

“KAZANTIP Z” WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW IN GEORGIA



Nikita I Marshunok, president of Kazantip - “We are only dealing with main issues: sound, lighting, good mood and love... Due to peculiarities of local mentality, the topic of drugs and free sex will be excluded altogether” *See p. 9*

EXCLUSIVE

“ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT SIGNING IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF OUR PATH TO EU” *See p. 4*



GEORGIA'S CHOICE

NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

Georgia can play its due role in international life, functioning as a player of firm consequence

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EXCEPTIONAL DISCOVERY OR EXCEPTIONAL SCAM?

Billions of cubic meters in gas deposit REPORTEDLY discovered in Iormughanlo, Georgia

“If this is true, gas deposit discovered by Frontera will satisfy Georgia’s internal needs for 12 years”

“In the 19th century Siemens brothers, who later founded the famous Siemens Company, were carrying out gas exploration works here” *See p. 13*

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“Historical sources prove that Ateshga is a monument of the IV-V centuries”



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Exclusive interview with a 14-year-old injured girl

Follow-up story (“Boyfriend accused of strangling girlfriend,” published in Georgian Journal, issue #23)

“TIRZA” - THE TALE OF LORD BYRON AND GEORGIAN GIRL

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Byron, aged 22, stumbled upon a 13-year-old Georgian girl at a slave market. She didn’t know who Byron was...

FROM JAIL TATTOOS TO HIPSTER TRIANGLE

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Tattoo evolution in Georgia

Comment

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GEORGIA'S CHOICE

Calling the last quarter of a century the "period of Georgia's nery tinkering with national independence and democracy" would probably be fair and descriptive enough for most of us because we all know very well that there is still something weird and offbeat with our sovereignty and democratic mien. The span of experimentation with modern ways of statehood is extended in time for Georgia, but we are far from giving up. We are still convinced that Georgia is a country where a well-organized and orderly state has a rock-solid chance to exist and survive. Moreover, we are sure that Georgia can play its due role in international life, functioning as a player of firm consequence. At least we are behaving that way on the global scene. There are also people among us who think that Georgia needs to acquire that international function because it does not yet have that function in reality. They also think that for the acquisition of international political and economic utility, Georgia first needs to go for gaining the regional – meaning South Caucasus – role, and not simply a role but a leading role too in the area, which is practically, as I hear from them, our historic task and duty. If you don't believe me, I can quote a book which was launched about a week ago in the big hall of the Academy of Sciences of Georgia in presence of almost the entire Academy. The academicians unanimously approved of the new project by the Doctor of Political Science, historian and lawyer Mr. Zurab Khonelidze. The book-project, 45 pages, in its trilingual and absolutely impressive edition is titled like "CHOICE OF GEORGIA, South Caucasus – Geopolitical Space," which is presented by the author as a new format for regional cooperation. Daringly enough, right in the beginning of the book, the author is viewing Georgia, as the country which is currently fallen out of international functions, contemplating the necessity of assigning to it a certain additional international role. This project is as old as the Caucasus hills itself – it was created about a score of long and difficult years, but none of the Georgian post-soviet governments had any intention or desire to lend their heedless and unqualified ears to this political novelty, except the one which is currently ruling this country. Finally, the project came to the deserved attention of our society, which is living in a never-ending expectation of good life. According to the author, one of our most urgent tasks is the formation of Georgia as a fully established state, which cannot happen without a thorough analysis of the role of our country in the globalized world and the acquisition by Georgia – or the reinstatement, to that matter – of additional international functions. The main condition, the only constant value, the major status quo that might be used for achieving this goal as well as for identifying of all current and anticipated threats, objectives and means of relevant action to this end is an absolute reality, called GEO-

POLITICS. This is a dominant prerequisite which impacts, influences and determines the fate and destiny of the nation within the complicated system of international politics – geographical location, space, time, area, quality and content of activity in regards with other nations. The Project emphasizes the unfortunate fact that in the recent history, the particular geostrategic location has been serving Georgia not as an advantage but as an obstacle on its way of modern social, political and economic development on the background and within the family of the nations. The author of this new project is patiently and tactfully explaining that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, right on the threshold of post-communist transformation, none of the Georgian governments has managed to give Georgia the place which could have been commensurate with its natural historical features or make an adequate step, exactly tailored on time and space. Due to the complexity of its neighborhood, Georgia cannot be a self-contained and closed system because it is situated in the area as a historical, geographical and cultural epicenter right on the crossroads of geopolitical, economic and military interests of the nations who make this epicenter, called South Caucasus. The key to the definition and fulfillment of our most important national goals, including the restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity, lies beyond the borders of this state, carrying regional and global dimensions. On top of all that, the international community has never fully realized the genuine cause of ethno-political conflicts and the reasons of their growing into global problems – all this triggered by the mines laid by the Soviet Empire

■ **Due to the complexity of its neighborhood, Georgia cannot be a self-contained and closed system**

against the sovereignty of our country, having left us without a function and the ability to see the nation's prospect clearly or handle its problems ably. The targets and directions that might be optimal and even indispensable for building Georgia's good future are unequivocally and unambiguously stated in the program of Zurab Khonelidze: a) Restoration of this nation's historic functionality, turning it into the carrier of a global mission; b) Formation of the unified Georgian national idea and public consciousness, and its ideological promotion; c) Integration of the country and formation of the political system, which would guarantee the restitution and maintenance of its historically ethnic, religious, cultural, political and territorial unity, giving it back the sense of the owner of its own land. The helper here would certainly be the opportunity to properly meet the demands of our time, among which the most significant for Georgia seems to be the necessity of the realistic acquisition by it the due international responsibilities. Nobody who was present at the book-launching academic event remained heedless or indifferent towards all this.

■ **"We offer Georgia new package of cooperation with NATO" – Rasmussen**

"We offer Georgia a new, basic package of cooperation with the alliance that will help the country be closer to NATO," – the Secretary General of NATO Anders Fogh Rasmussen said at the NATO office in Brussels, while opening an alliance foreign ministerial.

According to him, their principles have not changed in relation to the open door policy and "no country can stop the process."

"I would like to stress the significance of the open-door policy, as this is useful for not only the NATO aspirant countries, but – the alliance itself. Our basic principles have not changed. We support the aspirant countries in relation to the integration process and no country can stop the process. Georgia is notable in this respect, and we offer this country a new, basic package of cooperation with the alliance. It will help Georgia be closer to NATO," Rasmussen said.

NATO Secretary General wrote a Twitter post after a meeting with the Georgian Foreign Minister Maia Panjikidze. He highlighted the progress achieved by Georgia recently.

"NATO is ready to support and assist Georgia in terms of its ambitious defense reforms. The countries which aspire to NATO membership are discussed one-by-one. In the report about Georgia, positive achievements of last years are stressed. The free and fair Georgian election represents one more step towards perfect democracy.



It is good that Georgia wishes to participate in the NATO future main issues (Resolute Support, Connected Forces & Smart Defence). We appreciate Georgia's participating in the ISAF mission and future missions in Afghanistan," Rasmussen wrote.

P.S. View the exclusive interview with EU-Atlantic integration Minister Alex Petriashvili on Association Agreement on Page 4.

■ **"Developments in 2008 are really related to the Bucharest Summit decision" - Appathurai**

Special Representative of NATO Secretary General in South Caucasus and Central Asia James Appathurai commented on the reasons of Bucharest Summit decision in 2008 in his interview with "Rustavi 2" TV.

"Confirmation of our cooperation will be one of the main elements of the Wales summit. You can call it a package. Georgia has already implemented more cooperation with NATO than – any other partner. We are going to recognize your country's progress on the way towards NATO. As for the Russian fac-

tor, it has its own schedule. The developments in 2008 are really related to the decision of the Bucharest Summit. Some of my colleagues say whether we give Georgia MAP or not, Russia



will still implement a response. But I do not know what Russia will do. We will make every decision according to Georgia's progress and the Bucharest decisions," Appathurai declared. In addition, he believes that NATO involvement in Georgia will increase as a part of all commitments.

■ **"Referendum" on accession to Russia will not have legal force – Georgia's Foreign Ministry**

The Foreign Ministry made a comment on the so-called South Ossetian Parliament Speaker Anatoliy Bibilov's statement as per which, the new Parliament of Tskhinvali will put the issue of accession to Russia to a referendum.

The Georgian Foreign Ministry stresses that over the last 20 years the internally displaced people have been deprived of the right to return to their homes, while rights of those living in occupied regions are violated every day by the occupation regime. International observers, including the EU Monitoring Mission, are not allowed to enter the regions of Abkhazia and so-called South Ossetia to study the human rights situation there.

"Given all this, any "referendum" or "election" that is conducted on the occupied territories is an illegal act aimed at covering the ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands of people. Conducting such a referendum is against the fundamental principles of international law, including the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty and non-violation of borders. The 'referendum' on accession to Russia will not have any legal force and the international community will not recognize it as legal.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is watching with concern the 'passport verification process' of ethnic Georgians living in the occupied regions of Abkhazia, in particular, Gali, Ochamchire and Tkvarcheli.

In addition, the Foreign Ministry calls on the international community to appropriately assess the current situation in the occupied region of Abkhazia in order to avoid discrimination against ethnic Georgians living there and possibility of formation of a new political and humanitarian crisis.

The Ministry says the topics will be discussed at the OSCE Annual Security Review Conference, which is currently under way in Vienna.

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“KAZANTIP Z” IN GEORGIA

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

BY LALI PAPASKIRI

“Come, my darlings, and get a free visa to Kazantip! Smile, be happy and free!” – Such welcoming invitation is being extended to visitors by the organizers of the Anaklia festival.

