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The Georgian Times Media Holding Hosts First Industrial Forum



Malkhaz Gulashvili stated that the Industrial Forum will be held next year too and become a tradition, as the Georgian Business Awards have. It was important because it was devoted to the creation of business and job opportunities and the growth of Georgia's Gross Domestic Product.



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Kezerashvili Arrested in France

By LELA TSINTSADZE, GT

Davit Kezerashvili, Georgia's former Minister of Defence, has been arrested and sentenced to 40 days imprisonment by a French court. Georgia will seek his extradition, but his defence team thinks that on the basis of previous precedent he will not be extradited.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs announced last week that Davit Kezerashvili had been arrested in France on October 14. He is accused of a range of crimes, such as bribery, violating customs regulations, money laundering, receiving stolen money, defalcation and misuse of public funds. However Kezerashvili was not wanted by Interpol, and his lawyers do not agree with the accusations. They say that each one is both absurd and politically motivated.

The Georgian Prosecutor's Office has been collecting the necessary documentation to apply for the extradition of Kezerashvili. The prosecutors say it will take them about a week or 10 days to complete this procedure. Irakli Chilingarashvili, the head of Georgian Prosecutor General's Legal Department, has told The Georgian Times that extradition procedures are regulated by the European Convention on Extradition, on the basis of which the Georgian side must request the French side to transfer David Kezerashvili to their jurisdiction.

Chilingarashvili explained that according to this Convention the relevant extradition materials should be provided to the competent authorities of the state holding the individual concerned within 18 days of that

person's detention. "Since Kezerashvili has been sentenced to be detained for 40 days, we are committed to the delivery of these materials within this time-frame. They must be submitted through diplomatic channels to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs," he said.

Although Kezerashvili has dual citizenship of both Georgia and Israel, the prosecutor explained that this is no obstacle to his extradition, as it only becomes an issue if the person whose extradition is being requested is a citizen of the country from which his extradition would be carried out.

"Therefore there is no obstacle to Kezerashvili's extradition. French law only prohibits the extradition of its own nationals. In this case, dual citizenship is no obstacle," Chilingarashvili explained.

Kezerashvili's defence team has a different opinion to the Chief Prosecutor's Office, and think it is possible that the French will refuse to extradite him. Shota Mindeli, Kezerashvili's lawyer, confirmed to The Georgian Times that his client had been arrested and that he could only be extradited within the 40 day period he has been detained for. But he explained that what happens will depend on whether the prosecution presents a strong enough argument as to why the French government should transfer Kezerashvili to Georgian justice.

"According to the practice which still exists, people accused of certain types of crimes, such as those of which Kezerashvili is accused in Georgia, are not extradited, so I think it's most likely not going to be the case that Kezerashvili is returned to Georgia. Conditions are applied. The French legal system will

comply with the request of the government, however for them to become convinced that Kezerashvili should be extradited to Georgia certain standards of evidence must be met," Mindeli said. In support of this he cited the example of Irakli Okruashvili, another former Defence Minister, who was not extradited by the French authorities despite an official request from the Saakashvili government and was subsequently granted political asylum in France.

Irakli Chilingarashvili maintains that the most common grounds for not granting extradition are when the person concerned is alleged to have committed a crime which is not punishable under the legislation of the country the person would be extradited from, or is punishable but not with the type of sentence which would be imposed in the country requesting the extradition. Other grounds include when the crime has passed the statute of limitations applicable in both countries, i.e. it occurred too long ago for the authorities to be able to prosecute them for it, as happened in the case of the escaped Great Train Robber Ronnie Biggs.

"Also, if the person has already been sentenced for the same crime in the country they are now in, or has served this sentence, they cannot be extradited, if the crime is political, or related to politics, or is military in nature they cannot be extradited, and if the person has been granted political asylum in the country they cannot be extradited. According to our information, at this point Kezerashvili does not have such status in France, nor is he covered by the other prohibitions, therefore at present there is no obstacle to



his extradition," Chilingarashvili told us.

It is also notable that being wanted by Interpol, or appearing on a list of persons wanted by Interpol, is not a necessary prerequisite for that person's subsequent extradition to their country of citizenship. When a country requests another country to extradite it sends documents confirming that a warrant has been issued for that person's arrest, or that they have already been arrested or detained on the same charge.

"When Kezerashvili was charged in Georgia, we approached the Georgian courts seeking his imprisonment as a preventive measure. We applied simultaneously to the Interpol Bureau in Tbilisi, because they refer such applications to its General Secretariat, which can declare an international search for this person by including their name on a red circular," Chilingarash-

vili told us. He explained that the materials sent by the Prosecutor's Office were studied by Interpol representatives and additional documentation was sent at their request, but the matter is still being discussed by Interpol and no decision has been made. In response, Georgia sent France a direct request to arrest Kezerashvili, which it has now done.

A further point to remember is that when a country requests the extradition of a person the materials it presents must not include evidence. Absence of evidence is not therefore an obstacle to extradition, because the country the request is being made to does not consider evidence or make any judgement concerning their guilt or innocence. Extradition is granted, or not, depending on the nature of that person's crimes, whether they are excluded from extradition and whether the correct proce-

dures have been followed by the requesting country.

"There are a few countries in the world where the level of evidence is assessed before extradition is considered. These are what we call the precedent law countries - Israel, the United Kingdom and the United States. All other European countries, including France, do not require that evidence is presented by the requesting country, and it is not," Chilingarashvili explained. In such cases the country sends only the arrest warrant, the document formulating the charges and the person's identity data with the petition for extradition.

Kezerashvili served as Defence Minister from 2006 to 2008, including the eight day Georgia-Russia war in August of the latter year. The current charges relate, in part, to his period of office. Ironically, he is a graduate in international law.

SOCIETY

Yesterday's Nowhere Man on the Threshold of Total Victory

By LISA TONAKANYAN, GT

Georgia's Prime Minister has taken another opportunity to promote his candidate for the presidency by organising another meeting with journalists - this time newspaper and radio station editors. This time he encouraged the press to be more critical in their questions and statements, as these media outlets often criticise his government anyway.

After scolding and giving journalism lessons to TV anchors and talk-show hosts at his previous meeting with the media, Bidzina Ivanishvili began this one by accusing European diplomats of taking bribes for lobbying for President Saakashvili's interests in Europe. He then said that certain politicians were offering these bribes, particularly, some



candidates for the presidency who were opponents of the Georgian Dream coalition's candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili.

