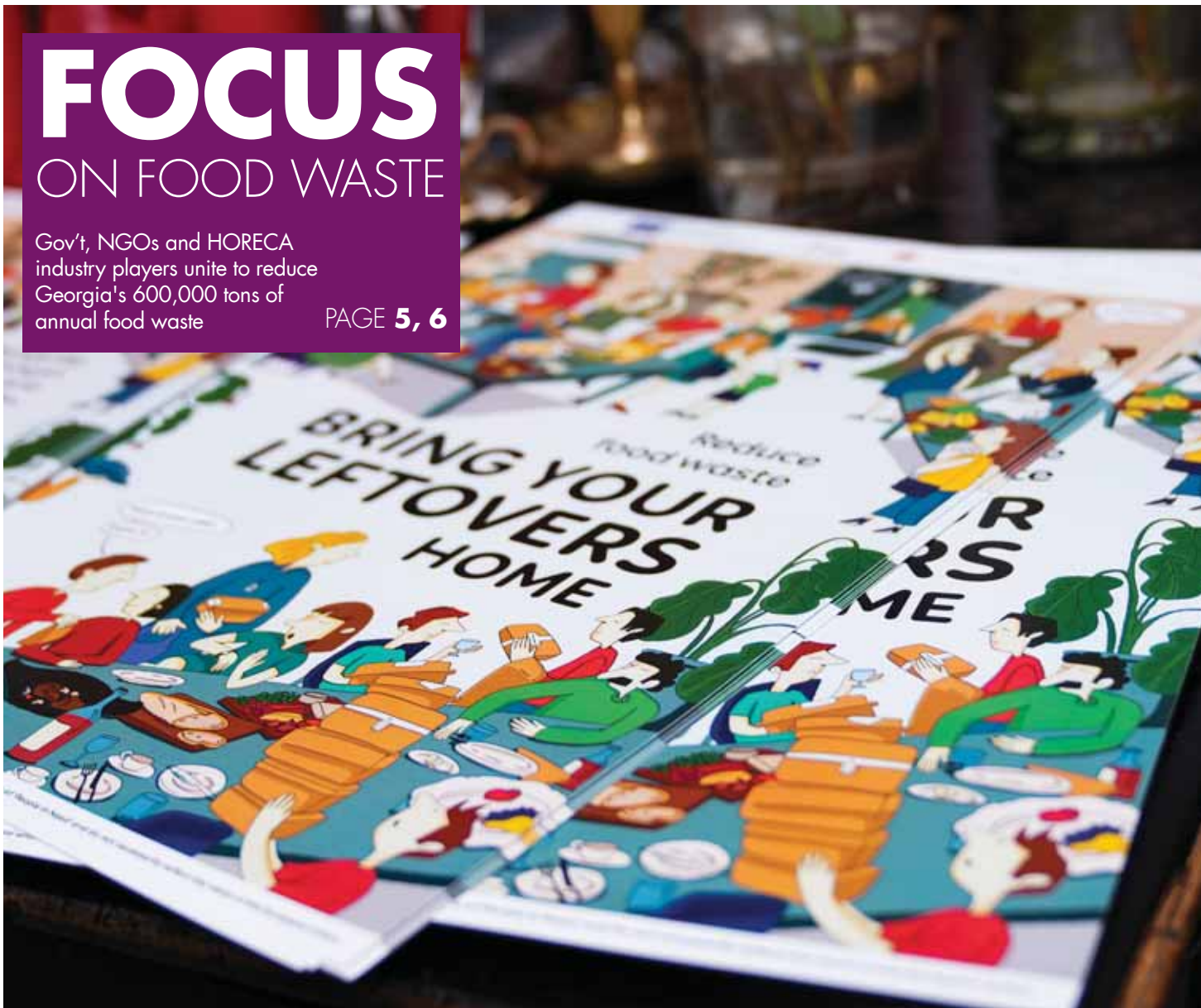




FOCUS ON FOOD WASTE

Gov't, NGOs and HORECA industry players unite to reduce Georgia's 600,000 tons of annual food waste

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How Russia's Foreign Intelligence is Influencing the 2024 Elections

BY MAMUKA KIRKITADZE FOR GFSIS

As Georgia nears its highly anticipated parliamentary elections on October 26, 2024, a growing narrative, spearheaded by Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), claims that the U.S. is staging a destabilisation campaign to unseat the ruling Georgian Dream party. These allegations are part of a broader disinformation campaign designed to portray Georgia's Western allies, particularly the U.S., as external actors manipulating the country's internal political landscape. Russia's SVR is orchestrating this effort to undermine trust in Western institutions, while discrediting Georgia's upcoming elections. The goal is clear: to ensure Georgia remains firmly within Moscow's sphere of influence.

The significance of these accusations goes far beyond political rhetoric, touching on key geopolitical interests in the Caucasus region.

Continued on page 3



Image source: politicsgeo

| GALT & TAGGART | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|-------|-------|-----------------------------|------------|-------|--------|--|--|--|
| Prepared for Georgia Today Business by | | | | | | | | | | |
| As of 30-Sep-2024 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Markets | | | | | Markets | | | | | |
| BONDS | Price | w/w | m/m | STOCKS | Price | w/w | m/m | | | |
| GEORGIA 04/26 | 94.76 (YTM 6.34%) | +0.2% | +0.5% | Bank of Georgia (BGEO LN) | GBP 36.75 | -5.4% | -19.2% | | | |
| GBAIL 04/28 | 90.71 (YTM 6.88%) | +0.1% | +0.9% | Georgia Capital (GCEO LN) | GBP 9.30 | -3.7% | -0.0% | | | |
| GEBOG 9/12 PERP | 98.22 (YTM 9.25%) | +0.1% | +0.2% | TBC Bank Group (TBCG LN) | GBP 26.50 | -2.0% | -15.9% | | | |
| SILANET 01/27 | 100.86 (YTM 7.95%) | -0.1% | +0.8% | | | | | | | |
| TBC 10/75 PERP | 100.00 (YTM 10.23%) | -0.3% | -0.2% | | | | | | | |
| TBC 8/94 PERP | 96.11 (YTM 11.17%) | -0.0% | +0.2% | Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl) | 71.77 | -2.9% | -8.9% | | | |
| TBC 10/1/4 PERP | 98.90 (YTM 10.61%) | +0.0% | +0.4% | Gold Spot (US\$/OZ) | 2 634.58 | +0.2% | +5.2% | | | |
| INDICES | | | | | CURRENCIES | | | | | |
| SP 500 | 5 762.48 | +0.8% | +2.0% | USD / GEL | 2,7299 | +0.3% | +1.6% | | | |
| FTSE 250 | 21 053.19 | +1.0% | -0.2% | EUR / GEL | 3,0398 | +0.5% | +2.4% | | | |
| DOW JONES 30 | 42 330.15 | +0.5% | +1.8% | GBP / GEL | 3,6503 | +0.5% | +3.5% | | | |
| Russell 2000 | 2 229.97 | +0.4% | +0.6% | EUR / USD | 1,1135 | +0.2% | +0.8% | | | |
| FTSE 100 | 8 236.95 | -0.3% | -1.7% | GBP / USD | 1,3375 | +0.2% | +1.9% | | | |

Ukraine Latest: Russian Forces Reportedly Capture Most of Vuhledar

COMPILED BY ANA DUMBADZE

Russian troops have entered the embattled town of Vuhledar in the Donetsk Oblast, Governor Vadym Filashkin said on October 1, adding that "fighting is ongoing," the Kyiv Independent reported.

Speaking on national television, Filashkin described the situation as "extremely difficult," adding: "The fighting is actively ongoing within the town, so it is almost impossible to bring in humanitarian aid."

Later in the day, videos emerged on social media showing Russian soldiers flying the country's flag on the roof of an apartment building in the town. The videos suggest that a complete Ukrainian withdrawal from the town is highly likely.

A total of 107 civilians remain in Vuhledar, though all children have been evacuated, the Governor noted. About 14,000 people lived there before the war.

Ukraine's 72nd Mechanized Brigade has defended Vuhledar for nearly two years, as Russian forces have been trying to capture the town since the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022.

The frontline town lies about 50 kilometers southwest of occupied Donetsk and roughly 40 kilometers east of the administrative border with Zaporizhzhia Oblast.

RUSSIA ATTEMPTS TO CAPTURE NEW POSITIONS IN ZAPORIZHZHIA SECTOR, PREPARING SMALL-SCALE ASSAULTS, MILITARY SAYS

Russian troops are trying to seize new positions in the Zaporizhzhia sector to improve their tactical positioning, the Ukrainian military's Southern Command spokesperson Vladyslav Voloshyn told Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty on October 1.

Voloshyn said there were indications that Russian forces were gathering troops near the towns of Pryitne and Robotyne in order to attack Ukrainian positions.

"There are certain signs that (the enemy) is concentrating personnel and moving



Vuhledar. Photo by Libkos/Getty Images

them to the frontline, training assault groups, accumulating ammunition," he said.

Following Kyiv's ongoing incursion into Kursk Oblast, Russia reportedly began moving its troops from Ukraine's south and east to the Russian region, but Voloshyn said the number of troops in the Zaporizhzhia sector remained around the same.

"Russia has only redeployed certain units and specialists to the Kursk direction, and is increasing the number of personnel by 2,000-3,000 soldiers per week to replenish losses," Voloshyn said, going on to claim that despite this, Russia does not have enough troops to launch a large-scale offensive.

Russia this week claimed it has captured two more frontline villages: Krutyi Yar in the Donetsk region and Vyshneve in the northeastern Kharkiv region, the state-run RIA news agency reported.

ZAPORIZHZHIA NUCLEAR PLANT 'ON VERGE OF BLACKOUT' AFTER RUSSIAN ATTACK ON SUBSTATION, UKRAINE SAYS

Russian forces attacked a substation connected to the occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (ZNPP), cutting off a power line to the facility, Ukraine's Energy Ministry said on October 1.

The attack put the plant "on the verge of

a blackout again, the ministry said in a statement, adding work was underway to restore full power.

The Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, the largest nuclear plant in Europe, has been under Russian occupation since March 2022. Throughout its occupation, the plant has been repeatedly disconnected from the Ukrainian power grid due to Russian attacks on the country's energy infrastructure.

"We demand to immediately implement the International Atomic Energy Agency resolution and return the occupied nuclear power plant to Ukraine's control. The safe operation of Zaporizhzhia NPP is possible only under Ukraine's control," Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko said.