These warm words, however, are not for your ears, Gentlemen: Nikita I, humble president of a great nation of Kazantip, addresses only Georgian and Ukrainian women. “If you are a girl with a Ukrainian or Georgian passport, come to Anaklia. Folks here love music and dancing too!” According to the information published on the website, many Crimean and Georgian girls already got their free visas...

After a lot of hesitation, doubts and debates, it was decided that electronic music performers from over 160 countries will arrive in Anaklia this year, starting from 20 August. Information about the first phase of lineup has already been published, along with the complete list of the performers.

Entry to the festival’s territory will be allowed



A visa is a special card that also contains a barcode and can be received on the spot for \$200-250. The price on the ticket will vary depending on when it is purchased: after 29 May, the price will be 403 GEL (\$230) plus the permit (2-3 GEL). However, if you decide to visit a festival already in progress, you’ll have to pay far more – 655 GEL. Therefore, better take appropriate measures to make sure you will not have to pay extra. Also, you must always have your yellow suitcase or your visa with you, because you might get fined or even expelled otherwise. Those from countries that do not have a free visa regime with Georgia will be able to obtain a visa for \$50.



Continued on p. 9

A bit of information about Kazantip:

“KaZantip Z” is an annual electronic and dance music festival, which was annually held on the Crimean peninsula from 1992 to 2013. After Russian occupation of Crimea, it was decided to hold a similar festival in Georgia, which will take place in Anaklia. The tickets are called “visas.” Up to 150 000 visitors, so-called “Paradizers”, attend Kazantip every year.

The name of the festival comes from Kazantip – a cape near the place where the festival was held in the years 1995-1999. President and founder of this glorious event is Nikita I (real name - Nikita Marshunok). In its first years, all his ambitions were mainly limited to a gathering of surfers. Later it was supplemented with trance and house music and so Kazantip festival was born.

to those with visas or special yellow suitcases with barcodes. These yellow suitcases are a well-known symbol of Kazantip. Lucky owners of these cool things can move around the festival’s territory without a visa, provided that the suitcases were stamped with a special barcode on the entry spot.

At first it was said that the festival would be held under the name of “Gaumarjos”, but it was eventually changed back to “Kazantip” so that adventurous and fun-seeking folks won’t get lost on their way here...

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“ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT SIGNING – ONLY THE BEGINNING OF OUR PATH TO EU”

BY MAKALOMADZE

Georgia is signing the AA (Association Agreement) on 27 June 2014. The initialing of the Association Agreement took place on 29 November at the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit. Usually, the signature is expected after a period of 9-10 months since the initiation. However, it has been possible to sign the agreement in seven months. How was it possible to sign the document in such a short period of time? What is Georgia's perception of EU and all that it brings? Georgian Journal discussed these matters with Mr. Alex Petriashvili, State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration.

■ *I can tell you with full confidence and responsibility that there will be no changes in our traditions, in our culture, in our history. Everyone must know this*

G.J: Let us briefly talk what the AA means for Georgia in general...

A.P: This is a historic momentum for Georgia. In general, we can say that this is a modernization plan for Georgia. This is the plan for the Europeanization of the country. We hope very much that by implementing the reforms and commitments included in this document, we'll help Georgia to become a European democratic country. We hope that the signing of the AA will make Georgia's integration in the European Union irreversible. This is just the beginning of Georgia's integration into the European Union.

G.J: However, we know that the AA itself does not imply obtaining full membership. Can we still say that it is a *carte blanche*, and if so, what gives us ground for optimism?

A.P: As I have already mentioned, it is the starting point of Georgia's EU integration. We made it very clear to the European lead-



Alex Petriashvili, State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration

ers and to the EU leadership - Georgia's final goal and foreign policy priorities are full membership of the European Union and NATO. We consider the signing of the Association Agreement as an important step on our path to EU integration. We are ready to work 24/7. The government is committed to implementing the reforms. We are ready to continue to strongly cooperate with different EU institutions. When the time comes, we have to be ready and we will be ready by then.

G.J: The approximate time of signing the

■ *When the time comes, we have to be ready and we will be ready by then*

AA was 9-10 months. However, we are signing it in an unprecedented 7 months. Why did they give us the chance to sign the AA in such a short period of time?

A.P: In the beginning of September, when we met under the leadership of the former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, the European leaders in Riga, Latvia told us at an international conference that the process would be speeded-up. Then there was the very dramatic developments in Ukraine. The EU leaders again decided to speed up the process even more. It is really unprecedented for the bureaucracy of the European Union. They did a tremendous job, working 24 hours a day really. We are the EU very grateful for that - Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine - the

■ *Whatever they propose us (at Wales summit), it will be a significant step forward*

three Eastern Partnership countries who made it very clear that European path is our choice.

G.J: Let's talk about another document that is also very much desired by us - The Nato membership action plan. Witnessing the speeding-up of AA signature, can we anticipate that MAP getting process will also be accelerated?

A.P: NATO will make steps towards Georgia. I can tell you with full confidence that the progress made by Georgia will be reflected in the decisions of NATO at the Wales Summit. Whatever they propose us, it will be

a significant step forward. Let us wait a little bit and let us see what will come out of our consultations in Brussels, as well as in the capitals of the top leadership of NATO member states.

G.J: There are some countries, including Germany, which are quite skeptical towards Georgia's EU integration. Do we run any risks that these countries do not ratify the AA after it is signed by Georgia - ratification being the very next necessary stage?

A.P: Certainly, no, that is not the case.

G.J: Myths around the EU - another topic for polarization within Georgian society. Some believe that the EU is a savior, while others are still suffering from the nostalgia of Soviet times, baptizing the EU as the "Machine of Evil." What levers does the Georgian government possess in order to raise the awareness of Georgians on the concept of Europe?

A.P: Well, I assure you that there are very few who are having nostalgia for the Soviet past. However, here are a number of people who believe that after the signing of the AA everything is going to change immediately, overnight. Therefore, we are communicating and we want our people to know the truth. The benefits will come later. First, it is all commitment and sacrifices. But, I can tell you with full confidence and responsibility that there will be no changes in our traditions, in our culture, in our history. Everyone must know this. In the EU, each country's culture, history and traditions are respected.

G.J: What about the visa liberalization? Why is this process lingering compared to Moldova who has already acquired V-LAP?

A.P: We are very optimistic that once we successfully pass the implementation phase next year, probably by the end of spring, we will have the decision of the EU on visa-free travel to the Schengen Zone but we have to be clear. This is 90 days of free travel to EU. So, they can travel but they have to come back. As for Moldova, they started earlier. It was very helpful for us by the way. We have shared their experience.

TAMAR IVERI IS A HOMOPHOBIC OPERA AUSTRALIA RIGHT TO SACK HER?

BY DENNIS ALTMAN, "THE CONVERSATION"

Opera Australia (OA) has dealt with what was becoming a significant boycott threat by sacking the Georgian soprano Tamar Iveri. The company had planned to bring her to Australia to perform the role of Desdemona in *Otello*.

In a statement on OA's Facebook page this morning the company said:

Opera Australia confirms soprano Ms Tamar Iveri will not be performing in *Otello*. Opera Australia has agreed with Tamar Iveri, to immediately release her from her contract with the company.

So why the furore, and is OA right to have responded in this way?

After a gay pride march last year in Tbilisi, Iveri wrote an open letter to the country's President in which she attacked the marchers in terms that are clearly abusive, offensive and could be read as an incentive to violence.

In response, La Monnaie Opera in Brussels has already dropped Iveri from its upcoming production of Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*, and in Australia a petition was organised to do the same.

Local activists have been in touch with

the Georgian LGBT organisation Identoba, which clearly supports a boycott. A posting from Identoba claims Iveri's future career will be confined to singing in Russia unless she finds a meaningful way of apologising.

Iveri's letter, which she later withdrew from her Facebook page and for which she has apologised, is worth reading in full.

What emerges is a contradictory outburst of anger and venom, in which she both claims to have many "gay friends and relatives" and not to justify violence, while simultaneously using extraordinary stereotypes to condemn all homosexuals - actually she seems quite unaware of, or disinterested in, lesbians - and proclaiming the need to "break jaws".

Subsequently she claimed in a statement on Facebook the post was written by

her husband; I suspect they both contributed to the letter given its internal contradictions.

The language of the letter reflects a feeling that is growing in many parts of the world, a fear that recognising sexual rights, usually understood to mean homosexual

■ *"After a gay pride march last year in Tbilisi, Iveri wrote an open letter to the country's President in which she attacked the marchers in terms that are clearly abusive, offensive and could be read as an incentive to violence"*

equality, is to undermine traditional religious and cultural rights.

Iveri was cast as Desdemona in the Opera Australia production of *Otello*.

Iveri's attack on the Georgian president



Tamar Iveri

is couched in terms of his "bending his head to the West", in this case by condemning violence against gay demonstrators.

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“SUMMIT OF DIPLOMATS”

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“WHY WOULD I KILL MYSELF? LAST THING I REMEMBER IS ME SITTING ON THE STAIRS”

Follow-up story (“Boyfriend accused of strangling girlfriend,” published in Georgian Journal, issue #23)

BY TEA KHURTSILAVA

The Orthodox baptizing of Luis Navarro, head of Georgia’s NDI office, attracted a lot of attention from society. Peruvian by ethnicity, Navarro has already spent several years living and working in Georgia... He got baptized at the Lower Bethlehem Church in Tbilisi. The holy ritual was performed by Father Aleksandre (Bolkvadze), who kindly agreed to an interview.

On the 3rd of June, at around 11 o’clock in the evening, a heavily injured 14-year-old girl on the brink of death was discovered by father and son in Gori at the entrance of their apartment. A hemp rope was wound around her neck twice and her body bore many injuries and fractures: pelvis, legs and feet, all were horribly damaged. She was unconscious by the time she was delivered to the hospital, spending several days hooked to a medical ventilator.

