



FOCUS
ON REPRODUCTIVE
MEDICINE
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int'l conference on infertility
35+ and their commitment
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Huge Israeli Company to Implement Large-Scale Plan in Georgia

TRANSLATED BY ANA DUMBADZE

The owners of Bikurei Sadeh, the leading logistics company in Israel, visited Tbilisi. The company is interested in cooperating with Georgia to import a large amount of fruits and vegetables from Georgia.

Currently, the company is studying Georgia's potential, agricultural crops, and its owners have already had meetings with the Agrarian Affairs Committee of the Georgian Parliament and the leadership of the Friendship Group with the Israeli Knesset. The conversation at the meeting in the Parliament touched on future cooperation in the field of trade and knowledge sharing between start-ups.

According to Ilan Sheva, who is the director and founder of the largest fruit and vegetable importing company Bikurei Sadeh, there are plans to open a department of Georgia in Israel, which will study the growing seasons and potential of agricultural crops in Georgia.

Continued on page 6



The owners of Bikurei Sadeh meeting with the Georgian Agrarian Affairs Committee

GALT & TAGGART CREATING OPPORTUNITIES									
Markets									
As of 07-Oct-2024									
BONDS					STOCKS				
	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m		
GEORG 04/26	94.66 (YTM 6.46%)	-0.1%	+0.3%	Bank of Georgia (BGEO LN)	GBP 37.35	+2.1%	-6.4%		
GBAA 04/28	95.56 (YTM 6.94%)	-0.2%	+0.6%	Georgia Capital (GCEO LN)	GBP 9.66	+3.9%	-0.1%		
GBGG 9/12 PERP	98.26 (YTM 9.40%)	+0.0%	+0.6%	TBC Bank Group (TBCC LN)	GBP 25.50	-3.8%	-10.2%		
SILNET 01/27	100.88 (YTM 7.94%)	+0.0%	+0.9%						
TBC 8.894 PERP	96.09 (YTM 11.40%)	-0.0%	+0.2%						
TBC 10 1/4 PERP	98.88 (YTM 10.61%)	-0.0%	+0.4%	COMMODITIES					
				Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)	80.93	+12.8%	+13.9%		
				Gold Spot (US\$/OZ)	2 642.59	+0.3%	+5.8%		
INDICES					CURRENCIES				
	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m		
SP 500	5 695.94	-1.2%	+5.3%	USD / GEL	2.7466	+0.6%	+2.1%		
FTSE 250	20 853.21	-0.9%	+1.8%	EUR / GEL	3.0143	-0.8%	+1.1%		
DOW JONES 30	41 954.24	-0.9%	+4.0%	GBP / GEL	3.5914	-1.6%	+1.6%		
Russell 2000	2 193.09	-1.7%	+6.9%	EUR / USD	1.0976	-1.4%	-1.0%		
FTSE 100	8 303.62	+0.8%	+1.5%	GBP / USD	1.3083	-2.2%	-0.4%		

Defending Democracy: European Parliament Adopts Resolution to Stop Georgia's Backsliding

BY TEAM GT

On October 9, the European Parliament adopted the resolution 'On the Decline of Democracy and Threats to Political Pluralism in Georgia' with a vote of 495 in favor and 73 against. This resolution articulates serious concerns regarding the erosion of democratic principles in Georgia and outlines specific actions the European Union should take in response. The draft calls for the freezing of EU aid to the Georgian government, sanctions against Bidzina Ivanishvili and other individuals responsible for this democratic decline, and a thorough assessment of anti-democratic laws concerning visa liberalization criteria.

The resolution further demands that the Georgian government cease its campaign of intimidation against political opponents and stop disseminating anti-Western disinformation. It calls for the imposition of sanctions on Russia, the release of former president Mikheil Saakashvili on humanitarian grounds, and a commitment to a peaceful transfer of power based on the upcoming election results. The concerns highlighted in the draft resolution underscore a troubling trend that has been unfolding in Georgia over recent months, marked by increasing attacks on democratic norms.

The joint resolution is the result of collaboration among several political groups within the European Parliament, including the European People's Party (EPP), European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), Renew Europe, Greens (Verts/ALE), and Social Democrats. It reflects a unified stance on the threats facing Georgian democracy. As noted in the resolution, the so-called "Foreign agents law," laws limiting LGBTQ+ rights, and changes to the election code have

raised significant alarms. The authors express concern over a promise by the ruling Georgian Dream party to ban the opposition, along with the party's growing anti-Western rhetoric directed at Georgia's democratic partners.

"This hostile rhetoric also applies to Ukraine, as the ruling party uses vile political banners depicting Ukrainian cities destroyed by Russia and profiting from the suffering of brave Ukrainians," the draft resolution reads, drawing attention to the harmful effects of the ruling party's political strategies. Furthermore, it emphasizes the troubling approval by Georgian leaders of statements from Russian officials suggesting that Moscow could assist Georgia in normalizing relations with the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This stance represents a significant departure from the government's previous policy of recognizing these regions as occupied.

The European Parliament resolution explicitly states its deep regret over the ongoing democratic backsliding in Georgia, particularly as the country approaches parliamentary elections on October 26. It strongly condemns the adoption of laws related to "transparency of foreign influence" and "family values and protection of minors," viewing them as tools for violating freedom of expression, censoring media, and limiting critical voices in civil society. The resolution emphasizes that these actions are incompatible with the values of the European Union and damage Georgia's international reputation, jeopardizing its Euro-Atlantic integration.

"[The European Parliament] condemns the personal role of Georgian oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili, who returned to active politics on December 30, 2023, when he became the 'honorary chairman' of the 'Georgian Dream' party, in the current political crisis and in digging the foundation for the country's Euro-Atlantic orientation in order to turn to



Russia," the resolution states. It calls for immediate and targeted sanctions against Ivanishvili for his role in undermining Georgia's political landscape and reaffirms the importance of holding accountable all individuals responsible for spreading anti-democratic practices.

In a significant acknowledgment of Georgia's aspirations, the resolution notes that on December 14 and 15, 2023, the European Council granted Georgia candidate country status, contingent upon the implementation of the recommendations made by the European Commission. However, the recently adopted laws are seen as contradictory to these ambitions, impeding Georgia's integration into the European Union.

The resolution also reiterates the demand for Saakashvili's immediate and unconditional release on humanitarian grounds, underscoring the government's responsibility for his health and safety.

"The resolution which the European Parliament will adopt today goes beyond our accustomed disappointment," stated Georgian Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili at a briefing. He criticized the resolution as based on "false narratives and personal attacks," particularly regarding the call for sanctions on Ivanishvili.

"The message, which urges the imposition of sanctions on Bidzina Ivanishvili, is disturbing. This is the EP's third resolution where certain forces utilize EU institutions to attack Bidzina Ivanishvili and incite political retribution," he added. Papuashvili argued that the resolution reflects an obsession with Ivanishvili and misrepresents his role in maintaining peace in Georgia.

Moreover, he condemned the demand for bilateral sanctions on Russia, stating, "It is disgusting to openly demand the imposition of bilateral sanctions on Rus-

sia in the EU's first official resolution." He cautioned that such sanctions would not harm Russia, but could lead Georgia into economic turmoil and heightened risks of military confrontation.

Papuashvili also expressed concern over the timing of the resolution, which comes just days before the elections, viewing it as an attempt to manipulate voter sentiment. He urged all foreign actors to respect Georgia's sovereignty and democratic processes, emphasizing the need for elections free from external influence.

The resolution by the European Parliament reflects a critical juncture for Georgia as it grapples with internal challenges to its democracy while navigating complex geopolitical pressures. As the country approaches pivotal elections, the calls for accountability and adherence to democratic norms are more pressing than ever.

Ukraine Latest: Zelensky Says Putin's War Can Be Stopped in 2025; Russian Forces Reach Key City

COMPILED BY ANA DUMBADZE

Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky says he believes Kyiv will have the opportunity to end the war with Russia next year if his country receives sufficient support from its allies.

"In October, November and December, we have a chance to move things toward peace and lasting stability," he told the Ukraine-South East Europe summit in Dubrovnik. "The situation on the battlefield creates an opportunity to make this choice for decisive action to end the war no later than in 2025."

He also used the summit to call on southeastern European countries to invest in weapons production in Ukraine.

UKRAINE HITS RUSSIAN AMMO DEPOT WITH NEARLY 400 SHAHED DRONES

Ukraine's military said its forces struck a base in southern Russia's Krasnodar region storing hundreds of Shahed drones, scoring several hits.

A statement by the General Staff said the attack was carried out jointly by naval

forces and the SBU intelligence service. "Reportedly, nearly 400 strike drones were stored there," the statement said. "Based on objective control results, a direct hit was made on the target. Secondary explosions were observed at the site."

It said the attack was carried out near a village identified as Oktyabrsky.

MOSCOW'S TROOPS REACH KEY UKRAINIAN CITY

Russian troops have reached the Ukrainian city of Toretsk, an anchor of Kyiv's defenses in the eastern Donetsk region, just a week after capturing the town of Vuhledar. Its capture could bring closer the prospect of Moscow securing the entire Donbas region.

The Ukrainian military said that the situation around the city of Toretsk was "unstable".

"Fighting is taking place literally at every entrance," Anastasiia Bobovnikova, spokesperson of the operational tactical group Luhansk, told Ukraine's national broadcaster. "The Russians have entered the eastern outskirts of the city."

Moscow's defense ministry said yesterday that its forces inflicted damage to manpower and equipment near several settlements in the area, including

near Toretsk.

Additionally, Russian military bloggers said Moscow's troops were continuing to advance towards the center of the town.

For Ukraine, Toretsk has been a front-line city for 10 years, as it is close to territories seized by Russian-backed separatists in 2014.

For Moscow, it offers the promise of bringing closer the capture of the whole Donbas region, given that it has been described as the anchor of Kyiv's fortifications there.

RUSSIA CLAIMS TO HAVE CAPTURED TWO UKRAINIAN VILLAGES

Russia has claimed further advances in the eastern Ukrainian region of Donetsk as fears spread that Moscow could capture a key city in the area.

