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Christopher Coppola: I am giving everyone an opportunity to express his talents

Christopher Coppola, the famous Hollywood film director and producer, has taken part in a festival organised by the Ministry of Youth and Sport of Georgia and the NGO Children and Youth National Centre, part of his

project PAH-FEST (Project Accessible Hollywood, Georgia 2013). The theme of the festival was famous seventeenth century Georgian writer Sulikhan Saba Orbeliani's "Wisdom of Fancy".

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Screening of scandalous videotapes causes controversy

By LIKA MOSHIAVILI, GT

The videotapes depicting the torture of two detainees by law enforcement officers, which the authorities say were found in a large arms cache unearthed earlier this week in the Samegrelo region, have been shown to a large group of media and civil society representatives, political analysts, commentators and diplomats by the Interior Ministry.

The tapes shown on June 20 contain two separate episodes in which two detainees, whose faces are concealed on the video, are raped and tortured, offences which according to the Interior Ministry took place in 2011. In one episode law enforcement officers are purportedly trying to obtain a confession from the detainee in connection with an alleged terrorism case. Sound was muted on the videos, which have English subtitles.

The Interior Ministry states that nine individuals, among them three acting and one former law enforcement officer and the man accused of sexually abusing two detainees, have been arrested in connection to scenes shown on the videotapes. "The public should know who was behind this. I want to remind everyone that Vano Merabishvili was the [interior] minister at the time; all state officials during whose tenure such terrible things happened should be held responsible," Interior Minister Irakli Garibashvili commented.

Irakli Alasania, the Defence Minister, told journalists on June 20 that the videotapes were evidence of "institutions of massive sadism" existing under the previous authorities. "Not only Vano Merabishvili but the President are politically responsible for these institutions of massive terror and sadism," Alasania said.

President Saakashvili's UNM party called for the setting up of a parliamentary investigative commission to oversee the Interior Ministry's probe into the crimes depicted on the videotapes in order to prevent the possible misuse of the case for political purposes. The President stated, "Every-

one knows that in recent years the police have changed much, and no doubt the situation here



has very much improved. But sadists and violators may always sneak in. Of course it's very much regrettable if such people sneaked into my government. There must be a very specific approach towards these people. They must not be covered up."

On June 20 the UNM stated that the videos revealed "such a grave crime that it should be stated unambiguously, and without any political speculation, that each and every person who was involved in and who has organized torture and inhuman treatment and made videos showing [this crime] should be punished to the fullest extent of the law." A further statement released on June 20 on behalf of UNM Secretary General Vano Merabishvili, who is now in pretrial detention facing multiple criminal charges, which he refutes and describes as politically motivated, concurs that those behind the crimes shown on the videotapes should be held responsible to the fullest extent of the law; however it adds that "if such things were taking place in the police" under the previous authorities these were isolated instances and such crimes were in no way systemic in nature. "Speculation about such cases being of systemic nature represent part of a campaign directed against the previous authorities and me personally,"

the statement reads.

The Interior Ministry's decision to show these videotapes

hidden under "the direct supervision of former high ranking officials of the interior ministry during the previous government."

A few journalists also walked out, among them talk-

ing devices." has in itself caused controversy. Some of the audience walked out in protest without watching them, including representatives of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, Transparency International Georgia and the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy; they said that it was unclear what the purpose of screening these videotapes was and that the Interior Ministry should have simply shared information about the investigation into these crimes.

"I'm sure the footage will show horrible things... things envisaged in ugly minds," head of the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) commented. "But they could simply have told us what volume of material had been found, and so on. I do not see the point of showing the tapes," he added.

The Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics, an organization protecting media standards, and expressed concern about the form in which the ministry presented the videos to the NGOs and media. The Charter called on the ministry to do its best not to allow to dissemination of these videos. "Media and NGO representatives could bring in mobile phones or recorders and film this footage," the Charter wrote in a statement. "The ministry should not have allowed media representatives to bring in re-

cording devices." show host Davit Paichadze, who said that before the screening he had asked the Interior Minister whether measures had been taken to fully conceal the identities of those seen on the footage; Paichadze, who is perceived by many government supporters to be a sympathizer with the previous authorities, said that instead of giving him a clear answer the Minister started asking him why he had not talked about human rights when the UNM was in power, and he therefore left the meeting. NestanTsetskhladze, Editor of Netgazeti, had similar concerns. "I saw two scenes in which it was possible to identify the persons depicted - their faces were not hidden. I do not know who they were, victims or violators, but I left the meeting after this," he says.

Interior Minister Garibashvili had in fact told the audience prior to the screening that the confidentiality of those depicted on the video would be protected and warned the audience that the footage was "very difficult to watch." He also said that it would not be appropriate to make the videos available to a wider public because "we think this would cause huge anxiety amongst the public."

The Georgian Interior Ministry stated last week that a large arms cache had been unearthed in the western Georgian region of Samegrelo, which was

hidden under "the direct supervision of former high ranking officials of the interior ministry during the previous government." It included "a large quantity of explosives and explosive devices; hand grenades; firearms and other weapons and military munitions; communications gear, and a large quantity of narcotic and psychotropic medicines including heroin, opium, cocaine, subutex, etc." Video footage released by the Interior Ministry showed that the cache included about two dozen Kalashni-

kov assault rifles, at least seven RPG launchers, over 90 hand grenades and other munitions and military gear, which were supposedly stored underground in plastic barrels. It also included the videotapes shown on June 20 and files containing photos and private information concerning some individuals who were in the opposition to the previous authorities and whose arrest had allegedly been planned in the event that the United National Movement won the October 1, 2012 parliamentary elections.

NEWS

Irakli Garibashvili not ruling out charges to be intensified against Vano Merabishvili

Irakli Garibashvili not ruling out charges to be intensified against Vano Merabishvili Interior Minister Irakli Garibashvili does not rule out charges to be intensified against Vano Merabishvili with regard to the hidden cache discovered in Samegrelo region.

"Of course it's possible. Naturally, we will launch an investigation to find out who were ideologists of all this. In the years when the videos were shot, the Interior Minister was Vano Merabishvili and he was controlling everything. How do you think could anyone dare commit such action without this person's will and his direct consent? This is absurd and this is a deliberate campaign aimed at justifying Merabishvili. But no one can escape responsibility," said Garibashvili.

He said there was a well designed and detailed plan for intimidation, terror, torture, rape and inhuman treatment of people.

As for why the discovered video tapes were shown to the diplomatic corps, civil society and media, Garibashvili said it was made for the critics who talk about political motives of Merabishvili's arrest.

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MIA not going to cooperate with National Movement in the investigation process with regard to the video tapes

MIA not going to cooperate with National Movement in the investigation process with regard to the video tapes The Ministry of Internal Affairs is not going to cooperate with the National Movement in the investigation process with regard to the video tapes discovered in Samegrelo region.

According to Irakli Gharibashvili, the National Movement involvement in the investigation means involvement of the offenders in the case.

"These people were representatives of the previous government and they were feeling very comfortable. I am sure many of them knew what was going on in the prisons, police, etc. Therefore, they have no moral right to be involved in the investigation. This is ridiculous", said Gharibashvili.

He added that the National Movement members will be involved in the investigation process only if their guilt is revealed.

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David Moran: We are strong supporters of Georgia's Euro- Atlantic aspirations

By EMMA BAIRAMOVA, GT

Outgoing United Kingdom Ambassador to Georgia David Moran was only in post six months. Here he shares his impressions of Georgia with Georgian Times.

Your Excellency, what impressions of Georgia do you take back to the UK?

Let me start by saying that I will take back memories of great openness, friendliness and hospitality. These were everything I expected they would be. I should also say that I value having been here 6 months, because mine was a temporary appointment between two full time ambassadors, so it was an unexpected but very pleasant surprise to be asked to come here.

How do Georgians differ from other Europeans? Do you like Georgian cuisine or any other specific aspect of Georgia?

I have been aware of Georgian cuisine for many years, I have worked elsewhere in the former Soviet Union since the 90s, so I have been to Georgian restaurants all over the world, but I can say that there is no substitute for eating Georgian food in Georgia. I think what makes Georgians so special is a combination of musical talent and artistic energy, enjoyment of life and willingness to look out to the rest of the world and build friendships around the world which is particularly Georgian.

Do you like the Georgian countryside?

You have a great variety of natural features and a lot of different climatic zones. I think this country is hugely appealing not only for tourists but people like filmmakers. You can make films, set in any part of the world in Georgia!

Can you remember any interesting cultural exchanges taking place between Georgia and the UK during your time here?