According to Ivanishvili,

Giga Bokeria, the Secretary of the Security Council, has been financing European lobbyists and bribing ambassadors. The Prosecutor's Office is investi-

gating a case in which it is alleged that 400,000 USD was given to diplomats. "They will be punished, as he will... You will see much more than this, and

the Europeans will see a lot too," he warned.

Commenting on local political leaders, he called head of the Labour Party Shalva Natelashvili a "jester", "with no ideology", and leader of the Christian Democratic Movement Giorgi Targamadze a traitor. "For twenty years Shalva Natelashvili has been lying to people, promising to compensate them for the deposits they lost in Soviet times, and trying to get people to live on such lies. He has nearly become a clown, but still has 1 or 2 percent support," Ivanishvili said. Giorgi Targamadze, another candidate for president, is "an example of a traitor" in his point of view.

"This man has always stood against the interests of the country. He has always been where the state doesn't need him to be, but he also has 1-2 percent support. I understand those supporting him: I also understand that many of them have no abil-

ity to make a correct analysis," he declared.

When it came to former Parliament Speaker Nino Burjanadze and the United National Movement's candidate David Bakradze, the PM said that he did not want to criticise them. "I don't see any need for that; I want the elections to be balanced... I do not want to make very critical statements. The public know Burjanadze's past and present... She has 10 percent support, according to the polls, in third place behind Bakradze, who has 1-2 percent more," the PM emphasized, adding that if there is a second round of elections, which will happen if no candidate obtains over 50% of the votes on the first ballot, he will advise his candidate not to take part and to let the public choose either Bakradze or Burjanadze.

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THE BUILDING OF TEA HOUSE SITUATING IN MARNEULI WON IN INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION



At the end of September of the current year, international architectural competition „EUROPEAN PROPERTY AWARDS ARCHITECTURE 2013-2014” was held in London, which was participated by almost all countries of East and West Europe. The jury was completed by well-known architects, journalists, exterior and interior designers. Lord Bates supervised the jury. The culture centre Tea House was presented from Georgia, which won in the nomination - „The best public architecture.”

The architecture and design company „M Studio” built the social-cultural centre Tea House. The project initiator and client is SOCAR.

The idea of Tea House establishment in the region aims to develop education, cultural and sport spheres. The house attracts the youth living in the region, promoting their development.

The main dignity of the building is harmonious synthesis of traditional and modern architectural elements. The three-floor building situates on 530 sq. m. and each floor is 430 sq. m. The national ornaments and colors brighten the building view. The oval mosaic poles in the entrance are hand-made creating the effect of Eastern carpet.



The garden bas-relief reflects historical prose of Azerbaijan in front of the building. There is a fountain in the garden centre, consisting of national jugs and mosaic carpets, fell on natural stones.

The parking place behind Tea House contains 20 cars.

The building frontage blends marble floor and traditional elements.

Except educational and cognitive rooms, there is an elegant restaurant in Tea House” having its own entrance side.

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SUNDAY BRUNCH

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

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Irakli Menagarishvili: The stronger party will win the war of nerves

By MAKAR DEKANOSIDZE, GT

“The relationship with Russia is a war of nerves. The party with the stronger nerves will be the winner. The party which gets hysterical is doomed to fail,” – states foreign affairs expert Irakli Menagarishvili.

The former Foreign Minister says in this interview with GT that conducting a unified diplomatic strategy is the only way to stop the creeping occupation, and that Georgia should be more active on this in the international arena.

What can the present government do to achieve more effective results and make Russia retreat from its positions?

Irakli Menagarishvili: The government has not worked effectively in the international arena so far. It will only be working satisfactory if it resolves the problem of the barbed wire. We should not be satisfied with what we have already done. We should continue working and become more active.

It is hard to say what spe-

cific steps the government should take, and frankly I am not going to dictate what step it should take next. But a unified strategy consisting of specific actions is necessary or it will be impossible to reach the goal. I hope such a unified strategy exists and everything has been done in this respect.

Ivanishvili has suggested that the occupation will affect the Sochi Olympics. Do you see a logical connection between the so-called creeping occupation and holding the winter Olympics securely?

Speaking frankly, I cannot see the connection. To my mind, the truth is simply that Russia is trying to separate the occupied territory from the rest of Georgia.

Of course Russia has the illusion that it is conducting anti-terrorist actions. The Russians make these statements and take the actions so the world will see them. We have been hearing all these baseless pronouncements since 1999. In their opinion, Georgia is a threat to the rest of the world, but no matter how much they pretend, their basic aim is to annex this terri-

tory, it has nothing to do with the rest of Georgia or the Sochi Olympics.

Government members reckon that the creeping occupation is related to the Vilnius Summit, and that more provocations can be expected in response to Georgia's move towards the West. Do you agree?

This summit is the basic driver of Russia's destructive actions. I do not doubt this at all, as the Vilnius Summit should make a decision about Georgia's future.

The summit is why Russia is engaging in so many provocations, and reacting to them will be fatal for our country. A reasonable, slow and careful response is necessary, and our government is presently behaving accordingly.

There are some who think that the considered approach you mention is too appeasing, and will not achieve positive results. So you think the PM's soft rhetoric is appropriate?

No one is perfect. Everybody makes mistakes, including Ivanishvili. But I would not pay attention to the President's pronouncements. It is hard to



see anything rational in his words. He has the right to speak, and we have the right to listen to him or not.

The PM's opinion on the tone to adopt towards Russia is not a new one. We have seen the results of hysterical screaming, and consequently it's clear that the position we take should be both principled and as pragmatic as possible.

I have said many times that relationship with Russia is a war of nerves. The party with the stronger nerves will be the winner. The party which gets hysterical is doomed to fail.

As for Georgia's participation in the Sochi Olympics, some people are demanding that we boycott Sochi 2014. What would this achieve?

Here we should not make decisions based on friendship. We should simply understand

that if anything happens during the Olympics, Russia should have as few reasons as possible to accuse Georgia of provocation.

That's why our participation is necessary. It shows we are sportsmanlike and fair. Having agreed to take part, saying no if the situation changed would then be the easiest thing to do; it could be done in minutes.

People are also connecting the creeping occupation to the forthcoming presidential elections. They are saying that if Nino Burjanadze loses Russia will try and cause trouble by means of her, causing chaos in the streets. Do you think this is likely?