The plant has already experienced eight complete blackouts, the state nuclear energy company Energoatom said.

Ukraine's National Resistance Center reported on September 15 that Russian forces continued to use the territory of the occupied power plant to deploy military personnel and store ammunition and explosives, and criticized the IAEA for supposedly ignoring the fact.

President Volodymyr Zelensky told the UN Security Council on September 24 that Russia was preparing to target three more Ukrainian nuclear power plants.

RUSSIAN ATTACKS LEAD TO MORE DEAD CIVILIANS

At least six people were killed and three injured in the southern city of Kherson, which lies on the western bank of the Dnipro River, after Russian artillery fire struck a market. Six more people were injured after they were hit by Russian fire while waiting at a city bus stop.

At least one person was killed and 32 injured in the southern Zaporizhzhia region after Russia hit residential buildings and infrastructure with aerial bombs, said regional governor, Ivan Fedorov.

Ukraine's military said it shot down 29 of 32 Iranian-made drones launched in a Russian attack on central, southern and northeastern Ukraine.

Ukraine held a nationwide moment of silence to remember the country's war dead on Defenders Day, the third since Russia launched its full-scale invasion in 2022. Ukraine does not release official numbers on its war dead, but tens of thousands of soldiers are thought to have been killed.

POLITICS AND DIPLOMACY UPDATES

The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine said that Russian torture and mistreatment of Ukrainian prisoners of war were "pervasive" in all stages of captivity. The mission also found some torture or ill-treatment of Russian POWs by Ukraine in the initial stages of captivity, but claimed that such actions stopped once the prisoners arrived at official places of internment. The mistreatment of Russian and Ukrainian POWs "is different in scope and scale," said Danielle Bell, the mission's head.

Ukraine's Prosecutor General Andriy Kostin said Kyiv is investigating the killing of 16 Ukrainian POWs who were taken captive by Russian forces on the eastern frontline after surrendering. Kostin said the men appeared to have been shot dead in an incident that took place near Pokrovsk.

Russia said it had detained 39 people, including nine teenagers, in several Russian regions, accusing them of backing "Ukrainian terrorist" groups.

Russia has released three journalists from independent news outlets that it had detained when they attempted to interview people attending a Red Square event to mark the second anniversary of the annexation of four Ukrainian regions. The three were fined 500 rubles (\$5) each for allegedly using "foul language" in a public space.

NATO's new Secretary-General Mark Rutte said Ukraine is his "top priority." Rutte, former prime minister of the Netherlands, was formally installed in the role on Tuesday.

The United Nations Development Program in Ukraine, with support from the European Union, has provided water trucks and water treatment facilities to five communities in the Kherson region and three communities in the Dnipro region. These communities face a persistent water crisis as a result of the Kakhovka dam disaster and ongoing attacks on critical infrastructure. Overall, UNDP has provided 10 water filtration stations and 10 water trucks, securing access to safe drinking water for over 95,000 residents in these communities.

Each mobile filtering station consists of two modules and can filter over 5,000 liters of water per hour, with the capacity to purify even seawater. Equipped with solar panels, these stations can operate continuously, even during power outages.

In April 2024, with funding from the European Union, UNDP delivered 15 water trucks and 30 water filtering stations to 14 communities in the Dnipro region.

The Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine reports that seven Ukrainian frontline regions received 600 generators of various capacities in September as part of the cooperation between it and the EU Civil Protection Mechanism with the support of the Polish Foreign Ministry. The devices will be used to ensure uninterrupted power supply to social and healthcare institutions, so-called 'Points of Invincibility' and other critical infrastructure facilities in the event of long-term power outages.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz

German Chancellor: Anti-LGBTQI Law Distances Georgia from Europe

BY TEAM GT

Georgia has recently adopted an anti-LGBTQI law. This means that Georgia is moving away from Europe, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said in a speech at a conference on the rights of queer people organized by the parliamentary group of the Social Democratic Party in Berlin.

"All people in Germany should be able to live freely, without fear and in safety,

and should be protected from hatred, violence, discrimination and abuse," Scholz said.

The Chancellor of Germany noted that during his travels abroad, he regularly meets non-governmental organizations and speaks about human rights in different countries.

"Georgia, for example, recently passed an anti-LGBTQI law that is discriminatory and violates fundamental human rights. I will say clearly: this means that Georgia is moving away from Europe. It is good that you pay attention to such cases and show solidarity," he noted.

Anti-Corruption Bureau Cancels its Decision on Declaration of TI Georgia as "Entity With Declared Electoral Goals"

BY TEAM GT

The Anti-Corruption Bureau canceled its decision to declare Transparency International - Georgia and its executive director, Eka Gigauri, "entities with a declared electoral goal," the head of the bureau, Razhden Kuprashvili, announced at a press conference Wednesday.

"No one should be given the opportunity to question the results recorded by the citizens of Georgia in the elections. Based on the above and the national interest of the country, I consider it necessary to cancel all the decisions about Transparency International - Georgia and its executive director, Eka Gigauri, according to which the organization and Ms. Gigauri were tasked to make transparent the expenses incurred in political processes and make them known to the public," Kuprashvili noted.

Razhden Kuprashvili



Based on the decision of the Anti-Corruption Bureau, Transparency International Georgia, its executive director Eka Gigauri, the "Choose Europe" organ-

ization, its director Khatuna Lagazidze and co-founders, were last week recognized as entities with declared electoral goals.

How Russia's Foreign Intelligence is Influencing the 2024 Elections

Continued from page 1

Russia, long interested in maintaining influence over Georgia, views the country's Western orientation as a threat to its strategic depth. Moscow aims to erode public confidence in Western institutions and destabilize Georgia's election landscape. This blog aims to explore the extent of these disinformation efforts and the potential implications for Georgia's future as a sovereign, Western-aligned state.

THE DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN: A TIMELINE

The SVR's narrative about "U.S. interference" in Georgia's elections has evolved over the past few months, focusing on themes meant to discredit the Western allies, as well as the opposition, and to undermine confidence in the electoral process.

1. July 9, 2024: The "Color Revolution" Playbook

The SVR Press Bureau first accused the Biden administration of planning a comprehensive propaganda campaign to discredit the Georgian Dream party. According to the official letter, Washington had prepared a "Hollywood-style" plot to blame Russia for Georgia's internal challenges. A key element of this alleged plan involves Georgia's president, Salome Zurbishvili, who is expected to give a critical interview to an American media outlet, denouncing the Georgian government for slowing down the country's European Union accession process and positioning too closely with Moscow. This narrative is intended to spark fears that the U.S. is staging a "color revolution," a term often used by Moscow to describe popular uprisings against regimes aligned with Russia. The SVR seeks to frame Georgia's political turmoil as the result of foreign interference, casting any anti-government protests as foreign-engineered rather than genuine expressions of dissatisfaction.

2. August 26, 2024: Preparing for Civil Unrest

In August, the SVR intensified its claims,

shifting its focus to the fragmented state of Georgia's opposition parties. The SVR alleged that despite U.S. efforts, the opposition "remains weak and divided," potentially allowing the Georgian Dream party to win decisively. Such a victory, the SVR claimed, would be unacceptable to Washington, as it would enable Georgian Dream to continue its "sovereign course" without Western interference. It further suggested that the U.S. was preparing for large-scale post-election protests, with alleged American "curators" supposedly directing opposition groups and pro-Western NGOs to gather evidence of electoral fraud. These protests, the SVR claimed, were intended to discredit the election results and provoke clashes with law enforcement, drawing parallels to the 2014 Maidan protests in Ukraine, which Russia also blamed on Western interference.

3. On August 27, 2024: Amplifying the Narrative

Russia's Foreign Intelligence Chief Sergey Naryshkin reinforced these accusations, claiming that Russia aims to prevent a "color revolution" in Georgia. In an interview with Russian state-controlled media TASS, Naryshkin stated, "The SVR made public the information that [we] have obtained and are obtaining about the hostile activities not only of Western intelligence services, but also of state bodies such as the U.S. State Department. We are doing this to help prevent attempts to carry out a colour revolution in Georgia."

4. September 11, 2024: Involving the OSCE

The latest twist in the narrative accused the U.S. of using the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) as an accomplice in its alleged plot to destabilize Georgia. According to the SVR, the OSCE ODIHR is preparing to release a report stating that Georgia lacks the conditions for free and fair elections just weeks before the voting is set to take place. This, the SVR claims, will give the opposition a pretext



The Georgia-Russia Friendship monument outside Gudauri. Photo by Stefan Applis

to challenge the legitimacy of the election results, sparking mass protests aimed at toppling the government. By targeting the OSCE, a respected international election monitor, the SVR seeks to discredit its criticism of the election process, portraying the organization not as a neutral observer, but as a tool of U.S. foreign policy.

Russia's disinformation campaign extends beyond traditional media channels and into the cyber realm. According to Meta's Adversarial Threat Report, a coordinated inauthentic behavior campaign, linked to Russian actors, has been actively promoting the Georgian Dream party, while discrediting protests against the controversial Foreign Agents Law. This network of fake accounts and bots amplifies state-sponsored content, blurring the distinction between organic political discourse and strategically manipulated narratives. By weaponizing social media platforms, Russia's digital interference not only distorts public perception, but also deepens political divisions, making it harder to distinguish genuine public opinion from foreign-driven disinformation. Russia's use of these digital tools—seamlessly blending

online and offline tactics—highlights the sophistication of its efforts to influence the 2024 elections.

IMPLICATIONS FOR GEORGIA'S ELECTIONS

These disinformation narratives are designed to achieve several strategic objectives that will significantly affect Georgia's political stability in the coming months.

1. Undermining Trust in the Election Process: The SVR seeks to cast doubt on the legitimacy of the electoral process through repeated claims that the U.S. is manipulating the elections. If citizens begin to believe that the election is rigged, either by Western powers or their own government, it could lead to decreased voter turnout, increased polarization, and potentially violent clashes.

2. Preemptive Justification for Post-Election Protests: The SVR's accusations serve as a preemptive explanation for any post-election unrest. If protests emerge after the election, especially following a potential Georgian Dream victory, the Russian narrative will blame U.S. meddling, framing the protests as foreign-orchestrated rather than

organic. This could also give the Georgian government a rationale for cracking down on demonstrations, portraying them as foreign-backed coups rather than legitimate expressions of democratic dissent.

