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Rati Mujiri

**SLAVERY IN THE  
NAME OF PEACE**

Jelger Groeneveld

**BANNING POLITICAL  
PARTIES IS NOT  
EUROPEAN**

Tinatın Eradze

**THE SECOND  
LIFE OF THE  
PURIFIED**

**CHOOSE TO WIN!**

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# We will win in the end!

Zurab Girchi Japaridze



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Zaza Bibilashvili

# CHOOSE TO WIN!



When a Georgian sits down at the table, the first thing he does is raise a toast to peace—or so we are told by those who, before corrupting the very idea of peace, first stole the words ‘dignity’, ‘hope’, and ‘dream’ from us.

In reality, before a Georgian sits down at the table and toasts to peace, he greets his nearest and dearest with the word ‘Gamarjoba’! In this manner:

Gamarjoba to you!

‘Gamarjoba’.

*Gamarjveba.*<sup>2</sup>

For peace to prevail, victory must first be celebrated.

This is what our history, common sense, and our genetically encoded memory have taught us.

One must come to the table proud, joyful, and with head held high, to afford the luxury of toasting to peace—peace on *your* terms.

And for that one must be in the spirit of feasting and toasting.

For the defeated do not feast.

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1. The Georgian word ‘გამარჯობა’ (gamarjoba) is a common greeting that literally means ‘victory’. Its etymology is deeply rooted in the historical and cultural context of Georgia. This word is a noun derived from the verb ‘მარჯვება’ (marjveba), which means ‘to be victorious’ or ‘to win’. The greeting likely originated from a wish for victory, reflecting the country’s long and turbulent history filled with invasions and conflicts. By saying ‘gamarjoba’, Georgians were essentially wishing each other success and triumph over challenges, a sentiment that eventually evolved into a standard greeting of goodwill.

2. Gamarjveba means victory.

The defeated *have* no peace.  
The defeated have only shame and fodder.

Those who seem to rejoice in defeat, those who justify submission to the aggressor, or profit from the mercantile slavery they chose for themselves are condemned, along with their shame and fodder, to live under the sincere contempt—a contempt that is an inherent part of enlightened patriotism, basic human dignity, and the civic virtue of ordinary citizens.

'We are on our land, and you will be in it'—with this inscription, Ukraine greeted its barbaric enemy. It is with this spirit that Ukraine has fought and buried the enemy since.

And that is why Ukraine will prevail.

At a high price? — Of course!

This is precisely what the Georgian language Russian propaganda exploits: rubbing salt into historical wounds, awakening fears buried deep in our consciousness and feeding us dark conspiracy theories.

Yet it seems absurd to argue about the price of freedom in a country where sacrifice for freedom is the very flesh and blood of national identity—a country that has survived to this day without ever fearing such a price. It is indeed shameful to debate the cost of freedom with those whose worldview has been moulded since childhood by Rustaveli's immortal words:

*'Death with dignity is better than a life of humiliation.'*

If it had not been so—if we had not taken this path, if we had not prevailed—Georgia would not exist today, and the *Gruzin Mankurts*<sup>3</sup> would formally be in the service of some other foreign power (not that they would mind or care).

Today, the petty peddlers who have lost all sense of shame speculate on the legacy of 100 thousand martyrs,<sup>4</sup> Erekle II, and other glorious—or not-so-glorious—episodes of Georgian history. Some conceal their Russian epaulettes beneath clerical robes, preaching religious unity with the enemy. Others, disguised in civilian clothes, hide their motives behind false arguments of pragmatism.



Yet it seems absurd to argue about the price of freedom in a country where sacrifice for freedom is the very flesh and blood of national identity—a country that has survived to this day without ever fearing such a price.

3. Gruzin, a Russian term for a 'Georgian' is used in Georgian as a word to describe those who fit the stereotypical Russian image of a Georgian who lacks civic virtue, social culture and personal ambition. Mankurts are unthinking slaves in Chingiz Aitmatov's novel *The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years*. After the novel, in the Soviet Union the word came to refer to people who have lost touch with their ethnic homeland, who have forgotten their kinship. This meaning was retained in Russia and many other post-Soviet states.

4. The 100,000 Martyrs of Tbilisi were Christians massacred on 31 October 1227, during the Mongol invasion, when Jalal ad-Din, the Khwarazmian ruler, demanded that the citizens of Tbilisi renounce Christianity and embrace Islam. Refusing to betray their faith, they were executed en masse on the banks of the Kura River. Their martyrdom is deeply rooted in Georgian historical memory and is commemorated annually by the Georgian Orthodox Church.



‘Death with dignity  
is better than a life  
of humiliation.’

Those are the ones who seek to base their legitimacy on heroic stories while simultaneously despising the very idea of self-sacrifice. They treat as objects of scorn the heroes who gave their lives for keep their motherland free—as shown by the vile remark of one notorious neo-Bolshevik about Giorgi Antsukhelidze,<sup>5</sup> dismissing him as being ‘senselessly doomed for someone else’s PR stunt’

Those who created the *Treason Commission*.

Those who are in complete sync with Georgia’s only modern-day enemy, which occupies 20% of our country.

Those who fulfilled this enemy’s dream—not the hollow promises like ‘5 million for every village’, ‘free money’, or ‘a solarium for every family in Ureki’ (promises given by bidzina Ivanishvili during his 2012 campaign), but the real, rotten, anti-Georgian dream: by humiliating the Georgian state, exalting the most unworthy to positions of power, and apologizing to those who have committed a genocide of Georgians in Abkhazia.

Those who tell us that defending our homeland and attempting to expel the occupying state from our territory—even if we were to believe that we really did start that war – is a crime.

Those who have earned daily praise from the Russian proxies in Tskhinvali and their cynical patrons in the Kremlin.

...Have you ever wondered what price David the Builder<sup>6</sup> paid for the unification of Georgia?

And Giorgi the Brilliant?<sup>7</sup>

And how many “beardless young men” did “Little Kakhi”<sup>8</sup> put into the ground during his eighty battles before paying the price of not knowing Russia and trusting it?!

5. Giorgi Antsukhelidze (18 August 1984 – 9 August 2008) was a Georgian sergeant who fought in the 2008 Russo-Georgian War. Captured during the Battle of Tskhinvali, he was tortured and executed by Russian and South Ossetian forces after refusing to kneel before his captors. His bravery and steadfastness became a national symbol of sacrifice and dignity. In 2013, he was posthumously awarded the Order of the National Hero of Georgia.

6. David IV, known as David the Builder (დავით აღმაშენებელი, 1073–1125), was King of Georgia from 1089 to 1125. He is celebrated as one of Georgia’s greatest monarchs, noted for unifying the fragmented Georgian lands, expelling the Seljuk Turks, and leading the kingdom into its political, military, and cultural golden age. His victory at the Battle of Didgori in 1121 is regarded as one of the most significant triumphs in Georgian history.

7. Giorgi V, known as Giorgi the Brilliant (გიორგი ბრწყინვალე, reigned c. 1299–1302 and 1314–1346), was a medieval King of Georgia. He restored the country’s unity after a period of Mongol domination, reasserted royal authority, and revived Georgia’s international prestige. Under his rule, Georgia regained much of its former strength, fostering political stability, economic growth, and flourishing cultural life. His reign is often considered the last great period of Georgia’s medieval monarchy.

8. Patara Kakhi was a nickname of King Erekle the Second of Kartl-Kakheti (Eastern Georgia), who ruled in the second half of the 18th century and was a feared military commander. He fought more than eighty battles against Persian and Ottoman forces, becoming a symbol of bravery and resistance. Surrounded by three major empires of the time, he managed to keep Eastern Georgia independent, until being lured into a diplomatic trap by the Russian Empire, leading to the loss of sovereignty three years after his death.



For us, free citizens of Georgia, the tragedy lies in the fact that those deprived of freedom alongside us feel no shame as long as there is enough fodder on their plates.

This is precisely why we must speak about this in Georgia, where dignified life and victory have always been, and still are, the only preconditions for real peace.

'I will die, but I will not surrender!'—Have you ever noticed how much Georgians love to say that? How beautiful, how poetic it sounds! It is indeed a sign of an indomitable spirit.

But have you ever thought that those who sacrificed themselves have in fact lost their battles? They left us with heroic legends, but more often than not, they were defeated (of course, had we not fought and sacrificed ourselves, we would have disappeared, but that's a whole different story).

And what we need, as much as air today, is victory.

*Gamarjveba.*

We must no longer idealize the notion of sacrificing ourselves for a noble cause. Our destiny is not to fall for glory, nor to measure our worth in the praises of those who wage war upon us. Let the enemy's chroniclers compose their epics about how valiantly they fought against Georgians. Our task is greater. We must change our mindset. We must praise courage not from the ground of defeat, but from the height of victory. Let us be the ones who, from a position of strength, acknowledge the bravery of the defeated. For only then will we step out of the shadow of endless sacrifice and stand as the true authors of our own history.

The tenth issue of New Iveria magazine is being released at a time when the illegitimate regime, acting on orders from the Kremlin, is waging a virtual war against Georgia's most loyal friends, at a time when the entire opposition—both genuine and dubious—is in prison (in the best traditions of the KGB), the non-governmental sector is virtually paralyzed, the free media is on its last legs, and repression against the liberation movement is ongoing, all while the Georgian Dream party is carrying out a Bolshevik-style internal purge.



We must praise courage not from the ground of defeat, but from the height of victory.

Let us be the ones who, from a position of strength, acknowledge the bravery of the defeated. For only then will we step out of the shadow of endless sacrifice and stand as the true authors of our own history.

Is it any surprise that, by the 13th anniversary of the Georgian Dream's takeover of Georgia, words have lost their original meaning or that reason has lost its appeal, giving way to primal instincts? And here, in the realm of instincts, the only thing that matters is victory in the struggle for survival. So, my dear Georgians, let us no longer think about poetically "sacrificing ourselves", but instead prepare – and choose – to WIN. ■





Rati Mujiri



War or peace? When someone asks you such a question, you would undoubtedly be a fool not to choose peace. However, if you don't immediately ask yourself what peace without freedom means, then it's clear that someone else will ask, 'What kind of person are you?!' Peace without freedom is slavery. When this is not a boringly banal truth and when the society must discuss this issue, how can we avoid the question, 'What kind of society are we?'

'A war-torn one,' the same person will tell you, adding, 'We've had enough of fighting, suffering, and dying.'

And here the slave enters the stage. Not because we haven't fought, and even less because we haven't suffered enough, no...

When the biggest war of the twenty-first

century started, for the first forty-eight hours I had no idea whether I would survive or perish in the land of Ukraine. As it turned out later, I survived. However, before I survived, and in principle, before and after that, I had rubbed in all the mud of war more than once, and accordingly, I know exactly that anyone who has experienced war in their own skin and has saved the person within themselves would never stoop to speculation with war. They would never open a wound of a war-torn society, which seems superficially healed, but is rotten in the depths and smells of decaying corpse. They would never stoop to it because they know exactly what the disgusting reality of war is like.

Only a slave can stoop to speculation with war, and even more so stoop to it with a society

that has experienced was. The exalted slave. He can, to the extent that he has a complex about the master's strength, be particularly cruel. He is cruel because he has been given power precisely for this cruelty. He has been given it temporarily and unequivocally by the master. He is accountable to the source of this power and, therefore, must oppress everyone around him.

The exalted slave sees everyone around him as a slave, he cannot imagine being a human being, for him everyone who is not his master is a slave and that is why he despises them, the others. He despises them because he does not see himself among them and rightly so. He cannot allow an exception, he cannot allow anyone to survive. He must also subjugate others to slavery. This oppression is the guarantee of his temporary power. Oppression is a toy in the hands of the exalted slave, which makes him feel equal to the master.

This is the nature of the Ivanishvili regime today. A slave elevated to power by his Russian master, who must oppress in order to maintain it.

**anyone who has experienced war in their own skin and has saved the person within themselves would never stoop to speculation with war.**

He began his reign of oppression in disguise.

The mask he wore was that of a liberator. It doesn't matter what he was liberating people from. The important thing was that he called himself a 'liberator'.

While the war-torn society, exhausted and deceived, basked in the illusion of a liberating messiah, the former slave—now elevated—betrayed it to the very enemy who was, at the same time, his master. He delivered into hostile hands the most sensitive assets of that society: lists of special forces veterans from the Kodori operation, registers of Georgian intelligence officers operating in the occupied

territories, detailed sketches of Tbilisi's defensive fortifications, and even secured the release of individuals imprisoned on charges of Russian espionage. He facilitated the release of the master's agents, yet never once exposed a single agent of that same enemy-master.

This went on for years.

**The exalted slave sees everyone around him as a slave, he cannot imagine being a human being, for him everyone who is not his master is a slave and that is why he despises them, the others. He despises them because he does not see himself among them and rightly so.**

The emerged slave continued to dig out the foundation of national security, and he even went so far as to sink the Anaklia port. The port around which the founding of a city was even planned, and if not for the slave's rise to power as the ruler of a war-torn society, it



would have been built and developed a long time ago.

‘What do the Americans have to do in the Black Sea?!’—this is the question posed by the chief master of the newly ascended slaves. Yet the answer is self-evident: the ‘American Anaklia’ project, a deep-sea port on the Black Sea, is squarely in Georgia’s national interest and needs no further justification. But that is only part of the story. While they publicly and ostentatiously refused to move forward with the Anaklia port—citing alleged political or economic disagreements, and even hinting that it might still be built, though not by American hands—behind closed doors they also blocked the renovation of the Vaziani military airfield. Such a renovation would have

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amounted, in effect, to the construction of a completely new strategic facility.

There was a chance to build a modern air base on the multi-component Vaziani military base, where there is now a useless airfield. The general of the United States Transportation Command, Stephen Lyons, personally introduced this idea to Prime Minister Bakhtadze, and he was also delighted, but this initiative was followed by hysteria from the Kremlin and this project also failed.

This went on for years, and when Russia invaded Ukraine, its slaves were forced to take off all their masks, because the master already needed open support.

Since February 24, 2022, the regime of ascended slaves has been forced to take off its pro-Western mask; it needed something to justify its cruelty and oppressive nature, and it stooped to what, as I mentioned at the beginning, a human being would not stoop to—it opened the superficially healed wound of a war-torn society and scared it with another war. It directly blamed the collective West for the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia, wrapping it up sometimes as a ‘global war party’ and sometimes as a ‘deep state,’ and sold the surrender to the enemy Russia without a war as a policy of peace.

**If you want peace, prepare for war—haven’t these Putin’s slaves, heard at least this?!**

‘And because the wounds of war stink of decaying carrion, festering in their depths, part of the war-torn society was intimidated. Those who weren’t intimidated had their elections stolen and the regime became a Russian stronghold in the region.

If you want peace, prepare for war—haven’t these Putin’s slaves, heard at least this?!

What do states do when faced with the threat of war? They prepare their armies, begin to arm themselves, and develop technology.

Against this backdrop, the comfort and self-interest of the elevated slaves are hollowing out Georgia's sovereignty, dismantling national security, and leaving the country without allies. If this course continues, the day is not far when our war-torn society—so deliberately and systematically gutted—will itself become that very empty space, ready to be filled in an instant by Russian gas. And gas, as we know, suffocates indiscriminately: both the slave and the one who survived slavery.



If they do not have sufficient resources themselves, they seek and find strong allies.

Who does the aggressor attack? Those who are weak, defenceless, and easy to defeat.

How is the emerging military regime behaving? It is weakening the country, losing allies, and becoming easy prey for Russia.

Now that Western civilization, almost suffocated by Russian gas, has awakened and is making efforts to prevent a repeat of this, the emerged slave is furious: how dare Europe arm itself, how dare it increase its military budget, how dare it show the will to resist our master?

It's not just Central Europe, and the Euro-Atlantic space in general, that is preparing to defend itself against Russia; everyone around is. Moldova is firmly continuing to take its

place under the Western security umbrella. Azerbaijan has a Turkish lobby, and Turkey is a NATO member, so Azerbaijan has long since emerged from the shadow of the Kremlin. The people's leader Pashinyan, albeit with great losses, is still managing to reach a safe place, and it seems that Armenia has also irreversibly set foot on the Western path. As for Ukraine, which is stubbornly paving its European way at the cost of its own blood, we will not dwell on that.

Gas, as we know, is a substance that relentlessly fills every empty space. Against this backdrop, the comfort and self-interest of the elevated slaves are hollowing out Georgia's sovereignty, dismantling national security, and leaving the country without allies. If this course continues, the day is not far when our war-torn society—so deliberately and systematically gutted—will itself become that very empty space, ready to be filled in an instant by Russian gas. And gas, as we know, suffocates indiscriminately: both the slave and the one who survived slavery. ■





Jelger Groeneveld

# Banning political parties is not European

A PERSPECTIVE FROM  
THE NETHERLANDS



Last year, Georgian Dream vowed to make the Georgian political landscape 'healthy'. The spirit of this vow was not to promote policies and programmes to improve the functioning of parties or their style of communication, nor suggesting more international assistance to achieve that. To the contrary in fact and instead explicitly suggesting a wide range of political parties should be removed from the political spectrum altogether. Speaking in terms of health: to cut away 'cancer'. That is how most of the Georgian opposition has been painted by GD.

In other words, to be banned, not by surgical precision and prudence based on a real threat analysis, but by using a blunt axe without clearly defined criteria other than being former rulers and strong opposers to the incumbents with the

common denominator of being in favour of western integration. Various Georgian Dream representatives defended the idea by saying that banning political parties is a rather common and accepted practice in Europe, implying this is how European democracies work. This way, they justified to their electorate that political cleansing as envisaged in their election campaign is a democratic thing to do.

Obviously, this was scrutinized domestically as well as abroad, including debunking the idea of an alleged common practice in established European democracies such as Germany, Netherlands, or the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, Georgian Dream went ahead by installing the commission led by Tea Tsulukiani, which serves to pave the way for removing the UNM and all its alleged satellite parties from the

political spectrum by having them declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. At least, that is the plan.

But how common is this practice in for example the Netherlands, a well-established multi-party democracy with a wide range of parties and a long tradition of changing coalition governments? And how does this legally work?

Various overviews in response to Georgian Dream's casual remarks have shown that in the last 80 years only four parties have been banned in the Netherlands, which were all

Union (Nederlandse Volks-Unie, NVU) was forbidden in 1978 through the law on association but could not be dissolved. It effectively still exists today, albeit without any actual political influence.

The legal constraints kickstarted debate on changes in the legislation. By the late-1980s the prohibition was inextricably linked to dissolution, but Parliament urged restraint in its use. Even though a ban was now possible if an organization's activities or objectives were contrary to public order, the explanatory memorandum explicitly connected this to 'racial discrimination and



related to Nazism or neonazism. The Dutch collaborationist Nazi party, the NSB, was banned in the last year of World War II by the exiled government for obvious reasons, when the southern part of the Netherlands was liberated. Not long after, in the early 1950s, a (neo)nazi party founded by a former SS-colonel was banned.