This is purely speculation. We should not waste our time on it.

The Georgian people should

make their choice on the basis of their assessment of each candidate.

Will Bidzina Ivanishvili's impending resignation affect the government's stability and increase the foreign threat?

I hope everything will be fine, and our country will undergo the transition process without any problems. However, any move not authorised by the constitution is risky, especially for a country like Georgia.

As for the foreign threat, I don't think the situation will change. There are enough threats already, we do not need to consider how a change of Prime Minister will affect them.

We will see what happens, but I would like to see less emotion and more care from everyone, as the difficult times we are living through demand this.

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Yesterday's Nowhere Man on the Threshold of Total Victory

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The Prime Minister is pinning his hopes on the Georgian people's wisdom and ability to understand all that his government has done during the past year. "Giorgi Margvelashvili is a very successful candidate," he insisted, mentioning that a second round of voting is "practically unimaginable", and if it happens it will be "awkward". At the same time he warned Georgian Dream supporters that he will be "disappointed" if the electorate "has got lazy" about participating in elections and Giorgi Margvelashvili gets only 51-55 percent. He expects Margvelashvili to get 65 percent of the vote, and if it is less than 60 this would be outrageous to the PM, decreasing his enthusiasm for the country.

Ivanishvili admitted however that the national minorities still support the UNM, especially the Armenians of the Samtskhe-Javakheti Region. He emphasized that this is the only region where Bakradze was likely to win.

"I have been to Akhalkalaki

and told them about us. It's up to them what they decide. We will use no levers to influence them... I could call Armenia's President, who has a certain influence on Georgia's Armenians, or I could call Aliiev [Azerbaijan's President], but things like this won't happen. We will not use ugly methods. The population should have the chance to understand who is who, analyse them and make their own choice," he said.

During his visit to the regions he assured himself that Armenian and Azerbaijani people do not lack the ability to understand and analyse the ongoing processes in Georgia, that they do not need to be dictated to and that their intellects are not inferior to anyone else's. He also expressed confidence that, despite their predilection for Bakradze, Margvelashvili will win in these regions as well.

Continuing to glorify his team and presidential candidate as if there were no other position to take, the PM continued talking about the "miracle" the government has performed within the space of a year, saying that they had done the im-

possible, but not the undreamable. "I know that the majority of our population have problems, unemployment is very high, the economic situation is very difficult and the development of democratic institutions still requires a huge effort, but during this year I think we have done our best," he said, promising that this election will be "European" as "we are a part of Europe by our mentality" and "we should live in a European way".

By contrast, he reminded people "how bad" it was before the parliamentary elections of 2012, and how people were scared to talk, even members of the previous Cabinet. The PM gave the example of former Justice Minister Zurab Adeishvili, who he said could have used his talents in a positive way if he had not had such a President as Mikheil Saakashvili. He admitted that the lion's share of the abolition of corruption in the courts and police can be credited to Adeishvili, but in spite of this he kept fulfilling all the illegal orders of the President and will therefore be punished.

"I also suspect that David Kezerashvili [the former Defence Minister] was financing the UNM with funds he got by wrong means," the PM said, assuring the audience that that it's not him who wants to ruin the United National Movement – the party is destroying itself.

"I don't have any desire to destroy anybody, or see my President in prison, but the public can be sure that anyone who has made a mistake will have to pay for it. The rest is a matter for investigation... offenders will be punished by the courts, not by me or [journalist] Irma Inashvili," the Prime Minister continued.

Nana Gagua, Publisher of The Georgian Times, expressed an interest in whether the PM would be criticising the new President and Prime Minister after the presidential elections and his own voluntary resignation, and whether Ivanishvili would oppose these individuals through civil activity if they were from his own team but still acted wrongly.

"If the public trust me they must trust my choice as well... If I am wrong (as no one is al-

ways right), of course, we will criticise them together. It will be much the same as now. I give no promises to pull the stars down from the sky, but we will participate in these processes together. The power resides with the people, and if the President and PM misbehave, I will be there with the population to tell them about it and criticise them," he responded by saying.

He was also asked about his desire to leave politics as soon as he can, as he had initially promised when elected. "My team members tell me that I am Pelé, and nobody wants Pelé to leave the team. I understand them, but it is better if I move back into civilian life and assist the government from there," was Ivanishvili's reply.

He added that after leaving the Prime Ministership he will take a more interesting position where he will stay for a long time – perhaps 20 years – in order to fulfil his dream of creating a European-style society in Georgia. Ivanishvili firmly believes that he will be leaving behind the best team, and President Giorgi Margvelashvili, and that they will be support-

ed by the public. He gave guarantees that there will be no more corruption, adding that he has no illusions that he is able to perform miracles to ensure the development of the society he wants to see but he will do his best to do so.

The meeting could not have passed without mention of Georgia's northern neighbour. The Prime Minister was a little more critical of Russia on this occasion, showing his indignation at Moscow's attitude towards "some former Soviet countries who wish to be a part of Europe". Ivanishvili said this would be understandable if the matter concerned a military union, but not when it was about joining the EU. He expressed the hope that someday Russia itself will want to become part of Europe.

The PM once again took the opportunity to say how absurd it was that members of the previous government were calling him "a Kremlin man", and accused Saakashvili's team of leading the country to such deadlock that the recent attempts to normalise relations with Moscow had brought no results.

SOCAR'S MULTI-FUNCTIONAL BUILDING OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR



AMAZING SOCAR-MCDONALDS ON THE BLACK SEA COAST IN BATUMI



‘Industrial Forum Will Become Traditional Like Business Awarding Ceremony’

On October 18 the Georgian Times Media Holding hosted the first industrial forum, a gathering of Georgia’s leading manufacturers, in the Courtyard Marriot hotel in Tbilisi.

President of The Georgian Times Media Holding Makhaz Gulashvili noted that the forum was an important development. The Georgian Times has been running the Georgian Business Awards, which honour the best businessman and business of the year, since 1995 but this was the first time a business forum of this sort was being held.

“We businessmen, the politicians and the media reckon that The Georgian Times has played a great role in creating the Georgian business sector. But following the events of the last nine years, our economy is in a bad position. For example, imports exceed exports, there is mass unemployment and no cheap credit is available,” Malkhaz Gulashvili stated.

He added that the government should support industry to help it develop export production and provide jobs, and that debates and discussions should be held over ways to move the country forward from here and no longer live as we did during the United National Movement’s rule.

