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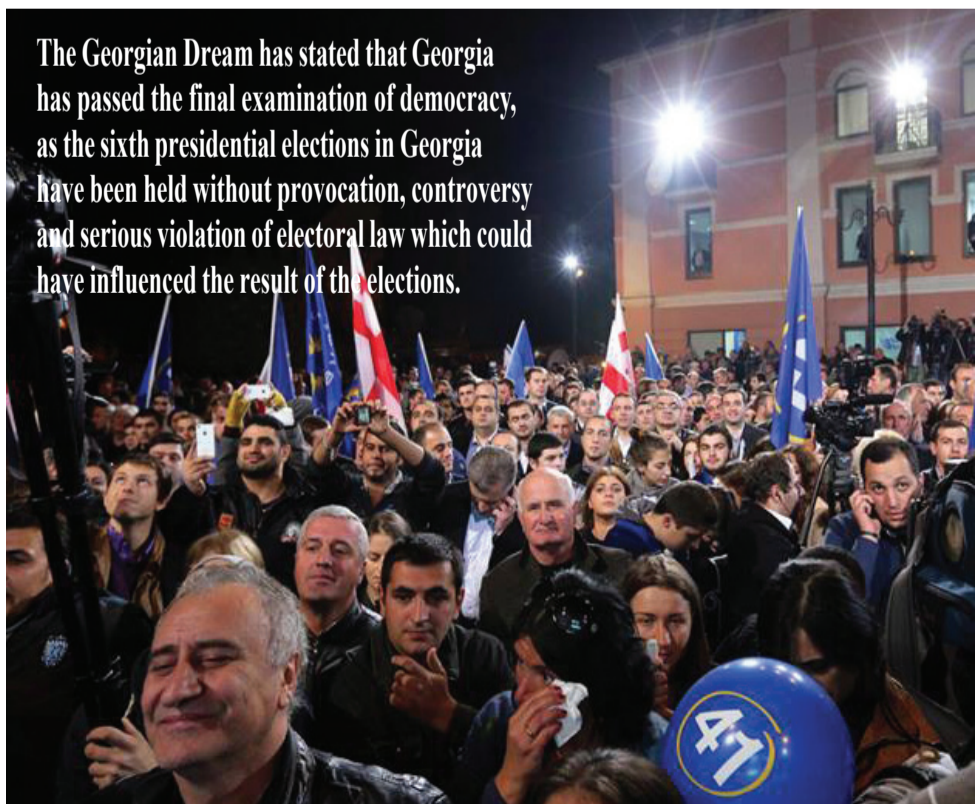
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## Georgia Chooses an "Ordinary" President



The Presidential election in Georgia has brought the Western-oriented "dictator" Mikheil Saakashvili's 9 year rule to an end. Prevented by the Constitution from standing himself, Saakashvili had nominated longtime ally Davit Bakradze as his successor, but Georgians have chosen Georgian Dream coalition candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili, who is backed by Bidzina Ivanishvili, the local tycoon who became Prime Minister after last year's parliamentary elections.



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# Georgia Chooses an “Ordinary” President

By LISA TONAKANYAN, GT

The Presidential election in Georgia has brought the Western-oriented “dictator” Mikheil Saakashvili’s 9 year rule to an end. Prevented by the Constitution from standing himself, Saakashvili had nominated longtime ally Davit Bakradze as his successor, but Georgians have chosen Georgian Dream coalition candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili, who is backed by Bidzina Ivanishvili, the local tycoon who became Prime Minister after last year’s parliamentary elections.

The peculiarity of the sixth presidential election held in Georgia since the state regained its independence in 1991 was the possibility that a second round could be held. If no candidate received over 50% of the vote this would be mandatory. However, Bidzina Ivanishvili’s threat that his candidate would drop out of the race if there was a second round, and that he would not be so enthusiastic about supporting the country as a private citizen after his impending withdrawal from politics if Margvelashvili gained less than 60-70 percent of the vote (possibly a hint for the Central Election Commission (CEC) as well) had its desired effect – the electorate rushed to support the Georgian Dream’s candidate.

Preliminary results gave Margvelashvili 62.09 percent of the vote, while his main opponents – Bakradze, leader of Saakashvili’s United National Movement (UNM), and Nino Burjanadze, the former Speaker of Parliament turned Saakashvili opponent, had 21.9 and 10.06 percent accordingly. For the first time in the modern history of Georgia the elections were held in a calm and competitive environment, with no obvious prospect of revolutions or mass demonstrations breaking out over them. The CEC and international monitoring missions have confirmed this. However, voter turnout was lower than in all the previous elections – 46.6 percent. Georgia does not have a minimum required turnout, and a presidential candidate has to collect only 50 percent plus 1 vote to be declared winner.

Not all the candidates were satisfied with the preliminary results – Nino Burjanadze among them. After the first exit poll results were published, she declared that she would defend the votes of her electorate. “It



has been proved several times that polls do not work in Georgia. An exit poll is merely a good opportunity to manipulate public opinion... I know what the situation on the ground is. We are going to protect our votes. We will bring more than 1,000 suits,” Burjanadze said.

To everyone’s surprise, outgoing president Mikheil Saakashvili called on “everybody who is dissatisfied with the results of the election” to “respect the opinion of the majority” as this is “the rule of democracy”. “Georgia has elected a new President, and I want

to thank all the voters who participated in the election, because all elections, whatever their results, serve the further development of democracy in the country,” he said, whilst adding that the opinion of the minority should also be taken in consideration.

Saakashvili also added that for Georgia “the last year”, i.e. the time since his party lost power, had been a time of serious regression, but he expressed the hope that Georgia will overcome all its difficulties and head towards prosperity again.

This year Georgian voters had a very large choice of candidates – 23 of them, some genuinely gunning for victory, others merely wishing to show their faces to the public. The programmes and priorities of the prospective presidents were very different – ranging from the serious to the ridiculous.

Frontrunner from the start, Giorgi Margvelashvili called on the electorate to support him as a follower of the path chosen by Prime Minister Ivanishvili. He promised to protect the political, social, economic and cultural rights of citizens. He assured the electorate that he would pursue the main development goal of Georgia – integrating with NATO and the European Union – whilst restoring relations with the northern neighbor, Russia.

Davit Bakradze’s programme was actually not much different from Margvelashvili’s. He also promised Euro-Atlantic integration and dialogue with Russia, though he said that the restoration of relations should be done on the basis of the national interests of Georgia. The focus of his campaign was the Georgian Dream’s unfulfilled promises. “Dreaming Doesn’t Work”, was his slogan.

“Justice Everywhere and For Everyone” was the slogan on Nino Burjanadze’s posters, which appeared in every possible place. The leader of Democratic Movement – United Georgia insisted that she was the only person who could really restore relations with Russia and remove barbed wire fences it has been installing along the administrative border

with South Ossetia. She also said that she would put Saakashvili under arrest for all the crimes he had committed.

Another opinionated candidate, Christian Democrat leader Giorgi Targamadze, declared that he was “the only” truly Western-oriented politician in Georgia, whose ideology is based on Christian values. Koba Davitashvili, the People’s Party leader, knew he would not win but claimed he wanted to achieve at least three percent support, as without this he saw no reason to continue his political career.

Restoring Georgia’s territorial integrity was, as usual, the main promise of all the candidates. However, some of them made patently absurd statements. Communist Party of Georgia leader Nugzar Avaliani wanted to return the country to the Soviet era, with its collective farms and planned economy. Mikheil (Gela) Saluashvili, who called ex-President of Georgia Eduard Shevardnadze a living Antichrist and Saakashvili a false prophet, participated in the TV show “Nichieri” (“Georgia’s Got Talent”) in order to address the electorate. He failed to make it past the first round of the show, but promised to “fight Satanism” and impose a ban on rock music and nightclubs. Leader of the Labour Party Shalva Natelashvili promised to finance a week-long honeymoon for newlyweds, whilst For Fair Georgia candidate Sergo Javakhidze offered to raise the level of sexual education in the country in order to prevent unplanned pregnancies. However

er the funniest part of the election campaign was the suggestion that there should be a contest for the position of Georgia’s first lady, made by Giorgi Liliashvili, who also had pretensions to being head of state.

“It was difficult for me to make a choice between those candidates,” admitted a voter at Gldani’s number 81 polling station, Lamzira Macharadze, 53. She had supported the Georgian Dream candidate, not for his electoral programme (she did not follow his campaign) but because he was supported by the PM, who is seen as the saviour of the nation. At the same time, Macharadze expressed the hope that this time she would not be disappointed, as she was by President Saakashvili.

Twenty-seven year old Mamuka Khazarashvili did not participate in the election – he saw no point. “Everything will turn out the way it must be,” he said smiling. “I don’t support anyone,” he added.