Over the past six months there have been all sorts of exchanges. A Georgian playwright took his play to the Royal Court Theatre, and it was an absolute triumph in London. The British dance company Candoco (a contemporary dance company featuring disabled and non-disabled dancers) was brought here by the British Council. They showed that anyone, regardless of any

physical disability, can have enormous talent. Georgian singers have travelled to Britain. A British military band (the Band of the Royal Marines) performed at the Queen's Birthday celebrations hosted by the British Embassy in Georgia. So these exchanges have been constant and very popular in both countries.

What was the political situation in Georgia when you came here and how would you describe it now?

In January when I arrived I saw that people were still getting used to the idea of transition and cohabitation. Now that mid-point between the last parliamentary elections and the presidential elections in October has passed, Both Georgians and Georgia's friends can see that different political parties here can work together constructively, even though one is in government and the other in opposition. This is not easy, but there are now plenty of examples of the two sides working together constructively. I think this builds on what was really a major achievement, the democratic and peaceful transfer of power last October.

Do you agree that there is a lack of democracy in Georgia?

I think that in all countries democracy is a work in progress. Georgia is building its own democratic system. There are all sorts of aspects to this, but in some things there have been real progress, and I am including here last year's elections. This year's elections are a chance to build further on this base. There are a number of other elements which also have to be built on constantly, as they do everywhere: judicial independence, media freedom, freedom of assembly and protection of minorities and people who are different, so that Georgia is a country for all Georgians.

What sort of mistakes did the previous government make?

I was not here during the previous administration. But I can say in general that it is hard to run a country, and every government will achieve certain things and fail to achieve others. The point is that you had an election in which the Georgian people chose a different government, that government is now in power and exercises it peacefully and one of the great-

est legacies of the previous government was that it accepted the result of the popular vote.

Cohabitation is not an easy process, and the Georgian public has seen many scandals since it began. For example, these endless releases of videos showing prisoners being tortured. What do you think about this?

No, cohabitation isn't easy. It needs constant effort from both sides and a mutual desire to work constructively together. And there are people very committed to doing this on both sides. I would like to encourage this positive momentum but recognise that it is difficult for people to accept everything which comes from the other side of the political fence. The other thing I would say is that Georgia is not the first country to experience political cohabitation. Others have gone through this process successfully and I am confident Georgia will too. In terms of those videos, I haven't seen them. I think when you are talking about evidence which can be used in judicial proceedings it is very important that the judicial proceedings themselves are places where evaluations are made. The court is a place where this evidence should be considered and judged. It is for the legal system to examine evidence such as this and draw conclusions about it. This will demonstrate to the world that Georgia has judicial independence.

What do you think about Georgia's position in the world?

We are very glad that Georgia is interested in getting closer to both the EU and NATO and we are strong supporters of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. When I say supporters, I do not mean just in the sense of saying we are in favour of Georgia getting closer. We have actually tried to help Georgia achieve this, both by giving expert advice and maintaining regular contact between our two countries. There is a constant flow of visits between London and Tbilisi, visits made by both ministers and officials. Senior foreign office ministers have been here and now David Usupashvili, your Parliament Speaker, is in London.

It is said that the new Government of Georgia is pro-Russian, while some said that the previous government was pro-American, pro-European etc. Do you think it is easy to

choose a single direction and be pro-something?

I am sure it is possible to be pro-something! Russia is Georgia's neighbour, this is a geographical fact. I think geography has to be taken into account in foreign policy and everything else. Britain sees no problem, and indeed an advantage, in building better relations with neighbours, as this can improve internal security, regional security and even international security. Better relations are what diplomats like me try to promote.

What is your diplomatic advice or message to Georgia's politicians?

Firstly I'd like to say thanks to everybody I have met for being so hospitable. It has been a very pleasant time for me in Georgia and I am determined to return here from time to time. I am not sure what I can give as advice, I can just give encouragement. There are many good things going on in Georgia, and not just since October but even before. The work to push democracy forward, to create a country which promotes and protects the rights of everybody in it, and promotes universal values, not only Georgian values, or European or Asian values, but the values of every human being in terms of freedom of expression and assembly and rule of law. Keep going with these things. I think Georgia is better equipped than many places to make the transition to full democracy with all of the appropriate institutions. I have confidence in Georgia's success, but it is for Georgians to decide how they will achieve it.

What can you say about the economic relations between Georgia and Great Britain?

This is an area where we can do much more together. The level of mutual trade at the moment is pretty low: for example, I think last year Georgia exported only about 20 million pounds worth of goods to the UK. British exports to Georgia were worth probably 120 million or something like that. There is a scope for doing more, and we have created a British business group here, involving British businesses and Britons working in international businesses, to help drive this process in Georgia. There is also a well-established British-Georgian Chamber of Commerce which is trying to do the same in both the UK and Georgia. I think there is



lot of interest, within Georgian business, the Georgian Government and Britain, not just in building trade links between our two countries, but in developing Georgia as part of a transit and logistics hub, providing links across the Southern Caucasus and from the Caspian to the Black Sea and back again.

What would you like to say about the 2012 Olympic Games in London?

The Olympic Games were something we were very proud of, both the Olympics and Paralympics. A big part of the successful bid we made to the International Olympic Committee is that the Games are just

not about a month or two in July-August, they are about creating a continuing legacy of using sport to encourage children around the world to be more active and more healthy and also show through the Paralympics that there is no limit to human ability. Everyone has potential and abilities. I know that Georgia will host the World Youth Games in 2015 and this is very exciting, because it provides another opportunity for us to work with Georgia in trying to promote the issues of youth sports and disabilities and recognising the ability of the disabled, promoting their potential and raising their profile.

NEWS

U.S. Embassy to Georgia releases statement on Wall Street Journal article

The U.S. Embassy to Georgia has released a statement on the Wall Street Journal article.

'The U.S. Government is focused intently on shutting down any Iranian attempts to evade sanctions, including through possible business connections in Georgia.

We are working closely with the Georgians on this issue.

Contrary to certain statements in the article, we see undiminished interest on the part of Georgia's government in strong relations with the United States, and a continued strong desire for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration.

U.S. concerns involving Iran sanctions evasion here have grown in recent years, and pre-date the current Georgian government', says the statement posted on the website of the Embassy.

The Wall Street Journal published an article with the title 'As Sanctions Bite, Iranians Invest Big in Georgia'. According to the article, despite the U.S. sanctions against Iranian business, Iranian products ranging from roofing materials to sour-cherry jam are pouring into Georgian markets, made more attractive by Iran's weak currency. Iran's government itself is buying Georgian land, Iran's agriculture minister has told Iranian media. In the article the U.S. Treasury's top official says 'we are focused intently on shutting down any Iranian attempts to evade sanctions, including through possible business connections in Georgia.'

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“We Have No Problems with the USA, These Problems are Being Invented by Saakashvili and His Friends”

By MAKHA DEKANOSIDZE, GT

The so-called cohabitation government is on the verge of deadlock. The President's party and the new governing coalition continually accuse each other of this and that, and no end to this slanging match is in sight.

Now the President and the UNM are saying that Georgia is under threat of international isolation, following statements made in the US Congress. Here Geotimes.ge interviews one of the leaders of the Republican Party, Levan Berdzenishvili, who is also a member of the governing coalition, about this.

Mr. Berdzenishvili, for several days the UNM has been trying to whip up public hysteria by saying we are at risk of international isolation. Are the statements made by various members of the US Congress so important?

First, I must point out that the statement you are talking about is a draft presented to the Lower House of Congress, the House of Representatives, and it will be voted on a month from now. Therefore, this is not a US Congress statement, as Congress consists of two chambers and the document has not been approved yet. What has been presented is disturbing because it does not contain the correct information. We have enough time to visit, meet, talk and explain, as the final document will be relevant to Georgia.

The President considers the opinions of the congressional representatives fatal to Georgia. However, these lies will not ruin Georgia, and neither can Saakashvili ruin Georgia by claiming that Vano Merabishvili is a holy person. The Georgian public and government are 100% right about this man, and his crimes will be proven in any court, including the Georgian courts and the international courts as well if the UNM wants his case taken there. Nobody can question his crimes, including Saakashvili and Merabishvili himself.

I hope the indictment against Merabishvili will be extended to include what happened to Girgvliani, November the Seventh, etc. It is clear that the attempts by Saakashvili, his friends, his lobbyists and his experts in the USA to exonerate his regime will have only temporary success.

Are you familiar with the position of the US State Department on this matter, as no public statement has yet been



made?

It is not expected that such statements will be made, as the US only wants one thing from our government, transparency and due process. Nobody has said we should not detain a criminal. We have no problem with the US, these problems are being invented by Saakashvili and his friends, some open and some hidden, including various Congressmen and government officials.

As for the State Department, the Vice-President or any other high-ranking officer of state, no one has made similar statements and we can be sure that they will not do so, as before making a statement they will listen to both sides, not just accept the biased information provided by the UNM at face value and react to it. It is not surprising that the US Congress recently approved the plan for US-Georgian military cooperation; this means our relations are stable and progressing, and nothing is hindering them.