In the late 70s and mid-80s, the period when the author grew up, a few far-right (neonazi) parties appeared, which triggered debate on the possibilities of banning them. Despite these parties operating in the electoral margins, to many people they hit a nerve of highly traumatic times. The legal framework was not fully in place to ban parties if desired. The Dutch People's

other prohibited discrimination', including 'incitement to hatred and expressions that constitute prohibited discrimination'. In the 1980s, the ghost of World War II still haunted Dutch society, with the war intrinsically associated with discrimination and racism.

After these changes, only one party has ever been banned and dissolved until today.

This, however, does not mean legislation is not updated with new needs in changing times. In 2019, D66 minister of Interior and Kingdom Relations, Kaja Ollongren, presented a new bill on political parties, which was sent for consideration to Parliament in May 2025, after it went through a thorough cycle of public consultations

and verification by the Council of State. The bill primarily focuses on strengthening the independent (legal) position of political parties and secondly on strengthening parliamentary democracy and the resilience of political parties. But it also contains a clause regarding party bans, narrowing down the criteria held so far.

According to the bill, a political party can be banned and dissolved by the Supreme

relation to a party ban is intended to address the democratic paradox: to prevent political parties from undermining the democratic constitutional state by abusing the democratic process. Within this framework, the Supreme Court must also assess whether political parties actually pose a threat to the democratic rule of law, including taking into consideration the actual (potential) degree of influence exerted by the political party. This is to ensure that a ban is only applied



Court at the request of the Attorney General, if it 'poses an actual and serious threat to the fundamental principles of the democratic constitutional state' by means of its objectives or activities. The bill defines these fundamental principles at minimum as upholding holding periodic, free elections with vote secrecy, democratic decision-making, fundamental rights, separation of

when really necessary in proportion to its actual threat.

The latter is an important factor in the Netherlands, which has a fully representative electoral system without a threshold for its 150-seat lower house. Multi-party coalition governments are the standard, which means the actual influence

**The focus on fundamental principles of the democratic constitutional state in relation to a party ban is intended to address the democratic paradox: to prevent political parties from undermining the democratic constitutional state by abusing the democratic process.**

powers, and an independent and impartial judiciary.

The focus on fundamental principles of the democratic constitutional state in

of any single party is limited. Parties with anti-democratic tendencies can be elected relatively easily, but it will be much more difficult for such a party to exert real influence. The Dutch political system with

a low bar on political representation and a bicameral Parliament, enshrined in a difficult to change constitution, is its own safeguard against political parties independently implementing anti-democratic changes.

This is entirely different in Georgia. The previous electoral system facilitated the long-term concentration of power in the hands of a single political party, exerting and expanding control over every branch of government. In the process, it was dissolving the separation of powers. Specifically under attack was the judicial branch, which decides over the legal fate of political parties. The legislative branch was also not left untouched, and is now controlled by a single party that can singlehandedly adopt, in tango with the executive branch, legislation that is

prevents. It is the unfortunate democratic paradox: a single party can undermine the democratic constitutional state by abusing the democratic process.

To conclude, banning political parties in the Netherlands has been and remains to this day a subject covered with much restraint and prudence, even considering the growth of the populist far-right since the turn of the century, with its discriminatory or anti-democratic rhetoric.

Party bans are not casually debated in order to silence any so-called undesired opposition or dissent and certainly not as an instrument to prevent competing parties from obtaining power. If anything, it could be called a taboo. A party ban is a 'last resort' to protect the democratic order and

**Banning political parties is highly associated with dictatorships and autocracies, and to many it is considered a sign of weakness if ideas and opinions are not fought by arguments but cancelled by legal procedures.**

designed to undermine the democratic constitutional state.

This is topped up with institutional control over election authorities, putting a pressure on free and fair elections that is required to guarantee a hold on power. The Georgian situation, the concentration of political, judicial, and institutional powers, without checks and balances, is exactly what the Dutch legal framework is

should therefore not be treated lightly and certainly not applied indiscriminately to a swath of parties at once.

In the Netherlands banning political parties is highly associated with dictatorships and autocracies, and to many it is considered a sign of weakness if ideas and opinions are not fought by arguments but cancelled by legal procedures. ■



Alexi (buka) Petriashvili



# Russia's War in Ukraine:

## A Struggle for Survival or...?!

At first glance, the main addressee of the question posed in the headline is Ukraine. For those who deliberately spread propaganda about the destruction and extermination of Ukraine ('the people are all finished; what have President Zelensky and the deep state done to poor Ukraine?', etc.), Ukraine is the only 'respondent'. These questions have, in principle, been answered at various times and in various circumstances by world leaders, politicians, and prominent public figures. However, let us attempt to compile a comprehensive list of individuals who, in my opinion, are accountable for these issues, to gain a clearer understanding of who is fighting for what.

### Ukraine:

Ukraine is obviously the main focus because Putin's Russia invaded its territory in 2014

and continues to wage war there to this day. A significant part of the country's territory (20%) has been occupied by Russia, which claims it as its own. Ukraine truly surprised the world in 2022 when Russia launched the largest act of aggression on a European country's soil since World War II. According to various forecasts, Kyiv was supposed to fall within 3 days to 3 weeks. Zelensky was expected to flee abroad into exile with his government and family, and Russia was supposed to re-establish dominance over all of Ukraine by installing a puppet regime loyal to Moscow.

Only a few weeks had passed since the start of the full-scale aggression when my friends and I arrived in Kyiv. The main assault on Kyiv and its surroundings had already been repelled, and the centre of Kyiv was very slowly and cautiously returning



to some semblance of normal life. While visiting one of the newly reopened cafés for lunch, a young waiter smiled and told us: ‘Russians were supposed to be sitting in your place right now; they had reservations for the entire cafe for March 8th.’

It didn’t work out; Ukrainian soldiers told us that they were defending their families and their land and would continue to do so at the cost of their lives until victory was achieved. Georgian soldiers immediately added that they were fighting not only for Ukraine, but also for the future of Georgia. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky often notes, and quite rightly so, that this war is not only for the existence and survival of Ukraine as a state and nation, but also for the long-term security of Europe and the world. This war was brought to Ukrainian territory by Putin’s Russia under completely fabricated pretexts, as if Ukraine were on the verge of joining NATO and that hypersonic weapons were going to be stationed on its territory. Unfortunately, this was nowhere near the truth (now, both are much more realistic).

Fortunately, Ukraine has withstood the aggression and continues to do so despite delayed or stalled international aid. Not only has it endured, but it is also prepared to fully move military operations onto Russian territory, provided there

is continuous support and cooperation, especially concerning the military-industrial complex. Even without moving operations into Russia, Ukraine would have had much greater success in the war against Russia were it not for Putin’s successful blackmail of the West with the threat of using nuclear weapons.

**This war is also of vital importance for Georgia; more precisely, Ukraine’s victory in it and Putin’s Russia’s defeat are a guarantee of Georgia’s long-term development and security.**

With the exception of an apocalyptic turn of events involving Russia’s use of nuclear weapons and the outbreak of a third world war, it can now be said with confidence that Ukraine will eventually become an inseparable part of democratic Europe and the Euro-Atlantic space. Ukraine’s membership in the European Union and NATO is inevitable. It will serve as the strongest and most resilient shield on Russia’s borders—even Russian



propagandists operating in Georgia concede that Ukraine has the strongest army, forged in battle with Russia—and will play a pivotal role in bolstering long-term security and stability. Here, I will reiterate the words of the heroic Georgians and echo the sentiment of

**Only the manifestation of unwavering will in concrete actions will ensure the long-term security of Europe and the Euro-Atlantic space.**

the majority of Georgian society: this war is also of vital importance for Georgia. More precisely, Ukraine's victory and the defeat of Putin's Russia would guarantee Georgia's long-term development and security.

## Europe

As I have said before, Ukraine is fighting not only for its own well-being, existence, and survival. We have heard many world leaders make statements on this subject. 'If we are not going to help Ukraine, we should start learning Russian,' said NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte. 'This is not only about

the future of Ukraine, but also an existential question for Europe as a whole,' British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has repeatedly noted in his speeches. 'Russia's defeat in Ukraine is crucial for Europe's security,' said French President Macron.

Compared to the first days and months of the war, Europe—especially Germany, Great Britain, Poland, and France—can't really be faulted. On the contrary, if it weren't for their aid alongside the U.S., Ukraine certainly couldn't have withstood the fight against Russia on its own. However... to be honest, I find the phrase, 'We will help Ukraine for as long as it takes,' very painful. Aside from the three Baltic states and Poland, who declared from the beginning that everything must be done to defeat Russia, the democratic world still gave us a feeling of being short-changed in the initial stages; a lack of readiness to see the fight through to the end was evident.

Although the rhetoric has shifted somewhat, there is still no firm belief, demonstrated through action, that Russia must be defeated. There is no conviction that Putin only respects force and that it will only be possible to bring him to the negotiating table and compel his capitulation by gaining a significant advantage. Putin's Russia cannot be defeated while there is constant uncertainty, with the hope of using





long-range German missiles appearing one day, only to fade, and then reappearing in a different form or as a rumour.

I don't even want to think about how long it took to reach an agreement on supplying aircraft, especially tanks. Any European leader would openly admit that, without American weaponry and intelligence, Europe would face great difficulty in defeating Russia. However, when the issue of selling American weapons to Ukraine arises, resistance emerges immediately. We understand the specifics of global politics, but can anyone explain to Ukrainian children, women, the elderly and heroic soldiers why an agreement cannot be reached on the timely purchase and delivery of 155 mm shells or Patriot systems to Ukraine?

Ukraine's heroic struggle has prompted NATO member countries to adopt a resolute stance on the issue of granting Ukraine and Georgia NATO membership. Had this decision been made in 2008, Russia's aggressive actions in 2008 and 2014 could potentially have been prevented. Furthermore, NATO allies often emphasise that the accession of Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova to NATO would prevent new Russian aggression, not only against these prospective members, but also against its current, smaller member states. It is highly unlikely that any NATO

member state's intelligence or military analytical service would claim otherwise: if Russia succeeds in Ukraine, it will inevitably continue its aggressive actions against other European countries, primarily the three Baltic states. Therefore, it should be clear what Europe must do to secure victory in Ukraine and defeat the Putin regime.

In my humble opinion, both Europe and the United States must first overcome their fear or apprehension regarding Putin's potential use of nuclear weapons. They should take every measure to paralyse the Russian economy, use the frozen Russian reserves in European banks to purchase weapons for Ukraine and support its reconstruction, and facilitate Ukraine's, as well as Georgia's and Moldova's, full integration into the European Union and NATO. Only by displaying a clear and unwavering commitment through concrete action can Europe and the Euro-Atlantic space ensure their long-term security.

### **The USA**

It is difficult to disagree with President Zelensky's statement that the previous U.S. administration could have done more, but without President Biden, Ukraine would not have received even the aid it has.

So, what is happening now under the Trump administration? By the time the reader sees this article, I hope (with cautious optimism!) that President Trump will already have made a decision to impose new, 'devastating' sanctions against Russia. I also hope that all issues between Europe and the U.S. regarding the purchase of American weaponry for Ukraine will have been resolved by then, and that the US will continue to provide Ukraine with satellite intelligence without hindrance.

Historically, it is not new for the U.S. to distance itself from European wars, but now we are facing a different kind of challenge. The U.S. cannot abandon Europe in its fight against Russia if it wants to prevent China from dominating Southeast Asia. The U.S. needs the war in Ukraine to end with Russia's defeat so that China does not have additional calculations regarding potential military actions against Taiwan (Mark Rutte states that China wants Europe and the U.S. to be maximally involved in the Ukraine war, so that it can have a free hand to attack Taiwan).

Donald Trump's stated policy of not getting involved in 'endless wars' is understandable. However, if new agreements with Europe were fully activated, Donald Trump, as a good 'dealmaker', would find himself in a very advantageous position. European money would be spent on American production, making the defeat of Russia with American weapons much more realistic. He might even get his hands on a Nobel Peace Prize.

When we talk about the statements, decisions, and actions of leaders and leading politicians in the democratic world, we should always remember that they pay close attention to public opinion.

The same is true for providing weapons to Ukraine: without the continued, serious

support of the American public for this issue, I doubt that Donald Trump and the vast majority of politicians, from both the Republican and Democratic parties, would have kept military aid to Ukraine and the use of tough measures against Russia as a top priority.

As for China, it is open about its desire for Ukraine to lose the war against Russia. However, it also claims that if China were involved, the war would have ended long ago with a Russian victory. While China doesn't want Russia to be defeated, it also highly values the American and European markets. Therefore, it will try to maintain the conflict in Ukraine at a low boil by supplying Russia with semiconductors and acquiring its oil and natural resources profitably, while bypassing sanctions.

Iran and North Korea are integral parts of the axis of evil; they need the political and financial support of both Russia and China. Therefore, as long as they have the opportunity, they will always try to profit from this war, even if it costs North Korea the lives of its citizens.

And finally,

## **Russia**

Russia can only keep its cannon fodder on the front lines by offering them high salaries. At this pace, however, it would take 84 years to conquer all of Ukraine. Now, imagine tens or even hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers returning home with no prospects, their psyches burdened by the trauma of war, especially the trauma of a lost war. This is one of the nightmarish scenes that haunts Putin. This also explains why he has not yet declared a general mobilisation. Doing so across the entire country would be very risky and disadvantageous for maintaining internal

political stability, as history has shown.

Unfortunately, in the first years of the full-scale war, Russia genuinely managed to shift its economy to a war footing and thereby avoided a collapse. However, concerns about impending difficulties for the Russian economy and businesses are growing louder, especially when they are voiced by officials or businesspeople close to the government. In fact, no one can deny anymore that the country's economy is entering a crisis. This might not lead to a rapid collapse, but it certainly signals growing problems for Putin and increasing dissatisfaction among the population.

Therefore, Putin is engaged in a battle of endurance to persuade the democratic world to accept terms that are favourable to him and disastrous for Ukraine. In my opinion, this is impossible. Therefore, Putin is actually fighting for his own survival.

However, if we look at the long term and weigh up the economic capabilities of the parties, Vladimir Putin is doomed to lose this war and face his political end. If he stops now, it will become clear that he has failed to achieve the goals of the 'special operation' while having sacrificed more than a million people to this war; if he does not stop, the outcome will be the same in the near future, but with an even worse economic and financial situation.

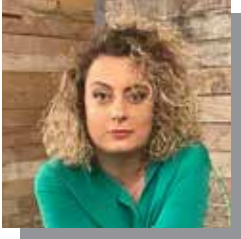
Putin thought he was fighting to restore his great dream—the Russian Empire and the Soviet glory of Stalin's time—and that this is how he would go down in history.

It has turned out that he is fighting to save his own skin. This is what happens after staying for 25 years in power and in a bunker.

Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes! ■







Tinatin Eradze

# The Second Life of the Purified

Or, How the Architects of Authoritarianism Become  
Experts in Critical Media



'I have never made a single mistake neither under Shevardnadze, nor under Saakashvili, nor under Ivanishvili!' declared a former 'Dreamer' who had been in every government, speaking on the air of one of the critical channels, diligently trying to convince viewers of his political integrity.

There are two things I do not believe in the Georgian political world: the conscience of those who remain in the Georgian Dream after the terrible story of Rafaliants<sup>1</sup> and in the morality of politicians who were right in all political times and under all circumstances—when they supported Ivanishvili, justifying him then and justifying him still now. However, they never take responsibility for the past. They never acknowledge, apologise for, or repent for anything.

'When we left, Ivanishvili started to mess things up. Before that, everything was fine.'

'The Dream started to change course in 2019.'

'I was a representative of the Georgian Dream coalition, not a member of the party.'

'We reformed the Supreme Court!'

'When I was a member of the government, I criticised it from within.'

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1. The "Rafaliants case" refers to the tragic death of Barbare Rafaliants, a 10-month-old infant, who was found dead in a pitcher in the village of Kolagi, Kakheti, on October 1, 2012. The case gained immense political notoriety during Georgia's 2012 parliamentary elections. The political opposition at the time, the Georgian Dream coalition, used the incident to accuse the then-ruling party, the United National Movement (UNM), of orchestrating the murder for political intimidation. This accusation was made without a full and complete investigation and was widely viewed as a political tool to sway public opinion during the election campaign. The case remains a highly politicized and unresolved tragedy.

You'll primarily hear these and similar quotes on 'critical' channels. Government-affiliated media, of course, no longer gives airtime to those who have been ousted from its ranks; they only extract and present to viewers snippets that align with their

**Former faces of the Dream government don't refuse invitations to 'critical' media shows, yet no one on these programs is particularly keen on evaluating or reevaluating their own political past.**

propaganda. You often hear such phrases from people who were strengthening the Dream government precisely when the foundations of authoritarianism were being laid and the destruction of political opponents was beginning. It should have been clear from the outset to any discerning eye that the Dream's rule would not bring anything good to the country but would instead lead it toward an abyss.

Former faces of the Dream government don't refuse invitations to 'critical' media shows, yet no one on these programs is particularly keen on evaluating or reevaluating their own political past. Questions about their past are irritating to them; they only want to share their own 'expert' analysis. If they are asked critical questions about their past, they get irritated and accuse the journalist of bias (which, by the way, is also a key characteristic of current Dreamers: getting angry at critical questions and attacking journalists). Some might say there's no such thing as a former Georgian Dream supporter, and they might be right. You'd have a hard time naming a former who has analysed their own past, taken responsibility, and apologized—sorry for strengthening the Russian regime, for helping a Russian oligarch come to power and then ensuring his stability for years to

come, for saying that Putin is not an enemy, for putting criminals and spies of every kind on a list of 'political prisoners' and releasing them from prison, for voting for thousands of harmful laws, either because of party expediency or in exchange for promotion or other material benefits... No one has yet apologised for claiming that Georgia started the August 2008 war.

They've left all their sins in the past and have appeared in this new era completely spotless and pure. Now Kobakhidze has become the destroyer of the country, otherwise, while they themselves were there, Ivanishvili was a pro-Western philanthropist devoted to his homeland. And no, you won't hear much sharp criticism of Ivanishvili even now (it seems no one wants to burn their bridges completely).