3. Tarnishing Georgia's Relationship with Western Allies: By implicating international organizations like the OSCE, the SVR aims to strain Georgia's relationships with its Western allies. If the government or the public begins to see these institutions as complicit in "U.S. interference," it could weaken Georgia's international standing and further impede the already fragile progress it has made towards Western integration, a key goal for many in the country.

CONCLUSION

Russia's disinformation campaign surrounding the 2024 Georgian elections represents more than just an attempt to influence public opinion; it poses a direct challenge to Georgia's political stability and its alignment with Western allies. By undermining trust in the electoral process, the SVR aims to weaken the relationship between Tbilisi and its Western partners, while preemptively delegitimizing the election outcome to justify potential unrest. This strategy is designed to ensure Georgia remains within Russia's geopolitical sphere of influence.

As Georgia faces this pivotal electoral moment, the disinformation campaign serves as a critical test of the country's democratic resilience and its commitment to European integration. The international community's proactive response to these challenges will be crucial in safeguarding not only the integrity of the upcoming elections, but also the future of Georgia as a sovereign, Western-aligned state. The stakes are high, as the outcome of these disinformation efforts could profoundly shape Georgia's political trajectory, determining its democratic development and its place within the broader Euro-Atlantic community.

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The Parallels Found within Georgian Society and Literature

BY SHELBI R. ANKIEWICZ

Writers have always played a historical role in Georgia, according to the Executive Director of PEN Georgia Natasha Lomouri, and even today, literature can expose parallels within society.

The 9th edition of Tbilisi's International Festival of Literature (TIFL) took place from September 27-30. The festival's theme was 'Protests within literature and beyond,' which Lomouri, the co-founder of the event, found suiting, considering Georgia's current political situation. She tells GEORGIA TODAY that she often seeks a theme that directly relates to Georgia and the world around it.

In the spring and summer of 2024, numerous protests broke out in Georgia in response to the then newly passed 'Foreign Agents' law. According to Lomouri, many people who were at the forefront of those protests were writers and other creatives. She sees writers as people who can take events or information and phrase them so they further touch their audience.

"Literature can not only expose some of the faults and problems in society, but it can also serve as a facilitator of some-



Lasha Bugadze during his book discussion at TIFL. Source: FB

thing new and hopeful," Lomouri says. "I always wonder if the writers of today can only afford to be storytellers. In most cases now, they are also mediums of a connection between people and events and what's happening around us."

Lomouri explains that writers were important historically within the country because they could influence public opinion; that writers were part of the founding fathers of Georgia, and people would examine how they told their stories, especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For her, she says, it is

vital that writers within the country continue this narrative.

Author Lasha Bugadze, a presenter during TIFL, talked about his book 'Georgia Against Joseph Stalin'. Written in conjunction with SovLab, a think tank that deconstructs Georgia's Soviet totalitarian past, the book focuses on Stalin, personally and politically, and his role in annexing Georgia - which Bugadze coined a 'tragic and catastrophic history of Georgia'.

He tells GEORGIA TODAY that his book is based on historical documents

that aim to break down the myths surrounding Stalin. Additionally, he notes that there are discreet 'Stalinistic' narratives and doctrines in place within the Georgian Dream party. Bugadze says, "The more books we read, the less chance manipulators will have to brainwash us, since we will know the history."

Stalin, who claimed himself to be religious, a good leader, and a person synonymous with strength, are myths that Bugadze says Russia is using as a hybrid war instrument. During his discussion at TIFL, which highlighted the repression and political situation during Stalin's regime, he noted that he believes Putin is using Stalin as a form of propaganda to bring together countries that have a common Soviet past, and says that this leads to emotional reactions within countries, especially in Georgia, exactly because people are not knowledgeable about the historical facts.

Lomouri agrees. "I read recently that Stalin was a Georgian citizen but not a Georgian," she says. "Ethnically he was, but he gave so much sorrow to Georgia. He tried to wipe out the whole intellect of the nation, and his repressions, especially in the 1930s were unbearable. It's important that a reader sees the many similarities between this regime now and the Bolshevik regime back then. We need to tell the truth about Stalin, who was Georgian."

Traditionally, TIFL has always been

held at the Writer's House, a place for literary development and processes in Georgia. However, Lomouri says she was director of the residence for 12 years before her term was halted simply due to 'different political views,' so she moved to PEN Georgia, where she became the executive director and continued the festival. It was the first year the festival was organized under the PEN umbrella, and it took place at multiple locations, including the Georgian Museum of Fine Arts, the Goethe Institute in Tbilisi, and The Movement Theater (See page 10 for more).

According to Lomouri, "More than 100 writers, publishers, and translators are boycotting the Writer's House and the Ministry of Culture. Half of the magic of this festival was that it was always held in the Writer's House and its beautiful surroundings."

PEN Georgia is a non-governmental organization with chapters worldwide. It was first created in 1921 after World War I and fights to defend freedom of expression. Georgia's branch has been operating since 1991. Lomouri claims that if Georgian Dream stays in power, the PEN Center will be shut down, and it will become increasingly harder to have any artistic practices. She is unsure if there will be resources for the tenth-year anniversary of TIFL, but she says, "If we survive, I promise we will have a great festival."

War or Peace?

OP-ED BY VICTOR KIPIANI,
GEOCASE CHAIRMAN

War or Peace? This question has become the main, and most importantly, cheapest, most speculative and choicest of slogans of the current election campaign.* Yes, the cheapness of pushing the call "War or Peace?" lies precisely in the fact that there is only one correct and indisputable answer to this question: peace, of course.

Such an appeal is naturally speculative, because, against the backdrop of ongoing hostilities in the region, the "electoral bet" is on the voter's very human, basic sense of fear and instinct to avoid danger. For any normal society and rational voter, the answer in this case is one: Peace!

Indeed, the call to choose between "war and peace" leaves the voter with virtually no real choice. All the more so if the authors of this appeal have nothing to offer society other than that pointless slogan addressed to both themselves and the Georgian electorate. Their move is easy enough to explain: when you cannot formulate the country's development agenda and you have nothing else to offer Georgian voters, the only effective election message you can come up with will be a cheap and speculative appeal.

They talk about the benefits of peace as a counterweight to war as if they have made a special discovery. Moreover, when talking about the issue (just imagine, mentioning the superiority of peace over war, which is more than obvious!), they suggest one or another person, and their own "party asset," as the only "guarantee" of peace.

However, in their self-satisfied analysis of this highly artificial equation "War or Peace?," the second, main question of the same equation remains unanswered: "peace, at what cost?"

At such times, as a rule, we might be

faced with an attempt to avoid a meaningful answer. Avoiding an answer, at the very least, indicates non-state political handwriting. And that's at best. In any other case, when considering the question "peace, at what cost?" you can think the worst, especially when you witness a particular word, action or attitude.

This is a question of principle, which also requires a principled, substantively correct and clearly formulated answer. Of course, there is and will be no alternative to peace! This is the kind of truth the emphasizing of which, or citing as a sort of argument, turns the election campaign of any political force into one that is, again, cheap and speculative.

I think the answer to the question "peace, at what cost?" coming from a responsible political force focused on the development of the country and real peace, should be as follows: "There can be no lasting peace in a country without a functional and civil political and social environment." I consider the normalization of state and political relations in the country to be the most important condition for this, which, first of all, means a return to the constitutional field and a restructuring to the principles of institutional governance.

It should be emphasized that, along with the resolution of other issues of principle, it is necessary to restore the capacity of state institutions as provided for in the Constitution. It is necessary for every institution - even at the cost of its own mistakes - to participate in the processes of governance within the rights and responsibilities established for it by law. It is necessary that policy development be based on the principles of openness and accountability. Yes, it is with great regret that we have to state that, today, the Georgian state and society are facing priority tasks, such as returning the role of the parliament as a determiner of the country's domestic and foreign policies, restoration of the executive function of the government as a collegial body accountable to parliament, establishment of justice as the



A poster from GD's election campaign. Source: FB

inviolable authority of the "creation of law", effective concern for the security of the country and citizens by the security system, etc. The list of existing problems is, of course, only a summary of the challenges facing the country on the way to achieving real peace. The list does not end here and is, unfortunately, freely expandable.

In order to ensure peace, without restoring the institutional governance of the country and without making the political process civilized, without adherence to the formal rules of decision-making within the framework of procedural democracy, without the normalization of the state and social process, any call for peace will remain a cheap and meaningless slogan; an attempt to speculate on the will of the electorate and a short-

term political ploy.

Furthermore, in order to achieve real peace, along with a number of domestic measures, the synchronization of the country's domestic and foreign policies is equally relevant.

From this point of view, the normalization of the internal process in the country should be accompanied by the practicality of the external political and military processes and a focus on getting real results. And such a result is connected, among other things, with the accelerated integration of our country into European and Euro-Atlantic structures. On the path of Euro-Atlantic integration, the subject of a separate discussion is the consultation on additional, so-called "compensation models" of security for the integrated national secu-

rity system offered by the modern world.

Thus, the deliberate ambiguity created around the question "war or peace?" necessarily requires a direct and principled explanation of the closely related question "peace, by what means?" It is in the context of such candor and integrity that political actors can be compelled to provide the necessary explanations and prepare the ground necessary for voters to make an informed choice.

*Last week, ruling party Georgian Dream released its new election campaign banners. Featuring the inscription "No to war! Choose peace!", on one side of the banners, the cities and buildings destroyed by Russia in Ukraine are depicted in black-and-white, and on the other side, the freshly renovated cities and buildings of Georgia are shown in color.

James Nixey: "The West drip-feeds. We don't do badly, we're not awful, but we're just not good enough"

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE

Mr. James Nixey, Director of the Russia-Eurasia and Europe Programs at Chatham House, spoke to Radio Free Europe/RL's Georgian Service at the Tbilisi International Conference on where Ukraine stands today.

"Ukraine's victory is still pretty much what's in Zelensky's 10-point plan, which is the maximalist objective, the 'all you want for Christmas' - it is withdrawal of Russian soldiers to pre-2014 lines and reparations and judicial reckoning," Nixey tells us. "Now, of course, I am often told, 'but James, that's not realistic. James, you're being idealistic. James, surely, you've got to meet the Russians somewhere.' And I don't know that that's necessarily true.

"Analytically, I can accept any proposition of any outcome," he notes. "But because this war is not over, because it could go in any direction, I don't understand why people say that it is not advisable or desirable or realistic to go for maximalist objectives. Of course, it is possible that Ukraine will be completely defeated [on the battlefield], but even then I find it quite hard to imagine a Ukraine which is totally subdued, because even if they lose officially, then there would be continual guerrilla warfare, continual jabs at the enemy.