A number of people supported Shalva Natelashvili. “Let’s give him a chance, as he is asking for it,” said an aged woman at the exit of the polling station. Apart from the three expected leaders – Margvelashvili, Bakradze, Burjanadze – Natelashvili was the only candidate who gained any significant support, with 2.88 percent. The other 18 eventual candidates (one of the original 23, Akaki Asatiani, withdrew at the last moment) did not gain more than one percent.

The newly elected President’s inauguration is due to take place on November 17, 2013 in Tbilisi.



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# The Sixth Presidential Elections in Georgia

By LONDA MINDIASHVILI, GT

**The major issue of the past few weeks has been the presidential election in Georgia. It would be interesting for our readers to review the history of presidential elections in this country.**

Georgia has suffered a very difficult political development. Back in 1918, Noe Zhordania declared the Democratic Republic of Georgia independent of Russia. On July 24, 1918 he became its head of government, though without any election being held. Within three years, his government had organised a successful land reform, secured the passage of comprehensive social and political legislation and cultivated widespread ties with other countries, which led to Georgia becoming the only Transcaucasian state to gain de jure recognition from both Soviet Russia and the Western powers. With mass peasant support, his government managed to gain friends elsewhere by combining socialism, democracy and a moderate form of nationalism. It attracted the loyalty of the intellectual elites and the nobility and played a crucial role in transforming Georgia into a modern political entity. However, the invasion of the Soviet army in February-March 1921 toppled the "Menshevik" Georgian government, forcing Zhordania and many of his colleagues to take refuge in France.

Soviet rule followed. However, mass pro-independence rallies were held in Georgia between 1987 and 1990, led by the nationalist dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Georgia held a referendum on restoring its pre-Soviet independence on March 31, 1991, in which 90.08 per cent of those who voted declared themselves in favour. The Georgian parliament passed a declaration of independence on April 9, 1991. On 26 May 1991 the first presidential election in Georgian history was held, and Zviad Gamsakhurdia became the first elected president, gaining 86.5 per cent of the vote.

Despite this margin of victory, Gamsakhurdia did not complete his term. His opponents remained highly critical of what they saw as his "unacceptably dictatorial behaviour", which had been an issue since before he was elected. On August 19 his Prime Minister, Tengiz Sigua, and two other senior ministers resigned in protest against his policies, and matters turned violent when an antigovernment demonstration in Tbilisi was dispersed by the police. On December 22, 1991, armed opposition forces at-

tacked a number of official buildings, including the Georgian parliament where Gamsakhurdia himself was sheltering. Eventually the President and some members of his government were forced to flee, initially to Azerbaijan.

A Military Council made up of Gamsakhurdia opponents then took over on an interim basis and formally deposed him. It then reconstituted itself as a State Council, without any referendum or elections being held, and appointed the former leader of Soviet Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, as its Chairman in March 1992. Shevardnadze ruled as the de facto president until the formal restoration of the presidency in November 1995 by the Parliament of Georgia. After that the second Georgian presidential election was held. There were six candidates: Eduard Shevardnadze, Jumber Patiashvili, Akaki Bakradze, Panteleimon Giorgadze, Qartlos Garibashvili and Roin Liparteliani. Shevardnadze was elected, with 70 per cent of the vote.

In the third presidential election, in 2000, Shevardnadze secured a second term. There were again six candidates, but his main opponent was again Jumber Patiashvili, though he was recognised as highly unlikely to win. However, once again a President of Georgia failed to complete his term.

On November 2, 2003 Georgia held a parliamentary election which was widely denounced as unfair, with international observers and the U.N. refusing to accept the results, which gave Eduard Shevardnadze's Citizen's Union a large majority. Many Georgians were furious at the perceived irregularities, and once again mass demonstrations broke out in the capital Tbilisi and elsewhere. This was the beginning of what became known as the "Rose Revolution". Some protesters, led by opposition figure Mikheil Saakashvili, broke into the first session of the new parliament on November 22, forcing President Shevardnadze to escape with his bodyguards. He subsequently resigned.

Under the terms of the Georgian Constitution Nino Burjanadze, the Speaker of Parliament, thus became Acting President of Georgia. She appointed early presidential elections, held on January 4, 2004. There were again six candidates, but the election was not competitive because there was one clear favourite – Mikheil Saakashvili. Perhaps as a result, the campaign was extremely passive, with some candidates not having enough money to

produce campaign materials or organise activities. Saakashvili simply focused on encouraging the voters to turn out. The election campaign was quite peaceful, but the ruler of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, Aslan Abashidze announced that he would not accept the elections.

According to the OSCE report, the fourth Georgian presidential election of January 4, 2004 was a significant advance on previous elections and closer to fulfilling OSCE obligations and other international standards of democratic elections. In contrast to November 2003, the new government had displayed the collective political will to hold a democratic election. But in a sign of things to come, the OSCE also underlined some problems: there was a political imbalance in the election administration, and administrative resources were used in favour of only one candidate – Mikheil Saakashvili, who secured a comprehensive victory. For example, his election headquarters were in a state-owned building, and his campaign materials were sometimes exhibited in the public buildings. There were also serious polling irregularities in some regions.

The fifth presidential election in Georgia was held on January 5, 2008. It was another early election, the date having been brought forward from autumn of that year by President Saakashvili after mass demonstrations against his rule in August 2007, organised by opposition parties. The opposition candidates claimed that this election was also rigged and that the exit poll results published on election night were false. Western observers hailed it as "the first genuinely competitive presidential election, which enabled the Georgian people to express their political choice." However the OSCE's final report was highly critical of the conduct of the election. It was generally acknowledged that the election process was disorganised and chaotic in a considerable number of precincts and that a limited number of serious violations, including ballot box stuffing, had taken place. Many local electoral commissions had problems completing the results protocols, which were often not posted for public scrutiny. There were cases of tampering with voter lists, results and protocols, and some protocols given to the OSCE observers differed from those provided by district level electoral commissions, many also being incomplete or inconsistent.

These were not the only problems in this "generally free and fair" election. A significant

number of electoral districts reported an unusually high turnout in the last three hours of voting, and several a turnouts considerably higher than the national average. Only a limited number of official complaints were filed during the pre-election period, almost all against the ruling party and its candidate. Although the courts generally carried out open hearings in a professional and thorough manner, some of these complaints were ruled inadmissible without there being a sound legal basis for such a ruling, and some written judgments did not set out sufficient reasoning. In addition, the Central Electoral Commission and the courts tended to stretch the law beyond reasonable interpretation, and without regard to its spirit, in favour of the ruling party candidate and public officials. After the election the election administration and the courts did not fully and adequately consider and investigate a considerable number of complaints about irregularities, some of which were of a serious nature.

The Georgian Ombudsman, Sozar Subari, was highly critical of the election. In addition to identifying breaches of the law, his report stated that the campaign was not equal and fair. An alarming blurring of the distinction between the presidential candidate of the ruling party and the state was once again observed in the direct involvement of different agencies of the executive branch in the electoral process. The electoral headquarters of the ruling party's candidate was in reality run by the Minister of Internal Affairs, who conducted meetings and assigning election-related tasks to local party leaders, heads of police departments, employees of the Constitutional Security and Special Operations Department, prosecutors and governors.

On Sunday, Georgia turned another political page. In their sixth presidential election the Georgian people chose Giorgi Margvelashvili as their President. Margvelashvili was the candidate of the Georgian Dream coalition, winner of the 2012 parliamentary election generally considered fair, rather than outgoing President Saakashvili's United National Movement. Observer reports will follow.

The Georgian Dream has stated that Georgia has passed the final examination of democracy, as the sixth presidential elections in Georgia have been held without provocation, controversy and serious violation of electoral law which could have influenced the result of the elections."





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# Petriashvili Speaks His Mind

Interview by STEVEN G. TRAYLOR, EU Journalist, GT

*The Georgian Times recently found an opportunity to catch up with the always-busy Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Alex Petriashvili, who will soon be departing for the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, due to be held on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of next month. The Minister has been in post since October last year and reports directly to Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili. His role is to present Georgia on the world stage as a potential member of the European Union.*

*Petriashvili's daunting responsibilities include interacting with all the various Ministries, Departments and other branches of the Legislative and Judicial system, either in person or through his staff. Since its inception the Ministry has had to thread the political, economic and social fabric of Georgia in such a way as to enable it to take its place as a rightful member of the world community.*

*The trip to Vilnius next month does not guarantee Georgia membership of the European Union, but it does guarantee it an opportunity to showcase the progress the country has made since the demise of the Soviet Union – such as establishing a freely elected constitutional government, ruled by law and not political dictates, and its meaningful and steady integration into Western society and its economic development, conducted for the benefit of all Georgian people.*

*I would like to ask some questions about elements which readers don't necessarily think about, when they think of 'Georgia in the European Union'. When were your post and office established, and how is the office staffed? Whom do you report too?*

The post of State Minister of European and Euro-Atlantic Integration was established in 2004. The Minister has two Deputies, and the office has the following internal departments:

- The NATO Integration Coordination Department
- The European Integration Coordination Department
- The EU Assistance Coordination Department
- The Public Relations Department
- The Administration

We also have a number of Advisers on different issues on staff.