Today, the only platform they have is the 'critical' media. They sit there with grim faces, assessing current events, condemning the opposition, distancing themselves from the United National Movement (UNM) and portraying themselves as impartial observers. They are neither Dreamers nor 'nationalists' and seem to dislike everyone in the opposition. They also never fail to emphasise that both the UNM and Georgian Dream are equally evil. One of them even said, 'We've been like this for 30 years; nothing special is happening now.' In other words, let's ignore everything that has been happening in Georgia in recent years—the

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change in the country's Western course, the disappearance of NATO membership from the agenda, and the successive sanctioning of high-ranking officials and judges by Europe and America—none of this has been anything special...

I've had my own attempts, and it's better to confess your sins. I've tried to interview

**In addition to political talk shows, the 'Purified' are also periodically featured in entertainment shows, where their positive image PR reaches its peak... Once, one of the former top Dreamers was dancing the Acharuli dance on a 'critical' media channel. It wasn't like he was disguised at the beginning and his identity was revealed at the end; no—it really was him and he really was dancing Acharuli while everyone around him was cheering him on. It was so much fun that I had completely forgot that in 2012 he compiled a list of 'political prisoners' full of GRU officers and terrorists.**

some of them, not as experts but as people who know the inner workings of the Dream, but every attempt to get them to reveal something from the old days that would shake Ivanishvili's regime has ended in failure.

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the end; no—it really was him and he really was dancing Acharuli while everyone around him was cheering him on. It was so much fun that I had completely forgot that in 2012 he compiled a list of 'political prisoners' full of GRU officers and terrorists.

Setting aside the attempts to whitewash and ennoble them, the main question remains: what electoral weight do these people have, and what does giving them time and a platform bring for the side opposing the Dream regime? To what extent are former Dreamers being instrumentalized as a new resource?

Theoretically, it's possible to use former Dream members as a bridge for voter transfer, but not in a situation where they have no desire to analyse their own past. In reality, this is just their attempt at self-

**Theoretically, it's possible to use former Dream members as a bridge for voter transfer, but not in a situation where they have no desire to analyse their own past. In reality, this is just their attempt at self-legitimization, and to achieve this, they simply use 'critical' media, especially since they don't represent an opposition force themselves and only share their expert opinions that are, as a rule, out of touch with the pulse of the majority of citizens (such as, for example, on the issue of opposition parties participating in the local elections in 2025: According to polls, the majority of opposition-minded voters do not support participating in the elections, while former Dream politicians, now resettled on the opposition flank, are trying with all their might to convince us of the necessity of entering elections against an authoritarian regime.**

**At the same time, critical media outlets feature expert politicians who do not enjoy the trust of voters and cannot even gain support from people on their own Facebook pages, yet they lecture opposition-minded voters and those who fought against Ivanishvili for 13 years on how to get rid of the disaster they themselves helped create in this country over many years.**

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affiliated media does not favour these people, when they express their positions on similar issues, they still give them a little airtime (everything has a reward!).

All of this is countered by the government-affiliated media, whether television, online, or print, with a well-organized information policy, a clearly defined plan, and a unified message box. It's the same routine: stories with the same themes, the same titles, and the same respondents. The more absurd the story, the more enthusiastically the propaganda shoves it down people's throats.

In addition to informational stress, Dream Media also subjects its viewers to entertainment-related stress. These shows, which appear out of nowhere, can shock the audience so much that they become glued to the screen, completely helpless in the face of the information that is being thrown at them. At the same time, critical media outlets feature expert politicians who do not enjoy the trust of voters and cannot even gain support from people on their own Facebook pages, yet they lecture opposition-minded voters and those who fought against Ivanishvili for 13 years on how to get rid of the disaster they themselves helped create in this country over many years.

And yet, who are these people's voters? Who is influenced by their opinion? Especially when they either don't represent political parties at all or are members of parties whose ratings aren't even measurable by polls and can't make it onto the list of 'other parties'.

Let's think about this. ■





Keti Kurdovanidze

## Write down your dream?!

### Or how the Soviet dream remained in the consciousness of post-Soviet people and how it became the political program of the ‘Georgian Dream’

At the end of the 18th century, shortly after the fateful Treaty of Georgievsk came into force, the Georgian man’s dream was somehow based on the Russian narrative, the main characteristics of which were: autocracy, sentimentalism, presenting the past as an idyll, inaction, passive social self-awareness, and the animalistic enjoyment of a simple, stable, and dull everyday life. The Georgian man soon turned this dream into a way of life: he created a conformist’s quiet existence in a society where there is no struggle, no work, no critical thought and debate, where a good horse and a rifle determine human status, learning and education are branded as enemies of happiness, and a book is considered a woman’s job, taking into account the discriminatory context.

I hope you recognize the living environment of the central figure of this era—Luarsab Tatkaridze<sup>1</sup>. It is a world in which change threatens not only the policies of the conqueror but also the entrenched, almost beastly, daily life of the conquered—those who remain unconsciously loyal to Russian rule. In this context, the dream of a Georgian of that period becomes fully absorbed into the Russian narrative: Russia as master and guarantor of peace, the wealthy and invincible sovereign who will mercilessly hang

anyone daring to speak of abolishing serfdom. Even the fantastical tree of diamonds and rubies that Luarsab imagines grows only in the court of the Russian sovereign—guarded by a mighty army, forever beyond the reach of men like him, and therefore attainable only in dreams.

Luarsab thus embodies, in literature, the decline of critical thought under the demeaning embrace of Russian protectorate rule. If *Oblomovshchina*<sup>2</sup> captures the paralysis of the Russian soul, then Tatkaridze is its Georgian counterpart—a reflection of passivity, dependency, and submission to the empire.

The dream of the Georgian of the Stalinist era is even more closely connected to the Russian narrative, which was conditioned by the revolution, wars, and the sense of collective victory, especially in the Second World War, under Stalin’s leadership. Collectivism, hatred of the intellectual elite and everything different, and the disappearance of individual freedom were connected to the dream of the Georgian of the Stalinist era. The triumph achieved through the Georgian with an imperial identity—‘our Soso (Jughashvili)’—was translated into a national victory and still lives on today in Stalinist groups that have turned into a sect.

1. Luarsab Tatkaridze: A fictional character created by the Georgian writer Ilia Chavchavadze in his satirical story ‘Is That a Man?’ (1858-1863). Tatkaridze symbolizes the passive, ignorant Georgian noble loyal to Russian rule, embodying stagnation, dependence, and the decline of national consciousness.

2. *Oblomovshchina*: A term derived from the protagonist Ilya Oblomov in Ivan Goncharov’s novel *Oblomov* (1859), denoting apathy, inertia, and social stagnation. It came to symbolize the broader cultural and moral paralysis of the Russian gentry in the 19th century.



The destruction and repression of the old intellectual elites led to the emergence of new social strata—the red intelligentsia and the working class. Accordingly, a new dream emerged—for the intelligentsia to receive

*The destruction and repression of the old intellectual elites led to the emergence of new social strata—the red intelligentsia and the working class. Accordingly, a new dream emerged—for the intelligentsia to receive privileges through loyalty and obedience to the government, and for the working class and peasantry to receive the Order of the Red Banner of Labor, which, on the one hand, would free them from the innate fear and responsibility of independent existence, and on the other hand, would impose a perpetual obligation before the party.*

privileges through loyalty and obedience to the government, and for the working class and peasantry to receive the Order of the Red Banner of Labor, which, on the one hand, would free them from the innate fear and responsibility of independent existence, and on the other hand, would impose a perpetual obligation before the party.

If we look closely, the dreams of Soviet people in general did not differ from the desires of ordinary people, although the scale of these desires was so meager, petty, infantile, and sometimes even humiliating that it left the Soviet people with no chance of being affiliated with the civilised world.

For example, doesn't everyone dream of a stable and secure life? But what did the average Soviet citizen mean by such a life? Above all: no war, no famine, no shortage of bread or kerosene, and at least some clothes, shoes, and shelter. For the Georgian of the Stalinist era, the nature or quality of these things hardly mattered, because his overriding goal was simple physical survival. This explains why people who had been repressed, scarred by war, and stripped of dignity could still mourn the death of the very leader

who had executed their parents, spouses, and loved ones, deported them, or sacrificed them to someone else's war. More shocking still, for decades many even longed for the return of the Stalinist era, driven by a grotesque belief: 'After the war, Stalin made everything cheaper. Had he lived longer, everything would have been free.' Such was the boundless poverty of imagination, born of despair and ignorance. And yet, can we really be surprised that a peasant later believed the promises of a billionaire who, with the help of well-known actors, assured them that every village would receive \$5 million?



The post-Stalinist era gave way to the so-called 'stagnation' period—years of political and social stability, or rather, a stable swamp. To the Georgian's dream was now added a new mercantile element—'Soviet happiness'—carefully molded in accordance to the Russian narrative. And what did this happiness consist of? Above all, an apartment that the Georgian

worker had waited years to receive. Yet even this reward was not his private property: it belonged to the state, which could evict him at any moment. In truth, it was never a home of one's own but merely a temporary shelter, granted conditionally and revocable at will.

Soviet architecture reflected the same ethos, manifested in thousands of drab and graceless projects: the Khrushchevkas, Czech, Moscow, Lviv, Kavlashvili blocks, and countless others. Within these cramped shelters, the Soviet citizen arranged and rearranged the objects of his modest dreams, struggling to fit them into narrow, uniform spaces. Later, the advent of cooperative housing introduced the illusion of



private space—an ostensible symbol of wealth and freedom. Yet such apartments remained the privilege of the Soviet elite; for the ordinary person, they were not merely unattainable but scarcely imaginable.

For example, owning a car such as a Volga or a Zhiguli was a symbol of success. People would save money for years to join the queue and buy their dream car at the official price. Zaporozhets and Moskvich were the only cars sold without a queue, intended for the working class. Often, the car would become more expensive, meaning that the accumulated money would only be enough for a Moskvich or a Zaporozhets. A proud Georgian wouldn't even get into one of those as a taxi, let alone park one in his own yard.

For Soviet Georgians, the issue of vacationing was a thorny one. There were elite sanatoriums: Sinopi, the Borjomi Plateau, Litfond, and the

Artists' House in Bichvinta, among others. Only the Soviet elite could afford to holiday here; ordinary mortals and their children had to make do with vouchers for cheap holiday homes with rooms for ten people and pioneer camps. The real dream for complete Soviet happiness was travelling abroad, achievable in socialist countries but unattainable in capitalist ones. Only the elite party nomenklatura and the red intelligentsia travelled to capitalist countries, accompanied by security officials.

Nevertheless, the average Soviet citizen did not lose faith in justice. He sincerely believed that his work would be appreciated, that people would be equal, that he would have a house and a car, that he would be able to travel abroad and that he would be accepted into university without connections or bribery. He believed in this falsehood that was publicised and was waiting for a better future. And so it came: The so-called perestroika or transformation era. The Russian narrative spread the myth that the system could be changed from within, and people believed in Gorbachev's 'new thinking' and the farce of democracy.

The restoration of national identity and the achievement of independence became the dream of the Georgians. However, this could only be achieved through war, bloodshed, and Russian tanks. The overthrow of the first president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, and the arrival of Shevardnadze brought the corrupt post-Soviet elite, crime, informal control by the state bodies, nepotism, bribery and economic hardship back to Georgia for ten years. The Russian occupation continued with the de facto loss of Samachablo and Abkhazia. Nevertheless, the dream of the Georgians was to get closer to the West, albeit with a passive approach: 'Europe, look at us; America, help us; Mother of God, save us.'

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Shevardnadze's position fit the Russian narrative well: A pro-Western policy infused with the rules of the Russian game. The Rose Revolution once and for all separated the post-Soviet symbiosis of these two antinomies and overthrew the myth of two Russias and



two Wests, which proved fatal for the Russian regimes in Georgia. Today, when the Ivanishvili regime is trying to restore this Russian narrative and its entire propaganda machine is working on the rehabilitation of the legend of two Russias and two Wests, everyone but the regime's propagandists and the feeble-minded scoffs at this nonsense.

And yet, from a historical perspective, the Ivanishvili regime adapted to the Russian narrative most successfully, convincing Georgians who dreamed of Western prosperity with almost no effort that the oligarch would use the millions he earned in Russia for the well-being of Georgians; that Russia, unlike the West, 'will not take away our Georgianness' and will only limit itself to (!) seizing territories; that the West wants to drag Georgia into a war and is therefore orchestrating a coup against the Ivanishvili regime, which saved the country from war by refusing to join the European Union and

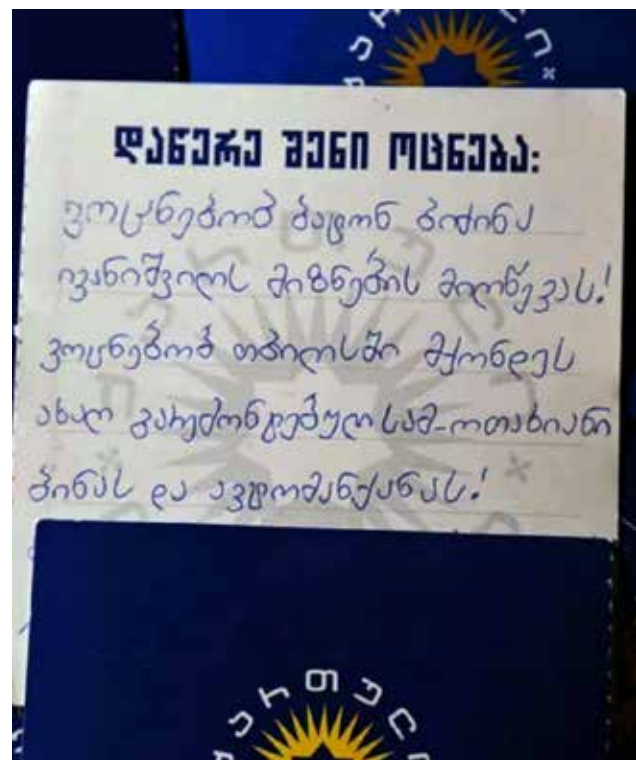
*Thus, the image of a philanthropist was gradually replaced by that of a peacemaker, who doesn't need to spend money, bribe the intelligentsia and voters, or get too worked up.*

saved Georgian men from getting married. Thus, the image of a philanthropist was gradually replaced by that of a peacemaker, who doesn't need to spend money, bribe the intelligentsia and voters, or get too worked up.

The other day, my nephew recalled the papers that Dream distributed before the 2012 elections, asking voters to write down their dreams. I remember with what enthusiasm and inspiration the Dream supporters wrote down their dreams on these flimsy papers, then took photos and shared them on their personal pages as a given that would surely come true. What a kaleidoscope of dreams they had: apartments, cars, jobs, high salaries, plots of land, tuition funding... There were also more naive and simple dreams, but none of them expresses the economic, mental, and psychological state of our poor people as accurately and meticulously as this card:

Write down your dream.

'I dream of achieving Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili's dream, I dream of having a newly renovated three-room apartment and a car in Tbilisi.' (The author's style, spelling, and punctuation are preserved).



I wonder where or how the author of this card is now, is he lying on a couch in Georgia and watching Nadezhda TV, or is he, having survived Mexican adventures, working tirelessly—separated from his family and loved ones—to fulfil his second and third dreams, just like the first one. Oh well, who knows, the ways of the Lord are unfathomable.

This small piece of paper reminded me not only of the misfortune that occurred in my country in 2012 but also prompted me to consider the issue more broadly. It made me consider how the Soviet dream remained in the consciousness of the post-Soviet person and how it became the political programme of the so-called Georgian Dream. The Georgian Dream, as both a political force and a cultural phenomenon, seems to be a natural continuation of this unformed post-Soviet mindset. Consequently, we have a state in which citizens fear change and progress, preferring to live under the protection of a powerful patron despite the violence, injustice,

*neither independence, nor integration into the European Union, nor democracy can be a guarantor of freedom, because freedom begins where dreaming no longer means relying on others, inaction, fear, and conformism.*

repression, and economic hardship they endure at his hands.

Today, in this time of trial, we must understand that neither independence, nor integration into the European Union, nor democracy can be a guarantor of freedom, because freedom begins where dreaming no longer means relying on others, inaction, fear, and conformism. And so, as long as this dream exists, the country is not destined for development, and people are not destined for peace and well-being. ■







Gia Gotua

## Another Republic



### An Alternative History of 1992–2008

Giorgi Beridze was twelve years old when tanks did not enter Tbilisi. He was born in 1980. His father was an engineer who worked at the Institute of Metallurgy, and like seven hundred thousand other citizens of Georgia, he was a member of the Communist Party. His mother was a teacher of Georgian language and literature and sympathised with the national movement. Giorgi's parents often argued about politics; consequently, he disliked it.

In actual history, an armed coup d'état, instigated by Russia, took place in Georgia in December 1991, and the state collapsed. In the alternative history that we're telling here, however, this event unfolded differently, to everyone's surprise. Patriotism and reason overcame rivalry and greed.

In January 1992, in this alternative history, Georgia faces a backdrop of almost the same tension as in real history. Part of the

former Communist elite and some activists of the national movement oppose Zviad Gamsakhurdia's government. Traces of Russian activity are visible everywhere—the capital is slowly filling with weapons.

But something unexpected happens. In the first days of January, Eduard Shevardnadze and several influential members of Gamsakhurdia's inner circle secretly meet in Moscow. Historians still argue about what happened and why the parties decided to de-escalate the situation. Some point to intrigues within the Russian government, suggesting that forces opposed to Shevardnadze were gaining the upper hand. In a bid for revenge, he decided to start his own game. Some analysts point to the role of Ukrainian mediators.

In short, the fact is that some kind of agreement was reached. The issue of privatization was probably the most important



part of this deal. The nomenklatura received certain guarantees for the preservation of their property.

For Giorgi, this was good news. Life was already getting harder. Many things had disappeared from the store shelves and, consequently, from the dinner table. His parents were finding it increasingly difficult to make a living. Against this backdrop, there was one less reason for his parents to argue.

The agreement that was reached was not ideal. Later, many of the problems faced by the country would be attributed to it. However, it was definitely pragmatic. Gamsakhurdia was to remain in power until the elections at the end of 1992. The privatization process was entrusted to the National Property Council, which had equal representation from politicians, economic leaders, and the so-called intelligentsia. It was no surprise to anyone that the majority of the property ultimately ended up in the hands of the nomenklatura.

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However, the country was experiencing economic difficulties. Most factories had closed, and operating enterprises were producing far fewer goods. Against this backdrop of hardship, two television shows became particularly popular: Latin American soap operas and parliamentary debates. Parliamentary debates, which often seemed rather pointless, instilled some hope for the future in the weary audience.

By 1995, the Second Republic had taken on a distinct form. Zviad Gamsakhurdia's supporters won the elections. In accordance with a previously signed agreement, they were able to enshrine several provisions in the

constitution. Orthodoxy was declared the state religion. According to one of the articles of the constitution, protecting the rights of Georgians became the goal of the state. The basics of the Orthodox faith became a compulsory subject in schools. Social and demographic policies aimed to increase the number of ethnic Georgians and encourage them to settle in regions populated by ethnic minorities.

