receive guidelines and training to aid them in making a rational selection of antihypertensive drugs. Providers should prescribe drugs that will be available, affordable, have a simple dosing regimen, and have minimal interference with the patient's quality of life.

We at GORBI would like to thank the EU and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine for the opportunity to implement this important social research, as well as The Georgian Times for agreeing to publish these papers as a civil service. In the coming weeks, we will publish similar policy recommendations on topics such as alcohol abuse and access to health care.

Sources:

Roberts, B, Stickley, A, Balabanova, D, Haerpfner, C, McKee, M (2012) “The persistence of irregular treatment of hypertension in the former Soviet Union” Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22447959>

Further Information:

World Health Organisation 2003. Adherence to long term therapies: Evidence for Action. http://www.who.int/chp/knowledge/publications/adherence_full_report.pdf

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(Footnotes)

¹ Marc Suhrcke, Rachel A. Nugent, David Stuckler and Lorenzo Rocco. (2006) “Chronic Disease: An Economic Perspective”. London: Oxford Health Alliance.

Legal Whitewash for former Deputy Interior Minister

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However, both the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili considered such allegations towards their officials as groundless. Meanwhile, the Prosecutor's Office informed the Georgian Times that neither Gia Khukhashvili nor Lasha Natsvlishvili is currently under investigation.

According to the PM's advisor Khukhashvili, the accusations are false and he plans to raise the issue of responsibility of those people who have apparently engaged in a smear campaign. Meanwhile, he admitted that no one has a right to meddle into the private lives of others and demanded the case be fully investigated. This case is especially interesting as the new government promised during the election campaign to have a zero tolerance policy towards crimes of governmental officials, especially in light of the crime ridden history of the previous government and many breaches of public trust.

This case is more like a soap opera than hardcore crime. Khvedelidze was responsible for securing a large cache of video tapes, which were “illegally recorded” by the previous authorities. However, as Interior Minister Irakli Gharibashvili declared, his deputy failed in carrying out the task and instead

leaked a scandalous sex video in order to take revenge against Giorgi Paresishvili. Gharibashvili assured the public that he was not planning “to be the kind of minister, who protects his family members, friends and relatives”. “This time will pass and be forgotten and I'm sure it will never be back,” the Interior Minister stressed, adding that no one will ever again be able to get away with such crimes.

The head of the Cabinet spoke in unison with his Interior Minister, saying that Gela Khvedelidze's arrest has demonstrated that everyone is equal before law and any guilty party will do the time they deserves. “Khvedelidze was a very active member of the coalition during the election process and he carried out very important tasks. By arresting him, we have showed our style...senior officials must be the first and role models among those who have to obey laws,” Ivanishvili said at a May 14 a press conference. The possibility of Deputy Chief Prosecutor Lasha Natsvlishvili's resignation has irritated the Prime Minister. “Why should he resign – because Eliso Kiladze wants him to do so?” Ivanishvili addressed journalists during the press conference and asked them not to interfere in various issues, as it will be resolved under the law.

In spite of the government's claims that the former official will be held accountable to the

fullest extent of the law, members of opposition United National Movement (UNM) party doubt the Georgian Dream coalition's seriousness in following through on their claims that justice will be served. Andro Barnov, Head of President's Saakashvili's Administration stated that they have “well-grounded suspicions that the Prime Minister sacrificed a less important official in order to cover up guilt of others”. According to Barnov, Ivanishvili's reaction has raised doubts that he was personally interested in releasing the footage showing Paresishvili's private life and was actually hiding the truth, as in the corrupt scheme and the names of officials are mentioned.

Soon thereafter, the Tbilisi City Court granted a 5,000 GEL bail to the ex-Deputy Interior Minister, dismissing the Prosecutor Office's application on preliminary confinement. As Kakha Sopromadze, defense lawyer of Khvedelidze, told journalists the judge allowed Khvedelidze out on bail since the alleged crime was considered “less grave”. The absence of a previous criminal record also worked in his favor.