The Minister reports directly to the Prime Minister.

*Georgia formally expressed a wish to be considered for EU membership back in May 2009, during the Prague summit which created the Eastern Partnership, and the President of Georgia committed the country to "the principles of international law and to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to, market economy, sustainable development and good governance". Can you tell us what progress has been made since then – has Georgia now met some or most of the requirements for EU consideration?*

The values and principles you have referred to are shared by Georgia, and we spare no effort to defend and introduce them.

In 2009, when the EU launched the new Eastern Partnership initiative as an Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy, Georgia gained greater opportunities with regard to European integration. The main benefits offered by the EaP, such as the conclusion of an Association Agreement, gradual visa liberalisation, the creation of a free

trade area, energy security, economic and social convergence with the EU rules and standards, etc., have to a great extent been granted to Georgia so far.

Our main achievement was that in July 2013 Georgia concluded negotiations with the EU on an Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), and now we are looking forward to initialing this at the Vilnius Summit.

In addition, Georgia has advanced significantly in different areas:

- Visa Facilitation and Re-admission Agreements have been in force since March 2011. Georgia has had a Visa Liberalisation Dialogue with the EU since June 4, 2012 and is implementing the legislative phase of the respective Action Plan;
- The Agreement on the Mutual Protection of Geographical Indications of Agricultural Products and other Foodstuffs has been in force in Georgia since April 2012;
- The Common Aviation Area Agreement between the European Union and its Member States and Georgia was signed on December 2, 2010 and was being implemented by Georgia prior to its entry into force.

To achieve such impressive results in a comparatively short period has not been an easy task. To achieve these outcomes Georgia has had to demonstrate significant progress in numerous directions through undertaking an intensive process of reforms aimed at strengthening and further improving democratic institutions and developing a market economy.

The reform process intensified after the elections of October last year, when the government was changed in a peaceful manner. The new government, from its very first days, clearly reaffirmed that Georgia's Western path is irreversible and European and Euro-Atlantic integration is a cornerstone of Georgia's foreign policy.

The introduction of democratic principles, rule of law and respect for human rights is the primary priority of the current

Georgian Government. Since assuming power, the Georgian Government has achieved some impressive results. The restoration of balance between the branches of government is becoming increasingly noticeable, while the judiciary and the media have been freed from government pressure.

The new Georgian Government is committed to scrupulous observation of the procedural requirements of the law and human rights. Court cases are heard by the judiciary, which is independent of the Government and the Prosecutor General's Office. Under new legislation, video and audio recording are now allowed in courtrooms. The judicial process is absolutely transparent. At the government's request, local and international observers, including ODIHR, monitor these processes. High-profile cases are closely followed by the EU Special Advisor to Georgia Thomas Hammarberg.

Just a month ago, on September 22, Thomas Hammarberg issued a report on "Georgia in Transition. The human rights dimension: background, steps taken and remaining challenges". This report demonstrates the progress Georgia has made, though it contains a number of recommendations for follow up work. The Government of Georgia has maintained the dynamic of reform and intends to continue working in this direction.

Changes have also been made in the respective legislation to ensure the introduction of institutional guarantees for opposition participation in governance. Another wave of changes has been introduced into the Constitution, aiming to achieve a clear separation of powers and introduce a system of checks and balances. The latest amendment has removed the President's unilateral power to appoint a new government without Parliament's approval. The role of Parliament in drafting laws and fulfilling monitoring functions has been increased. A number of reforms have been implemented in the Judiciary to strengthen its independence. The Election Code has been amended several

times. Media pluralism is developing constantly.

Georgia has taken significant steps to effectively combat corruption, organised crime, trafficking and money laundering. Significant progress has been achieved in economic development, including: DCFTA-related reforms; the liberalization of the economy; the adoption of prudent monetary and efficient budgetary policies, addressing the social and economic needs of the population; infrastructure improvements; further modernisation of the Tax and Customs services; increased diversification in the energy sector and the development of the transport infrastructure. An important package of legislative changes aiming at harmonising the national labour legislation with European standards has been adopted recently. Special attention is being paid to fostering reforms in the field of food safety, introducing and implementing an effective anti-monopoly policy and harmonising national technical regulations and standards with European ones.

The Government of Georgia is continuing the economic reform and democratic transformation of Georgia. In this respect further important steps have to be taken before the Vilnius Summit. The Government of Georgia is making its best efforts to ensure that the October 2013 presidential election will be held in a free and fair environment. Special attention is being paid to media freedom, the potential misuse of administrative resources and the enforcement of the rule of law. I believe in the success of our country.

**The 28 member European Union is a trading block worth nearly 15 trillion US Dollars, according to various sources and information available. How, and to what extent, will the economic benefits of growing closer to it be experienced by, say, small and medium sized enterprises, as well as big business?**

As you may know, the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement is an integral part of the Association Agreement, which ensures the opening of EU markets to Georgian companies and promotes the closest feasible integration into the EU's economic space.

According to recent statistics on Georgia's trade turnover with the EU, it represents our major trading partner, accounting for approximately one third of our foreign trade. Georgian export and import figures to and from the EU are characterised by growth we expect to continue to increase over time, especially after the DCFTA requirements are met. Access to the biggest market in the world



will be an additional incentive to devise more comprehensive development strategies, as both small and large enterprises will be able to take into account not only the limited Georgian market but the immense potential of Europe's advanced economies.

In addition to an increase in trade we anticipate a growth in foreign investment in the Georgian economy, which will, in its turn, be accompanied by the attraction of new technology, "Know How", innovations and job creation.

**If Georgia initials the Association Agreement with the European Union in Vilnius next month, what will your office do next, and how long will it take Georgia to be accepted into the EU?**

After initialing the Association Agreement during the Vilnius Summit Georgia will continue to pursue its European integration agenda. Soon, Georgia will start consultations with the EU on the Association Agenda (AA), which will have more concrete and advanced goals. The AA will replace the ENP Action Plan, and our office will be the main body which coordinates and monitors the AA's implementation. Meanwhile we will continue to provide assistance to the line Ministries in their cooperation within the Eastern Partnership and Mobility Partnership frameworks, to draw Georgia and the EU's political, business and non-governmental circles closer together and coordinate EU assistance and programmes. We are planning to increase the capacities of the office so that we can fulfill all these tasks effectively.

As regards the last part of this question, I cannot give the exact date, of course. European Integration reform implementation is costly and time-consuming, and requires indefatigable endeavour for more than a couple of years. On the other hand, the EU itself should be ready for further expansion, and the absorption of the potential Georgia has as a future member.

**Finally, what effect do you believe the eventual integra-**

**tion of Georgia into the EU will have on the relationship with Russia, in terms of trade and the political barriers both countries face?**

Of course there is a risk that Georgia's integration with the EU may affect our trade relations with Russia, but Russia is not a major trade partner which is exporting in Georgia industrial goods which will have to meet higher standards after DCFTA enters into force. Hence, Georgia will easily eliminate any gap which emerges, if it does, by receiving imports from appropriate countries. We have already experienced one Russian trade embargo, in 2006, which did not change Georgia's foreign policy priorities. Today, Georgia's exports are diversified. Moreover, due to the DCFTA with the EU we have greater opportunities in this area.

As for political relations, Georgia has already taken numerous productive steps, and will maintain this dynamic to prevent an escalation of tension between the two countries. Namely, Georgia has unilaterally agreed to the non-use of force, abolished the visa requirements for Russian citizens, consented to Russia's WTO accession and refused to boycott the Sochi Olympics. Moreover, the Georgian side has expressed a readiness to cooperate with Russia on security-related issues concerning the Olympic Games. Nevertheless, the Russian Federation continues to pursue a destructive and provocative policy, which includes the installation of barbed wire fences on Georgia's sovereign territory in the region of Shida Kartli.

Georgia has strong and firm support from its international partners around the world, who stand by us in demanding that the Russian Federation respects its international obligations with regard to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. We are sure the international community will remain unanimous in its appeals to Russia to stop undertaking such provocations against Georgia.

# International Tourist Forum and “Tbilisoba” in Kiev



Mikhail Ukleba, Kakhi Kaladze, Giorgi Sigua

*With the support of the World Tourism Organisation the Second Kiev International Tourist Forum has been held. The opening ceremony was attended by Mr. Kakha Kaladze, the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Energy of Georgia. A delegation from the Georgian National Tourism Administration, led by Mr. Giorgi Sigua, attended the forum itself.*

The event was opened on October 10 by Mr. Alexander Vilkul, the Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine, who talked about the tourist potential and future plans of his county. Speeches were made by Mr. Leonid Kozhara, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Taleb Rifai, General Secretary of the World Tourism Organisation, Mr. Victor Tsvirkun, Secretary General of the BSEC, Mr. Oleg Preskurakov, the Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine and Mr. Khose Leon Lora, Head of the Economic Cooperation Division of the EU Mission to Ukraine.