The Russian defense ministry has claimed Moscow's forces have captured the settlements of Zolota Nyva and Zhelanna Pershe.

The communities have an estimated population of a few hundred residents each, but they lie to the north and south of the town of Kurakhove, one of the focal points of military activity on the eastern front.

UKRAINE CAN HOLD KURSK TERRITORY FOR MONTHS, US OFFICIALS SAY

Ukrainian troops can hold their captured territory in Russia's Kursk for several months, senior US officials said, citing their latest intelligence assessment.

Kyiv's hold on the territory hinges on the reliable flow of supplies into the region and Russia's focus on advances in eastern Ukraine, the officials told Bloomberg on the condition of anonymity.

Ukrainian troops are now receiving a steady supply of shells after facing months of dire ammunition shortages, the officials said.

In the past three days, Ukrainian and Russian forces continued assaults in Glushkovsky Raion, west of the main Ukrainian salient in Kursk, but did not make any confirmed advances, the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) said.

VILLAGE IN RUSSIA'S ADYGEYA REGION EVACUATED AFTER DRONE ATTACK

Russian officials evacuated the village of Rodnikovy in southern Adygeya Republic region due to a fire after a drone attack, regional officials said.

Region head Murat Kumpilov said the

attack targeted the suburbs of the city of Maykop and there were no casualties. The Khanskaya military air base is located near the city.

RUSSIA RAMPS UP ASSAULT BEFORE MUDDY AUTUMN CONDITIONS - ISW

The Russian military is looking to make significant advances on the battlefield before muddy ground conditions in the autumn set in, a US-based think-tank has said.

"The Russian military command has likely ordered Russian forces to conduct a relatively high tempo of mechanized assaults in Ukraine to pursue significant tactical advances before muddy ground conditions in fall 2024 constrain mechanized maneuvers," the ISW said.

"Poor weather conditions in fall 2024 and early winter 2024-2025 will likely complicate and constrain both mechanized and infantry maneuvers, but Russian forces may seek to maintain their consistent offensive pressure in eastern Ukraine despite these difficulties.

"A Russian milblogger claimed on October 9 that muddy seasonal conditions have already started in Kursk oblast and are constraining maneuver for wheeled vehicles," it said.

Overview of Political Alliances for Georgia's 2024 Parliamentary Elections

BY TEAM GT

On September 26, the deadline for submitting party lists for Georgia's upcoming parliamentary elections closed, with the Central Election Commission (CEC) announcing that 19 election subjects had submitted their lists. This election cycle introduces a significant change: the prohibition of electoral blocs. Consequently, many parties have opted to unify by presenting joint lists, necessitating the dissolution of their individual identities.

One of the most notable alliances is "It's Time for Coalition for Changes," (Number 4) which brings together several prominent political figures and parties. This coalition includes Nika Melia, the former chairman of the United National Movement, and Nika Gvaramia, the former director of Mtavari TV. Joining them are Elene Khoshtaria's "It's Time" party, the "Republicans," and "Girchi - More Freedom." Leading the list is Nana Malashkhia, known for her role as the "woman with the EU flag" during pro-Western demonstrations in March 2023. Other significant candidates in this coalition include businessman Iva Chkonia and writer Oktai Kazumov.

Another significant platform is "Unity - National Movement," (Number 5) which forms a coalition around the United National Movement. This alliance includes Giorgi Vashadze's "Strategy Aghmashenebeli" and "European Georgia." The head of this list is Tina Bokuchava, and notable candidates include Gigi Tsereteli, former vice-speaker of parliament, and Irakli Khvada-

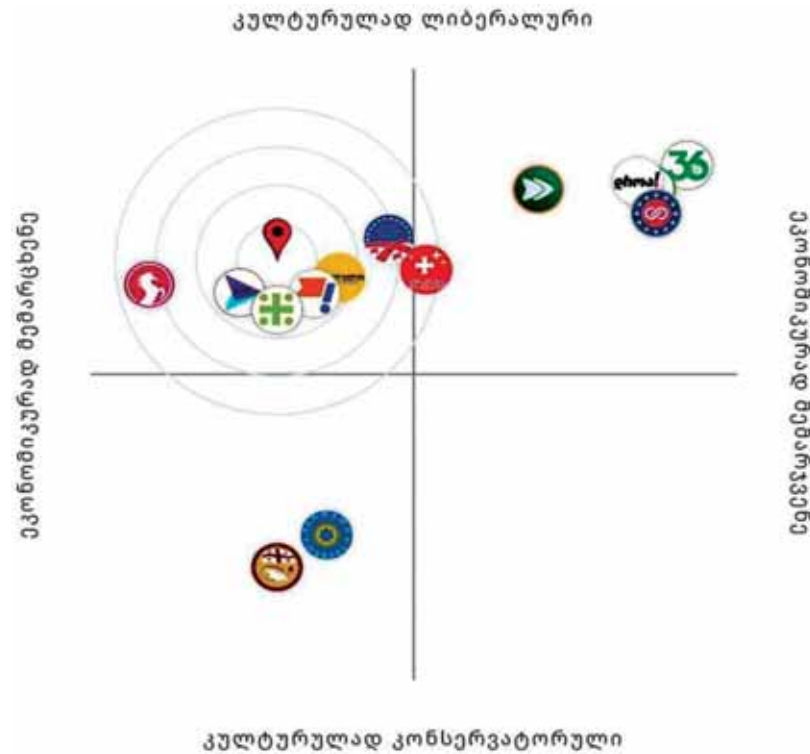
giani, a researcher with expertise in the Soviet past. This coalition emerged from internal party shifts and a desire to regain parliamentary influence.

The "Alliance of Georgian Patriots" (Number 8) has also made waves, by incorporating former members of far-right factions, including individuals with controversial pasts. The top of their list features Zurab Makharadze and Konstantine Morgoshia, both of whom have faced international sanctions due to their involvement in violent actions against journalists. Their inclusion raises questions about the party's direction and its implications for Georgia's political climate.

In a more centrist approach, "Strong Georgia - An Effort for the People, for Freedom!" (Number 9) has formed around the Lelo party, with Mamuka Khazaradze at the helm. Notable candidates include Ana Dolidze, an influential figure in civil rights, and former President Giorgi Margvelashvili, who, while not running for a parliamentary seat, supports the coalition's objectives. This union aims to attract voters disillusioned with traditional party politics.

The "Labor Party of Georgia," (Number 10) founded by Shalva Natelashvili in 1995, is making a comeback. Traditionally known for its leftist stance, the party has faced challenges in recent years, including losing state funding. Natelashvili leads the list, with Giorgi Gugava as the second candidate, as the party seeks to regain its foothold in parliament.

Another newcomer on the ballot is "Gakharia for Georgia," (Number 25) established by former Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia. This party has gained traction since its inception, particularly in the local government elections in 2021,



Source: geocompass.ge

where it secured 9.41% of the votes. Key figures joining this coalition include Teona Akubardia, an independent Member of Parliament, and Dimitri Tskitishvili, a former member of Georgian Dream.

The party "Girchi" (Number 36) employs a unique selection process based on contributions, allowing party members to cast votes proportional to their investments in the party, known as "Jeds." This year's list features politicians like Iago Khvichiya, Sandro Rakviashvili, and historian Giorgi Chauchidze, reflecting the party's innovative approach to candidate

selection.

Lastly, the ruling party, "Georgian Dream - Democratic Georgia," (Number 41) has been a dominant force in Georgian politics since its founding by Bidzina Ivanishvili in 2012. This year, the party's list includes 170 candidates, featuring prominent figures such as Irakli Kobakhidze, the current chairman, and Olympic champions like Lasha Talakhadze and Geno Petriashvili, showcasing the party's strategy to blend political experience with national pride.

In total, the voting numbers for these

parties are as follows:

- Number 3: Party of Unity and Development of Georgia
- Number 4: It's Time for Coalition for Changes
- Number 5: Unity - National Movement
- Number 6: European Democrats
- Number 8: Alliance of Georgian Patriots
- Number 9: Strong Georgia - An Effort for the People, for Freedom!
- Number 10: Labor Party of Georgia
- Number 12: Our United Georgia
- Number 13: Social Democratic Party of Georgia
- Number 16: Change Georgia
- Number 17: Georgia
- Number 20: Free Georgia
- Number 21: Tribune
- Number 23: We
- Number 25: Gakharia for Georgia
- Number 26: Left Alliance
- Number 27: Georgian Unity
- Number 36: Girchi
- Number 41: Georgian Dream - Democratic Georgia

As the election date approaches, voters in Georgia will face a diverse slate of candidates, each representing a distinct vision for the country's future. The electoral landscape is marked by significant alliances and a range of platforms addressing critical issues, such as European integration, economic development, and social reforms. The outcome of these elections could not only reshape the parliamentary makeup, but also influence Georgia's direction in both domestic and foreign policies for years to come. With the need to surpass the 5% threshold, the strategies adopted by these parties will be crucial in securing their presence in the new Parliament.

GEORGIAN HOSPITALITY SERVICES GO THROUGH GLOBAL STANDARDS

ROYAL INN

ONE STEP CLOSER TO PARADISE

AKHALTSIKHE INN

Pre-Election Programs in Georgia - An Overview

BY TEAM GT

As Georgia approaches its parliamentary elections on October 26, the political landscape is heating up, with major parties unveiling their pre-election programs. Each party offers a unique vision for the future of the country, focusing on key areas such as economic growth, social welfare, education, infrastructure, foreign policy, and governance. This article consolidates the essential elements of the main political parties, including Georgian Dream, Strong Georgia, the Coalition for Changes, Unity - National Movement, Girchi, and For Georgia, presenting a thorough analysis of their proposed plans and strategic goals.

GEORGIAN DREAM: ECONOMIC GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

On October 7, the ruling party, Georgian Dream, presented an ambitious pre-election program that was both comprehensive and forward-looking. The presentation, led by Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, lasted over an hour and laid out various strategic goals across multiple sectors, drawing comparisons between the current political landscape and that of 2012, when the party first came to power. Notably absent from the event were the party's honorary chairman, Bidzina Ivanishvili, and chairman Irakli Garibashvili, leading to speculation about their roles as the party seeks to galvanize support in light of ongoing political challenges.

