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FOCUS

ON TSAVKISI PARK

Just 7 minutes up from Liberty Square, Tsavkisi Park offers a new standard of living in Tbilisi

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Oleksii Reznikov on the Peace Talks, Kremlin Missteps, and the "Second Front" Myth

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA
TAVBERIDZE

As Ukraine marks three years since the first attempts at peace talks with Russia, former Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov reflects on the critical moments that shaped the war's trajectory. From the conflicting intelligence assessments before the invasion to the high-stakes negotiations in Istanbul, Reznikov offers a rare behind-the-scenes look at how Kyiv navigated Western skepticism, Russian ultimatums, and the early days of full-scale war. In this interview with RFE/RL's Georgian Service, he discusses why peace talks failed, the Kremlin's grave miscalculations, and the persistent myths surrounding Ukraine's role in the wider region—including the claim that Kyiv pressured Georgia to open a second front.

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Ukraine's former Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov. Source: AP/pbs

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Photo: Vegan Food and Living.

Lasha Papashvili Wins Lawsuit Over Banned Cattle Feed in Dairy Scandal

BY MARIAM RAZMADZE

Radio Free Europe published an investigative report on businessman Lasha Papashvili's farm, Kvarlis Bagi, which produces raw milk and has come under scrutiny for feeding its cows with chicken litter, a practice banned in the European Union. The milk from Kvarlis Bagi is supplied to several well-known companies in Georgia, including Sante, Soflis Nobati, Agrohabi, and Kvarlis Bagi's own subsidiary, Dairy Laboratory.

The controversy surrounds the purchase of chicken litter by Kvarlis Bagi from Chirina, a company formerly involved in supplying this controversial feed. In 2020, Papashvili filed a lawsuit against Chirina, alleging that the litter had caused significant damage to his livestock, resulting in the death of multiple cows. The loss was reported at 1.65 million Georgian Lari. Chirina disputed these claims, stating that it had sold the chicken litter as fertilizer, not animal feed.

In 2024, Papashvili won the lawsuit, and the court ruled that Chirina was liable for damages totaling 4.7 million Lari. As documents revealed, each cow at Kvarlis Bagi consumed approximately 6-7 kilograms of chicken litter per day, mixed with other feed. Initially, the case did not establish Chirina's responsibility for the livestock deaths, but the appeal brought the case back to court.

In March 2024, Kvarlis Bagi withdrew the lawsuit from the Rustavi court and refiled it in Tbilisi.

Chirina's owner expressed concerns over the shift of the case to Tbilisi, which, in his belief, indicated that the Papashvili brothers were potentially using political connections to influence the outcome.

In December 2024, the Tbilisi City Court ruled in favor of Kvarlis Bagi, after the farm presented laboratory evidence that the milk from the affected cows contained tetracycline, an antibiotic. This finding was crucial in the court's decision, which linked the antibiotic contamination to the deaths of nearly 200 cows and condemned Chirina to cover the costs of replacing the animals

and repaying loans taken to purchase new cattle.

However, the National Food Agency's official letter reveals that tetracycline is not listed as a banned veterinary drug and is still used by farmers in Georgia. Kvarlis Bagi's veterinarian reportedly administered tetracycline to treat the cows, which complicates the matter further. Chirina has denied using tetracycline in its chicken feed and claims it used other medications.

When asked about the matter, companies that purchase milk from Kvarlis Bagi were questioned about whether they tested each batch for antibiotics and whether they were aware that the cows were fed with European Union-banned chicken litter.

Soflis Nobati, owned by PepsiCo, responded that their records for that period were not preserved, but stated that any ingredient not meeting their quality standards would not be accepted into production.

Agrohabi also clarified that they were unaware of the chicken litter being used for cattle feed, but emphasized that they test all milk for antibiotics and reject any batches that do not meet their quality standards.

Sante revealed that it had detected antibiotic contamination in the milk from Kvarlis Bagi in 2018, which led them to stop accepting their milk and using it in production.

Following his legal victory in December 2024, Lasha Papashvili, a known supporter of the ruling Georgian Dream party, gave an interview where he praised the leadership of Bidzina Ivanishvili, the former Prime Minister, for steering the country away from war and helping the country in economic development. Papashvili remarked, "It is thanks to Georgian Dream that we have peace, the economy is growing... Our country is moving towards Europe. Don't you think so? We should forgive mistakes, whoever our leader is, we should forgive... Bidzina Ivanishvili has already entered history."

In January 2025, in a related case, a group of theater professionals returned the prestigious Duruji award to Papashvili's Redix Group after the release of Papashvili's interview where he praised Ivanishvili distancing themselves from him.

Ti-Georgia: The West Has Already Sanctioned More than 200 Representatives of GD

BY TEAM GT

The Western world has already sanctioned more than 200 representatives of "Georgian Dream," of whom the identities of 98 have been made public, while the rest are subject to anonymous visa restrictions. This information was stated in a report by Transparency International-Georgia.

The organization says the sanctioned individuals include Bidzina Ivanishvili and four members of his family, 32 high-ranking officials of Georgian Dream, 33 judges, 12 prosecutors, and 10 police officers.

"We present the full list of these individuals, which includes members of the illegitimate government and their deputies, high-ranking officials of law enforcement and security agencies, Georgian Dream MPs and their allies, judges, municipal leaders, supportive businessmen, propagandists, and their family members."

REASONS FOR SANCTIONS

Democratic countries have imposed sanctions on these individuals for:

- Brutal crackdowns on peaceful protesters
- Undermining democracy
- Obstructing the EU integration process
- Advancing Russian interests in Georgia
- Election fraud
- Corruption
- Propaganda
- Acting against the will of the Georgian people

ANONYMOUS SANCTIONS

The United States has imposed additional visa restrictions on 100 individuals, including:

- Members of the Georgian Dream party
- Members of Parliament
- Senior officials in central and municipal governments
- High-ranking officials in law enforcement and security agencies
- Corrupt business leaders and propagandists
- Some private citizens and their family members.

Their names remain undisclosed due to visa confidentiality laws.

On December 20, 2024, Latvia imposed travel restrictions on 13 Georgian citizens, but their names have not yet been revealed.

On March 3, 2025, the Baltic countries collectively sanctioned 145 individuals.



Georgian Dream party members. Source: FB

The identities of 90 people sanctioned by Lithuania and Latvia remain unknown.

The 55 individuals sanctioned by Estonia are listed in an official document.

SANCTIONS BY GERMANY

On December 31, 2024, Germany banned nine Georgian citizens from entering the country, citing their role in violence against protesters and opposition members. Their names have not been disclosed.

On March 24, 2025, Germany imposed additional travel restrictions, but the exact number and names of those affected remain unknown.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

On February 13, 2025, the European Parliament adopted another critical resolution, declaring that it does not recognize the self-proclaimed government of Georgian Dream. The resolution calls on Georgian Dream to end violent repression and hold new elections. It also urges EU member states to freeze assets and personally sanction: Bidzina Ivanishvili, his family, high-ranking Georgian Dream officials, business and state-sector allies, and propagandists.

LIST OF 31 INDIVIDUALS TARGETED FOR SANCTIONS

1. Bidzina Ivanishvili and his family:
Wife: Eka Khvedelidze
Children: Uta, Tsotne, Bera, and Gvantsa Ivanishvili
Brother: Aleksandre Ivanishvili
Nephew: Shmagi Kobakhidze
Cousin: Ucha Mamatsashvili

2. Georgian Dream Officials:
Irakli Kobakhidze (Prime Minister)
Shalva Papuashvili (Speaker of Parliament)

Kakha Kaladze (Mayor of Tbilisi)
Irakli Garibashvili (Former PM)

3. Government and Security Officials:
Vakhtang Gomelauri (Minister of Internal Affairs)
Grigol Liluashvili (Head of the State Security Service)
Natia Turnava (President of the National Bank)

4. Business Leaders:
Ivane Chkhartishvili, Sulokhan Papashvili, Giorgi Kapanadze

5. Regional Government Officials:
Tornike Rizhvadze (Head of the Adjara Government)

6. Former MPs and Businessmen:
Ilia Tsulaia (Ex-MP and businessman), Kakhi Bekauri (Head of the Communications Commission)

7. Propagandists:
Lasha Natsvlishvili (Pro-government media figure), Vasil Maglaperidze (Chairman of the Public Broadcaster's Board), Tinatin Berdzenishvili (Director-General of the Public Broadcaster)

8. Judges:
Mikheil Chinchaladze, Levan Murusidze

9. Media and Aviation Executives:
Irakli Rukhadze (Co-owner of TV Imedi and Liberty Bank), Tamaz Gaiashvili (Owner of Georgian Airways)

10. MPs and Businessmen Linked to Georgian Dream:
Anton Obolashvili, Gocha Enukidze

These sanctions and restrictions signal increasing international pressure on the ruling party in Georgia.