Mr. Giorgi Sigua gave the speech regarding health tourism. He emphasized that only 20% of the great number of health resorts in Georgia are operating at the stage.

“We are talking about the creation of the joint tourist product under the auspices of the Black Sea Cooperation Organisation and raising the level of awareness of the common tourist products so that the world, and people in regions near to ours, can learn about the medical tourism products offered by Turkey, Ukraine, Georgia and other countries”, Mr. Sigua declared.

Mr. Sigua said that Georgia is distinguished by its very developed medical tourism sphere; its numerous

health resorts include Tskaltubo, which has 53 sanatoriums. Mr. Sigua stated that there are 103 health resorts and 183 resort areas in total in Georgia, even though 80% of these are almost desolate at present.

“Georgia is rich in spas, climate spas and climate therapy resorts; here we are talking about the issue of their restoration; we have shared our conception with our guests and provided them with all the information about what we have in Georgia and what can be done; all this is designed to attract investments and raise the level of awareness of our country”, Mr. Sigua declared.

The Head of the Georgian National Tourism Administration believes that our country has unique conditions for medical tourism; there are certain places where different diseases can be cured by specific methods such as spa treatments or just enjoying the climate.

Mr. Kakha Kaladze also made a speech at the opening ceremony of the Tourist Forum; he underlined the strategic nature and prospects of Georgia-Ukraine partnership.

“Relations between Ukraine and Georgia are distinguished by close partnership. One of the directions for strengthening this relationship is tourism” Mr. Kaladze emphasized. He added that the number of tourists coming from Ukraine to Georgia is increasing annually, and that is why conducting joint projects is the major goal and task of both countries.

“If we rely on statistics and compare them each month, we see that the number of tourists visiting from Ukraine has increased 68%; this index will improve further in the future”, Mr. Kaladze declared.

The Second Kiev International Tourist

Forum was held with the support of the Tourism and Resorts State Agency of Ukraine. As part of it, a discrete session for national tourism agency heads was held.

On October 12, the last day of the Forum, Kiev also hosted a festival of Georgian culture, with the support of the Embassy of Georgia in Ukraine, entitled “Tbilisoba on Andreevski Descent”. This event was opened by Mr. Mikheil Ukleba, the Ambassador of Georgia to Ukraine, and Mr. Giorgi Sigua.

This is the second time such a festival has been held in the oldest district in Kiev – the place which appears on all the tours of the capital of Ukraine. The festival offered Georgian folk songs and dances, a master class of Georgian cuisine, an “I Love Georgia” competition, an exhibition of paintings by Ms. Maia Dvalishvili,

a Georgian artist residing in Kiev, a Georgian poetry corner, the children’s art project “I Paint Tbilisi” and other interesting events.

The concert programme of the festival attracted Georgian Diaspora organisations in Kiev; a special visitor to the festival was the girls group Gordela from Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University. The festival closed in the evening with the screening of Georgian movies.

The Embassy of Georgia in Ukraine has stated that “Tbilisoba” was attended by more than 5,000 people in total, including members of the Georgian Diaspora, Kiev residents and tourists visiting the capital at the time. Parts of it were broadcast by three leading TV channels in Ukraine. The Embassy of Georgia welcomes all events held with the purpose of popularising Georgia in Ukraine.



## Wine Festival in Sighnaghi

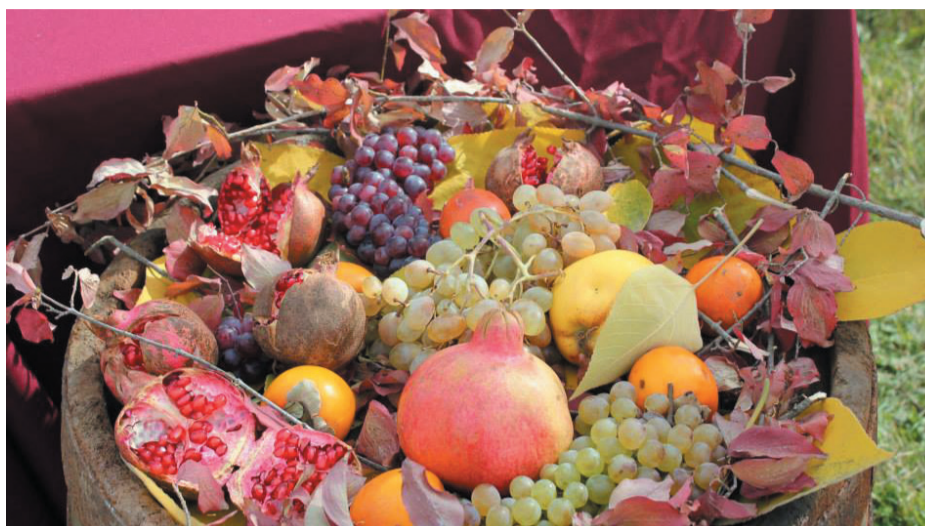
*A wine festival has been held in the city of Sighnaghi to popularise the wine of the Kakheti region and Georgia as a whole.*

The event opened on October 13 with the exhibiting, manufacturing and selling of Georgian traditional handicrafts – felt, quilts, carpets, rugs, pipes, phanduris (Georgian traditional musical instrument) at the festival site.

The guests were greeted by a group of singers in Baratashvili Street as they arrived in Sighnaghi and Berikas, folk song and dance groups, took part in the festival. The hosts rendered traditional Kakhetian hospitality: they laid a Kakhetian table, baked shoti (Georgian traditional bread) and nazuki and made tatara and churchkhela.

All along Baratashvili Street people from the villages of the Sighnaghi municipality presented their wine, made in the so-called farmer's manner from white and black grapes; 11 wine companies organised the main exhibition held alongside this, of wine made in the European manner.

The companies participating included Teliani Veli, Kindzmarauli, Kakhuri, Shumi and the Kvevri cooperative. Shumi's representatives told The Georgian Times that they had presented dry white, dry red and semi-sweet wines such as Mukuzani, Kindzmarauli and Khvanchkara.



“The event was really very impressive. It was visited by a lot of people who were knowledgeable about wine in general, who were given the opportunity to taste and get to know Georgian wine. There were a lot of guests from Ukraine, Russia, Poland and other countries. The more such events are held the greater opportunities there are for people to experience different sorts of wine”, the Shumi representatives declared.

Shumi has been developing wine tourism since 2005 and has a unique museum, featuring many priceless exhibits. It has also planted 294 species of Georgian vines and works with all the leading tour operators. Consequently it welcomes the Georgian National Tourism Administration's initiative of holding a wine festival.

“Such events will support wine popularisation among the tourists; we always welcome such activities”, its representatives at the festival told us.

One of the festival's aims was to popularise Sighnaghi itself, the beautiful city of local wine and traditional cuisine. Consequently it included other events such as a competition for the best speech about wine, the Machabela children's theatre festival at Sighnaghi theatre and the folklore festival “Sighnaghi 2013”. These latter events attracted song and dance groups from all regions of Georgia.

## Regional Development Projects



*The Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA) implements regional development projects to attract more tourists to the county. In 2012 the Spanish Consulting Company THR, in cooperation with the local company TBSC, developed the Imereti Tourism Development Plan, consisting of a tourism development strategy and a marketing plan.*

The strategy presents a long term vision of the development of Imereti as a tourism region and specifies the implementation of specific pieces of work, such as small-scale tourism infrastructure development, human resource development, the creation of new tourist products, the development of private tourist businesses etc. The marketing plan addresses significant issues such as target strategies and the popularisation of Imereti in domestic and international markets.

Certain projects outlined in the strategy are already in progress. Tskaltubo is being developed, in cooperation with the World Bank and the Municipal Development Foundation of Georgia. The major goal of this project is the development of the tourism infrastructure and the establishment of an investment-friendly environment in Tskaltubo. The local municipality is actively engaged in this project.

The implementation of the Imereti development strategy will take a significant place in the GNTA's action plan for 2014. It will follow on from similar work undertaken in Kakheti, whose development strategy was developed in 2012 by the World Bank, in close cooperation with the GNTA. A number of infrastructural development measures have been taken in this region, and marketing has also been enhanced. Again, this strategy is

being implemented in close cooperation with the Municipal Development Foundation and the World Bank.

The development of the regions is being greatly supported by the provision of regular flights between Tbilisi and Mestia. Since September 10 flights have taken place on every Monday and Friday in 22-seater MIL 171 helicopters. Travel agent Ms. Shorena Gvarliani informs The Georgian Times that the helicopter departs from Tbilisi at 11:00 and returns at 14:00. The fare one way is 50 GEL, 100 GEL for a return ticket.

