

The Georgian Times

NO 1 NEWSPAPER IN GEORGIA THE GEORGIAN TIMES MEDIA HOLDING

No 25 (1516) Monday, September 30, 2013 Weekly Newspaper, International Edition - Published by "The Georgian TIMES" Media Holding Since 1993 www.geotimes.ge



Creeping occupation – where are the Georgian borders?

Three families in the village of Dvani, in the Kareli district, have been given only a few days to vacate their homes. Their homes are on the outskirts of the village, and have now been declared to be in the area occupied by Russian troops. This is separated by barbed wire, put there by the Russians, from the rest of the village.



The future of the presidency

On p. 4

The Diplomat David Chkhitunidze is still waiting for the decision of Athens' Court

On p. 4

Syrian Geopolitical Enigma – Russia and Iran are allies, so who is in opposition???

On p. 11

Who can the PM call on to help us when he has not been anywhere and has no connection with anyone?

On p. 13



მაგთივინი Magtiwin

MANY THINGS ARE CLEAR WITHOUT WORDS

Wordless-Magtiwin

Address: Tbilisi,
119/1 D. Agmashenebeli Ave.
Manufacture: 5 Politkovskaya str. (former Jikia)
Tel: 253 65 17; 94 00 00

info@magtiwin.ge
http://magtiwin.ge/
https://www.facebook.com/magtiwin

What will happen to five Georgian hospitals?



"We are not going to step back, we want to work here, but if we will decide to abandon this investment it will be because of the incomprehensible, unreasonable caprices of a few doctors..."

On p. 6

ERNST & YOUNG
Quality In Everything We Do

Expand your professional horizons!

NEWSLETTER



Georgia

Country of life

On p. 7-10

Creeping occupation — where are the Georgian borders?

By LELA TSINTSADZE, GT

Three families in the village of Dvani, in the Kareli district, have been given only a few days to vacate their homes. Their homes are on the outskirts of the village, and have now been declared to be in the area occupied by Russian troops. This is separated by barbed wire, put there by the Russians, from the rest of the village.

Border demarcation has been conducted intensively over the last few by Russian border guards, who are using old maps of the former South Ossetian Autonomous District dating from the Soviet period. The village of Dvani is now on both sides of the non-existent boundary between South Ossetia and Georgia proper, as is to be expected as both sides are both legally part of the same country and have been administered accordingly.

Zurab Chkheidze, the Governor of Shida Kartli, says that after the demarcation process the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline will be on the Russian occupied side of the illegal border. He adds that the Georgian government should help the families now being forced to move. "The government should give some compensation to the families, so that that they can buy alternative living space", he says.

Government structures have made statements about the events going on near the occupation line. Most of these encourage us to stay calm, but others think that the state should take drastic steps to reverse this creeping Russian occupation.

Paata Zakareishvili, the Minister for Reintegration Affairs, says that it is the ministry's duty to respond to the erection of the barbed wire borders and ensure the locals remain in their homes, but this is not only their prerogative. This effort must involve the whole government, as the occupiers are making people leave the area and trying to speed up the harvest.

"We can see that the MIA is

working on this and making statements. All diplomatic corps are also involved, but we are dealing with the brazen, cynical and brutal Russian occupation regime", said the minister.

After a meeting held during the UN General Assembly Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO Secretary General, commented on the developments in Ditsi and Dvani and told Georgian journalists that NATO acknowledges Georgia's territorial unity and sovereignty. "We have a clear position regarding Georgia - we demand full respect of its territorial integrity and sovereignty. We continue the non-recognition policy concerning Abkhazia and so-called South Ossetia and call on Russia to abide by its international commitments. These steps are contrary to those international commitments", Rasmussen said.

President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili also criticised the border developments and the actions of the occupiers during the UN General Assembly. He stated that the Russian annexation of Georgian territory was continuing, and that unlike most nations the Russian Federation is not interested in having stable states around it, but wants to see constant turmoil in its neighbouring countries.

"Will The Kremlin agree to discuss the de-occupation of our regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, now the government has changed in Tbilisi? Far from it. The annexation of Georgian land by Russian troops continues. Yesterday the occupiers once again expelled Georgian citizens from their homes, and they are destroying them, their villages and the homes of their parents and grandparents and their cemeteries in total impunity", said Saakashvili.

The President also mentioned friendly statements made by the new Georgian government towards Russia in recent weeks and months and stated that despite this new departure in relations the Russian military keeps advancing. However State Minister for Reintegration Paata Zakareishvili criticised the President's com-



ments. "He is talking about us losing 400 square metres, when he gave many more kilometres to Russia when they entered our country thanks to him. This particular 400 metres is part of those kilometres he gave to Russia thanks to his adventurist policy. Unfortunately, the occupation is continuing, but it is not something which happened today, it has been a process. Against this background, the President's statements are impudence, as if in his mind the kilometres he lost do not exist", said Zakareishvili.

Despite the situation at the line of occupation Tea Tsulukiani, the Minister of Justice, believes the Georgian Government must remain calm and not think about taking any reciprocal aggression. "In the face of Russia creeping occupation policy, be it in Ditsi or Dvani, the Georgian government should maintain firmness and tranquility",

said Tsulukiani. However Nino Burjanadze, presidential candidate of "Democratic Movement-United Georgia", accuses the government of inactivity and is calling on them to take more effective steps. "It is very worrisome, very unfortunate and unacceptable that in the 21st century they build a barbed wire fence and a wall between people. Who will take responsibility for resolving this problem? First of all, it should be our government, which unfortunately cannot do anything", said Burjanadze.

Since the resumption of the installation of barbed wire fences in the village of Ditsi on 22 September the Russian occupation forces have forbidden the local population to enter the agricultural land and conduct farming activities. Despite international appeals, the Russian Federation continues to blatantly violate the fundamental rights and

freedoms of those residing in the occupied territories and their immediate vicinity, including their right to receive education in their native language and other civil, economic and cultural rights.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has explained that Russia's actions are a flagrant violation of the fundamental principles of international law and the commitments Russia undertook when signing the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement. "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia once again expresses its profound concern over the consequences of Russia's illegal activities along the occupation line in the Tskhinvali region, where it is an occupying power. The Ministry stresses, that Russia as an occupying country and bears the responsibility under international law to desist from the violation of the fundamental

rights and freedoms of the population residing in the occupied regions", it said in a statement. It also called on partner states and international organisations to take appropriate and effective measures to immediately stop and reverse Russia's illegal activities along the occupation line in the Tskhinvali region.

Members of European Union Monitoring Mission are currently taking information from the people living along the occupation line and making daily reports on developments in the occupied territories. The EU has called on both sides to show restraint and enter into dialogue, but the sad fact is that, despite repeated calls of this nature, the occupation and the demarcation process have not been interrupted and the barbed-wire fence continues to creep tens of hectares further into Georgian territory.

NEWS

Georgia irresponsibly continues to ignite tension in South Ossetia

Georgia irresponsibly continues to ignite tension in South Ossetia's bordering regions, deputy Minister of Russia's Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin told EU special representative for the South Caucasus Philippe Lefort.

As Russia's media informs, Grigory Karasin called on the EU representatives and EUMM observers not to spare effort to stop this dangerous intention of Georgian government.

"It is important to avoid the destructive results against the security and stability in the region, and the protest organizers will be responsible for this", Russia's foreign department declared. Russian media writes nothing about Philip Lefort's comment about the conversation with Karasin on the phone. So called South Ossetia's president's representative in regulation of post conflict issues Murat Jioev commented about the protest planned by Georgian

journalists. He states that the protest of journalists in Dvani will have serious consequences.

So called South Ossetian news agency Res informs the Jioev sent written address to the co-chairpersons of Geneva negotiations and called on them to take appropriate measures that the protest on 28 September by Georgian journalists doesn't hinder the steps taken by the Geneva negotiations for the security and stability in the region.

"Similar protests are more frequently held and are directed to mislead Georgian people and the international society. In fact, neither Georgia's territorial integrity nor sovereignty is violated. South Ossetian border service marks state border according to the law and sovereign rights of the republic. The work is conducted in the vicinity of South Ossetia and is directed to preserve stability on the border", Murat Jioev's letter says.

geotimes.ge

The Georgian TIMES

1 English-Language Newspaper in Georgia

First published in 1993.

The Founder and the President Malkhaz Gulashvili. Tel: (+995) 577 461 046

The Georgian Times Media Holding.

12, Kikodze str, Tbilisi, Georgia. Tel: (+995 32) 2934405,

E-mail: office@geotimes.ge; http://www.geotimes.ge

Publisher:
Nana Gagua
Tel.: (+995) 555 293 003
E-mail:
gul@geotimes.ge

Executive Editor:
Emma Bairamova
Tel: (+995) 593 999 262
E-mail:
editorinchief@geotimes.ge

Deputy Editor:
Dali Bzhalava
Tel: (+995) 593 337 334
E-mail:
editor@geotimes.ge

Director:
Kakha Maskharashvili
Tel: (+995) 551 501 313
E-mail:
director@geotimes.ge

Marketing Director:
Irma Kvachantiradze
Tel: (+995) 593 314 105
E-mail:
marketing@geotimes.ge

Contributions to The Georgian TIMES are welcome. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item, ect. please contact; Tel/fax: (+995 32) 2934405



SOCAR REDUCES DIESEL FUEL PRICE WITH 15 TETRI

In 105 SOCAR petrol stations, which include whole country, the price of diesel has been reduced to 1 Gel and 90 tetri. The reduction in the price is equal to fifteen tetri.

According to information that GT received from SOCAR, based on financial and economic aspects, it is difficult for the company to maintain such a low price, but with the approach of fall plowing sowing and vintage and the Harvest period in Kakheti and the rest of Georgia, the demand for diesel fuel has increased significantly from the population.

Taking into account these circumstances and in accordance with Georgian user's request, SOCAR has maximally reduced the price of diesel fuel at the moment.

This action has been reflected in the user's activity as well as on diesel sales, concretely, after cheapening, the daily amount of diesel sale is more than of 350 000 liters.

SOCAR intends to maintain this price of diesel fuel during the full fall period, which means, that users will enable to keep their savings.



 *0001

WWW.SOCAR.GE

The future of the presidency

Some comments being made about the powers of the president under the new constitution, by experts, politicians and the current candidates for the presidency, are either misleading or false. Consequently the Regional Centre for the Research and Promotion of Constitutionalism considers it necessary to publish series of explanations, and engage the public in a debate about the issues the new constitution raises.

Under the principles of public law, the formal-legal role and significance of a body or official in a state mechanism can be determined based on: a) the date of its appointment or election, b) the range of issues within its competence (under its jurisdiction), and c) its degree of independence in decision-making. The role this person or institution will play in practice rather than theory is determined by additional factors, such as the configuration of political forces in the higher echelons of the state, the legal and political culture of civil society and the voters, the personal qualities of the leaders of the state (especially the President and Prime Minister), and to a certain extent the geopolitical situation.

If we assess the new role of the president against both these sets of criteria, we can conclude the following:

1.) The president is elected by general election, which gives him a high degree of legitimacy and authority. He can say that the people of Georgia gave him a mandate to be head of state, to be the guarantor of the country's integrity and national independence, to ensure the normal functioning of state bodies,



to be the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and to be the country's representative in foreign relations. All this gives him a certain advantage over the other branches of state, especially the government, which has a so-called 'secondary legitimacy'.

However the limits of the president's sphere of action are actually undefined. He can claim that more or less all areas of state work fall within his competence, as he still has the constitutional power to resolve any issue of state importance.

2.) The president does not have to be the person who either directs or implements everything. He does not have the specific powers of the legislative, executive or judiciary. But does have the legal possibility to impact on the work of these branches.

In the legislative field the president has the right to veto legislation, appeal to parliament to take certain actions, present reports, to dismiss parliament or accept its resignation and other

powers. In certain instances specified by the constitution he can also influence the executive, as it is his right to demand that all issues discussed at a government meeting be considered privately, to take part in government meetings and to demand that the security council members also attend government meetings. Given the high degree of his legitimacy, deriving from his mode of election, we can suppose that his participation in such meetings could be decisive to their outcomes.

The president can independently appoint 3 members of the Constitutional Court, the president of the Georgian National Bank and a member of the Supreme Justice Council. Likewise, he may provide to parliament the list of candidates for both chairman and members of the Supreme Court. He may appeal against the legal acts of parliament, government or any other body in the constitutional court or in courts of general jurisdiction. To enhance the prestige and influence of the post a president can also utilise the so-called

'powers of the king', those to pardon, to grant state awards, to award titles and diplomatic ranks and to issue citizenship.