Young Leaders Discuss Democratic Governance at UN House

BY MARIAM RAZMADZE

Organized in collaboration with the British Embassy and the Innovations and Reforms Center, The UN House in Tbilisi this week welcomed a group of young people dedicated to democratic governance and sustainable development in Georgia. The event served as a platform for participants to explore the principles of accountable public institutions focused on citizens and their needs.

The primary focus of the discussion was the UK's civil service model, widely recognized for its neutrality, professionalism, and commitment to public service. Participants assessed how these principles could be adapted to strengthen Georgia's governance structures.



Young leaders engage in a discussion on democratic governance and accountability at the UN House in Tbilisi. Photo: UNDP/ Gela Bedianashvili.

"This dialogue allowed young people to engage with key ideas on democracy and institutional accountability," organizers declared, emphasizing the value of such exchanges in for an inclusive future. Building

on networks established during the recent Winter School, the event reinforced connections among younger leaders and experts, ensuring continued engagement in governance and reform efforts.

Ukraine Latest: Russia Claims Gain in Donetsk, Top Putin Negotiator Visits Washington

COMPILED BY ANA DUMBADZE

Russian President Vladimir Putin's investment envoy Kirill Dmitriev met with US officials in Washington on Wednesday as the Trump administration continues to press Russia and Ukraine to agree to a ceasefire, two US officials familiar with the matter said.

Dmitriev, a Stanford-educated former Goldman Sachs investment banker, is one of the most US-savvy members of Russia's elite, with close relations to some key members of the Trump team. He is the highest-ranking Russian official to travel to the US on state business since Russia's 2022 expanded invasion of Ukraine.

It was not clear what Dmitriev discussed with the US officials, but his visit comes after President Donald Trump expressed his frustration with the pace of ceasefire talks, saying on Sunday he was "pissed off" with Putin, and raising the possibility of imposing sanctions on those who buy Russian crude oil. Russia is the world's second largest exporter of crude oil after Saudi Arabia.

Steve Witkoff, a Trump envoy who has taken the lead on the Trump administration's contacts with the Kremlin, invited Dmitriev to the United States last week. The White House directed the State Department to issue a short-term license for Dmitriev to travel to the country, a necessary step as Dmitriev faces US sanctions, the officials said.

Dmitriev could play a crucial role in mending relations between Moscow and Washington, which, until Trump's inauguration in January, had reached their lowest point since the most perilous



Russian President Vladimir Putin's investment envoy Kirill Dmitriev. Source: REUTERS

moments of the Cold War.

The Russian envoy was involved in early US-Russia contacts following Trump's 2016 election, and helped foster ties with Saudi Arabia, leading to an oil price agreement under the expanded OPEC+ producers' forum.

Notably, on Wednesday, the Trump administration excluded Russia from a sweeping list of countries facing major new tariffs. Meanwhile, Ukraine was hit with a 10% levy, based on a White House fact sheet.

Trump has voiced frustration with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, accusing him of attempting to renegotiate a minerals deal.

In recent weeks, Dmitriev has high-

lighted several potential areas of cooperation between Russia and the United States, including investment, rare earth minerals, energy, the Arctic, space, and collaboration with Elon Musk.

RUSSIA SAYS IT HAS CAPTURED A VILLAGE IN DONETSK

Russia this week claimed it had captured a village in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region.

The Kremlin's defense ministry said its forces had taken control of Rozlyv - which has become the focal point of their advance through the area.

Ukraine's military said Russian forces launched five attacks on Rozlyv and the nearby village of Kostiantynopil, but

made no acknowledgement that Rozlyv was now in Russian hands.

Intense fighting continues on Ukraine's eastern flank, particularly in Donetsk and Luhansk, as Russia seeks to seize full control of the region. However, no significant breakthrough has been achieved.

hit a substation in Ukraine's northeastern Sumy region, and artillery fire damaged a power line in the central Dnipropetrovsk region.

Moscow's Ministry of Defense accused Kyiv of hitting Russian energy facilities twice in the past 24 hours despite a mutual moratorium on energy strikes brokered by the United States.

OTHER IMPORTANT BATTLEFIELD DEVELOPMENTS:

One person was killed and two others injured in a Russian overnight attack on southeast Ukraine's Zaporizhia region, Regional Governor Ivan Fedorov said.

A Russian ballistic missile strike on Ukraine's Kryvyi Rih killed at least four people and injured 14 others, including two children, Ukrainian authorities said.

An infant, a seven-year-old boy and six others were also injured in a drone attack on Ukraine's Kharkiv region, said Oleh Syniehubov, the region's governor. Kharkiv's Mayor Ihor Terekhov said 15 drone strikes were carried out in the region.

At least 60 people were forced to evacuate from their homes in the Russian city of Kursk after falling debris from intercepted Ukrainian drones hit their apartment buildings, acting governor, Alexander Khinshtein, said.

Russia's state news agencies TASS and RIA Novosti report that Russian forces destroyed 93 Ukrainian drones overnight, most of which were destroyed over the Kursk region.

The Ukrainian air force said it shot down 41 of 74 Russian drones launched towards Ukraine overnight. Another 20 drones failed to reach their targets due to electronic jamming measures, the air force said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said nearly 4,000 people were left without electricity after a Russian drone

KREMLIN'S DEMANDS FOR PEACE CONTRADICT TRUMP'S GOALS - ISW

Russia's demands for peace contradict what Donald Trump wants to achieve, the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) reports.

In its latest update, the US-based think-tank notes that senior Russian officials are continuing to reiterate the Russian demand for the elimination of the "root causes" of the war in Ukraine as a precondition for a peace agreement.

This is a "reference to Russia's initial war demands" that contradict Donald Trump's goal to achieve a lasting peace in Ukraine," the ISW says.

The ISW states that Russia's deputy foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov had claimed on 1 April that the Trump administration is attempting "some kind of scheme" to get a ceasefire before moving on to achieve an end to the war.




The Kremlin official claimed that the Trump administration's plan to resolve the war in Ukraine does not address the "root causes" of the war and that Russia cannot accept the US proposal.


The Kremlin's demands for the "full capitulation of Ukraine with the installation of a pro-Russian government in Ukraine and long-term commitments of Ukrainian neutrality" are the same demands Putin made at the beginning of the war, the ISW points out.

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THE BILTMORE
TBILISI

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Oleksii Reznikov on the Peace Talks, Kremlin Missteps, and the "Second Front" Myth

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THERE WERE TWO CAMPS BACK THEN, DESPITE THE US SUPPLYING INTELLIGENCE. ONE CAMP BELIEVED THAT THE INVASION WAS IMMINENT, ANOTHER WAS HOPEFUL THAT IT STILL WOULDN'T COME TO THAT. WHICH CAMP WERE YOU IN?

We were receiving mutually exclusive intel. German and French intelligence claimed Russia wouldn't invade, while Washington said they would. Then we had some high-level people trying to persuade President Zelensky to leave Ukraine and escape to Europe. "Volodymyr, you need to understand that a full-scale invasion is coming." Our President asked them back, "Okay, if I recognize that, what's the next step? Are you ready to implement the sanctions regime? Are you ready to do something truly impactful to the Kremlin?" "Yes,



Ukraine's former Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov. Source: atlanticcouncil

we'll do it. Let's do it now, maybe they'll stop." "No, no, no, we'll do it after they cross the Ukrainian border." We suspected that some players were subtly pushing us toward a Minsk3 agreement...