Kobakhidze emphasized the projected growth of Georgia's economy, forecasting that it would reach at least 130 billion GEL by 2028. This economic expansion is anticipated to generate a national budget exceeding 50 billion GEL. The Prime Minister highlighted significant progress in reducing unemployment, claiming it has been halved since 2012. His ambitious goal is to further decrease the unemployment rate to 4% by 2028, which would position Georgia below the European average.

Infrastructure development is a cornerstone of the Georgian Dream's vision. Kobakhidze outlined plans for a major upgrade of the country's road networks, including the opening of a new four-lane highway from Tbilisi to Batumi. Additionally, the development of the Anaklia port is expected to revolutionize trade by enabling it to handle 600,000 containers annually by 2029. In a bid to enhance Georgia's transportation capabilities, a new airport in Vaziani is set to accommodate up to 18 million passengers, further integrating the country into regional and global transportation networks.

The party also aims to invest 3 billion GEL in agriculture over the next four years, a commitment that builds on Ivanishvili's earlier promises to revitalize rural areas. Kobakhidze emphasized that this investment will surpass previous financial commitments to the agricultural sector. In the energy domain, the Georgian Dream envisions achieving self-sufficiency by 2030. Plans include increasing power generation from the current 4,600 MW to over 10,000 MW by 2030, through the construction of 63 hydropower plants, as well as various thermal and wind power facilities.

Education and healthcare are other key areas addressed by the program. The Prime Minister promised to expand educational infrastructure, including the development of Kutaisi International University and a new campus for Tbilisi State University. In healthcare, Kobakhidze committed to constructing a new republican hospital and proposed potential increases in pensions, targeting amounts between 350 to 450 GEL. For social services, particularly for civil servants, the program includes salary increases, with special attention to staff in kindergartens and art schools.

Cultural initiatives received significant attention, with Kobakhidze announcing an allocation of 30 million GEL aimed



Image source: CEC of Georgia

at supporting artists and enhancing funding for sports. A new stadium capable of hosting 70,000 spectators is also planned, designed to accommodate both football and rugby events, with aspirations to host the Champions League by 2028.

On the defense and foreign policy front, Georgian Dream aims to bolster the national military industry while improving social conditions for military and police personnel. Significant investments are earmarked for housing and infrastructure development for soldiers and police officers. Kobakhidze underscored the need to reset relations with the United States and the European Union, while advocating for a pragmatic approach toward Russia, prioritizing peaceful conflict resolution. He expressed confidence that by 2030, Georgia would be well-positioned for EU membership.

"STRONG GEORGIA" PRESENTS "ILIA'S WAY"

"Ilia's Way" features a 9-point strategy to rapidly implement the EU's recommendations, aiming to expedite membership negotiations post-election.

At the core of "Ilia's Way" is a strategy focused on implementing the European Union's recommendations, with the goal of expediting EU membership negotiations immediately following the elections. A vital component of this vision is the "Georgia Protection Act," which seeks to manage the influx of Russian citizens, limit their influence in Georgian society, and prevent foreign nationals from purchasing land. By reinstating visa requirements and strengthening border controls, "Strong Georgia" aims to safeguard the country's sovereignty while moving towards a stable European future.

In addition to these protective measures, "Strong Georgia" is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for its citizens. The coalition plans to raise pensions to 1000 GEL, ensuring that this amount is adjusted annually for inflation. This initiative is aimed at allowing elderly citizens to live with dignity and security. The funding for this increase will come from a realistic, citizen-focused budget that emphasizes economic growth, reducing corruption, and increasing taxation on the gambling industry.

Furthermore, the coalition is committed to creating 200,000 new jobs through major infrastructure projects like Anaklia port, which have faced significant delays in recent years. "Strong Georgia" aims to develop infrastructure that meets European standards, driving economic growth that benefits all Georgians. Additionally, the plan includes providing paid internships for graduates, helping them gain valuable experience and transition smoothly into the workforce.

COALITION FOR CHANGES: COMMITMENT TO REFORM

In a contrasting vision, Zura Japaridze unveiled the "Coalition for Changes" on July 25, focusing on a comprehensive approach centered around four main directions: adherence to the Georgian Charter, rapid economic development, education reform, and regional empowerment. This coalition emphasizes a

commitment to the Georgian Charter, which aligns with the European Commission's nine recommendations aimed at facilitating Georgia's negotiations for EU membership. Japaridze stressed that the coalition is dedicated to making tangible promises and fulfilling them, positioning itself as a leader in this regard.

A cornerstone of the Coalition's program is the ambition to double the country's economy. Japaridze stated that this growth would serve as a foundation for broader changes, particularly concerning budgetary reforms. The coalition aims to create an environment conducive to rapid economic expansion, thereby enhancing the overall quality of life for citizens. Japaridze expressed a desire to modernize Georgia's education system significantly. Central to this initiative is the maximum deregulation of private educational institutions, fostering a competitive environment that encourages quality improvements. While public education will remain, incorporating free-market principles is viewed as a means to elevate educational standards without heavy-handed government intervention.

The coalition emphasizes the importance of empowering local regions, advocating for decentralized governance. Japaridze argued that decision-making should not be confined to the central government but should instead empower local leaders and communities. This approach aims to incentivize market dynamics and promote self-governance, enabling regions to take charge of their own development. As the Coalition for Changes gears up for the electoral campaign, Japaridze's presentation outlines a vision for a more democratic, prosperous, and self-sufficient Georgia, aiming to resonate strongly with voters seeking meaningful change.

UNITY - NATIONAL MOVEMENT: EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE

The Unity - National Movement has outlined its priorities with a strong commitment to European integration, advocating for an EU passport and securing €14 billion in European support for national reconstruction. The program promises visa-free travel to the USA and the establishment of an independent anti-corruption service under EU supervision. Central to their economic agenda is the aim for an average salary of 3,500 GEL and a minimum salary of 1,500 GEL, along with a basic allowance of 300 GEL for rural residents and displaced persons. They also propose guaranteed retirement savings for immigrants, supported by the Mikheil Saakashvili Foundation, which intends to invest €1 billion to facilitate their return.

A significant focus of the program is the protection of pensioners. The coalition plans to write off pension loans by December 1, 2024, and promises a pension of 1,000 GEL for pensioners, disabled individuals, and veterans. Additionally, subsidies for medicines are proposed to assist this vulnerable population. To support families, the coalition's fourth priority includes monthly financial support for newborns, quality kindergarten

provisions, and free school meals for all children. They aim to establish a minimum salary of 2,000 GEL for teachers, alongside housing initiatives for outstanding educators and subsidized rent for students. The coalition also pledges to combat the drug mafia, focusing on resocialization and care for users.

Furthermore, the Unity - National Movement seeks to eliminate monopolies across various sectors and reduce bank interest rates by half. They plan to halve the costs and existing fines for state administrative services, promote Georgian production, and establish enterprises in all regions, backed by a €1 billion EU subsidy for agriculture. Through these priorities, the Unity - National Movement presents a comprehensive vision aimed at securing Georgia's European future, enhancing economic stability, protecting vulnerable populations, and fostering family well-being, striving to resonate with voters eager for substantial change.

GIRCHI: A CALL FOR RADICAL REFORMS

The Girchi party presents a radically different approach, aiming to establish a rich and fair society through significant reforms in the economy, judicial system, and political structure. Their program includes ambitious proposals designed to empower citizens and promote equity. Girchi advocates for the equal and free distribution of state-owned property, emphasizing that 90% of Georgia's resources are currently state-owned and largely underutilized. Their plan includes a detailed project called "Return of Land, Water and Country," which aims to ensure that all citizens can benefit from these resources.

To combat poverty, Girchi proposes a Universal Basic Income (UBI) system that would provide every citizen with a monthly payment of around 500 GEL, aiming to eradicate extreme poverty. In response to inflation, Girchi suggests a multi-currency regime, allowing citizens to transact in multiple currencies, providing an alternative to the national currency if it devalues. They also call for the return of pension fund money to citizens, abolishing the pension contribution system which it perceives as a fraudulent scheme.

Tax reduction is another key priority for Girchi, focusing on eliminating burdensome taxes for the poor and introducing a fair tax system to foster economic growth. They propose a one-time distribution of National Bank reserves amounting to \$1,200 per citizen, aimed at alleviating financial strain. The party emphasizes individual property rights, proposing that landowners should have complete ownership of their land, including the airspace above and the minerals below. This would remove existing restrictions on property use and empower citizens to manage their assets as they see fit.

On the judicial front, Girchi proposes significant reforms, including a large-scale amnesty to address injustices in the current penal system, which they believe is outdated and unfair. They advocate for electing judges and juries

to ensure a more trustworthy judicial process, and for the revision of the Criminal Code to decriminalize actions without direct victims. To enhance accountability, they suggest that local police chiefs be elected by their communities, fostering a law enforcement system that is responsive to the public.

The Girchi program also emphasizes educational autonomy, calling for the abolition of the Common National Curriculum. They believe that this would allow schools to develop their own educational approaches, thus promoting diversity and better aligning education with community needs. Their defense policy emphasizes a transition to a volunteer-based military, and advocates for a stronger alignment with NATO.

FOR GEORGIA: STABILITY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

The For Georgia party, led by former Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia, presents a program aimed at achieving a future marked by "real peace, dignity, and prosperity." Gakharia's vision emphasizes significant social welfare initiatives, proposing the establishment of a minimum salary of 950 GEL and substantial support for unemployed individuals. To improve employment prospects, the party aims to allocate 300 million GEL annually for employment support programs, with a focus on women and youth.

Gakharia's party places a strong emphasis on education reform. Their program seeks to expand vocational training opportunities and enhance infrastructure for regional development, ensuring that all villages have access to essential services like gas, drinking water, and fast internet by 2028. They aim to introduce free meals for all schoolchildren and improve quality in early childhood education through substantial investment.

Economic stability is another critical area of focus for For Georgia. The program emphasizes controlling inflation and providing long-term, low-interest financing to entrepreneurs, thereby fostering an environment conducive to business growth. To ensure effective governance, Gakharia's strategy includes the establishment of an independent anti-corruption agency, which is viewed as essential for restoring public trust in government institutions. This agency will be responsible for monitoring corruption and holding accountable those who exploit public resources for personal gain.