The forum aimed to focus the attention of the Georgian government, parliament, the media, businessmen and investors on the main strengths and the important problems of Georgian entrepreneurship. In the main body of the meeting The Georgian Times outlined all the obstacles to the fast and dynamic development of entrepreneurship: legislative regulations, tax and excise policies, transparency, the investment climate, the labour code and the system of allowances and preferences on traded goods.

The official partners of the first industrial forum were the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of In-

frastructure and Regional Development, the Energy Development Fund, the Revenue Service, the supervisory board of legislative committees, the Partnership Fund, the Georgian National Investment Agency, the Georgian Co-investment Fund, GCCI and a number of individual companies. One of the biggest metallurgical companies in Georgia, **GeoSteel**, was the general sponsor of Industrial Forum and its **General Director, Balakrishnan Sajiv**, was its first speaker. He stated that the main advantage his company offered was its 30-year expertise and high technological sophistication. He



MAMUKA BAKHTADZE - GENERAL DIRECTOR OF JSC GEORGIAN RAILWAY, MALKHAZ GULASHVILI - PRESIDENT OF MEDIA HOLDING THE GEORGIAN TIMES, DAVID NARMANIA - MINISTER OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE; MIKHEIL JANELIDZE - DEPUTY MINISTER OF ECONOMY, MARIAM VALISHVILI - DEPUTY MINISTER OF ENERGY

ish standards. Our basic aim has always been to produce high quality steel. We are oriented to making our production high

specialists in order to improve the quality of its products and export them, because exports are very important for the de-

velopment of Georgian economy. **GeoSteel** has received Turkish and British product certificates. “Several years ago there was an earthquake in Tur-

key, and the construction standards were reviewed. We decided to work according to the new standards imposed then, as this Sajiv maintains that Georgia should be proud of the quality of steel this Georgian company produces. **GeoSteel’s** production infrastructure is of the same standard found in other European countries. “By means of our high technology we produce steel which meets every quality standard everywhere. **GeoSteel** is devoted on to maintaining and improving global steel standards,” Sajiv said.

Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia **David Narmania** also participated in the forum. He stated that a decision has already been taken to remove the political pressure which has been applied to business in recent years. He said that the change of government should positively influence the business environment and that the government is paying special attention to the negative aspects of Georgian business.

“We are studying the obstacles businesses face. We would like to remove all these and induce a new phase of development so that we have a free business environment in our country, reducing barriers as much as possible,” stated Narmania.



BALA CRISHNAN SAJIV - GENERAL DIRECTOR OF GEOSTEEL, JASPAL SINGH - DIRECTOR OF GEOSTEEL

added that although the managers of the company are foreign, 99% of its employees are Georgian.

“Our product corresponds to American, British and Turk-

quality and at the same time available for the consumer. Consumer satisfaction is important for us,” Sajiv stated. He added that the company also focuses on retraining Georgian

will help us construct impregnable buildings in Georgia too,” stated Sajiv.

Georgia has a long and proud steelmaking tradition which **GeoSteel** seeks to maintain.

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The Minister added that he was under no illusions that the new government would be able to sort everything out straight away and address every issue right now because Georgia has a low rating in many components of its business culture, but what it can do, which is cease to pressurise businesses with demands for support of various kinds, it has done.

“Our government has already taken the decision to ensure that people’s property is protected. If anyone tries to seize it, they will be strictly punished,” stated Narmania. As regards unjust tax demands, individual issues are being resolved step by step. Furthermore, “A very important dialogue is going on between entrepreneurs’ unions and the Finance Ministry of Georgia about participating in tenders and state purchases. We have improved the environment in this area, making tendering processes transparent and fair, and the number of participants of tenders has now significantly increased. Competition in purchasing state assets promotes improvements in offer and delivery and stimulates the production of more quality goods and services.

“You should not think that we will be able to resolve every problem this year. Frankly speaking, this is not possible. But we are working step by step to make the tax environment in our country attractive,” stated Davit Narmania.

The minister also spoke about the importance of the industrial forum. “I would like to emphasize that it is important for a media holding to organise such a forum, arrange a meeting of entrepreneurs and give them the opportunity to discuss things, exchange ideas and develop partnerships. All this will be reflected in more intensive work and the continuing economic development of our country,” he said.

The next speaker was Deputy Minister of Energy **Mariam Valishvili**, who spoke about ongoing construction projects, some of which have proved controversial. “There is debate over some of our construction work, but no country has been able to develop when it only has a small energy gen-

erating capacity. We need a strong infrastructure to meet the challenges our country faces. This is not only our opinion, it is the point of view of financial institutions, as reflected reports by the World Bank. Constructing big barrages is not a caprice,” she stated. She added that government policy was to use local resources to provide local people with energy. “The energy sector is politically attractive, as it involves bringing in foreign investment, but we cannot afford to slacken the pace of these projects as we are only at the beginning. Investments have been flowing in for the last 2-3 years but they have not been satisfactory in themselves. During the first six months of this year investments increased by 21%, because we have continued to further our infrastructure projects. Hydro energy plant constructions are continuing, and the more we build the more other work the government and the ministry will have to do.

“Georgia is an energy exporting country, but we also import energy, especially in winter. We do not have a satisfactory energy independence situation. 75% of our energy is imported, for example natural gas and oil products. The sector’s task is simple: to ensure that energy is available at an acceptable price, which will satisfy both our economy and our population,” stated the Deputy Minister.

Valishvili bemoaned the fact that the size of the Georgian market has proved unable to motivate the private sector to invest in energy. “It is good that we now have achievements to our name in respect of regulation, and our sector is no exception. We have international obligations to fulfil, but our main task is to ensure the availability of our resources on the European market. This would create more private sector interest in energy, because our domestic energy market cannot motivate it to make investments in energy generation, as the local returns are not sufficient,” she told the forum.