I remember discussing it with the head of our intelligence service: what assessment did the Kremlin have if they crossed the border? What did they think the Ukrainian reaction would be? Our intelligence report showed that the Kremlin expected 30% of Ukrainians to welcome them with flowers, like they did in Crimea in 2014— that 60% would be apathetic, and only 10% would resist. This was especially expected in the Russian-speaking Eastern regions. The reality, however, was that we did meet them with flowers—but of a different kind. All the Soviet legacy artillery systems are named after flowers—Tulips, Peony, Hyacinth, and so on. That's the bouquet we greeted them with.

THIS WEEK MARKS THREE YEARS SINCE THE FIRST ATTEMPTS AT NEGOTIATIONS/ PEACE TALKS IN 2022. THE RUSSIANS FAILED IN THEIR 3-DAY PLAN, RETREATING FROM KYIV, AND THERE WAS HOPE THAT A TRUCE OR CEASEFIRE MIGHT HAPPEN. WHY COULDN'T IT BE ACHIEVED?

The first three meetings were held in Belarus, where we managed to open humanitarian corridors, and the culmination was

in Istanbul, with President Erdogan generously mediating. He really believed he could stop the war. But there was a sharp contrast in expectations and perceptions. What they tried to do was essentially ask us to capitulate, but we weren't there for that. We were there to buy time, address humanitarian issues, handle prisoners of war, and persuade the West that we were strong enough to continue—and that they should stay with us.

WERE THEY PREPARED TO MAKE ANY CONCESSIONS AT ALL?

No. Their demands were absurd: they wanted us to change our constitution and abandon NATO, make Russian the second official language of the army, reduce our armed forces, tanks, aircraft, artillery, and so on, and grant special status to Russian-speaking regions. We said no. We weren't going to change our constitution, because the majority of Ukrainians want us to move toward NATO and the EU. We couldn't negotiate away Ukraine's statehood interests. They claimed NATO expansion was a threat. Well, they must have done a great job stopping it—since the invasion, two other countries, Sweden and Finland, joined NATO, and now Russia has a much longer border with it. Great success...

WAS KYIV AT ANY POINT READY TO CONSIDER FREEZING ITS NATO BID, SAYING, "WE'RE WILLING TO STAY

OUT OF NATO IF WE CAN AGREE ON THE REST?"

Not in any meetings I was involved in. My personal focus was on humanitarian corridors and POW issues. I never believed the Russians would follow through on anything else. I had previous experience: two years in the Minsk process, as deputy head of the Ukrainian delegation. I spent many hours with them in Berlin and Paris, in the Normandy format. All I saw was how they played games, never shifting their position. There was no good faith, no real intent to negotiate.

SO, UKRAINE WAS PLAYING FOR TIME, TRYING TO GALVANIZE SUPPORT IN THE WEST. WHAT DO YOU THINK THE RUSSIANS WERE AIMING FOR?

That's a good question. I think they were just too surprised that their initial plan failed. At the negotiations, I remember seeing Roman Abramovich's reaction. He was the true mastermind behind these talks, with real access to the Kremlin, unlike the other members of the delegation, who were just there for show. He was really upset. Deep down, we hoped that maybe this time, they'd realize it was a mistake and stay away. We thought we could bargain and find a solution out of this situation. But three years on, knowing where we are now, I think that hope was misplaced.

I WANTED TO ASK ABOUT THE ROLE FORMER UK PRIME MINISTER BORIS JOHNSON PLAYED IN ALL OF THIS. THERE ARE REPORTS CLAIMING THAT THE SIDES WERE CLOSE TO A BREAKTHROUGH, BUT JOHNSON ADVISED AGAINST IT, COUNSELING KYIV TO FIGHT ON.

I believe that's just an urban legend. Boris Johnson was very friendly and supportive of President Zelensky. Thanks to Brexit, he wasn't constrained by the EU's diplomatic "handcuffs." He was very open and frank— he really hates Putin, and tried to deliver that message. But I never heard any advice from him regarding the negotiations. I don't know if they discussed it privately, but from what I know about President Zelensky, he makes his own decisions. No amount of advice,



It's a psychological, cognitive warfare strategy by the Russians. They have always tried, and continue to try, to divide us

no number of Boris Johnsons, could convince him of anything if he didn't believe it was in Ukraine's interest.

THAT NARRATIVE USED BOTH IN GEORGIA AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT, IN MOLDOVA, THAT KYIV PRESSURED TBILISI AND CHISINAU TO OPEN A "SECOND FRONT" AGAINST RUSSIA- AS DEFENSE MINISTER, I DON'T THINK SUCH CONVERSATIONS WOULD HAVE GONE OVER YOUR HEAD. SO, WAS THERE EVER ANY PUSH FROM KYIV ON TBILISI TO OPEN A SECOND FRONT?

No. That's not true. It's a psychological, cognitive warfare strategy by the Russians. They have always tried, and continue to try, to divide us. We know how sensitive the issues of Abkhazia and Transnistria are for Georgia and Moldova, respectively. And besides, what would be the point? It doesn't make any sense militarily. It wasn't in our interest. Any sergeant will tell you that the war would have ended in days, but then what? It wasn't in our interest because of the different types of territory, different strategies, and weaponry involved.

There was no pressure whatsoever from Kyiv. This was never our government policy, nor our tactics or strategy. If it were true, I would have heard about it in my position.

At the first peace talks, they asked us to capitulate, but we were there to address humanitarian issues, handle POWs, and persuade the West that we were strong enough to continue—and that they should stay with us

Parliament Passes So-Called "FARA" Bill in Final Reading

BY TEAM GT

Georgia's Parliament passed the controversial "Foreign Agent's" (FARA) bill in its third and final reading on April 1, with 86 votes in favor. The bill, introduced by the Georgian Dream faction, was approved amid growing concerns over its potential impact on civil society and human rights defenders.

Speaker of Parliament, Shalva Papuashvili, highlighted the law's alignment with the American Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), stating, "A law identical to the American standard has been adopted." The bill mandates that individuals or organizations acting in the interest of a foreign entity must register as foreign agents. It also requires the submission of an annual financial declaration and introduces criminal penalties for non-compliance.

The legislation, titled the "Foreign Agents Registration Act," also includes amendments to the Criminal Code, providing the Anti-Corruption Bureau with enforcement powers. Under the law, the terms "foreign principal's agent" and "foreign power" are formally defined, and the registration process, transparency requirements, and deregistration procedures are outlined.

However, the law has sparked significant concern among international bodies. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) released a statement, warning that the law could negatively impact civil society organizations, human rights defenders, and the freedoms of association, assembly, and expression.

"This law profoundly impacts the work of civil society and all those working to defend human rights," said ODIHR Director Maria Telalian. "Civil society is vital to all democracies, and any new requirements should enhance their important



Inside parliament. Source: netgazeti

work in line with international standards rather than imposing limitations."

The new legislation replaces the "Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence" passed last year. ODIHR has expressed concerns that it could undermine essential safeguards for civil society, effectively restricting their ability to operate freely.

The legal analysis from ODIHR highlights that while the US FARA law includes safeguards against labeling civil society as foreign agents solely due to foreign funding, Georgia's version may lack such protections.

The office has called on Georgian authorities to reconsider the bill's imple-

mentation, emphasizing the need for a careful reassessment. "The regulation of lobbying activities is an important tool to ensure the transparency and integrity of public decision-making and prevent corruption, but it must respect these rights and not infringe on political and public participation," ODIHR said.

Smart Tourism: Transforming Travel through Technology

FEATURE BY MRS. EKATERINE JIKIDZE

This article is the first in a series exploring the latest trends in tourism. Mrs. Ekaterine Jikidze, founder of Guide of Georgia LLC, brings her expertise in tourism with a focus on innovative trends shaping the industry. In this article, she explores the growing influence of smart tourism and its potential to reshape the travel experience. The travel industry is undergoing significant changes, with technology playing an increasingly important role in shaping the future of tourism. One of the key developments is the rise of smart tourism, which leverages digital tools and sustainable practices to improve the travel experience and optimize industry performance. For Georgia, a country with a rich cultural heritage and diverse

landscapes, embracing smart tourism offers a unique opportunity to enhance its tourism sector and compete in the global market.