Why has the government not been able to change the opinion of these Congressmen through the provision of information? Does this not mean that our foreign policy is weak?

Everything has been provided, but there are more than four hundred Congressmen. Do not worry about this - during the vote it will be revealed who provided what to whom and how much information was provided, even though there are some old friendships, and some not so friendly relations, some ideological and some mercantile links between the previous Georgian government and various Congressmen. Mikheil Saakashvili does not work

against the government but against Georgia. He is not saying that that Government will suffer from international isolation but that the US will not support us militarily anymore, an open attempt to weaken Georgia in the eyes of its enemies. When someone does this it is clear whether that person is a friend or enemy of their country, and if this isn't clear to anyone we will help them understand.

The senior US government members know what is really going on, that is why they are keeping silent. If they believed that Vano Merabishvili was an angel, trust me, John Kerry, Joe Biden and Obama would fall over themselves to be the first to demand that we take our hands off Merabishvili. They do not say anything because they have been provided with the correct information, and we'll provide more information about Merabishvili too. We have found the diary of Megis Kardava, showing how this monster was raised. We will send this as well. It is not possible to become a sadist by chance, no... I will also give it to you journalists to read, and you will understand that when a parent treats you like that, it is obvious what kind of person you will grow into.

You have said that the UNM will disband in autumn, but your fellow coalitionist, Speaker of Parliament David Usupashvili, has said that the survival of UNM would encourage the development of democracy in our state. Hasn't your statement increased public dissatisfaction with the Republicans for cohabiting with the UNM in the first place if this is how you feel?

Cohabitation does not mean that criminals should not be detained. This cohabitation, and we support it, consists of the Republicans and the other members of the Georgian Dream coalition working together with the UNM to change the paragraph in the Constitution giving the President excessive powers, as we have done. Cohabitation does not mean saving Vano Merabishvili, and the Republicans have no different attitude to other parties in this regard. We would like to save the UNM as a party, but if it wants to commit political suicide we cannot interfere. Unfortunately, they still cannot extricate themselves from Saakashvili. Regardless of our desire to save them, they will face problems. I cannot see any reason to blame the Republicans for acting in accordance with the law. I repeat that we will cooperate with the UNM in drafting important laws; any other kind of cohabitation is not possible for us. During his visit to the European Parliament the Speaker called those who have no desire to understand what actually happens in our country "European Kandelakis"

Yesterday, a hidden cache of weapons, drugs and video footage was found in Samegrelo. Is there a threat of informal groupings emerging to destabilize our country?

The UNM is not a threat anymore. Irakli Alasania's announcement of finding those things has created a great panic, but this is unjustified. The head of the EU Mission has asked us why he never found these things when he had so many people on the ground but we did. The UNM has been keeping weapons, drugs, lists

of who should be detained, and finally a plan of what to do in Georgia in the event of victory in these hidden storages.

We will present what we have found to the diplomatic corps and journalists, and this will not be all. There is more footage of human right violations which has not been seen yet.

Vladimir Komodov, the head of the Russian Duma's Defence Committee, has stated that if Georgia is accepted into NATO it may be without Abkhazia and Ossetia. Is this your understanding?

I recently visited the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and had meetings with NATO representatives and I have the impression that we are very close to NATO. I do not exclude us receiving a MAP at the next summit. Only two forces are fighting against this. Our neighbor Russia does not hide the fact that it does not want to see Georgia in NATO and the other force is our former government, which cannot bear to see another government achieving what they couldn't.

Love for the country should always be more important than party interests. NATO has stated very clearly that no country, including Russia, can affect the decisions of NATO and I have seen personally that the Russian Federation is very concerned about NATO's positive attitude towards us. Recent developments at our administrative border are connected with our aspiration to join NATO. I think they are also connected to the detention of Vano Mera-

bishvili, as Russia considers him a useful person.

Regardless of Russia's concerns, we would like to establish relationships with NATO countries and our neighbor will just have to adjust to that. Georgia will be under the same umbrella as Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, all the countries whose citizens saw Russian tanks move in while they slept. When Georgia joins NATO it will actually improve relations with Russia, as happened in the Baltic countries when they became NATO members. European integration and joining NATO are the desire of the majority of the Georgian population and no party will change this.

Georgia knocked on NATO's door during Shevardnadze's era, a big and serious step was taken by Saakashvili and we will take the final step into this structure and thus have one problem less to solve. Therefore, the concerns of the Russian "Derjavniks" that Georgia might join NATO soon, is not without foundation. However, they will also realize that it is better for Georgia to be a NATO member, and to forget about invading our territories. They have a good relationship with Armenia and they would like to go to Iran and the ocean, which they can do through Armenia but not the occupied territories.

History has given another chance to the small countries, and I assure you that you and I will see Georgia become a member of the Alliance and thus become a secure country.

NEWS

Nino Burjanadze: UNM has to start de-natification process instead of co-habitation

Nino Burjanadze calls "National Movement" criminal organization and demands to ban it. As the leader of the "Democratic Movement", Nino Burjanadze stated on today's press-conference that she is shocked from the information obtained at the yesterday's meeting held in the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

According to Nino Burjanadze, the debate about whether there is a systemic crime abuses and misleads the society. As stated by the leader of the "democratic movement", the society has seen many examples and experienced existence of the systemic crime in the country.

"National Movement is a criminal organization and it should be banned. Their political and legal responsibility should be questioned. Not specific doers of the crime, but the organizers of the ideologue and creators of such verticals should be punished, which will be identified after the investigation. I am sure that the criminal trace will lead to the closest environment of Saakashvili" - stated Nino Burjanadze.



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“Georgian Fascism and its Historical Roots”

By DR. VAKHTANG MAISAIA, GT

A hidden cache of arms videos, some of which depict horrific episodes of physical abuse and ill-treatment of various people (including rapes) was recently discovered in the Zugdidi region of Western Georgia. These items are believed to belong to an illegal paramilitary group, the so-called “Georgian Death Squadron”, which is allied with the United National Movement and run by the infamous Georgian “butcher” brothers Megis and Levan Kardava.

More than 13,000 tapes were discovered. Some contain illegally shot footage of people’s private lives and others scenes of sadistic violence so terrible that the Government of Georgia is trying to prevent them ever being seen by the general public. These materials directly indicate that systematic political crimes were committed by the authoritarian

former UNM regime led by Mikheil Saakashvili and his clan. The President must take full responsibility for the committing of these crimes, as such consistent and systematic abuse, by the same individuals, could only have taken place on his authorization.

Mikheil Saakashvili is mentally diseased, suffering from a sexual malevolence complex very similar to that of Adolf Hitler. The systematic criminality depicted on these tapes is a natural product of the immoral and deviant executive environment created by Saakashvili and the sadistic individuals he chose to gather round him, figures such as **Bacho** and **Dato Akhalaia**, **Megis Kardava**, **Vano Merabishvili**, **Giorgi Baramidze**, **Giorgi Mazniashvili**, **Otar Ordzhonikidze**, and **Valeri Zumbadze**. These quasi-political thugs established a new type of Fascism in the 21st century, and the former UNM regime should be judged and punished as the Nazis were at the Nurem-

berg Trials of 1948.

The former regime’s sadistic orientation has long been very vivid, but the question is where it derived from. Rooting out the cause may prevent other regimes following its inhuman example. Georgian Fascism has the following distinguishing features:

- From a historical perspective, Georgian Fascism began on 14 February 2005 when President Saakashvili introduced the political jargon “Zero Tolerance” and the motto “Everyone will be sent to prison” during his official presentation to parliament. Subsequently then Ministry of Internal Affairs Vano Merabishvili was to tell all law enforcement agency personnel: “Kill everyone who resists you in any way and eliminate criminals where you find them without arresting them”. This “Zero Tolerance” policy bore a strong resemblance in practice to a similar initiative launched by Chilean dictator General Augusto Pinochet. In 1975 he pronounced special decree number 1009, which empowered Chilean law enforcement agencies



(principally the DINA – the military junta’s secret police) to conduct: “the preventive arrest of beings who are considered threats to state security”. These ‘beings’ were summarily arrested and then jailed by Ministry of Internal Affairs without trial. Mikheil Saakashvili’s brutal regime adopted exactly the same practice;

- The existence of at least 190 political prisoners and 25 political exiles, confirmed by the Parliament of Georgia on December 5th 2012, fully indicates that the previous undemocratic Georgian regime committed “systematic political crimes” and practiced a hard, authoritarian style of governance. Again, there is a direct parallel with Pinochet’s bloody dictator-

ship, which created more than 30,000 political prisoners between 1973 and 1990;

- The mass torture and physical abuse conducted by the Ministry of Corrections and Legal Assistance and the Ministry of Internal Affairs since 2006, part of the “reformation process” overseen by Vano Merabishvili, who transformed these services into a Soviet NKVD-type monster; incorporating internal and external securities into common totalitarian repressive bulk, are also characteristic of fascist regimes. The “prison videotapes” which inspired the so-called “broom revolution” in September 2012 were linked to the Ministry of Corrections led by VIP-butchers Khatuna Kalmakhe-

lidze, Dmitry Shashkin and Giorgi Tughushi and the “Zugdidi torture tapes” are linked to the Ministry of Internal Affairs led by the blood soaked Vano Merabishvili and Bacho Akhalaia. Once again the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile provided the model – on 31 December 1973 this established the notorious “National Executive Secretariat for Detainee Affairs” and in June 1974 the Directorate for National Intelligence (DINA), whose conduct were very similar to those of their Georgian equivalents, which were likewise created by presidential decree.