"By contrast, I can at least imagine what a Russian implosion might look like, whether that's on the frontline going towards Moscow, whether it's centered in Moscow, whether it goes through the regions as some form of snowball. I'm not saying it will happen. I can't be a predictor of the future and we shouldn't try it. But we shouldn't underestimate how difficult this should be for Russia to fight this war. I don't have any sym-



The [Western leaders] don't see the risks from history or from the present that these countries on the frontline do



James Nixey with interviewer Vazha Tavberidze

pathy for the Kremlin whatsoever, but it must be incredibly hard work. And of course, we should be making it harder and harder."

WHAT WOULD A MORE COMPROMISE-BASED VICTORY LOOK LIKE?

You're quite right to ask it, but it implies some form of concession to the Russian narrative. And, of course, that makes us deeply uncomfortable, because where do we do that? Do we give a piece of land? Do we give neutrality? Almost anything beyond the Kursk region is a very difficult thing to accept. It's really hard to imagine how Ukraine would be satisfied with any concession. If you examine them one by one, territorially, Crimea even, I don't see how that's ever going to work. It could be put in a frozen state, like it was between 2014 and 2022, but we clearly know that Crimea alone is not enough for Russia, so it almost doesn't make sense talking about it.

If you take away the question of neutrality or non-NATO membership, non-EU membership even, it overtly accepts a Russian sphere of influence. I have no faith in Western politicians, but I can't see any of them doing that.

IS THERE SOMETHING THAT UKRAINE COULD CONCEIVABLY SETTLE FOR AND STILL CONSIDER ITSELF VICTORIOUS?

It's an appropriate and at the same time nasty question, because we struggle with that - it's not an unfair question, it's just a really difficult one, because nobody wants to be in the position where they are making moral compromises, where we let Russia walk away from it. But of course we'd take it - you, me and Zelensky would take it if Russia were to walk out of Ukraine, which it won't, but if it were to do so tomorrow, we'd accept it. Of course, there would still be some push - you can't rescind an arrest warrant, it would still be there, but that's it.

HE COULD STILL GO TO MONGOLIA, THOUGH.

Exactly. It is astonishing, the naiveté of many Western commentators and experts, who say, "this is an affront to international justice." Did anybody seriously expect Ulan Bator to arrest Vladimir Putin? Then you're not living in the real world. And, of course, the affront to international law is not Mongolia, it's Russia.

LET'S TALK ABOUT THAT POTENTIAL FROZEN CONFLICT.

It doesn't strike me as a frozen conflict situation. It's gone too far. If you think about the war in 2008, which was more horrific for you than it was for me, but I still remember being horrified by it, it was five days, and it was, I'm sorry to say this, and I mean no offence, but it was a clear victory. And in a situation where you have quite a clear ending over a short period of time, then that leads to a frozen agreement.

It does seem to me the war in Ukraine is an absolutely unique situation. And, unfortunately, there's no going back from it. I find it hard to see people getting on with their lives in this situation, when so many have died, when there's been such a shake-up of the system; when Russia's gone all-in, doubled down. It just makes freezing harder. Because it was hotter, it's harder to freeze, I suppose.

And yet, I simply fail to imagine a situation whereby Ukraine is totally subdued and relatively happy with the status quo as it is right now.

DO YOU THINK THE WEST HAS A UNIFIED STRATEGIC VISION WHEN IT COMES TO WHAT IT WANTS TO ACHIEVE IN UKRAINE?

As the Russians say, zhelatelno bi. Yeah, if only. The wish is that the collective West gets its act together and doubles down, makes a real plan, forms an oper-

ational conclusion, agrees that it needs to win this, to help with all sorts of other problems, not just regarding China. But it doesn't, and this is what my problem is: what we do is only just enough; we drip-feed. We don't do badly, we're not awful, but we're just not good enough.

THE SCALE OF THE CHALLENGE IS HARD.

It is. And, it is ultimately true that the Biden administration, and probably the Harris administration, if there is one, will not be comfortable with a Russian defeat. They are genuinely worried that it would create anarchy, loose nukes, spillover, civil war, things they can't control. And they want to be able to control this war. A Russian defeat isn't controllable because none of us know how that will play out. Now, I think that's wrong in all sorts of ways, because, frankly, we're already in my worst case scenario, with the potential for Russia to take over Ukraine, but I think the real, dirty, uncomfortable reality is that Ukraine can be sacrificed if it means something approaching the old world order can be maintained.

I'm not suggesting that they want to sacrifice Ukraine; they don't, they're not the devil. But they're not the angel either. And so the problem is we have the worst of both worlds, an uncomfortable situation whereby you actually have not a frozen conflict but a protracted conflict, because we don't want to let it go, we don't want to win, we don't want to lose. And so that leads to paralysis.

IF NEITHER A RUSSIAN DEFEAT NOR A UKRAINIAN DEFEAT ARE MANAGEABLE OR DESIRABLE, WHAT IS MANAGEABLE?

What appears to be manageable is the "new normal," whereby you have a hot war which is apparently containable, with no spillover - one that doesn't extend into Moldova or the Baltic states, or Georgia. It is funny how comfortable

policymakers are with here and now, because it's the existence that they live in. And how uncomfortable they are with almost any change. You know, even Maggie Thatcher didn't want the unification of Germany. We know this from the records, because she didn't understand or know how it would play out. To you, it seems completely obvious, but that's hindsight. She was pretty good on Cold War issues, but it just goes to show how policymakers don't want to reach for a substantive change: they are uncomfortable with the idea of anything that could shake up their little world. And that, unfortunately, creates the paralysis, the unhappiness and the protraction of the situation. There is a problem at the top, a lack of leadership, with people who do not think like the President of Estonia, or President of Finland, because they are much more concerned with the global status quo. They don't see the risks from history or from the present that these countries on the frontline do. There's a totally different mentality. If you're living in Lisbon, and if you're living in Tallinn, of course, you see different pictures, I do get that. We shouldn't be listening to Lisbon as much as we should to Tallinn, but we do.

SO TO SUM IT UP, THE MODUS OPERANDI IS TO CONTAIN THIS WAR AND WAIT UNTIL RUSSIA GETS BORED AND DECIDES TO BACK OFF?

Just on a microcosm note, if you look at the F-16s, now delivered, we still don't know what the restrictions are on their use, and yet Russia is building airfields near to the Ukrainian border. Are the Americans giving permission to use the F-16s or not? It's a small, important element of what I think your question is.

When we look back on this, when we're older, I would imagine that the Biden administration will not come out very well. History will not judge it well, just like it doesn't judge Obama well. They're good people, Biden's a good person, but I suspect that if we have this continual arc of instability, in whatever form, however this turns out, but beyond the borders of Ukraine, then we will be able to point to this administration for its inability, albeit hamstrung by Congress, etc., for its inability to exert its power. The US is a powerful country. It's much more powerful than any other country in the world, including China, and yet it's not willing to use that power. Russia, by contrast, is not a powerful country, but it uses all the power it can possibly muster, and that's the difference. Russia's maximum extension of its power appears to be more than America's minimal extension of its power.

BUSINESS

Gov't, NGOs, HORECA Industry Unite against Food Waste to Launch Georgia's Pilot Food Bank

BY KATIE RUTH DAVIES

In Georgia, an estimated 600,000 tons of food go to waste annually, much of that ending up in municipal landfills. A new project aims to change that by providing legal incentives for businesses to donate food rather than discarding it, and raising awareness among consumers of how to consume better and waste less.

On September 27, key players in Georgia's HORECA (Hotel, Restaurant, and Café) industry gathered for the first ever 'Zero-Waste Lunch' at Ninia's Garden in Tbilisi, an event aimed at highlighting the need to reduce food waste and intro-



The 'Zero-Waste Lunch' at Ninia's Garden. Source: Parki Ar Minda

ducing the country's pilot food bank. Organized by NGOs People in Need and Parki Ar Minda, alongside the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Georgia, this initiative is part of a broader campaign titled 'Food Bank Georgia: Reducing Food Waste, Increasing Food Security.'

A tool of survival for vulnerable families in many Western countries, food banks are non-profit organizations dedicated to providing food to individuals and families who struggle to afford enough to meet their nutritional needs. The Georgian model for the food bank initiative draws inspiration from successful long-term programs in Belgium and France, with a study tour to these countries having informed the project's

development.

Salome Japaridze, Project Coordinator at People in Need (PIN), shared details about the logistics of the food bank initiative with GEORGIA TODAY. "A central hub in Tbilisi will accept and sort dry food products [tinned goods, grains, oil, etc. - classed as "low risk"] donated by retailers, including major supermarkets, before distributing them to regional warehouses. Our pilot project will launch in Tskhaltubo municipality, supported by volunteers from Red Cross Georgia and the local mayor's office," she explained.

Tskhaltubo was chosen by PIN as the pilot site due to its community needs and potential for impact.

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Moutai Night: Celebrating the 75th National Day of the People's Republic of China



BY TEAM GT

On September 29, 2024, the tranquil shores of Tbilisi Sea served as the backdrop for a meaningful pre-celebration of the 75th National Day of the People's Republic of China. Hosted at Hotels & Preferences Hualing Tbilisi, this gathering aimed to foster cultural connections while commemorating a significant moment in Chinese history.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NATIONAL DAY

October 1 marks National Day in China, commemorating the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. This day is crucial for the Chinese people, representing national unity, resilience, and the achievements made since that pivotal moment. It serves as a time for citizens and expatriates alike to reflect on their shared heritage and aspirations for the future.

A GATHERING OF COMMUNITY AND FRIENDS OF GEORGIA AND CHINA

The "Moutai Night" event brought together members of the local Chinese community and friends of China and Georgia for an evening characterized by warmth and camaraderie. While the celebration was not grand in scale, it was rich in meaning, emphasizing the importance of cultural exchange and mutual respect.

Guests enjoyed a selection of Moutai, China's esteemed liquor, known for its unique flavor profile and storied heritage. This premium spirit embodies centuries of Chinese craftsmanship and

tradition, making it a fitting centerpiece for the evening. Attendees engaged in conversations about Moutai's cultural significance, adding depth to their experience.