“The demand for flights is very high; the availability of the flights greatly depends on weather conditions, but they are in great demand by the general public, the local population, tourists and businessmen,” Ms. Gvarliani declared. She confirmed that more airplane flights would also greatly support the development of tourism and the reduction of

air fares would encourage the population to use the flights more intensively. Tbilisi-Mestia plane flights presently cost 75 GEL.

“We are not going to declare that the helicopter flights will be terminated for a certain period due to the winter season. The flights will be made regularly if the weather is fine, and we will not revoke them in advance”, Ms. Gvarliani declared.

The Georgian National Tourism Administration is planning to develop strategies for other regions similarly to those for Kakheti and Imereti. Representatives of the Administration say that the selection of a priority region will not be done randomly but following close consultation with the private and public sectors. The main criteria which will be applied are the material and non-material condition of the region and its touristic potential.





# “Georgia and Travel” photo competition announces winner



very good for the popularisation of tourism and of “Georgia and Travel” and the prizes are also appropriate, as they are associated with travel and very interesting”, Mr. Mchedlidze declared.

Mr. Mchedlidze added that some photos were uploaded for enjoyment rather than competition, but that although it is good for the population to be able to select the winner by “liking” the photos it would also be good if a jury voted on them too, as this would increase the standing of the competition participants.

“A jury should assess the quality of the photos and draw up shortlists of the best photos under different headings; the artistic aspect of the photos should also be given more weight by the jury. This would increase both the quality of the photos submitted and the level of public interest in the competition,” Nika Mchedlidze declared. He added that segmentation of the photos into different categories is a good thing, and he plans to send his to other thematic groups on the basis of this.

It should be emphasized that the same individual can take part in the competition every month if they so choose. The topic for November will be “Georgian Portraits” and for December it is “Winter”.

The Georgian National Tourism Administration has begun work on a new tourist portal which will be more diverse and efficient than the existing webpage. It will enable every potential foreign or domestic tourist to familiarise themselves with Georgia and obtain any information they are interested in.

The site will be interactive, giving potential tourists the opportunity to register as portal users, create their own personal pages, make friends, establish contact with other tourists, plan itineraries and create maps tailored to their needs.

“A new Facebook page – “Georgia and Travel”, which derives from the portal, provides information and photo and video materials for the purpose of popularising Georgia. It will also include Georgian recipes and information about museums and sightseeing” – the National Tourism Administration declares.

“Georgia and Travel” is running a photo competition which aims to popularise tourist sites. Everyone interested in participating should upload their photos to the official page: the winning photo is the one which receives the greatest number of “Like”-s. Entitled “Georgia is the Country of Life”, the competition announces winners at the end of each month. The first was Mr. Nika Mchedlidze, who was presented with a gift bag and a “Hotel Rooms” voucher by Mr. Giorgi Sigua, Head of the Georgian National Tourism Administration.

Nika Mchedlidze told The Georgian Times that he won with a photo entitled “Tobovarchkhila”.

“I learned about the photo competition and decided to take part in it. My photo gained the highest number of “Like”-s. Of course, such competitions are a good thing, as civil society develops more interest and activity in this sphere as a consequence. This one is



Giorgi Sigua, Nika Mchedlidze

## Tourism Information Centres

One of the priorities of the Georgian National Tourism Administration is the establishment of Tourism Information Centres throughout the country. Similar centres operate in all countries with a developed tourism sphere, and aim to provide tourists with information about any and all types of services, such as accommodation, restaurants, sightseeing and other necessary information.

The GNTA explains that the information centres will have particular significance for individual tourists, travelling alone, and will also be important for local tourism companies, which will be able to disseminate information about their services and offers through such information centres.

There are currently 18 tourist information centres in Georgia, in Tbilisi, Mestia, Kutaisi, Batumi, Sarpi, Kobuleti, Khulo, Gori, Mtskheta, Kvareli, Signaghi, Telavi, Borjomi and Akhaltsikhe. Two additional centres, in Ureki and Gudauri, operate seasonally.

The GNTA is now establishing more centres. It is planning to open a new one in Tbilisi, in the tower in Sanapiro Street, and also ones in Dusheti Municipality, Bakuriani, Kazbegi and Samegrelo. There are presently two tourist information centres in the capital, one in Rustaveli Avenue,

in the National Museum building, and the other at the Airport.

The information centres say they have a busy workload, and opening more would be a reasonable step. Ms. Nino Sirbiladze of the National Museum says that the centre there has been operating for four years but was previously located in Freedom Square. It was moved to the National Museum about two years ago. The centre provides tourists with any information they may need whilst visiting the country.

“We have a database containing information about transport, accommodation, regulations, tourist companies, tours; we also offer leaflets and maps of the city and the regions. All these are free for tourists,” she says. The centre also has an e-base including an interactive map, displaying all the relevant tourist sites.

Ms. Sirbiladze explained that this summer a great number of tourists visited the country from Israel, Poland, Ukraine, Russia and other countries. “If we talking about points of interest, the main one was the mountains. In Tbilisi tourists are interested in Old Tbilisi and sightseeing; it would be reasonable to increase the number of information centres, as too many tourists are coming to us and enjoying our services!” she explained.

The Tbilisi International Airport tourist

information centre is three years old and is open 24 hours a day. Ms. Nutsa Kravashvili, one of its staff, told GT that most of the people they see are interested in the sights of Tbilisi.

“We give them maps and show them certain places to go, and inform about the transport they will need, etc. The tourists usually know where they want to go already, but if they don’t we choose suitable sites for them,” - Ms. Kravashvili declared. She added that the places of most interest to tourists are Kazbegi, Svaneti, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kakheti; they are interested in the Svaneti towers, the nature of Kazbegi, the reserves and national parks of

Samtskhe-Javakheti region and the UNESCO world heritage sites, and they visit Kakheti for the wine.

The Airport’s information centre is also very busy; they render service to any tourist who is interested in this or that type of information. “Currently we are seeing many tourists from Iraq, Iran, Russia, Ukraine, Poland and Israel, also from Germany, Austria etc.” Ms. Kravashvili declared.

The tourist information centres in the regions are also busy, but their schedules and services are more diversified, as each region of Georgia offers different attractions.





საქართველოს ტურიზმის ეროვნული ადმინისტრაცია



# Russia More Determined on Eurasian Integration

By DR. VAKHTANG MAISAIA, GT

**As the EU's Vilnius Summit is approaching, which will make possible further EU enlargement to the East, the Russian government has been furthering its Eurasian integration policy more enthusiastically and vigorously. It was a real surprise when it was announced recently that the proposed Eurasian Economic Union could be transformed into a fully-fledged Eurasian Union, which would include Turkey. This idea has been promulgated all of sudden by President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev, a long-time proponent of Eurasian integration similar to that of the European Union.**

In contradiction to the forthcoming the EU Summit in Vilnius, Belarus has hosted two Eurasian political forums – the Customs Union and CIS Summits, in its new Palace of Independence. These were intentionally held to demonstrate that the Eurasian integration structures

are to be counterweights to the EU's. The CIS Summit was very interesting, as it sought to reintegrate Georgia into the organisation – Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko made a special gesture of inviting Georgia back into the ex-Soviet space under the aegis of the CIS.

Russia provides Belarus with financial subsidies of more than \$10 billion annually in order to damp down energy prices. This figure differs from that provided by the EU to the members of its so-called "Eastern Partnership" (six countries – Georgia, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Belarus) by about 600 million Euro, a significant difference, in favour of the EU. As two of the Eastern Partnership nations – Armenia and Belarus – are now looking East rather than West, it is easy to predict which nations will be the next to "re-take their seats" in the former Eastern bloc.

Georgia has been requested, via the Belarus President, to re-take its own "seat" in the CIS rather than a more lucrative "place in the EU sun" which EU Associate Membership, which should be offered at the Vilnius

Summit, will provide. As previously predicted in this column, The Kremlin will now reinforce the pressure it is applying to Georgia to join the Eurasian community. Armenia and Kyrgyzstan have been invited to join the Customs Union in an attempt to torpedo any pro-Western manoeuvres. The Ukrainian leadership has been sharply criticised for its European integration policy and stating its intention to become an EU Associate Member, meaning it would be keeping pace with Turkey in the European integration process. However, having received the same status in relation to the EU, Turkey is also now looking to the East and North and seeking to become a Eurasian power, considering this a more realistic prospect than eventual membership of the European community.

The rise of China also comes into this equation. The domination of such great "oriental" geopolitical powers will enable President Vladimir Putin to fulfill his dream of refounding not the Soviet Union, but something stronger – a new Eurasian geopolitical entity.

A maxim of classical geopol-



itics, coined by Sir Halford Mackinder, the founder of the British School of Geopolitics, is that "who controls the Heartland (Russia+China+Turkey) controls the World Island". The "World Island" is really a counterweight to the incumbent geopolitical world power – the USA. That is why it is important to consider how seriously the Russian government is pursuing this project, and by doing so prolonging The Kremlin regime for years ahead.