If Georgia wants to put the Saakashvili years behind it should immediately study the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile and pass laws ensuring that the same models cannot be followed in Georgia. There is no excuse for such bloody dictatorships in the 21st century.

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

First Public Sector Hepatitis C Treatment Programme in Georgia

By TAMTA ASANIDZE, GT

The Ministry of Corrections and Legal Assistance and the Open Society Foundation - Georgia have developed a three-year programme for Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Hepatitis C in penitentiary institutions. This is the first time such a programme has been developed in the public sector in Georgia and it will be the first programme in a post-Soviet country in which infected patients in the penitentiary institutions will be treated free of charge.

The programme plan specifies the number of the patients to be treated per year, the criteria for their selection for treatment and what financial resources the programme will need. It has been elaborated with the help of national and international experts.

The ministries of Correction and Healthcare regard this programme as very important. It will be expanded to other areas of the public sector from 2014.

“This very serious programme has been developed with the Ministry of Healthcare. Initially, it will be implemented in the penitentiary institutions,



and its screening and treatment activities will reach each infected inmate,” says Sozar Subar, the Minister of Corrections and Legal Assistance.

Irma Khabazi from OSFG says that, “I think this is a crucial step towards solving the hepatitis problem in prisons, though it can only be solved gradually. Hopefully, the programme will in future support the treatment of patients not only inside the penitentiary institutions but outside them.”

Mariam Jashi, Deputy Minister of Labour, Healthcare and Social Protection says that “at least 47,500 patients will require special antiviral treatment against Hepatitis C in the public sector, and this will cost about 98 million GEL by pre-

liminary estimation. This is quite a large sum, equivalent to about 1/6 of the doubled state budget this year, but it is nevertheless necessary to begin treating hepatitis C in the public sector through this pilot programme, which will be gradually expanded”.

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus. Severe forms of the infection can develop in the 6 months from the date of infection. Chronic hepatitis C can cause serious problems like cirrhosis of the liver or liver cancer. The virus is spread through the blood. The majority of the infected receive this virus from a shared needle, through intravenous drug use, receiving a blood transfusion and undertak-

ing cosmetic procedures like manicures, tattoos etc.

The spread of hepatitis C and lack of access to treatment have been serious problems in the penitentiary system for several years, and infection rates have increased dramatically. In most cases, hepatitis C is fatal. According to experts, launching this programme in the penitentiary system will lower the prices of the relevant medicines for all.

Civil society organizations have already discussed this programme. The plan will be presented to government and donor organizations for funding and service providers selected by competitive tender. Pending Cabinet approval, the programme will be launched in September.

NEWS

There is stagnation in medical establishments - Davit Sergeenko

There is stagnation in medical establishments - Davit Sergeenko
There is stagnation in medical establishments, Healthcare Minister Davit Sergeenko said in response to the statement of the insurance companies.

Some insurance companies say they face stagnation. According to the Minister, there are strikes in hospitals almost every day.

“There are strikes at hospitals almost every day because of delays accounts. I don’t understand what the insurance companies mean in stagnation, but I know that there are problems. Our efforts are aimed at eradicating these problems”, Sergeenko said.

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Rostom Sosiashvili, detained for violation of the occupation line on 29 May, released

Rostom Sosiashvili, detained for violation of the occupation line on 29 May, released Rostom Sosiashvili, detained for violation of the occupation line on 29 May, has been released, the Ministry of Internal Affairs told InterpressNews.

The release was a result of the meeting held under the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism.

Participants of the meeting reviewed the incidents and occurrences that have taken place since the meeting on 31 May. All appreciated that the situation has generally been calm and quiet, with fewer detention cases.

Participants discussed the increased level of fencing activities along the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) and its impact on local communities, especially with regard to restrictions to their freedom of movement and threats to their livelihood.

The co-chairs of the meeting, EUMM and OSCE, encouraged participants to find pragmatic solutions to the alarming issue of local communities’ access to water, as well as cemeteries.

Issues related to detained, missing and wanted persons were discussed; participants took note of some positive developments.

The importance of early warning regarding military exercises was reiterated.

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US Congress considers critical amendment to cooperation document with Georgia

By LIKAMOSHIASHVILI, GT

The U.S. Congress has released a statement on defense cooperation with Georgia. This describes the Republic of Georgia as a highly valued ally of the U.S., but criticizes what it calls politically motivated measures taken against former members of the outgoing government.

"The peaceful transfer of power as the result of the free and fair parliamentary elections in Georgia in October 2012 represents a major accomplishment toward the Georgian people's creation of a free society and full democracy," the statement reads. "However, since the October 2012 parliamentary election the new Georgian government has taken a series of measures against former state officials and members of the current political opposition that appear to be moti-

vated by political considerations." The detention of former Prime Minister Vano Merabishvili, who is now Secretary General of the United National Movement and thought to be a possible candidate for president in this October's election, is among those highlighted.

The statement suggests that the arrests of former ministers and UNM supporters threaten U.S.-Georgia relations. "The measures taken by the Georgian Government against former state officials and political opponents, apparently in part motivated by political considerations, may have a significant negative impact on cooperation between the United States and Georgia, including efforts to build a stronger relationship in political, economic, and security matters, as well as progress on integrating Georgia into international organizations," the statement says, adding that "the United States must be unambiguous when dem-

ocratic backsliding occurs in a key ally after a peaceful and democratic transfer of power between political parties."

President Mikheil Saakashvili has said that he was shocked when he read this statement, adding that Georgia should listen to this advice from a friendly country.

"Georgia exists today because the US stood next to us, and if the US stops supporting us we will be left at the mercy of Onishchenko's country," he said, referring to the Russian chief sanitary inspector who has repeatedly accused Georgia of conducting economic warfare against Russia by spreading swine flu. He added that the statement that Georgia has regressed in democratic terms is catastrophic. "Seeing this statement broke my heart, because in previous years the US Congress has made different statements," Saakashvili added.

Davit Usupashvili, the Speaker of Parliament, asked every

country to send observers so they could look more closely at what is happening in Georgia, including the impending court cases. "In any country the arrest of a person who had been a Minister for many years and then Prime Minister will arouse great interest. Therefore, our friends' interest is quite normal. Their position that there should not be politically motivated arrests in Georgia is quite natural. The Georgian government and parliament do, of course, share this position. We thank everyone for their recommendations. As for these particular statements, they are based on a lack of information," he claimed, adding that the U.S.-Georgia friendship is not in danger.

Tea Tsulukiani, Minister of Justice, maintains that the suspicions mentioned in Congress' statement are groundless. "We want to establish a culture in Georgia where no one will enjoy immunity from criminal prose-

cution because they are a member of the government or opposition," she says. However, Sergo Ratiiani from the parliamentary minority regards the Congress statement as "very tough." "The government should understand that fights against opponents should not turn into a fight against the state. We should keep in mind that each step back in relations with the United States means the creation of security problems for Georgia," he declared.

Kakha Gogolashvili, Director of EU Studies at the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, shares Ratiiani's opinion. "It's very important for Georgia to have good relations with the U.S. and EU. Thus I think the government should not ignore this statement and react appropriately to it, as doing otherwise might endanger the country's security," he told GT. However Georgian Ambassador to the US Archil Gegeshidze

thinks that Congress has been misled by the "unilateral information provided by certain forces." He notes that as recently as June 5 Congressman Turner, the author of this statement, voted for a decree supporting Georgia in the Military Committee. "The fact that in one week important changes have occurred in Congressman Turner's vision suggests that he was unilaterally misinformed by certain Georgians," the Ambassador says.

Irakli Sesiashvili, Chairman of the Georgian Parliamentary Defense and Security Committee, is optimistic that the positive attitude the USA has towards the former government will soon change. "The processes taking place in our country, including the investigations of former state official's cases, are very transparent. I hope US Congressmen will soon see that everything is completely differently in Georgia," Sesiashvili told The Georgian Times.