However, Gamsakhurdia and his supporters were unable to consolidate their power. According to the new constitution, Georgia became a mixed parliamentary-presidential republic. In the proportionally elected parliament, the ruling party faced strong opposition from two factions: the Democrats' bloc, a complex and contradictory union of nomenklatura and activists, and the Regions Bloc, consisting mainly of MPs representing local elites who were elected by the populations of Abkhazia, Adjara, and Javakheti. According to political observers, both forces received support from Russia.

The regional elite's representation in parliament often prevented useful reforms from being implemented on the ground. However, the presence of ethnic minority representatives in the same union also prevented ethnic and regional conflicts from being incited. Behind the scenes, Eduard Shevardnadze acted as an influential figure. The war in Samachablo came to an end, however a final settlement between the opposing sides was not possible, and the Tskhinvali region continued to exist as an unrecognised quasi-state under the 'protection' of Russian soldiers.

In 1995, Zviad Gamsakhurdia unexpectedly passed away. Despite the widespread reverence for his figure, his supporters lost the elections held the following year. The time had come for Shevardnadze.

The economy was improving. Trade with other countries was slowly expanding. In addition to Russia and other post-Soviet states, the country gained new trading partners. Tourism was also gradually growing. The discovery of new oil reserves on the Caspian Sea shelf became a significant turning point. The country came to the attention of the

United States and Europe. Shortly before losing the election, Gamsakhurdia's government had signed an agreement with the U.S. that involved building an oil pipeline through Georgia. Shevardnadze, who had secretly promised the Russians he would reconsider this agreement, was in no hurry to do so. Russia, too, was slowly approaching an economic crisis and didn't have time for Georgia.

The ageing Shevardnadze no longer had



the energy or willpower to do much. He was unable to cope with the widespread corruption within his inner circle and throughout the state apparatus. Controversy within his inner circle was commonplace—one might even say it was one of the levers of governance at his disposal. However, a confrontation was slowly brewing that he could no longer control. It was the clash between the team of so-called young reformers and the nomenklatura.

In 1996, Giorgi entered the university. He



chose International Relations as his major, probably due to his mother's influence. His father's connections and financial resources were insufficient to secure him a place at Tbilisi State University. However, the private university

he enrolled at had a good reputation. Many honest and qualified academics and staff found their way to Tbilisi Independent University. Rumour had it that the university was financed by one of the wealthy Georgians living in Moscow.

New players were also emerging on Georgia's political and economic scene. From the early 2000s onwards, ethnic Georgians who had made their fortunes in Russia became increasingly involved in Georgian politics. In this context, five individuals in particular were mentioned, and their relationships were periodically tense. Shevardnadze was becoming increasingly powerless in the context of these developments. Many oligarchs were buying up land and properties at minimal prices from bankrupt or cash-strapped nomenklatura.

At that time, the opposition had been weakened. Regional leaders played only a nominal role within it. The Round Table coalition was weakened by sharp internal divisions. Nevertheless, Round Table structures played an important role in Georgian public life. They created a powerful network of activists, especially in the regions. These activists played an essential role in all local and national protests, becoming a formidable force for the local and national elite. This forced the elite to reconsider many of their decisions. It could be argued that the opposition also represented a Georgian version of civil society, playing an important role in public life.

The political landscape changed in 2002. The democratic bloc disintegrated. With the support of Western-funded NGOs, young reformers left Shevardnadze's camp. The Round Table also finally split. Some of its activists joined the coalition with the young reformers. Dissatisfaction with the deteriorating economic situation and corruption was growing. A series of protests were held in the regions and in Tbilisi. Following the 2003 elections, the coalition of young reformers and Round Table supporters won. The coalition took two-thirds of the seats in parliament. This victory was not only determined by broad public support. Behind the scenes, the winning bloc had also gained

the support of the regional elite and some of the oligarchs.

The new government was faced with many challenges. On the one hand, many issues required swift and radical intervention. On the other hand, the government relied on a broad coalition of supporters and had to consider the interests of the various groups within it. One such disagreement concerned the tough policy of combating crime and the planned changes to law enforcement structures. Despite the coalition's broad consensus on the need to tackle organised crime, heated discussions took place regarding democratic control of law enforcement agencies. Implementing a zero tolerance policy caused some tension, particularly in the regions. Against this backdrop, opposition sentiments emerged not only among the general public, but also within the ruling coalition and among local activist groups.

Following several high-profile incidents and public discussions, a compromise was reached in early 2006. Within the coalition, a decision was made to shift the focus of efforts towards strengthening the independence of the judiciary. According to the agreement, the judiciary was to play a pivotal role both in overseeing law enforcement and in combatting crime.

Ultimately, reforming the police and criminal justice system became one of the new government's most popular and widely supported moves.

Reforms in other areas did not proceed at an acceptable or pleasing pace for everyone. Thanks to the efforts of the new government, much of the country's economic activity emerged from the shadows. Tax reform and policies aimed at attracting foreign investment also proved effective.

However, both the opposition and some members of the ruling coalition resisted reforming the state apparatus and privatisation. The government's plans for saving and creating jobs were unclear. In the fight against corruption, some small entrepreneurs and state sector employees found themselves outside informal security mechanisms, causing dissatisfaction.

Ultimately, this debate also ended with a certain compromise within the government coalition. A strong component for small and medium-sized businesses was added to the economic policy. Relatively small but robust social safety mechanisms were included in the social policy. The issue of land privatization also moved forward, with politicians agreeing to consider both economic efficiency and the interests of local communities in the process.

Relations with the oligarchs were not simple either. Some of them supported the new government and preferred to operate

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behind the scenes, sometimes competing and sometimes reaching agreements with one another. One oligarch openly opposed the government and spearheaded the creation of a new opposition coalition, aided by his own television station. However, the opposition was not monolithic either. Gradually, opposition and civil groups that had emerged from within society also developed, including political parties, trade unions, community organizations, and others.

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In terms of foreign policy, although allied relations with the West were strengthening, the main problem remained the relationship with Russia. The Kremlin was dissatisfied with losing its leverage inside the country, as well as with the new government's active policy towards the Tskhinvali region. In 2007, an alternative administration for the Tskhinvali



region was created with Tbilisi's support. Some Ossetian villages came under the supervision of this administration. This presented a real possibility for the peaceful reintegration of the region into Georgia.

Confronted with this prospect and Georgia's growing rapprochement with the West, Russia became concerned and began to develop invasion plans. Russia started to prepare the necessary infrastructure and conduct military exercises. Experts in Russia, Georgia, and Western countries actively discussed possible invasion scenarios. There was a broad discussion on this topic in the country, including on opposition channels. The first footage of Russian tanks entering via the Roki Tunnel on 1 August 2008 was shown on one of these small, independent opposition

channels. From there, it spread to news channels worldwide, overshadowing the start of the Olympic Games in Beijing. Amidst the ongoing small-scale clashes between Georgian and Russian forces, an emergency meeting of NATO leaders was convened. Subsequently, French President Sarkozy first visited Moscow and then travelled to Tbilisi. The hostilities were halted.

In August 2008, Giorgi went to the recruitment office and volunteered for the army. However, by the time he was ready to go, the military action had already ended. At the time, he was working as a history teacher. After graduating from university, he had initially worked for a non-governmental organisation before moving to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, two years prior to these events, he realised that the most valuable thing he could do for his country was to be a teacher. Moreover, due to a successful education reform, the school had become a prestigious and financially secure place of employment. According to an ambitious plan developed by the Ministry of Education, by 2020 schools were supposed to have fully transitioned to a new model. Taking local specifics into account, this model resembled the Finnish school system.

In September 2008, teacher Giorgi set an essay task for his eleventh-grade homeroom class. Students were asked to answer the following question in their essay: How would you assess Georgia's development since 1992? One evening, Giorgi was sitting in the staff room. He was surprised and delighted to read an essay by Mari, a student who had recently joined the class. The essay ended like this:

'It's true that we lost a lot of time, but I believe that we still became a state. This happened because, at the right time, the citizens of Georgia stopped fighting for power and chose to serve the country instead! ■







David Khvadagiani



# GEORGIAN “JAMES BOND” NIKOLOZ (KOLIA) NIZHARADZE

Nizharadze was a counterintelligence officer in the General Staff of the Georgian People's Guard who carried out several important operations and became a real rage to the local satellite of the Russian Communist Party and Georgian Bolshevik underground. He was mentioned fragmentarily, only by surname, in various publications of the Democratic Republic of Georgia period, including the newspaper *Kommunisti*. His traces were erased by the Soviet occupation and emigration in 1921.

A century later, deciphering his identity became a difficult task for historians, as

this common surname did not reveal his first name, position, or other identifying information. However, the important events in which a certain Nizharadze, shrouded in mystery, took an active part were such key and successful operations of the Georgian special services that gathering and tracking down information bit by bit made it possible to reconstruct the identity of this man, full of heroic and tragic adventures.

According to some reports, Nizharadze took part in the crackdown on a Bolshevik rally in Alexander Garden on 10 February 1918. The emigrant and former Social Democrat Porfiry Mekhuzla wrote about Nizharadze in his memoirs: 'N. Nizharadze participated in the rally in the Garden of the Communards on the day of the salvo firing during the years of Georgia's independence.' It is therefore highly probable that he was assigned by the Guard's General Staff at this time to coordinate with the Transcaucasian Commissariat's special detachment, which carried out this punitive operation and thwarted the attempted Bolshevik coup.

From these fragmentary glimpses in the republic's press and archives, we knew that, in 1918, Nizharadze arrested Budu Mdivani in Kutaisi. In the same year, he also arrested Tengiz Zhgenti in Tbilisi; Zhgenti had been living illegally in his cousin's house near Alexander's Garden. Also in 1918, he arrested Efrem Eshba, an Abkhaz Bolshevik who had come to Tbilisi to carry out illegal activities and was hiding at his girlfriend's house.

The press also preserved the story of the robbery of road engineer Chkheidze, who was transporting 1,200,000 roubles in wages for workers on the Georgian Military Highway in the town of Pasanauri and was robbed by bandits on 9 March 1920. The investigation



of the case was entrusted to the head of the criminal police, Platon Pachulia, to whom the General Staff of the People's Guard sent Nizharadze as an assistant. Pachulia and Nizharadze solved the crime in the shortest possible time, arresting all the robbers and returning the stolen money.

### **Who was Nikoloz Nizharadze?**

Nikoloz (Kolia) Nizharadze was born in 1888 in the village of Maghlaki, Kutaisi province. In 1903 he graduated from the Kutaisi Classical Gymnasium.

In 1904-1907 he studied pharmacy at the D.M. Kandelaki pharmacy in the city of Batumi and became a pharmacist.

In 1904, he became a member of the Social Democratic Party and was actively involved in political activities, and personally knew Noe Zhordania, carrying out his party assignments.

From 1908 to 1910, he worked as a pharmacist's assistant at E.K. Okrinsky's pharmacy in the city of Poti. From 1911 to 1913, he served as the manager of the pharmacy at the Supsa station in Guria. In 1914-1915, he worked as a pharmacy manager in Khashuri. From 1915 to 1918, he worked as the head of the pharmacy at the Lazaret of the Transcaucasian Union of Cities in Tbilisi.

While working in various parts of Georgia, Nikoloz Nizharadze continued his party and political activities. Following Russia's February Revolution, the collapse of the empire, and soon after, the declaration of Georgia's independence, due to his political experience, he was appointed as the head of counterintelligence in the newly formed People's Guard.

### **The year 1919**

Nikoloz Nizharadze was actively involved in one of the main counterintelligence operations carried out by the security services of the Democratic Republic of Georgia in 1919. The Bolshevik uprising of November 7, 1919 against the Democratic Republic of Georgia, which was directed from Soviet Russia, was defeated before it began. The Special Unit

(Security Service) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Georgia had successfully infiltrated one of its agents, Corporal Estate Pichkhaya, into the insurgent illegal headquarters, the so-called Garrison Military Council, which included 22 military personnel from Georgian army units stationed in Tbilisi who had defected to the Bolsheviks' side.

Pichkhaia provided crucial information to the head of the Special Detachment, Melkisedek (Meki) Kedia. The secret headquarters, led by the Georgian Bolshevik Ilia Mgeladze ("Khoroghli"), who had arrived illegally from Soviet Russia, was arrested two days before the uprising was set to begin. The arrests took place in Room 15 of the Hotel Aurora on Vorontsov Square, where they were to give final directives to the military to incite an uprising in the Tbilisi garrison. Along with him, 22 military personnel were arrested. For the sake of



*The first session of the Constituent Assembly of Georgia, March 12, 1919.*



*The press box of the Founding Assembly, where Nikoloz Nizharadze sits with journalists and representatives of the nation.*

conspiracy, Kedia also arrested his own agent, Estate Pichkhaia, who was released a few days later on the grounds of 'lack of evidence'.

The arrested Bolsheviks smuggled a backup plan for the uprising and contacts for the 'second echelon' of illegally operating Bolsheviks out of prison with the help of the freed Pichkhaia. This resulted in the attempted uprising ending in complete failure. All the Bolsheviks involved in preparing the uprising were arrested. A similar situation



*Filipe Makharadze*



*Levan (Leo) Rukhadze - Member of the Constituent Assembly of Georgia, member of the Main Staff of the People's Guard.*

developed in Akhaltsikhe and Poti, where the secret headquarters of the uprising was infiltrated by Georgian secret service agents and all Bolshevik leaders were arrested before the uprising could begin. However, the political leader of the Georgian Bolsheviks and of the uprising, Filipe Makharadze, managed to escape and continue his illegal activities underground.

On 30 November 1919, an interesting scene unfolded on Kojori Street in Sololaki, Tbilisi. After a secret meeting on Rtishev Street, Filipe Makharadze, who was disguised in a wig and a priest's robe, was on his way to a conspiratorial apartment when he was arrested by Nikoloz Nizharadze, head of the counterintelligence department of the People's Guard's General Staff, and Mikheil Chkadua, a counterintelligence officer of the Guard. The operation was led by Levan (Leo) Rukhadze, who was a member of the People's Guard's General Staff and the head of the Information and Political Section.

From Filipe Makharadze's safe apartment, the Guard's counterintelligence unit seized all the important documents related to the Bolsheviks' planned uprising. These papers directly linked the uprising to Moscow and revealed that it was financially supported by millions of roubles. The Minister of Internal Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, Noe Ramishvili, later presented a detailed report to the Constituent Assembly and provided significant information to Georgian and British journalists about the preparation and failure of the Moscow-organized uprising.

### **The year 1920**

On March 1, 1920, on Andreev Street in Tbilisi, Nikoloz Nizharadze, head of the counterintelligence department of the People's Guard's General Staff, and other counterintelligence officers arrested the Bolshevik terrorist Pavle Mardaleishvili. Mardaleishvili had been wanted since September 13, 1919, when he and fellow Bolshevik Arkadi Elbakidze attacked General Nikoloz Baratov, a representative of the Russian Volunteer Army, on Vera Hill. Elbakid-



*Bolshevik terrorist Pavle Mardaleishvili.*

ze was killed during the pursuit after the attack, while Mardaleishvili managed to escape. When he was arrested by the Guardsmen in 1920, a large quantity of explosives was found on him. Both Nizharadze and Mardaleishvili were originally from the village of Maghlaki, and the head of the Guard's counterintelligence likely used his acquaintance with the terrorist as an additional means of surveillance.

With this operation, the Georgian special services severed a highly important link in the detailed chain of war and sabotage planned by the enemy, Soviet Russia, which contributed significantly to saving Georgia from occupation.

In 1920, Soviet Russia was able to gain a decisive advantage on the front of the civil war. On January 2, 1920, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of Soviet Russia, Georgy Chicherin, appealed to the governments of Georgia and Azerbaijan asking to jointly fight against the Russian Volunteer Army. He was refused. On January 14, 1920, the Chairman of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, at a solemn session of the Constituent Assembly dedicated to the de facto recognition of Georgia by the Supreme Council of the Entente, stated directly that he had refused a military alliance with Russia because it would be a deviation from Georgia's European path.

The Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan also responded in the negative to Russia.

Since 1919, Azerbaijan had been party to a military cooperation agreement with Georgia, the purpose of which was to enable both states to defend themselves against the aggression of the Russian Volunteer Army.

Consequently, Azerbaijan refused to ally with Soviet Russia without the consent of Georgia. In March 1920, the Soviet Russian Red Army defeated parts of the Russian Volunteer Army in the North Caucasus, which were commanded by General Ivan Erdeli, and pursued them to the Georgian border. The Georgian government allowed the Volunteer Army units to enter only after they surrendered their weapons to the Georgian armed forces, in accordance with international regulations, and then let them pass abroad. The Democratic Republics of Georgia and Azerbaijan once again found themselves bordering Soviet Russia.

On April 28, 1920, Soviet Russia began its intervention in the Transcaucasus. Red Army units started an offensive towards Baku from the Samur River border zone. Azerbaijan found itself in a difficult situation. A large part of its army, about 20,000 soldiers, had been deployed in the Ganja-Karabakh direction to repel the invasion of the army of the Democratic Republic of Armenia, commanded by General "Dro"—Drastamat Kanayan. The Azerbaijani government could only send about 3,000 soldiers to the border battles against Soviet Russia, and a similar number of soldiers were stationed in Baku.

A significant number of high-ranking Georgian officers served in the Azerbaijani army, and the Georgian government was informed about the difficult situation in Azerbaijan. In accordance with the terms of the alliance agreement, certain units of the Georgian army advanced in the direction of Baku. However, the sequence of events unfolded with such speed, partly due to the Bolshevik uprising in Baku, that by May 1, Baku had fallen without serious fighting. In a matter of days, the Soviet Russian Red Army had advanced to the borders of Georgia.



The Georgian army and the People's Guard successfully repelled the attack by the Soviet Union and subsequently initiated a counter-offensive. Notwithstanding the stipulations set out in the Russo-Georgian Treaty of May 7, 1920, which called for the cessation of military operations, hostilities persisted. The Georgian government's emissaries, along with Georgian officers within the Azerbaijani army, were successful in their endeavours to incite an uprising in Ganja. Concurrently, an uprising erupted in the Zakatala region under the leadership of a Georgian military intelligence officer, Major Ilya Ebralidze. This officer had assumed the guise of a trade agent, a tactic that enabled the Georgian armed forces to regroup. The Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, General Giorgi Kvinitadze, with six battalions of the People's Guard and artillery, commanded by the Guard Commander Valiko Jugeli, successfully repelled the South Ossetian Partisan Brigade that had invaded

government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia.