The program also highlights the need for a fair amnesty process, along with stronger measures against organized crime, as a means of promoting a secure and stable society. On foreign policy, Gakharia emphasizes the importance of addressing issues of territorial integrity and advocates for EU membership as a strategic goal that would strengthen Georgia's position in negotiations with Russia.

CONCLUSION: A DIVERSE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

As the elections approach, Georgia finds itself at a crossroads, with each political party offering distinct proposals and visions for the future. The stakes are high, and the decisions made at the ballot box will have lasting implications for the country's political, economic, and social landscape. From the ambitious infrastructure plans and economic forecasts of Georgian Dream to the grassroots empowerment strategies of Girchi, each party's program reflects a unique perspective on how to navigate the challenges ahead.

The Coalition for Changes, Unity - National Movement, and For Georgia also contribute vital ideas, focusing on European integration, social welfare, education reform, and economic stability. Voters will have a wide array of proposals to consider, each promising a different path forward for Georgia, ultimately shaping the nation's future for years to come. As citizens prepare to cast their votes, the discourse surrounding these programs will undoubtedly play a critical role in determining the next chapter in Georgia's ongoing journey toward prosperity and democratic governance.

Serhii Kuzan: On Vuhledar, Weapons Supplies and Georgian Dream's "Russian" Campaign

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE

Political and military expert Serhii Kuzan is Chairman of Ukrainian Security and Cooperation Center (USCC), having held the post of advisor to the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine (2022-2023), and advisor to the Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine (2014). Radio Free Europe/RL's Georgian Service sat down with him to talk through hopes for Ukraine as winter approaches and hopes for Georgia as the elections loom. We started our discussion with the loss of Vuhledar.

VUHLEDAR HAS FALLEN AFTER MORE THAN TWO YEARS. WHAT IMPACT IS THAT GOING TO HAVE?

We need to understand that Vuhledar and its surroundings were very important for the Russians, but not so important for Ukraine. Vuhledar was a focal point of our interference in their logistics which connects the eastern regions of the Donetsk with the southern region. In the south, the railway system was fairly poor, quite undeveloped. The railways are the backbone of Russian logistics. That is, where Western logistics is motor transport, Russian logistics relies on railways. In the east, that is Donetsk, Luhansk and so on, the railway network is well developed. In the south, the Russians are creating new infrastructure. They really needed a railway from Donetsk to Volnovakha and on to Mariupol, as they could not use the existing railway. And now that they have taken Vuhledar, they will fine-tune and develop infrastructure that runs along the Sea of Azov, making it much easier for them to transfer their forces and equipment from the eastern front not just to the south, but even to Crimea. And in doing so they will not be in the range of our artillery. They have secured themselves.

As for Ukraine, with the loss of Vuhledar, we have removed ourselves from an encroachment; it was quite disadvantageous for us to stretch our logistics the way we were so as to keep control there. It was at a dominant height, which gave us a tactical advantage, but all around there are only plains, so the flanks caused us defense issues. Now, we're levelling the front, we're closing this distance and we're pulling closer to our main fortifications to the west. It is more favorable and convenient for us to keep this smaller front line.

AND YET, FOR MONTHS, YOU FIERCELY DEFENDED VUHLEDAR. WHY DIDN'T YOU RETREAT SOONER, IF IT WAS ADVANTAGEOUS TO DO SO?

The same question can be referred to Avdiivka. Avdiivka was surrounded on three sides for over a year, which is almost a complete encirclement. But we were able to hold this dominant height while we had sufficient ammunition; we were able to control the adjacent territory, to control not only the city itself, but also the surrounding area, and to fire on Russian logistics lines, the railway and highways. But we developed problems with ammunition, when the Senate spent seven months trying to agree on the aid package for Ukraine. We had to withdraw from Avdiivka. The situation with Vuhledar is similar. It had already ceased to exist, in principle, as a city with urban infrastructure last year, that is, it had been completely re-equipped as a fortress. And as long as Vuhledar fulfilled its role as a defensive outpost, as long as it was possible to destroy enemy forces from this height, and as long as the fortifications allowed us to defend, that was how long Vuhledar could function. In the ratio of Russian and Ukrainian losses, it was high enough to make a decision to continue defending it, until that defense became untenable.

DOES THE AVDIIVKA PARALLEL EXTEND FURTHER, IN THAT, HAD THE WEST DELIVERED WHAT YOU WERE ASKING IN TERMS OF MILITARY AID, AND IN TIME, THEN VUHLEDAR TOO MIGHT NOT HAVE FALLEN?

Indeed. Only 20% to 30% of our requests are being satisfied by our Western partners. We have serious problems with ammunition, with equipment, with weapons. We admit we have shortages compared to the Russians, that we do not have parity with them on any indicator. That's our problem. And it would seem that even though they have largely emptied their artillery depots, still they outnumber us 6-8 times just in terms of intensity of fire. So yes, this is a serious problem. And, unfortunately, it is still far from being solved.



Serhii Kuzan. Source: uscc

We can somehow deal with their artillery, and go toe to toe; we destroy their artillery installations, we destroy their armored vehicles, their tanks, but we really have problems against aviation. We can't do anything about it. And if you look at the Russian footage of the bombardment of Vuhledar, they dropped large aviation bombs from the south, from the east, and they literally destroyed our positions. Of course, it is a big problem to hold positions in such conditions, when every day they bombard us with air raids, so that we can't even raise our heads.

RUSSIA CONTINUES TO USE ITS MEAT GRINDER TACTICS. IF NEITHER SIDE IS READY TO BACK DOWN, WHAT IS MORE LIKELY TO HAPPEN FIRST- THAT RUSSIA WILL RUN OUT OF SOLDIERS, OR THAT UKRAINE WILL RUN OUT OF CITIES?

Well, if we look at the figures, we see that the area occupied by the Russians in the summer offensive campaign is smaller in area than the area we occupied as a result of the Kursk operation.

TO WHAT EXTENT CAN THIS PARALLEL BE APPLIED, BECAUSE UNLIKE UKRAINIAN CITIES, IN KURSK NOBODY ACTUALLY DEFENDED RUSSIAN TERRITORY.

That's because they have no reserves, and if we look at their losses, we see that last month they lost 40,000 men. That means we destroyed or took out of the battle over a thousand of their fighters a day. 1300-1400 are the typical numbers. So at that rate, of course, any army would be depleted.

Add to that the fact the Russians did not fulfil any of the objectives they set out for their summer offensive. In the spring, we talked about those incredible Russian reserves, how we expected those accumulated forces to charge us and overwhelm us and break through in summer. After Avdiivka, they planned to take Pokrovsk and head in the direction of Zaporizhzhya and Dnipro, to reach the administrative borders of the Donetsk region. They also planned to take Chasiv-Yar, to approach and decimate the urban agglomeration of Sloviansk, Kramatorsk, Kostyantynivka and Druzhkivka. If we look even higher up, to the north, they planned to go to the left bank of the Oskil River and take Kupiansk.

None of those tasks were fulfilled during the summer offensive campaign. None at all. They planned to take Chasiv-Yar at the beginning of summer, back in June. But they did not take it; they couldn't reach the left bank of the Oskil and were unable to even approach Kupyansk. We expected fighting on the outskirts of Kupyansk, but they couldn't get there. They haven't even taken the entire Luhansk region. They have not approached Pokrovsk. They did not take Kurakhov in the south.

We see that their reserves are being depleted, and in order to implement this offensive campaign, if the same intensity of fighting is to be maintained, well, of course, it also depends on our reserves, but the Russians will have to mobilize an additional number of people.

WESTERN MEDIA SAYS THERE ARE BIG PROBLEMS WITH THE UKRAINIAN RESERVES - THAT THOSE MOTIVATED TO DEFEND THEIR HOMETOWN ARE ALREADY AT THE FRONT, AND THE REST ARE BEING PUSHED THROUGH BY FORCE.

This is a standard problem for a war of this scale and intensity. In general, we need to realize that

the slightest doubt: we will continue, and we will definitely have enough men.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF GEORGIAN DREAM'S LATEST ELECTION CAMPAIGN POSTERS COMPARING UKRAINE AND GEORGIA, SEEING THEM CLAIMING THAT ONLY THEY CAN OFFER GEORGIA PEACE?

It's manipulation and Russian narratives, and the fact that the ruling party applies Russian narratives is deeply alarming. We've seen similar narratives here in Ukraine since 2016. We had our own rich guy, our own "agent of Russian interests," Viktor Medvedchuk, who also talked about how we need peace at any cost. And they attempted to plant these seeds into the body of Ukraine, in the occupied regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, under the indirect control of Moscow, just so that there would be no war. But any such speculation is all in the interest of Russia. Russia wants to undermine the statehood of its neighbors, as it undermines it in Moldova with Transnistria, as it undermines it in Ukraine with the help of Donetsk and Luhansk. And how it is now trying to undermine statehood in Georgia by offering the occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as bait. This is what weakens the state, because it gives Russia leverage.

I am sure that in Georgia they will follow the same scenario as in Ukraine: they will offer to return Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but only on the terms of some confederation and limitation of sovereignty of the state and so on- typical Russian conditions, typical tricks of the KGB. And those who carry these interests out, consciously or unconsciously, are carrying out the will of Moscow. Medvedchuk did not end well. All Russian agents will end up like Medvedchuk, or even worse.

We are sure, absolutely sure, that you cannot defeat the Russians only here in Donbas; they must be kicked out of Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia too. Both Georgia and Moldova must have full sovereignty. Only then can we talk about the security of our region as a whole.

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Joint Project by Mastercard, USAID, and UNA Georgia Aims to Grow Financial Education Countrywide



USAID | unag | mastercard

BY ANA DUMBADZE

Mastercard, a global leader in digital payments, is renowned for its commitment to empowering individuals and communities through valuable initiatives. One of its key focuses is enhancing financial education. In February 2024, Mastercard launched its Financial Education Project in Georgia, specifically targeting regions with ethnic and religious minorities. The project has been prospering for eight months

now, making a significant impact in the community.