JUSTICE

Shocking video footage – Georgia must remove the stench of this sadistic system

By MAKADKANOSIDZE, GT

The latest video footage from the Samegrelo cache of arms, weapons and drugs are the worst to have been seen until now. Although these videos have not been shown publicly, information about their shocking contents has been broadcast several times.

The first statement regarding them was made by the US Ambassador, Richard Norland, who called on the government to investigate the crime recorded on the videos immediately. "I am shocked and astonished by the information provided by our representatives about what is recorded on these videos. The US calls on the Georgian government to investigate the things recorded on the videos immediately," he said.

The diplomatic corps has not made any statement regarding the political responsibility of the UNM for what is seen on the videos. However the government has suggested that not only former Interior Minister Vano Merabishvili but also President Saakashvili should be held responsible for their contents. Irakli Alasania, the Minister of Defence, says, "Political responsibility lies not only with Vano Merabishvili but the president, as he created such massive terror and sadism institutions in the country. It is necessary to judge publicly all those institution created during the previous administration. This is very important not only for Georgia but for humanity. It is crucial that everybody knows how such mass sadism institutions came to be established and to prevent the creation of such systems in Georgia or any other country in future." The UNM does not agree



that senior political figures from its regime should be held responsible for the crimes depicted. David Sakvarelidze, a member of the parliamentary minority, told Geotimes.ge that he is against the violence shown in the footage and hopes that those responsible will be punished but revealing the secret cache is actually a performance. "It will be good if the investigation is not biased and all the people involved in the crimes of torture, beating and illegal surveillance are brought to justice. We will be 100% proactive in this and I will demand such action is taken at parliamentary and non-parliamentary level. However the statement that the UNM has been guilty of systematic criminality was only made after a US Congressman expressed his critical attitude towards the detainment of Vano Merabishvili and political opponents of the incumbent government generally. Only after this

was the investigation of these videos put on agenda, and now they have been made into a political matter. The torture of inmates at the Guantanamo prison has been revealed many times, but nobody suggests that the President of the US is personally responsible for them. The cache is being used for a political purpose, and it is shameful to broadcast this footage."

In response to Sakvarelidze's statements Nana Devdariani, the former public defender, has no doubt that the cache is evidence of systematic criminality and that the UNM has long used similar methods against its own opponents. "Now the UNM declares that this is a provocation and a performance; this is a direct confession that they have conducted similar performances over the last nine years. Therefore it is important to investigate who was behind this one. Lower-ranking officials could not have commit-

ted such crimes independently. These latest developments show that the UNM has internal groupings, and they have to discuss which group did this and not whether Vano Merabishvili should have a TV in his cell."

Tea Tutberidze, one of the leaders of Liberty Institute and an ideologist of the UNM, has condemned the violence and blatant mistreatment recorded on the videos. She states that the introduction of such methods of torture was the responsibility of the MIA of that time and indirectly indicates that Vano Merabishvili was the creator of this system. "We have to consider the fact that some of the astonishing material on this footage was recorded in 2007 by the police itself. Similar methods were used in the prisons from 2010 onwards. Why? And who made the political decision to do this? If it was possible to manage the prisons without such meth-

ods until 2008, when Bacho Akhalaia was appointed head of the penitentiary system (this is true, as I used to visit the prisons myself and no similar case was discovered either by me, nor other members of monitoring group until the end of 2008), why did this situation change?" said Tutberidze.

The screening of the videos for media, NGO and diplomatic representatives at the MIA was controversial. Some of those attending protested against the showing of the videos and others said that the identities of those featured were not protected. However others, including President of the Georgian Times Media Holding Malkhaz Gulashvili, are demanding that they be more widely publicized. Gulashvili stated that, "the material we have watched is blatant evidence of criminality, though identification of the victims was impossible. Some, including me, are demanding that these videos be made public, as the UNM's struggle against its own people for many years should be revealed. The prison videos were publicized and the public made their own assessment. I consider some of these new videos should be broadcast. The material depicts crimes which took place in a deserted building in the forest in Samegrelo in 2011. It is clear from the footage that men were being sexually harassed in order to force them to confess to terrorist acts. In one video you see a man being kidnapped, his pregnant wife being beaten and him being sexually harassed. The current minister says that there is a large quantity of such sexual harassment videos."

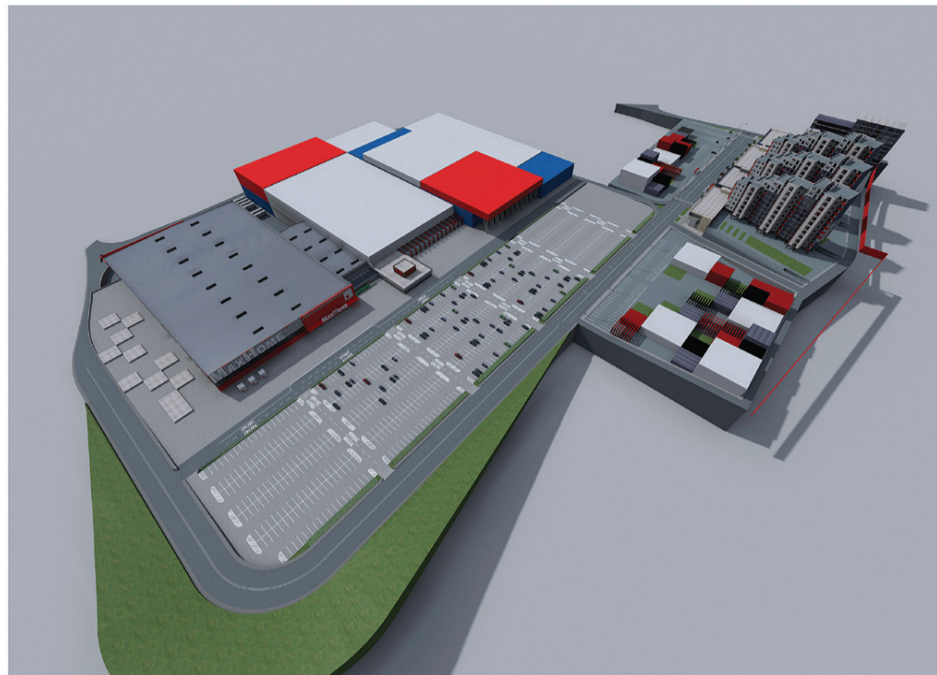
The majority of NGOs consider showing such shocking videos to the public impossible. An-

alyst Khatuna Laghazidze says that the perpetrators of the crimes depicted should be identified and judged, and only after this would it be possible to discuss publicizing the videos. "Do not let the UNM become a threat after its death. The government has done its duty. Anything further will be a direct push to the UNM to continue its evil deeds. They will not put anybody in the prison, they will kill people, therefore the crucial thing is to bring the former government to account," she says. "If we have been ruled for 9 years by a regime whose members should be imprisoned for their deeds there is no room for such people in parliament. Early parliamentary elections should therefore be held to replace them. First they should be judged and then early elections put on the agenda," she adds.

The outgoing President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, would be ultimately responsible for any crimes committed by the government he was leader of. However at present he is busy with "important" business trips abroad and considers the violence recorded on the videos to be the work of rogue operators who sneaked into the police system without his knowledge. He has made a statement to this effect recorded elsewhere in this newspaper, refusing to acknowledge that his government was guilty of systematic criminality. Instead, he criticizes the present government for its deeds.

Saakashvili expresses regret for not being able to "completely ventilate the swamped system". In reality however the Georgian public is now beginning to ventilate the country from the stench of the Rose Revolution government's sadistic system.

D.I.Y. IN GEORGIA



The company "Georgia Invest" with the support of the "Bank of Georgia" and Georgian Government, has started the construction of the largest trade-entertainment complex in the country and in Caucasus. The complex will be located around 180,000 square meters in the western part of Tbilisi. Initially this major international project will start with the construction of DIY ("Do It Yourself") hypermarket "MaxHome". "MaxHome" is the first contemporary, innovative chain of construction hypermarkets of DIY format in Georgia. The seventeen thousand square meter hypermarket will be opened in 2014 on one of the busiest highways of Tbilisi, in the neighborhood of existing major shopping

centers – Tbilisi Mall and Goodwill. 60,000 product items – home, cottage, garden, construction and decorative-finishing materials, lighting and appliances, floor coverings and tiles, heating equipment, sanitary ware and water supply, tools, woodwork etc. from famous international brands and manufacturers – will be allocated in the store. Location of the hypermarket, a wide range of products, a high level of various services, active promotion of wholesale, discount systems and ability to make complex purchases in one place, will minimize material and time costs for customers and meet the demands of Georgian consumers. Long term professional experience of management team and staff and the support of Russian

and European partners guarantees that the visitors of the hypermarket, and in future «MaxHome» chain, will positively evaluate the advantages of this shopping center and become its loyal customers. The mission of «MaxHome» is to assist customers in making their homes better and more comfortable, to convert time-consuming and expensive process of repairing and renovation into

an interesting and affordable process for everyone. The company "Georgia Invest", together with the large international trade chains and partners, plans to start active construction and development of the rest of the site next year, in order to create a modern, multi-functional trade center, which will meet the newest technologies.