Armenia and Kyrgyzstan are really on the verge of going, as The Beatles put it, "Back in the USSR". The modern Eurasian Empire, which will stretch from Turkey to China via Russia, will effectively be a new version of Genghis Khan's Mongol Empire of the 13th-14th centuries.

More generally, Eurasian geopolitical integration will be based on three main pillars:

**The First Pillar** – the Eurasian Economic Component – consisting of the three main organisational structures in the area: the CIS, the Custom Unions and the Eurasian Economic Union;

**The Second Pillar** – the Eurasian Security Component – consisting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) with its relevant integrated structures – the Joint Mobile Forces and Joint Military Coordination Staff;

**The Third Pillar** – the Eurasian Political Component – the Eurasian Union, with the further inclusion of Turkey and China

(ex-CIS Secretary General Boris Berezovsky backs incorporating Iran too).

This three-tier echelon, constructed in Moscow, is being supported in a proper way and its potential success is a pending issue through the Eurasian political space. Russia has considered very nervously and then utterly derided Ukraine's "message" to The Kremlin on following up its attempts to integrate with the EU, but it badly needs to follow through its own intentions towards Ukraine and Georgia to fulfill its geopolitical dream. It is in Georgia's hands to make sure it ends.

Associate Professor, IB Euro-Caucasian University  
The GT Azri Strategic Studies Centre

## LAW & CONSTITUTION

# Local Government in Georgia

Local or, as it is often called, municipal government, is a widely recognised and proven public relationship system which ensures the self-government of the population through directly responsible organs covering small, manageable units which can address grass roots local issues.

Such self-government however requires considerable legal regulation to ensure that it serves its purpose appropriately. The European charter of local government, which applies throughout the European Union, is an important legal document on the level of an international multi-lateral agreement, which demonstrates the importance and necessity of local government in each country. This specifies that the principle of local government must be recognised within the constitutions of European states. Georgia seeks membership of the European family, and this will involve the harmonisation of its domestic legal systems with European systems. The member states of the Council of Europe, which are the signatories of this charter, consider local government to be one of the bases of a democratic regime.

The establishment of local government in Georgia has not so great and not so successful a constitutional history. Before the constitutional reform of 2010 local government was covered by only one paragraph of one article of the Georgian Con-



stitution, which merely stated that local government would be established without diminution of national sovereignty. Local government was therefore optional, a subject of organic rather than constitutional law. Of course this was insufficient in the eyes of Europe, and it was therefore necessary to make additional regulations concerning it which promoted and safeguarded its importance.

In 2009-2010 the State Constitutional Commission agreed that a definition of local government, its social function and role should be included in the Constitution. It was defined as the right and means of residents

to decide issues of local significance through direct participation, independently from national government. State government and local government should therefore be separate from each other. The basic constitutional principles of local government were also laid down – not just the fact that local authorities should be elected, as the constitution already required, but their competences, status, funding, property regulations, means of acquiring resources, rights and responsibilities, relations with and to state bodies, means of settlement of disputes with the help of the court and other stipulations.

Based on these principles a new chapter has been added to Georgian Constitution, which regulates local government.

In the second article of the new edition of the Georgian Constitution local government is determined as the right and possibility of Georgian citizens who are registered as living in the various local government entities. These bodies can address issues of local significance independently with their own set of rights and responsibilities.

The structural basis of local government bodies, their election, absolute and relative status, financial basis, property and resource acquisition and manage-

ment principles and relation with and to State bodies have been laid down. Local public officials are to be accountable to the local government bodies.

The creation and abolition of new local government units and the vision of administrative borders are also now covered by law. Such actions shall always be preceded by consultations with local government units. This stipulation is consistent with the aforementioned European Charter of local government.

In general, the powers of local government bodies must be separated from those of the national government and its agencies. This is in order that local government bodies can act independently and not be subordinated to the will of national ones.

According to the new edition of the constitution there are two types of local government competence – direct and delegated. Direct competence, as prescribed by law, is exclusively that of the local government body, which means that only such a body can exercise that competence. In such cases central government is powerless. Decisions taken by a local government body within its direct competence are binding upon every physical and juridical person within its boundaries.

Delegated competences are those which are transferred by the state to local government bodies by law or agreement, and such delegation must be accom-

panied with the provision of appropriate material resources by the delegating body. If it is given an additional competence, a local government body will receive additional money to exercise it. State bodies will ensure that appropriate financial possibilities are given to local government, as the implementation of local government is impossible without financial guarantees. Accordingly, the constitution stipulates that local government bodies will have their own property and finances.

Local government activities are subject to state monitoring. This may be of two types: legal oversight of local government's actions and examination of its actions for the purpose of determining their advisability. The aim of this monitoring is to ensure that normative acts passed by local authorities comply with the Georgian constitution and that they are consistent with their delegated competences. State oversight is undertaken in proportion to its objectives.

Under the new edition of the constitution local authorities have new rights concerning the Constitutional Court. A local council now has the right to ask the Constitutional Court to rule on the constitutionality of state actions which affect local government.

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

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

# Small and Medium-Sized Business in Georgia

By EMMA BAIRAMOVA, GT

*Many people dream of starting their own business, but only smart people can make these dreams come true. Only smart people can find the start-up money for their business and maintain it thereafter.*

Very often people who have obtained start-up finance still delay starting the business up, and the reason they often give is interference from the government (of any complexion) and heavy taxes. But according to some business experts, smart businessmen can "survive" in any conditions and a real, successful business is not harmed by government regulations.

Those who have a little experience in business know that despite all the possible problems a big business can maintain itself because it has big lobbyists etc., however we cannot say the same about small and medium-sized businesses, which are also very important for the country's economic development. Here in an interview with the Georgian Times Mikheil Chelidze, auditor and Chairman of Tax Committee of the Georgian Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Association, speaks about the development of small businesses in Georgia.

**What is the main problem faced when starting up a business in Georgia?**

First of all, it is important to mention that very often people

who don't know what business is begin to conduct business. I can say that there is a lack of "business education". Sometimes they do not even have any money, only ideas. They do not have even general information, do not know which consumer segment they will sell their product to, do not know about market research and so on. The second problem is that business "start up" is never financed by banks here and new entrepreneurs have to mortgage their houses. So running a business, especially a small business, is really not safe.

**Do monopolies have a negative influence on small businesses?**

Monopolisation mostly concerns big businesses, as this or that company can have no competitors and become monopolist, but small businesses very frequently fulfil orders from big businesses. The two main problems of small businesses are not monopolisation but lack of finance and necessary business education, the latter being especially important for conducting successful business.

**How can you assess the environment for small businesses in this country? Do the existing regulations facilitate or, contrarily, impede business development?**

First of all, I have to mention something about taxes. I must say that taxes are quite low in Georgia, and don't hinder small businesses, so we cannot consider tax as one of the interfering factors. It is important that all entrepreneurs have good accounting staff, who will keep an exact record of

transactions. It is not proper to blame taxes for the failure of a business. The entrepreneur must have full and proper information about government taxes, because taxes are not money thrown to the wind. Taxation is a necessary aspect of a state's economic development. Taxes in Georgia are lower than in other post-Soviet countries and in Europe. The profit tax here is 15%, and I think this is a quite acceptable figure for Georgia.

The registration of businesses is very easy in Georgia, and this surprises many foreigners. Making all the documentation electronic is one of the main reasons progress has been made here, and this provides accurate record keeping facilities for entrepreneurs.

Whether an enterprise is a small or medium-sized business is determined by the number of people it employs, it is not indicated in the registration documents or by any special legal norm.

Small business development is regulated by the big business environment. They cannot rise to become big businesses very quickly, but the development of small businesses is very important for the country, because they are the main creators of employment, one of the main factors driving the development of the macro economy.

**Can you say that the change of government last year changed anything for business and for smaller entrepreneurs?**

What has changed is the entrepreneurs' mood. They feel

more motivated. Before there was the feeling that someone was fighting against business. Even people who had never attempted to found a business were claiming that it was impossible to conduct business in Georgia because someone would pursue that business. Now, there is the vague notion that business is completely free.

In fact those who are able to run businesses managed to run them before and are doing so now, because they can do this in any conditions. Since last year there have been no serious or radical changes in the Finance Ministry structure or regulations, but the penalty tax has been reduced. Some people have been waiting for a financial amnesty, but this hasn't happened and shouldn't happen, because it is unfair to those people who have paid their taxes in good faith. An amnesty would mean that they would lose out. Such amnesties encourage people not to pay taxes, at least when we are approaching elections. Taxes and dues must be paid, except in special cases where taxes are imposed unfairly, but these must be examined by the appropriate experts.