Mikheil Janelidze, the Deputy Minister of Economy, told the forum that the government was developing strategies which would form an action plan of development for 2014-



NINO TSILOSANI - WAGON-BUILDING HOLDING, MALKHAZ GULASHVILI - PRESIDENT OF MEDIA HOLDING THE GEORGIAN TIMES, FAROOQ SIDDIQUI - RMP, MARK CATSNELSON - RUSTAVIAZOT

2020. He said that the main task of government policy was to ensure long-term inclusive growth, the profits of which would be available to the broad masses. He also stated that the government is not focusing on providing social support but on creating opportunities for income generation. “To achieve this we are working on creating a strategy document, which will reflect the views of the whole Georgian Government on the development of the economy. Within this strategy we will focus not only on separate sectors, but on identifying the main factors preventing growth and taking measures to eliminate them,” stated Mikheil Janelidze. He said that the initial draft of this strategy was already ready, and was being discussed by government bodies and ministries in the relevant areas. He said that the main issues identified were overcoming Georgia’s low competitiveness, developing human resources and improving the availability of finance.

“To improve our competitiveness it is necessary to improve the industrial and investment climates and create better conditions for the introduction of new technology, the growth of exports, the maximising of

our transport potential and the development of our energy resources. All this is needed to develop our private sector. We think that ultimately we will be able to draft laws acceptable to business which will promote free competition in the market. This year we have concluded negotiations with the European Union concerning our Association Agreement and this will be the main document determining the nature of the reforms we will introduce in Georgia. Maybe these reforms will not be easy to implement, but they will promote the modernisation of the public sector, introduce new technology and attract investments,” stated Janelidze.

Nino Tsilosani, Chair of the Wagon-building Company, explained that this enterprise is in fact a group of three companies - the long established Wagon-building Company, the Rustavi Metallurgical Plant and the Electro-building Company—and its main activities are railway carriage construction and major overhauls.

“Our holding mainly serves the Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijan railway systems and other private companies. Since 2005 we have increased production and introduced new technologies. We began at that time

to work seriously on introducing international standards of quality control,” Tsilosani stated. She told the forum that the Wagon-building Company is the only carriage builder in the Transcaucasian region and Georgia is the third country in the Post-Soviet space in terms of wagon building. She added that is the geopolitical situation of Georgia can be improved the development of carriage-building will give the country a competitive advantage in this important sphere of logistics.

Natia Turnava from the Partnership Fund also made a presentation about the projects being implemented by that fund.

The new Georgian Co-Investment Fund told the forum that GCF may exit from its projects through Initial Public Offering on the local or international (London, Warsaw) stock exchanges. George Shengelia, Deputy Head of Research and Risk Analysis Department spoke about investment strategy of the Fund and noted that it will invest in projects with minimum size of 5 million dollars and fund’s equity participation will be in the range of 25 - 75%. “Our aim is to partner up with large international companies and successfully implement in-

vestment projects in Georgia. The fact that GCF will invest up to 6 billion dollars in the next five years in Georgia is very positive signal for potential investors,” said George Shengelia.

Another speaker, David Chanturia, representative of American Alloys, said that one of the main problems facing Georgia is still environmental degradation. He stated that his company was working well and producing good products, as it has produced significantly more during the last two years than the old Ferroalloys plant produced during the past 25 years. He also stated that a 20 million investment was about to be made in the construction of a new plant, such is current demand.

Bachi Zautashvili, General Director of Airzena told the forum that Tbilisi International Airport is facing a number of problems. He said that the aviation sector is one of the most important in the country and its issues should be addressed. He said that Georgian companies were uncompetitive even locally and that employment, revenue and salaries were continually under threat. “During the last 8-9 years our company has lost its previous importance in the local market.



URUZMAG KARKUSOV - EXPERT; NINO KAMBEGASHVILI - GERMAN GEORGIAN ASSOCIATION OF ECONOMIC AND CULTURIN FRANKFURT AM MAIN - DIRECTOR



TSEZAR CHOCHELI - BUSINESSMAN, ILIA SHIKHASHVILI - CONCRETE SLEEPER PLANT DIRECTOR



MALKHAZ GULASHVILI - PRESIDENT OF MEDIA HOLDING THE GEORGIAN TIMES, NATIA TURNAVA - PARTNER SHIP FUND



GEORGE PERTAIA - HEAD OF GNA, ZAZA CHELIDZE - HEAD OF GEOSTAT, MALKHAZ GULASHVILI - PRESIDENT OF MEDIA HOLDING THE GEORGIAN TIMES



TATO LASHKISHVILI - SVOBODNAYA GRUZIYA, MAIA PURTSELADZE - VERSIA, IRAKLI LEKVIANIDZE - EXPERT, EMZAR JGERENAIA - EXPERT



BALA KRISHNAN SAJIV - GENERAL DIRECTOR OF GEOSTEEL



NIKO MCHEDLISHVILI - JTI, K. JAYANCHANDRAL - TRANSELECTRICA



DACHI TSAGURIA - GEORGIAN RAILWAY HEAD OF PUBLIC RELATIONS, DAVID BARDAVELIDZE - BUSINESSMAN, GODERDZI MAMALADZE - SAKCABLE



LAURA GACHAVA - LG, DAVID KODUA - BUSINESSMAN



IRAKLI SAPARIDZE - COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR OF PETRA



GEORGE BABUNASHVILI - LIBERTY BANK



FAROOQ SIDDIQUI - RMP, JASPAL SINGH - GEOSTEEL, BALA CRISHNAN SAJIV - GEOSTEEL



LIZA TAVDUMADZE - MINISTRY OF ENERGY



LIZA TAVDUMADZE - MINISTRY OF ENERGY



IRAKLI LEKVINADZE - EXPERT, EMZAR JGERENAIA - EXPERT



K.JAYANCHANDRAL - TRANSELECTRICA, HARDEEP SINGH - GEOSTEEL DIRECTOR, FAROOQ SIDDIQUE - RMP



EKA BERIDZE - GWP, TIKO MAKARIDZE - GWP, GIATAVADZE - EXPERT



DAVID NARMANIA, MINISTER OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE, MAMUKA BAKHTADZE, GENERAL DIRECTOR OF JSC GEORGIAN RAILWAY



ZAZA CHELIDZE - HEAD OF GEOSTAT, KHATIA MOISTRAPISHVILI - REVENUE SERVICE, IRAKLI SHARTAVA - DEPUTY HEAD OF REVENUE SERVICE



GEORGE BEZHUASHVILI, MARIAM RUSISHVILI, GEDF



MARIAM VALISHVILI - DEPUTY MINISTER OF ENERGY, GEORGE PERTAIA - HEAD OF GNIA, ZAZA CHELIDZE - HEAD OF GEOSTAT, MALKHAZ GULASHVILI - PRESIDENT OF MEDIA HOLDING THE GEORGIAN TIMES, NATIA TURNAVA - PARTNER SHIP FUND, GEORGE SHENGELIA - DEPUTY HEAD OF RESEARCH & ANALYSIS DEPARTMENT GCF

‘Industrial Forum Will Become Traditional Like Business Awarding Ceremony’

Continued from p. 7

We think this is partly the fault of the reckless airline policy which has been pursued during this time. There are a lot of airlines in Georgia, but 15 or more of them are foreign companies, and Airzena pays four times more in taxes than those 15 airlines put together and has employed 25 times more people than those other companies. The government must pay more attention to this issue and give us more opportunity to develop a national airline business, because our development means more job opportunities and more income to the state budget,” Zautashvili said.