Leluka Vanishvili is still at a hospital. She underwent several surgeries and one more is yet to come. A court case has been opened, but the culprit hasn’t been found yet. It is still unclear what actually happened to the girl. As we said in our previous article, the girl’s family members suspect that her boyfriend is responsible for this violent assault, since he was the one she went to meet. However, the boy’s father protests fervently against this accusation, categorically denying his son’s involvement. He accuses Leluka’s family of slander and thinks that they are tainting his innocent son’s reputation. The teenager himself was questioned by the law enforcement twice.

In order to find out more information, I came to the hospital and talked to the victim of the assault. The girl does not remember much, but hopes she will do so in the future.

– Leluka, first of all, congratulations on getting well. Do you remember what happened that day?

Exclusive interview with a 14-year-old injured girl



■ *“I do not know who inflicted such terrible injuries on me. There was a rope wrapped around my neck. Look at my arms. They still bear marks of someone’s hands, do they look like I did that to myself? My leg is broken and I’ll need another surgery soon”*

■ *“We were done as a couple, but we still met from time to time, messaged each other on Skype and read each other’s social media”*

– On 3rd of June, at about 9:30 I left the house and told my parents that I was going to my friend Mari’s place. But I didn’t meet Mari, instead I went towards the 9-storey apartment block, because I had to meet my boyfriend there. We often met at this place. So I entered the apartment block and sat down on the stairs of the 4th or 5th floor. I was wearing a hoodie with the hood up. I messaged to Mari that I’ll be there in 15 minutes, then called Murad sev-

eral times, but he didn’t pick up. Then I put the phone into my pocket and deleted the calls I made from the log. I always delete all calls and messages I made to him. I didn’t delete the message I sent to Mari, but now I remember that it wasn’t on my phone. Mari, however, still has it saved on hers.

– As I was told, you broke up with your boyfriend. It is also said that you two weren’t seeing each other for some time. If this is so, why did you go to meet him?

– We met on 24th of May and had a casual conversation. We were done as a couple, but we still met from time to time, messaged each other on Skype and read each other’s social media. On 24th of May I called him, asked him if he wanted to meet, he agreed and we met. We decided to stop the relationship and he also said that he met someone else. There was

■ *I was in such a terrible condition and he didn’t even visit me in the hospital, even to say that he is not guilty of anything. We aren’t a couple now, but we used to be one, after all. If he isn’t guilty, why didn’t he show up?*

no tension between us, however.

– What happened, then? How did you receive these injuries?

– I think about it a lot myself, but I can’t recall what happened there. When I came to my senses, I was already at Iashvili Clinic in Tbilisi. I don’t remember being at the reanimation, either. I was woken up by terrible pain. Then I held a cross in my hand and prayed to an icon. I do not know who inflicted such terrible injuries on me. There was a rope wrapped around my neck and I still have marks from someone’s fingers on my arms. My leg is broken and I’ll need another surgery soon. My lungs failed to inflate and they had to perform surgery on them too. I’m trying to recall what happened and I hope I will do so soon.

– It was also said that you wanted to commit suicide because of breaking up with your boyfriend. Were you really in such a dire mental condition to do that?

– This is ridiculous, why would I kill myself? We broke up because of gossips about us, but we kept up the casual communication. We became just friends, although we didn’t talk much to each other at school to avoid another series of rumors. Look at my arms. They still bear marks of someone’s hands, do they look like I did that to myself?

– Members of your family suspected that your boyfriend did that to you, while his father told us that you were messaging him from the hospital. Do you continue communicating even now?

– This is even more ridiculous. What messages? I don’t have a phone or internet access here and I definitely did not send anything. He knows my Skype and Facebook passwords, so it must be him sending something on my behalf. All I know is that I never sent anything. To tell you the truth, I don’t even care anymore – I was in such a terrible condition and he didn’t even visit me in the hospital, even to say that he is not guilty of anything. We aren’t a couple now, but we used to be one, after all. If he isn’t guilty, why didn’t he show up? I am not upset about breaking up with him anymore. I think that eventually I’ll recall everything; I won’t place blame on anyone until that.

TAMAR IVERI IS A HOMOPHOBE – WAS OPERA AUSTRALIA RIGHT TO SACK HER?

Continued from p. 4

But among a majority of the world’s population, Iveri’s outburst will have more resonance than it would in Australia – though it is worth recalling that 40 years ago her words might well have reflected public opinion.

This is not an argument for tolerating hate speech, but rather for a pragmatic assessment of how we can best respond.

One unintended consequence of Iveri’s contract now being cancelled is that it will reinforce the perception that “the West” is using homosexuality to wage a cultural war on those whose understandings of sexuality are very different; it might well increase homophobia in Georgia and make Iveri into a martyr for social conservatives.

This is exactly the outcome that many of those who are using sexuality as a means of strengthening their hold on power and maintaining a deeply patriarchal social order will like.



Tamar Iveri with her husband Raul Tskhadadze

■ *“Subsequently she claimed in a statement on Facebook the post was written by her husband; I suspect they both contributed to the letter given its internal contradictions”*

One of the consequences of social media is increasing campaigns for boycotts as a means of expressing outrage and opposition. To boycott an individual artist might well make us feel better, but will OA’s actions actually help those facing ongoing violence and persecution in Georgia?

Rather than Opera Australia cancelling her contract, there were alternatives in this case. The company could have been asked to dedicate a performance to international LGTB rights, and for Iveri to donate her fee that evening to an organisation supporting global rights such as the International Lesbian and Gay Rights Association.

UPLISTSIKHE - "FORTRESS OF GOD" AND CITY LIKE JERUSALEM

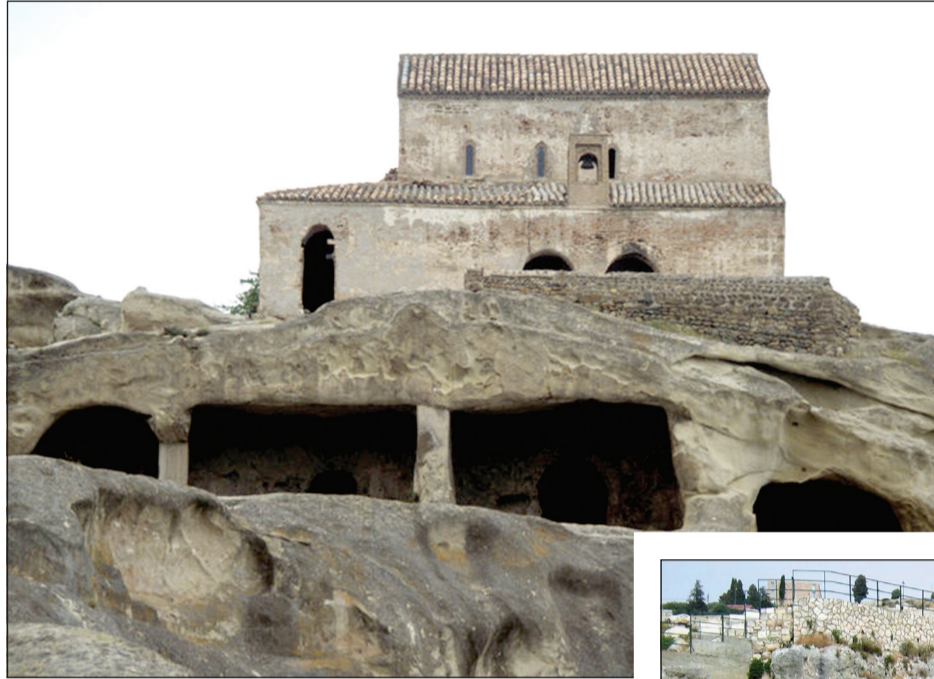
BY NINO KHORAVA

Shida Kartli region is well known by a diverse range of cultural sights including several historical and cultural landmarks, for example the museum of Joseph Stalin and the famous ancient rock-hewn town of Uplistsikhe Church.

Uplistsikhe is a remarkable cave town with a variety of archeological sites and many churches, monasteries and fortresses. Uplistsikhe was an important religious, political and cultural center in the Hellenistic and the late antique periods. This is one of the most significant tourist attractions dating back to the 1st millennium BC.

Uplistsikhe is in eastern Georgia, some 15 kilometers east of the town of Gori. It contains various structures dating from the early Iron Age and the late middle ages. It's hard to tell if caves naturally existed in this stone because you can tell that rooms were carved into the stone, but I suspect the caves were there and they were modified extensively over time. Some of the caves have very ornately-carved ceilings resembling three-dimensional plaster work. In some areas you can tell there were columns standing from floor to ceiling, but they are nowhere to be seen.

Walking along ancient stone walkways and stairwells made me feel like I was walking in a city like Jerusalem before Jesus was



■ *Walking along ancient stone walkways and stairwells made me feel like I was walking in a city like Jerusalem before Jesus was ever born. If you watched Ridley Scott's epic "Kingdom of Heaven", then Uplistsikhe will remind you of Holy City of Jerusalem*



ever born. If you watched Ridley Scott's epic "Kingdom of Heaven", then Uplistsikhe will remind you of Holy City of Jerusalem. Both are remarkable for the unique rock-cut architectures. Uplistsikhe is identified by archaeologists as one of the oldest urban settlements in Georgia.

Archaeological excavations have revealed extraordinary artifacts of different eras: beautiful gold, silver and bronze jewelry and magnificent examples of ceramics and sculptures. These are no longer on site and are displayed in the National Museum of Tbilisi. The majority of the caves are void of any decoration but there are columns and beams carved from the sandstone rock.