CULTURAL REFLECTIONS AND SHARED ASPIRATIONS

Throughout the evening, several speeches underscored the significance of the upcoming National Day and the progress China has made over the years. Mr. Giorgi Jagaspaniani, Managing Director of Hawk Euro-Asia International Group and Regional Distributor of Moutai, expressed his gratitude for the gathering, stating, "Thank you very much for celebrating Chinese National Day with us today. We appreciate the participation of various well-known Chinese enterprises in Georgia, as well as friends from both state-owned and private enterprises, including the largest investor, Hua Ling Group, here in Georgia. Let us raise a toast to the friendship between the Georgian

and Chinese people, as well as to the collaboration between our governments." Mr. Hong Song, a senior advisor and partner of the group, a prominent figure at the event, introduced Moutai, the most famous Chinese Baijiu, and emphasized the importance of friendship, adding, "Tomorrow, our embassy will host a larger ceremony at the same location, and we hope that our partnerships will flourish globally, bringing happiness to all."

CULINARY FUSION: A CELEBRATION OF FLAVORS

A highlight of the evening was the carefully curated menu showcasing both Chinese and Georgian cuisines. Traditional Chinese dishes, such as dumplings and Peking duck, were paired with local Georgian favorites like khachapuri and khinkali. This culinary fusion not only celebrated the rich traditions of both cultures but also provided an opportunity for guests to share their personal experiences and preferences in food.

The melding of flavors served as a metaphor for the gathering itself—a chance to strengthen ties and foster understanding between two distinct cultures. As guests enjoyed the diverse offerings, conversations flowed easily, bridging the gap between Chinese and Georgian culinary traditions.

THE VENUE: HOTELS & PREFERENCES HUALING TBILISI

The choice of Hotels & Preferences Hualing Tbilisi as the venue enhanced the evening's atmosphere. Nestled along the scenic shores of Tbilisi Sea, the hotel provided a comfortable and inviting



space for guests. Its modern amenities and stunning views created a serene environment conducive to conversation and connection.

The hotel staff ensured that every detail was attended to, allowing attendees to focus on building relationships and enjoying the evening's offerings. The setting not only added to the ambiance but also reflected the hospitality values held by both Chinese and Georgian cultures.

LOOKING AHEAD: BUILDING BRIDGES

As the night came to a close, the sentiments shared among attendees reflected a commitment to strengthening ties between China and Georgia. The Moutai Night event, while modest in scale, was significant in its ability to foster understanding and appreciation for one another's cultures.

er's cultures.

As the official National Day celebration on October 1 approaches, the connections made during this gathering will serve as a foundation for future collaboration. The spirit of unity, shared values, and mutual respect will continue to guide the relationship between China and Georgia, paving the way for a future characterized by cooperation and shared success—much like the vibrant cocktails that opened the event, full of beautiful color and flavor.

In summary, Tbilisi Sea's Moutai Night was not just a prelude to a national celebration; it was an opportunity to reflect on a shared history and look forward to a future of partnership and understanding. The event captured the essence of the evening, emphasizing friendship, collaboration, and the promise of a prosperous future for both nations.



Gov't, NGOs, HORECA Industry Unite against Food Waste to Launch Georgia's Pilot Food Bank

Continued from page 5

"The list of beneficiaries will be gender-inclusive, compiled by the municipal office," Japaridze explains. "Our hope is that once the pilot is established, we can expand to other municipalities."

An essential aspect of this initiative is fostering a culture of awareness around food insecurity, with an emphasis on eliminating the stigma associated with seeking assistance. Japaridze emphasized, "We will conduct an awareness-raising campaign in Tskhaltubo to ensure beneficiaries feel no shame in accessing food bank services. This involves engaging local schools and supporting local NGOs in training and presentations."

A critical timeline for the initiative sees changes to Georgia's tax codes set to take effect on January 1, 2025, while relevant legislation will come into force on January 25.

The FAO has been instrumental in shaping this initiative since it began discussions with the Ministry of Agriculture

in 2019. "We found that the concept of food waste and redistribution via food banks was largely unknown in Georgia," Jumber Maruashvili, Senior National Policy Advisor at FAO, noted. "Previous donation efforts were informal, and there was no systematic approach or legal framework to support these initiatives. Our goal was to create a foundation for a sustainable food donation system."

He elaborated, "The waste generated by retailers is staggering—up to 20 million GEL each year, which is simply unacceptable. Our research indicates a strong willingness among major retailers to get involved. We looked to Brussels and France for inspiration, as they really are champions in the field. France has operated food banks since the 1990s, making them leaders in food donation, although it wasn't until 2018 that they implemented the necessary legislation, part of which includes governmental funds dedicated to food banks. Although we're not currently asking the Georgian government for budget allocations, we



are seeking essential political support from them."

By removing VAT and income tax on food donations, retailers will face no costs for contributing, which not only helps minimize waste, but also bolsters their corporate social responsibility (CSR) reputation.

"The law clearly defines the responsi-

bilities of state institutions, after which came the necessary decrees and bylaws to establish effective donation procedures and ensure food safety," Maruashvili tells GEORGIA TODAY. "Authorization from the National Food Agency is vital; food banks will be classified as food business operators and will be subject to inspections to uphold quality stand-

ards. At this stage, Georgia doesn't have the infrastructure to have the food banks handle higher-risk products like meat and dairy, and the process of elaboration will be long. But we've been working to align with societal expectations, and, encouragingly, we've encountered zero negative feedback—this initiative even garnered bipartisan support in parliament!"

The Zero-Waste Lunch, co-hosted by Meriko Gubeladze, a leading advocate for sustainable dining, also served as a platform for chefs and hospitality representatives to rally around the urgent need for food waste reduction. "This initiative not only aims to tackle food waste, but also to promote sustainable practices across our industry," Gubeladze stated.

As the pilot project begins to take shape, the commitment from Georgia's government, HORECA and retail sectors signals a pivotal shift towards a more sustainable future, where food waste reduction and community support go hand in hand.

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Back to Shatili, II

BLOG BY TONY HANMER

Khevsureti has plenty to offer, of course, other than the fabled and fabulous aforementioned medieval city-fortress of Shatili. I woke up a bit early on the morning of our first full day there to clouds but no rain, and set off towards the old town to look for distance shots of it from the riverside. Then, after breakfast, our driver took us towards the necropolis of Anatori, our first stop.

Because our Georgian-German friends were seeing all of this for the first time, they marveled. For me it was about the fourth visit, so I took more video than photos, as I have accumulated quite a good store of the latter. Anatori was the final resting place of quite a few people who apparently went there by their free

will to die of an infectious disease in the 18th century, and spare the village thus if possible. Their bones still litter the floors of the several low, dug-in stone houses, clearly visible. A macabre scene, and an open ossuary.

On to Mutso, another fortress-village like Shatili, only this one abandoned and quite a bit more arduous to reach, higher up off the main road. By now there was once more a drizzle, but we pressed on, ready for the weather and determined to see what we could. Again, our friends were astounded at the location and construction of the place, with hardly a horizontal patch of ground anywhere outside the stone-walled and -roofed houses, with their mostly wooden floors. This is very close to the border with Chechnya, just on the other side of the Russian North Caucasus, the Chechens long-term traditional enemies of the Khevsurs, with plenty of raids in both directions for cattle and sheep occurring

over the centuries. This accounts for all the fortresses and towers in the area. More necropolis buildings reminded us that here, too, disease had been a threat several centuries ago.

Once we had descended and stopped in a roadside cafe for coffee and to dry off, the rain began in earnest, and we counted ourselves fortunate to have missed its stronger pour while clambering about; others we had seen were not so lucky.

There are several really good longer hikes in this area, extending between it and neighboring Tusheti. But these are several-day affairs on foot or horseback, complete with river crossings and camping, for none of which we were equipped, our large heavy tent being suitable only for short lugs from car to campsite. If one has the time and equipment, though, the views will be spectacular. Bucket List...

Now we had a decision: spend another night as planned, with the forecast not likely to improve much from rain, or pack up a wet tent and leave early? In the end, we decided to go, largely because of the weather. Most of our time would have to be spent outdoors, exploring on foot, and it's not much fun in wet conditions. Nor was there sense staying in our tent or guest house room while the drizzle continued. Our driver would get his original pay; so it was all the same for him. We packed up and left, sufficiently impressed (especially the first-timers) to want a rematch in better weather.

I spread the tent and flysheet over our apartment balcony to dry once we were home again, and several sunnier days accomplished this. We must also get a smaller tent, likely a three-person one for the two of us and gear, suitable for backpacking farther distances. I'm delighted that my wife has taken well to this lifestyle; it's not for everyone, but she seems to love it, as long as there are



minimal standards of comfort met, which we can do. We can either drive/be driven with the full kit including gas bottle for cooking, or hike with the stripped down version. And the rest of Georgia awaits our whim. Like Khevsureti, it will not disappoint.

Tony Hanmer has lived in Georgia since

1999, in Svaneti since 2007, and been a weekly writer and photographer for GT since early 2011. He runs the "Svaneti Renaissance" Facebook group, now with over 2000 members, at www.facebook.com/groups/SvanetiRenaissance/. He and his wife also run their own guest house in Etseri: www.facebook.com/hanmer.house.svaneti

My Amazing Experience at the CENN Eco Camp



My fellow eco-campers. We were one of a few groups that studied here this summer. Source: UNDP

BLOG BY LILY DAVIES-DOLABERIDZE

This summer, I had the amazing opportunity to attend the CENN (Caucasus Environmental NGO Network) eco camp at the Bulachauri Green Center, just outside Tbilisi. It was a five-day adventure that opened my eyes to the huge problem of plastic waste and showed me how we can all make a difference. If you care about the environment, this camp is something you'd absolutely love!

Right from the start, I was excited to meet 50 other students from various regions of Georgia who shared my pas-

sion for protecting our planet. We stayed in a beautifully renovated village house surrounded by a massive garden where we could chill in the shade of trees or play games. It was such a refreshing escape from the plastic-filled chaos of city life.

One of the most impactful parts of the camp was our discussions about plastic waste. We learned why it's crucial to think about the products we buy and what happens to them when we're done using them. I discovered that, in Georgia, we don't have many recycling points, which makes the problem even worse. It made me realize that we all need to reduce our plastic consumption and find smarter ways to deal with our waste.

The trainers were super knowledge-

able and broke down complex ideas about the circular economy and sustainable development into easy-to-understand concepts. It felt empowering to learn how we can change our habits and promote these ideas in our communities.

What really stood out to me was the incredible atmosphere among everyone at the camp. Everyone was friendly and supportive—there was no judging or negativity at all. We even did a fun gift exchange, kind of like a Secret Santa! Some gave books, and others brought sweets and small ornaments. It was such a fun way to bond and create lasting memories together.