It was precisely within the scope of these preventive operations that on March 1, 1920, Nikoloz Nizharadze neutralized the Bolshevik terrorist Pavle Mardaleishvili in his apartment in Tbilisi as he was preparing a terrorist act. Mardaleishvili was storing explosives and living illegally under the false passport of Kirile Zhorzholiani.

Mardaleishvili's plan was as follows: When the Soviet Russian Red Army occupied Azerbaijan and then attacked the Georgian capital of Tbilisi, he and his created terrorist group, which included Bolsheviks from Maghlaki, were to blow up the railway bridge at Rioni station. This would sever the Georgian armed forces' connection with western Georgia and the seaports.

The Bolshevik Pavle Mardaleishvili was in Metekhi prison for only two months. He was released on May 14, 1920, along with other



The newspaper "Ertoba" of the Georgian Social Democratic Party – May 28, 1920.

from the rear, from the borders of Georgia.

Georgia survived. It is crucial to note that the Georgian government had advance knowledge of Soviet Russia's extensive plans. Following the Soviet occupation of the North Caucasus, plans were made to proceed with the occupation of Georgia and Azerbaijan in a single move. In order to achieve this objective, preparatory work was conducted across the entire South Caucasus region. This included the planning of an attack on the military school in Tbilisi and the capture of the

imprisoned Bolsheviks who were serving sentences after the failed uprising of November 7, 1919, based on the May 7th treaty. He then began working for the legalized Communist Party of Georgia's newspaper, Komunisti.

The Soviet Russian propaganda mouthpiece, the newspaper Komunisti, which was first published on June 3, 1920, did not last long. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Georgia shut it down after its 10th issue was released due to its declared support for the so-called South Os-



setian uprising. In reality, this was a raid by the “South Ossetian partisan brigade” from Vladikavkaz, which was pre-planned in Moscow, a diversionary tactic against the Georgian armed forces during the war with Soviet Russia.

The first issue of Sakartvelos Komunisti (Communist Georgia), published on June 18, 1920, instead of the newspaper Komunisti, provided readers with comprehensive information regarding the closure of Komunisti by the Georgian government.

On Monday, June 14, from 11 a.m., employees of the Special Detachment of the Ministry of Internal Affairs surrounded the building in Sololaki that housed the editorial office of the newspaper Komunisti, as well as the bureaus of the Central Committee and the Gubernia Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia. They blocked all entrances and exits. Everyone was allowed to enter, but no one was allowed to leave. When Tumanov, the editor of the Komunisti asked what this sudden attack meant, the answer was: “We have orders from Kedia.”

An hour later, Meki Kedia appeared and presented the editor with an order from Governor-General Sulakvelidze, which authorized Kedia to search the Komunisti editorial office and printing press and then shut down both. Additionally, he was to transfer the detained editor and staff of Komunisti to the Special Detachment.

Prior to the closure of the Komunisti editorial office by Kedia, he and Nikoloz Nizharadze, the head of the counterintelligence department of the People’s Guard’s General Staff, visited the Komunisti printing press. The press was closed down and the arrested employees were transferred to the Special Detachment of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The prisoners were released soon afterwards, but those who were not Georgian citizens were immediately expelled to occupied Azerbaijan, which was by then under Soviet Russian control.

On 23 June 1920, the Ministry of Internal

Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Georgia issued an order for citizens who continued their illegal work in favour of Soviet Russia to leave Georgia within three days. Otherwise, they would be arrested again. The Bolshevik Pavle Mardaleishvili did not comply with the demand. He was arrested again by Nizharadze and returned to Metekhi prison.

### **The year 1921**

In the autumn of 1921, the Georgian government became aware of Soviet Russia’s plans. Georgia’s ambassador to Soviet Azerbaijan, Gabriel Khundadze, personally brought the 11th Army’s combat plan to Noe Zhordania via diplomatic train. The plan had been obtained by Georgian intelligence officers in Baku. The Georgian government, anticipating a Soviet attack, declared mobilization and began taking pre-emptive measures. This included the evacuation of 950 Bolsheviks who had been arrested in the summer and autumn of 1920 to Kutaisi Gubernia Prison, away from the front lines. The Bolshevik Pavle Mardaleishvili, who had been in Metekhi prison in Tbilisi since June 1920, was transferred to Kutaisi Gubernia Prison in early January 1921.

On February 11, 1921, Soviet Russia attacked the Democratic Republic of Georgia. After bloody battles, the capital, Tbilisi, fell on February 25.

A few days before the capital was abandoned, an arrested officer of the General Staff of the Georgian Ministry of Military Affairs, Colonel Nikoloz Ivanov, who was working for Soviet Russian intelligence, was transferred from Tbilisi to Kutaisi prison. On March 10, 1921, the Georgian government and armed forces retreated in the direction of Batumi. Before the evacuation, some of the Bolshevik prisoners from Kutaisi Gubernia Prison were transferred to Batumi prison. The Bolshevik prisoners learned of the Red Army’s approach and adamantly refused to be sent to Batumi, which made it necessary to transfer them by force. The evacuation of the Kutaisi prison inmates was assigned to Vladimir Sulakvelidze,





the Head of the Rear, to whom the Special Detachment and all units of the People's Militia were subordinate during the war.

On March 8, at noon, the Head of the Rear, Vladimir Sulakvelidze, the Head of the Ku-



*Colonel Nikoloz Ivanov*

taisi People's Militia, Silibistro Maghnaradze, his deputy Valiko Pichkhaia, the Head of the Criminal Police, Platon Pachulia, the Head of the Kutaisi Criminal Police, Amberki Adeishvili, and the Head of the Counterintelligence Department of the People's Guard's General Staff, Nikoloz Nizharadze, arrived at the Kutaisi Gubernia Prison. Accompanied by employees of the Special Detachment and the People's Militia, they severely beat the stubborn Bolshevik prisoners, forced them onto railway echelons, and transferred them to Batumi prison. On the night of March 9, Volodia Sulakvelidze and his companions arbitrarily took Pavle Mardaleishvili, Nikoloz Ivanov, and the criminal Davit Ukleba from the Kutaisi prison. They killed all three in the Saghoria forest, doused the bodies with gasoline, and burned them.

On 17 March 1921, the government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia went into exile. They were accompanied by military and security personnel who faced an immediate death threat from the Russians, specifically from the 11th Army's Osoby Otdel (Special Section), led by the sailor Vasilii Pankratov, who was notorious for his cruelty. Among them was the head of the Guard's counterintelligence, Nikoloz Nizharadze.

Like many other emigrants, he left his fam-

ily – his wife and young child – behind in his homeland, with the hope that Georgia would soon be liberated from Russian occupation and they would return home.

### **Emigration**

Nikoloz Nizharadze settled in Paris, France, and during the 1920s and 1930s, he lived the ordinary life of a Georgian political emigrant. At the same time, presumably like other colleagues, he continued to informally carry out special tasks for the legitimate Georgian government in exile.

In August 1942, Nikoloz Nizharadze, an emigrant residing in Leville, Paris, received a letter from his son, Akaki Nizharadze, who was then held in a German prisoner-of-war camp. Akaki Nizharadze informed his father that he had been taken prisoner during the Kerch disaster in May 1942 and was asking for help. Nikoloz immediately contacted Mikheil Kedia, the head of the Georgian Liaison Staff in Berlin. Mikheil, son of Meki Kedia, was former head of the Special Detachment and had worked there during the years of independence. Following the occupation, he went into exile, where he graduated from Heidelberg University. During World War II, he collaborated with the Germans with the aim of liberating Georgia from Russia. Mikheil Kedia facilitated Akaki's release from the concentration camp, and a Georgian officer of German intelligence, Sinjikashvili, brought him to his father in Paris.

Akaki Nizharadze was born in the city of Poti in 1909. He graduated from school in Tbilisi and went on to receive a higher education. He was a journalist and worked as an editor of a regional newspaper. In 1929, the Soviet security agencies expressed an interest in him. In 1942, he was conscripted into the war, serving as a captain, political officer of the 509th Separate Anti-Aircraft Artillery Division, and head of the club. On 15 May 1942, he was captured in Kerch. The Germans subsequently sent him to the Galati concentration camp No. 3 in Romania.

While in Paris, Akaki became close to

The image shows a handwritten document in Georgian, which is a fragment of a list of soldiers and guardsmen who emigrated in March 1921. The document is organized into several sections with headings. The first section lists names and ranks, such as '1. ჯიქიაშვილი ივანე', '2. ჯიქიაშვილი ივანე', etc. The second section is headed 'სხვა მსახიობნი' (Other staff) and lists names like '1. ჯიქიაშვილი ივანე', '2. ჯიქიაშვილი ივანე', etc. The third section is headed 'სხვა მსახიობნი' (Other staff) and lists names like '1. ჯიქიაშვილი ივანე', '2. ჯიქიაშვილი ივანე', etc. The document is written in a cursive hand and has some corrections and additions.

*Fragment of the list of soldiers and guardsmen who emigrated in March 1921 - National Archives of Georgia.*

Mikheil Kedia and the Georgian officer of German intelligence, Givi Gabliani, and became involved in daily emigrant life. He managed to secretly contact Soviet intelligence and started playing a double game.

After France was liberated from Nazi occupation, Akaki began working at the Soviet Consulate in Paris, where he collaborated with Soviet agents sent from Georgia—Ilia Tavadze and Petre Sharia—who were tasked with convincing emigrants to return to their homeland.

In 1946, Ilia Tavadze was summoned to Moscow. Akaki Nizharadze decided to go with Tavadze, despite his father’s pleas not to, as his father believed a difficult fate awaited a former prisoner of war due to Stalin’s and Beria’s brutal policies. Akaki did not listen to his father and went to Moscow, hoping that after “filtration”, he would return to work with Tavadze in Paris. However, as expected, he was not allowed to return. After this, Akaki came to Tbilisi to be with his mother, wife, and

child. They had learned from the first wave of emigrants who returned to their homeland that Akaki was alive and living with his father in Paris.

After returning to his homeland, Akaki Nizharadze wrote numerous letters to his father, urging him to return and guaranteeing his safety. He even travelled to Moscow specifically to speak to his father by phone. The experienced 60-year-old intelligence officer Nikoloz Nizharadze understood the situation, but despite knowing the fate that could await him and motivated by the desire to save his son from his dire situation, received permission to return to the USSR in April 1948 and travelled to Moscow.

Akaki arrived in Moscow to meet his father. He took Nikoloz to dinner at the Aragvi restaurant, where he introduced him to men who seemed to be employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but were actually high-ranking Soviet foreign intelligence officials. Guskov, Natsvlshvili, and Martirosov. The Soviet spies, disguised as diplomats, praised the elderly opponent, who had fought against them for 44 years, for his decision to return to his homeland and give up his anti-Soviet activities. Nikoloz Nizharadze went back to Tbilisi, reunited with his wife, whom he hadn’t seen in 27 years, and started working in his original profession at the city’s pharmaceutical department.

As expected, the Soviet security services constantly monitored the Nizharadze father and son. On January 27, 1950, the head of the Ministry of State Security’s First Department (Intelligence), Colonel Menabde, forced Nikoloz Nizharadze to agree to secret cooperation. He was given the operational pseudonym “Tevzadze” and was soon sent to Batumi to handle a person of operational interest to the security services. Nikoloz Nizharadze did not carry out the Chekists’<sup>1</sup> assignment, which

1. Chekist (Rus. chekist, чекист): Originally a member of the Cheka (VChK), the Bolshevik secret police created in December 1917; later used for officers of its Soviet successors (GPU/OGPU, NKVD/NKGB, MGB, KGB), and more broadly for state-security personnel.



led to his arrest on May 1, 1950. His son, Akaki Nizharadze, was also arrested.

Later, on October 9, 1950, Colonel Menabde reported to Nikoloz Rukhadze, the Minister of State Security of the Georgian SSR, with the highest level of secrecy:

‘...after recruitment, “Tevezadze” was directed to cover re-emigrants, including to expose agents of the Menshevik Bureau abroad and foreign intelligence. During his period of collaboration with our agencies, “Tevezadze” provided nothing of interest, despite having very extensive connections among re-emigrants as well as among a part of the Georgian intelligentsia who are of operational interest to our agencies. When he was sent on a special assignment to the city of Batumi to work on a very important target, he got drunk, talked too much, the target became suspicious, and the assignment was foiled. On May 1, 1950, “Tevezadze” was arrested and charged with a criminal offense.”

The interrogation of Nikoloz Nizharadze was personally conducted by Nikoloz Rukhadze, the Minister of State Security of the Georgian SSR, for months. During the interrogation, Rukhadze confronted Nikoloz Nizharadze with his son, Akaki, who asked his father to do everything the Minister of Security demanded of him. Akaki confessed to collaborating with the Germans and also admitted that after the war, he was recruited by Georgian emigrants.

He urged his father to confess everything, which he believed would lighten their sentence. However, Nikoloz Nizharadze denied all accusations. Rukhadze was particularly interested in the exiled head of the Georgian government, Noe Zhordania, his plans, and what tasks he had given to the Nizharadze father and son and other re-emigrants who had returned to their homeland after the war as a result of Soviet agitation. Among them was Polikarpe Rukhadze, the brother of Leo Rukhadze, a member of the People’s Guard’s General Staff, who was arrested along with the Nizharadzies after returning from exile.



*Nikoloz (Kolia) Nizharadze. Photo taken during his arrest on May 1, 1950. Archive of the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (former archive of the State Security Committee)*



*Akaki Nizharadze - photo taken during his arrest in May 1950.*



*Nikoloz (Kolia) Nizharadze. 1949. Passport photo, which made it possible to identify him at the session of the Constituent Assembly on March 12, 1919.*

Rukhadze kept asking Nikoloz Nizharadze, a prisoner, for information about the connections Noe Zhordania made with the British and Americans after the war. What's especially interesting is what he said to Nizharadze during his interrogation. It was threatening and he made it clear that he meant to do something about it. "If you think that the Americans... you're wrong!"

After several months of interrogations, psychological pressure, and physical torture, Nikoloz Nizharadze admitted that before legally returning to his homeland, Noe Zhordania had instructed him to campaign about his personality as a national leader and the legitimate representative of the Georgian people, and to convince people that the Democratic Republic of Georgia would soon be restored with the direct assistance of the United States and that Georgia's legitimate, national government would return.

During the interrogation of Nikoloz Nizharadze by Minister of State Security Rukhadze, it is noteworthy that Rukhadze was primarily interested in the plans of the Americans and Noe Zhordania. He paid little attention to Nizharadze's past, relying almost entirely on what Nizharadze himself admitted about his 'service during the Menshevik government'—and even then, only on the most minor details. In Nizharadze's multi-volume case file, there is no mention of the dispersal of Bolsheviks in Alexander's Garden, the failed Bolshevik uprising of November 7, 1919, or the Ivanov-Mardaleishvili case.

Nikoloz Rukhadze, who was born in 1905 and began his service in the Chekist agencies in 1927, along with the other Chekists of his generation, possessed almost no detailed information about the secret battles between the Georgian and Russian special services from 1917 to 1921. That generation of Georgian Bolsheviks and Chekists, who were involved in this ruthless struggle themselves, became victims of the Great Terror and mass repressions of the late 1920s and 1937–1938, which completely wiped out all the knowledge and

experience of the past.

Throughout the investigation, the Chekists tried to find information about Nizharadze's past in the state archives, but all they could find was that Nikoloz Nizharadze was listed as a member of the Menshevik Party in 1916. They also found information about a certain Nikoloz Nizharadze, an officer in the Tsarist army, who, of course, had no connection to their prisoner. The Georgian Chekists turned to "the Center"—Moscow—for help. From there, on October 11, 1956, they received a single but very interesting document.

The Second Department (Counterintelligence) of the Committee for State Security (KGB) under the Council of Ministers of the USSR informed its subordinates that the materials of the KGB's First Main Directorate (Intelligence) contained a copy of an intelligence report (source unknown) that arrived from Warsaw on January 9, 1924, with the following content:

'...On December 22, 1923, Nikoloz Nizharadze and Giorgi Suladze, with documents issued by the Second Department of the Polish General Staff, left for Georgia via the Sniatyn Station, Bucharest, Constanta and Constantinople to obtain a mobilization plan. The Second Department issued the documents by order of the officer of the French mission in Warsaw, as Nizharadze was registered as his agent. From Constanta, they arrived in Poti on a ship of the Lloyd Trestino company... Upon arrival in Poti, Nizharadze and Suladze went to the Nabada Pier, where ships are loaded with coal. They asked for Milorava at a booth, but the guard told them that he was not there at the moment. After walking a short distance, Nizharadze approached a worker and said, "Adieu, madame," after which the three of them went to the barracks. There, the whole Poti underground committee, except for one person (whose surname is unknown) who was hiding from the Soviet authorities, were met with fire. The chairman and secretary of the committee are the Milorava brothers. As far as we could tell, the committee





has friends on a ship and sends officers and information abroad. Nizharadze said that he and his comrade had come to learn about the plans for the Georgian Naval Commissariat (Tbilisi). He was told that the head of the Naval Commissariat's mobilisation department had taken the plan back to add something to it. After that, Milorava would bring the plan from him to Poti, along with a comrade who had escaped. The next day, Nizharadze and Suladze went to Kutaisi and stayed at Nizharadze's brother's house at 17 Samto Street. There, Nizharadze met his father, and Suladze met his brother.

...  
 'Our materials also include a copy of a letter from Salakaia, the chairman of the Georgian Committee in Warsaw, to the Menshevik leader Noe Zhordania in 1924, which partially states: "...Citizen Nizharadze, who was sent to Georgia to obtain a mobilisation plan, received 31 American dollars from us..." We have no other data on Nizharadze's espionage and intelligence activities or his affiliation with foreign intelligence agencies.