Khvedelidze was initially charged under Section One, Article 157 of Georgia's Criminal Code, which deals with “illegally” obtaining, retaining or distribution of personal or family secrets” – and is punishable by fine, or by corrective labor for

up to one year, or by imprisonment for a similar period. However, later, the part was changed to the third section, which implied “illegal use of private or family secrets and/or its distribution” by a person who was authorized to secure the secrecy of such information. The charge

carries either financial penalty, or a restriction of freedom for up to three months in length, or imprisonment extending for up to three years. Khvedelidze's case is not considered under the Article 333 of the Criminal Code (Exceeding Official Powers), which envisages a sentence of up

to eight years in prison.

A preliminary hearing on the criminal case against Gela Khvedelidze is scheduled for July 2, 2013, though the Prosecutor's Office promises to appeal Tbilisi City Court's decision on releasing the former official on bail to a higher court.

Georgia Straddles between NATO, Russia and Reality

Continued from p. 6

However, unlike Putin's understanding of the importance of Western technology, investment and energy cooperation, in those early days of the Cold War, such outlandish statements by Soviet officers were aimed at sowing discord among alliance members while demonstrating the USSR's ambitions to integrate Western Europe with the Soviet Union, which realistically was thought to be carried out either through communist subversion or an outright military invasion.

Such hypothetical scenarios have also been considered by the Georgian PM when he said that “Of course it would be desirable if there is a rapprochement between NATO and Russia – that would have resolved our problem. But Russia has such a position and it had the similar position in respect of other states;

others managed to do it, and why can't we? We failed to do it because I think the previous government made grave mistakes; it was the previous government which used NATO to irritate Russia”. However, as long as Putin remains in power in Russia, and together with his team, and groomed and hand-picked successors, such scenarios are less viable and difficult to realize.

Nonetheless, and based on such a statement the question remains if and when Georgia will become a full-fledged NATO member. Much has been discussed and written on this topic but it remains an eventuality that is still hard to predict in the nearest future. The criteria for each candidate state for membership fast tracking varies – as concrete requirements are set up or stipulated as: 1) peaceful solutions to any kind of political and military problems with neighboring countries; 2) resolution of any

kind of intra-political difficulties, including domestic conflicts and then to be followed up with 3) reforms based on Euro-Atlantic values, inter alia.

These are sufficiently contentious and debatable enough issues to be resolved, and this is the first step to setting the stage for real discussions. They do, however, serve in highlighting the ability of the Georgia authorities and society at large to come together to deal with many pressing social and political issues on the domestic level.

In the meantime, Georgia's PM remains very optimistic in seeking a positive outcome to all the issues raised, as can be confirmed from his overall summary of the situation, “I prefer deeds over promises and we have such ambitions [about the Membership Action Plan] ... and these are very objective; I think we will manage to accomplish them.”



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Neither here nor there: Why Anti-discrimination is not a Policy

By KENDRA PARADIS, GT

A lot has been said about the massive, extreme and sweeping educational reforms of the Saakashvili administration, especially about the introduction of a revolutionary new pedagogic and cultural perspective introduced via the introduction of an English language program in every school across the country starting from the first grade. However, not a lot has been said about the adverse effects of the replacement of Russian programs to make way for the new regime.

While this may not seem like a matter of great importance for Georgians looking to integrate with the European Union and other Western institutions, it appears that Georgia's minority populations' lingering ties and reliance on the "imperialist Russian language" have been overlooked.

Although the independent counties of the South Caucasus have their own strong and historically prevalent vernaculars, which were in large part the impetus for secession from the late Soviet Union; the people of the North Caucasus, as republics of the present day Russian empire, are still forced to rely on the language of their federal structure. Georgia's lack of perspective and policies toward the North Caucasus have been pointed out and are being enumerated more thoroughly in certain circles of the educated elite who have a stake in the deficient policies. Otherwise, this region has long been forgotten; other than sadly Orientalist stereotypes, locals know little to nothing about their true neighbors. This lack of understanding has led to an egregious deficit of support for some of Georgia's citizens. The Dagestanis of northeastern Kakheti (a region in eastern Georgia), referred to in Russia as Georgian-Avars, are suffering under the political fervor of post-Soviet independence, which to them looks quite schizophrenic.