WHAT IS SMART TOURISM?

Smart tourism refers to the use of technology to enhance the travel experience, making it more convenient, efficient, and personalized. This can include tools like mobile apps that provide tailored recommendations, real-time updates about local attractions, and contactless payment systems that simplify transactions. It also involves using data to better understand tourist behavior, improve services, and manage resources more effectively. Additionally, smart tourism incorporates sustainable practices, such as monitoring the impact of tourism on the environment and cultural sites, helping to preserve them for future generations. In short, smart tourism leverages technology to improve both the visitor experience and the man-

agement of tourism destinations.

WHY SMART TOURISM IS IMPORTANT FOR GEORGIA

Georgia's tourism industry has grown significantly in recent years, attracting visitors with its historic sites, natural beauty, and unique cultural offerings. From the capital city of Tbilisi to the mountain resorts of Gudauri and the vineyards of Kakheti, Georgia is becoming an increasingly popular destination. However, to maintain this momentum and meet the expectations of modern travelers, Georgia needs to adopt smart tourism practices.

IMPROVING THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Today's travelers expect more than just scenic views. They want personalized services, ease of access, and efficient planning tools. Implementing smart tourism technologies can help meet these expectations. For example, AI-powered systems can provide tailored recommendations based on individual preferences, and real-time information about attractions can help visitors make the most of their time in Georgia. Additionally, the introduction of contactless payments and online booking platforms can simplify the logistical aspects of travel, making the experience more convenient.

With increasing numbers of international visitors, particularly from Europe and the Middle East, these tools will help Georgia remain competitive by offering an easier and more enjoyable experience.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS THROUGH DIGITAL TOOLS

Smart tourism offers significant opportunities for Georgia's tourism economy. Digital tools, such as dynamic pricing and advanced booking systems, can help businesses optimize revenue and improve operational efficiency. AI-driven pricing models can adjust based on demand, ensuring that businesses can capitalize on peak travel periods with-



Ekaterine Jikidze, founder of Guide of Georgia LLC
out overpricing, while also offering more affordable options during off-peak seasons. This approach not only enhances profitability but also contributes to a more sustainable model for the tourism sector.

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is a growing priority for travelers and for the tourism industry as a whole. Smart tourism can help Georgia monitor and manage the impact of tourism on its cultural and natural sites. Using IoT sensors and other technology, the country can track visitor numbers and manage crowds, reducing the risk of over-tourism and minimizing damage to sensitive areas. These technologies can also help with waste management, energy efficiency, and conservation efforts, ensuring that Georgia's heritage is preserved for future generations.

GEORGIA'S PATH FORWARD IN SMART TOURISM

To fully realize the potential of smart tourism, Georgia must make a concerted effort to integrate digital technologies into its tourism infrastructure. Countries like Singapore, South Korea, and Dubai have set high standards for digital innovation in tourism, and Georgia can look to these examples as models for development. By investing in smart infrastructure, building partnerships between the public and private sectors, and encouraging innovation, Georgia can position itself as a leader in digital tourism in the region.

B2B Meeting Connects Businesses with Georgia's Social Enterprises



By collaborating with social enterprises, businesses gain valuable and diverse opportunities to create mutual benefits. Source: weforum

BY KESARIA KATCHARAVA

The Georgian Heritage Crafts Association hosted a recent meetup for social enterprises as part of its Acceleration Program, aimed at bolstering the sustainability and presence of social enterprises in Georgia. The event facilitated valuable dialogues between social entrepreneurs, private sector representatives, and industry mentors, fostering new opportunities for collaboration.

Social enterprises in Georgia focus on generating revenue while addressing social challenges, such as preserving cultural heritage and providing employment for marginalized groups. However, to succeed, these businesses need strategic partnerships, financial support, and corporate engagement.

Five social enterprises, Lampino, Igrika, Karagma, Gumbati, and Tebe, showcased their unique missions. Attendees had the chance to learn about their work and explore potential collaborations, along with hands-on workshops demonstrating traditional craftsmanship.

THE ROLE OF PRIVATE COMPANIES IN SUPPORTING SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

A key theme at the meetup was the importance of long-term collaboration between private companies and social enterprises. Tamar Rodonaia, mentor for Igrika, stressed that businesses should engage beyond one-time CSR activities, integrating social enterprises into their operations through purchasing products, collaborating on community-driven projects, and offering team-building services.

"Private companies play a crucial role in supporting and fostering the growth of social enterprises. By collaborating with social enterprises, businesses gain valuable and diverse opportunities to create mutual benefits, enhancing both their own operations and the impact of social enterprises," said Rodonaia.

It is an approach benefits both businesses and social enterprises, enhancing brand image, employee satisfaction, and social impact.

SHOWCASING THE SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Each of the five enterprises at the event blends traditional craftsmanship with social impact:

Lampino creates handmade architectural lamps inspired by Georgian heritage, preserving cultural identity.

Igrika designs modern accessories incorporating ancient Georgian symbols, bridging tradition with innovation.

Karagma blends Georgian ornamentation with modern leather fashion.

Gumbati focuses on providing education in rural areas, promoting professional development.

Tebe employs people with disabilities, creating economic independence through laser-cut wooden products.

A BROADER INITIATIVE WITH REGIONAL IMPACT

This meetup is part of a larger EU-funded project supporting social entrepreneurship in Georgia, Belarus, and Ukraine. Irina Mania from the Georgian Heritage Crafts Association highlighted the importance of mentorship and regional outreach, aiming to help social enterprises become competitive and sustainable.

"This project involves 15 mentors from various successful business sectors who guide enterprises based on their expertise. Our goal is to make these collaborations meaningful and sustainable," said Mania.

She highlighted that the initiative is not limited to Tbilisi but extends to regional areas such as Gori, Dusheti, and Tserovani.

PRIVATE SECTOR SUPPORT

Private companies like Tegeta Holding shared their experiences working with social enterprises, noting the reliability and competitive nature of these businesses.

Nazi Tetradze, Tegeta Holding's Head of Marketing Procurement, addressed concerns about potential risks in working with social enterprises, emphasizing that Tegeta's experience has been overwhelmingly positive. "Some assume that working with social enterprises comes with challenges, whether in terms of delivery times, pricing, or quality. However, based on our collaborations, we've seen that these businesses are just as reliable and competitive as traditional suppliers," she said.

INTERACTIVE WORKSHOPS: BRINGING GEORGIAN CRAFTSMANSHIP TO LIFE

The event included workshops that allowed participants to engage with the craftsmanship behind the enterprises, creating a deeper understanding of their artistic and social value.

The meetup was a step toward long-term partnerships, showing that supporting social enterprises not only benefits communities, but also strengthens businesses and contributes to a more inclusive economy.

For more on this story, check out the upcoming issue of GT Business.



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Startup Grind - Iako Jikia on Reinvention and Building a Startup

BY KESARIA KATCHARAVA

At this month's Startup Grind Tbilisi, former professional tennis player Iako Jikia shared her journey from sports to entrepreneurship. Forced to retire after an injury, Jikia transitioned into business, first working at Paybox, a company specializing in cash deposits and e-wallet services. Now, she is the CEO and co-founder of Helio AI, a platform that uses AI and gamified assessments to improve hiring processes. Since its launch, Helio AI has analyzed 300,000 job seekers for over 150 companies, offering businesses a new way to evaluate candidates. Speaking at the event, Jikia discussed the challenges of career change, the role of AI in recruitment, and the realities of building a startup.

ADAPTING TO CHANGE AND THE ROLE OF AI

Jikia believes AI is not replacing human work, but reshaping it. "I think artificial intelligence allows people to be much more human and do much more creatively, not to take on various routine tasks," she said. Instead of automating jobs out of existence, AI is streamlining repetitive processes, allowing employees to focus on more meaningful work.