One of the most memorable experiences was our visit to a recycling facility called "Polyvim." Seeing the entire plastic recycling process up close was eye-opening. The challenges they face made it clear that while organizations like CENN are working hard, it's on all of us to do our part too.

In addition to plastic waste, we discussed important topics like media literacy and civic responsibility. Some amazing speakers shared their insights on how we can engage our communities in environmental issues. By the end of the camp, we had created action plans to tackle plastic waste in our neighborhoods. I felt so inspired and ready to make a change!

We also had a session on European values, which helped us understand Georgia's history and its path toward closer ties with the West. It was fascinating to see how our country fits into global environmental efforts. We even



Me receiving my certificate of participation from Rebecca Lie, the Deputy Ambassador of Norway. Source: UNDP

received certificates from Rebecca Lie, the Deputy Ambassador of Norway, for our commitment to these important issues!

The whole experience was not just informative but also incredibly motivating. I left the camp feeling empowered and eager to share what I had learned with my friends, family, and classmates. It's crucial that everyone understands how important it is to reduce plastic use and make better choices as consumers.

I know that many families in Georgia are dealing with financial issues, and environmental problems might not seem like a top priority. But, as I learned at the camp, every small action counts. We can't wait for the perfect moment to start making changes. If we all take small steps

now, we can build a cleaner and more responsible society for the future.

I can't wait for next summer to attend the eco camp again! If you're passionate about the environment and want to make a difference, I highly recommend joining. Together, let's tackle plastic waste and create a better world for ourselves and future generations!

The eco-camp was organized by CENN with the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Norway as part of the project 'End Plastic Pollution in Georgia.' This project is implemented under the broader LEAD (Leadership, Equality, Advocacy, Democracy) program, supported by UNDP and Norway.

The Tragic Murder of Kesaria Abramidze: A Stark Reminder of Georgia's Growing Transphobia

BLOG BY HELENA BEDWELL

Last week, Kesaria Abramidze, a prominent transgender woman, was brutally murdered in her own apartment—stabbed and left to die. It struck me that if someone like her, radiant and glamorous, who went on TV shows and actively created social media content, could be killed in such a horrific manner, what hope do other LGBTQ individuals in this country have? Georgia's democracy is deteriorating, particularly after the recent passage of two controversial laws: the foreign agents' law and an anti-LGBTQ measure.

The police acted swiftly last Tuesday, as rumors circulated that the suspect was her long-term lover, a 26-year-old man, who allegedly killed her “following a personal conflict” before fleeing the scene. As a reporter tired of witnessing rampant phobias in this small nation, I found it all too coincidental that the murder occurred just after these laws were enacted, and that the suspect fled in such a cowardly manner. The police opened a case for premeditated murder with aggravating circumstances based on gender hatred. Kesaria's on-and-off boyfriend, known for his history of violence toward her, was apprehended while attempting to leave Georgia. It puzzles me to this day why someone who had openly threatened her before would commit such a loud and public crime, be captured on CCTV, and flee without attempting to cover his tracks. Naturally, he was quickly apprehended.



Kesaria Abramidze. Source: IG

Context is crucial here. Georgian lawmakers recently supported a bill targeting LGBTQ rights amid a crackdown on civil society, drawing condemnation from the US and the European Union. The ruling party, Georgian Dream, proposed measures that include banning “LGBT propaganda” and outlawing same-sex marriages and adoptions. In a recent vote in Tbilisi, legislators overwhelmingly backed the bill, while the opposition boycotted the session.

Kesaria Abramidze was one of the most prominent transgender figures in the country, admired for her charm, wit, and outspoken nature. Her loss leaves a significant void. In this internet age, nothing is forgotten; videos of her recounting her joys and struggles circulate widely. In one video, made months before her death, she revealed her history of being manipulated and experiencing violence, a fact which prompted her to leave the country for a time. She also once said, while representing Georgia at a beauty pageant, that she didn't want to mention the problems and abuse suffered by transgender and gay people in Georgia in order to protect her country – and yet the country did not protect her back.

Under the so-called Protection of Family Values and Minors legal package, schools and universities are to be prohibited from teaching about same-sex relations, and public demonstrations advocating for LGBTQ rights will be outlawed. This mirrors similar laws passed in Russia.

Despite her popularity, I barely knew Kesaria, even though her hometown, Vani, is where my ancestors are from. This historic town, like much of Georgia,

is steeped in religious sentiment and patriarchy. Conversations about her evoke a mix of sympathy and condemnation; many pity her not for her tragic end, but for her choice to transition. Some say she was a true woman, wanting the same things as anyone else: love, family, and perhaps children.

Cathy Jeanne Maclain, a professional therapist, told me, “The atmosphere of homophobia in Georgia is terrible. It is supported by the government, making people feel it is acceptable, even good, to get rid of ‘those’ people.”

I attended Kesaria's wake with my husband to show that long-term relationships, love, and understanding are what LGBTQ individuals desire too. Her friends and family shared that she yearned to start a family with her partner, a dream now shattered.

Kesaria was fortunate, as her family accepted her for who she was. In both good and bad times, her mother, sister, and friends stood by her. Tragically, six other transgender individuals who have over time been murdered in Georgia were not so lucky. I cried at Kesaria's wake alongside her mother, with images of her, looking like a winged goddess, surrounding us. Her life ended in a mundane tragedy: a domestic conflict with the man she loved. Yet her death was rooted in transphobia and femicide.

It feels like everything ends with Kesaria. I truly doubt anyone will dare to take a stand in this country now, especially with the current laws in place. Kesaria did not die alone; our freedom died with her. The chilling message from this brutal case is clear: this could happen to anyone, whether famous or not.

CULTURE

The Famous Sikhharulidze Talents

BLOG BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

There goes a good and popular man in Georgia, whose name is Givi Sikhharulidze. Ask anyone in the street and you will get a prompt answer about his beaming personality: author, poet, agronomist, dancer, athlete, actor, public figure and, most importantly, a wonderful family man. The two sons of this diversely talented, intelligent, flamboyant, heartfelt and ever youngish octogenarian has reared as a widower are both chips off the old block. Jaba, the senior, is a professional dancer and a lawyer by education; Beka, the junior, 44, is an actor and movie director, happily living and working in America. His late mother was a medical doctor and a genuine bulwark of the family. They say Beka's dad did his sincerest utmost to save the life of his beloved lifetime comrade-in-arms, but his efforts failed against her perfidious malady, and so the boys were left in the hands of their caring father, who never remarried after his

loss. And, behold, the boys turned into two very good and special men of their generation.

Beka's cinematographic career is simply unbelievable, and deserves to be better known in his native country. To date, Beka's masterpiece 'From Life to Life' (starring Givi and Beka Sikhharulidze, Nino Kuratashvili, Ia Shugliashvili and Roman Gventsadze, and for the briefest moment of a scene, our own Editor-in-Chief Katie Ruth Davies) has so far earned 12 international film awards and eight nominations. The story is set in 1990s Sakartvelo after the breakup of the Soviet Union. The main protagonist of the film, Luka, is a surgical doctor, who is eager to save human lives but is compelled to fiercely scuffle to somehow adjust to the merciless and shady system, doing his possible best to remain faithful to his vocation. The central idea of the plot is that he is being torn apart between the need to take care of his own family and his desire to protect the lives of those who need his help, even if it means the loss of his career. The difficulty Luka faces is dramatically conducive to the irretrievable result of his decisions.



Givi and Beka Sikhharulidze. Source: FB

Beka Sikhharulidze is the author of the script, director and the main character of this movie that so sensitively touches upon the most vulnerable of human attitudes and the depths of relationships between them.

The latest of the awards was received at the Apulia Festival in Italy for the Best Actor nomination. Especially notable is the People's Choice Award at the celebrated 32nd Chichester Film Festival in the UK, a significant event that has been a genuine inspiration for cinematic brilliance for more than 30 years.

Another recognition of Beka's opus, which is definitely worth mentioning as one of his myriad recognitions, is his winning the award for Best Cinematography at the Montelupo Fiorentino International Independent Film Festival. 'From Life to Life' was also named the winner of the Best European Film Award at the Chandler International Film Festival. The winner of the International Motion

Pictures Award at the famed Madrid Film Festival then carried on its triumphant march towards the pinnacles of cinematographic magnificence, receiving three nominations at the eighth annual festival in Chandler, Arizona, right before having been named the Best European Film of 2024. And that's not all: the film received two awards at Socially Relevant Film Festival, NY, a special prize from the jury, and an award for the best male role. The founder of the festival, actress and producer Nora Armani, an Egyptian citizen of Armenian origin, spoke to Voice of America about Beka's film, underlining its modern-day topicality, noting that viewers make emotional parallels between their lives and the main character's life-size feats, which is why such huge interest has been seen towards this movie from such a faraway and little-known land.

On top of all that, Beka is an outstanding dancer, having toured the world on

his tiptoes as the Georgian national dance would have it. He is also a wonderful tennis player, once a champion of Georgia among youth. At the age of 19, he won a black belt in Karate. In the United States, he founded the Beka Tennis Academy, where he used to coach a number of celebrated Hollywood stars. He went to the New York Film Academy and to the University of California, Los Angeles, to master the art of movie direction. Beka has been a member of the American Screen Actors Guild since 2004, and, in 2014, he founded his own movie company, named Beka Film Productions, which debuted with an amazingly exciting short film Grandpa's Debtor telling his father's life story. Having received international recognition, the film hit the screens in as many as 86 countries. Beka's breakthrough in Hollywood is connected with Steven Soderbergh's 2022 thriller 'Kimi,' in which he starred as a Russian hacker.

And, the recent cherry on the cake: Beka Sikhharulidze is the only Georgian to enjoy official documentary recognition of the mayor of New York, Erik Adams, as well as of the United States Congress, initiated by congressman Hakeem Jeffries, for his substantial contribution to the development of the metropolis and for dedicated service to the American nation.

There is one more unavoidable side of Beka Sikhharulidze's life, and that's his absolutely wonderful family – his wife Maia and two boys, Givi and Luka, who are growing up in America, but who speak Georgian perfectly well thanks to their parents' tireless daily efforts. Maia is a spouse who has always stood shoulder to shoulder with her husband in any doing they have embarked on together during their lifetime. They even sold their houses in Los Angeles and Tbilisi to finish the production of From Life to Life. Doesn't that speak volumes about this amazing couple?