The villages of Chantlitskhure, Tivi, and Sarusso are located in the Kvareli region of Kakheti. Historically, the Dagestani shepherds would bring their herds down from the harsh mountains to this area in the cold winter months but eventually settled the land permanently. During Soviet times they were relocated after the Chechen and other Muslim population deportations of WWII. In 1977, the Chechens and other groups were rehabilitation and allowed to return to their villages in Georgia. However, their houses had already been repopulated by Georgians, so they were forced to



settle the lands which they inhabit to the present day. The delineation of proper borders after the Soviet Union's collapse offered the Dagestanis a bridge of no return, and many saw their best chance for prosperity was to take Russian passports in Makhachkala, the administrative capital of Dagestan. Most families however, left a few members behind to preserve the connection to their homeland. Those who remained on their native land in Georgia have ended up in a no-man's-land of policy.

Mokhtar Alieev is the Russian teacher at the Chantlitskhure public school and his family is a perfect replica of his village's history. His school has been no less fragmented by the passage of time; once home to both a Georgian and Russian section, giving parents the choice about the direction of their children's future, the village has suffered the consequences of national educational policies. Not only was the Russian section closed, but since the English language was introduced from first grader last year, Russian is now only sanctioned from grade 7. This gives the Dagestanis only three years of Russian as a foreign language. Although he is happy that his daughters are receiving a Georgian education he is worried about their future. The school, recently rebuilt by the Ministry, is allowed to provide education only through grade 9 leaving students with no realistic options. The Kvareli Educational Resource Center, under whose jurisdiction the Dagestani communities fall, has informed them if their children wish to get a high school diploma they will have to travel four villages away to Akhalsofeli, a Georgian village, to have any chance at receiving a diploma.

This is an unthinkable prospect for the local parents.

"I want my girls to be educated and have a chance to continue studying but I can't leave them to go so far every day, alone, where there is no one we know. Anything could happen to them," Mokhtar explains. His youngest daughter is now in first grade. "I'm nervous about how she will learn anything in this system. The children are split by all these languages; we speak our language at home, they're learning in a Georgian school, English from the first grade, one hour a week of Avar which is difficult to imagine without a basis in Russian since our alphabet is based on Russian, and some children are learning Arabic so they can understand the recitations they must perform at the mosque." That's a staggering four alphabets over a span of six languages.

Although the Kvareli ERC has allowed for the one hour of Avar language instruction a week for the village's population, Mokhtar points out that time could be spent more efficiently. Dagestan is comprised of thirteen districts, each with its own completely unique language which then branches off into innumerable dialects, many of which are mutually incompressible. "We can't use that language anywhere. Our dialect is totally different from the literary Avar language and anyway, no one in Dagestan is using that language. All the schools, most of the TV, everything is in Russian. Our republic is part of the Russian Federation. All our relatives communicate in Russian it's the common language of Dagestanis since otherwise we can't communicate."

The responsibility falls completely on the family to pre-

serve the language. Neighboring Zinobiani is an excellent example of how these policies can be culturally dangerous. Mokhtar's colleague, a history teacher in his school, is of Udi decent. The Udi people, as Orthodox Christians, have assimilated much more into Georgian society. As a result, more and more Georgian is spoken in Udi homes and their language has lost its priority in school. The language is now in extreme danger of extinction. Although none of the Georgian-Avars see this

and there can be no increase in provisions for the instruction of foreign languages. This is a farce since there is no ambiguity as to the governmental language of the Republic of Dagestan being Russian; and if the matter was related to the mother tongue of the population then the instruction of Avar is also inherently false. Additionally, after first being told their numbers were not sufficient, they were told that their numbers were subsequently determined to be sufficient, but that the

alike, to include an increased presence of minority groups. If Georgian history teaching encompassed a more inclusive approach, it would serve to inform both majority and minority groups of their fellow citizens' history and culture and would considerably aid the civil integration process.