The population of our country is small, so whatever you produce and sell you will be working on low margins because of the low consumption rate, and therefore taxes may seem too high for you. Tax regulation, and encouraging its correct perception by the population, will take some time.

How do associations like yours contribute to the development of small businesses?



We help those who apply to us by representing them if there are some administrative irregularities and problems. We arrange meetings with the business ombudsman; we also disseminate business news for entrepreneurs and sometimes broker mutual promotions of businesses between companies. There have also been cases in which we have made proper business plans for start-up companies which have helped them obtain a phased credit or stepwise loan from the bank.

Unfortunately in Georgia we have no culture of applying to such associations yet. Many people do not understand the significance of business incubators. For example, many new entrepreneurs think that they do not need to learn how to run a business, and think having start-up capital is enough for them to conduct effective business. In many developed countries people appreciate the work of business associations. But this is not a problem, because the new generation does know the significance of "protecting" associations - so called business incubators - and in the near future this situation will change noticeably.

Political cataclysms also have

great influence on business and the business spirit of the people: they do not make significant purchases, do not spend money, because there is a constant expectation of change, and of course this affects the economic indicators of the country.

Do you agree that business must preserve itself, without government protection, independent from any interference from outside, because business exists under different governments and in good or bad times?

Of course, business can preserve itself in any conditions and it must not wait for government and regulatory changes.

**What must one do to start a successful business?**

First of all, the entrepreneur must prepare an effective business plan, then meet his competitors in the market, to see with whom he will compete, and finally research the market. The first income from the successful business must be spent on its further development; however in many cases businessmen spend their income on meeting other needs, which is completely wrong. A business is like a living organism, which needs proper care.

## PUBLICITY



## SUNDAY BRUNCH

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# 'Goodbye, cruel world'

By TATIA KAKIASHVILI, GT

On October 17, at approximately at 1-2 pm, 22-year-old Nino Gvasalia left home and never returned. Her mother, Lali Tsintadze, later told to media that she had been seen in Telavi Street, Tbilisi, but nothing had been heard of her since. She had been wearing brown jeans and black boots and carrying a red cloth bag with black straps on the back.

At 4 a.m. on the day Nino Gvasalia went missing her mother had broadcast the following information on social network sites:

"Friends, acquaintances, strangers, help, share, distribute, help me find my daughter! She left home alone on October 17, at 1 pm. We still do not know where she is - Nino Gvasalia, 22 years old. If you meet her, or have seen her somewhere, please, call us urgently..."

The following day, at 10 am, Nino Gvasalia had been officially declared missing, as the obligatory 12 hours had passed since her disappearance, and the police had become involved in the search for her. Dogs had been used to help track her down, and detectives assigned to the case.

Still her daughter did not appear. So Lali Tsintadze published

case. The tapes from various surveillance cameras were studied: those from outside the missing girl's house, from offices, pharmacies and other buildings nearby and from the 300 Aragveli and Avlabari subway stations. The information gained from these was provided to the MIA, the Police Department, and all operational divisions and checkpoints on the

## MISSING

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS PERSON?

more messages, appealing to taxi drivers to discuss her disappearance amongst their colleagues to see if anyone remembered anything. But no information emerged: Nino is still nowhere to be seen.

The Interior Ministry has launched an investigation into the

same day. Police also checked the hospitals, and the Tbilisi Mayor's Office of Emergency Management and Emergency Situations checked the riverbank.

After all this the MIA released a statement:

"If you have any information regarding the missing

girl, contact our hotline number, 112, or any police station".

Still nothing happened. On October 22, onshore and underwater investigations were carried out at the Tbilisi Lake and the Mtkvari riverbank and the Tabakhmela and Okrokana forests were searched. Unfortunately, Nino Gvasalia was still not found. The search continues.

Recently, disappearances of young people in Georgia have become very frequent. Obviously, there are a number of different reasons why they happen. Media has reported that on Friday October 18, 18-year old

would soon be back. But at dusk, Salome was still nowhere in sight. She was searched for four days. She had just vanished, like Nino Gvasalia, and her mobile phone had been switched off.

Ekaterine Apkhaidze, mother of 15-year old Sandro Mgaloblishvili, also told to media that three days later, on October 21, her son had left home at approximately 16:30 but not returned:

"We thought that he had gone to play basketball, but it turned out that he was never at the court. He never returned home either..."

She added that her son had been planning to go to a monastery, but after checking she found that the boy was not there either.

Fortunately, after several days of searching both of these missing persons were eventually found. The police found Salome Dondua in a relative's house in Gonio. Sandro Mgaloblishvili was also found with a relative, in Racha. But this does not explain why they felt the need to disappear, or make it any easier to find those who haven't yet been traced.

Lamzira Makharadze is the mother of 17-year old Darejan Diasamidze. She says that the search for her missing daughter is a nonsense:

"The police can't tell me any-

thing. What they don't know, they can't tell me. They have not found any trace of my daughter."

This is in spite of the fact that Darejan Diasamidze's disappearance has aroused considerable publicity. Even the President has got involved, visiting her family. This was an exceptional event - neither the President nor any other senior public figures have visited the other families, whose relatives have gone missing. But eventually these persons have been found, in some cases, whilst this case in another of the unresolved.

TV journalists, have reported the following statistics:

"631 people have been reported missing since 2010. Most of these - 198 - went missing in 2011. The MIA estimates that in 2013, 83 people have so far gone missing, including 6 children. A total of 62 children have disappeared during the last 32 months. Of the 631 missing people, 61 were eventually found and 69 are known to have died. The state is still searching for 186 people. The searches for the other 315 missing have been terminated."

Why do young people choose to disappear? What kind of protest is being expressed by their actions, and how realistic is it to say "Goodbye, cruel world?!" These are the questions which remain unanswered.

## ART & CULTURE

# Tbilisi Will Not Be The Same Again

By TAKOAGARASHVILI, GT

Gift 2013 has just ended. The two week celebration of the world of art has reached the finish line. Tbilisi will miss the long lines in front of the Tumanishvili, Rustaveli and Griboedov Theatres. Every time I saw people standing there with tickets chatting about an upcoming performance, I would proudly smile at them. It rang a bell for me; the sweet sounding bell of past Gift festivals.

Gift 2013 was unforgettable. It was refreshing, diverse, fun, and most importantly it had Krymov.

Stella Adler said that the theatre is a spiritual and social X-ray of its time. Every year Gift adjusts our vision, puts extra lenses in it and carries us away into the endless world of theatre and art. As objective as I must be, I must highlight the standout of season 2013 - the Dmitry Krymov Laboratory, which brought 4 plays to the Georgian audience. We saw "Katya, Sonya, Polya, Galya, Vera, Olya, Tanya...", "Death of a Giraffe", "Opus 7" and "Three Sisters". I am sure theatre lovers amongst us have experienced the rush that grabs your entire spirit from the stage, the ecstasy that consumes your entire being, the impact that leaves a mark on your entire life. I am sure those theatre lovers have experienced the goose bumps they feel from good acting; the tears which flow from seeing a touching story, as their body shrinks while watching a marvellous play. The Krymov Laboratory shook us to the core like this, swept us off our feet, touched us, moved us, horrified us, made us happy, made us laugh, got us thinking, made us cry, made us angry and changed our lives.

Krymov's art is not something you see, accept and move

on. Once it enters your life it leaves a mark, it gets under your skin and stays for good. Watching the Laboratory's plays make you feel you can't stop, you need more and you get more. The more you see the more you wonder where these ideas, this vision, this thinking, these stories and this talent come from. I couldn't help wondering how much more Krymov has to offer - does it ever end, where is his mind, how does someone get there to begin with?!

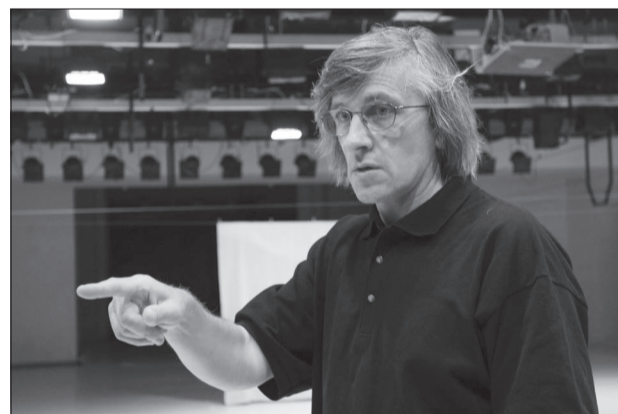
Dmitry Krymov was born in Moscow in 1954, the only child of famous parents - the director Anatoly Efros (1925-87) and the theatre critic and historian



Natalia Krymova (1930-2003). Because of the complicated history associated with the name Anatoly Efros in the Soviet era (not least its distinctively Jewish connotation), his parents decided that their son should take the last name of his mother to avoid potential obstacles in his future career. In 1976, Krymov graduated from the Stage Design programme of the Moscow Art Theatre School. During the next nine years he worked primarily in support of his father's performances at the Malaya Bronnaya Theatre, the Moscow Art Theatre and Taganka Theatre, where the latter was Artistic Director between 1985-87. After Efros's death in 1987, and for the next twenty years, Krymov designed

over one hundred productions for an assortment of directors and theatres in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Riga, Tallinn, Sofia, Tokyo and Paris.