At Uplistsikhe an entire town is carved into the soft stone of the mountainside. As the city grew, wooden structures were either added to the caves or built to stand alone. All of these dwellings have since dis-

Continued on p. 15

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ATESHGA OF TBILISI – ANCIENT SITE OF WORLD ZOROASTRIANISM

BY EKA LOMIDZE

In Sololaki, the old district of Tbilisi, not a single man out of ten can tell you where Ateshga is; even more, this name may embarrass them. In case you mention the fire-worshippers' temple, they will shrug their shoulders even more. Some of them may attempt to make excuses, saying that the times of fire-worshipping are far gone and forgotten.



At a stone's throw from the Zemo Beblemi church there is an ancient religious monument, Ateshga, the place for kindling a fire. This is the name of the Zoroastrian temple built of brick in the Kldisubani district. According to historic sources, Ateshga is an IV-V century monument. It is therefore one of the oldest, still existing fire-worshipping altars in the world. The temple has been "besieged" by residential buildings for a long time. The only possible way to get near it is via the Anton Dgebuadze's yard.

They call him uncle Chito. For years he's been functioning as an out-of-staff guard of the temple without any payment. He was promised a salary ten years ago but...

"In case the state cared about the history of the country, full scale excavation works should be done here. A lot is hidden under the earth. Under the floor there are arched vaults built of the same mortar as the temple itself. Analyses are to be made in order to establish the age but it's not possible here in Georgia. And it's expensive abroad. A lot of tourists come; mostly Iranians. Turks said they would restore it as a cultural center, then as a mosque. That was a No-No. Nobody will bear a mullah here. Only Georgians and Christians live in this district.

John Taft, the former US Ambassador, and his wife used to come here often. He took photos. He was appalled by the number of current-supply wires, saying that this marred the beauty. Mr. Taft was an interesting man. Unfortunately, in Georgia, (as I reckon, in most countries too) people in power are only fond of money and they don't care about such things unless foreigners point them out. They only think to wrap things up as quick as possible and pocket the money. Our ancestors took care



■ *"Historical sources prove that Ateshga is a monument of the IV-V centuries"*



■ *"This is the same Ahura Mazda, the follower of which was Zaratustra, the Übermensch of Nietzsche"*

of every stone. When laying a brick, they checked it from every angle in order to retain beauty and symmetry."

Despite the fact that nobody officially pays uncle Chito, he is so fond of the ancient cultural monument that he never shuns from repairing it. He cares about tourists, too. Right now tourists have neither guides nor information booklets mentioning this place. Uncle Chito wanted to get

■ *Zoroastrianism was very popular here during the reign of King Vakhtang Gorgasali (Founder of Tbilisi, second half of the fifth century)*

some booklets printed but it proved too expensive. Expensive for ordinary, unemployed people like him, but it should not be difficult for the state.

Anton Dgebuadze's family settled down there in 1974. Before him Armenians lived in the temple yard and they had a hen house in the old sanctuary. There were even trees in the temple interior...

The name "Ateshga" originates from the Persian "Ateshgah" which means the place for fire. The supreme deity of Zoroastrianism (fire-worshipping) is Ahura Mazda - the omniscient uncreated spirit. This is the same Ahura Mazda the follower of which was Zaratustra - Nietzsche's Übermensch.

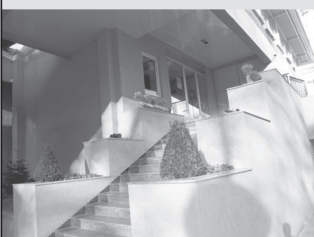
The fire-worshippers' altar has been here since ancient times. According to the chronicler, Zoroastrianism was very popular here during the reign of King Vakhtang Gorgasali

■ *"Before that Armenians lived in the church yard and they had a hen house in the old place for idols"*

(Founder of Tbilisi, second half of the fifth century) and he had to tolerate this foreign faith. Together with the Christian bishop at the King's court there also was a High Magus, in the Georgian historical source called as "The Persian bishop". The Persian Magi were officially empowered to propagate their faith in Kartli. Presumably, Ateshga was built during the Vakhtang Gorgasali's times. After the mass persecution of Zoroastrianism by Byzantine Emperor Heraclius VI, it would be impossible to build it in the Christian country. According to the historical data, Ateshga was turned into a mosque by the Turks who reigned in Tbilisi from 1724. After the banishment of the Turks from Tbilisi, in 1735, Persian Shah Nadir demolished it.

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“KAZANTIP Z” IN GEORGIA – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Continued from p. 3

Nikita Marshunok, president of the republic of Kazantip:

“I wonder whether Georgia actually needs Kazantip or not. If it does, we are ready. Many don’t really understand what Kazantip Z is – we are not trying to create exact analog of Crime-

Still, the Georgian Orthodox Church wasn’t overly excited about the festival being held in Anaklia. Davit Isakadze, a deacon notorious for his radical fundamentalist views, condemned the festival and threatened that those attending this “source of perversion” would be excommunicated...

As locals say, some of them who lived near



There will be comfortable temporary housing built near the Kazantip’s territory, with each living unit fit for 20-30 people. One day’s meals will cost about \$15. Guests will be also settled in the building of the so-called Patriots’ Camp, with price of a room per person per day also being \$15, meals included. Anaklia’s hotels are also prepared for the influx of “ParadiZers”. There will be a tent settlement erected as well, with all the necessary infrastructure such as storage safes, showers, latrines and food joints. Living in a tent will cost from \$2 to \$5 per day.

an festival in Anaklia. Taking the local mentality and existing opportunities into account, we are going to hold a musical festival based on both Georgian traditions and innovations. At the first stage, we expect up to 50 000 foreign guests in Georgia, with the number growing every year. There will be millions of dollars invested in this small, beautiful city of Anaklia, which will boost local businesses... Georgia offered us two cities in which the festival would be held – Batumi and Anaklia. We chose Anaklia.”

Management of Kazantip recommends scooters and electrocycles for getting around the place.

Giorgi Sigua, Head of National Tourism Administration:

“We have already achieved an agreement with Ukrainian International Airlines about appointing new flights to Batumi airport from Kiev, Kharkov and Lvov. We agreed on 11 flights per week.”

According to him, the festival of 2014 will not reach the scale it used to have in Ukraine.

Nikita Marshunok said from the very beginning that due to peculiarities of local mentality, the topic of drugs and free sex will be excluded altogether. “We are only dealing with main issues: sound, lighting, good mood and love” – he explained.

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■ “We are only dealing with main issues: sound, lighting, good mood and love”- **Nikita I Marshunok**, president of Kazantip. “Due to peculiarities of local mentality, the topic of drugs and free sex will be excluded altogether”

the sea, were already approached by the festival’s organizers and asked for permission to erect tents in their yards.

Gocha Khubua, resident of Anaklia:

“We have a large yard. It is about 300 or



come and live here – even if I don’t go to the festival, I’ll be compensated by ogling them. I’m kidding, of course. Still, I’d like to visit the festival – we don’t get many such events in Georgia and we aren’t used to them, so naturally, I’m interested.”

Lika, 24, resident of Anaklia:

“Locals are intensely preparing for the festival by furnishing the houses with maximum comfort, sorting out lavatories, etc. Locals who will be responsible for housing and hosting tourists have their own cafes and food joints, most of which are currently undergoing renovation. Competition for clients will be enormous, and everyone will try to attract foreigners with local dishes & drinks, in hope of eventually making them permanent clients.

– **Is the price of hotels known?**

– Prices vary. Price for a hotel room with one meal per day begins at 180 GEL, although I’ve heard that rooms with a view on the seashore are more expensive. So, after a two-year stagnation, life is finally returning to Anaklia.

Long story short, in just a bit the festival preparations will enter their intensive phase. As locals say, important preparations such as setting up required infrastructure, erecting tents and fencing the festival location haven’t even kicked off...



400 meters from my house to the sea, so my parents were asked to yield some space for the tent from 20 to 30 of August. No one talked about money at all; I don’t think renting a yard is normal practice. But why do I care, it’s all the better if some beautiful ladies

WHO WOULD BE WHO IN A HOLLYWOOD MOVIE?

BY EVA BOLKVAZDE



Judi Dench – Tbilisi mayoral candidate Asmat Tka-bladze from Labour Party. Dench is known for often playing dignified, strong willed women in positions of authority who are sometimes opposed or criticized by those under her. She is a genius and unique actress. In fact, there is no similarity between Judi and Asmat, but I think she suits in this role if it would be comical version of movie. I think there are no difficulties for Damme Dench and she can perform any kind of role.



Mark Strong - Tbilisi mayoral candidate Nika Melia from the United National Movement. Mr. Strong often plays negative roles, crime lords and sinister villains. He is often casted as cold, calculating villains. But he is very nice in real life and this is the main thing. I think he would be perfect as a suave, well-mannered yet cunning mayoral candidate. I think their similarity expresses in their gazes too. They both have that serious, strict look with a twinkle of mischief in it.



Mr. Pitkin – Tbilisi mayoral candidate David Narmania from the Georgian Dream. It’s funny but also interesting to imagine Mr. Pitkin’s character in David Narmania’s role. How Mr. Pitkin tries to become mayor of a city. What are his actions to achieve his goal? being prone to uttering some really funny lines, I believe Narmania would make one hell of a comic character to play, especially if you are willing to cast his overly protective mother too.

TKEMALI – UNIQUE GEORGIAN PLUM SOUCE

Tkemali is a famous Georgian sour plum sauce made of cherry plums – both red and green varieties. Red sauce is cooked from ripe plums at the end of summer, while green Tkemali is prepared from unripe plums in the Spring.

It is mainly used with potato dishes, fried or grilled meat and poultry.