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Vladimir Putin: Russia is ready to restore ties with Georgia

By LIKA MOSHIAVILI, GT

Moscow is ready to restore ties with Georgia but doesn't intend to reverse its decision to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on June 11.

"I think the current President of Georgia made a big mistake and I think he is not denying this. I told him: Mikheil Nikolayevich, let's discuss everything, but let us avoid bloodshed. Unfortunately however it all ended with war," said Putin in his interview with state-owned English-language television station Russia Today. "As a reaction to this, Russia took the steps which led to the recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. I cannot imagine taking a step backward from this position now. But this issue is also a kind of red line for Georgia, which Georgia cannot cross, because it believes Georgia is fighting for its territorial integrity," the President of Russia added.

Putin said that many foreign journalists have blamed Russia for the souring of relations with Georgia, but it is clear to im-

partial observers that "Russia had nothing to do with this process." The Georgian government, he continued, should have exercised patience in dealing with the ethnic conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. However, it failed to do so and Russia "was forced to react" to the developments and recognize the independence of Georgia's breakaway territories. He added that this issue must be resolved by taking into account the "desire" of the people who live in those territories.

Georgia and Russia have had no diplomatic relations since August 2008, when Tbilisi broke them off after Moscow crushed a Georgian attempt to regain control over its two rebel regions. Georgia declared these two mostly unrecognized republics to be 'occupied territories' a month later.

In the same interview Putin hailed the Georgian authorities' decision to take part in the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics and added that The Kremlin is prepared to accept any proposal on providing security for these games. "We also see potential for cooperating with the Russian Federation on maintaining

security at the Olympics," said Georgian Foreign Minister Maya Panjikidze at the press conference on Wednesday. However she noted that diplomatic relations will only be restored after Russian troops have withdrawn from the country.

"We are ready for cooperation with Georgia. We want to restore relations with Georgia; we have a very warm attitude towards Georgians. We are very close to the Georgian people," Putin stated. "I have held a meeting with Catholicos Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church Ilia II... he's a very kind person and he's a real Georgian. There wasn't even a second when he wasn't speaking about the interests of the Georgian people, and doing so wisely, softly and calmly."

When asked what therefore needed to be done before Russia was prepared to lift visa restrictions on Georgian citizens, Putin responded: "That is possible if we really work jointly against crime and terrorism. You probably know that terrorist elements are constantly infiltrating, or have been infiltrating, our territory from Georgian territory. If our law enforcement agencies and special services



can work together on this, that will be the first step towards the restoration of visa-free travel."

Commentators have expressed diverse opinions on Putin's interview. Nikolai Svanidze, Russian political scientist and publicist, stated that "Such friendly words with regard to Georgia haven't been heard for a long time. But the problems of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are still unresolved. In the near future nei-

ther Russia nor Georgia can make any concessions." He added that both Tskhinvali and Sokhumi are interested in the deterioration of Russian-Georgian Relations. "They will only be calm when Moscow and Tbilisi drastically confront each other," Svanidze maintained.

Irakli Menagarishvili, Co-Chair of the Centre for Strategic Research and an ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, thinks that despite the fact that the Russian president's

tone has changed in a positive direction this does not fundamentally change anything. "It's very important that wine exports have resumed, liberalization of the visa regime is also very important for many people, but these things in themselves won't restore relations between two countries. Until Russia reverses its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia these sentiments will be just empty words," Menagarishvili told The Georgian Times.

Kakha Kaladze: I advise not to watch those videos, because it is a real nightmare

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The Minister of Energy Kakha Kaladze believes that showing the video footages discovered in Samegrelo to representatives of Diplomatic Corps were very important. As he stated, it was necessary for them to see and get assured once more in what was happening in Georgia for last 9 years. "This is not one usual case. I watched those videos and I advise not to watch them, because it is a real nightmare. I do not know why a person should do this, just to maintain the power. These incidents have occurred massively in order to make people sleep and morally destroy them and thus achieve what they needed" - stated Kaladze. In addition, according to the Minister, every involved in the torture and blackmail person should be punished including clients and those who did it. Kakha Kaladze does not exclude President's responsibility regarding this issue and states that

Saakashvili was the ideologue of the system. "When there was a discussion around the crime, "National Movement" has never separated from any of its member. They used to say, that they were members of one team, accordingly, this responsibility should be divided between everybody" - stated Kakha Kaladze. The Minister also responded to President's yesterday's announcement, according to which Mikheil Saakashvili did not know Levan Kardava personally. According to him, Saakashvili's statements are inadequate and funny, because fact that the President does not know people under Ministers is not serious. "It was a unified system and not an action done by several people. Not all of this was decided at the lower level, and the system, which was built on fear, terror and intimidation was created by Saakashvili, Merabishvili and Adeishvili. And today they talk to us about moral" - stated Kaladze



NEWS

Richard Norland calls on the Government to Immediately Investigate the facts in the Video Footage

The U.S. ambassador in Georgia Richard Norland calls on the government of Georgia to investigate the facts in the video footage discovered in Samegrelo, Norland told journalists during his visit to Kutaisi.

He said that despite not attending the meeting with diplomats at the Ministry of Internal Affairs yesterday, he is informed by the embassy employees and is shocked and surprised about what he was told.

"The US embassy was presented on yesterday's meeting. They have informed me about it. Therefore, I am informed, shocked and surprised with the news delivered by our representatives. They spoke about the footage. The U.S. calls on the government of Georgia to immediately investigate the facts in the video footage", Richard Norland said.

Richard Norland visited Micro financial organization "Cristal" in Kutaisi today

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Maia Panjikidze - Salaries Were Too Low in MFA and were Balanced by Bonuses

Salaries were too low in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and it was balanced in some way by bonuses, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Maia Panjikidze told journalists after the government sitting.

Panjikidze commented on the statement released by the Young Lawyers' Association regarding the bonuses issued at the Ministry.

"Our policy is not distinguished regarding this. The bonuses were issued within this policy, as salaries were too low and it was somehow balanced by the bonuses. This actually was not bonuses, but an addition to the salary. Bonuses must be different; they must be issued according to certain achievements. I hope it will be so in future and the salaries will be balanced", Maia Panjikidze said.

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Christopher Coppola: I am giving everyone an opportunity to express his talents

By EMMA BAIRAMOVA, GT

Christopher Coppola, the famous Hollywood film director and producer, has taken part in a festival organised by the Ministry of Youth and Sport of Georgia and the NGO Children and Youth National Centre, part of his project PAH-FEST (Project Accessible Hollywood, Georgia 2013). The theme of the festival was famous seventeenth century Georgian writer Sulokhan Saba Orbeliani's "Wisdom of Fancy".

PAH-FEST, created by Coppola, is a week-long digital media festival held in cities throughout the US and internationally. PAH-FEST encourages visual storytelling, fosters civic engagement and promotes the production of fictional and documentary videos which can be shared and enjoyed globally. People from all walks of life who have engaging story ideas are provided with digital equipment and a professional "helping hand" in order to create their own short digital films. Here Christopher Coppola tells the Georgian Times about his project and his impressions of Georgia.

Mr. Coppola, what do you know about Georgia and why did you decide to come to Georgia?

A long time ago, I think 24 years, I watched a movie whose name, as I remember, was "Moscow in Love". It was a collection of love stories between many different people in Moscow and one of the characters was a smart female lawyer who was in love with a Georgian man. He was such an interesting character: he drank, he had a lot of passion and energy, he seemed larger than life, and this planted in my mind the idea that Georgia is a country which produces interesting people like that. Recently I also ran into some Georgians in Los Angeles, one of them being Lasha Zambakhidze, who told me that the story of Jason and the Argonauts and the Golden Fleece was about this country and the beautiful Medea who helped Jason steal the Golden Fleece was from Georgia. I loved mythology as a little boy and was really excited: "Oh, that's Georgia?" So I opened up this new world with a very ancient and interesting culture and history, and afterwards discovered Sulokhan Saba Orbeliani, the fa-



mous Georgian writer, through Lasha. It was a discovery like those of Marco Polo. This is how I learned about Georgia, got excited by it and decided to listen to some stories from Georgians, personal stories, the wisdom of elders and historical tales, and share these with the rest of the world.