3.) Analysts are not paying due attention to the full powers the president enjoys as head of the National Security Council of Georgia. We remind readers that the national security council is a deliberative body which advises the president and consists of, at minimum, the prime minister, foreign affairs, defence, interior and finance ministers and the speaker of parliament, although the president may also appoint some other persons as members. Under certain conditions, the president may use the national security council, which according to the law was created "For high level decision-making on strategic issues of national defence, internal and external politics, to provide stability and law and order and to manage all types of crisis situations containing threat for the interests of the country and for national security," (Organic Law of Georgia, "About the Security Council of

Georgia") to express and defend his own position on a given topic.

According to the fundamentals of the constitution the president may declare war, a state of emergency or martial law. If he does the president has absolute power during such periods, ruling by decrees having legal force. These do not require any approval or countersignature, and parliament's control is episodic and remote. The president can declare both war and peace, but following the revocation of a declaration of war, state of emergency or martial law his decrees require the countersignature of the Prime Minister.

4.) On this basis, we can conclude that according to the new constitution the president is no longer the cornerstone of the state but nor is he a mere "assistant" or symbolic figure. During times of stability and peace he has the function of an arbiter, and in times of acute crisis – a war, state of emergency or martial law - he is the sole ruler.

5.) However, all of the above does not give us a correct representation of the real role of the president, as the correlation of forces in the state bodies must be taken into consideration. If his supporters form the absolute or even relative majority in parliament his constitutional statute and plenary powers may give him much more actual authority. If his supporters are in the minority in parliament, and the opposition forms the government and can control parliament, the best the president can hope for is cohabitation, or in the worst case effective exclusion from the real life of the state. In such cases, the first person of the state will effectively be the Prime Minister.

Chairman of the Regional Centre for the Research and Promotion of Constitutionalism

Avandil Demetrashvili

Executive Director of the Regional Centre for the Research and Promotion of Constitutionalism

Vakhtang Zhvania

The Diplomat David Chkhitunidze is still waiting for the decision of Athens' Court

The Diplomat David Chkhitunidze, the former head of General Inspection of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, is still waiting for the decision of Athens' Court.

According to the Georgian Times, the diplomat David Chkhitunidze, the former head of General Inspection of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia was acknowledged as not guilty and freed from the hall.

According to the family members of Chkhitunidze, the Greek party decided to release him instead to extradition to Georgia after review of the case.

According to Natalia Kvantaliani, the family of David Chkhitunidze was requesting for extradition to Georgia, instead the Court of Athens decided not to extradite, but to release him from the hall.

"His case was studied and reviewed by the Greek Court and was directly released from the Court hall. The family members had the appeal in written regarding to his extradition, but he was extradited but he was acknowledged as non-guilty," said Natalia Kvantaliani to the

geotimes.ge

This is the decision of the EU member state-Greece Appeal Court judge:

"This is the order about extradition of the David Chkhitunidze, being sued by the Georgian State, who was arrested by the order # 125/2013 of Athens Appeal Court Chair and based on the requirement of Georgian State in order to judge for the crime: 1. power abuse of the public or appropriate servant.

2. Public servant or relevant official power abuse, causing multiple violation of the rights of physical and legal persons, as well as public and state interests abuse. The order should be issues regarding cancellation of order on the detainment # 125/2013

The order to be issued to release from detainment in case he is not detained for other reason

Despite of this, later, it becomes known that David Chkhitunidze is in the Athens' prison, Athens prosecutor's office had claimed against the Appeal Court Decision in the Supreme Court.

As family considers, the Prosecutor's office of Athens had claimed the decision of Chkhitunidze release based on Georgian requirement. It was con-

firmed by Irakli Chilingarashvili, the head of Chief Prosecutor's office legal department.

Irakli Chilingarashvili declare, that Chkhitunidze was freed just for the reason, that the crime, based on which the extradition was demanded, was considered by the Greek Legislation as outdated.

"The interview of the attorney was released indicating the discrepancy related to the passport was solved and it was the reason for his freeing. We had communication with our colleagues in Athens in the Ministry of Justice as well as in the Prosecutor's office. They confirmed that this person was released by the Court.

However, the reason was not related to the passport validity expiration, why he was detained, but the crime, we accused him and why he was sought by Interpol, which was considered as outdated by Greek Legislation.

This is the only obstacle for the extraditionis that the action is not considered as outdated by our legislation. Greece has another regulation. According to Greek law, this crime was outdated. Therefore, we appealed to upper instance of the Athens

prosecutor office and finally, we will know the final decision, positive or negative."-says Irakli Chilingarashvili

It seems that decision of Athens' court is claimed based on Georgian Party's decision.

This is to remind, that the accused Chkhitunidze was detained by the law enforcement bodies while he was going to go to Turkey from Athens on August 14. In accordance to the Interior Ministry of Georgia, the sued by the Interpol was detained by the demand of Georgian side.

The information was refused by the attorneys and family of Chkhitunidze. According to Vakhtang Talakvadze, David Chkhitunidze was not sued by Interpol and the information released by the Interior Ministry is not true, as if he was detained based on the requirement of Georgia by the Interpol.

"The material entered to Interpol are reviewed for months, whether the person should be announced as sued. David Chkhitunidze was not sued by the Interpol," said the lawyer Vakhtang Talakvadze.

According to Chkhitunidze family and lawyers, Chkhitunidze was going to visit Georgia based

on preliminary discussion with his lawyers as he was going to cooperate with the investigation. The lawyers applied to the chief prosecutor's office about it on August 13, 2013, hoping to reveal the truth after Chkhitunidze's arrival to Georgia.

The high-ranking official of the Ministry of Justice and diplomat is accused in the power abuse.

Georgian Law enforcers are accusing him in creation for privilege conditions for the people blamed in murder of Sandro Gvirgvliani. Though initially, the prosecutor's office sued the claimed him in murder. He was accused in participation in Sandro Gvirgvliani's case. Though the family of Chkhitunidze was able to present relevant document proving that David Chkhitunidze was not in Georgia, but he was abroad, for studying in Marshal Center.

According to Chkhitunidze's family, the blames about participation and torture paragraphs were disappeared from his case.

Currently, former diplomat is disputed by the investigation based by 333 article of Criminal Code, considering power abuse, as David Chkhitunidze is blamed in creation of privileged conditions

for the sentenced in Sandro Gvirgvliani murder in the prison.

Chkhitunidze, who was detained was celled together with the Georgian criminals in Athens prison, he was severely bitten, with multiple injuries. According to the family members, he needs the course of treatment and rehabilitation.

It is unclear yet what decision will be made by the Supreme Court instance of Athens. Its verdict will be final. The family members and attorneys are expecting the positive verdict, as Georgian Prosecutor's office has no any additional evidences for presenting.

As for return of David Chkhitunidze to Georgia, as Natalia Kvantaliani says, even in case that Athens' Court takes the decision about release, he needs the medical rehabilitation, as his health condition is still heavy and after that, he will return to Georgia.

"Dato was ready to cooperate with Georgian law enforcement bodies before; our course will not be changed. He knows that legal processes will be continued and he cannot avoid it. As soon his health condition is in order he will fight for truth till the end himself," says Natalia Kvantaliani.

Geotimes.ge



PARTNERS



Ministry of Finance of Georgia



Ministry of Energy of Georgia



Georgian Revenue Service



Regional Development & Infrastructure of Georgia



Georgian Co-Investment Fund



Georgian Energy Development Fund



Georgian Chamber of Commerce & Industry

MEDIA-PARTNERS



BUSINESS WEEK caucasian



LEADER Today



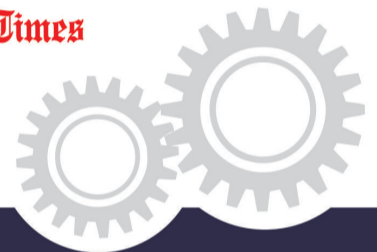
PRIME Time



Commersant.ge



პარსია



Georgian Times | www.geotimes.ge

Please Contact: marketing@geotimes.ge



SUNDAY BRUNCH

Gather around with your friends and family on Sundays for brunch at Tbilisi Marriott where we will cater to every family member! Sunday Brunch at Parnas captures the essence of Marriott's glamorous culinary tradition where Chef Pedro Gonzalez offers a variety of delights on the buffet with comfort cuisine combined with modern flavor. Everyone will find Sunday Brunch exciting with unlimited complimentary wines from Telavi Wine Cellar, mimosas for the ladies and kids' game room equipped with Xbox KINECT for your little one to enjoy!

Every Sunday, 12-3 PM
 Buffet - 47 GEL+VAT
 Buffet, unlimited white and red wine - 59 GEL+ VAT
 Children under 9 free of charge. Ages 9 to 13 - 25 Gel +VAT
 Special discounts for the parties 10 and more
 10% discount for our returning guests

Tbilisi Marriott Hotel
 13, Rustaveli Avenue, Tbilisi 8,
 0108 Georgia (Caucasus Region)
 Telephone: +995 32 277 92 00
 Fax: +995 32 277 92 10
 tbilisi.marriott@marriott-hotels.com
 TbilisiMarriott.com



What will happen to five Georgian hospitals?

By EMMA BAIRAMOVA, GT

“We are not going to step back, we want to work here, but if we will decide to abandon this investment it will be because of the incomprehensible, unreasonable caprices of a few doctors...”

The fate of five strategic children's hospitals - the Iashvili Children's Central Hospital, the Tsitsishvili New Children's Hospital, the Pediatric Institute, the Batumi Regional Medical Centre for Children and the New Life Maternity Hospital - is still unclear. The Medical Staff of these clinics are still waiting their fate.

The five hospitals were sold by the previous government to private individuals, namely the former president of the Georgian National Olympic Committee Gia Natsvlishvili and the founder of Artes and Avante Hospital Management Zaza Kapanadze. They have now decided to sell them to a Turkish investor, the Universal Hospital Group (UHG).

According to information held by the Public Registry, on August 12 50% of shares of Avante Hospital Management Group Ltd. were purchased by Turkish citizens Abdulla Kurshat Darchin and Azmi Ofluoglu. The contract they signed valued



spend their money sponsoring entertainment programmes rather than purchasing this hospital. We would prefer for the clinic to be run by Georgians alone. If not, let other investors come and present precise and clear future plans for our clinic, but we will not work with these people.”

SO, UNDER WHAT TERMS WAS THE CLINIC SOLD?

One of the former owners of these hospitals, Gia Natvlishvili, had told the local press that the Iashvili clinic is their private

says that the doctors at the Iashvili clinic are conducting an aggressive provocation against him personally because they oppose the sale of the hospital. He says that the administration of the clinic has serious financial problems and is trying to frighten the investor in order to hide its financial failings.

“There are 60-70 workers at this clinic who are budgeted for and receive a salary but do not come to work. There are also other money losses and irregularities in financial documents. When I became interested in this documentation they began this provocation against me. I have nothing to do with any religious issues, I have no connection with the rumoured removal of crosses and icons. I have never been drunk during working hours, but I have seen doctors enter the surgery drunk and perform surgery in a drunken state. I think a lot of things must change here, as the wards are in a terrible state. On the day the incident occurred a patient from Gori had come to me and said that she had not received her tomography snapshot or been given any diagnosis as a result, even though she had paid money for it and had been waiting for weeks. When I asked the doctors to show me the disk containing her information they refused, and that is when I raised my voice.”

Atik added that the clinic's

have not submitted any official documents concerning their company yet. We cannot make any assessment of their work, because the representative of this group created a tense situa-



tion in the clinic which led to an interruption of the treatment process. We want to know the future plans of this group and their vision for developing the healthcare system in these clinics. At this stage we cannot say that the Ministry has a positive opinion of them. We will see what steps they take and make our assessments later.”

Makhataдзе added that this company can continue to pur-

will resolve all the misunderstandings which have occurred up to this time. Yes, I think that all these unpleasant events are ordinary misunderstandings which derive from lack of communication and the language barrier. Our representative Tekin Atik may have made some mistakes in communication, but I do not believe he has removed any icons. He has worked in many other Christian countries and there has been no problem of this sort, why should he argue against the religion here in Georgia? I know this is not the time to speak about my private life, but my brother's wife is Bulgarian and I respect her religion. I am interested in making a significant investment, and religion and other things are not our business. We respect all patients, regardless of their religion and race,” - Ofluoglu said.

After the meeting both sides answered questions from journalists. One of these stated that at the moment UHG has financial problems and that one of their hospitals in Diyarbakir city is in

The founders of UHG have since stated that they know of several other cases in which Turkish businessmen have been victims of similar provocation in Georgia. They say that it is necessary to explain to people that they are coming with good intentions, and that it is time for them to understand that the further development of their country will involve many such investment projects. An investor is not the enemy, as an investor wants to contribute to a country's development in all spheres, in this case the healthcare sphere.