Mastercard is dedicated to fostering economic inclusion and prosperity among Georgia's ethnic and religious minorities, and this transformative initiative aims to raise the level of financial literacy and empower micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and individuals, students and graduates, ensuring them access to essential resources. The Financial Education Project, implemented within the USAID 'Unity Through Diversity' program, by the United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG), with the financial support of the US International Development, has

become a transformative force in empowering Georgia's ethnic and religious minority communities.

Key activities include the introduction of a basic financial education module for schoolchildren, students and representatives of small and medium-sized businesses, the creation of a financial literacy department in local libraries, the translation of an explanatory dictionary of financial terms into Azerbaijani and Armenian languages, and the strengthening of basic business management skills.

Since February 2024, the project has developed educational modules, public lectures, interactive seminars, and online resources, along with banking products. It has already attracted participants from regions including Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti, and mountainous Adjara.

"We are proud that our financial education project has become synonymous with positive influence in Georgia," says Davit Zgudadze, Regional Director of Mastercard in Georgia and Armenia. "Over the past eight months, we've seen firsthand how financial education empowers both individuals and businesses, especially in regions populated by ethnic and religious minorities. This initiative is in line with our broader mission to promote financial inclusion and economic growth in the country. We believe that if we give people the necessary tools and resources to make informed financial decisions, we will not only empower them at the individual level, but also contribute to the overall well-being of the country."

Mastercard collaborates with key educational, business, and financial organizations in Georgia, including Liberty,

the National Bank of Georgia, the National Library of the Parliament of Georgia, Women for Tomorrow, Society and Banks, and educational platforms like "Orjer Ori" and "22 Gradusi." Additionally, it partners with prominent media representatives at both national and local levels.

Mastercard's financial education project will continue until the end of the year.

*The publication was prepared within the program 'USAID Unity Through Diversity,' implemented by the UNA Georgia with the financial support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The views and opinions expressed in the publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the USAID and UNA Georgia.



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Galt & Taggart Reports on Georgia's 2024 Tourism Revenue



BY MARIAM RAZMADZE

Galt & Taggart shared its report on Georgian tourism revenues between January and September of 2024, with the country having reached USD 3.6 billion, representing an 11.3% increase compared to last year. The month of September separately grossed USD 470 million, highlighting the monetary increase in Georgian tourism.

The investment institution projects that tourism earnings will rise to USD 4.4 billion by the end of this year, measured against the entirety of 2023, which amounted to USD 4.1 billion. In the meantime, the government of Georgia forecasts that tourism revenues will conclude with USD 3.4 billion in 2024, illustrating strong financial recovery and gradual growth of the sector.

Galt & Taggart's account underscores the prospects of Georgian tourism and its significance in the country's overall economy.

Huge Israeli Company to Implement Large-Scale Plan in Georgia

Continued on page 1

A preparatory group has already been formed, which includes Bikurei Sadeh, Neumann Group and Agro G.I.

Gela Samkharauli, chairman of the Parliamentary Agrarian Affairs Committee, and Givi Mikanadze, head of the friendship group with the Israeli Knesset, Georgian entrepreneurs and farmers will be supported as much as possible so that their products meet the requirements of the Israeli market.

The visit to the Parliament of Georgia was preceded by a working meeting attended by the Israeli Knesset Friendship Group with Georgia, the leaders of the Knesset Economic Group, the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia and the Georgia Parliament Friendship Group with Israel.

At the meetings held in parliament, the head of the Israel-Georgia Chamber of Business, Itsik Moshe, said that the import to Israel from Turkey was more than 10 billion. And after the suspension of imports from Turkey, new markets are being sought. It should be noted that 225,000 tons of fruits and vegetables entered Israel in the last year, and Jordan alone accounts for 20% of that.

Now, through joint work, it is possible for Georgia to partially replace the export from Turkey to Israel. This issue will be one of the main topics at the business forum planned in Tbilisi this December, organized by the Israel-Georgia Chamber of Business and Israeli House.



Ilan Sheva, director and founder of Bikurei Sadeh



'Your Desires Inspire Our Vision': Zion's Ambitious Vision for Residential Living in Tbilisi

BY MARIAM RAZMADZE

Zion, a Georgian construction company, has made an impressive entrance into the real estate market with its ambitious and intense declaration: "Your desires inspire our vision." Founded in 2022, the firm is operated by experienced professionals aiming to alter perceptions of residential spaces in Georgia. The idea behind 'Zion' was born three years ago, when the demands of

the Georgian market were meticulously studied, allowing the team to understand what mistakes to avoid. This blend of domestic and international experience brought 'Zion Orangeri' to life, a company striving for fresh approaches in the contemporary real estate scene.

The name 'Zion,' meaning a sacred mountain, symbolizes the peak point and absolute height one can reach, reflecting the brand's unwavering commitment to plans that strive for excellence in the industry. Located in the peaceful and diplomatic district of Krtsanisi, Zion Orangeri offers a blend of accessibility

and tranquility, situated close to the city center while maintaining a peaceful atmosphere away from the capital's usual chaos.

The development includes greenery, a fitness center, a swimming pool, a spa, and underground parking, allowing residents to enjoy various recreational activities without leaving their home environment. The architecture, designed by DEPHANI, artfully blends Old Tbilisian elements with modern flair. The interior, finessed by prominent Italian designer Matteo Nunziati, whose portfolio includes Trump Towers Pune and

Bosco Verticale, is sophisticated, yet not overwhelming, featuring customized design elements such as Georgian-themed carpets made specifically for Zion Orangeri.

Zion's leadership is aware of the skepticism many potential buyers have regarding the promises made by real estate developers. As a representative of the company put it, "People have doubts regarding the promises of real estate developers. This was not only a challenge, but also our opportunity to prove otherwise, to actually bring our vision to reality. Our mission is to create high-

quality living in Georgia." With this mission, Zion is determined to redefine the landscape of residential living in Tbilisi, offering a fresh and creative approach to contemporary real estate.



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GGRC Hosts 5th International Conference on Infertility 35+

The Georgian-German Reproductive Center (GGRC), in collaboration with Georgian Associations of Reproductive Endocrinologists, Obstetricians, and Urologists, facilitated the 5th International Scientific-Practical Conference on the theme of 'Infertility 35+'. Supported by the Ministry of Labor, Health, and Social Defense of Georgia, the event welcomed internationally recognized experts from the USA, Canada, Israel, Italy, and many other countries.

Primary topics included recent advancements in assisted reproductive technologies; the importance of genetic studies, and fertility preservation for oncology patients. Esteemed guests, Edgar Mocanu, President of the International Federation of Fertility, and Professor Andrea R. Genazzani from the International Academy of Human Reproduction, were engaged in discussions on exceptional developments in the field.

A highlight of the conference was the collaboration among fertility experts from Georgia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and Italy, emphasizing the necessity of international cooperation in addressing infertility issues, particularly in oncology



patients. Attendees learned about contemporary breakthroughs in genetic disease diagnosis and embryo screening.

Notably, scientific papers presented during the event will be published in 'Medical Times', a GGRC-operated peer-reviewed journal that sheds light on medical research, with a digital edition launching for the first time.

Participation for Georgian doctors and scientists was highly encouraged, with attendance underscoring the institution's commitment to promoting reproductive medicine in the country.

In line with the conference's achievements, GGRC is also making changes in its leadership. The establishment has newly appointed Dr. Nato Shamugia, a gynecologist and reproductive professional with over 25 years of experience, as the Deputy Director for Clinical Division. A member of ESHRE, Shamugia has published over 40 scientific papers and co-authored the 'Standard of Reproductive Technologies and Artificial Fertilization: Clinical Recommendations and Treatment Protocol'. This addition will further enhance GGRC's dedication to excellence in reproductive healthcare.

SOCIETY

Seeing the Impact of Climate Change through Georgian Youth – Rezi Dgebuadze



Rezi Dgebuadze talking at the 'Youth Action for a Safer Tomorrow' event. Photo by Gela Bedianashvili/UNDP

BY SHELBI R. ANKIEWICZ

Climate change is on the radar for many Georgian youths, but there is always an opportunity to further educate those who don't know about it, says Climate Ambassador Rezi Dgebuadze.

Dgebuadze is an 18-year-old who is involved in various initiatives in Georgia to combat climate change. During the event 'Youth Action for a Safer Tomorrow,' held on October 3 by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Environmental Information and Education Center of Georgia's Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, young people from across Georgia came together to talk about the initiatives they are participating in to push their country toward a more climate-focused future.

The event saw discussions held and the screening of a short film documentary, 'Thank You for This World,' created by Rezi Dgebuadze and Karen Cirillo, the digital communications specialist at the UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub. The documentary portrays the hopes and

concerns youth have with the future, once the world has been further affected by climate change.

GEORGIA TODAY talked with Dgebuadze about his climate change initiatives and his and Cirillo's documentary.

WHEN WERE YOU FIRST EXPOSED TO THE PROBLEM OF CLIMATE CHANGE?

When I first heard about it, I was 15. They taught us something at school, but not very much. They didn't emphasize how big of a problem it was and how shared the problem was globally. At the time, I was also introduced to non-formal education, which played a huge role in my learning about the climate change problem. The courses, projects, and activities, for example, at the Environmental Information and Education Center, where I have a long history, are where I was introduced to the basics of environmental protection and climate change.

WHAT'S YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH THE 'YOUTH CLIMATE AMBASSADORS' SUMMER CAMP?

I participated in it for the first time in 2022. It's an annual green camp that's held in collaboration with UNDP Geor-

gia and the Environmental Information and Education Center. The thing about climate change is it's really sustainable. The camp teaches youth, school students, from all over the country, how to write and develop a project and then launch it. So, after ten days of green camp, these groups that are formed continue advocating and raising awareness about climate change, and that's a spectacular thing. I don't remember anything at this level of sustainability happening in Georgia before.

It's up to the individual groups as to how long their project will last, but most choose one year. Also, most of the information students learn during green camps is about climate change, which they take and teach to other students in their high schools. Most projects are about raising awareness, advocacy, and making campaigns for eco-friendly things.