Lasha Zambakhidze knows about the festival I run – the Project of Accessible Hollywood – and suggested that I bring it to Georgia. Since 2006 we have travelled all over the United States and to other countries and have used digital technology to help people learn basic filmmaking skills so they can share their stories about themselves, their community, their way of life and give them an opportunity to demonstrate their talent. This is also a nice way for people from around the world to make a connection. The premise of PAH is that everybody has a filmmaker inside them, a little bit of Hollywood inside them. I want people to feel that they are stars, big directors, great editors and cinematographers. The main reason I created PAH is that it gives a chance to a new generation to express their emotions using digital technology. So participating in this project will give people from Tbilisi, Batumi and other cities an opportunity to show the world a little bit more about Georgia, because frankly most people, in the US for example, think that Georgia is still the USSR or Russia. By doing these creative pieces and helping people share their stories we can make people around the world more educated.

So will Project Accessible Hollywood give Georgian stars the chance to express themselves in Hollywood?

I think everybody has a way of visually sharing themselves, and everybody is a star. It does not matter whether you are in

Hollywood or anywhere else. It is not necessary for you to come to Hollywood; it is better that Hollywood comes to you, like this project does. This project gives young filmmakers the opportunity to learn



how to work in this industry, how to be confident and gain experience in filmmaking. Hollywood is just a place; it is not the be all and end all. You can make your own Hollywood in Georgia. Hollywood is where the people are, and each person has a Hollywood filmmaker in his soul, that's what is important. Hollywood puts less focus on actual storytelling and is more interested in special effects. So it is important that young filmmakers from every part of the world retain their own voice and tell everyone about their people. The desire to come to Hollywood is cool; you should come, but never forget that you have your own way of seeing things and making films as well.

The stereotype about Hollywood is that it does not like actors from other countries, as only Americans can get good roles in Hollywood films, with

Latin American, Russian and other actors only being allowed to play killers, prostitutes or things like this. How true is this?

This has been true in the history of Hollywood. You know that some of the greatest actors once had different names but changed them to more American sounding ones. My brother Nicolas Cage's real name is Nicolas Coppola, he changed it to Cage to make him sound more like a leading man, and Tom Cruise and others have done the same. Many of these stereotypes are true, for example another is that men can work longer in Hollywood than women, as they can continue to work even when they get older whereas women can't. It always has been unfair like that.

The only way to make your mark in Hollywood is to do

Americans and this is the way it should be. Newcomers have to work hard to achieve success. Georgian actors who get roles in Hollywood achieve great success just by doing this. It is not easy.

What do you think of Georgia? Do you like the country? What impressions will you take back to America?

Yes. I like the hospitality here, the attachment of the people to each other; loving human connections which do not exist much in Hollywood. I like the passion in the hearts of people. I love their storytelling. I like sitting at the table with my Georgian friends and speaking with their parents. I like Georgian cuisine, and that food with cheese, eggs and bread. I love Churchkhela. When I go back I will tell all my friends and filmmakers and storytellers about

best cinematographers came from Georgia, but I know that it's now a separate country.

Do you think Georgia is an appropriate place to make Hollywood films in?

Yes, definitely. I have made a film in Romania. There is no difference. We can make a film here as well. I see a lot of talented actors here, I see a lot of talent and dedication, and I see an interesting history here. I have worked with Georgian students and although they were not ready for the roles on offer I cannot deny that some have real talent and are not scared of doing anything they have to do. You have to compete with other countries to create good film crews, but in co-production with other countries anything can happen.

Who is the best actor in Hollywood in your opinion, apart from your brother Nicolas Cage?

Oh, I don't know. I think the stars of today are not very good actors, they are like boys, not men. There is no real man in Hollywood like Clint Eastwood or Clark Gable. For example, Ashton Kutcher and Leonardo DiCaprio are good actors but they are boys. Women in society have lost something in the emasculation of men and stars. They want to see real men. We see older women who say "where are the men?" And that is a problem. I think my brother Nicolas Cage is a man, I think Robert Downey Junior is a man and a good actor. As regards women Meryl Streep is great. But what has happened to the great actresses, what has happened to the Katharine Hepburns and people like that? Unfortunately, they do not exist anymore.

What about your own projects in Hollywood? What are you doing now?

What I like is teaching. I am also going to do something with Georgia. I will continue to work with PAH and give new talents a chance to express themselves. By the way, in the 60s and 70s when my uncle started out there were low budget movies where directors working under him could learn on the job. Nobody does this anymore. I want to create my own staff by working with students, giving them an opportunity to learn how to make movies, how to raise money for schools. So I want to combine education with entertainment.

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Ketevan Kemoklidze, World Famous Mezzo Soprano: The Story Of Having It All

By TAKO AGARASHVILI, GT

She used to sit in the front row drawing jugs, fruit or kettles. She was fairly talkative, polite, self-assured and humble. Once her mother came to see the teacher and ask how her daughter was doing. I can still hear the voice of the teacher saying – “she is talented, hardworking and her mind is flying somewhere far away from here, I don’t think we can catch up with it”. Ketevan Kemoklidze, the Georgian girl in that art school 17 years ago, first drifted away to accounting and then found her crystal shoe as a mezzo soprano and conquered the world.

Ketevan lives in Vienna. She is happily married. She is in demand. She is living her dream. When our generation were growing up there wasn’t even the slightest hint that we had a bright future. We were children of war, poverty, darkness, cold, armed men running around and people dying from random bullets. At that time we only dreamed of electricity and the heat: glamour was a different galaxy for us.

Ketevan’s career suggests that she has turned winning into a habit. She has continually collected prizes at youth competitions and become a Georgian National Musical Laureate. She has continued developing and has appeared on the biggest stages in the world. In 2002, while still a student, she made her debut as Magdalena in *Rigoletto* and also sang Emilia in *Otello* and the title role in *Amadigi*. Subsequently

she has appeared successfully at many of the world’s major opera houses including Deutsche Opera Berlin, the Théâtre du Capitole in Toulouse, Teatro Regio di Parma, Teatro Massimo in Palermo, the Opéra National in Montpellier, Deutsche Opera am Rhein, the Opéra Municipal de Marseille and in Washington.

She compares her story to that of Cinderella but I would disagree. There are many different stories out there: Cinderella, Lady D, Pretty Woman and Ugly Duckling. I don’t think Ketevan’s is like any of these, she is writing her own story of a girl who has it all.

Opera is not the limit for her. She has debuted in a movie, not just any movie but Carlos Saura’s ‘Io, Don Giovanni’. She was worried sick, she even burned her hair doing a romantic scene, but she managed just fine. Like I said, the girl has it all. After speaking to her, it looks like Domingo’s favourite mezzo soprano has much more to come.

You have won quite a few of contests. How did you even get to compete in them?

Contests were a very important stage of my life. They were the only way to pave a way out of Georgia. It’s quite hard for a Georgian student to get invited to compete in them. But with my determination and some help I managed it.

Which contest was the most important for you?

I don’t think I can name one. It was like a chain reaction. One led to another. It was a marvelous journey. The first important prize I won was St. Petersburg, the competition in



honor of famous opera singer Elena Obraztsova. It was a meaningful as well as a wonderful experience for me. The next life changing victory was the H.G. Belvedere International Competition in Vienna. The jury of that contest came to Georgia and picked a few Georgian singers to take part. It was a great success. I got to the final and won the Special Prize of the Teatro al la Scala and was admitted to the Academy of the Teatro al la Scala without an entrance exam. I would also highlight the prizes I won at the Lyceum (Barcelona) and Leipzig (Germany) operas. I still perform at these venues quite frequently today. The Belvedere was followed by the Concourse International de

Chant de la Ville de Toulouse. This was a big victory, as this contest rarely awards the grand prize; I was very young and I got very lucky. I was also lucky to be accompanied by Georgian pianist Nino Pavlenishvili (based in France). In 2011 I returned to Toulouse to sing Rosina (in *The Barber of Seville*). I was happy to see that the public there remembered me and had been waiting for me.

But my groundbreaking victory was at Plácido Domingo’s Operalia. Thousands of singers apply for this but only 40 are selected to participate. I was fortunate to get in, but that year was an unfortunate one for Georgia. I was devastated by the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 and figured that going to

the contest was the only way I could support my country in my own way. I was happy to find that I would be accompanied by Georgian orchestra leader Nino Sanikidze (Nino and Tamar Sanikidze are the favourite pianists of Plácido Domingo). The final round was judged by Plácido Domingo. I won the contest, and most importantly it was watched by the directors of the world’s leading theatres. Now they often invite me to their theatres to perform. Thanks to this victory I debuted at Covent Garden (London), the Royal Theatre (Madrid) and at the Santiago Opera, where after 5 years waiting I am having a premiere in a couple of days.

What do you perform most, tragedy or comedy?

I can’t say one more than the other. I think it’s a balance. One must perform different characters in order to grow, advance and succeed. My repertoire is mostly roles of young women and young men. Mezzo sopranos often perform so called ‘pants roles’, in which luckily I don’t die at the end. I try my best to portray young characters. With age this will become harder, but these roles are necessary and useful, they advance and prepare singers for more difficult and dramatic roles later in life.