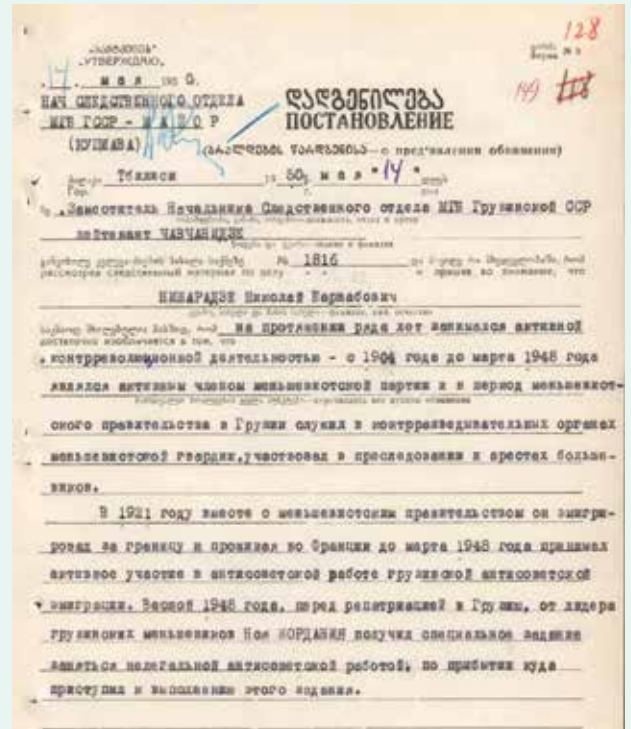
Deputy Head of the Operational Registration Department of the KGB's First Main Directorate; Lieutenant Colonel Zaitsev

Head of the Second Department; Sokolov"

While in the Ortachala prison hospital, weakened by months of physical and psychological pressure, Nikoloz Nizharadze wrote a letter to Joseph Stalin on April 25, 1951, requesting a reduction of his sentence. The letter was written in Georgian, and, of course, it had no effect.

On April 28, 1951, Nikoloz Nizharadze was sentenced to 10 years of prison in Ozerlag (Озерный исправительно-трудовой лагерь, Ozerly Corrective Labor Camp). His sentence emphasized that even after returning from emigration he had not ceased his anti-Soviet activities. His son, Akaki Nizharadze, was also imprisoned.

The multi-volume case file of Nikoloz Nizharadze shows that he was brought back to Tbilisi several times for the review of his appeals. It appears that due to his serious



*Resolution from the case of Nikoloz Nizharadze. Archive of the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (former archive of the State Security Committee)*

health condition, he was held in the hospital of Ortachala prison during his time in Tbilisi. However, his appeals were rejected by the Transcaucasian Military District Prosecutor's Office. The last entry in Nikoloz Nizharadze's case file is dated November 14, 1956, when the Transcaucasian Military District Prosecutor's Office reviewed and rejected his appeal. Nikoloz Nizharadze died in the camp, and his trail was lost. Unconfirmed information about his death is contained in the aforementioned memoirs of the re-emigrant Porfile Mekhuzla.

In 1954, Nikoloz Nizharadze's wife, Elizabeth (Vardo) Nizharadze-Chikvaidze, died prematurely from grief over her husband and son. Akaki Nizharadze was released in 1953, after Stalin's death, and began working at the Radio Committee in Tbilisi. According to some sources, Akaki died in the late 1960s.

Leo Rukhadze, a member of the General Staff of the People's Guard of the Democratic Republic of Georgia and head of its information and political section, was executed in 1937 after many years in prison and in the

camps. He was considered an uncompromising anti-Soviet fighter whom the Chekists found impossible to break or recruit.

Nikoloz Rukhadze, Minister of State Security of the Georgian SSR, was arrested on July 11, 1952. On September 19, 1955, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR sentenced him to death by firing squad in Tbilisi. He was executed on November 15, 1955.



*Nikoloz Rukhadze - Minister of Security of the Georgian SSR.*

Prior to his physical liquidation, the Soviet regime stripped him of his rank of Lieutenant General and all state decorations. He was never rehabilitated during the existence of the Soviet Union.

P.S. The trail of the direct descendants of the Nikoloz and Akaki Nizharadze family is lost after the 1970s. Consequently, we have not yet been able to obtain their family archive and oral histories.

The photographs of the father and son Nizharadze are kept in their criminal case file at the archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Academy of Georgia, which is currently closed. By comparing a passport photo issued in 1949 with a famous photograph taken on March 12, 1919, at the opening of the Georgian Constituent Assembly, we assume that a young Nikoloz Nizharadze is sitting in the press box with journalists and representatives of the zemstvo<sup>2</sup>, wearing a tuxedo and a bow tie.

The details of the adventures of Nikoloz Nizharadze still require much clarification. The forgotten history of an entire generation of his comrades-in-arms awaits the light of day—those who often fought for Georgia's independence, freedom, democracy, and European future at the cost of their own lives. The Soviet regime erased their faces from our society's collective memory, and Russian propaganda continues to benefit from the consequences of Georgia's lost history. ■

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1. Zemstvo (Rus. zemstvo, земство): A form of local self-government introduced in the Russian Empire in 1864. Zemstvos were elected district and provincial councils responsible for local economic and social affairs such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and taxation. They were abolished after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

*P. s We would like to thank Valeri Tevdoradze, Merab Chonishvili, and Tamaz Nizharadze for their help in working on Tatia.*





Lasha Gabelia

# FROM SACHKHERE TO LA SCALA, AND THEN TO THE GULAG

## THE FATE OF ONE MAN IN THE WAR OF EMPIRES



*Old Sachkhere,  
1915*

There is no family in Georgia that was not scarred by World War II. Our country made the greatest sacrifice, with more than three hundred thousand dead and countless wounded and maimed—physically or psychologically. Many families ceased to exist, and many children grew up as orphans. After Ukraine, Georgia lost the most people as a percentage of its population in that meat grinder that Moscow propaganda called the ‘Great Patriotic War.’ In Georgia, which had lost its independence, many truly saw it as a patriotic war, but the reality was that our country was once again crushed in the struggle between bloody empires.

‘For Georgians, being at the forefront of

fighting is a rule!’ This phrase, uttered by David Ulu in the 13th century, has served as a slogan for centuries, and in wars with the Mongols, Ottomans, Persians, and Russians, countless Georgian lives were lost in the defence and consolidation of those empires. The boundless energy and strength that should have been used for the prosperity of the homeland were lost and disappeared in distant battles.

The sons of a small country located at the crossroads of empires would be tossed by historical storms like a hurricane tosses small pieces of splinters at sea, throwing them from one shore to another. This is where the story of my grandfather, Samson



*Samson Papiashvili, 1936.*

Papiaashvili, begins, for whom World War II prepared the fate of such a splinter.

Samson was born in Sachkhere in 1913. From childhood, he showed an inclination toward art, especially singing, and he had a good voice and a good ear. He graduated from the Kutaisi Music School. He performed both Georgian folk songs and romances. In addition, he sang arias from operas (he had a wonderful tenor voice). He quickly became famous on a regional scale and even further. By 1939, he was already the director of the Sachkhere Culture House, the head of an ensemble, and a choirmaster. He was invited to Tbilisi, and his solo and ensemble songs were often played on central radio. also,he same time, he also engaged in pedagogical activities, and as his former students said, he taught not only singing and music but also, humanity. Samson already had a wife and two young daughters. 'Not noticed' in dissidence, he lived the life of a happy Soviet citizen.

Samson didn't even protest: 'If I do anything now, everyone will think I'm a coward.' It was December 1941. My grandfather took his panduri to the front...

He described what happened to him in a poem he called 'My Short Adventure'. First, he

ended up on the North Caucasus front, then in Crimea:

'I still remember the merciless,  
Fierce battles over Sevastopol,  
The Black Sea—entirely stained with blood,  
Groans and wails on the sea horizon.'

The fight did not last long for him. In July 1942, right there in Crimea, his unit was captured by the Germans. Since Crimea was on the front line, they weren't kept there for long. They were all transferred to a prisoner-of-war camp somewhere in the Carpathian Mountains, in western Ukraine (my grandfather doesn't specify the location). Soon, a conspiracy was organized in the camp, and Samson tried to escape with fifteen comrades. They dug a tunnel under the fence and crawled through, but someone betrayed them. They were captured, and everyone was sentenced to be shot. One night, they were taken far from the camp to the edge of a forest. 'And with our own hands, they made us dig the grave, to bury ourselves in,' my grandfather writes. They were made to stand by the graves they had dug, and a burst of machine-gun fire was aimed at them. By some miracle, as Samson himself tells it, a bullet did not hit him. But he jumped into the grave and feigned death. The Nazi punitive squad, it seems, performed their duty perfunctorily; they lightly covered the graves with soil and left.

When the sound of cars faded away, Samson crawled out of the grave and fled into the forest. He was the only one who had survived from those condemned to be shot. After wandering all night, he reached a village. Here, a family sheltered him, treated him, and helped him regain his strength. Samson does not specify their names or nationality, only mentioning a girl named Lina, for whom he developed 'warm feelings', although he did not 'betray' his 'Mania' (his wife). My grandfather spent several weeks with this family, helping them with their village chores.



They treated him like a family member; they grew very close and even took him as a guest to visit relatives in a neighbouring village.

The idyll could not last long, and during one of the Nazi's next raids, Samson was captured again. This time, he was sent to forced labour—to a stone quarry, where they were made to work in harsh, open-air conditions. Interestingly, the prisoners were divided by nationality: There were many Georgians in Samson's group, and there were Georgians among the overseers. My grandfather was not accustomed to hard physical labour, and it was very difficult for him, as he honestly writes in his diary poem:

'Cutting trees, breaking stones,  
It's not my talent, it's hard for me.  
My business is merriment,  
Dancing-singing, what a life.'

It was 1943. One day, as he himself writes, exhausted, he sat down on a large stone and started to sing: 'They are late, they are nowhere to be seen'... His song was so liked by the prisoners and overseers around him that they rewarded him with applause. The Georgian commander noticed this, and he

reported the news 'above'. They summoned him and told him: gather people like you, form an ensemble, entertain the prisoners and the administration, and you will be saved from hard labour.

Here, it is important to state the following: My grandfather was writing this poem-diary in Siberia, in the Gulag, under Soviet exile, and, consequently, much needs to be read between the lines. Clearly, the Nazis had seen in Samson not only the talent for singing but also potential that they could use. That's precisely why they singled him out and gave him the opportunity to form an ensemble. The German authorities needed such activities for propaganda purposes, on the one hand: 'Look how well we treat prisoners and conquered peoples, we take care of their culture, and so on.' On the other hand, it was also to win over the hearts of the Georgian legionaries of the Wehrmacht. Thus, it was part of a political strategy. In addition to Samson's ensemble, there were several similar groups, and not only made up of Georgians.

Samson's ensemble 'project' was extremely successful. Soon, they were singing not just for prisoners of war but for the soldiers and



*Samson Papiashvili (in the centre) with his choir. Neuhammer concentration camp, 1943.*

officers of the Wehrmacht directly. Within a few months, they also began participating in regular civilian concerts, not only in Germany but almost all over occupied Europe. Samson describes the geography of their tours this way:

‘Every Frenchman, Italian,  
Belgian, or Dutchman,  
Everyone sends us off with glory and  
applause,  
Hungarian-Pole and Austrian.’

That’s how my grandfather, born in Sachkhere, ended up on the stage of La Scala, where he performed Georgian folk songs and opera arias!

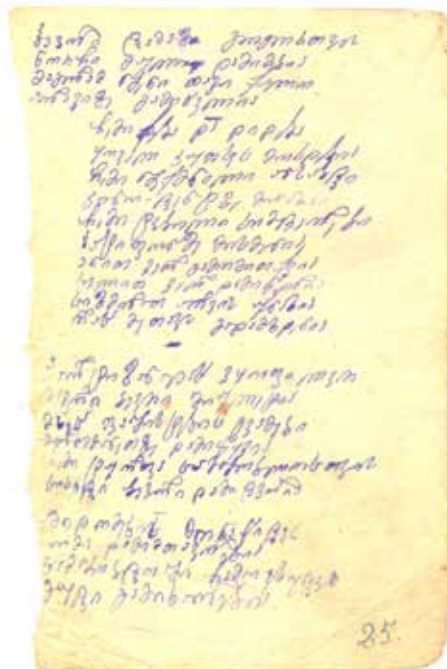
They were not completely free, but they lived in better conditions than other prisoners. They had adequate living quarters, all kinds of musical instruments, and even Georgian national costumes (chokha-akhalukhi) for their concerts.

For example, on May 26, 1944, a solo concert by his ensemble was held in Berlin as part of the Georgian Legion’s events to

celebrate Georgia’s Independence Day. The legion’s weekly newspaper, ‘Sakartvelo’, wrote about it: ‘In the evening, the city’s large theatre was packed with people. The choir of singers led by choirmaster S.P. (Samson Papiashvili) held a concert where old and new songs and dances were performed. The panduri playing was particularly good... Overall, the concert was a great success and was held with special acclaim.’



*Datashka Kavsadze (third from left in the middle row) and Samson Papiashvili (fourth from left in the middle row) with Georgian singers. Germany, 1944.*



*A page from Samson Papiashvili’s poem-diary*

However, a dangerous situation arose several times afterward: For example, in France, Samson and the members of his choir made contact with the resistance movement. They were thinking of escaping. It’s not clear from the details what happened, but they were all immediately returned to Germany and threatened with being sent to a concentration camp. However, the threat was not carried out; they were placed in a military unit. Here, Samson was contacted by Davit (Datashka) Kavsadze (the father of the actor Kakhi Kavsadze).

‘They say that David Kavsadze,  
He too has been captured as a prisoner,  
His name all over Europe  
Has become famous, just like mine.’

David suggested to Samson that they

merge their ensembles, and they did. A large Georgian ensemble was formed by the two groups, and their concert activity continued.

Samson, for understandable reasons, does not write much about it, but it is clear that the Nazis' lenient attitude toward him



*Pridon Tsulukidze*

and his people was a result of the Georgian Legion's protection.

The Nazis were already in trouble, and in the autumn of 1944, Hitler declared total mobilization. The mobilization of the captive singers' ensembles, along with others, was on the agenda. This matter was led by Colonel Pridon Tsulukidze from the Georgian Legion, a former Menshevik who had fought on Franco's side in the Spanish Civil War and was now an SS-Waffen-Standartenführer. My grandfather, with his ensemble, ended up under his command as part of the Georgian group of the Waffen-SS (SS-Waffengruppe Georgien)—they were first stationed in Hungary and then, from January 1945, in Northern Italy.

Everyone felt that the days of the Nazi regime were numbered. The Georgians conspired, and in March, everyone, including the leadership, defected to the side of the Italian partisans. It was here, in some village in Northern Italy, that my grandfather lived to see the end of World War II.

His first thought, of course, was to return to his homeland. Many advised him to stay,

warning him that nothing good awaited him: he would either be exiled or shot. However, his love for his homeland and his longing for his family and loved ones prevailed. Samson and part of his ensemble surrendered to the Soviet authorities (some remained in exile). A severe sentence awaited him, of course, given his past as a prisoner of war, 'singer for the fascists', and, although only formally, a member of the Waffen-SS. The hope of returning to Georgia turned out to be in vain. He was first sent to a labour camp in Tajikistan (specifically, Leninabad), where he stayed for a year and a half. Then, his charges were made more severe, and in 1947, a tribunal sentenced him to 25 years in exile. He was first taken to Kolyma and finally ended up in Zabaykalsky Krai—in Ulan-Ude.

Life in the Soviet Gulag was much harder than life as a prisoner of the Nazis. There was frost, hunger, and violence. It was here, in Ulan-Ude, that Samson wrote his poem-adventure, which he dedicated to 'the great Stalin' in the hope of being released. He did not spare him any praise. Needless to say, this had no effect. Remarkably, Samson managed to form a choir of singers from among the prisoners in the Gulag. This choir was made up not only of Georgians; it was international and had an appropriate repertoire.



*Samson Papiashvili (in a suit, right) with the ensemble formed in the Ulan-Ude camp. Circa 1950.*





*Samson Papiashvili on stage*

Samson spent six years in the Ulan-Ude camp, and his health gradually deteriorated. Only Stalin's death granted him his freedom. At the end of 1953, he returned to his native land. People from Chiatura met him, and at the Sachkhere railway station, all Sachkhere was there to greet him. Everyone remembered him and his singing fondly. He was met by his wife and his now-grown daughters. Samson once again became the artistic director of the Sachkhere Culture House and continued his beloved work, although with his health in decline, he did not have much time left.

Samson Papiashvili died of a heart attack on May 14, 1955, on the stage of the Krobauli village club, while singing. He left my grandmother—pregnant with my mother. He was only 42 years old at the time. ■



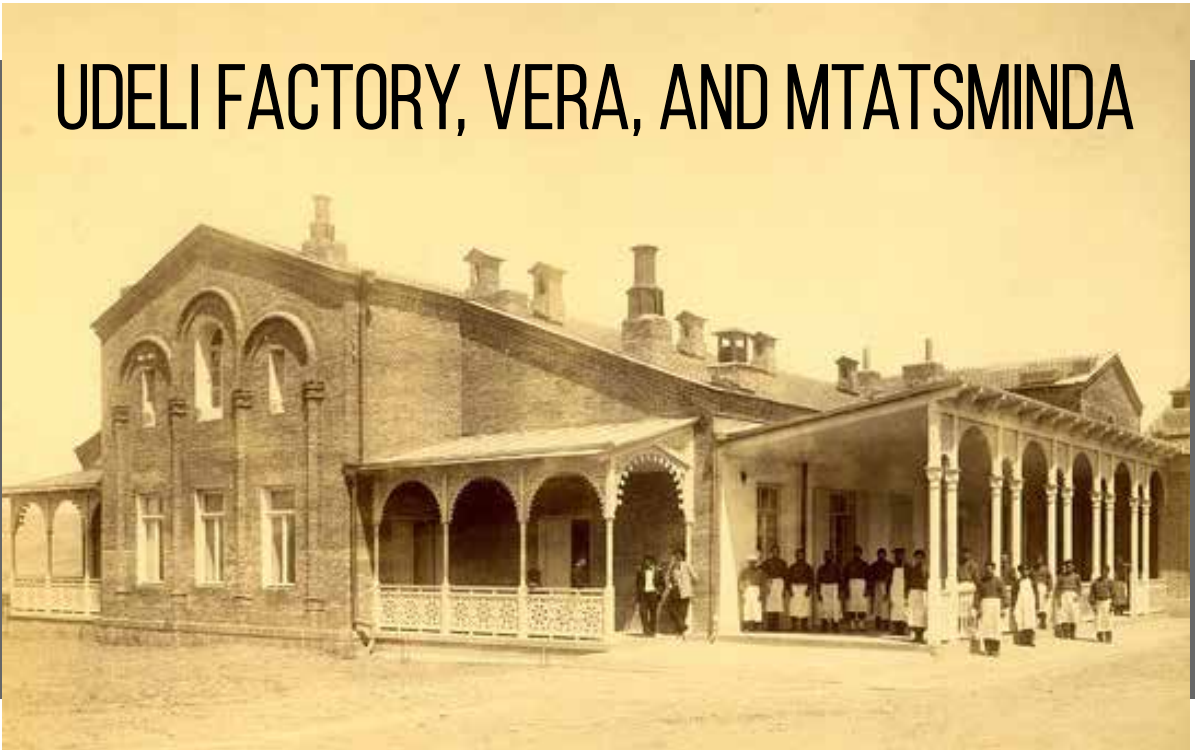
*La Scala, main hall*





Nana Kalandadze

## UDELI FACTORY, VERA, AND MTATSMINDA



As long as I can remember, I've lived in Mtatsminda, Tbilisi, and even if I ever change my house, I will still live in Mtatsminda in heart, mind, and spirit. But I was almost born in Vera. Here's how the story goes:

My mother's surname was Peikrishvili. According to history, most of the Three Hundred Aragvians<sup>1</sup> were from this family. As an example of their fighting spirit, Tina of Tsavkisi, who was also a Peikrishvili, is worth mentioning. This surname is also common in Kakheti, and many people mistakenly believe that the Peikrishvilis are Kakhetians. However, they actually originate from the beautiful, dignified region of Meskheti,

specifically the village of Khizabavra in the Aspindza area. There is also a toponym with this name near Lagodekhi, which the Peikrishvilis probably brought with them from Samtskhe. In short, some of the family settled near Tbilisi in Tsavkisi and devoted themselves to farming, primarily growing flowers, trees, and other plants. They transformed Tamar's former summer residence and the Tsitsishvilis' estates into a paradise.