TELL US ABOUT THE REGIONAL NETWORK 'GENERATION NEXUS.'

It's a youth network in the region, including Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the South Caucasus. It's not a big network in terms of quantity; there are only two coordinators from Georgia. The network is moderated by the UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub, and our main goal is to empower youth from this region. We have done some projects, like photography, and we also take part in regional conferences because youth need to be heard. Generation Nexus includes many youth activists, who are not only focused on climate change, but also on human rights, health care, energy, and other sectors.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO MAKE A DOCUMENTARY?

Video is the most powerful tool to attract and engage people on social media. Since we needed to incorporate social media into our work with Generation Nexus, we thought about doing a documentary. But we didn't want a classical documen-

tary that incorporated information about climate change and numbers and stuff like this – that has been done a million times. I started thinking about how to create a film that incorporated emotions and feelings. We wanted to show emotions and portray how the youth see this global problem and engage with it. Everyone knows that people from high schools and universities are not yet professionals, but they understand this problem well.

The film finishes with hope. We took inspiration from the poem 'Thanks' written by American Poet W.S. Merwin. The poem is really sad and pessimistic about things mankind has done to the climate, but we took the positive side of it.

HOW CAN OTHER YOUTH BE EMPOWERED, AND WHERE CAN THEY START ON THEIR PATH TO HELPING GEORGIA BECOME MORE CLIMATE-FOCUSED?

That was one of the goals we wanted to achieve with this short film. It's good that this amount of youth is empowered and wants to do something, but how can we engage more in this good work? Emotions are the thing to concentrate on when working with youth, because if you don't connect with them emotionally and don't tell them something touching, it's usually hard to engage them. After that, you can go on with raising awareness and education and giving them the basics. I'm talking from my own experience, because when I found out about it, I wanted to learn about it more. It's like a chain reaction. You attend one course, and you want to attend more and more to get as much information as possible.

In Georgia, we have a lot of youth who see this problem, and the nice thing is, it doesn't matter what profession someone chooses or what interests or hobbies they have, they all see this as a big deal and want to work on it. It's hard to change your lifestyle, it's a problem we often stumble upon but that's why we work to

make things greener.

WHAT ARE ONGOING PROJECTS BY YOUTH IN GEORGIA TO ENGAGE COMMUNITIES IN THIS TOPIC?

"People might expect that it's all the same – advocacy and raising awareness – but all the groups take different paths to how they do this. One group, their project was really special: they incorporated Roblox, the game, into the engagement of youth. They assimilated climate-driven disasters, droughts, heavy rains, etc., into a game and made it public. It's a really creative way of using digital tools. My group and youth organization made animations for campaigns, including those for the new year against fire-works.

"Most of the youth climate ambassadors, and other volunteers of the Environmental Information and Education Center, have the right modules, tools, presentations, and research, from UNDP and the Ministry of Environment and Agriculture to educate youth. They are ambassadors in their high schools and municipalities. This engagement continues to grow and grow. It's really nice to see the youth organizations formed from the green camps - there are so many in different municipalities and all this good work is being done across the country."

Dgebuadze gave special thanks to Karen Cirillo because "creative collaboration is what this short film brought to us and the audience," he noted.

The 'Youth Action for a Safer Tomorrow' was supported by the Green Climate Fund, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The UNDP has a climate program in Georgia, supported by the Green Climate Fund and the governments of Georgia, Sweden, and Switzerland, that is a seven-year initiative aimed at implementing disaster risk management systems across the country.

A Chilling UNO Forecast about Georgia

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

Isn't it an absolute delight that our little darling, called Sakartvelo, happens to be a democracy, one of the many on our beautiful planet? Thanks to this fortunate reality, we have learned how to replace our governments by means of a peaceful transition of power. And we have achieved

this unique success notwithstanding the fact that only 30-odd years have passed since we were one of those unfortunate, poor, socialist nations, squeezed within the powerful Soviet grip.

We have since created a free, open society, the members of which voluntarily and diligently go to their respective polling stations to give their valuable and well-protected votes for liberty, equality, justice and prosperity. On top of all that, our politicians and media

are so amazingly liberated that their scandalously scurrilous vocabulary, habitually directed towards each other like poisoned weapons, has no limits or censorial restrictions. Our speech is freer than it has ever been before: go ahead and talk as much as you want, and say anything your tongue can withstand.

In addition to all those God-and-modernity-given pleasures, there is peace in the sky over our fortunate heads; the economy is doing OK, although the prices seem to be skyrocketing; gas tanks can be filled on a regular basis, though the fuel is not very cheap; people are dressed well; restaurants are packed full; and there is no deficit of smiles around.

All this firmly in place, the United Nations Organization, out of the blue, has promulgated a scary document about our universally and perpetually felicitous Georgia, claiming that, in 40 years, Georgia's population will be half what it is now. As free people, we have every right not to believe this creepy, petrifying prognosis of a most prestigious international body of our time, but why would our skepticism make any reasonable sense here? At this very moment, there are as few as only 3,807,583 people living in this country, and the ominous forecast says we will be half that in less than a century.

And I wonder, if this is true, then why



Source: bpn

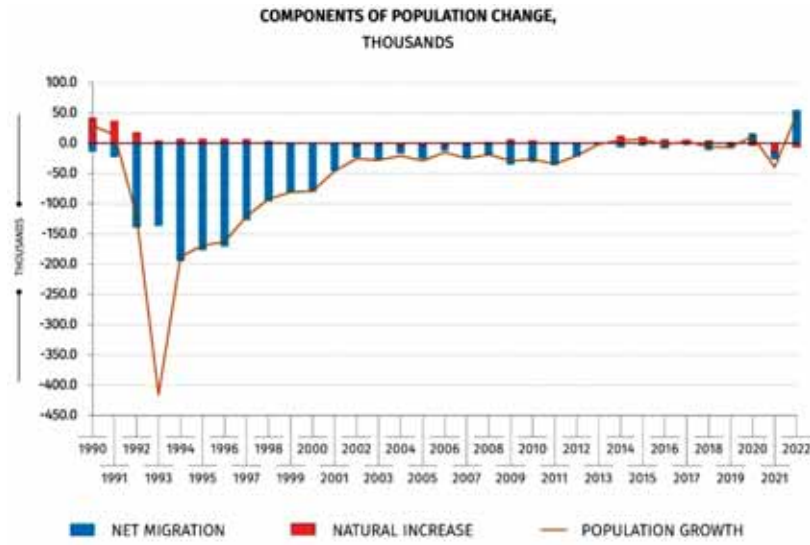
are we killing ourselves so desperately in expectation of the outcome of the upcoming parliamentary elections? Why are we so eager to find our own niche among the peoples of the world, fighting some of them and cooperating with others? What makes us so keen on becoming the members of this or the other political, military or economic bloc? Why are we imposing on our poor selves so many troubles we can't deal with and burdens we can't carry?

If we are going to be halved in less than 50 years and disappear from the surface of the Earth as soon as only twice that long, this nation needs to reorganize itself forthwith, focusing in the first place on its physical survival, rather than on those silly political competitions and ceremonial pageanties we have gotten used to in the last hundred adventurous years: The only thing that matters seriously under the impression of that scary prognosis is our corporeal survival. Anything else is second-rate. The destination of our national efforts has to be altered in favor of the idea that in 200 hundred

years from now, the Kartveli species will still be around and the language called Kartuli still spoken.

The solution is implacably healthy, though not so easy to actually bring about: first, all of us currently alive and kicking want to live and enjoy life, for which we have to keep doing what we are doing right now – working, politicking, voting, entertaining, eating, drinking, reading, watching and travelling, doing all this with a genuine sense of happiness; secondly, we must stop stupidly shunning away from having an ample number of progeny so as to prolong the life of the nation; and thirdly, we need a stronger understanding of the idea of national priorities, which could easily be the key to our survival.

Meanwhile, as always, man supposes and God disposes – we are drastically dwindling away, to someday, in the tragically near future, leave the world orphaned, without the presence on Planet Earth of our stunningly attractive Georgian species. Wouldn't that be awful? Help! Help!



Source: Geostat

The New Politics of "We": Reclaiming Community in the Era of Platform Capitalism



Photo by the author

BY IVAN NECHAEV

In today's hyper-commodified landscape, words like "community," "sharing," and "solidarity" have been co-opted, becoming buzzwords in the lexicon of platform capitalism. Social media companies thrive on the idea of community while dismantling its very essence through commodification and monetization. This is the crisis to which An Atlas of Commoning: Places of Collective Production responds. The exhibition, hosted at the TBC Concept Flagship in collaboration with the Tbilisi Architecture Biennial, seeks to reclaim the language and practices of community, urging viewers to reconsider what "we" really means.

At its core, the exhibition critiques the loss of community ideals by focusing on commoning—the dynamic and often messy process of building and maintaining shared spaces and resources. This practice stands in direct opposition to the privatization and individualism ram-

paint in contemporary urbanization. It is a call for the revival of collective governance and the rediscovery of public life, particularly relevant in a city like Tbilisi, where rapid urbanization has reshaped both physical and social landscapes.

FROM THE GLOBAL TO THE LOCAL: THE ATLAS AS A LIVING ARCHIVE

One of the exhibition's central features is its ever-evolving Atlas of Commoning. First conceived by ARCH+ and Carnegie Mellon University, the Atlas is an open archive of global grassroots projects that challenge the privatization of urban spaces. As the exhibition moves between cities, local case studies are added, keeping the Atlas in constant flux.

In Tbilisi, students from the Free University of Tbilisi, under the guidance of CMU faculty, contributed local research, ensuring that the Atlas reflects the city's unique struggles and solutions. The result is not merely a collection of case studies, but a living, breathing document—a global commons of ideas and practices that grow with every iteration

of the exhibition.

For Tbilisi, the Atlas connects with the city's fraught history of urban development. The privatization boom that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union led to the erosion of public spaces and the rise of stark economic inequality. But the exhibition shows how local activists and community groups are now pushing back, reclaiming space and reinventing what it means to live together in the modern city.