Ingredients:

1kg of green tkemali
1-2 bunches of coriander (mature is better, although fresh one will do as well)
1 bunch of pennyroyal
5-6 cloves of garlic
1 bunch of dill (optional)
1 bunch of wet savory (also optional)
Red pepper
Salt

Step-by-Step Instruction:

Preparation:

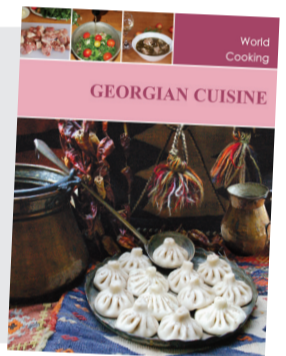
Put washed tkemali into a cooking pot, pour a bit of water (make sure it doesn't cover the fruit) and put it on a low flame. Stir it a few times while it boils. After the tkemali become soft, squeeze them out in a colander (save the juice) and grate them. Mix them with their own juice, the amount you add is up to you.

Mash your greens, garlic and pepper (alternatively, just put them through a meat-grinder) and add them to the tkemali paste along with some salt.

You can replace hot peppers with ground red pepper. There is a lot of pectin in green tkemali and it can get very thick after you grate it. In this case, add boiled (but cooled) water until the paste reaches a desirable consistency. In the end, you can add more garlic, greens or any spices to modify the taste of tkemali as you see fit. In some cases, if the sauce is too sour, you can add some sugar.

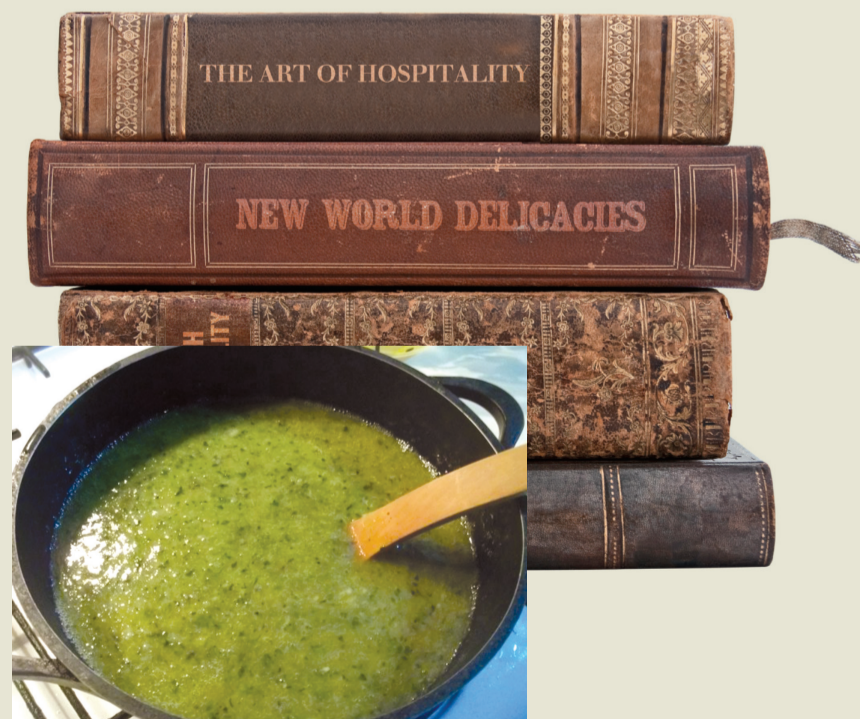


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Be Informed About Georgian Reality

“TODAY’S GEORGIA NEEDS STALIN AND DICTATORSHIP” – 18 YEAR OLD “STALINISTKA”

BY LADO GOGOLADZE

Not so long ago, a page dedicated to Joseph Stalin appeared on Facebook and is quickly gaining popularity. The creator of the page is an 18-year-old girl. She hesitated a lot before agreeing to an interview, giving her consent only on condition of full anonymity. We will let you judge for yourself whether what you read below is a product of her own thought or of someone else’s influence, but it is obvious that even today there are quite a few people in Georgia who share her opinions. The first thing we asked the young Stalinist is why she decided to create such a page:



■ “I, as a Georgian, like the fact that a fellow Georgian, an ordinary guy from Gori, achieved so much. This is why I adore him”

proud of his ethnicity. Stalin frequently said that he was born in Georgia, but raised by Russia.

– If he loved Georgia so much, then why didn’t he return territories such as Saingilo Or Sochi back to Georgia?

– I too pondered on this question and heard many answers to it but this does not belittle Stalin in my eyes, because I believe he must have had his own reasons. Stalin was a person vastly different from everybody and this is what I like about him. Naturally, I don’t justify what you asked me about, but I, as a Georgian, like the fact that a fellow Georgian, an ordinary guy from Gori, achieved so much. This is why I adore him.

– Would Stalin be good for today’s Georgia?

– Definitely. Today’s Georgia needs Stalin and dictatorship. It would be good for Georgia to be ruled by a dictator – everything would be better. If Stalin was here, he would tidy the country up, both economy- and territory-wise. Do you like what’s going today in Georgia?

– Regardless of whether I like it or not, the will of the people exists, which they express at the elections...

– Stalin would be good for today’s Georgia because he would put everything back in order and get the country back on its feet.



■ “I like his style a lot – dictatorship and Totalitarianism. He created was a powerful and centralized state. I vastly prefer that to democracy”

tion. For years, he ruled the world the way he wanted. I like his ruling policy a lot – Totalitarianism and dictatorship. He created a powerful and centralized state. I vastly prefer that to democracy.

– By this logic, can Stalin be forgiven for creation of GULAGs as well?
– Of course, it can be jus-

tified. Such an authority could not be established based on kindness or love.

– And why it had to be established at all?

– Unlike other ruling methods, dictatorship is far more organized and stable. Besides, he was Stalin and he could do anything he wanted because he desired to create a powerful state.

– Stalin is said to have been proud to be Georgian. You think this is true?

– Yes, he loved Georgia a lot and was

– I am from Shida Kartli region. Living there and not being interested in Stalin simply doesn’t come together. I got interested too and decided to learn more about Stalin- that meant searching the internet, reading books, asking elders for their opinions, etc. Then I went to Gori and found even more information about him in the museum. In the end I decided that I liked Stalin a lot, so I created this page to make people look at him from another perspective; showing society his positive sides.

– You never encountered any literature that portrayed Stalin negatively?

– Of course, I encountered literature which accuses him of repressions, executing members of the intelligentsia, etc. I still justify his actions, though. What is interesting is that while everyone mentions Stalin in a negative light, no one ever talks about him restoring autocephaly to the Georgian Orthodox Church in 1943.

– What exactly do you find attractive about him?

– Stalin was an ordinary person who accomplished a lot through sheer determina-

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“TIRZA” - THE TALE OF LORD BYRON AND GEORGIAN GIRL

BY MANANA GABRITCHIDZE

On 23 June, Tbilisi hosted 40th annual international Byron Conference. A grand opening went very successfully and ended in triumphant finale with 200 graduates and current students of the Byron School of Tbilisi on the stage. This was followed by the plenary session of the conference. Next day the guest enjoyed the sights of Tbilisi after the programmed scientific discussions of the Byronic legacy. One of the honorary guests of conference, Mrs. Inesa Merabishvili, a well-known Anglicist and translator, gave us an interview.

– Let’s start from the most important subject – what was Byron’s connection to Georgia?

– When Byron was 19-20 years old, he wrote a poem, which ends with the following lines:

“YE wilds, that look eternal;
and thou cave,
Which seem’st unfathomable;
and ye mountains,
So varied and so terrible in beauty.”

In his Don Juan he describes a Georgian woman as an exemplar of beauty. The Giaour sees the depiction of someone named Leyla wearing Georgian national dress... In Byron’s original poem, Don Juan, when dressed as a woman, was described as so beautiful that he might have even compared to a Georgian wom-

an in beauty. Russian translation, however, states that he was so beautiful that you could compare a Georgian woman to him...

– Is there any other proof of Byron’s connection to Georgia?

– Byron died in 1824 and his autobiography in three volumes was published in 1825. In volume three, an interesting occasion is described. Byron, aged 22, stumbled upon a 13-year-old Georgian girl at a slave market during his travels through Asia Minor. Byron

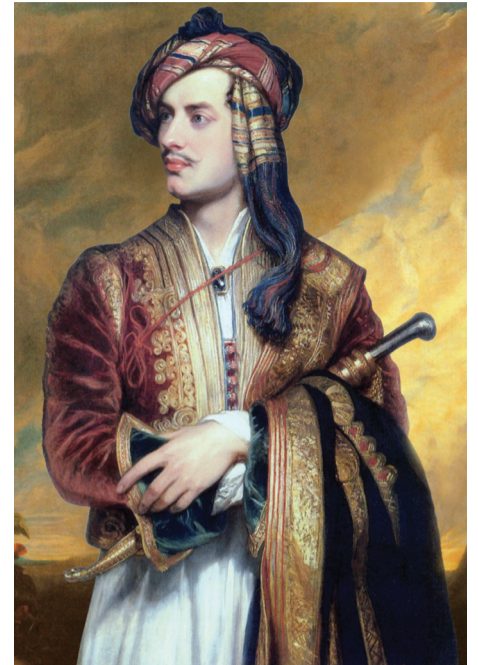
■ **Byron, aged 22, stumbled upon a 13-year-old Georgian girl at a slave market during his travels through Asia Minor... He immediately bought the girl and promised her that she would return to Georgia... Their meeting left a lasting impression on the poet, with the girl crying and hugging him. She didn’t know who Byron was**

did not know any Georgian and this girl did not know English, but at the time, a specific tongue existed between traders and travelers, which the girl spoke because she was being sold as a slave for the third time already. Byron was deeply touched by the child’s appearance and age. He immediately paid 800 Pias-tres for rescuing the girl and promised her that she would return to Georgia. Later, however, it seems that the person he entrusted the girl with, an Irishman by name of Fletcher betrayed him and so Byron lost her trail. He looked for her far and wide for two years and eventually found her, but she was in poor health. Their

meeting left a lasting impression on the poet, with the girl crying and hugging him. She didn’t know who Byron was. He left her in reliable hands and continued his journey. The girl was taken to the island of Crete for treatment, but her health failed and she died. When Byron found out about this, he was really aggrieved.