The reasons why the Peikrishvilis relocated and became scattered across Kartli and Kakheti are probably recorded somewhere in history. The people of Tsavkisi

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1. The Three Hundred Aragvians were a detachment of soldiers from the Aragvi valley who, alongside King Erekle II's army, fought at the Battle of Krtsanisi in 1795. This battle was fought against the invading Persian army of Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar. The Aragvians are celebrated in Georgian history for their courage and sacrifice, as they fought to the last man to defend their capital, Tbilisi.

were, to say the least, surprised by the 'different' nature of the new family. These Georgians wore crosses but did not go to church. If they did, they would make the sign of the cross in reverse. They prepared food a little differently. They grew flowers using a 'different method'. But what's so surprising about that? Every region has its own way of life and customs. But here, the influence of 'non-local' religious traditions could also be felt in daily life.

Georgia's contact with the Catholic world dates to the 6th century (perhaps even earlier) and was quite close and businesslike. The Catholic Diocese of Tbilisi was founded in the 14th century, and the influence of Italian and French missionaries from the 17th century even changed the political pulse in Georgia. However, this is not my topic. What I want to say is that, under the influence of European missionaries, a significant part of the population of Samtskhe-Javakheti became adherents of Catholic Christianity, not to mention Giorgi XI and Sul Khan Saba Orbeliani... This fact had a significant impact on the lifestyle and character of the Meskhetians. They were even called 'Frenchmen'. Moreover, European influences could be seen in their cuisine and cooking. I will never forget the cakes that my Aunt Maro used to send to her daughter Guliko (whose surname is Zubashvili, like Zubalashvili, and who is Catholic) from Akhaltsikhe in a huge box, when she lived with us as a student. It was then that I first tasted a croissant, which this extraordinary woman baked using a French recipe. No one knew the name of this culinary masterpiece, so they called it razhok or ragalik, having passed it through the Russian 'filter'...

In this regard, I have my own theory about the famous Borjomi cakes, which were truly unique in terms of their content and quality compared to other confectionery products in Georgia. Perhaps the Samtskhe-Javakheti recipes and the French-European tradition of preparation also made it there? It's not that far away... But I don't know... Today, the descendants of these cakes are called

'Lovika's cakes'. I got sidetracked, but what I wanted to say is that, as a descendant of the Meskhetians, my grandfather was also baptised a Catholic. However, unlike his siblings, he converted to Orthodox Christianity. I strongly suspect he took this step because he was in love with my grandmother. By the way, there is a small basilica in Tsavkisi at the village crossroads. My mother said it is called the Peikrshvili Church, which suggests that the people who settled in this village were gradually adopting the 'local' way of life.

The people of Tsavkisi continue to engage in the gardening activities that have been passed down to them by their ancestors. A huge share of Tbilisi's flower market comes from Tsavkisi. It's true that this activity has become over commercialized, which has created a lot of reproach towards the locals, but in this beautiful village, you will also definitely meet real, professional gardeners who have elevated the cultivation and care of flowers to the level of art. So, it's not surprising that my grandfather, a descendant of these people, was passionate about gardens and flowers—especially since he was apparently good at painting, too, and had impeccable taste.

In 1896, when they decided to build the Udeli wine cellar for the royal estate, their attention was drawn to what was then a suburb of Tbilisi—now Melikishvili Street—and soon the idea was brought to life. Alexander Ozerov, an architect in Tbilisi at the time, who was very fond of this elevated location, designed the building using traditional Georgian church architecture. Who else but David Sarajishvili could finance the construction of such a project?

The building was quite large for a cellar, so soon the first winery was built there, where Georgian wine was subsequently produced for many years. The winery worked perfectly, but the building stood somewhat isolated on a hill, looking sadly at the Varazi Ravine. The area needed to be landscaped, which is how my grandfather ended up at the factory. In modern terms, my grandfather,

a landscape designer, created a beautiful garden. However, it required a permanent caretaker. Traveling 'so far' from Sololaki every day wasn't easy, so my grandfather almost moved to the factory. Later, an order was issued to develop the outskirts of Tbilisi. Plots of land were allocated to factory workers nearby where houses were planned to be built, and the area around the Varazi ravine, where jackals howled, was to take on an urban appearance.

Meanwhile, the construction of the Noblemen's Gymnasium (later the first building of the State University) was in full swing on the opposite side. My grandfather, as a factory worker, was also allocated a plot of land for a homestead, but building a house would not happen overnight. Therefore, the family lived in Sololaki. My mother and her

slowly filling up with buildings and taking on a city look. Across from my mother's house (where Nikoladze and Sharashidze streets are today), new construction was underway. Later, the members of my father's family settled in one of those houses, although at the time, they had no idea that a girl living nearby would one day walk through the door of their apartment as a daughter-in-law.

The main residence and base of my father and the Kalandadzes was Chokhatauri. Then, a large part of the family moved to Tbilisi. After returning from Siberia, my father started building a new house in Guria. He probably wanted to settle there, but he returned from his second exile married and chose to stay in Tbilisi instead. Those who returned from Kazakhstan, however, were not met with good news. The government



siblings also grew up and finished school in that neighbourhood.

Then the Vera house was built and the Peikrishvili family moved from Sololaki to the Varazi Ravine. My grandmother complained, 'I lived wonderfully in the city. Now, how can I endure riding the tram for such a long distance?' But she quickly got used to the new neighbourhood and neighbours. My grandfather worked at the Udeli factory and took care of every seedling, tree, and bush. Later, when my mother and I would walk past the factory, she would often say, 'When the trees in that yard rustle, I think I hear my father breathing..'

The Varazi Ravine neighbourhood was

had settled another family in the Peikrishvili house and allocated a room at the back of the yard and a tiny corridor on the first floor to our family. Who's talking about furniture and belongings? While the owners were away, everything was scattered and distributed. They were left with this dark 'apartment' and the two or three things that remained there.

My grandfather approached the factory administration to see if they could help him on behalf of their organization. The factory authorities shrugged and said, 'We allocated the land to you,' (land that there is evidence had belonged to my grandfather), but what right do we have to interfere in domestic

affairs? The reason was clear. After Stalin's death in 1953, returning to Georgia did not mean people were fully rehabilitated. Who would grant them the status of a full-fledged citizen until their documents were re-examined and their lives were chewed over once again? I think they begrudged them even that measly room and reminded them that other "enemies of the people" would dream of having it. Meanwhile, my grandmother and grandfather, having endured so much stress and insult, passed away almost one after the other...

In 1956, they finally got a break, and my mother and father received a rehabilitation paper that contained two very important words: 'Fully rehabilitated'!

My parents continued to fight vigorously to get their house back, or at least a couple



rooms. But, in the meantime, the situation turned out completely differently. The government decided to 'clean up' the area and build a new five-story building on the site of our house and that of our neighbours'. They planned to compensate the residents according to the space they possessed. As you might have guessed, I'm talking about the arched building next to the former Tea House. That building doesn't just have a façade, does it? The inner courtyard also belongs to it. So, they were given two rooms on the inner side that were dark and built against a solid rock wall.

Instead of receiving a proper homestead, albeit perhaps not large, the family was dealt

another blow when they were given two dark rooms. They had to bear the name 'enemy of the people' for a long time because of family members who had exchanged the great Soviet Union for 'rotten capitalist' countries. Who knows what sorrow and pain swirled in the hearts of the 'criminals' roaming freely in France and Bavaria? A ruined house could not be restored, but my parents still hoped that they would gain better conditions.

One day, my father was informed that he was summoned to the executive committee. It was quite normal for him to be summoned to various authorities for questioning, checks, warnings, etc., so he went there as he would if he were going to work. To his surprise, he found himself in the office of a distant relative. This man had learned that a family was looking for an apartment, and he had an idea: a large family on Alexander Chavchavadze Street in Mtatsminda wanted to expand, and perhaps he could help him get this apartment through a double exchange. He said it was an old house, but it had large, bright rooms, and, most importantly, its own bathroom and storage rooms. The latter fact was particularly emphasized because, as is well known, living in so-called 'communal apartments' was common at the time.

Of course, my mother would have preferred a newly built house. However, she was so bothered by how narrow and dark the rooms were that the government had bestowed upon them that the Mtatsminda apartment seemed like a palace, and the deal was made. If you ask me, this apartment is the other extreme when it comes to lighting. It was once a school building, which explains the sheer number of doors and windows. In short, the apartment had two large rooms, one small room, a four-meter ceiling, a tiled stove, its own kitchen and bathroom, and a private, non-corridor entrance from the stairwell, which was even enviable at the time.

They settled and established themselves. Then, on October 12, 1958, I came into their lives. ■





Mariam Kvariani



The existence of good judges and a court is important for protecting human rights, ensuring the rule of law, preventing government arbitrariness, and supporting stable economic development in a country. However, a good judge is also essential for a narrower spectrum of society—I mean lawyers.

A judge holds the highest position in the hierarchy of legal professions and sets the standard for any professional. In an ideal picture, he is a symbol of independence, courage, and justice, who enjoys authority in professional circles and in wider society.

Highly qualified, conscientious, indep-

endent, and impartial individuals are appointed as judges. Their past activities and professional ethics inspire confidence in the justice system. Their decisions clarify the law and guide the development of legal practice. Judges' courage, principles, and transformative decisions strengthen legal frameworks and lay the groundwork for future development.

A good judge's decision explains complex legal problems clearly and inspires followers. In the legal field, a judge's position is the most prestigious position a young lawyer can aspire to.

The standard a judge sets is the standard

the legal spectrum of the state follows.

What is happening in this regard in Georgia?

The recovery of the system remains an unresolved problem in the history of independent Georgia. Every attempt to form an institutional backbone ends in failure. Today, despite four waves of reforms, the court is more closed and biased than it was before the reforms began. The Georgian Dream gave the judicial clan a green light and equipped them with all the legal levers needed to establish control over the judicial branch of government.

Following the United Kingdom's sanctioning of judges Mikheil Chinchaladze and Levan Murusidze, Irakli Kobakhidze expressed the government's full support for the judiciary and promised to address every issue raised by the judicial branch. Two months later, the Georgian Dream parliament adopted amendments that were less a legislative bill and more a list of demands from the clan seeking revenge on civil society and independent judges. In addition to the ban on video and audio recording on court premises, sanctions for insulting a judge or the court have been tightened. The restraining mechanisms created within the framework of the reforms have been destroyed. It has become virtually impossible for independent judges to work in the judicial system after the Georgian Dream party banned judges from engaging in academic activities without the council's permission, simplifying the notoriously abusive rule of forced secondment and tightening the norms regulating disciplinary liability.

In such a system, the court is merely a stage, the judge an actor, the lawyer a

psychologist, the bailiff an executioner, and the audience helpless spectators.

While the global legal community is discussing the complete digitalisation of judicial proceedings, new forms of data processing and sharing with other state institutions, and the development of search systems in databases, not to mention the ethical standards for introducing artificial intelligence into the decision-making process, we lawyers are awaiting a guilty verdict for another political prisoner, clinging to the hope that the European Court of Human Rights will deliver a just decision.

If we agree that no force will lead this path to justice despite years of effort, it is clear that we must explore a new path. Perhaps this is the privilege of our generation.

First and foremost, it should be considered that under any legal framework, we always have a human component. Accordingly,

**In such a system, the court is merely a stage, the judge an actor, the lawyer a psychologist, the bailiff an executioner, and the audience helpless spectators.**

it is necessary to staff the judiciary with non-conformist, ambitious, courageous, and qualified personnel. Personnel reform should not only include minimal, formal legislative standards but also study in detail the candidates' professional and academic activities, financial situation, and resilience of character. An independent commission should have the ability to verify both the person's competence and their integrity and compliance with ethical standards. Appointed judges should take responsibility for their decisions and for the development

of the judicial system as a whole. Despite their individual independence, every judge must recognise their pivotal role in shaping the independence of the judiciary and the institutional culture of the justice system.

The merit-based evaluation process for current and future judges should, of course, be conducted publicly to ensure high professional standards and instil trust in the court system.

Alongside staffing the justice system with worthy individuals, changes must be made to the existing structure and legislative framework. Georgia is a small state with close ties and internal influences. In its recent history, it has had plenty of

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experience with nepotism, corruption, and political influence. Unless this possibility is eliminated from the outset, it will very easily return to these harmful practices and fall back into its old rut. It should be taken into account that the clan's influence extends beyond judges to every layer of

the institution. Therefore, to break free from harmful habits, consistency is key. We must investigate why the Georgian justice system is susceptible to various influences and identify the causes of this behaviour. A parliamentary commission's investigation and interviews with individual judges can help to identify this harmful cycle. However, actionable steps must follow the investigation. The legislative framework must remove judges from temptation to the maximum extent possible, the environment that encourages such behaviour must be changed, and a new institutional arrangement must be formed that is less centralised and not so saturated with bureaucracy.

Both the judiciary and each individual judge must strive to maintain the system's self-identity and legislation must ensure the necessary conditions for creating such an environment. All judges must constantly remember that they provide a public service and are accountable to society and their own colleagues. The system must establish internal discipline and consistency and take care to maintain the high professional standards that have been established.

As we move forward, it is important to be aware of the events taking place around us. This year, for example, the European Union published its e-Justice strategy, which aims to unify the digitalisation of member states' judicial systems. The judicial system is developing in the same direction in North America and other developed regions.

Against the background of the existing reality, the concept of a digital court may sound ridiculous; however, this direction is relevant in the developed world, and if we are to avoid falling behind, we must focus on

the future in the process of judicial reform.

The Georgian justice system's short history is one of its advantages. Judicial practice and documentation have been in place since the country's independence was restored, and only 29 courts are set to undergo digitalisation.

In addition to keeping up with the modern world, we need to develop a digital court culture and legal technologies to reduce and eliminate individual and political influences in the court. This will help to reduce the court's overload, speed up legal proceedings and improve quality, which would otherwise deteriorate significantly if personnel reform were to be implemented.

In addition to eliminating bureaucratic loopholes and improving the quality of court decisions, implementing digital technologies will enhance judicial transparency and

accountability, simplify access to justice, and reduce state expenditure.

A fair, transparent, and modern court

**A fair, transparent, and modern court system should not be a luxury item in a democratic state. Without bold action, it is impossible to break free from a cycle where a black cat is caught in a dark room, even when it is not there.**

system should not be a luxury item in a democratic state. Without bold action, it is impossible to break free from a cycle where a black cat is caught in a dark room, even when it is not there. ■

***Mariam Kvariani** is a lawyer who has been working in the Rule of Law Program of the Georgian Democracy Initiative since 2020. Her work includes strengthening the transparency, independence, and accountability of the justice system.*







Irakli Laitadze

# The Illusion of Modern Times

## Part 3: Motivation vs. Discipline

*Via supervadet vadens.*

*Only the one who walks will overcome the path.*

Today, there is a lot of talk about motivation, and it seems that motivation is the only essential tool for achieving a goal. However, in this process, somehow less attention is paid to discipline.

Motivation is very important; it's the starting position. At the same time, motivation is transient and ephemeral: you might have motivation today, but then you might not have it tomorrow; you have it again the day after, and not the day after that, and so on. Motivation, unlike discipline, is an emotion, and it is practically impossible to maintain an emotion constantly. At the same time, discipline is the result of thinking, which means it can be developed through the power of the mind. Motivation gets us started on a task (be it a business project, physical exercise, quitting smoking, and many other things), but discipline gets us to finish that task. Motivation sets the goal for us, but discipline works to fulfil it. Your mood, character, or emotions have no effect on discipline—no matter what, I take this small step today, again tomorrow, again the day after, and so on. Motivation is popular because it is both pleasant and easy to be in a state of motivational euphoria. In a society where the expectation of instant gratification and instant results is almost the

norm, and where routine and consistency are rare, discipline is not popular because it requires systematic effort.

**Motivation gets us started (be it a business project, physical exercise, quitting smoking, and many other things), but discipline gets us to finish the job. Motivation sets a goal, but discipline works to achieve it.**

When fatigue, fear, and doubt come (and they will definitely come, and more than once), motivation is practically powerless against them. The only thing that can repel them is discipline—the routine that consists of many small, daily steps and actions. In my opinion, 90% of those who say they are always motivated in their work are, consciously or unconsciously, not telling the truth. Scientific research confirms that it is impossible for a person to be motivated non-stop—from day-to-day, week-to-week, month-to-month, and year-to-year. It is quite often for a person not to like his job,

his work, and at this time some business mentor urges him to quit his job, find another job or start his own business. For some reason, these self-appointed teachers forget that people, in addition to freedom, have responsibilities (primarily towards people dependent on them). These mentors often also do not/cannot say or do not understand that responsibility is the other side of the freedom medal. Discipline forces us to move forward and work at a time when your motivation, curiosity, and enthusiasm have evaporated. I will tell you one of my examples, which, I think, quite clearly illustrates and distinguishes motivation and discipline from each other.

A few years ago, I decided to fulfil my childhood dream and climb to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro (a long time ago, I read Ernest Hemingway's book *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, and then I saw the movie of the same name, a golden age Hollywood film starring Gregory Peck and Ava Gardner). Before deciding to climb the peak, I had gained a lot of weight and couldn't stick to various diets. As for exercise, there's no need to even mention it. As soon as I decided to climb that mountain, everything changed. I knew I couldn't climb the mountain at that weight. I spent six months losing weight and exercising systematically. Then I went to Tanzania and climbed Kilimanjaro. Climbing to the summit was my motivator, but the six

**For some reason, these self-appointed teachers forget that people, along with freedom, have responsibilities.**

months of dieting and systematic exercise were only the result of discipline. Many times, I lost the motivation to climb the mountain, and at those times, only discipline drove me to stick to my diet and exercise.