“The Kars-Akhalkalaki Railway creates interesting business opportunities for the processing industry,” Mamuka Bakhtadze, General Director of JSC Georgian Railway, told at the forum. He stated that the construction of this new railway link continues intensively, despite the fact that the Turkish and Georgian railway systems differ from each other in gauge and in other standards. He said that the construction of a Dry Port is also planned as part of this project.

Bakhtadze announced a new initiative to the forum. He said

that Georgian Railway and Azerbaijan Railways have agreed to change the tariffs they charge for transporting raw materials from Central Asia, which should obviously stimulate more business.

Director of the Georgian National Investment Agency Giorgi Pertaia told the forum that the present political cohabitation between opposing forces diminishes the attraction of Georgia for investors.

“When we speak of the Georgian business environment - we have good products, low taxes, low levels of criminality, low bureaucracy. There are some segments of our economy which are competitive in comparison with other countries, and give us advantages; on the other hand we have a lot of problems, for example political instability and cohabitation, which maybe is good for democracy but very bad for attracting investment. We are not China or Russia, which have long queues of investors wanting to enter them; we have to go abroad and attract investors. It is very important to create long-term stability in the country,” said Pertaia. He added that low taxes were not enough to attract investors. He had information however that a lot of



ALEKSEY KUZNETSOV - GWP, EKABERIDZE - GWP, TIKO MAKARIDZE - GWP

foreign investors are interested in extending hotel chains in Georgia, and that there is a real demand for this.

Head of GeoStat Zaza Chelidze made a presentation about

GDP and FDI.

Liza Tavdumadze, representing the Ministry of Energy, made a presentation about the energy perspectives of Georgia and GEDF head George

Bezhuashvili talked about the projects which his fund will be supporting. Liza Tavdumadze, representing the Ministry of Energy, made a presentation about the energy perspectives

of Georgia and GEDF head George Bezhuashvili talked about the projects which his fund will be supporting.

Continued on p. 11



EMZAR JGERENAIA - EXPERT, GRIGOL NEMSADZE - ALGANI SECURITY COMPANY



GEORGE TALAKVADZE - DELOITTE, GEORGE KHARAISHVILI - DELOITTE, GEORGE KEKELIDZE - DELOITTE



MARK KATSNELSON - GENERAL DIRECTOR OF RUSTAVIAZOT, ABESALOM KEVKHISHVILI - DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF RUSTAVIAZOT



GODERDZI BUCHASHVILI, MANUCHAR MARKOIDZE, ILYAS CHILOGHLU - IBSU STAFF

Continued from p. 10

JTI Caucasus's Director of Corporate Issues and Communication Nikoloz Mchedlishvili stated contrarily that during the period of the previous government Georgian business was put under pressure and that this, more than anything, had greatly interfered with investment flow. He said that at the moment business is free of political pressure from the government, but stress is still being placed on it.

"Today we see the government and parliament issuing new regulations every day. This puts business under stress. If they initiate a new law, they must not adopt it before a proper analysis has been conducted. Such a precedent is found in European countries and Russia. If this were done business would know that laws cannot be changed by the whim of a few parliamentarians, without the consequences being clear. There must be detailed examination of all initiatives before they are voted on and introduced," Mchedlishvili said.

The next speaker, businessman **Tsezar Chocheli**, stated that the industrial forum format is a very interesting one, but the problems faced by business did not emerge only a few days ago. He said that loud pronouncements were being made by government officials back in the 1990s. They said even then that local entrepreneurship should be promoted, the United National Movement said the same, now it is being said again.

"Unfortunately, we have not seen any real results. Our business group was established in 1991, and has implemented 12 large local business projects, such as Lomisi, Natakhtari, Barambo, Berta, etc, but when government officials tell the world that entrepreneurship should be promoted it does not happen, and the pressure on us increases," said Chocheli.

He pointed out that the combined efforts of these companies contribute 1% of the entire Georgian budget, but first the tax service investigated them, then the finance ministry investigation service, but when these agencies did not discover any economic crime they entered the companies anyway and conducted criminal perse-

cutions. "These processes paralyzed our business. Our group had started up 5 new enterprises, in construction, tool manufacturing and the food industry, but each one of these is not functioning at present", Chocheli said. Barambo was attacked in January, when land for a new enterprise was obtained, and for this reason investors were driven away.

Chocheli stated that such criminal persecution should not be used to prevent companies from operating. "As a result of the attacks on our group, 7-8,000 thousand people are now unemployed. The budget does not receive an income from us. TBC Bank now has a toxic debt, as Berta is a dead asset on its lending portfolio. The same can be said about the rest of our companies, where 4,000 persons are employed," Chocheli stated. However he added that

Zedazeni, one of the group's companies, has seen a 40% increase in sales despite the economic downturn. This increase is reflected in additional income accruing to the state budget, more people being employed and more investments being made. Chocheli therefore reckons that Georgian business will develop well if politics does not prevent it.

Farooq Siddiqui, Director of Rustavi Metallurgical Plant was also among the major speakers of the forum. As he stated, "the creation of industrial policy is very important for Georgia. Through the joint efforts of both government and the industrial sector the giants of the former Soviet Union, such as the big metallurgical plants, can revive, rebuild and make a great contribution to the economy of our country. It is good that we now have an opportunity to communicate directly with the government and government structures. I think that, in the nearest future goods produced in Georgia will be able to compete even with those of Russia and Ukraine. I think we can do it."

Closing the event, Malkhaz Gulashvili stated that the Industrial Forum will be held next year too and become a tradition, as the Georgian Business Awards have. It was important because it was devoted to the

creation of business and job opportunities and the growth of Georgia's Gross Domestic Product.