David Sergeenko, the Minister of Labour, Health and Social Affairs, has told The Georgian Times that a private owner is entitled to sell such strategic objects, but the Ministry also has the full right and responsibility to control this process to prevent any interruption in the provision of health services. “Our main goal is to provide a continuing medical service without interruption,” he told us.

The Minister noted that it is



100% of the company's shares at 16,700,000 USD.

The medical staff of the Iashvili clinic are resisting the UHG takeover. In August they prevented its representative Tekin Atik from entering the hospital. Clinic staff say that the investors have not yet paid the required sums, and therefore have no right to enter the hospital. The administrations of all five hospitals are demanding that these clinics be returned to state ownership.

The confrontation between Tekin Atik and the Iashvili clinic doctors escalated on September 2. The doctors say that Tekin Atik came to the hospital, physically abused them and demanded the removal of crosses and icons from the walls.

Marina Pirtskhalava, a doctor at the clinic, told us: “This man came to the clinic in August without submitting any official document certifying his connection with this company. He was very arrogant and aggressive, and did not try to engage in positive communication with clinic staff. We often saw him drunk. On the day when the incident happened, he was again drunk and tried to smash a computer because it had no disk drive where he wanted to put a disk. He raised his voice towards me and dragged me into a staffroom, is this not physical abuse? We do not want to see him here anymore, and it is a pity that Georgian investors

property and they can sell it at anytime without anyone's permission, even that of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia. He said that he purchased the Iashvili clinic at auction, where it was offered at 6 million lari, by electronic tender, and as there was great competition he eventually paid 10 million 400 thousand lari for it. “When we decided to sell it a lot of companies wanted to purchase the clinic, but we chose this group, which I think is one of the most serious companies in Turkey. They have not paid the money yet, because according to the contract they have six months to pay it in,” Natvlishvili said.

Universal Hospitals Group (Turkish: Universal Hastaneler Grubu) is one of Turkey's largest hospital groups. It owns 11 hospitals in 7 Turkish cities and is planning to expand outside Turkey. It aims to bring 25 hospitals and 4,000 more beds under its control by the end of 2013, utilising investment from ADM Capital and the International Finance Corporation for this purpose. Its present portfolio also includes nearly 9,500 healthcare employees, 1,600 physicians, 4,100 beds, 95 operating theatres and top of the range surgical, cardiovascular, coronary and neonatal intensive care units.

Tekin Atik, UHG Representative in the Caucasus, denies all the accusations against him and



medical equipment is 15 years old and the new investor has ordered contemporary equipment, which will be brought over from Turkey very soon.

CAN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR, HEALTH AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS INTERVENE?

At this stage the Ministry has no legal right, or basis on which, to hamper the investment by the Universal Hospital Group. First Deputy Minister Dimitri Makhataдзе made the following statement after meeting the founders of Universal Hospital Group, who had come to Georgia to meet the Minister, but met the Deputy Minister due to the former's busy schedule:

“We do not know much about this group; unfortunately they

sue its investment if it does not breach healthcare law and principles and does not interrupt the treatment process in these strategic objects. At this stage, unless serious violations occur the Ministry cannot prevent this private sector investment going ahead.

The meeting with the Deputy Minister was apparently quite tense. One of the founders of UHG, Azmi Ofluoglu, stated at the meeting that the Universal Hospital Group will coordinate all its steps with the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs.

“Although these hospitals are private property, it is not good for us to work entirely independently of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia. I hope that we

very bad condition, with the staff there not having received their salaries for 8 months. Asked to comment, Ofluoglu replied:

“Yes, we have had some problems with salaries and finances, but these problems will be resolved by the end of this month (September). Our financial situation is now quite stable and we are ready for this investment. We are going to make an approximately 150 million dollar investment, but I will give the exact sum after an evaluation of the purchased objects.”

In an interview to The Georgian Times Azmi Ofluoglu told us: “I am sure that many of those accusations against Tekin Atik are not true, but if even some of them turn out to be so we will dismiss him and appoint a management a group composed of both local and Turkish doctors. We have implemented many successful projects in different European and Asian countries and want to make a significant contribution to the healthcare system of Georgia. A lot of Georgian patients go to Turkey for better treatment, and we want to ensure they will receive the same treatment here in Georgia. We are not going to bring doctors here from Turkey, we will take Georgian doctors to Istanbul and improve their qualifications. We also promise we will bring you the newest technology. Let us work here and see what positive changes we will bring. Our last project was in Bulgaria. We are not going to step back, we want to work here, but if we will decide to abandon this investment it will be because of the incomprehensible, unreasonable caprices of a few doctors...”

not necessary for the government to return these clinics to state control to resolve their problems. He said that it does not matter whether a hospital is private or belongs to the government, it must fulfil its functions properly. At present Sergeenko cannot say for sure whether UHG will make this investment in Georgia or not, as he is still waiting for it to submit an official company certification and present an exact and clear plan of how it will contribute to the Georgian healthcare system. These are the factors determining whether Georgia will cooperate with any foreign investor. Although some Turkish websites have carried articles about the financial problems of UHG, David Sergeenko said that he has not conducted any special research and needs official documentation which will confirm their financial situation and reputation.

The founders and owners of UHG claim that they will return to Georgia and implement this investment of 150 million USD, but the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia is waiting to see the official documents and concrete future plans of UHG and the administrations of these five hospitals and the doctors at Iashvili clinic say that they will never let “the Turks” through their doors. So is Tekin Atik a terrible man, who behaves like a sultan, or a victim of provocation by cunning administration which is trying to hide the money it has lost? We hope that the fate of these strategic facilities, which are not in a good situation and really needs good investment, will soon become clear.

Giorgi Sigua: Our Priority is to Develop Infrastructure

According to the data of the first 8 months of the year, 26% more tourists visited Georgia than in the corresponding period last year. We talked to the head of the Georgian National Tourist Administration, Giorgi Sigua, about the current situation in tourism and how things are likely to develop from here.

How have you managed to generate a 26% increase in tourist numbers so far this year?

Last year there was a 4% increase in the number of tourists globally. So an increase of more than 4% is very good. There should be a 25% increase across the whole year. If this happens we will consider this year to be very successful, but we are not only concerned with numbers. Developing the tourist infrastructure is our priority.

What kind of campaigns do you conduct to attract tourists?

At present we are conducting campaigns in countries such as Latvia, Lithuania and Azerbaijan. A similar corresponding campaign will be conducted in Kazakhstan, but this in itself is not enough. You cannot invite tourists if you do not have the infrastructures to host that many people. For example, the Japanese admire our nature and cuisine but are not satisfied with our toilets. That's why I think infrastructural development is our priority.

We will work on infrastructural projects till the end of the year and open new tourism information centers. In Tbilisi there is no information centre where tourists can obtain a brochure about our capital city. We have already established project where mobile tour guides conduct city tours, however we are adding a new information center in Pushkin square. In addition, beside our office there is an old tower, which is now on our balance. We will renovate it and create a beautiful tourism center on the first floor. It will become a very interesting touristic place.

Is there enough money in the state budget to implement such projects? Do you work with any of the ministries?

We started negotiating with international and donor organizations concerning public toilets, places of relaxation on the highways, where you will be able to drive through by your car, you will have Wi-Fi connection, a shower, a small café and so on. We do not have places like this.

Everyone has already planned their budget for this year, we have done the same. If we can't fund infrastructural projects, hopefully other state agencies will, but if they don't either I will address donor organisations for help in this field. Very little money is left

until the end of the year. Our budget must be increased next year and we will implement many infrastructural projects. What we will not be able to do ourselves we will succeed with grants. The main point is to get the grants.

What do you do to interest investors?

We study our tourist assets, what we have and where, what kind of climate there is, where the abandoned buildings are. When we look for investors we have to offer them concrete projects. We have to explain the benefits of the land, for example the airport being near, how you can tap water and energy. We have to tell them – I will give you the land in a reasonable price or not in a very reasonable price, or for a nominal sum, whatever will arouse their interest. If we do not succeed in developing infrastructural projects the outcome will be bad. People will no longer come here, and they will become anti-advertisements for Georgia.

How much does tourism contribute to the economy?

We have a lot of walking tourists and backpackers in Georgia. I have nothing against them, but they do not spend much money. We should have such tourists, but tourists who spend more money are also necessary.

Tourism accounts for 6.5% of the country's GDP, or approximately 600,000,000 USD. It could be much more, if we had the infrastructure.

The tourist flow from several countries, such as Ukraine, Russia and Israel, has increased. How do you explain this?

Usually, there is always an increase in the number of tourists from our neighboring countries. We are conducting an active advertising campaign in Ukraine, with several different elements. There has been a 69% increase in tourism from this country. It has a higher rate of tourist visitors to Georgia than most - for example, 1,109,000 people from Turkey visited Georgia January-August, but only 200,000-300,000 were tourists. Many of them were simply passing through on the way to another country.

Georgia is not a transit country for Ukraine, that's why a traveler from there is a tourist. I can say the same about Iraq. Scheduling flights to Najaf, Baghdad and Erbil has helped us attract tourists from Iraq. Correspondingly, 25,000 visitors came from this country.

I think Azerbaijan is a very interesting market for us. Azeri people have more money than Georgians, and they are near us. For them, we are the only ones in the region, who permit gambling in the country.

From my point of view, we should continually conduct campaigns in the countries near us,



Giorgi Sigua, Head of Administration

where there is less of a language barrier.

Tbilisi and Batumi attract the most tourists. Does this mean that they have better infrastructure?

Tbilisi, Batumi and Kazbegi have significant tourist loads. There are road problems in Kazbegi, but its hotels were full this year. It is the third most popular touristic centre after Tbilisi and Batumi.

Traditionally Tbilisi is an attractive place for foreigners, as there are many places to see... sightseeing, visiting museums and sulphur baths – everything is possible, even in winter. The capital is full of antiquities.

As for Batumi, it is active in the summer and thanks to the gaming business does very well.

Did the bad weather in Ajara this year cause any problems?

The room occupancy rate in Ajara this year was very high. Last year it was 40% in June, this year 42%. Last year it was 81% in July, this year 88%, in August 2012 it was 69%, this year also 69%.

In Ajara there are 327,000 rooms where someone can spend a night, and 227,000 were used in August. We have enough hotels at present but will need another 10,000 rooms if we maintain such a rate of increase. Thus more hotels should be added.

Not everyone can stay in branded hotels. Three-star hotels function very well in Europe. Do you plan to introduce these?

This are what we need. We explain to investors how profitable it would be to establish a network of three-star hotels in Georgia. There are some interested parties, and several three-star hotels have already been opened. One of them, hotel "Rooms" is a very good in hotel. Such hotels are being opened in Gudauri and Bakuriani as well.

As for internal tourism, is the corresponding infrastructure being developed for Georgian travelers?

It is already very active and developing very successfully.

Which resorts have the best prospects for development?

The whole Georgia. This country has great potential and resources in the tourism sector. It simply needs to be studied well in order to make the right offers to investors and advertise these places.

In Kakheti good hotels are being opened one by one and functioning very well. There are mud treatment baths in Borjomi, Akhaltsikhe and Aspindza, where hotels have been opened. We are planning to do the same in hotels. Every hotel in Georgia should be equipped

Cont. on p.B2

The 20th session of UN World Tourism Organisation General Assembly



Head of the Georgian National Tourism Administration Giorgi Sigua has participated in the UN World Tourism Organisation General Assembly, held in Zambia (August 24-29). More than 750 delegates from 145 countries, 49 ministers of tourism and 900 additional representatives of the media and private sectors attended.

Giorgi Sigua was vice-Chair of a European Regional Commission session (as the Georgian representative). The basic trends in tourism were summarized, and Sigua was appointed the vice-Chair for a second term (2014-2015).

Giorgi Sigua also delivered a report on the session to the General Assembly, talked about Georgian tourism policy, current projects and future plans, the open-sky policy and aviation issues. Afterwards he

met the organisation's Secretary General Taleb Rifay and discussed a possible visit by him to Georgia, Georgia hosting a future assembly, its involvement in the organisation's work and other issues.

Sigua also met Zambian Minister of Tourism and Art Silvia Masebo, Head of the Russian Tourism Federal Agency Aleksandre Radkov, Supervisor of the Tourism and Resorts Agency of Ukraine Elena Shapovalova, Minister of Tourism and Culture of Azerbaijan Abulpas Gareav, Director of the Iraq Tourism Department Mahmud Al-Zubaidi and other distinguished colleagues. He also met Zambian Vice-President Guy Scott and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wilbur Simuusa. It was suggested that Sigua become the honorary consul of Zambia in Georgia.