Cast members of 'From Life to Life'. Source: FB

BI Auction's Meet the Artist: Nino Kvrivishvili



Searching for Traces. By Nino Kvrivishvili. Source: propaganda.network

INTERVIEW BY TEAM GT

It is autumn again, which means back to school, home, friends, and, of course, a plethora of festivals and exhibitions to enjoy.

After the summer break, BI Auction's 'Meet the Artist' has returned, kicking off with Nino Kvrivishvili.

"Nino is a textile artist who reflects radiance not only from her talent, but also from her warm and accommodating personality," says Bengu Akcardak Kucuk, Co-Founder and Partner of BI Auction.

"She not only creates at her studio, but works at the Academy of Art supporting future artists and even for expats who are interested in creating through special courses in English."

Nino Kvrivishvili studied Textile Design at Tbilisi State Academy of Art (2001-2007) and has exhibited in Georgia and abroad. Among her most recent solo exhibitions were those at Museum Wäschefabrik, Bielefeld; Gallery Melike Bilir, Hamburg; and the Czech Cultural Center, Paris.

"I've participated in group exhibitions 'Long-distance Friendships,' at the Kaunas 14th Biennial (LTU); LINKS at the

Nathalie Karg Gallery (USA) in collaboration with Gallery Artbeat; SILK at GAD _Giudecca Art District Gallery (IT); and many more," the artist tells us. "Currently, I am getting ready for the exhibition 'Landscapes of an Ongoing Past,' an exhibition conceived by Urbane Künste Ruhr in cooperation with the Zollverein Foundation for the salt warehouse for the Ruhrtriennale 2024."

In the past few years, Nino has become involved in art residency programs in Germany, Switzerland, and Lithuania, through which she has been gaining some exceptional experiences as she seeks to forward her career.

"I am always proud to mention my contribution to establish a textile making studio in the Adjara region. This journey started with my professor, Iano Jikia, to whom I dedicated my recent work presented at Kaunas Biennial," she says. "It is always refreshing for an artist to be outside their country, but at this moment I feel good being and working in my studio in Tbilisi."

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR WORK? WHICH TRENDS IN ART OR IMPORTANT ARTISTS HAVE HAD AN IMPACT ON YOU?

I work with textile installations. I'm interested to see how my drawings are translated into materials, and how I can use traditional textile making in contemporary art.

While painting, I think a lot about light and color, which can be perfection itself without any particular form. I am inspired a lot by Georgian Avant-garde artist David Kakabadze, whose knowledge and attitude to color is visible in his works.

I'm also very much inspired by G. Marandi's works too. I especially love works by artists that are not often put on display in museums. For me, the intimate part is about seeing their sketches and study drawings.

NAME A PIECE OF ART YOU THINK EVERYONE SHOULD SEE "LIVE".

Anything by David Kakabadze, and The Milkmaid by J. Vermeer.

WHAT IS YOUR VIEW OF THE VIRTUAL ART SPACE, OF EXHIBITIONS, AUCTIONS AND SALES?

The virtual art space allows everyone access, but I am afraid it remains beyond reality. I am more for the idea of physical objects and their appearance in our

daily lives. When we see art in real life, we can't get bored with it.

Galleries and auctions play an important role for experienced artists, who already have a lot to say.

YOU ALSO ORGANIZE ART COURSES AT THE ACADEMY, IN ENGLISH. TELL US MORE.

I am very much for the idea of education in art. Art is knowledge, routine; it is not a quick turn-around.

I teach art to students, and at the same time I am involved with other professionals to give art education to the general public. These are short programs for everyone to learn any skills in art that can be a good starting point for the future.

HOW DO YOU EVALUATE THE CHANGES IN ART IN GEORGIA?

As I studied in Tbilisi and I know what was happening during my student years, I would say that something new started in young artists' lives from 2013.

I remember when the first 'Popiashvili Gvaberidze Window Project' gallery in the city center was opened and showed off young artists- that was really a starting point for positive changes.

After that, many art initiatives were established to present the young generation.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE FOR ART AND ARTISTS IN GEORGIA?

In the same way today everyone speaks about football and Georgia's sporting achievements, I really hope for the same with Georgia's art, ultimately leading to more investment in art and artists.



The 9th Tbilisi Int'l Literature Festival: A Multinational Dialogue of Words and Worlds

BY IVAN NECHAEV

The 9th Tbilisi International Literature Festival, held from September 27 to 30, concluded on a note of remarkable cultural synthesis.

Set against the vibrant backdrop of Tbilisi's urban and intellectual landscape, the festival attracted an eclectic range of voices from across the globe, offering a space where literature became both a celebration and a form of protest. With a diverse array of events that explored identity, history, politics, and the future of writing, the festival demonstrated the power of words in transcending borders.

OPENING NIGHT: LEO VARDIASHVILI AND THE GEORGIAN LITERARY CANON REVISITED

The festival opened at the Georgian Museum of Fine Arts with a dialogue between audiences and British-Georgian author Leo Vardiashvili. His presentation of *Hard by a Great Forest* encapsulated a new wave of Georgian literary expression, infused with an architectural sense of place and time. As Vardiashvili's work takes readers on a journey through Tbilisi's forgotten corners, he discussed the intersections between memory and narrative, offering both a sentimental and analytical dissection of his homeland through the lens of diasporic distance.

Moderated by Luka Grigolia, the conversation sparked reflections on how contemporary Georgian literature negotiates national identity within the shifting tides of a globalized world. The nostalgia in Vardiashvili's writing mirrors the broader Georgian literary scene's

focus on reconciling the past with the present. The session also touched on the role of architecture as a character in Georgian storytelling, akin to Dan Brown's urban explorations, yet with a subtler emotional landscape reminiscent of Khaled Hosseini.

FOREIGN TRANSLATORS ON GEORGIAN POETRY: BEYOND LINGUISTIC BARRIERS

A pivotal moment of the festival arrived with the session on modern Georgian poetry through the eyes of foreign translators. Rodolfo Hasler (Spain) and Norbert Hummelt (Germany) presented their experiences in translating Georgian works, a rare exploration of how poetry survives—and sometimes even thrives—through linguistic transformation. The event was a layered discussion of translation as a bridge between cultures. While poetry is often seen as untranslatable due to its nuances, these experts demonstrated the vitality that exists in translating cultural essence.

The talk raised essential questions about how Georgian poetry, with its deep metaphors rooted in national experience, can achieve universality without losing its distinct voice. This session underscored the critical role translation plays in expanding the horizons of Georgian literature, making its unique cultural footprint accessible to the wider world.

PROTEST IN THE LANGUAGE OF ART: BELARUS, ARMENIA, AND GEORGIA IN DIALOGUE

At the Goethe Institute, the panel discussion on 'Art as a Form of Protest,' featuring Uladzimir Niakliaeu (Belarus), Armen Ohanyan (Armenia), and Rati Amaglobeli (Georgia), was a poignant reflection on literature as resistance. For each participant, art was not merely an aesthetic pursuit but a platform for

political activism.

Amaglobeli, one of Georgia's most recognizable poets, positioned literature as an "invisible revolution," where words can subtly but profoundly undermine authoritarian regimes. Niakliaeu, whose work is banned in his native Belarus, spoke candidly about the role of literature in unmasking the myths surrounding dictatorial power. His experience echoed the ongoing tensions in post-Soviet countries, where authors and artists find themselves at the frontline of the sociopolitical struggle. This session resonated with the current global climate, reinforcing the idea that literature is not only a tool for individual expression, but a communal weapon against oppression.

POETRY JAMS: WHERE CULTURES MEET THROUGH RHYTHM AND RHYME

One of the festival's most electric events was the poetry jams. With performances from all international participants, this event was a whirlwind of multilingual expression, blending styles from across Europe and beyond. Together, the poets and musicians demonstrated how different traditions of poetry can coalesce to create a shared space of artistic resonance.

This poetry jam was a key reminder that, in the realm of art, language barriers fall away, making room for a universal exchange of ideas and emotions. It exemplified the festival's overarching theme of breaking down cultural and linguistic boundaries through literary expression.

CLOSING NIGHT: A PERFORMATIVE FUSION OF GEORGIAN POETRY AND GLOBAL VOICES

The festival's closing event, held at the



Photo by the author

Movement Theater, was a spectacular fusion of poetry and performance, blending Georgian and international works into a night of theatrical recitations and live readings. The event brought together poets from Ukraine, Latvia, and the USA, alongside Georgian artists, in a grand finale that epitomized the festival's spirit of multinational dialogue. Dever Butson, a contemporary poet from the US, anchored the evening with a powerful reading of his work rooted in social and political crises.

The festival concluded with a spectacular closing event, where Georgian poetry took center stage in an unforgettable performative evening titled *Night as Such*. The evening featured poetry readings from both Georgian poets, culminating in a poetic and performative fusion of art forms. The Movement Theater, with its intimate setting, was the perfect venue for this multi-sensory exploration of language. The evening encapsulated the festival's goal of merging diverse literary traditions while celebrating their individuality. It provided a fitting end to a four-day journey that traversed the personal, political, and poetic landscapes of each participating country.

A FESTIVAL THAT BRIDGES NATIONS, WORDS, AND WORLDS

The 9th Tbilisi International Literature Festival succeeded in its mission to create a space where literature, in all its forms, could serve as a bridge between nations, cultures, and historical contexts. From the local voices of Georgia to the far-reaching echoes of global poetry and prose, the festival provided an essential platform for dialogue, reflection, and artistic collaboration.

In a world where borders seem increasingly rigid, this festival reminded us that literature remains one of the most effective tools for dismantling walls—both literal and metaphorical. It also affirmed Tbilisi's place on the map as a dynamic cultural hub, where the past meets the present, and where words transcend the limitations of time, place, and politics.

The 9th Tbilisi International Literature Festival was not just a celebration of books; it was a celebration of the power of language to unite, inspire, and resist. As Georgia continues to grow its presence on the global literary stage, this festival will undoubtedly serve as a vital touchstone for future generations of writers and readers alike.

Young, Furious & Frustrated: What Does the Future Hold for Georgian Theater?

BY IVAN NECHAEV

The Georgian Showcase at the Tbilisi International Festival of Theater 2024 presented a vivid portrait of the emerging trends and the fresh perspectives of theater in Georgia. Among the highlights of the showcase were three innovative performances: *Berserkers: At Home*, directed by Giorgi Jamburia; *HA*, a one-woman show directed by Sandro Kalandadze; and *Fire*, a student production from the Open Space (Center for Performing & Visual Arts). Each of these performances, though distinct in its style, technique, and narrative structure, sheds light on the current direction of youth theater in Georgia, emphasizing experimentation, social relevance, and personal introspection.