If you are disciplined every day, you can overcome many of life's challenges, such as

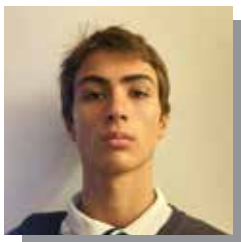


fear of losing, fear of poverty, fear of being a bad parent, and laziness. Discipline helps you to develop good habits, and this makes

**“Anything that is possible for a human is also possible for you.”**

many things easier. Discipline stops us from being arrogant when we are successful (in whatever way we define success) and prevents impulsive behaviour. Developing and acting with discipline—at a time when the current routine seems meaningless—is a practical guarantor of achieving a goal.

When we fail to do something or to cope with a task, it's less about our mental or physical abilities or a lack of time. It's more a result of a lack of discipline and willpower. Let's recall what the Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius said: “Anything that is possible for a human is also possible for you.” ■



Konstantino Jiaquinto

# Something Borrowed

## THE LINGUA-FRACTURE: ENGLISH LOANWORDS, CIVIC DISCOURSE, AND THE DEMOCRATIC DISCONNECT IN GEORGIA

*With minor morphological and syntactic modifiers “inclusive” turns into “inkluziuri”, “stakeholders” turns into “steikholderebi”, and “initiation” turns into “dainitsireba”—seemingly Georgian words, but their meanings remain foreign and incomprehensible to most Georgians not belonging to the urban elite or the NGO sector.*

Languages are living organisms. They are constantly evolving, borrowing, and adapting. The natural pace of change is typically slow and gradual, with significant changes occurring over three or more generations. Lexical borrowing, which happens because of prolonged contact with a foreign language due to foreign-subjected administration or cultural and trade relations, is part of the natural language evolution process. Ordinarily, about 2 percent of the vocabulary shifts over the course of a century due to language borrowing.

Georgia, a country with a unique language not belonging to any of the major language families, like Indo-European or Semitic, has experienced its share of foreign

language influences throughout centuries of foreign conquests and cultural exchanges. Historically, language change due to the borrowing of foreign words has occurred over the span of centuries. Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Russian words have all entered the Georgian vocabulary at significant rates, but their borrowing was gradual.

Georgia has navigated waves of foreign influence by a powerful tradition of translation. From Arsen Ikaltoeli’s 11th-century philosophical terminology to Vakhtang VI’s localized adaptations of European and Middle Eastern scientific texts, Georgian scholars acted not as passive conduits, but as cultural mediators. They sought to convey foreign ideas in forms intelligible and meaningful to



Georgian audiences, adapting terminology while anchoring it in local epistemological frameworks. This tradition extended through the 19th and 20th centuries, with figures like Arnold Chikobava and Ivane Kauhchishvili developing technical lexicons and standardizing vocabulary to support Georgian-language science, administration, and education—even under Soviet Russian influence.

However, in the post-Soviet era, Georgia witnessed an unprecedented influx of English loanwords, especially in civic, political, and NGO discourse. While such lexical borrowing can be a sign of openness

**Georgian scholars acted not as passive conduits, but as cultural mediators. They sought to convey foreign ideas in forms intelligible and meaningful to Georgian audiences, adapting terminology while anchoring it in local epistemological frameworks.**

and modernization, the unchecked and maladapted nature of this process has begun to erode the accessibility of public discourse, deepening social divides.

Since the 1990s, as Georgia has pivoted westward, a new wave of language borrowing has emerged. Some concepts of democracy and the market economy, previously unknown to Georgians, arrived in unfamiliar linguistic packaging, limiting their accessibility and

popular comprehension. Unlike the prior period, during which linguistic adaptation was institutionally moderated, today's inflow of English terms—particularly in the realms of politics, NGO work, and media—occurs in a largely unregulated linguistic space. The terms lacking native equivalents are primarily understood only by urban elites, academics, and those working in the NGO sector.

A massive influx of terms like სეკულარული (secular), იმპლემენტაცია (implementation), ინკლუზიური (inclusive), and გენდერული (gender-based), creates what scholars describe as 'semantic alienation' for wide swaths of the population. Field studies suggest that 10–20% of vocabulary in public-facing NGO reports consists of untranslated or semi-transliterated Anglicisms. While this reflects their alignment with global standards and donor expectations, it often distances these organizations from the very populations they intend to serve.

**in the post-Soviet era, Georgia witnessed an unprecedented influx of English loanwords, especially in civic, political, and NGO discourse. While such lexical borrowing can be a sign of openness and modernization, the unchecked and maladapted nature of this process has begun to erode the accessibility of public discourse, deepening social divides.**





Citizens without Western education, particularly the older generation and rural residents, are increasingly finding the civic language opaque. The result? A language of governance that is unintelligible to much of the governed, weakening civic participation and undermining democratic legitimacy. When terms vital to understanding democracy, rights, or governance are incomprehensible to large groups, it creates a democratic deficit.

Opponents of liberal democracy, such as ultranationalist and populist actors, have seized upon this linguistic disconnect. By framing NGOs and rights advocates as elites who ‘speak the language of foreigners’, they recast technocratic language as evidence of foreign control and cultural erosion. Progressive values—when expressed in

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borrowed or unfamiliar terms—are easily reframed as foreign impositions rather than organic societal evolutions. For example, instead of ‘gender equality’, populists rally support under slogans like ‘protect family

values’; instead of ‘secularism’, they call for a ‘defence of tradition’. These simplified, emotionally resonant terms allow them to present themselves as defenders of Georgian identity against a lexicon they portray as alien and elite.

Democratic backsliding rationalized by ultra-nationalistic ideological narratives is becoming increasingly evident in Georgia by the day. Democratic values are regularly presented as threats to Georgian traditions. Anti-Western rhetoric is no longer propagated solely by openly pro-Russian groups; it has permeated the narratives of government officials and populist talking

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heads on state-sponsored TV channels. They portray NGOs and civic activists as vehicles of foreign influence.

Many agree that today Georgia is at a crossroads. The country’s pro-Western trajectory and its aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration enshrined in its constitution are now being seriously threatened. While decades of civil society-

building efforts have yielded results as manifested by individual and group activism against the growing authoritarianism, shortcomings of broader civic education work are evident in the dwindling degree of citizens' unequivocal support for the country's democratic development. Some parts of the society, especially the older generation and the rural population, appear to be easily influenced by populist ideology. These are the same segments that are particularly prone to alienation from the civic discourse because of comprehension gaps created by the excessive use of foreign-derived vocabulary.

While Georgia's politics is affected by a myriad of geopolitical factors, forces, and resources at play, ultimately the key determinant of the country's trajectory will be the attitudes and the will of the Georgian people. Therefore, the democratic discourse must be made accessible and understandable to all segments of the society through a language that is not merely a tool for expression but a foundation of

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a shared understanding. In this regard, meaningful translation of democratic concepts and terminology adaptation is not just a linguistic task—it is a democratic imperative. ■

### ***Konstantino Jiaquinto***

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Ilia Nikolaishvili

## You have our support, now show us your respect!



‘Considering the many experiences I’ve gained from the world, if I know anything for sure about morals and obligations, it’s all thanks to football. The little I understand about morality, I learned on football fields and theatre stages—the football field and the theatre stage were my true university.’ After this interview with Albert Camus, a journalist asked him, ‘And still, which was more important to you, football or the theatre?’ Camus replied without hesitation, ‘Football.’

Today, I would like to talk to you about the moral dilemmas that exist in Georgian football. Sometimes people avoid starting an article with a quote, but when it comes to morality and football, how can we

not mention Albert Camus, a talented goalkeeper and a great man?

Camus said that football taught him life lessons that he did not learn anywhere else. He believed that football, unlike the hypocritical rules of politics and public life, is based on very simple and clear moral laws: fairness, loyalty to the team, and teammates, and, most importantly, solidarity and the ability to take responsibility.

In Camus’s football, there is no God and no ideological manipulation, but there is a kind of Sisyphus myth that the boulder must be delivered to its destination every time. And this is impossible without compassion, solidarity, support, and respect for your teammate.

Let's recall those brutal days when, last spring, on Tbilisi's central avenue, a Russian government with Georgian surnames used merciless force and cruelty to crack down on young people who were protesting against the Russification of Georgia, beating, injuring, and physically and morally abusing innocent, righteous people.

When widespread injustice prevails under an oppressive Russian rule, most people naturally seek sympathy and solidarity. In those days, we saw immortal examples of such solidarity directly among

**THE TEAM'S PLAYERS RESPONDED TO THAT DIRTY IDEOLOGICAL MANIPULATION, WHICH, IN ALBERT CAMUS'S OPINION, HAS NO PLACE IN FOOTBALL, NOT WITH SOLIDARITY, SUPPORT, OR THE SHARING OF SISYPHUS'S BURDEN, BUT BY BURYING THEIR HEADS IN THE SAND LIKE OSTRICHES.**

the beaten and repressed people. But this was not enough. Given the government's brutality and the complexity of the task, freedom-loving people expected broad national solidarity from various layers and spheres of society. People particularly expected solidarity from Georgian football players, who had achieved unprecedented success for Georgia just two weeks earlier. They expected it because the people, the so-called 12th player had made a significant contribution to this success. In interviews, practically every player on the national team said that the victory would have been impossible without the energy they received from the people. The value of fan support was best described by Nika Kvekveskiri, who scored the decisive penalty. He recalled how the people's energy entered his body and how great a part the fans played in his scoring of that historic penalty.

When the football players' voices were becoming unbearably late, Giorgi

Kochorashvili was the first to express support for the people. It wasn't with a clear, resonant statement, but with just a banal Instagram Story showing a child and a European Union flag. But both the people and the government understood that this could be the beginning of a very important wave.

The authorities pooled all their malice, employed all their cunning, and, with the help of the dirtiest political manipulations, introduced into the national team, recently proclaimed as uniting the nation, a vile narrative developed in the Kremlin's laboratories. The entire state mobilised to discredit the name of Giorgi Khochorashvili, the author of this very weak Instagram Story. Who could be quicker than neo-Bolshevik Kakha Kaladze (whose body, even in modern Balenciaga and Margiela trousers, resembles that of Dynamo Tbilisi footballer Chichiko Pachulia in breeches, a Chekist from the Beria era) in joining this shameful act? It was he who took on the dirty work of calling his colleague, a national team football player, 'politically biased' and a 'UNM member' because of his father's political activities. In Russian-Georgian Dream propaganda, this is a synonym for a bloodthirsty villain.

**THE NATIONAL TEAM PLAYERS VIOLATED THE MOST IMPORTANT RULE IN THE DIVINE WORLD OF THIS GAME: THE RULE OF RECIPROCITY BETWEEN FANS AND PLAYERS.**

This very fact became the first moral dilemma in the national team after that great victory. A dilemma that, instead of ending with a clear, dignified, and morally upright response, ended in shame. The team's players responded to that dirty ideological manipulation, which, in Albert Camus's opinion, has no place in football, not with solidarity, support, or the sharing



of Sisyphus's burden, but by burying their heads in the sand like ostriches. Just when we thought that the neo-Bolshevik Kaladze's incredible vileness would be met with sharp statuses from 'our boys', the exact opposite happened: even Giorgi Kochorashvili deleted that Instagram story.

This was the first moral fall and shame for the football players hailed as 'golden boys'. Except for one man, everyone remained silent. But that one man, Solomon Kvirkvelia, turned out to be the smallest of them all. He not only buried his head in the sand but publicly declared his support for Kaladze. With that, he truly threw himself into the garbage dump, if not of Georgian football, then certainly of humanity.

One of the main goals of violent Russian regimes is to prevent society from consolidating around values like freedom, independence, equality, and democracy. In just a few hours, that great football victory united the people in a way we hadn't seen since the dawn of the national movement. This unity proved to be a deadly threat to the regime.

THERE ARE COUNTLESS GREAT EXAMPLES IN FOOTBALL HISTORY WHEN PLAYERS, THROUGH THEIR WORDS AND ACTIONS, DEFENDED FANS WHO WERE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE.

In more or less democratic countries, football success doesn't necessarily mean a change in the existing political reality. But for regimes like the Georgian Dream, a nation united even for the sake of football is a real threat. In this happiness, the voice of propaganda and moral relativism is no longer heard as loudly as is necessary for a dictatorship. That's precisely why the regime started using force. That's why it needed to shed the mask it had worn since 2012 and openly set out on a Russian path.

In the context of new opportunities

for European integration, national rapprochement and the weakening of polarization would have significantly diminished Russian influence on political processes. For this reason, the Kremlin's Georgian emissaries pursued targeted escalation, as they needed to put an end to the country's movement toward the free world. It so happened that at this point in history, football was found to have an important role. Therefore, the regime subjected the national team to a terrible moral test, which not a single player passed. From a moral standpoint, the failure to publicly support Giorgi Kochorashvili was the first fall for this generation of the national team. This was followed in the coming months by even greater cowardice, superficiality, heartlessness, and now, turning their backs on their own fans. The national team players violated the most important rule in the divine world of this game: the rule of reciprocity between fans and players.

In 2004, I went to Paris on a work trip to prepare a report on a match between Paris Saint-Germain and Saint-Étienne. The PSG fans had displayed a huge banner for their club's players that read: 'LE SOUTIEN VOUS L'AVEZ, ALORS RESPECTEZ NOUS' ('You have our support, now show us your respect!'). I wondered what they meant by 'respect' in return for their support. I asked a French colleague, 'Let's say Paris Saint-Germain loses the game despite the fans' support; would that be considered a sign of disrespect? What exactly do they mean?'

He explained that respect meant playing with dedication, being loyal to the club's values, and supporting the fans if someone treated them unfairly.

This is the main rule of the football world—reciprocity between players and fans. When you need support, I'm by your side, but you must respect me. There are countless great examples in football history when players, through their words and actions, defended fans who were victims of violence. The story of Zvonimir Boban, for example, is worth

telling. During a fight between the fans of Zagreb's Dinamo and Belgrade's Crvena Zvezda, he physically confronted Serbian police to protect Dinamo fans. Instead of separating the sides and stopping the fight, the Serbian police attacked and began beating the Croatian fans. Boban was a great footballer, but he became an immortal legend and a hero that evening when he physically fought to protect his own fans.

In 2017, the Catalan Parliament illegally declared independence, in violation of the Spanish constitution. This move was followed by heavy clashes in Barcelona between pro-independence supporters and Spanish riot police. The police visibly used excessive force and brutally dispersed the crowd (though this brutality is a humane act compared to the methods of the Ivanishvili regime). At that time, the entire Barcelona Football Club stood up against this brutality and violence. There wasn't a single player who didn't demand an end to the violence

**UNFORTUNATELY, THE FANS ARE ALSO TO BE BLAMED. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT. IT'S SURPRISING WHEN YOU TAKE ON DEBT TO FOLLOW YOUR TEAM TO GERMANY, AND WHEN YOU RETURN HOME, YOUR IDOLS TURN THEIR BACKS ON YOU, IGNORE YOU, DON'T SUPPORT YOU WHEN YOU SHED BLOOD DEFENDING YOUR COUNTRY'S FREEDOM, AND ALL WHEN YOU NEED THEIR SUPPORT THE MOST.**

with an explicit statement or who didn't hold the Spanish government responsible for beating the people. Some of Barça's Catalan stars didn't even shy away from swearing. The ethnically Spanish Andrés

Iniesta, who is by no means a supporter of Catalan independence, was one of the first to stand by his fans, regardless of his political views. Even Leo Messi, who had never spoken publicly about anything other than football before, had to speak out. All of Barça's stars were saying the main message: they are beating innocent people in the Catalonia stadium, they are beating our fans. They are beating our fans, our people in Barça jerseys—the same people we're supposed to meet tomorrow at Camp Nou. We will not allow anyone to beat our people. Either stop the violence, or come to Barça's training ground and beat us too. This is the world of football, this great game!

But what did we see when the Georgian Dream's Russian-style riot police were bloodying innocent people? We saw cowardly texts that were written and then quickly deleted. We saw even more cowardly Instagram Stories that didn't even need to be deleted, as they vanish on their own without a trace after 24 hours. We saw the shameful silence of the team captain, Guram Kashia. I don't know what he can do to wash away this shame. We saw four football players hired to participate in the Russian regime's election video. We saw that in such a large team, not a single person was found who would refuse to take money from a modern-day Sergo Ordzhonikidze<sup>1</sup>.

The entire team watched as executioners bloodied their fans wearing their team's jerseys. Every day they watch as a Russian oligarch cuts off their country from the free world, how he overthrows its sovereignty and independence, and how they are sinking into a Russian peat swamp, but, astonishingly, not a single person among them will say no!

Unfortunately, the fans are also to be blamed. There is no such thing as unconditional support. It's surprising when

1. Sergo Ordzhonikidze (1886-1937) was a prominent Georgian Bolshevik and a high-ranking official in the Soviet Union. He was a close associate of Joseph Stalin and played a key role in the Bolshevik takeover of Georgia in 1921. He was known for his ruthless and uncompromising methods and was directly involved in the suppression of opposition and the implementation of Stalinist policies. He later died under mysterious circumstances, with some historians believing he was forced to commit suicide by Stalin. In the context of the provided text, his name is used as a historical parallel to an individual who serves as a tool for a modern, pro-Russian regime.

you take on debt to follow your team to Germany, and when you return home, your idols turn their backs on you, ignore you, don't support you when you shed blood defending your country's freedom, and all when you need their support the most.

The sports media is a world of its own, never lacking in flattery but rarely asking critical questions.

I have no hope for the football players or the media. They will never change on their own. We, the fans, must change. You can't ask anyone to act heroically like Boban. It's also pointless to explain that sports and politics cannot be separated. They don't understand, but we must at least make them understand that when their fans are having their bones broken, being crammed into torture machines, beaten to death, and spat on in the face, they shouldn't be taking money from the creator of this hell. On the contrary, they should distance themselves from him in every way and scream until

**UNCONDITIONAL FANDOM MUST BE REPLACED BY THE CONDITION, "LE SOUTIEN VOUS L'AVEZ, ALORS RESPECTEZ NOUS"— "YOU HAVE OUR SUPPORT, NOW SHOW US YOUR RESPECT!"**

they lose their voices for the torture of their innocent fans to stop. This is the foremost rule of football!

It's a bit late, but what can you do? Unconditional fandom must be replaced by the condition, "LE SOUTIEN VOUS L'AVEZ, ALORS RESPECTEZ NOUS"— "You have our support, now show us your respect!"

And finally, a big thank you to Giorgi Tsintsadze and Tornike Okriashvili for doing the exact opposite of their colleagues and standing by their fans on those bloody days—on Rustaveli Avenue, where the fate of Georgia is often decided! ■









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