Georgia Welcomes 3,568,518 International Travellers

In each country, special tourist surveys are conducted. ACT conducts these in Georgia, and sends information to the government daily.

The surveys identify the numbers of visitors entering the country and their fundamental characteristics, such as their reason for entering the country, how long they intend to stay, where they stay and in what sort of accommodation. Every question the National Tourism Administration may be interested in is addressed in the survey questionnaire. A separate survey is conducted for internal tourists, Georgians who travel to different parts of the country, and further statistics on international visitors are provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which derives them from the border posts.

Head of the National Tourism Administration Giorgi Sigua has presented the tourism data for January-August 2013. It is recorded that 3,568,518 international visitors entered Georgia during this period, a 26% increase on the same period of the previous year. The greater part of these came from neighbouring countries. There was a 14% increase in visitors from Turkey, 15% from Azerbaijan, 44% from Armenia and 54% from Russia.

61% of the visitors entered the country for two or more days, 39% for a day. 40% came for relaxation and entertainment, 24% to see relatives and friends, 17% were in transit elsewhere, 8% came for shopping, 4% for business and professional reasons, 2-2% for education and treatment and 3% for other reasons. 5% spent more than 15 nights here, 10% 8 to 14 days and nights, 15% 4 to 7 days and nights, 16% one night and 39% did not spend the night here.

65% of the tourists enjoyed Georgia's nature, 62% its cuisine, 36% its wine, 34% its hospitality, 34% just relaxed, 27% went



shopping, 24% enjoyed its architecture, etc. 40% of international tourists came to Georgia alone, 26% with family members of relatives, 21% with friends, 3% with a group of tourists, 2% with colleagues and 10% fell into other categories.

42% of visitors crossed the Georgian border by car, 41% by bus or minibus, 13% by plane, 2% by train and 2% by other means. As for accommodation, 47% stayed in hotels, 31% with friends and relatives, 9% in guest houses, 5% in rented apartments, 5% had their own flats, 4% stayed in tents and 6% in other forms of accommodation.

The most popular destinations for visitors were Tbilisi and Batumi. 46% visited Tbilisi, 40% Batumi, 8% Kazbegi, 7% Marneuli, 6% Rustavi, 5% Mtskheta and Kutaisi, 2% Signaghi and Lagodekhi. 74.3% of visitors

were very satisfied with Georgia. 24.1% were merely satisfied, 0.4% dissatisfied, 0.1% very dissatisfied, 1.1% of those surveyed did not answer.

Tourism accounts for 6.5% of Georgia's GDP. International tourists spent the largest portion of their money on food and beverages, 499,713,510 GEL (26%). 293,559,959 GEL (17%) was spent on recreational, cultural and sporting activities, 296,937,803 (17%) on shopping, 326,493,806 (19%) on accommodation, 192,395,603 (11%) on local transport. The average expenditure per visitor was 613 GEL, and their total spending was 1,703,673,938 GEL.

The surveys take place at border posts. A sample of 800 people each month is taken from different border posts, with the more frequently used posts providing a greater

proportion of the sample. The data from the sample is then applied proportionally to the number of visitors entering the country in that particular month.

The surveys are conducted by direct polling or by filling in a questionnaire. An interviewer generally asks the traveller to set aside a few minutes for an interview and writes everything down. This is done at every airport in Georgia. In several countries it is impossible to cross a border without filling in such a questionnaire, but it is not obligatory in Georgia, as it can take a long time and the traveller may not appreciate being inconvenienced in this way.

The National Tourism Administration began conducting such surveys last year, as a pilot, but those were not so detailed. The current surveys are of a higher standard.

Giorgi Sigua: Our Priority is to Develop Infrastructure

p.B1

with a proper infrastructure, so that people with limited financial means can still enjoy complete rest.

It has been said that mountain tourism is not as developed as it should be. Why do they say this?

Tourism, by which I mean the touristic infrastructure, in generally is weakly developed in Georgia. We exist to change this and develop. Mountain tourism facilities need to be addressed. Roads, private facilities, hotels are in disrepair. But everything will be fine.

According to statistics, 41% of tourists found out about Georgia from friends and relatives, but 6% from television and radio. What do you do to increase the amount of information about Georgia available on the TV and internet?

I would like to see our videos shown on CNN and BBC, but we do not have the financial means for this now. The administration did not have the budget to conduct this kind of advertising campaign. The President's fund previously sponsored these videos. But several videos are on TV at present. Good internet resources are also necessary. For example, our website is not up to standard. You cannot see where to go and how. We are rebranding the website. A very good site will be ready in December, giving all kind of information to tourists about flights, climate, food and other important issues. We have a new Facebook account called Georgia and Travel, which in a very short period of time got many likes. It contains information about Georgia in Georgian, English and Russian.

Mobile Guides will serve tourists in the capital city

The National Tourism Administration is offering a new 'mobile guide' service. Three times a week, on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, groups of city guides distinguished by branded clothes and equipped with information materials, will guide parties of tourists round the city for free.

The project aims to popularize Tbilisi's attractions among foreign and local travelers. The guides will begin their tours in Freedom Square, Rustaveli Avenue, Shardeni Street, Abanotubani and Narikala, and be available from 10:00 to 20:00.

Initially this project will last until the end of October, during a very active season for tourism. Eight students who have passed courses run by the National Tourism Administration are serving as guides.

"As you know, 80% of tourists travel individually. 90% of these will obviously see Tbilisi, where we have tourism information centres and a 24-hour hotline, and we are

trying to develop and increase the network of support available for tourists," stated head of the National Tourism Administration Giorgi Sigua.



Mobile Guides will serve tourists in the capital city

The National Tourism Administration Introduces "English Speaking Drivers"

The National Tourism Administration has announced a new programme under which taxi drivers will study English. The project aims to improve the facilities Georgia offers and assist the country's taxi drivers, who now serve an increasing number of tourists.

Drivers who pass the course will be awarded certificates and carriage signs bearing the inscription: English Speaking Driver.

"Taxis are the most important form of tourist transport throughout the world. By teaching the drivers English we will make travel more convenient for foreign visitors to Tbilisi and the regions. This will in turn affect the drivers' welfare," stated the Head of National Tourism Administration, Giorgi Sigua.

Drivers wishing to apply should go to the

Administration in person in their own cars, which will be registered and photographed. They should present:

- Driving licence;
- Document confirming their ownership of the taxi.

For registration consult the official Facebook Page of the National Tourism Administration; turism@gnta.ge;

Address: 4a Sanapiro st.
Tel: 243 69 99



Fred Finn, the world's most travelled man, visits Georgia

After experiencing 150 other countries the world's most travelled man, the British expatriate Fred Finn, has visited Georgia. The 70-year old has covered more than 24 million kilometres so far and holds the record for being the world's most travelled man.

Fred Finn came to Georgia on the invitation of Director of United Airports of Georgia Ketik Aleksidze. He says that he would never have seen this magnificent country without Ketik.

Following his visit to Ajara on September 8, where he was hosted by the autonomous republic's Department of Tourism and Resorts, Fred Finn said that Georgia is one of the last countries he has visited but has left one of the best impressions.

In recognition of his achievements, the Georgian National Tourism Administration has granted Fred Finn the title of Georgia's honorary representative. Here in an interview with The Georgian Times Fred Finn tells us about his travelling experience and impressions of Georgia.

When and how did you start to travel, and how did you become the world's most travelled man? Was travelling your dream from childhood on, and did you imagine you would have such an interesting future?

I didn't even think about it as a goal. I don't think about what my eventual mileage maybe, as I am still flying around and enjoying every minute of it. Just the other day I caught a flight at 6:55am, went to Moscow for the day and came back in the evening at 10:35pm. It was a very long day, but made pleasant by the wonderful ladies on Ukraine International Airlines.

I have enjoyed anything to do with aviation since my grandmother got me lifted into a Mosquito fighter bomber just after WW2. I guess the smell of the inside of this plane remained with me. I used to go on my bike to a former WW2 airfield in Kent, UK, over which the Battle of Britain was fought. I finally got someone to take me up in a Tiger Moth Biplane with two wings and an open cockpit. I made my first commercial flight in 1958.

What do you think of Georgia and the Caucasus? What did you know about our country beforehand? What were your expectations and what did you find here? Will you visit Georgia again?

I was enamoured with Georgia, its scenery, mountains, rivers, nature at its best. Where else can you go from skiing on the highest peaks in Europe to swimming in the Black Sea within a couple of hours? I think the hospitality of Georgian people is the best I have ever experienced anywhere, the food is amazing, with different food to sample in different regions, and being a small country the regions are close together. I loved the churches, where Christianity started in Europe; I liked the hotels in the resorts like the Rooms in Kazbegi, they are of the highest order, with excellent service. I will be back in Georgia as a guest of the Mayor of Tbilisi and the Saburtalo Governor for Tbilisoba.

When did you officially become known as "the world's most travelled man"?

In 1983 I was officially entered into the Guinness Book of Records, and have been there ever since, as I have made the most flights on Concorde and have the greatest number of miles/kilometres flown; being in there this long this is something of record in its own right, as it's more than half the life of the Guinness Book itself.

How do you occupy yourself during a flight?

I read sometimes, and there is usually someone who knows me among the passengers or crew who likes to have a catch-up chat, sometimes a business conversation or an in-flight interview. I try to lip-read the in-flight movie, and that sends me to sleep.

I met Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow and London and helped to arrange his lecture tour of the UK. I met Paul McCartney on Concorde, who drew happy faces – a really nice guy. Also John Major, through the Lord's Taverners cricket, likewise Tim Rice. I have arranged travel for their Royal Highnesses, Prince and Princess Michael of Kent's tour of Kenya.

I met Sarah Ferguson, and then arranged her charity trips to Kenya after she told me at a McLaren function that she had heard that my Kenya tours were the best. I also arranged the honeymoon of the former England cricket captain and now Sky Sports broadcaster David Gower.

I travelled from London to Nashville with Dolly Parton and got sore ribs from laughing so much. I was great friends with Johnny Cash and his wife, June Carter Cash. We used to have dinner together in NYC.

I was friendly with Bruce Springfield too, he would always ask "how many trips?" referring to my Concorde flights – the final count was 718!

As the most experienced traveller in the world,

what are your top travel tips? What would you recommend to people with a fear of flying?

I always adjust my watch and time to my destination, and eat, sleep and drink by that time. I also go to bed at local times when I get to my destination, which makes the long day I've just had go away in my deep sleep. I always keep my skin moist on flights, as this helps stop dehydration, and on long flights I close my eyes for a few minutes so they don't become dry, as this overcomes dehydration, which is what most people call jet lag but really isn't.

As regards other tips:

1. Use hard suitcases – they can be dropped without anything breaking if packed correctly.
2. Pack clothes in the sort of bags you get from the dry cleaners so your clothes won't crease.
3. Have a length of twine or string with you to repair your suitcase handle when it breaks.
4. I always carry a travel adaptor that fits all plugs.



Fred Finn

5. I always take some antibiotics, plasters, and a copy of my prescription for any special medication that I have, in case you get asked what you are carrying.

6. Don't forget contact numbers for your family in all cases.

7. Notify your embassy if you're going to be in a foreign country for some time.

8. Don't take unnecessary risks when travelling. Some people seem to drop their guard when abroad, but you should use the same caution as you would at home.

I suggest that to overcome fear of flying the best tip is not to drink before the flight, as this can get you denied boarding, and drinking on the flight will only make you feel worse as alcohol is stronger at altitude. You can always find a fear of flying course - British Airways runs one, and there are many others which have a very high rate of success.

Where do you call home, when you're not travelling?

Today I spend a great deal of my time commuting from destinations all over the world to Komsomolsk in Ukraine, a beautiful small town 4 hours south of Kiev. It is on the banks of the river Dnieper, one of the largest in Europe, with white sandy beaches, many islands to visit, fantastic locally grown produce, and wow, what stunning ladies - I am lucky enough to have found a beautiful Ukrainian lady for my wife. I guess I grew up in the Garden of England and now live in the Garden of Europe. I still maintain a home in the UK as well.

One of the most interesting questions for our readers: You've been to a lot of places; can you name some that you would recommend everyone to visit before they die? And where are the worst places you've ever been to?

Georgia for sure. It used to be Kenya, for its game parks, which are the best, the 6,000metre high Mt. Kenya, which sits right on the equator with snow on top all year round, the lakes and sea. The food there is good, and the hospitality really good as well.