In 1990, in the midst of the economic meltdown which accompanied the collapse of Communism, Krymov left the theatre behind and turned to the art world for a living. The decision was a profitable one. For the next twelve years, his distinctive neo-Impressionist paintings and drawings and imaginative installations built a considerable reputation for him and were shown in many personal and group exhibitions in Russia, France, England, Germany, Israel and other countries.



you are amazed, you are stunned, you have changed. Yes, Krymov's art changes you. It wakes up as many emotions as you are possibly capable of having and explodes them. It turns your world upside down, it turns your perception inside out and hypnotises you, and you become his follower into the endless, amazing world of the yet-unknown and supreme.

Here I ask Krymov a few questions. On one level alone are there answers.

**Your actors are exquisite to the point of being "insane". How did you gather them?**

There is no story to it. I'm not sure how I found them. Some I saw on the stage, I came across some accidentally. They can all sing, act and be free on stage. That's all I need.

**Could you describe a few of them for us?**

They are all different. You can't make a play with only one decent actor, but a team. Now there's 12 of us. These guys don't have a certain line, they can embody any character.

**I could go on and on talking about your supernatural plays. Tell me in your words, what do you stage? What are your plays for you?**

They are very different, and were first staged at very different times. We never stop. We move forward. I try to combine the acting and all the traditions

of an authentic Russian theatre. We are called a silent theatre. My input and connection to every play varies. It's never just me, it's all of us. They are not just actors I bring out onto the stage; they are the essential keys to the performances. In "Three Sisters" I came up with everything and I gave them everything. I don't set the control buttons on the stage, once they are on the stage it's all up to them. This is the biggest challenge. It's interesting and it's dangerous for the play, for me, for them, but it keeps me fascinated, if we can pull it off...

**It looks like you trust them completely.**

It's more than I completely trust them, I want to trust them. This is a conscious choice. I am eager to reach the edge of this connection between us, so that they can do what they should without me.

**Where do you find what you should stage?**

It happens differently each time. It is always connected to something. I would be careful about saying that so far "what to stage" has always come to me.

**Will this trip leave a mark on your future art? Did "something" click?**

I don't know about our future art, but the trip absolutely did click, and in many ways. I have visited Tbilisi before, with Opus. It's like an art exhibition;

looking at the exhibits gets the author thinking and digging. Sometimes he reaches the whole, sometimes it's merely a step up. We all saw ourselves from the side when we were performing here, I mean the entire company. It set us all thinking and evaluating.

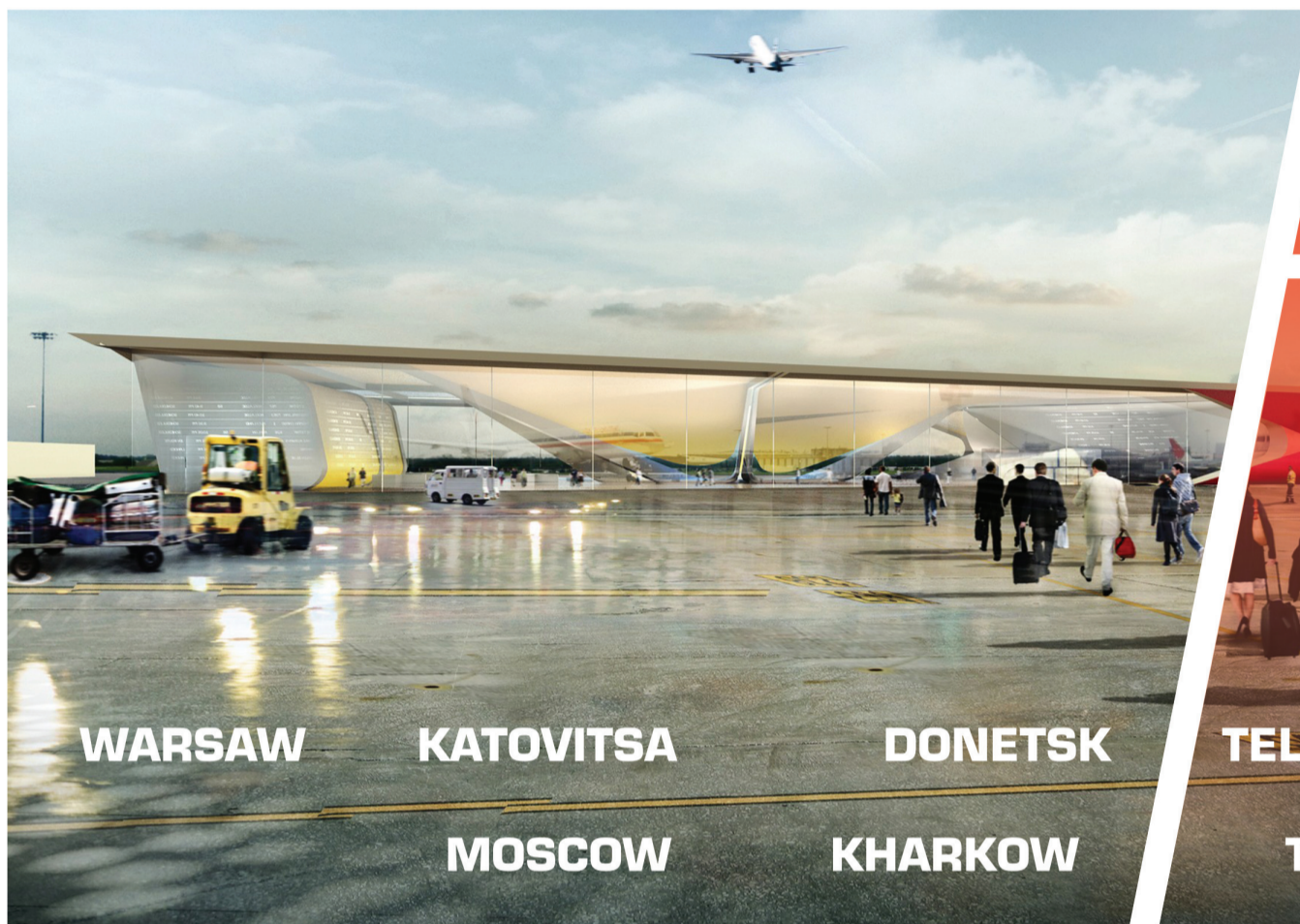
Besides, this is a very important time for the company. We have been together for 10 years now, and in the art world this is a certain milestone. We brought 4 plays to Tbilisi when we had just reached it. Significant and insignificant, helpful and harmful details started to pop up out of nowhere, both in communication and creativity. So I don't know what's going to happen to the Laboratory, but you supported us here a great deal. These two weeks spent here with you have made us see what we mean to an audience, that our work is appreciated. That's the only way to keep moving forward.

\*\*\*\*\*

I do hope that this team never falls apart. They can rock any stage; they go out there and rock our world. The festival team call them a "sect" (joking), they are all well connected, they are talented, they have taken our perception of acting and art to a whole different level, a level that we could never have imagined existed. They are artists with their gut, in their entire existence and being. They are like fairy tale supernatural characters who are connected by invisible ties, speaking an unknown language, all serving the same goal. The feeling you have after coming across and sharing their art is something that feeds you, nourishes you, opens a whole new world of beauty, possibilities, vivid spaces and supernatural realms where you can do and achieve everything. Where there are no limits to human perception or capacity and blessings. That's where Krymov is from.

I can't thank Ketii Dolidze enough for giving us a chance to be a part of Gift 2013.

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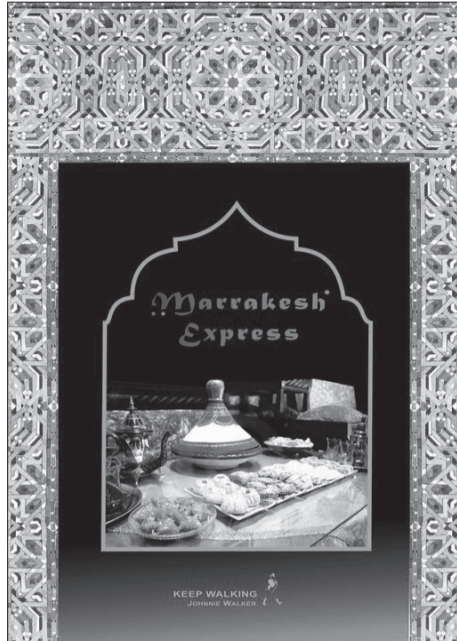


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