We checked the facts and everything in this story matches. Was Byron in Alexandria Troas? Yes, he was, and he met the Georgian girl on 12 April 1810. In 1811, Byron wrote a

letter to his friend in which he says that he is devastated because yet another one of his friends had died (that year Byron’s mother died, along with four of his friends) and there is no point in mentioning her name because she is not a local... On the same day Byron writes a poem about Tirza and then a whole cycle dedicated to Tirza as well. We do not know the girl’s name, but “Tirza” is a Jewish name which means “sorrow.” But knowing that the girl was Christian, it might well be that the girl’s name was “Tsiso” or maybe he simply gave her another name. For 200 years no one could find the one who inspired the poem...



Also, there is a matter dedicated to Leyla in Don Juan’s eighth to eleventh songs, which tells the fate of a Georgian girl. It can be said that they are basically the same, which is yet another proof. The girl’s grave was allegedly destroyed during the expansion of a Cretan city and can no longer be found, otherwise we’d know more, because it is said that the story was chiseled into the gravestone. It was an expression of Byron’s mourning of the Georgian girl – “What is love of thousands compared to love of a dead one who will never forget you?” He never forgave himself for abandoning the girl, it seems.



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EXCEPTIONAL DISCOVERY OR EXCEPTIONAL SCAM?

BY EMA TUKHIASHVILI

Last week the beginning of the gas extraction works in the village of Iormughanlo of the Sagarejo region was marked with much fanfare. Extraction and distribution of gas from the deposit is carried out by the American Company Frontera. Along with company representatives, the first transmission of natural gas was attended by Mr. Richard Norland, the US Ambassador to Georgia.

The gas extraction works began in the second half of the 1970s and are still going on a small scale. Average annual extraction of gas within the last five years was 16.5 million cubic meters. The total amount of extracted gas in the country is 2.8 billion cubic meters. The discovery of the gas deposit by Frontera didn't come as a surprise but the amount of it – 42 billion cubic meters – solemnly announced by the American company aroused great interest. Annually Georgia consumes 1.8-2 billion cubic meters of gas and the country almost by 100% depends on the imported natural gas.

On this background it isn't strange that Steve Nickandros, CEO of Frontera, assessed this discovery as historical, considering the 42-billion cubic meters of gas as a precondition of energy independence of the country. The importance of the project was also underlined by Ambassador Richard Norland who noted that Georgia has the potential of becoming a state that extracts significant amount of gas. All this is wonderful but... nothing was known about this grandiose discovery to the Oil and Gas Corporation of Georgia.

Alexander Abaidze, Oil and Gas Corpora-

Billions of cubic meters in gas deposit REPORTEDLY discovered in Iormughanlo, Georgia



Steve Nickandros, CEO of Frontera and Ambassador Richard Norland in at Iormughanlo gas deposit

■ **If this is true, gas deposit discovered by Frontera will satisfy Georgia's internal needs for 12 years**

tion of Georgia: "The deposit in Iormughanlo was discovered during Soviet times. After that, in 2008, Frontera renewed the drilling and extraction works. As for the volume, the official documents submitted by Frontera to our Corporation, representing the state, said 23 million cubic meters. I hope you agree that there is much difference between 23 million and 42 billion. Besides, the discovery of such deposits is connected with wide-scale works; there should be geological proof, etc. No such special exploration works have been carried out and consequently no big deposits have been found. I can tell you even more, several months ago we held different meetings, including with Frontera where the 23-million deposit was discussed. Due to insufficiency of the presented



■ **In the 19th century Siemens brothers, who later founded the famous Siemens Company were carrying out gas exploration works here**

data the state didn't consider the beginning of extraction works well-grounded."

Liana Jervalidze, expert in energy issues:

"The gas exploration works in Georgia have been on since the second half of the 19th century. By the way, the Siemens brothers who later founded the famous Siemens Company were carrying out gas exploration works here. After WWII, in a mountainous village of the Akhmeta region gas was produced by Belgians. They carried wineskins filled with small amounts of natural gas on mule back and sold them to the plains.

Frontera has been carrying out exploration works for a long time but nothing has been found so far; that's why the declaration about the 42-billion-deposit was somewhat unexpected. In case there is indeed such a reservoir, of course it's very important for the development of the inner market because we depend on imported gas for 100%. At present, Georgia consumes maximum 2 billion cubic meters of gas. If we suppose that the economy develops and consumption will increase, it will presumably reach 3.5 billion.

It seems that the gas deposit discovered by Frontera will meet the internal needs for 12 years. This potential won't turn Georgia into a full-fledged player on the world gas market but for the internal market it will be interesting. In case the exploration works are successful and the amount of deposit is as expected, this will be commercially very profitable and Georgia will become an exporter country."

In Frontera they declare that the 42 billion is an anticipated index. According to the official webpage of the company, the daily rate of the extracted gas from the deposit amounts to 57 000 cubic meters and its geological potential is assessed at 28 billion cubic meters...

EURO-4 STANDARD MIGHT BE INTRODUCED IN GEORGIA

BY KHATUNA CHIGOGIDZE

It has been almost two months since our neighbor Azerbaijan banned the import of old cars: from now on, only cars that meet the "Euro-4" ecological standard and were manufactured in 2005 or later are allowed to be imported. This is a very hard hit not only for our car dealerships but for the economy as well, since re-export of cars has occupied a significant place in Georgian economy till today. This is exacerbated by the fact that June 27 is approaching – the day Georgia will sign the European Union Association Agreement. With the date drawing ever closer, certain questions surface in our society, such as "Does getting closer to the European Union mean that the "Euro-4" standard will be applied to our cars and fuel as well?" or "Will the renewal of our auto park become mandatory as well?" Naturally, such questions are important and attention-worthy for a country which owns a rather outdated auto park. As Vano Mtvralashvili, Chairman of Petroleum Products Importers' Union, says, changes in this field are necessary, but everything requires time.

Vano Mtvralashvili:

"As we try to become members of the EU, the quality of cars and fuel will become a major question. I think that matching our numbers and statistics with those of the EU should be done gradually. It should happen step by step, not instantly. Currently, no one obliges us to immediately switch to the standards that are currently active in Europe. In the future, however, we will be obliged to do so, and we will be ready to slowly start matching the requirements. Wanting to be part of the EU automatically implies that we should accept its norms.

Let's ask a different question: how ready is Georgia to implement such regulations now? There are a lot of drivers who use outdated cars; what are we going to tell them? Of course, if Georgia becomes a member of the EU, the government will have no

choice but to implement certain limitations on the import and sale of cars. The newer the auto park is, the less it pollutes the environment, but as I have already told you, everything depends on the country's current development and the financial condition of the population... Our social background is quite bleak, the country is not ready for this and thus the government will not be able to take such radical measures. All we can do at this stage is to stimulate the import of newer vehicles – this will be the best way of making sure that the country will get an influx of new cars while

■ **Our social background is quite bleak, the country is not ready for this and thus the government will not be able to take such radical measures**



■ **What is "Euro-4" standard? - only cars that meet the "Euro-4" ecological standard and were manufactured in 2005 or later are allowed to be imported**

avoiding financial damage to the citizens."

This opinion is shared by Soso Archvadze, an expert economist:

"What matters the most is how our government is going to regulate the quality of vehicles and fuel. How did Azerbaijan man-

age to do this, then? Don't forget the enormous income of this country."

Azerbaijan is a country of oil and gas, and there is no way we are able to compete with them. The population of this country possesses adequate financial resources - Renewing one's auto park and reducing the amount of ecologically damaging cars is a very good move for the country that possesses necessary resources for that. In our case, however, care is necessary – renewal of the auto park should happen gradually and painlessly.

BY BACHO ODISHARIA

A man without tattoos is invisible to the Gods. I read this somewhere and ever since then I have romanticized my view about tattoos.

The human body is always treated as an image of society, so tattoos are a significant part of identity and many stereotypes are associated with them. Some people think that tattoos are for criminals. When I first got inked my neighbors asked me: "why the hell did you do this to yourself? You are not a gang member or anything." Part of society, mostly the older generation, sees an inked body as a negative thing; as the mark of an outlaw who has been in prison.

I strongly believe that tattoos are a map to one's life and personality. As with clothing and hairstyles, tattoo choices are rooted in personal taste, but that is one of the greatest things about them. It can be a public exclamation or very private, but either way, there is an experience and a memory behind it. A tattoo is just one of the many ways in which we can record our lives.

However, in today's Georgia, people who are looking for work should think twice about getting them. There is no tattoo acceptance at workplaces like banks or governmental institutions or schools and universities. It is still staya taboo.

So, why do people get tattoos? And what kind of images are they painting on their bodies? In Georgia, there are several types of body painting. I will discuss what kind of imagery I have encountered. Let's start with religious motifs. Some people do believe that if they will paint sacred symbols of religious confessions all over their bodies it will keep them safe or guard them. Some do this to

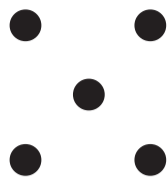


■ *"The shape of a triangle is the most common tattoo seen with teenagers. Deers, cats and whales are popular too"*

express their respect and others just like the look of it. For example, my relative, one of the greatest Georgian writers, Chabua Amirejibi had Saint George's icon on his chest and he said that it kept him alive and safe. It's a classic example of how some people look at tattoos as if it is a talisman.