Kenya also has probably one of the most perfect climates possible. Where else could you be on the equator and go and dine at the famous Mt. Kenya Safari Club founded by William Holden, dress in a suit and tie for dinner, then return to a big open fire for after dinner drinks with stars so bright you can drive by starlight?

Seychelles is where to go for the best beaches on earth, there's so many of them that they are never crowded; the diving and snorkelling is just magnificent. Travel between the islands is easy, as you can go by Air Seychelles and use the services of the ever reliable Select Travel for all Seychelles inter island and other excursions. The food is also

delicious, and you can even try fruit bat curry!

Ukraine is probably not on everyone's favourite list but it has wonderful scenery, great people, mountains, sea resorts with beautiful, white sandy beaches and historical battlefields both in Crimea and the Poltava region, where Peter the Great defeated the Swedes 300 years ago at the Battle of Poltava. The food is great, as mainly fresh produce and ingredients are used; the meat is amongst the best I have tasted and the fish is either straight out of the sea or from the mighty River Dnieper, one of the biggest rivers in Europe.

The USA is a truly diverse country and has some of everything to please most people. Croatia on the Adriatic is a beautiful country with many small island hideaways to visit, and the historic Dubrovnik is a good place to visit, but now Georgia is an absolute must. I am so very glad I came here. I was asked why I left Georgia so late, but I certainly left

the best until last. I am glad I did, as I can now truly compare Georgia with everywhere else I have been and speak about it to many people and in interviews such as this.

Worst places? Lagos, Nigeria, get my top vote easily, it's lawless and full of scammers and it's really not that safe. Iran - I was held there during their revolution and I feel that from being a very great place to visit it has gone backwards as a tourist destination.

Is Georgia an attractive place for tourism? What can you recommend to Georgians in terms of developing the tourism sector? What are our plusses and minuses?

Apparently I have been appointed Georgia's honorary representative.

The couple of minus points that do and will affect tourism is the smoking in restaurants and hotels. Most countries in Europe, and the USA and UK, have stopped this. It does make a difference for obvious health reasons, but to enjoy beautiful Georgian food without smoke is even better. The driving here is certainly exciting!

What do you think of the Georgian aviation system? Are you satisfied with Georgian air services?

When I met the brilliant lady Ketik Aleksidze, who is the Director of United Airports of Georgia, at the CIS Routes Conference in Donetsk where I was a guest speaker, Kete learnt that I hadn't been to Georgia and invited me to come, so there should be a great big thank you on behalf of Georgian Tourism to her as I would never have seen this magnificent country without Kete. I have to add the names of Irakli Nasidze, head of the Business Development Department which made this trip possible and such a wonderful experience, and Tamar Tatumashvili, its Corporate Communications Manager who came with me every step of the way - she is a real star.

I have met the head of TAV Georgia and am confident that the airports are in safe and great hands. I also had the great pleasure to meet and exchange many stories with Guram Jalaghonia, director of the civil aviation agency.

Having met them I visited Tbilisi International Airport, Batumi International Airport and the new and green Kutaisi International Airport, where I hope to give my suggestions concerning the new VIP business lounge. I am totally convinced that Georgian Aviation is in very safe hands indeed.

How has flying changed since you boarded your first plane?

When I first flew across the Atlantic it took 18 hours, with four stops from London, namely Prestwick, Keflavik in Iceland, Bangor Maine then finally New York, on a propeller aircraft. The fastest I flew was

in Concorde, in 2 hours, 52 minutes, 59 seconds from takeoff to touchdown.

Flying today has become mass transit. With more and more people able to fly and aircraft able to accommodate more and more people, like the Airbus A380 which can carry up to 800 people, for me it has become less glamorous. I don't think that I would want to be landing in rush hour at any airport with busy customs and immigration and possibly be behind four of these mammoth planes. Airports are hard pressed to manage the load they have already, let alone a potential 3,200 people at one time or maybe more.

How did you end up doing so much travelling? Are you still flying as much as you used to?

I worked for multinational companies setting up licenses for companies and governments to manufacture and sell products without the need to import them and use up their foreign exchange. This has meant constant travelling around the globe to meet the people involved.

I eventually went to live in the USA and am proud to be a citizen of the US. I worked for a company involving new patents and innovations which I had to license around the world. In 1974 I was invited by the chairman of Hasbro, Harold Hassenfeld, to come and work for them to license the manufacturing of their new products around the world. At the time Harold said, if you think you have travelled up until now, you ain't seen anything yet. I became a bit like a satellite circling the earth. My boss said he couldn't understand my English, so he sent me back to the UK to start this programme where I could be understood. From there I made over 500 trips to Nairobi, and many trips to the Far East. While in Iran I was held during the revolution for several days but eventually got out on the last flight, which caused big cheers when we passed over the Turkish border.

I eventually fulfilled my present role and became involved with Richard Branson, Ethiopian Airlines and Kenya Airlines who all wanted to know what I would like to see on their flights (bigger pillows, in-flight amenity kits etc.). All the airlines that I have been involved with are either 4 or 3 star rated, so I hope my input has been useful.

Where in the world would you still like to go?

Where to next is a good question! There are a few new countries that have formed since the breakup of the former Soviet Union that I've haven't been to. North Korea is the other country I've not visited, but I don't really want to go there anyway.

I have visited every country in South America, most of the Caribbean and have driven to every major city in the USA on a marketing trip. This took me 17 weeks and I had the time of my life. I went to every country in Europe and Africa when I was an advisor to Ethiopian and Kenya Airways.

I've done Australia, New Zealand and Asia. I've been to Pakistan, Singapore and Malaysia.

I would like to catch the trans-Siberian railway from Moscow to Vladivostok, which is a 21 day journey across 11 time zones. The Maharajah train in India is another journey I'd love to do.

I have done the Blue Train in South Africa and the Orient Express from London.

Seeing as I've travelled to most of the earth, I have started looking further afield; I signed on for the Pan American trip to the Moon when they launched passenger services, but sadly Pan American are no longer with us, so it's looking like my travels with be confined to terra firma after all!

I have been invited by Sir Richard Branson, owner of Virgin Atlantic, to get some more air miles by flying into space on Virgin Galactic.

I have visited all the places I have wanted to visit, and now want to revisit some of the most enjoyable places.

What is your most memorable experience of flying?

I have been on flights with a suspected bomb on board and through a suspected high jacking. I was going to meet my wife for dinner and didn't show up until 2am, and when I told her what had happened she said that this was the best excuse she had ever heard - until she saw it in the newspapers in the morning. Perhaps that's why she is my ex-wife.

I have to rate my first flight on Concorde as memorable, as one didn't know what to really expect when going through the sound barrier.

I have also flown with the Royal Air Force Red Arrows Acrobatic Team in the UK. I took Richard Branson to fly with the Red Arrows on a later occasion, and flew the last flight of the F4 Phantom. We took along Ron Dennis, who owns the McLaren Formula 1 racing team, to experience its real performance; he couldn't believe that something with this performance level could be out of date. David Gower, the former captain of the England cricket team, was also with us.

Georgia Promoted in Ukraine, Azerbaijan and the Baltic States

The Georgian National Tourism Administration is conducting a large-scale advertising campaign in Ukraine, the Baltic States and Azerbaijan. The ongoing campaign involves poster and print media adverts and also online marketing. Presentations have also been held for tourism companies and the press in Azerbaijan, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine. With the winter season approaching the campaign is currently focusing on the country's winter resorts. At a recent event in Baku Giorgi Sigua, head of the National Tourism Administration, talked to 70 leading tour operators, journalists and hotel managers about Georgia's tourism potential, existing offers and future directions. According to the figures for the first 8 months of 2013, 686,671 tourists entered Georgia from Azerbaijan, 15% more than in the same period the previous year, but it is hoped that by increasing public awareness of Georgia's resorts the flow of tourists from Azerbaijan, already significant, will increase demonstrably.

The main tourism products which the tourism administration offers are summer and winter resorts, adventure tours, cultural and culinary tours. Business tourism is also developing. Attention is being drawn to the Kakheti region, a focus of all these tours.

Three cities - Kiev, Donetsk and Kharkov – are the target of the Ukrainian vector of the campaign. This will involve using billboards and LED monitors in the central districts of these cities, in addition to traditional media outlets. In 2011 58,966 tourists entered Georgia from Ukraine, but in 2012 the figure was 76,082, or 29% greater.

The Tourism Administration also undertakes other activities to promote national tourism. During the last few years it has participated in 11 international exhibitions. By the end of the current year it should have attended exhibitions in the UK, Spain and Poland. It has also organised 20 press tours. Media representatives from Russia, Kazakhstan, China, Scandinavia, the Benelux countries, the Baltic States and other target markets will have toured Georgia by the end of 2013.

More attempts are being made to improve Georgia's online marketing presence. An improved search system, social media advertisements, a new mobile application about Georgia, new webpages and interactive portals are being introduced. It is also planned to develop new tourism products and diversify the range of existing products during the current year. Specifically, the Ateni Valley Hiking Trails and a tourist map of Imereti region will be developed alongside a wine map of Georgia. Adventure tourism in Georgia will also be further developed and the administration is planning to open tourist information centres. These will be built in Bakuriani, Kazbegi, Zugdidi and the capital Tbilisi, where it will be located in Pushkin Square.

Several tourist events are soon to be held. In October the Telavi Wine Festival will open, the "Georgian Traditions" and souvenir festival is scheduled for November and in December the winter sports season will open in Gudauri and Mestia.



Грузія країна життя



Georgia
Country of life

www.georgia.travel • www.gnta.ge

Kokkai, the Respected Representative of Georgian Tourism

Head of the National Tourism Administration Giorgi Sigua has awarded popular sportsman Levan Tsaguria, a former sumo wrestler known as Kokkai, who resides in Japan, the title 'Respected Representative of Georgian Tourism'. Ambassador of Japan to Georgia Toshio Kaitani attended the award ceremony. "My 15-year experience enables me to present my country and establish Georgia's image in Japan," said Tsaguria at the ceremony, where he was presented with a certificate confirming his status.

Under a new initiative of the Administration, Respected Representatives of Georgian Tourism will be appointed in a number of designated countries to popularise the country. "Levan Tsaguria is a well-known and successful sportsman in Japan, who will help the Japanese people understand the potential of Georgia. We are going to work with Qatar Airways to improve air services to and from

Japan and have a joint marketing campaign, which will involve hosting joint media tours by means of Tbilisi-Doha-Tokyo flights," said Giorgi Sigua, Head of the National Tourism Administration.

The number of Japanese visitors to Georgia increases by at least 30% each year. In the first seven months of 2013 2,681 Japanese visitors entered Georgia, a 62% increase over the same period of the previous year. The Japanese are distinguished by their ability to spend money intensively, making them desirable visitors for any country. They represent an important source of income for local tourism companies. Every year Georgia participates in the IATA (International Air Transport Association) international exhibition, and as a member of the GUAM group of countries it was involved in developing a common tourist product for the Japanese market.



24-hour Hotline for Tourists

Country of life

24/7 FREE

თქვენ უხვე შეგიძლიათ
გამოიყენოთ ჩვენი სასაზღვრო ინფორმაციო ცენტრი

საპარტოვალო ტურისტების საინფორმაციო ცენტრი GEORGIAN TOURISM INFORMATION CENTER ИНФОРМАЦИОННЫЙ ЦЕНТР ТУРИЗМА ГРУЗИИ

0 800 800 909

Following an initiative by the National Tourism Administration a 24-hour hotline has started functioning in Georgia. Foreign and local travellers will receive comprehensive information about accommodation, transport and food by dialling 0800 800 909 for free. They will also receive information on recommended tourist trails, festivals, national celebrations and other activities if they wish.

The operators speak English, Russian and Georgian. Other languages will be added in future. Each tourist will be provided with information about the hotline when they cross the border.

In the future the services offered will increase and will include a comment function, in which tourists will be able to express their positive and negative opinions about Georgia. These will be taken into consideration by the National Tourism Administration.

"Until now, individual travellers have been able to obtain information from the tourism information centres situated in the capital and the regions of Georgia, but these worked only during the day. By means of the new hotline information will be available 24 hours a day, for free. We are trying to make travelling better for both foreign and Georgian travellers," stated Giorgi Sigua, the head of the National Tourism Administration.

Syrian Geopolitical Enigma – Russia and Iran are allies, so who is in opposition???