Unfortunately, they have been subject to more blatant discriminatory policies such as unfair land distribution, and the horrible real-estate buy-back policies of the early indepen-



as a potential outcome for their community, pressure still remains to find a place for their children in their global futures.

"There are schools for the Armenians and Azerbaijanis, so it can be done for some people." In fact, what Mokhtar did not know was that a study in 2009, showed a substantial number of monolingual schools in these languages, as well as one in Ukrainian. According to the study, an even greater number of bilingual schools for these languages were available along with Russian and even several Ossetian schools. The problem, the ERC explained to the community, was that the Dagestanis are not ethnic Russians, so it is not their language

population was unfortunately not compact enough. It was very unclear what the later was intended to mean.

The school's history teacher, from the Udi village which is situated between the Avar villages, had no accurate knowledge of his people. The history of ethnic groups in the region rarely feature in the textbooks, when they do it is often with negative connotations. Mokhtar often feels tensions run high within the school whenever he expresses his concern about the future of his people. This predicament could be aided by amending the curriculum of the teaching of history of Georgia in all schools, both Georgian and non-Georgian

dence period. The village has not been given building permits to construct a proper mosque so they were forced to buy an old shop and convert it into a space for prayer. A former student of Mokhtar, now a shepherd, knowing his language was different from Avar and that because he was of course not a Georgian, or a Russian, was simply unable to identify who he was. Laws of anti-discrimination are simply not effective means of policy dealing with minority populations and instituting national policies in this arena is not allowing them to fall through the cracks but rather forcing them into the cracks of the system, even in their own minds.

NEWS

Cooperation Agreement was concluded between Georgia and Hungary

A cooperation agreement on economic and tourism development was concluded between Georgia and Hungary on May 15. The document was signed by the Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maia Panjikidze during her official business trip to Hungary and Hungary's State Secretary for Foreign Affairs and External Economic Relations Péter Szijjártó. According to the Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, the parties mentioned during the official ceremony that the signed cooperation agreement provides an excellent framework for the intensification of Hungarian business activities and investment in Georgia. A bilateral economic committee between the two countries will also be set up as part of the agreement. Hungary and Georgia had a trade turnover of 50 million USD last year, which can be increased, the State Secretary said. "Among key areas of cooperation, projects focusing on transportation, energy, agriculture, water management and joint railway ventures are worth mentioning. We would have an actual opportunity to discuss the issues and identify the fields where we need to strengthen our cooperation," Szijjártó noted.

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Love in '3D' on the Stage of Tumanishvili Film Actors' Theatre

By TAKO AGARASHVILI, GT

Nothing is infinite. Everything in this world comes to its natural end. Yet, there are some topics that are always timely. From generation to generation human kind keeps digging deep into it, but nevertheless the results seem fleeting. There is no era that can come up with the constant solution to it. Men and women and what connects them will be a matter of discussion and conflict until the very last moment the universe exists.

French playwright Jean Cocteau introduced the well-known topic in his plays, novels, films and poems. He didn't just introduce it, tell us the story or show us the angle - he showed us the way. He showed

home. She is worried, she is hectic, she is jealous, she is in love and most importantly she is sensing that something is wrong. Three guys play a husband Emil, who is very concerned about the truth and false matter.