As well as religious characteristics, there are criminal tattoos too. In Georgia we have the "Vor v zakone" (thief-in-law) kind of images. Many of them are complex, secretive, and deeply meaningful. The most spread prison

FROM JAIL TATTOOS



Tattoo evolution in Georgia

TO HIPSTER TRIANGLE



■ *"One of the greatest Georgian writers, Chabua Amirejibi had Saint George's icon on his chest and he said that it kept him alive and safe."*



■ *Hollywood actor Viggo Mortensen "getting his stars (signs of Vory-v-zakone) done" in crime/action movie "Eastern Promises" (2007)*

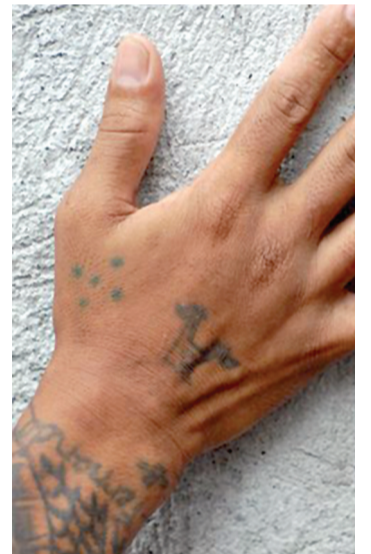


■ *Don't trust a Woman! - As funny as it looks, there is probably some sad story behind this tattoo*

tattoo is the five dots on the hand which means that a person was imprisoned. Four dots represent the cell, one dot in the middle represents the person caged between the four walls. For example, if a person has a blossoming rose as a tattoo it means that he/she turned eighteen while in prison. But nowadays this kind of tattoos (gang related, criminal, gulag style) etc. are part of fashion and many youngsters cover their bodies with paintings that once were strictly for criminal authorities.

I have seen dozens of tattoos, but the one I want to mention here is the funniest I ever saw. It goes: "Every woman is a slut, sorry mom." This guy was probably heartbroken, betrayed and lost faith in women in particular; so he expressed himself like this. I think that tattoos are the easiest way to express your thoughts in public. Tattoos work exactly like posters at demonstrations, even better. Our bodies were printed as blank pages to be filled with the ink of our thoughts, beliefs and desires.

The younger generation has a completely different look at tattoos. With the rise of the hipster culture, it brought us a whole new meaning to geometrical and animal images. The shape of a triangle is the most common tattoo seen with teenagers. Foxes, cats and whales are popular too. I researched why hipsters were so obsessed with triangles. I haven't found a real explanation to this phenomenon yet. One thing is sure: hipsters and triangles are two things that will always go together.



■ *"The most popular prison tattoo is the five dots on the hand which means that a person was imprisoned. Four dots represent the cell; one dot in the middle represents the person caged between the four walls"*

In conclusion, tattoos have been around for centuries for medicinal, decorative, and various other reasons. Presently, they are used more as an extension of a person's sense of fashion or to show their religious or gang affiliations. No matter how a person looks at it, the body is still a canvas for a tattoo artist and now there is a lot of really nice artwork out there. The styles of tattoo art are as diverse and unique as the individuals wearing them today. And it's my belief that these styles will continue to grow even more diverse and creative than they are today.

NATO UNLIKELY TO GRANT GEORGIA STEP TO MEMBERSHIP

BY ADRIAN CROFT

NATO countries, wary of antagonizing Russia, are unlikely to grant former Soviet republic Georgia a formal step towards membership of the alliance at a summit in September, NATO diplomats say. With NATO-Russia tensions running high after Moscow's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region, the question of whether to invite Georgia to join the Membership Action Plan (MAP), putting the country closer to its goal of NATO membership, has spawned conflicting views in the alliance.

Some allies oppose granting Georgia MAP membership, fearing it could provoke Russian retaliation, whereas others say it would look as if NATO was bowing to Russian pressure if it did not. One NATO diplomat said the alliance was split 50:50, and therefore was far from required consensus.

At a Bucharest summit, NATO had rebuffed US demands to grant MAP to Georgia and Ukraine and only promised to the two ex-Soviet republics that they would join NATO one day. Washington may now tread more cautiously.

If Georgia became a member of the alliance, members would be obliged to intervene to defend it if it comes under attack, another factor that would weigh heavily in future decisions. Russia, which has said that its annexation of Crimea in March was influenced by the Western military alliance's expansion into Eastern Europe, has made no secret of its hostility to its neighbour Georgia joining NATO.

NATO foreign ministers will discuss the prospects of Georgia and three other countries that aspire to join NATO in Brussels next week, with a final decision expected in September.



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NATO's Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow said in April that NATO needed to convey "a strong and convincing message on enlargement at our Wales summit."

"We will reaffirm that any decision on future alliance membership are for NATO members alone to take and that no third party has any right of veto," he said. Despite the defiant talk, some allies feel it would be needlessly provocative to Russia - which still has several thousand troops near Ukraine's border - to invite Georgia to join MAP now. "It's not very likely they will get MAP," one NATO diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, said.

NATO should not show weakness but

should also not take steps "that would irritate Russia without bringing anything to the alliance," he said. But a diplomat from another country commented: "Not giving MAP to Georgia because of Russia is the wrong thing to do."

MAP is a program of advice, assistance and practical support tailored to countries wishing to join the alliance. One diplomat said around a dozen of NATO's 28 members were reluctant to invite Georgia into MAP and predicted that the alliance would be unable to reach the required consensus. NATO appears likely to settle on a compromise by giving Georgia a package of "reinforced cooperation" with NATO that would fall short of MAP. This package could in-

clude measures such as closer political cooperation, training the Georgian armed forces and strengthening NATO's liaison office in Georgia.

The United States is putting a higher priority on preserving alliance unity at a time when NATO is locked in confrontation with Russia over Ukraine.

France thinks the timing is not right to invite Georgia to join MAP and Germany is also opposed, the diplomats said.

Some allies question whether NATO - whose limited military presence in Eastern Europe has been exposed by the Ukraine crisis - could credibly extend its security guarantee to Georgia, with its two Russian-backed breakaway regions.

The hawks on the issue are the former Soviet republics in the Baltics and some other east European countries, which argue NATO should send a tough message to Russia by granting MAP.

In 2010, Ukraine's former pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich ditched his country's goal of joining NATO. But Georgia has doggedly pursued its ambition of NATO membership and contributes 800 troops to the NATO-led force in Afghanistan.

NATO head Anders Fogh Rasmussen offered encouragement in loose terms at a defense ministers meeting this month.

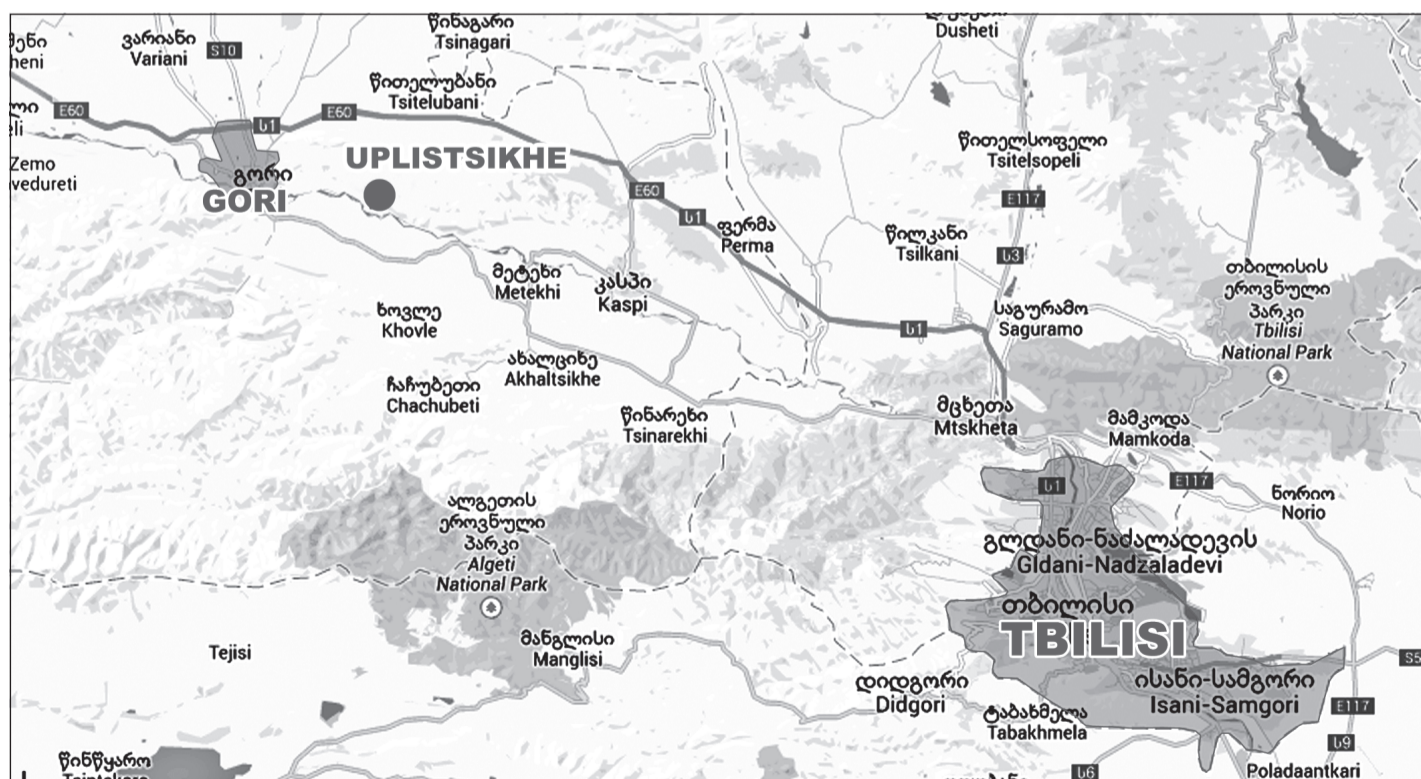
"Georgia will be a member of NATO, provided that it fulfills the requirements of membership," he said. "I am confident that our next Summit will recognize Georgia's progress."