By DR. VAKHTANG MAISAIA, GT

It has already been decided that there will be a war over Syria. The Obama Administration has made the difficult decision to launch an attack on Syria due to President Assad's use of chemical weapons against the civilian population of Aleppo, which violates the principles of the 1925 Geneva Convention. Even the US Senate's Foreign Relations Committee has supported this decision, meaning that very soon war will be starting, regardless of the fierce opposition of China and Russia to any campaign being conducted against its ally – the Assad regime.

The UN Security Council has declined to provide legal basis for conducting a military operation against Syria, despite sending its experts to conduct an investigation into the chemical weapons attacks. The NATO leadership has also refused to join the war effort, and the creation of a wide-ranging international coalition against Syria, such as that against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001, has completely failed. Despite this, war is unavoidable, and this is a clear indication that unipolarity still prevails in global politics and that the USA is seeking to increase its leadership at global level.

The war against Syria will not have only local effects, like those in Libya or Iraq, but have regional and even global consequences. As is known, Syria and Iran have created a common strategic alliance and are linked by a special agreement on strategic partnership and cooperation, which includes military cooperation. A new geopolitical coalition, Moscow-Tehran-Damascus, has been formed, and the Russian Federation has its own geostrategic interests in providing at least covert support to the totalitarian Assad regime.

In fact Russia already has two military bases in Syria. The Soviet era naval supply and maintenance base at Tartus, established under a 1971 agreement, is still staffed by Russian naval personnel. This is the last Russian military base outside the Soviet Union and its only Mediterranean fueling spot, which spares Russia's warships the trip back to their Black Sea bases through the straits of Turkey, a NATO member. There is also a special cosmic radio-technical surveillance centre in Damascus, established in 1972, which is analogous to the Lundres Centre in Cuba. This is run by the Russian military intelligence service, the GRU, and the Cosmic Strategic Command HQ of the General Staff of the Russian Federation. This centre, in conjunction with a counterpart in Gabali in Azerbaijan and a local aerial surveillance centre in Gudauta in Russian-occupied Abkhazia, helps Moscow control various sea spaces in the Middle East, the Arab peninsula, Western Africa and South Asia.

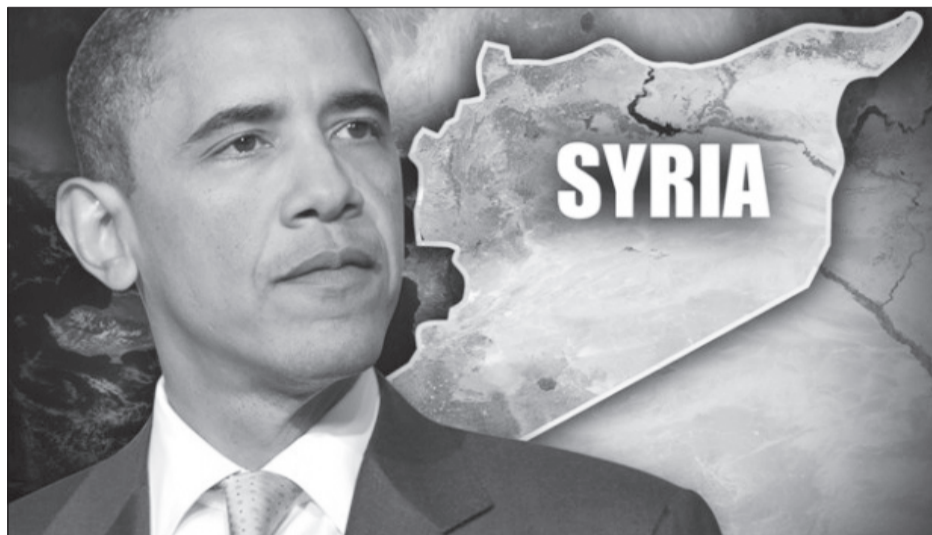
Moreover, in 1982 the Soviet GRU and Syrian military intelligence signed a then-secret memorandum on strategic partnership, which specified close cooperation and coordination in operational and human intelligence activities in case of war. This memorandum was invoked at least twice, firstly in July 1982, when the sixth Arab-Israeli war erupted in Lebanon and Syria intervened in Lebanon and occupied the Beqaa Valley, and in 1993 during the war in Abkhazia, when a Syrian commando unit (the so-called "Captain Bashir Group") engaged in warfare against Georgian military forces with the direct support of the then chief of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service Evgeny Primakov.

The Soviet legacy inherited by the Russian Federation in 1991 forced official Moscow to maintain its geopolitical linkage with the successive Assad regimes in Syria. The Soviet Kremlin's friendship with Khafiz Assad, who took power in 1971, became the genesis of a pledge by Putin to assist his son Bashar Assad. This was consistent with the so-called "status quo" foreign policy implementation of Russia and the similar nature of the authoritarian-totalitarian regimes in both countries. Russia is well aware of the oriental proverb: "if you betray your friend, you betray yourself".

Russia is now providing the incumbent Syrian regime with new "third" and "third+" generation Russian armaments, notably the Air Defence Missile System S-300PM (international trade mark "Favourite") and SU-30 and MiG-29 jets. According to some information a GRU special destination force group, including Chechen "Vostok" and "Zapad" commandos, has been dispatched to Syria to help the national armed forces quell a mutiny amongst military and paramilitary formations, provide training assistance and consult Syrian government units. Hence, the Russo-Syrian alliance is evident, as is the fact that it relies on the pursuing of mutual geostrategic missions.

The chief of Iran's elite Quds Force unit was quoted on 5 September as saying that Iran will support Syria "until the end" in the face of possible US-led military strikes. Iran is Syria's main regional ally, and some analysts believe that a wider goal of US President Barack Obama's prospective strike against the Damascus regime is to blunt Tehran's growing regional influence, and any consequent threat to Washington's ally Israel.

All these facts indicate that the current military conflict will not be restricted to a so-called "limited military operation", and that citing "the Yugoslav case" in invoking a solution to the so-called "Syrian dilemma" is irrelevant and groundless. Such an "air-land" intervention will prove insufficient and full military intervention is now unavoidable. However, it is still unclear who is going to support America's unilateral decision to wage war.



INTERNATIONAL LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION IN GEORGIA:

The Case of Dr. Vakhtang Maisaia

Introduction

Dr. Vakhtang Maisaia was arrested in Georgia on May 5th 2009 in connection with the so-called "Mukhrovani Mutiny" and charged with espionage for both the NATO alliance special services (specifically, the military intelligence service of Slovakia) and what was then described as the "Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation", the latter via third parties. However, it is unclear why, where, when and how he would have been able to have done any of this.

After his arrest the former envoy was taken to the "Module" building of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and interrogated for five hours. He was immediately subjected to psychological and physical pressure and abuse, and forced to write a confession about his cooperation with the pharmaceutical company "Novartis", specifically with Professor Olena Yatsunska, a political analyst in Ukraine, and Mr. Ioseb Dolezhal, Novartis' representative in Slovakia. Later he was alleged to have obtained and transmitted secret information, in violation of the first and second sections of Article 314 of the Georgian Criminal Code.

Maisaia's arrest, the subsequent court hearings (at which he was not represented by a lawyer and the proceedings of which were classified), and the case in general aroused widespread interest among Georgian civil society organisations. The charges were immediately questioned by various NGOs, not only in Georgia but in other countries. The court hearings were controversial because the whole trial was conducted in secret, and even the eventual verdict was not made public.

Background

All the evidence presented in this case was declared secret, including the determination that a souvenir badge for foreign tourists he possessed, bearing the legend "KGB of the Soviet Union", which cost USD 5 and is still available at many stores in Moscow or Kyiv, was evidence of Dr. Maisaia's collusion with or employment by foreign security

services. Only the judge, prosecutor and defence attorney were allowed to view the evidence. Dr. Maisaia was stated to have been paid for his "job" of supplying intelligence for foreign "colleagues", but no such funds have been found at any time. Moreover, even the money deposited in his general account with "Basis Bank" in Tbilisi was not confiscated subsequent to his conviction.

In order to present an objective account of this case, the precise wording of the written court verdict on the accusation made against him is instructive:

"...2002 წლის დასასრულს უკრაინის რესპუბლიკის მოქალაქე ელენე იაცუნსკას სახელით მოქმედი პიროვნების მეშვეობით სლოვაკეთის სამხედრო დაზვერვის თანამშრომლებს (!!) დოქტორ ვაკხტანგ მაისაიას და "ტომის" სახელით იმეზად საქართველოს საგარეო საქმეთა სამინისტროს თანამშრომელი ვახტანგ მაისაია, საქართველოს ინტერესების საზიანოდ, საქართველოს სახელმწიფო საიდუმლოების შემცველი ცნობების, სხვაგვარი მონაცემების შეგროვების, შენახვის და მათთვის გადაცემის მიზნით გადაიბარეს რუსეთის ფედერაციის სადაზვერულო სამსახურის (???) თანამშრომლებმა, რომლებსაც სლოვაკეთში მოქმედებდნენ ქალაქ პრატისლავეში მდებარე საგარეო ფირმა "ნოვარტისის" საფარველში."

This can be translated as:

"At the end of 2002, via citizen of Ukraine Helen Yatsunska who was acting in the name (or under cover), and as a representative of, the Military Intelligence Service of the Slovak Republic (!!), one Dodo Dolejal, who used the names "Yan" and "Tom" and was using the cover of the trading company "Novartis" (???) in Bratislava in the Slovak Republic to gain, keep and transmit secret information about the State of Georgia to use against its interests, and recruited for this purpose Vakhtang Maisaia, an employee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, was recruited by operatives of the Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation (???)".
(Indirect translation by Dr. Maisaia.)

Political Motivation

The apparent motivation for Dr. Maisaia's arrest was perhaps the threat he was perceived to pose to the previous Georgian authorities due to his expression of critical and insightful positions on civil liberties in his journalistic activities and his academic research and publications, including an English language monograph on the 2008 Russia-Georgia war in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This was scheduled to be published at the end of 2009. Two other books of his were submitted by the authorities, and the law enforcement agencies which fabricated the case materials, as evidence of his so-called "espionage" activities (including a geographical map of the Pankisi Gorge).

Physical Abuse and Torture Facts

Dr. Maisaia was tortured, physically abused and told that his family members (his spouse Elena Magradze and his mother Barbara Duduchava, who suffers from dementia as a result of the psychological abuse of the Saakashvili's regime) would also be arrested and ill-treated in the prison. Twice (in May-June of 2009 and on August 24th 2010) he was assaulted, and special clandestine operations were conduct-

ed by the law enforcement representatives in prison number 8 in Gldani in Tbilisi, where he was held, which were designed to secure his elimination and physical liquidation, as confirmed by the U.S. Department of State's 2010 Georgia Country Report on Human Rights Practices and the letter from his cellmate, fellow inmate Zaza Azariashvili, who was also tortured because of his refusal to fulfill the illegal de-

mand of the prison administration to kill Dr. Maisaia. The concrete methods of torture and physical abuse inflicted on Dr. Maisaia included the following:

Strangulation
Murder simulation – in one of his interrogations, a secret police officer (from the Counter-Intelligence Department of the MIA of Georgia) pulled out a pistol, aimed it at his head, cocked it and pulled the trigger. The pistol was loaded with blanks. Dr. Maisaia still suffers physical and psychological trauma from this;

Illegal interrogation at night – this was conducted in a similar manner to that of the Soviet KGB in the 1960s and 70s – he was not allowed to sleep at all for a period of 35 days and subjected to severe physical and psychological abuse designed to force him to confess to the treason he had not committed. As a result of this torture he has lost almost all his teeth (pulled out during this abuse in 2009) and has experienced terrible nausea and dizziness since 2010;

Intensive use of psychotropic drugs (such as "Scopolamin")

Incarceration in an underground cell – four times he was put in a wet underground cell, with only the most elementary hygiene facilities, no water, no

heat, no bath, no food, no soap or toilet paper and no access to medical treatment, for 40 days.

All this demonstrates the extent to which the political police of the Georgian government of the time were willing to pursue their objectives.

During their night interrogations political police representatives (led by Deputy Director of the Counter-Intelligence Department of the MIA Otari Ordzonikidze, who was executing orders from the then-Minister of Intelligence Vano Merabishvili and President Mikheil Saakashvili) attempted to force him to provide false testimony against more than thirty high ranking government and opposition figures, for example, Salome Zourabichvili, Nino Burdjanadze, Irakli Alasania, Irakli Okruashvili, and others who were labeled his "allies in espionage". The fabricated evidence assembled against Dr. Maisaia, outlining many of the cases against the named individuals, is still held as criminal case material, in a series of seven volumes, with all the data therein classified as a state secret, thus limiting public access to it, in contravention of constitutional provisions to the contrary.