"During the Mikheil Saakashvili period the economy functioned by using other methods. Local and infrastructural projects were funded by dodgy loans, these were recorded as income rather than repayable loans and the economy effectively stopped functioning at all," stated Malkhaz Gulashvili.

He insisted that new industrial concerns, such as metallurgical plants, cement and fertiliser production factories and others must be created in the country. All these will create jobs for the population, and unemployment is still the main problem facing Georgia.

"During the forum, all the companies have expressed their discontent with Poti Port. As we have all found, this company will not enter into any form of discussion with anyone. Poti Port has to change its position on this, and if it does not we have information resources we can use which will make it negotiate with entrepreneurs," stated Malkhaz Gulashvili.

The President of the Georgian Times Media Holding stated that the forum had shown how important the energy sector is for the country and how much investment is being made, and should continue to be made, in this sphere. He added that the Georgian economy will not develop without the industrial sector developing accordingly and that is not true to say that we can achieve any success without this sphere. Gulashvili is sure that the foundations laid by the forum, amongst others, will facilitate the development of industry and that the Government of Georgia is following the right path of development.

He suggested that the next forum would be more thematic and time-limited in format, because it is not easy to persuade businessmen to separate themselves from their work for 5-6 hours. The Georgian Times cares about Georgian industry and will continue to pursue this interest through its various outlets and events, in accordance with its established traditions and principles.



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ACCURACY I TRUST

Georgia and the United States - a Test of Democracies?

By STEVEN G. TRAYLOR, GT

Georgia and the world are seeing a unique series of political events occur – but no one is paying really close attention. A mini-revolution has been attempted in the United States of America, but democracy has prevailed in a free society.

The US Constitution, the basis for the existence of the American form of government, was adopted in 1787. It divided government into three separate branches, the Judiciary, the Legislative and the Executive, which are deemed “equal”, for the good and benefit of the American people.

The Executive branch is represented by the President of the United States, Barack Hussein Obama. The Legislature is made up of two chambers: the lower house, the House of Representatives, and the upper house, the Senate. All monetary bills are brought before the House of Representatives, whose members are the elected officials closest to the American people, who stand for election every two years. This House of Representatives has now been hijacked by a small band of ideological extremists known as the Tea Party Movement (a faction within the Republican Party) over a political issue on which they disagree with the Executive branch of government, namely the national health insurance programme in-

roduced by the current President, known as Obamacare.

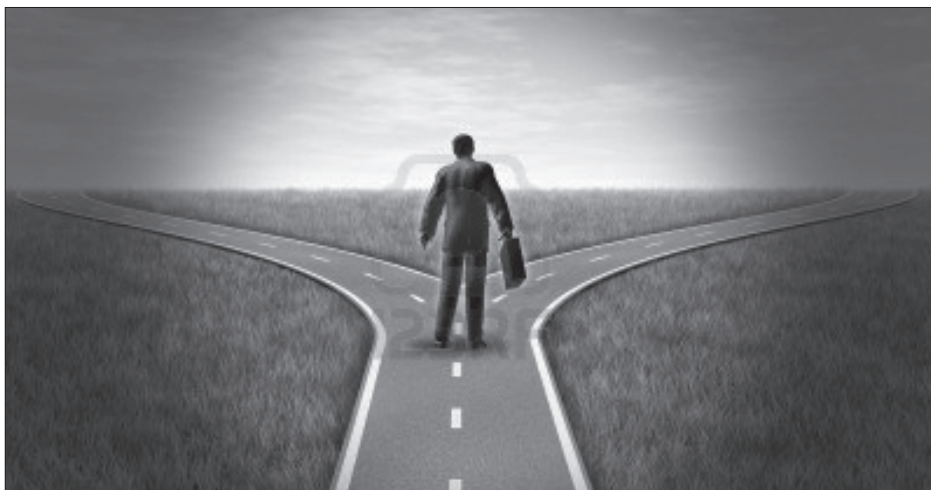
The American government – like any business – is supposed to function on a budget. At present, the US government is running a deficit on its budget – it is obligated to spend more money than it brings in through taxes and paid-for government services.

30 September was the close of business for fiscal year 2013. Seizing its opportunity, the Leg-

islative branch of government attached an amendment to the funding appropriation for the 2014 budget which would have “de-funded” a pre-approved government programme, Obamacare. The Executive Branch refused to sign this amendment into law, so no budget was agreed for 2014. Therefore government came to a standstill, as it

did not have the money to finance itself and meet its current obligations.

Government financing today is based on borrowing from the Central Bank, the Federal Reserve, until such time as the United States can balance its books and make its revenue and expenditure equal. The government only had enough money in the bank to continue to run until about “the 17th of October”, or



so said Secretary of the Treasury, Jacob Lew. Compromised has finally been achieved, with the Republican majority in the House, the Democrat majority in the Senate and the Executive Leader signing into law a “short term deal” which will see the American government function for the next three months. The revolu-

tionaries have been brought under control, at least in the short term. No tanks in the streets, military actions or civilian rebellions have taken centre stage while the ‘leader of the free world’ continues to deal with its ‘local domestic issues’.

So it’s now history – or it is until 15th January. Then the short term deal expires, and the budget will again become the political discussion point of the day in the United States, and the rest of the world will again ‘listen in’.

The Country of Georgia

Georgia has experienced its own form of democracy since the breakup of the Soviet Union, and like the United States is “evolving” into a free, open and law-abiding society.

The Georgia of the 1990s was characterised by a highly centr-

alised government, a non-independent legal system and a ‘top down’ hierarchy of economic and political control. The traffic police, the most visible sign of government control over the citizenry, were considered the most corrupt in the world. Today all that has changed.

In 2003 citizens took to the streets to protest against the official outcome of the disputed parliamentary elections, and President Eduard Shevardnadze was forced to resign. A revolution took place, and brought to power the following year later a Western-minded and educated leader, eager to see his country emerge from the stranglehold of Soviet domination and take its rightful place on the world stage as a ‘fledgling democracy’.

The Rose Revolution began when the protesters claimed that the new Georgian parliament was “illegitimate”. The capital Tbilisi saw 100,000 demonstrators demand the resignation of the old guard of the former Soviet area. Shevardnadze stepped down on the 23 November. Now fast forward to 2012 – 12 months ago. The leader of that revolution, Mikheil Saakashvili, admitted defeat in the parliamentary elections and the current Prime Minister took over, moving the country away from a presidential towards a parliamentary republic. Another peaceful transfer of power is now due to take place at the end of this month, when a new President of Georgia is elected.