REIMAGINING PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION: NEW FORMS OF SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

A particularly striking aspect of the exhibition is its focus on merging production and reproduction—terms that have long been segregated, both socially and spatially. Historically, labor has been relegated to economic production, while reproduction—childcare, household work, and caregiving—has been considered secondary. This separation has not only reinforced gender hierarchies, but also limited the potential for new, more inclusive forms of collective living.

The exhibition highlights initiatives that challenge these divisions. One such project, the Granby Workshop in Liverpool, illustrates how residents can reclaim control over their neighborhood's future. Collaborating with the architecture collective Assemble, the Granby community transformed their urban environment by creating a social enterprise that produces ceramics from locally sourced waste. The workshop blurs the lines between production and reproduction, offering a model of communal life that benefits everyone involved.

For Georgian viewers, this theme of reclaiming public and private spaces holds particular resonance. The rapid urbanization that swept through Tbilisi after the 1990s has pushed many communal activities—traditionally integrated into public life—out of shared spaces. By presenting global and local case studies, An Atlas of Commoning invites

visitors to imagine how similar efforts might work in their own neighborhoods.

WHO OWNS THE CITY? THE BATTLE OVER SPACE, OWNERSHIP, AND ACCESS

At the heart of many of these commoning initiatives is a fundamental question: Who owns the city? As urban environments across the globe become commodified, with land and housing increasingly out of reach for the many, this question is more pressing than ever. An Atlas of Commoning directly engages with this issue, presenting examples of alternative ownership models that challenge the capitalist system's grip on urban space.

One especially playful exhibit, the Free Universal Construction Kit by Golan Levin and Shawn Sims, exemplifies this spirit of resistance. The kit consists of 3D-printed adaptors that allow different construction toys, such as Lego and Duplo, to be used together. By enabling the combination of these toys, which are normally segregated by proprietary systems, the kit symbolically questions the ownership of creativity and intellectual property.

In Tbilisi, the privatization of urban spaces and rapid gentrification have created fierce debates over who controls the city. The exhibition's exploration of these issues has immediate relevance, urging citizens to think critically about how urban land can be shared and governed more equitably. As grassroots movements continue to emerge in Tbilisi—like those preserving the historical neighborhoods of Sololaki and Abanotubani—the lessons from this exhibition offer vital insight into alternative ways of organizing urban life.

BEYOND BORDERS: COMMONING AS A FORM OF GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

In its final section, An Atlas of Commoning turns its attention to the intersection of legal rights and global solidarity. It challenges the often-limited scope of human rights, which are grounded in

national borders and state sovereignty. Commoning practices, by contrast, offer a form of governance and resource sharing that transcends legal frameworks, opening new paths for international cooperation and mutual aid.

A notable object in this section is Manuel Herz's Rights on Carpet. The carpet is inscribed with declarations of human rights and invites visitors to engage with these texts in a visceral way—by sitting, kneeling, or lying down on them. It emphasizes the ongoing struggle to realize these rights in real life, rather than merely treating them as abstract legal principles. In Georgia, where minority rights and displacement are critical issues, the notion of solidarity beyond borders resonates deeply.

COMMONING AS A REVOLUTIONARY PRACTICE: A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

What makes An Atlas of Commoning so powerful is its insistence on commoning as a process rather than a fixed state. The exhibition doesn't present commoning as an idealized, utopian vision but as a messy, ongoing negotiation between individuals, communities, and systems of power. It is a practice rooted in the belief that collective governance, shared resources, and solidarity are the tools we need to create a more just and equitable world.

For Tbilisi, and for cities across the globe, this exhibition offers a blueprint for action. By focusing on the how of commoning—how resources are shared, how spaces are governed, how communities organize—the exhibition provides a roadmap for resisting the privatization and commodification that threaten urban life.

As cities face growing pressures from globalization, climate change, and social inequality, An Atlas of Commoning offers a timely reminder of the power of collective action. In reclaiming the spaces and resources that have been lost to commodification, we reclaim our right to live, work, and build together in ways that prioritize people over profit.

First Time: Ieli

BLOG BY TONY HANMER

This year has already seen me visit Adishi in Svaneti for the first time ever. Now I can add Ieli to that list of new places for me in this province.

As I recall, the very first mention I heard of this village is that it had been, maybe was still, an important gold-mining location. The Chinese had visited with an interest, and been rebuffed most firmly and unequivocally. That was more than a decade ago. It was off the beaten path for me (as Adishi had been), and awaited someone's request for me to take them there.

One of our recent guests was a journalist, traveling here and there and freelancing stories in various exotic places. What did I know about Ieli? Only what I've written above, and roughly where it was, I told him. But for the going rate, I'd happily drive him there and also interpret for his initial visit. Agreed.

Svaneti is in the midst of its most colorful season, as the deciduous trees all go

red, orange and gold for fall, while the conifers remain green and the sky blazes blue. We hit good weather on the trip, which takes you above Mestia in the Hatsvali direction and then branches off onto a slightly worse road, no more asphalt or even cement, but still quite navigable though narrow. We reached Ieli proper and then asked for the hamlet which interested us, called Atsi, much further down towards the Enguri River. Here, we met members of the only three families who currently populate Atsi.

All of them used to live in Abkhazia, and left it when the war there was raging in the 1990s, going to Tbilisi to start again as refugees. But this abandoned hamlet was their family's real point of origin, and eventually they worked themselves into a good enough position to consider returning here and rebuilding the winter-ravaged houses, a single cold season of which can be enough to collapse roofs if no one is there to shovel them off.

There are even two complete towers, and a couple of partially ruined ones, way out here. Not only have the former been re-roofed, but their whole topmost sections have had to be remade first, no small undertaking of stone, cement,

height and nerves. One of these towers also offered a rare view for me: nice laden grapevines on a trellis in front of it, not usual to find in a village at the end of the road in this province. Bees are hard at work too, in many hives.

But the locals were (unsurprisingly perhaps) shy to talk about the gold, except to say that the Soviets had dug mines for it somewhere nearby in the mountains. Now the main procurement method was panning from the Enguri, and possibly the ancient time-honored method of throwing a stone-weighted sheep hide into the river, onto which the heavier gold dust would settle while the lighter silt would wash past. Jason, Argonauts and Golden Fleece, I'm looking at you.

Anyway, now was not the gold season, they told us, so we didn't press it, understanding their reticence, saving this topic for some future visit, once our friendship might develop further.

Mid-winter, Atsi gets 2-3 hours of precious sunlight a day, as it's rather hemmed in with mountains. So it takes some guts, and preparation, to winter here; although apparently the gravel road is sloughed and there are even rumors that the whole thing, some 8 km of it, could be cemented



in the future. This would be transformational.

We were let into the small 16th century hamlet church, recently lovingly stuccoed and re-roofed, and served by an itinerant priest. A painted cloth banner in one corner shows the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist, and it is supposed to be as old as the building. As for secular education, the only two children of school-going age go to a place in Ieli itself, to join a handful of others.

Ieli is just clinging on to life, but better this than becoming a ghost town. I take

my hat off to its residents for their gumption in staying, or returning, and doing their best to keep it alive.

Tony Hanmer has lived in Georgia since 1999, in Svaneti since 2007, and been a weekly writer and photographer for GT since early 2011. He runs the "Svaneti Renaissance" Facebook group, now with over 2000 members, at www.facebook.com/groups/SvanetiRenaissance/. He and his wife also run their own guest house in Etseri: www.facebook.com/hanmer.house.svaneti

CULTURE

Stars of the Past on the Contemporary Stage - Berlin Review

BY LILY FÜRSTENOWKHOSITASHVILI

Set against the backdrop of Germany's show business and hit parades from the postwar era to today, "Ich nehm dir alles weg - Ein Schlagerballett" (I take it all away from you - a Hit Ballet) explores the deeply entrenched issues of race, identity, and representation in a world obsessed with image and success. The play poignantly depicts symbolic celebrity figures, some immediately recognizable, some less so: their rise to fame and the compromises they were forced to make along the way, from battling racial stereotypes to confronting the tokenism that still pervades the German entertainment industry. Female and gender fluid characters' struggles with authenticity versus marketability echo the experiences of real-life performers who have had to "play the game" in order to succeed, while questioning what it means to truly belong, and at what price belonging comes.

A striking parallel visualized prominently in the staging was derived from the double meaning of "Schlager" that stems from "schlagen" (hitting, beating up), likewise in English "hit" from hitting that brought in the metaphor of violence hidden or overt that is an inevitable negative side to publicity, celebrity culture and showbiz. Performers of color—immigrants, AfroGermans, and foreign entertainers—faced similar obsta-

cles. Germany's evolving relationship with race is unpacked with nuance, showing how the popular hit parades of the postwar era were both a window into mainstream culture and a battleground for racial acceptance.

The music, a combination of Schlager hits of various popularity degree, serves as a medium for exploring how racialized bodies have been packaged and sold in German entertainment. This blending of musical genres and languages challenges the sanitized version of multiculturalism often presented on screen. The juxtaposition of music styles asks the audience to confront the ways in which diversity is consumed, but not always embraced.

Director Joana Tischkau has crafted a tightly woven narrative that doesn't shy away from the hard questions: Who gets to define success in show business? How does Germany's past shape its present attitudes towards race in entertainment? And can true inclusivity ever be achieved in an industry built on commodification? The play laid bare the otherwise hidden injustices and racialization of showbiz that are topical issues. One can only wish that certain repetitive recitative sequences hadn't marred the overall impression. Joana Tischkau, together with Anta Helena Recke, Elisabeth Hampe and Frieder Blume, are founders of the German Museum for Black Entertainment and Black Music that houses a comprehensive archive of vinyl records, magazines, autographs and memorabilia. A digital tour of the museum immerses the

visitor in a movement that brings together stars that undoubtedly influenced show business and the German pop industry.

Politics has lots to do with showbiz often with graver consequences, yet parallels are often more than obvious. Issues of identity, tokenism and justice from a female viewpoint are thus central for Sophia Tabatadze, a Georgian artist based in Berlin and Tbilisi. In her performance, developed at the CuratorLab at Konstfack University in Stockholm, she explored the life and work of Alexandra Kolontai, a Russian revolutionary, feminist, and prominent Marxist theorist who played a significant role in the early Soviet Union, particularly in advocating for women's rights and social reforms. Alexandra Kolontai was staged by the official regime as a staunch Communist and powerful role model for emancipated new womanhood.