She also noted that traditional work

structures are evolving. "With Georgian companies, and in the latest perspective, you see that they are generally adapting to the idea that the traditional 9-to-6, five-day workweek is not necessary," she said. "When we talk about the region, in my opinion, the trends we see in America and Europe will eventually come here too."

BUILDING A STARTUP ECOSYSTEM IN GEORGIA

The event's organizer, Colin Donahue, highlighted Startup Grind Tbilisi's role in supporting entrepreneurs. "We've done almost 100 events over the years here, and it's about building a community of founders," he said. "It's about building a community of people who want to create companies, who want to try things, make mistakes, and go on that entrepreneurial journey."

A key challenge for founders, he noted, is the lack of mentorship. "If you don't have mentors, it's very difficult to be successful," he said. Events like this aim to bridge that gap, connecting new entrepreneurs with those who have experience scaling businesses.

This month's Startup Grind also focused on female founders. "We're doing three events focused on female founders, partly in celebration of International Women's Day, but also because we have a ton of really good founders who happen to be women in Georgia," Donahue said. "We actually have better representation here



than in a lot of places. I was in India, and I looked around the room, and it was all men. So I'm very proud of Georgia for having great female founders."

LESSONS FROM SPORTS AND BUSINESS

Jikia credits her time in professional sports with preparing her for the uncertainty of entrepreneurship. "Sports teach you how to handle setbacks," she said. "You train every day, you lose matches, but you have to get back up and keep

going. That's exactly what entrepreneurship is like."

Starting a business, like training for a tournament, requires discipline, adaptability, and persistence. Jikia had to navigate an entirely new field after leaving tennis, learning the ins and outs of business while building something from the ground up.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR HELIO AI?

Helio AI is expanding rapidly and gaining international recognition. "We're

accumulating customers and revenue very quickly," Jikia said. "We're internationalizing, and it's just a great example of how Georgian startups can compete on a global level."

As more entrepreneurs enter the tech space, events like Startup Grind will continue to play a role in bringing people together, sharing insights, and fostering new ideas. Jikia's story is a reminder that a career setback doesn't have to mean the end—it can be the start of something new.

SOCIETY



Tbilisi, the Hub of Worldwide Peace and Friendship

BLOG BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

The story of potential success and prosperity continues: Sakartvelo has already proven that it is, and will continue to be, a genuine hub of peace and friendship between the peoples of the world. Too bold a statement? Perhaps, but the historical opportunity that has fallen straight into our hands must be nurtured and upheld by the entire nation. In fact, there is no better path for this beautiful land's survival and success. This remarkable international project, based and accomplished in Sakartvelo, carries a long but very meaningful title: 'The Multifunctional International Valley of Peace and Friendship for Peoples of the World, Football Stars, Olympic Champions, and World Titleholders.'

March 25 was a significant day in laying the foundation for this project, which was initiated, organized, and led by Nikoloz Makhradze-Patarklishvili, the founder of the Argentina House in Georgia and the United Nations Ambassador for Arts and Literature in the country. Crowds gathered at the site of this future global endeavor, located at the foot of the Man & Sun Monument by Zurab Tsereteli, the world-renowned Georgian artist, sculptor, architect, and UNESCO goodwill ambassador. People came to witness the enthusiastic public support for this outstanding international project, grounded in our national values, ideals, and inspirational standards.

Among the supporters were the founders of the Georgian National Olympic Committee, Tengiz Gachechiladze and Paata Natsvlishvili, Olympic and world champions Nino Salukvadze, Rusudan Khoperia, and Inga Giorgobiani, Givi Abdushelishvili, counselor to the National Academy of Sciences, and many other public figures, including representatives from the arts, culture, sports, the Patriarchy, and the Government. The most vibrant part of the day was the young football players, dressed in their field uniforms and equipped with custom-made soccer balls under their well-trained feet, standing alongside

teenage folk dancers, both boys and girls, dressed in colorful Georgian national costumes.

The author of these words was also honored to be present at the event. The foundation of this Valley of Fame is one of the most prominent components of the fruitful cooperation between Georgia and the countries of the well-known Latin American free-trade and cultural union, MERCOSUR. The belief is that the development of upcoming cooperation with the member countries of the alliance will provide a strong impetus to Georgia's promotion on the international stage as a bridge for peace, friendship, and cooperation – a country positioned at the crossroads of the East and West, North and South.

Our connection with the nations of MERCOSUR envisions the enhancement of multilateral tourism, profitable business deals, meaningful cultural ties, and, to the greatest delight of our football fans, the revival and promotion of Georgian football to world-class standards. Regular air flights between Georgia and Latin America are also planned, which could potentially stimulate both regions' national economies. The much-discussed Valley will be a harbinger of numerous sporting events, planned by relevant national federations and international associations, including the GNOC, FIFA, and UEFA.

The founders and promoters of the Valley, who symbolically laid its foundation two weeks ago near Tbilisi International Airport, are not alone in their patriotic endeavor. The Government of Georgia is fully involved, prepared to support the actual construction of the Valley. The Tbilisi City Council and the Mayor's office have been tasked by the Administration to manage the project and ensure its completion. It is certain that leaders from various countries will show interest in helping bring the project to fruition, given the historical, cultural, natural, geographic, climatic, recreational, and other assets Georgia possesses.

In addition to the Georgian government's support, the active participation of the United Nations, UNESCO, and UNOTA in implementing the project is also anticipated. As the saying goes, the more, the merrier!

Meet You in the Meadows

დიღომის ყალბები DIGHOMI MEADOWS

Funded by the European Union

ბიომრავალფეროვნება BIODIVERSITY

დიღომის ყალბები ერთ-ერთი უნიკალური ბიომრავალფეროვნების არეალია, რომელიც მდებარეობს მთკვარი მდინარის ნაპირას. აქ ბინადრობს მრავალი მცენარეული და ცხოველური სახეობა, მათ შორის ბევრი მცირე ზომის მცხოვრებელი. ეს არეალი არა მხოლოდ ბუნების სილამაზის სახეობაა, არამედ მნიშვნელოვანი ბიომრავალფეროვნების არეალია, რომელიც უზრუნველყოფს მცხოვრებელ სახეობათა გადარსებას.

ბიომრავალფეროვნების მნიშვნელობა

ბიომრავალფეროვნება არის ბუნების ერთ-ერთი უმთავრესი მნიშვნელობა. ის უზრუნველყოფს ბუნების სილამაზის, მცხოვრებელ სახეობათა გადარსებას და ბუნების სილამაზის შენარჩუნებას. ბიომრავალფეროვნების დაცვა არის ბუნების სილამაზის შენარჩუნების ერთ-ერთი უმთავრესი პირობა.

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BLOG BY TONY HANMER

Having spent a whole autumn and winter getting to know and photograph the neighborhood around our apartment, it was my great joy to discover recently a new sign put up near one of the ponds. “Dighomi Meadows,” it proclaimed, the whole notice board in both Georgian and English. It described the area’s wildlife (otters! Eurasian hoopes! and more), some issues such as illegal dumping of garbage, and so on. There is a

new Facebook group for the organization, <https://www.facebook.com/Dighomimeadows> as well. Today, I interviewed Ana Trapaidze about all this, on site.

Ana and her family, recently relocated from living and working abroad for a while, were stuck in the rising pandemic from late 2019. Living in the same building as my wife and I would later move to, they heard incessant trucks driving to and fro, and had to breathe in the dust of that movement night after night—this at a time when nighttime quarantines were supposed to be in effect. Ana began lobbying the city government to find out more, and discovered that there

was an illegal gravel-digging operation going on between Green Diamond and the Mtkvari River, the holes being filled with construction waste. After hard protest work and videoing of the culprits, they were able to have this stopped (more or less). But there are still hectares and hectares of dumped concrete, rubble and more in this location.

The main island on the Mtkvari running under the bridge between Dighomi and Gldani is called Otter Island, for obvious reasons. Here, river otters can raise young entirely away from predatory dogs and cats. The whole area between the river and the sports complexes is a catchment zone for occasional

flooding; anywhere you dig, your hole will fill up with water, slowly but surely.