BERSERKERS: AT HOME – THE REVOLT AGAINST THEATRICAL CONVENTION

Giorgi Jamburia's *Berserkers: At Home* stands out as a quintessential example of how young Georgian directors are breaking away from traditional forms to create an immersive and unpredictable theatrical experience. Drawing from themes of existentialism, failed utopias, and human isolation, the performance operates as an experimental social drama that transcends mere storytelling. Jamburia not only writes and directs the play, but also designs the scenography, making it an intensely personal creation that reflects his broad vision of theater.

The performance's interactive nature, where the audience's reactions play a significant role in shaping the progression of the action, breaks the conventional divide between stage and spectators. This approach evokes a sense of intimacy, creating a new form of artistic reality, where the performers and viewers exist in a shared emotional and physical space. Jamburia's manipulation of tempo and rhythm, driven by improvisation, constructs a unique narrative flow that contrasts with the rigid structures typical of more traditional plays. *Berserkers: At Home* exemplifies a vital trend in youth theater—an embrace of unpredictability, fluidity, and direct engagement with the audience. By doing so, Jamburia fosters a kind of resistance to conventionality, a theme that runs parallel to the disillusionment with larger societal ideals, such as the critique of failed political utopias presented in the text.

This performance not only questions ideological principles, but also challenges the core of theatrical presentation, urging the audience to rethink their relationship with art, space, and each other.

HA – THE POWER OF THE HUMAN VOICE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF MEMORY

Sandro Kalandadze's *HA*, a one-woman show featuring Anano Makharadze, strips down theater to its bare essentials, relying on voice, breath, and sound to convey a profound emotional narrative. The monologue, written by Mariam Megvinyte, explores the experiences of those who have perished unjustly in war, and the performance transforms their silence into a resonating cry.



Fire. Photo by the author

HA represents a significant departure from more visually driven performances. Kalandadze's use of sound and breath as central elements in the play's structure points to a growing experimental trend in Georgian youth theater—an exploration of non-verbal communication and the physicality of performance. By focusing on the nuances of breath and voice modulation, the play forgoes traditional dialogue for a more primal expression of pain, suffering, and remembrance. The performer's breath becomes a conduit for the stories of the dead, bridging the past and present in a deeply symbolic way.

The minimalist staging and the focus on the human voice place *HA* within the broader global trend of deconstructing theater to its core elements. However, the performance's context in Georgia gives it a particular resonance, as the country continues to grapple with its own violent history. In this way, *HA* becomes more than a theatrical experiment; it is an act of collective memory and a poignant reminder of the ongoing impact of war on both the living and the dead.

FIRE – NAVIGATING THROUGH PERSONAL AND GLOBAL CRISES

The student-led collaborative performance of Elene Burchuladze, Masho Makashvili, Elene Mindiashvili, Nika Shanava, Luka Chibukhaia and Luka Japaridze *Fire* curated by Davit Khorbaladze and Mikheil Charkviani is perhaps the most overtly political and socially conscious of the three productions, drawing parallels between the personal emotional turmoil of its participants and the environmental catastrophe that serves as the performance's central metaphor. The performance delves into themes of identity, sexuality, depression, and the uncertainty of the future, all framed within the context of a world that is literally and figuratively "on fire."

The use of personal stories as the foundation of the performance positions *Fire* as a documentary-style piece, where the real experiences of the performers are transformed into theatrical art. This is a trend increasingly seen in youth theater worldwide, where lived experiences become the primary material for performance, allowing for a raw and authentic exploration of societal issues. In *Fire*, the pervasive anxiety over the environment mirrors the inner emotional landscapes of the performers, creating a powerful symmetry between the global

crisis and individual struggles.

The production's use of multimedia highlights the influence of digital culture on the younger generation. By incorporating loops of screenings and authentic landscape outside the window, the performance captures the dissonance between virtual escapism and the harsh realities of the world outside. The continuous refrain of "Wake up!" in the performance acts as a call to action, not only for the characters but also for the audience, urging them to confront both personal and societal crises.

A NEW WAVE OF EXPRESSION

The three performances from the Georgian Showcase of the Tbilisi International Festival of Theater 2024—*Berserkers: At Home*, *HA*, and *Fire*—represent a powerful tapestry of modern Georgian youth theater, reflecting the themes, trends, and aesthetic tendencies of a new generation of artists. These works highlight experimental social drama, intimate and personal storytelling, and the merging of individual and collective experiences.

Existential Crisis and Social Commentary: Across all three performances, we see a deep engagement with existential questions and a reflection on contemporary social issues. *Berserkers: At Home* uses a cyclical narrative about utopian ideals, love, and nihilism, exploring the disillusionment with grand societal narratives like communism and the trivialization of emotions such as love. This work grapples with the search for meaning in a world where traditional values seem exhausted or irrelevant, revealing a sense of absurdity that mirrors the uncertainty of postmodern life. Similarly, *HA* tackles the devastation of war, trauma, and the weight of historical memory. By giving a voice to the dead, this performance suggests that the unresolved past haunts the present, and the chaos of modern life is inescapable. This emotional weight is further reflected in *Fire*, where personal stories of identity, love, depression, and sexuality are intertwined with environmental catastrophe. The performance's use of fire as a metaphor for the chaos and uncertainty that dominates both personal and global spheres encapsulates a generation's anxiety about the future.

Fragmented Narratives and Personal Stories: All three performances emphasize fragmented, episodic structures, breaking away from traditional linear storytelling. In *Berserkers: At Home*, the

characters' interactions feel disjointed, with shifts in tone and subject matter, echoing the breakdown of coherent worldviews. *HA* is similarly fragmented, with the lone voice oscillating between past and present, life and death. This technique reflects the fragmentation of contemporary consciousness, where personal and collective histories merge in disorienting ways.

Fire amplifies this by blending documentary storytelling with personal confession. The participants' narratives are pieces of a larger emotional landscape, connected to a global environmental crisis. These fragmented narratives reflect the modern condition, where individuals struggle to form cohesive identities or make sense of an unstable world. This emphasis on personal stories, especially in *Fire*, suggests that youth theater in Georgia is deeply invested in exploring subjective experiences, particularly those often marginalized in society, such as mental health and sexual identity.

Critique of Utopian Ideals and Identity Politics: There is a critical stance toward traditional ideals and societal structures in all three works. In *Berserkers: At Home*, the character's reflections on communism and the notion of love highlight a skepticism toward utopian promises. This echoes a broader cultural sentiment of disillusionment with ideologies that once offered hope but now seem irrelevant or oppressive. Meanwhile, *Fire* addresses the search for identity in an era of profound instability, where even the idea of a stable, coherent self seems elusive. This critique extends to *HA*, where the voice of the dead serves as a reminder that past traumas continue to shape present realities. The refusal to let go of historical pain reflects a society grappling with unresolved conflicts, both personal and political. The focus on identity politics, particularly in *Fire*, where sexuality and mental health are key themes, suggests that youth theater in Georgia is attuned to the complexities of selfhood in a rapidly changing world.

Experimental Forms and Improvisation: Each performance demonstrates a commitment to experimentation in form and technique. *Berserkers: At Home* relies heavily on improvisation and interaction with the audience, creating a dynamic and unpredictable performance that changes with each iteration. The physical and emotional state of the performers and the energy of the audience influence the direction of the performance, breaking down the traditional divide between performer and spectator. This improvisational approach allows for spontaneity and risk, hallmarks of contemporary experimental theater. *HA* uses sound and breath as its primary expressive tools, pushing the boundaries of traditional monologue. The performance's emphasis on vocal modulation and breath control creates a unique auditory experience, transforming the performer's voice into a physical presence that haunts the space. This approach highlights the potential for sound to convey emotion and narrative, even in the absence of conventional dialogue or plot.

Minimalist Scenography and Symbolism: The scenography in these performances is often minimalist, focusing on symbolic gestures rather than elaborate sets or props. In *Berserkers: At Home*,

the proximity of the action to the audience creates an immersive, intimate experience, with the staging itself becoming a tool for breaking down conventional theatrical boundaries. *HA* similarly employs minimal visual elements, with the focus on the performer's voice and body as the central means of expression. This stripped-down aesthetic forces the audience to focus on the performers and the emotional intensity of the performance. *Fire* uses fire as a central metaphor, suggesting both destruction and renewal. The minimalist staging of this performance allows the themes of environmental catastrophe and personal crisis to take center stage, with the performers' physical presence and the symbolic use of fire creating a visceral connection between the audience and the performers' inner worlds. The reliance on minimalist, symbolic scenography across these performances suggests a trend toward focusing on the emotional and conceptual core of the work, rather than on external spectacle.

Interdisciplinary Approaches: The use of interdisciplinary techniques, such as sound design, movement, and multimedia elements, is a key trend in these works. *Fire*, for example, incorporates the rhythms of media culture into the narrative structure, blending the personal and the digital in a way that feels distinctly contemporary. This integration of media culture into live performance suggests a growing awareness of how technology shapes identity and experience, particularly for younger generations.

THE FUTURE OF GEORGIAN THEATER

Based on these performances, the future of Georgian theater appears to be one of innovation, experimentation, and social relevance. Young directors and theater-makers are pushing the boundaries of form, blending different disciplines and embracing non-linear, fragmented storytelling. There is a clear focus on personal and social issues, with themes like mental health, identity, and environmental crisis at the forefront. These performances reflect a generation grappling with a rapidly changing world, seeking new ways to express the complexities of modern life.

The aesthetic choices made by these young theater-makers—improvisation, minimalism, and interdisciplinary approaches—suggest a move away from traditional theatrical forms in favor of more fluid, experimental methods. This willingness to break with convention, coupled with a deep engagement with contemporary social issues, points to a future in which Georgian theater will continue to evolve as a platform for personal and collective expression.

In summary, the theater of Georgia, as seen in these three performances, is characterized by a bold experimentation with form, a deep engagement with existential and social questions, and an aesthetic minimalism that foregrounds the emotional and conceptual power of performance. This new wave of theater-makers is not afraid to confront difficult themes, and their work suggests a vibrant future for Georgian theater—one that is deeply connected to the realities of contemporary life and committed to exploring new artistic possibilities.



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