What Georgia should never forget, if it wants to be a true democracy, is that authoritarian regimes cannot survive, and although the presidency of Mikheil Saakashvili was deemed the strong one essential for the implementation of reforms to the democratic process, authoritarian regimes cannot truly lead in a free society today. During his recent speech to the UN in New York City Saakashvili admitted, according to *The Economist*, “In our rush to impose a new reality, against the background of internal and external threats, we have cut corners and certainly made mistakes”.

The leaders of yesterday, today and tomorrow best serve the needs of the citizens who elect-

ed them when governance is by consensus, and does not derive from extreme or personal political motives. Centralised power can lead to political defeat, in a democracy.

The revolution/evolution continues

Today Georgia stands at another revolutionary and political junction. This is a global junction – with the Vilnius Summit on the horizon – an event four weeks from now which show to the world, where Georgia would like to head and whether the rest of the world is happy with that. Russia, its former colonial master in Soviet times, is afraid of Georgia becoming a true democracy and a potential member of the European Union, with all that stands for.

Georgia’s revolution, between 1990 and 2013, can continue with the initialing of the Association Agreements offered by the European Union, through the Eastern European Partnership which Georgia signed up to in 2009. Another 10 years will await Georgia before it can move beyond this level. But the democratic process can still evolve, and can still give citizens of Georgia an economic future similar to that of citizens of the United States. Compromises between extreme positions, an independent and transparent judiciary and preventing the centralization of power into one branch of government are the true hallmarks of a free and democratic society.

The revolutionary extremists of the Tea Party did not win last week in the United States. Georgia can now take a lead in the same direction, by following a decentralised and open path to true democracy, successfully holding the presidential elections this month, and thus, in future, looking forward to joining the European Union – some day.

ART & CULTURE

Cheating Above Ground, Playing Below It

By TAKO AGARASHVILI, GT

Being in my early thirties, I strongly believe that cheating is outmoded yet extremely painful. Still it’s part of almost everybody’s life. The topic somehow remains timely; it’s always THE thing to talk about. Many directors have made films and put on plays, visual artists have painted and writers have written about cheating. Now so has the legendary director Peter Brook, by staging the play “The Suit”, by Can Themba, at the Gift Festival in Tbilisi.

The original novel was banned in Themba’s native country (South Africa), as he had been exiled during the apartheid period. It’s not just a story, it’s more a fable embodied by the brilliant artists who perform it. Not only did the play take us back to early fifties and apartheid, it was decorated with beautiful music performed by the artists themselves.

Gorgeous Matilda (Nonhanhla Kheswa) is the cheating wife of Philemon (Ivanno Jeremiah) who punishes her after finding out about it through his friend Maphikela (Jordan Barbour) who believe she is doing a



good thing by telling on a cheating wife. Cheating is a phenomenon which never goes quite unpunished. It may seem like the betrayed party has let go, but it can never be completely overcome. Philemon does not get over it and keeps on punishing his wife after she has been caught red handed.

The play addresses the very common problem of cheating and how to handle it. It’s like everybody’s story, but Peter Brook didn’t choose a contemporary play, he chose one where the period it is set in is of the greatest importance. In the particular circumstances of the time I found the insulted and enraged husband very thoughtful and kind. He does not turn her out of

the house, which at the time would have completely ruined her life, but chooses to punish her mentally by making her take care of the suit her lover has left behind when running away from the unexpectedly arriving husband.

As tragically as the play ends, it tells us the tale and makes us wonder, who is the bad guy? Should the husband just forgive? Did his friend do a good thing by telling on the cheating Matilda? Tons of questions kept popping up in my mind. And while I couldn’t decide whose side I was on, one thing was obvious: Matilda didn’t seem to be sorry about her infidelity. She plays around with the suit when she is alone, she seems to be in love, she seems to be unhappy

but she never seems to be sorry.

Nonhanhla Kheswa gives a brilliant performance of the songs of a humble house wife who is simply bored with her perfect husband, who treats her like a queen. When watching the play you see that the actors are happy to be on stage, they are happy to be in the same show, they are talented, feel what they are doing and are having fun. It’s the lightness of touch of the amazing directing and marvellous acting which keeps the play so enjoyable despite the heaviness of the story. Peter Brook stages a play about this difficult topic, with a tragic ending, without forcing his opinion on the audience but leaves us with tons of options to pick from and cre-

ates in us a few extra.

From the apartheid era Gift took us underground and presented a musical, which told the sad stories of musicians and beggars who should have been, but weren’t, appreciated for their talent. They couldn’t find their place in the “upper” world and so moved “underneath”. It was their conscious choice, since they were not willing to compromise when it came to their art. They were the victims of the unfair, snobbish, “flexible” system. The government was ashamed of these characters, and so they chose to operate in the underworld, as they thus felt in charge of their daily choices. They live on the very edge of real and surreal. But most importantly, they are happy as long as they can play.

The Music and Drama Theatre of StasNamin provokes huge expectations by default. Knowing that Ketidolidze was directing the play blew expectations even bigger. Then there it was, in the Griboedov Theatre – the Georgian premiere of Under-

ground. It has been years since I last saw the Russian performance on stage. In 2007 the Gift Festival presented the one person play “Five Letters to the President”, the single character being played by Yulia Grigorieva. This actress

stunned me with her talent and transformation. The play was amazing enough to keep me talking about it for the last 5 years. So I was bewitched again when Yulia came out onto the Griboedov stage. She plays a beggar, but the woman is luminous, radiating power, standing solid and confident on the stage. Every time she gets off her chair and moves her body centre stage she carries the world with her. I don’t think I have ever seen such brilliant acting as Yulia’s. I don’t think I have ever seen actors floating on the stage rather than standing. These guys were experiencing tragedy, love, loss, rejection, betrayal, judgment, and yet managed to tell the story while simply floating on the stage. They have a certain freedom in their acting, they feel at home. They charm the audience with their talent. You don’t see the hard work behind the characters; you witness the superb performance and beautiful directing.

Russian is a graceful language, especially when you hear it from the stage from the mouths of outstanding actors like those of the StasNamin company. The play was precise, accessible and fascinating. I am looking forward to the Georgian version Ketidolidze is now working on – it has much to live up to.



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