The political police also tortured Dr. Maisaia in order to obtain information on foreign diplomats (including those of the United States and United Kingdom, including Robert Kenety, Ian Lent, Rob Fuller, Bogdan Udriste, Michael Simon, John Anton and a high-ranking official from the US Administration) and overseas citizens residing in Georgia, including an American citizen, Mr. Jeffrey Silverman. They asked Dr. Vakhtang Maisaia about this man's personality and background, and tortured him in order to obtain his contact information and whereabouts so that they could abduct him; giving the impression that they intended to use a "death squad" for this purpose. It has since been confirmed to Dr. Maisaia that the political police intended to execute this man in some unknown place because of his foreign citizenship and his popularity abroad.

Summary

On January 13th 2013, Dr. Maisaia was recognised by the new government to be a political prisoner and released. He immediately stated upon being freed:

"Every allegation, every accusation has to be fully investigated. And I will, by all means, follow this to the end, on all levels – political and judicial."

Dr. Maisaia plans to appeal to the Strasbourg Court of Human Rights on the basis of articles 3, 4 and 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

(Footnotes)

¹ President Saakashvili notably mentioned Dr. Maisaia's name several times in the press, and talked negatively about his case and supposed treason, at official governmental sessions and public meetings in 2009 and 2012.

Dr. Vakhtang Maisaia
Military expert, Associate Professor at Sukhishvili Teaching University
Director, the GT Azri Strategic Studies Centre

Salome Zourabichvili: Who can the PM call on to help us when he has not been anywhere and has no connection with anyone?

By MAKHA DEKANOSIDZE, GT

Diplomat and descendent of Georgian émigrés Salome Zourabichvili, having been denied the opportunity to stand for President by the Central Election Commission and court, remains a public figure and promises an intensive battle to secure the European future of Georgia.

In this interview Zourabichvili outlines what she sees as the threat implicit in the country's new foreign policy orientation.

In one of your interviews you said, referring to Ivanishvili's speech to the European Council, that "a good and earnest Georgian was standing in front of Europe". Do you still think the same about Ivanishvili, or have you changed your mind?

Probably he is earnest, but Georgia needed two things from him: more democracy and a

greater commitment to our European course. Initially we did not know what would happen, but lately democracy has had problems. Very big questions have now arisen as a result of the forthcoming elections. My prospective candidacy was a test for the government and the court, but the public has been deprived of the right of choice. Is this not anti-democratic? Georgia's democracy is upside down today.

As for our Western aspirations and independence, there are now concerns that we might join the Eurasian Union. I do not believe that any of our politicians will make such a big mistake. The PM knew what he was doing when he started talking about this - he was sending a trial message. This message was delivered to the world, we have heard the Lithuanian President's reaction.

You said when announcing your candidacy for Presi-

dent that if you won you would renounce your French citizenship. So what was the main reason given for not allowing you to stand? Was this a political decision?

I did not simply express a readiness to renounce my citizenship of France, I went to the French Consulate and filled in a form which would mean that my citizenship would be terminated on election day. But the court did not even take this into account. The CEC was not interested in this important fact. They said that I have no right to participate in the elections, but this is not true, it was a political statement. Something must be behind it.

Do you think the government is afraid of you?

I do not represent a threat for the government candidate, as everyone knows I have no financial resources. My basic resources are Facebook and the émigré factor.

If you do not represent the threat for the government, why would preventing you from standing be political?

There is the threat of not knowing what might happen when the government's candidate is not popular. I think the basic message was that they would not allow a 'European' to influence the elections. I am sure Burjanadze is not interested in the presidency, as this position is not powerful. She and the rest are really interested in the next stage - the parliamentary elections, as real power will be possessed by the PM.

Was there any Western pressure on you to stand?

There was no pressure from the West. There was none in my case, so there would not have been in other cases. They have not got involved in our internal political affairs. The US Embassy addressed Usupashvili, but that is all.

Nor is it true that the West has demanded that the government stops investigating members of the previous government. Can the West prevent anyone conducting an investigation and presenting proper evidence?

Why has who falsified the elections and why not been investigated?

Russia is still annexing Georgian territory. Is the government's response adequate?

We are always presented with a false choice: either serious negotiations or confrontation and war.

When you have power but can do nothing with it you can achieve a result by means of diplomacy. But nothing is being done at Geneva. These meetings are in vain - there will be no agreements on Olympics or borders.

How can Ivanishvili persuade others to guarantee our security if he does not go to these meetings?

I support Europe and West because they guarantee our independence. The West will not get involved in a war, but our only defender is the West. This was clear in August 2008 when Sarkozy came here. They love to say that he did nothing, but he came in our time of need to resolve the situation.

When you have no connection with anybody it is bad. Who can the PM call on to help us when he has not been anywhere and has no connection with anyone? Why didn't he



visit France? He is a citizen of France, he could have taken the opportunity to make economic connections.

Did the European leaders express a wish to meet him?

When Ivanishvili came to power his political orientation was vague. Europe wanted to find out who he was, but he did not capitalise on this interest.

But as the PM has already said he will resign, surely he feels it is not worth starting something he won't finish?

This visit was necessary for the country. Being in isolation is the same as being under Russian occupation. When you do not try and build relations with foreigners and gain even minimal support your country is unprotected.

The country is not stable, and this suits Russia. Russia never attacks itself, only those places which are unstable and whose governments do not behave like governments. So who will protect us, particularly if we have two orientations?

What are you going to do next, as you will not be stand-

ing for President?

We should conduct the elections peacefully. Destabilisation is the biggest threat to us. After the elections it will become clear which power we will be fighting against.

Irakli Alasania has stated that the political parties will coalesce around what foreign policy orientation Georgia should take. Do you agree?

This time will come. The pro-Western forces in the present coalition, Irakli Alasania, Tea Tsulukiani, the Republicans, have been discredited. So this regrouping will happen. But before then court cases must be held, criminals must be punished. The political space must be cleared.

Some people in the National Movement wanted an independent court and we should not reject these people. But we must not continue living in a country where crimes have been committed for 20 years but we still don't know who the criminals are. This has happened because we have never had serious courts in this country.

PUBLICITY

Expand your professional horizons!

Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) is an international qualification in securities markets, banking, corporate finance, fund management, insurance and investment advice.

Are you someone who stands out or hides behind?

EY Georgia invites you to define your competitive advantage:

CFA Level I Start Dates: January 24 - 26, 2014

CFA Level II Start Dates: January 31 - February 2, 2014

Please contact Marika Vakhtangishvili at (+995) 599 31 07 05 or e-mail: Marika.Vakhtangishvili@ge.ey.com

<http://www.ey.com/GE>

ERNST & YOUNG
Quality In Everything We Do

History Lies Beneath Time, What Matters Is Keeping It

“History will be kind to me for I intend to write it.” - Winston Churchill.

By TAKO AGARASHVILI, GT

Many people have written, rewritten, invented, created, changed and made history. History and time are inextricable bound, and together these two forces are powerful enough to both erase and immortalise small and great, kind and brutal, meaningless and significant events and people. As unfair as it sounds, it is history which decides who and what stays on the surface and the irony of it lies in the “tools” it uses to do this.

Considering all the great men of history, mortality appears to be their greatest enemy. None of them have been able to fight it; no one has proved able to go against nature. But these guys were bizarre, great and energetic enough to overcome it by transforming themselves from mortal human beings into timeless ideas. So yes! They did eventually beat even nature, time and death.

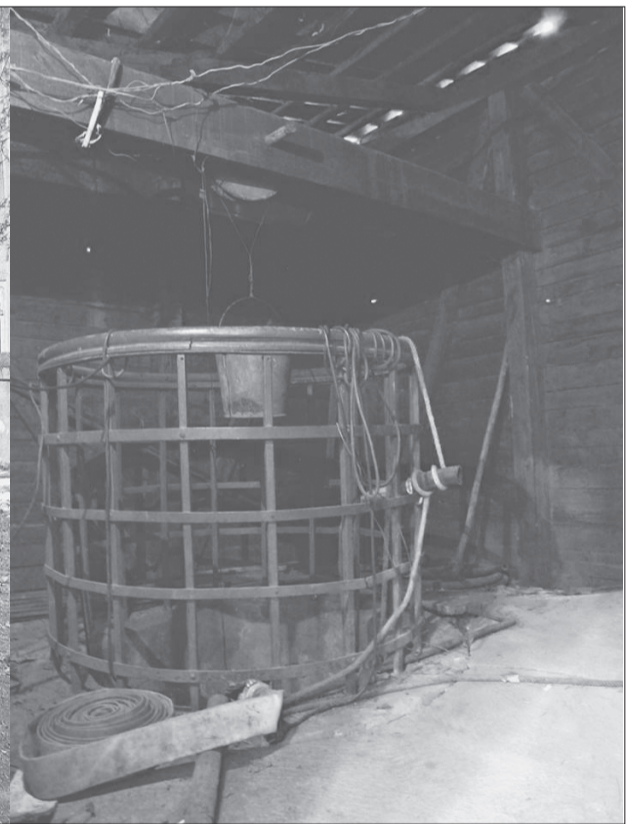
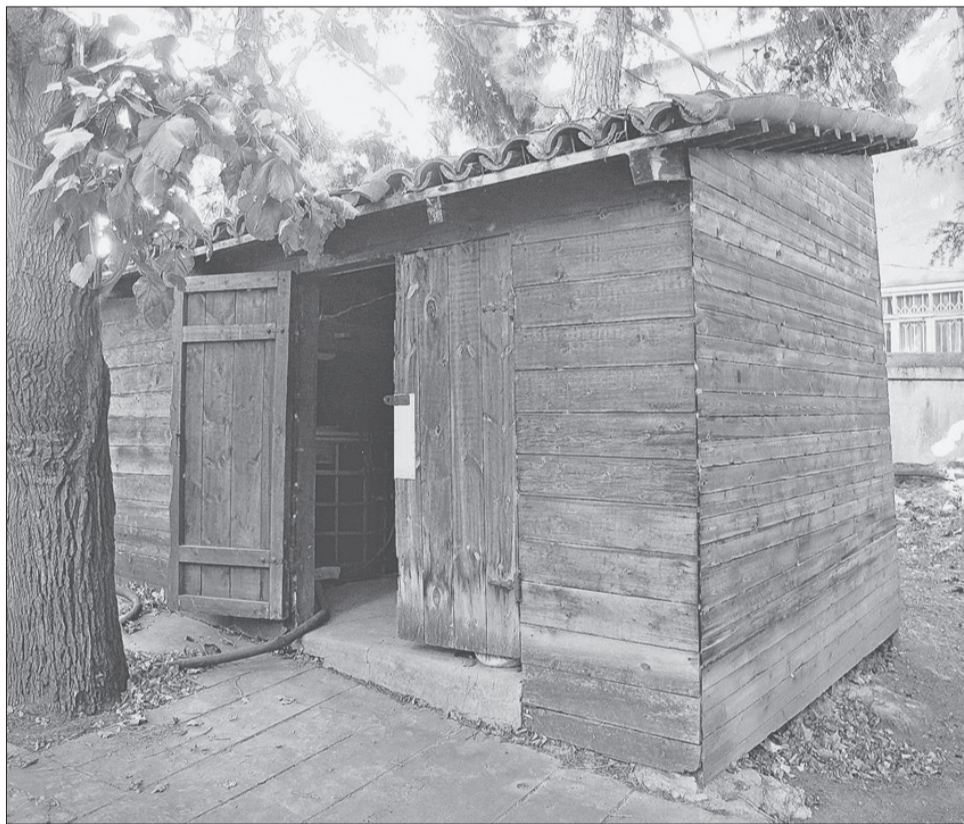
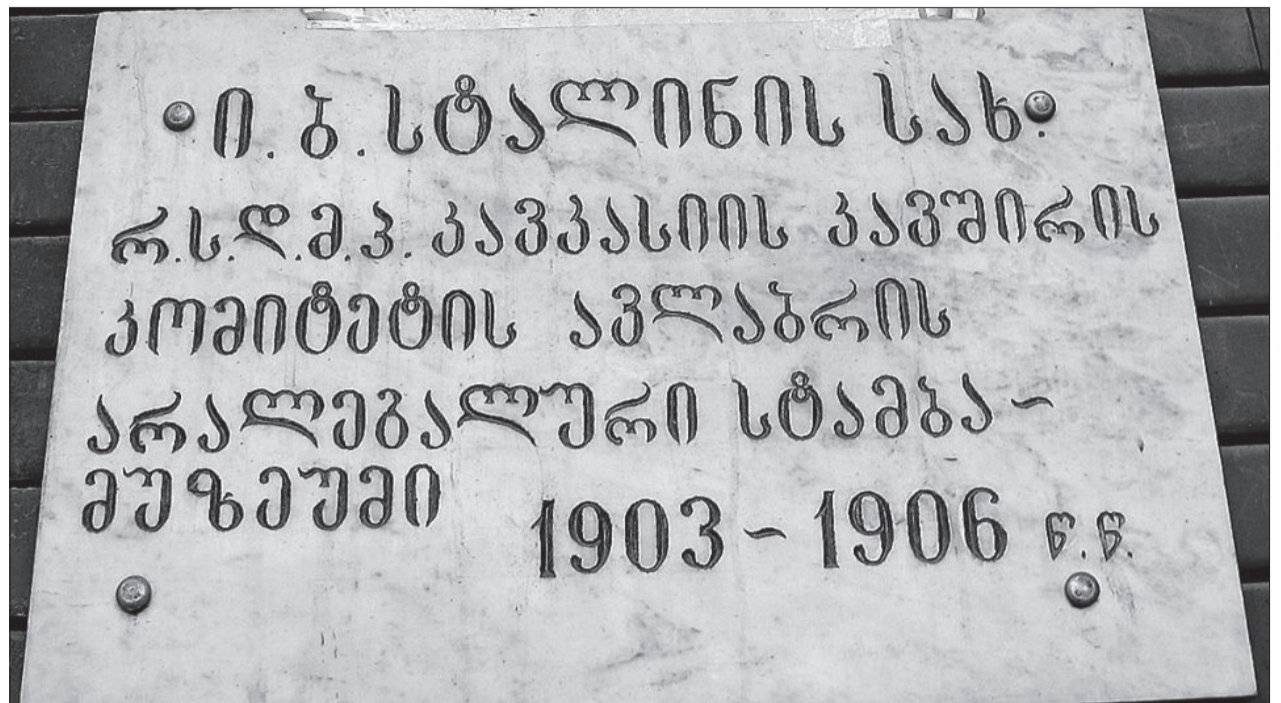
“Ideas are more powerful than guns” said Joseph Stalin (Ioseb Jughashvili). And he knew what he was talking about. Moreover he convinced the entire nation and made it follow him. Joseph Stalin was one of the biggest figures in 20th century world politics. As leader of the Soviet Union, Stalin was deeply involved in World War II and played an essential role in the Allies’ victory.