The amount of actors creates the feeling that you looking at the person in '3D'. If we start talking about women and their mood swings it will take us forever. Yet, right there on the stage a hectic emotional woman was wide open in front of us without us getting tired or bored or overloaded. The girls were switching on the stage playing a mood after mood. You could see Emmy inside out. She was just fighting with her curiosity, fear, jealousy and craziness. While one was playing, the other one was observing her from the outside and most importantly laughing at her own false misery because



a glass of wine. They ask the public a question: "Is jealousy an act of love or selfishness?" The answers were mostly - 'selfishness', but I shall let

professions. Two people being busy and dedicated to their jobs. Two people being happy for each other's success. Two people being lovers, friends and

lic as well. They all had the same feeling after the play. They found themselves in the characters; they even found their friends, their loved ones.

pression is simple yet deep, funny yet essential. The play lights up deep feelings, new approaches and most importantly it makes people laugh.



us that no matter if we are a man or a woman, sometimes we need to get out of our skin, our mind, our heart and look at the situation from the side. Most importantly we must do it with a huge amount of humor. After compiling pieces of novels by Cocteau, Georgian director Nana Kvashvadze created a composition and staged the play 'A Man and a Woman'. The play is funny, sophisticated, captivating, alluring and emotional. It simply embodies your most inner fears, thoughts, feelings and actions. Looking at the story it seems like a regular one of a pregnant woman and a man who has just lost his job and these two can't find a right moment to confess. There are six actors on the stage playing two characters. It is a man and a woman and their love. Three girls play a young successful actress, Emmy, who is crazy in love with her husband. She got back earlier from the tour, she is pregnant and is waiting for her beloved to come

at the end, everything turned out just fine.

Fascinating directing, set and translation by Nana Kvashvadze, marvelous modern choreography by Nino Gogua, lovely costumes and set design by Sophia Koridze and brilliant acting by the young actors: Emmy - Tamara Bziava, Nutsa Mtchedlishvili, Nini Kvashvadze, Emil - Gagi Shengelia, Guram Laliashvili and Ilia Tcheishvili. As soon as a person enters, the room gets captivated, grows in the mood of the theme thanks to beautiful set decoration. After reading the play and having long busy conversations with the director, Sophia became inspired to create an outstanding, warm and cozy design. Getting deep to the point of the characters she came up with vivid, charismatic and dramatic costumes. It's her art that gets public in the mood of the play from the second one puts the eye on the stage.

Actors interact with the public during the play offering



myself disagree big time (like I did on the spot). To me jealousy shows love and only love. Love may turn you selfish, obsessive, jealous, but it all is caused only because one is in love. I questioned the leading actress Tamri Bziava who enriched the play with outstanding acting.

Do you think this play is a new word about the matter of love?

I certainly do. It's about the humorous approach and attitude to it. In my opinion human kind is lacking it.

Do you think families like this can work? An architect married to a wife who is always travelling?

You never know what kind of families work. Besides Emmy and Emil live in the hotel, so the sense of living on the move probably balances the gap.

What is the idea of a happy relationship for you?

Two people being good at what they do and loving their

partners. That's what I'm going to have.

What is jealousy to you? Love or selfishness?

Both. I interviewed the pub-



It is the kind of a play that can never leave one empty; the im-

Now you tell me, does jealousy show love or selfishness?!

NEWS

Head of Georgian-Abkhazian and Ossetian International Movement to Run for President

Nestan Kirtadze, President of the Georgian-Abkhazian and Ossetian International Movement, will run in Georgia's 2013 presidential elections, according to her official announcement on May 13. Kirtadze said that she decided it after the ruling Georgian Dream coalition nominated on May 11 current Minister of Education and Sciences and first Vice-Premier Giorgi Margvelashvili as its presidential candidate. According to Kirtadze, Margvelashvili is not a candidate who can make a right impact on the most important issue of the country - territorial integrity - and send the right signals to the Abkhazians and Ossetians. "I will run for president in the October 2013 Presidential Election. I would like to use the chance and show my private respect towards Giorgi Margvelashvili as a colleague to colleague. But his nomination as a presidential candidate by the Georgian Dream was incomprehensible," stated Kirtadze. She said that the presidency remains one of the highest political posts. "It was insignificant for Georgian society who the ruling political power would nominate as a presidential candidate. Unfortunately, Giorgi Margvelashvili was nominated, whose political background is that he is a philosopher and has an ironic sense of humor," NetanKirtadze said.



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