Do you have anything in common with your characters?

Usually mezzo sopranos play strong, beautiful, determined women. So yes, I resemble a lot of them, both personality and looks wise. It’s an advantage for me, and a great joy for directors and costume designers, that I look like the characters I stage. Sometimes we play vengeful women who have been abandoned because the soprano stole their beloved. Sadly people say that opera is too over the top and distant from reality, but this is wrong. Opera is very close to real life, the characters are real people with real feelings and weaknesses. So as I said, yes, I have a lot in common with my characters. But I must admit I have nothing in common with my favourite character – Cinderella. Although my life is full of similar stories, personality

wise we are very different. This year I am debuting as Carmen (in Tokyo), so I’m curious to see if I will find her in me, as this character is the symbol of a freedom loving woman.

Is it hard to portray a character very different from your own nature?

As I said, I often play male characters. This requires a certain preparation, especially if it’s the role of a grown man like Julius Caesar. Usually when the performance is near I don’t wear a dress and I try to be a bit masculine in my manners. Finally it becomes natural, my manners, walk and behavior change. I prepare psychologically as well. Being convincing and confident on the stage is the main aim of an actor.

You acted in a movie by Carlos Saura. Did this show you at your best, like the stage?

I think I’m rather more confident on stage than in front of the camera. I think it’s about the experience. I have only done one film, it was something new for me. It was the first but I hope not the last movie.

Are you an artist or a singer?

I am an artist. It’s the twenty-first century, the era of movies, TV and computers, and the audience is spoiled (in a good way) with great shows. If they don’t see the same quality of performance at the opera, they won’t come again. Acting in opera requires a lot of skills. We must be on top of singing, acting and performing. In the growing economic crisis fewer and fewer people are visiting the opera. Promoting it is our primary job, together with the right marketing campaign.

If you could sing incognito to the entire world, what aria would you sing? What would you want to say to us all?

It would be the aria from Cinderella. Even though we are very different, we still have our moments. Like all Georgian children of the 90’s, a time of mass poverty and the agony of war, I never gave up dreaming. Most of my dreams have come true. I’d tell the world never to give up, to keep dreaming, because dreams do come true.

Christopher Coppola: I am giving everyone an opportunity to express his talents

Continued from p. 12

Do you particularly like Orbeliani’s “Wisdom of Fantasy”?

Yes. This PAH festival in Georgia is all based around Orbeliani. What I like about him is the concept of the living story, human stories not just fables like Aesop’s. Here we have to consider who is telling the story, the king, the wazir or the prince, how they are telling the story and why the story is be-

ing told. There are so many complexities around that, not just intellectual but human, and this is everyone’s personal life, so when I encountered him I was very impressed and said wow! I want people all round the world to know about this Georgian writer and his wisdom.

What message can you give to young Georgian stars about how to achieve success in this industry?

Be yourself. Stay true to

your heart. Work hard. Promote yourself. And you can do it. Georgians have a very good look, a very unique look. They are not just the bad guys, they are beauties. Understand how you can take that beauty and soul and make it universal. I think that if you try to change yourself just to make yourself appropriate for American movies, if that happens, great, but I think it’s good for you to find out what makes you unique and special. Make good movies

here. Make really good movies and be fresh. Hollywood will see it. We live in a world where there are so many ways you can promote yourself. Just do everything sincerely, do not pretend to be someone you are not. If there are people in your group who have similar ideas to you, work with them to make good movies. You can promote them using the internet. Just be true to yourself always. You can share the good work of Georgian talents on the internet; this

works, but you have to do it constantly.

What can you say about the unhealthy worship of Hollywood stars? What can be done about star mania? Is Hollywood a fairy tale or Olympus?

Behind glamorous award ceremonies and red carpets there are working people. The glamour lasts one second, you taste it for only one second then go back to your business. You can dream of gaining success, but you should ask yourself – why? Why do you want this, it is because of the money or because people will love you all over the world? Why? Only a very small number of actors in Hollywood are working. It is not easy to constantly be a star. If you are smart you can make good stories, so you can make your own Hollywood

here. But people always worship celebrity, it is understandable, and if you want to achieve this success, work hard and never give up and one day you will get it.

I personally refuse to act in films and am happy doing my thing. I know so many people in Hollywood who are successful but not happy. So do what makes you happy. You really need to answer the question, why do I need this? Why do I want to go to Hollywood? What’s the reason for this? First of all you should be happy being an actor, you should be happy going through the process, and fame and success are just a bonus. The best actors and actresses know that. They think: “I like to act, if success happens this is good, if not, this is my job!”



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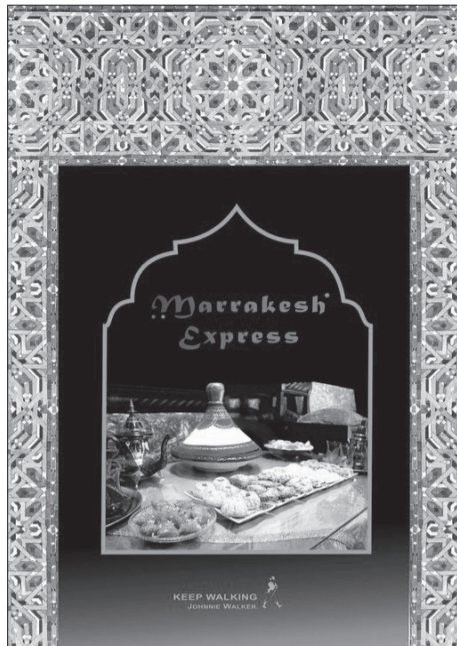
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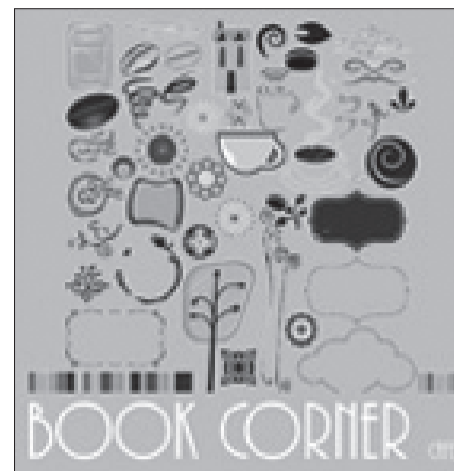
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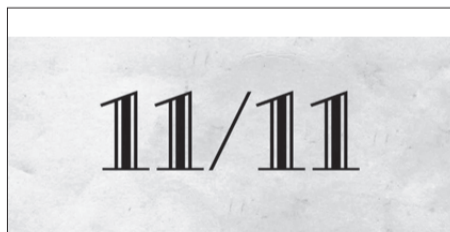
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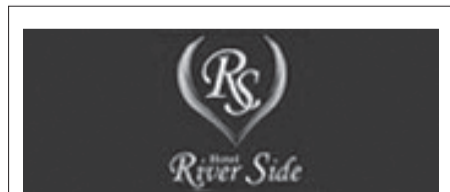
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QSI Tbilisi is pleased to announce that the 2013 Graduates will attend the following Universities next year



Valentine Clary, daughter of Jean Louis and Sylvie Clary, will attend **MCGILL UNIVERSITY** in Quebec, Canada majoring in Psychology and minoring in Music.



Henry Christopher Hartman, son of Colonel Jeffrey Hartman and Maria Hartman, will attend **VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY** in Pennsylvania on a ROTC scholarship. Chris will major in History and minor in Russian and German.



Nicholas Doudnikoff, son of Charles Burges and Olga Mandrugina, will attend **TOWSON UNIVERSITY** in Maryland and will major in Chemistry.



Sophiko Kashakashvili, daughter of Elene Gelovani and Benedict Kashakashvili will attend **ECLA of BARD COLLEGE** in Berlin, Germany majoring in Psychology and minoring in Visual Arts.



Stepan Denk, son of Dana Denkova, will attend **ANGLO-AMERICAN UNIVERSITY** in Prague and will major in International Relations.



Cathrine Salby, daughter of Christian and Nina Salby, will attend **SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY** in Massachusetts. Cathrine's major is undecided.



Aleksandre Pachuashvili, son of Mamuka Pachuashvili and Maya Chakignitze, will attend **FERRUM COLLEGE** in Virginia. His major is undecided.



Olga Cheltsova, daughter of Anna Meltzer and Alan D. Meltzer, will attend **MARY WASHINGTON COLLEGE** in Virginia. Olga will major in International Relations and minor in Humanities.



Aryana Givechian, daughter of Efat Yazdani and Mohammad Hassan Glvechian, will attend **JOHN CABOT UNIVERSITY** in Rome, Italy and will major in Liberal Arts.

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