In her performance "Ask Alexandra," the artist herself played the role of Kolontai, who was in fact nicknamed the "Valkyrie of the Revolution," highlighting her strong involvement and influence within the revolutionary leadership before and right after the Russian Revolution of 1917. Yet, around 1923, Alexandra was removed from office and sent on various diplomatic missions.

In her performance, Tabatadze, a female artist herself, tried to study the power-play within the totalitarian Soviet regime that, although it praised itself for gender equality, feministic emancipation and "equal pay for equal work, for all," irrespective of gender or race, in reality implemented very few of the loud slogans of the state PR machine at the grass roots.

Tabatadze's basic questions in this performance are: how much power did Kolontai still have after 1923, and to what extent did she use her intelligence, strength, and charms merely to secure her own survival? As Sophia wrote: "I had these questions and decided to directly ask Alexandra in a performance where I invited other members of the group from CuratorLab, which had concentrated on Alexandra Kolontai in that study year. Together, we formed a group in which I would appoint various roles to the participants, and ask them questions that they would answer in the style of the Family Constellation method."

It is common knowledge that a diplomatic career was out of the question for



Sophia Tabatadze in 'Ask Alexandra'. Source: sophia-tabatadze.com

women in the Soviet era. Only women who joined the Communist party could ever dream of any kind of professional success; strong personalities voicing critique were silenced by repressions and political persecutions. Poet Marina Zvetajewa and Georgian filmmaker Nutza Gogoberidze are just two examples.

For many women from the former East, Alexandra Kolontai is lost to oblivion. However, feminist ideas of emancipation and revolutionary change for equality and justice are as essential within capi-

talist societies today as they were back in 1917. How have priorities within the feminist movement evolved throughout the last 100 years? What relevance do role models like Alexandra Kolontai have for us today? How can we learn from past examples to make our societies fairer for all? Projects like these, with contemporary artists identifying with activists of the past, may not always give ready answers, but might help us to commemorate and carry on where the previous generations left off.



'Ask Alexandra'. Source: sophia-tabatadze.com



'Ask Alexandra'. Source: sophia-tabatadze.com

A Sonic Pilgrimage: Jörg Halubeck's Extraordinary Journey into the Soundscapes of Bach's Organ Music at Tbilisi Conservatory

REVIEW BY IVAN NECHAEV

On the evening of October 8, the hallowed halls of the Tbilisi State Conservatory reverberated with the transcendent sounds of Johann Sebastian Bach's organ music, as performed by one of the foremost interpreters of early music, Jörg Halubeck. Under the initiative of Bravo Records, this concert was not merely a recital but a deeply immersive cultural and historical journey. Through a masterfully curated program and a performance marked by intellectual rigor, Halubeck delivered an unforgettable evening, transporting the audience through the landscapes and epochs of Bach's organ works.

A MUSICAL ARCHAEOLOGIST: THE MAN BEHIND THE PERFORMANCE

Jörg Halubeck is not just a performer—he is a scholar, a musical archaeologist of sorts, who has spent his career uncovering forgotten gems of the Baroque era and reviving them with scholarly precision. Known for his work on medieval instruments, Halubeck has been at the forefront of historical performance, breathing new life into centuries-old music. His 2004 project, *Bach's Organ Landscapes*, is a testament to his devotion to understanding not only the notes on the page, but the very instruments, churches, and cities that shaped Bach's sonic world.

This project took Halubeck on a pilgrimage across Germany, where he studied the distinct organ-building traditions that shaped the sound of Bach's compositions. Playing on historical instruments that Bach himself would have used, Halubeck was able to capture the unique tonal colors and acoustics of each instrument, revealing how geography, craftsmanship, and culture intertwine to shape musical expression. This attention to historical detail, combined with Halubeck's own musicality, makes him one of the world's leading experts on Bach's organ works.

ORGAN MUSIC AS A REFLECTION OF BACH'S LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY

Bach's organ music is often considered the pinnacle of Baroque composition. It represents a fusion of theological symbolism, mathematical precision, and emotional expression. The organ, with its vast dynamic and tonal range, was the ideal medium for Bach to explore his spiritual and intellectual ideas. Each of the works presented in this concert reflects a specific moment in Bach's life and his interaction with the organs of various German cities.

The program, framed as a chronological journey through Bach's organ compositions, not only reflected the composer's personal and professional evolution but also served as a window into the cultural and religious life of 18th-century Germany. Halubeck's meticulous choice of pieces from Lüneburg, Arnstadt, Lübeck, Weimar, Hamburg,



Photo by the author

and Leipzig underscored how Bach's music was shaped by the cities and their distinct organ traditions, which influenced the sonic landscapes of his works.

A JOURNEY THROUGH SOUND AND SPACE: THE CONCERT PROGRAM

The concert's title, *Journey to the World of Organ Music of Johann Sebastian Bach*, could not have been more fitting. The program took the audience on a sweeping voyage through Bach's organ compositions, beginning with his early years in Lüneburg and culminating in his mature works from Leipzig.

Lüneburg (1700) – The Early Years. The concert opened with Chorale "Jesus, My Joy!" BWV 1105 from the Neumeister Collection, a reflective and meditative work that demonstrated Bach's early mastery of the chorale form. This piece, deeply rooted in Lutheran traditions, immediately established the religious and philosophical framework that underpins much of Bach's organ music. Halubeck's restrained and reverent interpretation brought out the spiritual depth of the piece, setting the tone for the evening.

Arnstadt (1703) – The Drama of Toc-

cata and Fugue. One of the most iconic works in the organ repertoire, *Toccatina and Fugue in D minor BWV 565*, followed. This composition, with its bold harmonic progressions and dramatic contrasts, was a stark contrast to the reflective opening chorale. Halubeck's performance emphasized the balance between the toccata's fiery, improvisatory gestures and the fugue's intricate counterpoint. Following this, the modified chorale "Glory to the Lord in Heaven" BWV 715, was an elegant choice, underlining Bach's early creative explorations and his work in the Lutheran tradition, which elevated chorales into a complex spiritual and musical narrative.

Lübeck (1705) – The Passacaglia: A Monument to Baroque Structure. The highlight of the concert was perhaps the *Passacaglia in C minor BWV 582*, a monumental piece that epitomizes Bach's genius for building complexity from simple forms. The passacaglia's ground bass, repeated throughout the piece, served as the foundation upon which Bach constructed a cathedral of sound, with each variation adding layers of contrapuntal intricacy. Halubeck's performance was both precise and passionate,

his command of the instrument allowing the audience to experience the full weight of the passacaglia's emotional and structural depth.

Weimar (1708) – A Lyrical Interlude. Following the grandeur of the passacaglia, the concert shifted to the delicate *Trio super "Lord Jesus Christ, Look Upon Us" BWV 655*. This work reflects Bach's mastery of the trio sonata form and his growing interest in Italian concerto principles during his Weimar years. Halubeck's sensitive articulation brought out the seamless interaction between the three voices, creating a moment of serene, lyrical meditation. The *Concerto in D minor BWV 596*, with its contrasting *Grave*, *Fuga*, and *Largo* movements, offered a balance between virtuosity and expressive lyricism, a performance that Halubeck handled with utmost control and poise.

Hamburg (1720) – The Fantasy in G minor. The concert resumed its dramatic course with *Fantasy and Fugue in G minor BWV 542*. Often called the "Great" G minor fugue, this work showcases Bach at his most virtuosic. The fantasy, with its sweeping arpeggios and bold harmonies, contrasted sharply with the strict counterpoint of the fugue. Halubeck

navigated the work's technical challenges with ease, his performance capturing both the intellectual rigor and emotional intensity of the piece.

Leipzig (1739) – The Final Flourish. The evening concluded with "Awake, the Voice is Calling Us" BWV 645 from the *Schübler Chorales*, a joyful and uplifting work that brought the concert full circle, returning to the Lutheran chorale tradition that had opened the program. This piece, radiant and majestic, reflects the fusion of spiritual awakening and musical ingenuity that marks Bach's later works. Closing with the *Fugue in G minor BWV 542*, Halubeck tied together the concert's exploration of complex structures and emotive depth, offering the audience a powerful final statement.

HALUBECK'S MASTERY OF THE ORGAN: TECHNIQUE AND EXPRESSION

What sets Jörg Halubeck apart from other performers is his ability to combine technical precision with deep emotional and intellectual engagement. His understanding of historical performance practices—especially regarding the organs and their acoustics—allowed him to create an authentic yet fresh interpretation of each work. Halubeck's choice of registration (the selection of stops) was particularly noteworthy, as he used the full palette of the organ's timbres to bring out the contrasts and complexities in Bach's music.

In the *Toccatina and Fugue in D minor*, for example, he used a bright, almost piercing registration for the toccata's opening, which then gave way to a warmer, fuller sound in the fugue. This contrast emphasized the dramatic architecture of the piece, giving it a sense of narrative progression. Similarly, in the *Passacaglia in C minor*, his gradual build-up of sound mirrored the structural buildup of the variations, creating a sense of inevitability as the piece reached its towering conclusion.

A LASTING IMPRESSION OF BACH'S ETERNAL GENIUS

This concert was more than just an evening of music—it was a significant cultural event for Tbilisi, connecting the city to the broader world of classical music. The collaboration between Bravo Records, the German Embassy, and various sponsors highlighted the importance of such cross-cultural exchanges in enriching Georgia's cultural landscape. For Georgian audiences, the chance to experience a performer of Jörg Halubeck's caliber is a rare and invaluable opportunity, particularly in the realm of historical performance.

Jörg Halubeck's performance of Bach's organ works was a masterclass in both technique and interpretation, offering the audience a rare glimpse into the spiritual and intellectual depths of one of Western music's greatest composers. Through his thoughtful programming and historically informed performance, Halubeck not only showcased the timelessness of Bach's music but also illuminated the rich cultural and geographical landscapes that shaped the composer's sound world.



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Reg. # 06/4-309



I am Georgian and therefore I am European

Zurab Zhvania, Council of Europe, 1999