Georgian Defence Minister Irakli Alasania told Reuters after talks with NATO counterparts this month he remained hopeful that Georgia would be invited to join MAP in Wales but added: "I care less about wordings (and) more about the actions on the ground."

Prepared by NBR

■ Uplistsikhe is in eastern Georgia, some 15 kilometers east of the town of Gori. It contains various structures dating from the early Iron Age and the late middle ages...

UPLISTSIKHE - "FORTRESS OF GOD" AND CITY LIKE JERUSALEM



Tbilisi-Uplistsikhe route: Follow our map!

Continued from p. 7

appeared. The caves, plus remnants of streets and city walls, have afforded archaeologists a good view of the demarcation of neighborhoods and their functions within the community.

Uplistsikhe is now a UNESCO-recognized site and, in conjunction with financial aid from the World Bank, the Georgian government is working hard to protect it from further damage.

Uplistsikhe is important because of the combination of pagan and Christian evidence linked to it. Situated just a few kilometres from the ancient Silk Road route, Uplistsikhe was a major trading centre and is a place where the archaeology demonstrates strong links with Asia Minor, Armenia and Iran, amongst others.

Uplistsikhe had been a city before the days of Genghis Khan, and now it is de-

stroyed. Here are fabulous monuments carved out of rock, likewise rock-cut grand halls and a long tunnel lead to the waters of

the Mtkvari. To the west there is a sheer cliff: one can imagine troops armed with bows and spears and cavalry coming out of

the caves and marching to the battlefields. The site is said to be an oracle. It is called Uplistsikhe.

BY MANANA GABRICHIDZE

"I have never seen a city which reminded me of Tbilisi. This is what makes Tbilisi unique – it is completely different," says Teona Kontridze, a famous jazz woman and a singer who made career in Russia. She provided her own explanations as to which street, theater, museum, hotel or restaurant was the most precious to her and which places she frequents.

TEONA KONTRIDZE ON WHAT MAKES TBILISI UNIQUE



Rezo Gabriadze's Puppet Theater

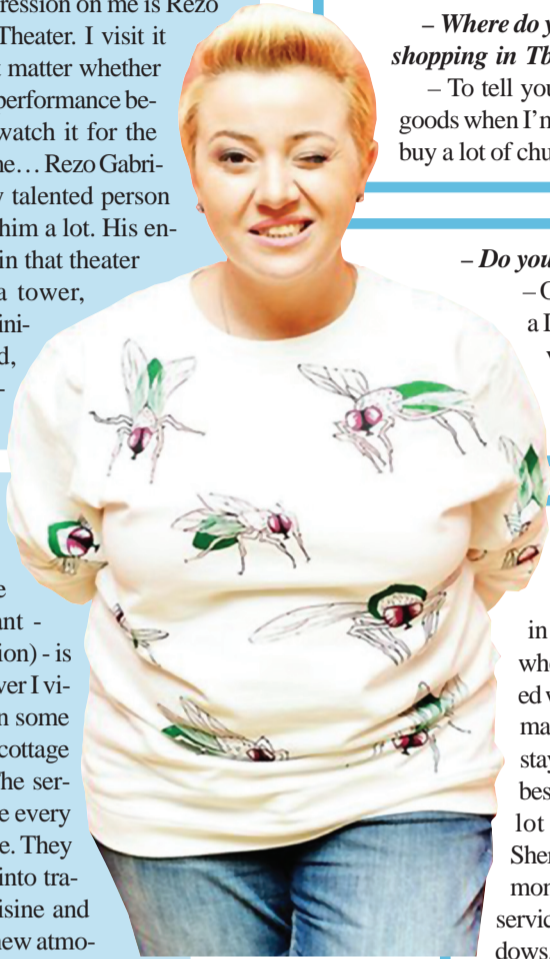
– The biggest impression on me is Rezo Gabriadze's Puppet Theater. I visit it very often; it doesn't matter whether I've seen a particular performance before or not – I can watch it for the fourth or even fifth time... Rezo Gabriadze is an extremely talented person and the location fits him a lot. His entire soul is reflected in that theater and the cafe with a tower, where sometimes a mini-performance is held, which I simply adore...

– Besides this, you probably have a favorite street which you frequent...



Restaurant Shavi Lomi entrance

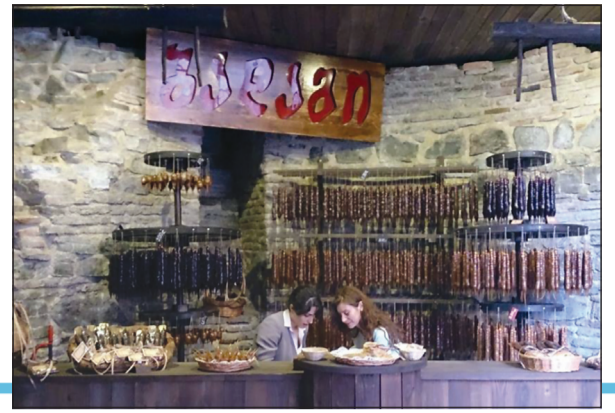
– I like Davitashvili Street a lot because my favorite restaurant – Shavi Lomi (Black Lion) – is located there. Whenever I visit it, I think myself in some Georgian aristocratic cottage in the countryside. The service is great and I love every waiter that works there. They breathed a new soul into traditional Georgian cuisine and gave it a completely new atmosphere.



Teona Kontridze
Photo by Giorgi Tsaava

– Where do you go shopping in Tbilisi?

– To tell you the truth, I don't. I am not interested in clothes or any material goods when I'm in Georgia. I do, however, like the shop "Badagi", where I usually buy a lot of churchkhela's for my children.



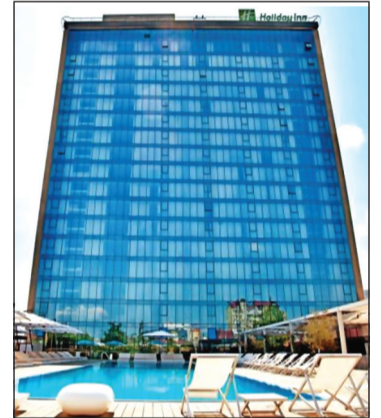
Georgian sweets shop "Badagi"

– Do you go to any museums?

– On the same street of Rezo Gabriadze's Puppet Theater, there also is a Doll Museum which I enjoy a lot and recommend it for everyone to visit... Naturally, everyone interested in Georgia simply must pay a visit Pirosmani's (Famous Georgian Painter) exhibition and thus I doubt I need to recommend this to anyone.

– Which hotel would you recommend?

– I like Tbilisi's hotels a lot in general, like Holiday Inn, where any visitor will be accepted with maximum hospitality. No matter which Holiday Inn hotel I stay at, the Tbilisi one still is the best of all... I like Kopala hotel a lot as well. I also stayed at Sheraton Metekhi Palace for three months and was amazed by the service and the view from the windows. I can safely state that Tbilisi hotels are worthy of the high praise.



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FOR THE FIRST TIME IN GEORGIA – MARATHON ON HIGH HEELS

BY SALOME SHIKHASHVILI

On June 24, a marathon was held in the park of Peace, organized by the Caucasian Federation of World Records. 11 Georgian beauties raced against each other on a 50-meter long track. What made the competition unusual, however, was that all the participants had to wear high heels of at least seven centimeters long.

“The concept itself originated in the Netherlands, where 100 women in high heels competed with each other on a 100 meter long race track. The winner received EUR 10,000 as a prize, although the competition ended in injury for many of the girls. Due to this, we decided to slightly change the rules. In order to avoid chaos and trauma, we selected only 11 girls for the race. Since running in high heels

is far from comfortable, we decided to secure the shoes with rolls of duct tape,” declared Shota Keldishvili, head of the Caucasian Federation of World Records.

Specially invited judges named the winner. The first place in the race, with an obvious margin, was won by Ani Mgeliashvili, a 17-year-old dancer in the Sukhishvilebi group, who received a ticket for a tourist trip to Turkey for two. Despite wearing high heels

being a rarity for her in everyday life, this didn't seem to deter her at all:

“It's been several years since jogging became a lifestyle of mine; I jog every morning. Naturally, the competition wasn't exactly what I'm used to, but it popularizes the healthy way of life and thus I think that similar contests should be held in Georgia more often,” declared the winner.

The second and the third winners were named by the judges as well. The second place was won by Salome Gamiashvili, and Shorena Kubaneishvili took the third place. They were given monetary prizes and various products by Perfume Company Mystical.



■ “First place in the race, with an obvious margin, was won by Ani Mgeliashvili, a 17-year-old dancer in the Sukhishvilebi group”



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Nana Hernandez Getashvili, President of "NG Galaxy" Holding



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One of the two event sponsors was NG Georgia - representation of elite mono-brand boutique Versace and multi-brand boutique NGG. These boutiques operate in Tbilisi and Batumi and feature creative pieces of Roberto Cavalli, Etro, Ralph Laurent, Phillip Plein, Jitrois, Alexander McQueen, Blumarine, Casadei.

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