We continued our walk behind the sports fields, and here Ana showed me many more ponds, artificial ones caused by gravel digging. She pointed out the sound of a kingfisher, which if I want to photograph I’ll need a much longer lens than my current maximum of 300mm. I had seen a woodpecker earlier, and also terrapins sunning themselves on logs, and snails. There’s plenty of wildlife, once you start looking for it. There must be fish in the main ponds, too, given the numbers of fishermen now coming out to try their luck, including an Orthodox priest.

We also found many new 20kg sacks of building waste dumped at the edge of one of the ponds; and Ana told me that she has caught youngsters after sports practice dumping drink bottles here too. Sheer laziness and lack of will to take the trouble to find proper garbage disposal locations.

My wife and I hope to be on hand for the next garbage removal day, before we go to Svaneti for the summer, to do what we can to clean up. It might be a small effort, but if more of us get involved,

we can make a difference.

One of the things I have cherished about our new apartment is exactly this: its proximity to these ponds, the forests and the river. We have the best of both worlds: city and nature. I have spent many happy hours over many days shooting reflections in the ponds, close-ups of rare ice in puddles in the winter, the changes of season and more; getting shots I can call some of my best recent work. I CAN shoot around the garbage. But it’s harming both the esthetic and the environment; and I can also remove it and promote proper garbage disposal. I hope to see things turn around and flourish here. Ana, thank you so much for your dedication as an eco-warrior!

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

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Tsavkisi Park - A New Standard of Living in Tbilisi



BY TEAM GT

Located just a 7-minute drive up from Freedom Square, Tsavkisi Park is a new residential project in the heart of the Tsavkisi Valley, a suburban development which over 200 families have already made their home. Situated at an altitude of 820 meters above sea level, Tsavkisi Park offers panoramic views of Tbilisi, surrounded by lush greenery and a tranquil environment. The final phase of the Tsavkisi Valley development, Tsavkisi Park promises to blend nature with modern, luxury living. We sat down with Gegi Vasadze, Man-

aging Partner of Horizon Capital, the company behind Tsavkisi Park, to discuss the unique aspects of this project and its vision for the future of urban living.

WHAT IS TSAVKISI PARK AND HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE IT IN YOUR COMPANY'S CONCEPT?

Tsavkisi Park is not just another residential project; it represents a significant step forward in how we think about modern living. As the last phase of the Tsavkisi Valley development, it is part of our broader vision to create environments that elevate the lifestyle of residents, combining luxury with nature and convenience. Our concept for Tsavkisi Park is simple: it's a place where you can

enjoy the comforts of modern life, without losing touch with nature. We wanted to create a space that allows people to live close to the city but also feel like they are in a protected natural environment.

HOW DOES THE PROJECT REFLECT THE PROXIMITY OF TBILISI AND WHAT ADVANTAGES DOES THE LOCATION HAVE THAT SET THIS PROJECT APART FROM OTHER SIMILAR PROJECTS?

The location of Tsavkisi Park is one of its greatest assets. It's just a 7-minute drive from Freedom Square, which gives residents easy access to the city while allowing them to escape the noise and congestion of urban life. At the same time, Tsavkisi Park is situated at 820 meters above sea level, offering breathtaking panoramic views of Tbilisi. The combination of proximity to the city and the natural beauty of the area makes this project truly unique. The protected environment of Tsavkisi Valley adds to the appeal—it's a secure, peaceful community, surrounded by hills, ravines, and green spaces. The convenience of living so close to the city, paired with the tranquility of nature, sets Tsavkisi Park apart from other developments.

WHAT IS THE DESIGN OF TSAVKISI PARK AND WHAT ARE THE MAIN ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES THAT HELP YOU CREATE A DISTINCTIVE EXPERIENCE FOR RESIDENTS?

The design of Tsavkisi Park is inspired by the natural surroundings, yet it's also fully adapted to modern living. The townhouses are designed with both comfort and style in mind. Each townhouse spans three levels and ranges from 240 to 305 square meters. They come with private features, such as their own garage, spacious terraces, and a private pool on the top floor, covered with modern pergolas. The architectural concept was developed by Irakli Abashidze and his firm, Laboratory of Architecture, known for their innovative approach to contemporary design. Their vision for Tsavkisi Park seamlessly integrates modern structures with the natural landscape, ensuring that each home feels organic. We've also included vertical gardens, which not only add beauty but also connect the living spaces with nature. The



Gegi Vasadze, Managing Partner of Horizon Capital

homes are delivered in a "green frame" condition, which means they are ready for personalization, but buyers don't have to worry about foundational work. The materials used are of the highest quality, from Spanish granite on the terraces to Italian-made heating pipes. This thoughtful design allows residents to experience both luxury and practicality.

DOES THE PROJECT FEATURE MODERN INFRASTRUCTURE, AND HOW DO YOU PLAN TO ARRANGE LARGE-SCALE AND COMFORTABLE SPACES, FOR EXAMPLE, GARAGES, TERRACES, AND POOLS?

Yes, the infrastructure at Tsavkisi Park is designed with the highest standards of modern living in mind. Each townhouse comes with a private garage, ensuring that residents always have dedicated parking. The terraces are expansive and beautifully designed, offering an excellent space for outdoor living, and the private pools are a standout feature, allowing residents to enjoy their own resort-like environment. The pools are positioned on the top floor, offering stunning views, while the pergola system provides both style and shelter. The entire area will be surrounded by green belts, walking paths, and playgrounds, making it not just a place to live, but a place to relax and enjoy the outdoors. Everything has been thoughtfully planned to create spacious, comfortable, and convenient living.

HOW IS THE SALES PROCESS GOING IN TSAVKISI PARK? WHAT STRATEGIES DO YOU USE TO MAXIMALLY INVOLVE POTENTIAL BUYERS IN THE PROJECT?

The sales process for Tsavkisi Park is progressing very well. The project has generated significant interest, particularly because of its unique offering—modern, luxurious living with nature just steps away from the city. We have partnered with TBC Bank to offer flexible mortgage solutions, which allows potential buyers to secure their homes with favorable terms. Our sales strategy is to emphasize the lifestyle that comes with Tsavkisi Park. It's not just about buying a house; it's about buying into a community and a way of life. By focusing on how the development blends nature with modern conveniences, we've been able to engage with buyers who are looking for something more than just a place to live—they're looking for a home that fits their lifestyle.

WHAT IS THE CONDITION OF THE HOUSES AND HOW DO RESIDENTS ACCEPT THE "GREEN FRAME"? WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF THIS FORMAT?

The "green frame" condition offers buyers the flexibility to personalize their



homes while benefiting from a high-quality base structure. This format has been well-received because it allows residents to customize the interiors to their liking while still moving into a house that is nearly finished. The green frame includes all the essential features: high-quality windows, doors, and plumbing, as well as the necessary wiring. This gives buyers the freedom to design their interiors according to their preferences. In addition, the green frame condition comes with added perks, such as smart home systems, remote garage opening mechanisms, and pergola systems, ensuring that the transition to their new home is as easy and enjoyable as possible.

HOW WOULD YOU ASSESS THE POSITION OF TSAVKISI PARK IN A COMPETITIVE MARKET? WHAT IS THE MAIN DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THIS PROJECT AND OTHER SIMILAR PROJECTS?

Tsavkisi Park is unique in that it offers the best of both worlds: luxury living and a connection to nature, all while being just minutes away from Tbilisi. In a market filled with luxury developments, what sets Tsavkisi Park apart is its emphasis on natural beauty and tranquility, combined with modern living and top-tier amenities. The area is already well-established, with Tsavkisi Valley being home to top professionals and entrepreneurs from Georgia. The sense of security, well-maintained green spaces, and access to natural surroundings are what make Tsavkisi Park stand out. It's not just a place to live—it's a lifestyle choice.

WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL BE THE LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT OF TSAVKISI PARK AND WHAT INITIATIVES ARE THERE TO INCREASE THE POPULARITY OF THIS COMPLEX?