He was a sweet, unhealthy kid, born (1878) to a housekeeper and a cobbler in Gori. Before he rose to power Stalin was based in Georgia, and that’s where he began his revolutionary activities. After being expelled from the Georgian Orthodox Church Seminary of Tiflis he gradually became one of the biggest revolutionary names in the Caucasus region. The two most significant accomplishments of his revolutionary youth were the 1907 Tiflis bank robbery (a theft of 341,000 Rubles, roughly USD 3.4 million adjusted for inflation) and the establishment of an underground printing house which supplied the Eurasian region with illegal revolutionary print materials such as socialist proclamations, banned publications etc. The newspapers and leaflets were printed in Russian, Georgian, Azeri and Armenian. They were spread throughout the entire Eurasian region. The printing house played a key role in the success of the 1917 Russian revolution.

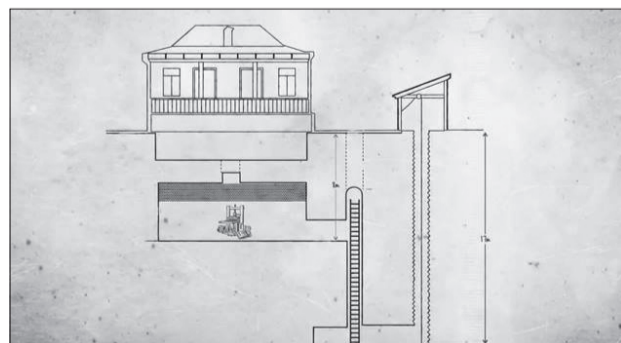
“I believe in one thing only, the power of the human will.” said Stalin, and he did. He believed in his will alone. He was inspired by it. His biography suggests that his faith in the power of “the human will” turned into a rush he couldn’t

control at some point; yet he didn’t have to. The secret printing house is where Stalin discovered his secret “rush”. This was the “it” place for communism. It was the hearth of his communist beginning, the place where he transformed communist ideas into a solid tool, the illegal abode of his intention to reign.

The secret printing house was located under a small residential house in what is now Tbilisi. The only way you could get to the printing press was through the well in the yard. An underground tunnel connected the well and the underground printing space. In 1906 the Tsar’s gendarmerie accidentally discovered the publishing house. They thought that the illegal printing activities were



still going on, and searched the place for traitors in vain. They looked down the well, set fire to a piece of paper and dropped it into it. After watching the



paper float down and land on the bottom without touching water they discovered where the well led, and blew up the printing house. It must be noted that one of the greatest mystics of the twentieth century, Giorgi Gurdjieff, was involved in this mission. He was an agent who had infiltrated the group of revolutionaries.

Stalin is the key name Georgia is known for. He is the brand. His museum in Gori has the highest visitor numbers (mainly tourists) of any in Georgia.

In 1937, under Lavrenti Beria’s Soviet leadership, the publishing house and secret living quarters of the revolutionaries were reconstructed as a historical site. The Soviets have gone, but now the old printing house, too, has been reopened as a museum. It’s nothing personal for the young men who created the initiative group and

started the campaign for a restoration of the museum, just business. There is no sentiment or dedication in their initiative, merely the desire to bring in more tourists, and therefore income.

The museum offers several exhibits about the “greatness of a great leader”. It’s not advertised, and receives no more than 100 visitors a year, mostly Chinese. But it’s a much underrated, fascinating place. As before, you enter through the well. A second horizontal tunnel, 17m down, connects to the 15m vertical tunnel; the revolutionaries entered the publishing house via an 8m high horizontal section. It should be noted that the design and construction of the publishing house were undertaken by the workers’ committee – amateurs, which is particularly surprising.

The printing press was made in Germany. It was dis-

mantled and brought to Tbilisi piece by piece. It is still in place, but not only out of order but sad to look at. It doesn’t radiate the power it had, the change it brought and the history it made.

At the moment the historic printing house (including the underground printing press) is in extremely poor condition and needs immediate restoration. The group traced down several exhibits and studied the problems regarding the well. The guys are willing and determined to turn this historic place into a modern museum, search for lost exhibits, restore the place and hopefully the printing press itself and advertise it, to show the world the very roots of the communist era. They don’t want to convince people that communism was a great page in world history, just present the real picture of its origins and leave the

visitors to draw their own conclusions. They have a business plan, they have made the video and they have put it on the crowd funding web-site www.indiegogo.com which is famous for hosting projects like this. Any donation is welcome, and the group will also find its own funds to invest. They are determined, enthusiastic and experienced. According to their business plan the restored museum will be ready for a high volume of visitors in spring 2014. This is the group’s first project, but many more interesting ones are in the pipeline.

At the end I think Stalin missed one thing. “Communism doesn’t work because people like to own stuff.”- said Frank Zappa. I would love to watch their honest yet diplomatic (on Stalin’s side) conflict of interests at The Kremlin over a cup of tea.

DAVID THE BUILDER KUTAISI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT



DAVID THE BUILDER KUTAISI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
 Tel: (+995) 0431 237000
 (+995) 0431 239003



From 15 €

WARSAW

KATOVITSA

DONETSK

TELAVIV

MINSK

MOSCOW

KHARKOW

TBILISI



Become a VIP at the Airport? Then ask for "Primeclass" CIP Service

"primeclass" CIP Service offers a complete package of meet and assist services at the airport. "primeclass" CIP Service agents will gladly assist passengers during all flight procedures for both departure and arrival. Passengers are accompanied through the fast tracks, dedicated security check points and business check-in and hosted in "primeclass" Lounge while their luggage are carried by a porter.

Tbilisi Tel: 322 310 330 Fax: 322 310 331 E-mail: primeclass.georgia@tav.aero
 Batumi Tel: 422 235 111 Fax: 422 235 112 E-mail: primeclass.batumi@tav.aero
 TAV Georgia Operation Services LLC | www.primeclass.com.fr



Ambadori
13 Shavteli st, Tbilisi0105, Georgia
Tel: (+995 32) 2439494 (+995 32) 2 180110

Holiday Inn
1,26 May Square; Tel: (+995 32) 2300099
web: <http://www.hi-tbilisi.com>

სამურაი სუსი ბარი!

ნიკონური სემზარეულო

SAMURAI SUSHI BAR

Samurai-Sushi Bar
Tbilisi , 9 G. Tabidze St.
Tel: (+995 32) 240 39 99, (790) 16 02 02

სასტუმრო ვარაზი

HOTEL VARAZI

Hotel Varazi
Kostava st.45a, 0179 Tbilisi, Georgia; Tel: (+995 32) 293 11 61

First Irish Pub in Tbilisi

WHEELS

Wheels - Irish Pub
Tbilisi, 16 G. Akhvlediani St., Tel: (+995 32) 298 87 33

Hotel OLD METEKHI

Old Metekhi
3 Metekhi St. Tbilisi
Tel: (+995 32) 274 74 04; (+995 32) 274 74 31
Fax: (+995 32) 277 46 35

Jazz Cafe

Marrakesh Express

Marekesh expres
Rkinis rigi N5 (Meidan Area) Tbilisi, Georgia
Tel: (+ 995 32) 439350

HOTEL "VERE PALACE"

Vere Palace
Tbilisi , 24/8 Kuchishvili St. ,
Tel: (+995 32) 225 33 40, 225 33 41,
web: www.verepalace.com.ge

inhouse
restaurant&bar

Inhouse
Ahvlediani (Perovskaya) street #17, 0162 Tbilisi, Georgia
Tel: 577 44 99 61

Canape

Cafe Canape

Canape
Tbilisi , 14 I. Abashidze St., Tel: (+995 32) 223 19 21,
Tbilisi, 7 Kazbegi Ave., Tel: (+995 32) 237 35 73
Tbilisi, 112 Agmashenebeli Ave., Tel: (+995 32) 296 22 69

KOPALA

Kopala
Chekhov str.8/10, Tbilisi, Georgia
Tel: (+995 32) 277 55 20

Glasgow
20 Akhvlediani Str. Tbilisi
Tel: (+995 32) 236 99 18

Sheraton Metechi Palace
HOTEL TBILISI

Sheraton Metechi Palace
Addr: 20 Telavi St. Tbilisi
Tel: (+995 32) 277 20 20;

Marriott TBILISI

Tbilisi
Rustaveli Avenue 13
Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia, Tel: (+995 32) 277 92 00

DAVID SULTAN Hotel Tbilisi

David Sultan
16a P. Iashvili str. Georgia, Tbilisi
Tel: (+995 32) 2 935-006; (+995 32) 2 931-685

Radisson BLU
IVERIA HOTEL, TBILISI

Radisson Blu Iveria Hotel, Tbilisi
Rose Revolution Square 1, 0108 Tbilisi, Georgia.
Tel: (+995 32) 402 200
web: www.radissonblu.com/hotel-tbilisi

11/11

11/11
11/11 G. Tabidze Str. Tbilisi
Tel: (+995 32) 293 23 40

River Side

River Side
Corner of the Brose Street
Tel: (+995 32)224 22 44; 224 22 55;

BUSINESS CONSULTING Award

www.award.com.ge

AWARD CONSULTING
Tel: 593 31 41 05

BOOK CORNER

Book Corner
13b Tarkhnishvili Lane, 0179 Tbilisi, Georgia
Tel: (+995 32) 223 24 30

COURTYARD
Marriott

Marriott Courtyard
4 Freedom Square; Tbilisi, 0105, Georgia
Tel: (+995 32) 277 91 00

Penthouse Hotel

Penthouse
12 Metekhi Str. Tbilisi
Tel: (+995 32) 274 57 77; (+995 32) 274 59 99

Cafe Lefse

Kafe Lefse
Shardeni Str. 14, Tbilisi, Georgia
Tel: (+995 32) 243 93 03

KMM
Hotel

KMM
Metekhi Turn10 Tbilisi Georgia
Tel: (+995 32) 277 88 50; (+995 32) 2747185

Contact us and Become our Partner

12, Kikodze str, Tbilisi, Georgia.
Tel: (+995 32) 2934405,
E-mail:marketing@geotimes.ge;
www.geotimes.ge



Premier League Games Exclusively on Silk Sport HD

For Silk TV subscribers only, Barclays Premier League, from August 17th, on the new channel!



Find us on: facebook.

2 100 100

www.silknet.com

Interactive Television