Looking to the future, we see Tsavkisi Park becoming one of the most desirable addresses in Tbilisi. The combination of luxury, convenience, and nature will only continue to attract more residents. We plan to maintain the project's exclusivity and high standards while further developing the community and ensuring it continues to meet the evolving needs of residents. As the Tsavkisi Valley area continues to grow in prestige, we are committed to maintaining a high level of service and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the environment around Tsavkisi Park.

Tsavkisi Park, as the final phase of the Tsavkisi Valley development, promises to be a true landmark in Tbilisi's real estate landscape. With its stunning townhouses, exceptional design, and unparalleled natural surroundings, it sets a new standard for luxury living in Georgia's capital. Whether it's the private pools, the green spaces, or the flexible "green frame" condition, Tsavkisi Park offers an unmatched lifestyle—one that is both connected to the city and immersed in nature.



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The House That Paints the City: The Museum of Elene Akhvlediani as a Time Capsule of Tbilisi's Soul

BY IVAN NECHAEV

In the heart of Old Tbilisi, tucked away on Leo Kiacheli Street, stands a building that is a portrait of the city itself. The Elene Akhvlediani House Museum is not just a tribute to one of Georgia's most celebrated painters; it is a microcosm of Tbilisi's artistic, political, and social transformations.

Unlike grand museums that monumentalize art in the cold silence of white walls, Akhvlediani's home preserves art in its most organic form—a lived-in space. This house once buzzed with the voices of poets, composers, and avant-garde intellectuals, forming a nucleus of Georgia's artistic resistance. Today, it continues to breathe, serving as a bridge between past and present, between artistic expression and the turbulent currents of history.

To understand the significance of the museum, one must first understand Elene Akhvlediani (1901–1975) herself. A woman who defied artistic conventions, she painted Tbilisi not as a postcard-perfect vision, but as a living, breathing entity—full of cracks, rhythms, and whispers. Her cityscapes, with their fluid lines and dreamlike hues, capture the essence of Tbilisi not as an architectural ensemble, but as a psychological space.

Trained in Paris in the 1920s, Akhvlediani returned to Georgia carrying the echoes of modernist Europe in her brushstrokes. But she did not merely imitate Western trends; she translated them into a Georgian language of form and light. Her work straddled the line between impressionism, expressionism, and the emotional essence of Georgian folk art.

What makes Akhvlediani's legacy politically and socially charged is that she painted at a time when Socialist Realism sought to impose its rigid doctrine on Soviet art. While official art glorified factory workers and collective farms, Akhvlediani painted Tbilisi's crooked streets, decaying balconies, and the intimate poetry of its everyday life. In a sense, her art was an act of quiet defiance, an insistence on the primacy of individual vision over collective ideology.

Akhvlediani was one of the very few female artists in the early Soviet period who achieved recognition in a male-dominated field. This alone makes the museum an important landmark in the history of Georgian feminism. Her career challenged the traditional roles expected of women at the time: she was neither a homemaker nor an artist confined to decorative crafts, but a painter of vast, ambitious urban landscapes.

Yet, paradoxically, despite her immense contributions, Akhvlediani's place in public memory remains overshadowed by male counterparts like Lado Gudiashvili and David Kakabadze. The existence of her museum is an ongoing political act of reclaiming space for women in Georgia's cultural history. It ensures that she is not relegated to a footnote but remains a central figure in Tbilisi's artistic narrative.

The museum, which was Akhvlediani's actual home and studio, preserves the spirit of artistic resistance that defined her life. In Soviet times, when free thought was policed and creativity was expected to serve the state, Akhvlediani's house functioned as a safe haven for intellectuals.

Her salon gatherings were attended by poets like Paolo Iashvili and Titsian Tabidze, musicians like Otar Taktakish-



Photo by the author



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vili, and theater directors who sought to push the boundaries of their craft. These meetings were more than social occasions: they were covert acts of cultural resistance, where artistic innovation was nurtured in defiance of totalitarian aesthetics.

Even after Stalin's purges devastated Georgia's artistic community in the 1930s, Akhvlediani's house remained a sanctuary. This makes the museum not just a

static exhibition space but a living archive of Georgia's intellectual resilience. Today, when one walks through its rooms, one is not merely observing paintings on the wall, one is stepping into a historical moment, into the very fabric of an alternative artistic history that refused to be erased.

Established in 1976, one year after Akhvlediani's death, the museum is more than a collection of paintings; it is a space that embodies the tension between preservation and transformation, a tension that has defined Georgian culture for centuries.

Akhvlediani's paintings serve as a visual diary of a disappearing city. The wooden balconies, crooked alleyways, and hidden courtyards she depicted are vanishing under the pressures of gentrification and modernization. In this sense, the museum functions as a time capsule, reminding visitors of a Tbilisi that once was—a city where art and daily life were intimately intertwined. But does the museum merely preserve a romanticized past, or does it push us to engage with the city's present and future? This is the central question that lingers in its halls.

While the museum does not explicitly present itself as a political space, its very existence is an act of resistance. Akhvlediani lived through the Soviet cultural machine, which sought to control artistic production. Yet, her work remained defiantly Georgian, her landscapes did not adhere to Socialist Realism, and her focus on Georgia's unique architecture and landscapes subtly rejected Soviet homogenization. In this way, the museum stands as a quiet protest against cultural erasure. It tells a story that Soviet history books often overlooked: the endurance of Georgia's artistic identity despite political pressures.

A HOUSE THAT STILL BELONGS TO THE ARTISTS

In 2024, the museum underwent a significant restoration, funded by the Georgian Ministry of Culture and Sports. The project included improvements to climate control, lighting, and structural integrity. Over 100 artworks were restored, and the interior was carefully reconstructed to reflect the atmosphere of Akhvlediani's lifetime.

In an era where gentrification threatens to erase the historical texture of Tbilisi, Akhvlediani's house stands as a monument to the city's artistic DNA. Tbilisi has undergone rapid transformations—glass skyscrapers replace old Soviet structures, and hip cafés take over historic neighborhoods. Amidst this whirlwind of change, the Akhvlediani Museum serves as an anchor, a reminder that Tbilisi's identity is not built on commercialized nostalgia, but on its true artistic past.

Furthermore, the museum's potential role as an active cultural space, hosting exhibitions, literary evenings, and experimental performances, ensures that it remains a site of creative dialogue rather than a mere mausoleum. This is what differentiates it from conventional house museums that preserve artifacts without engaging with contemporary culture.

The Elene Akhvlediani House Museum is more than a tribute to a single painter. It is a testament to the enduring power of artistic defiance, a space where Tbilisi's past, present, and future collide. It reminds us that art is not only about beauty, it is about memory, resistance, and the refusal to conform. As long as its doors remain open, it will continue to whisper the stories of those who once gathered here, ensuring that Tbilisi's creative spirit never fades into silence.

Between Romantic Thunder and Nordic Mysticism: Tbilisi Symphony Orchestra's Concert of Tchaikovsky and Sibelius



Photo by the author

BY IVAN NECHAEV

On the evening of March 29, the Djansug Kakhidze Tbilisi Center for Music & Culture became a battleground of emotions, where the fervent Romanticism of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky met the austere and enigmatic world of Jean Sibelius. The Tbilisi Symphony Orchestra, under the guidance of Maestro Revaz Javakhishvili, presented a program of breathtaking contrasts, pairing Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 with Sibelius' Symphony No. 2. The concert's soloist, the celebrated Georgian pianist David Aladashvili, brought both fire and finesse to the evening, turning this performance into a profound dialogue between musical traditions, national identities, and artistic sensibilities.

THE STORM OF TCHAIKOVSKY: DAVID ALADASHVILI'S FIERY VIRTUOSITY

If there is one piano concerto that has become synonymous with Romantic grandeur, it is Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1. Opening with its legendary, almost orchestral chordal introduction, this concerto is a relentless display of both technical brilliance and deep emotional turmoil.

David Aladashvili, a pianist with a reputation for blending intellectual precision with expressive depth, took on the formidable challenge with a unique approach. From the first thunderous chords, his playing was neither bombas-

tic nor indulgent; rather, he demonstrated an understanding of Tchaikovsky's architecture, carefully balancing drama with lyricism. The cadenza in the first movement was not just a display of virtuosity but a moment of storytelling—Aladashvili seemed to shape every phrase with narrative intensity, as though reliving Tchaikovsky's own personal torments.

The Andantino semplice—the fragile, almost fairy-tale-like second movement—was where Aladashvili's nuanced touch shone. The pianist is known for his refined, crystalline sound, and here, his delicate phrasing turned the movement into an intimate confession rather than a mere interlude. The orchestra, under Javakhishvili's sensitive direction, provided a shimmering backdrop, allowing Aladashvili's playing to breathe and unfold naturally.

The final movement was an explosion of rhythmic energy. Tchaikovsky, always inspired by Russian folk music, fills this Allegro con fuoco with relentless syncopations and dance-like motifs. Aladashvili attacked the finale with controlled ferocity, making it clear that he understood the movement's raw power without letting it descend into mere bravado. The chemistry between the pianist and the orchestra was palpable, with Javakhishvili keeping the ensemble taut and responsive.

SIBELIUS' SECOND SYMPHONY: A NORDIC EPIC IN A GEORGIAN CONTEXT

After the fire of Tchaikovsky, the transition to Sibelius' Symphony No. 2 was almost cinematic. If the Russian composer's concerto was a storm, then the

Finnish composer's symphony was a vast landscape—expansive, brooding, and quietly defiant.

Sibelius' Second Symphony has long been associated with the Finnish national struggle, often interpreted as a subtle but powerful assertion of identity against Russian rule. For a Georgian audience, this context was impossible to ignore. Much like Finland, Georgia has had to navigate the tensions between cultural preservation and external political pressures. In this sense, the symphony's inclusion in the program felt pointed: was this a reminder of the power of art in shaping national consciousness?

Javakhishvili approached the first movement with patience, allowing the opening theme—softly murmuring strings—to emerge organically. The Tbilisi Symphony Orchestra, known for its lush string section, delivered the warm textures that make Sibelius' symphony so distinct. Unlike the sweeping melodicism of Tchaikovsky, Sibelius' music moves in broad, tectonic shifts. Here, Javakhishvili's skill as a conductor was on full display, building the movement's momentum with architectural clarity.

The second movement, an elegiac Andante, was where the performance reached its deepest emotional resonance. The haunting pizzicato opening, answered by mournful wind solos, felt like a lament—perhaps for a Finland of the past, or for any nation that has struggled for its autonomy. The Tbilisi Symphony's brass section, often a highlight of the orchestra, gave the climactic outbursts a raw, almost primal quality.

By the time the third movement arrived—a restless Scherzo that barely allows the



Photo by the author



Photo by the author

listener to breathe—the tension was palpable. The sweeping final movement, often called Sibelius' great "freedom symphony," exploded into its majestic finale. The brass fanfare, rising inexorably like a national anthem being born, was a moment of sheer transcendence. The Tbilisi Symphony Orchestra, under Javakhishvili's baton, captured the grandeur without overstatement. The final chords rang out with the kind of authority that made one believe, at least for a moment, in the redemptive power of music.

A MUSIC TO REFLECT UPON

This concert was more than a showcase of brilliant musicianship. In its very structure, it posed an implicit dialogue between two artistic worlds: the impassioned, often self-destructive emotionalism of Tchaikovsky and the measured, nationalist resilience of Sibelius.

For Georgia, a country that continues to navigate its complex post-Soviet identity, these works resonate on multiple levels. Tchaikovsky's music, deeply beloved in Georgia, carries the weight

of imperial history, while Sibelius represents a model of cultural independence through artistic perseverance. Could this pairing be read as a statement on Georgia's own aspirations—to honor its historical ties while forging a distinct and self-determined future?

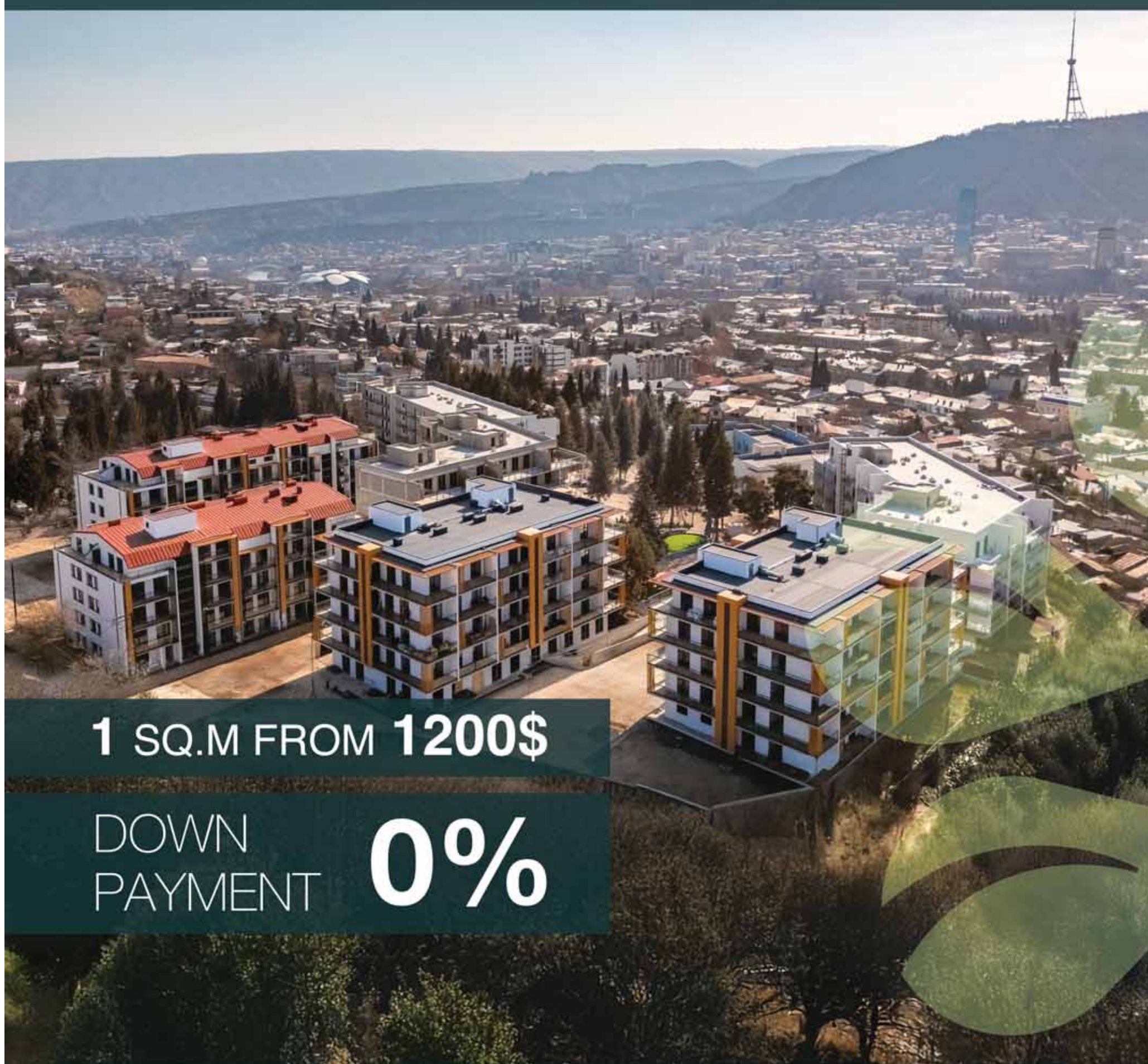
Both David Aladashvili and Revaz Javakhishvili seem to embody this balance in their artistic choices. Aladashvili, despite his international career, remains deeply connected to his Georgian roots, bringing a uniquely national sensibility to his interpretations. Javakhishvili, as one of the leading conductors in the country, has consistently sought to expand the repertoire of Georgian orchestras, bringing in lesser-performed works like Sibelius' symphonies.

Ultimately, this was a concert of more than just music: it was a statement. Whether intentional or not, it reminded the audience of the power of cultural memory, of the stories embedded within sound, and of the unspoken dialogues that music creates across time and borders.



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