**President-Prime Minister Friction on the Agenda Again**

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**7 Years On from War, Georgia Still Plagued by Russian Occupation**

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President-Prime Minister Friction on the Agenda Again

By Zaza Igurkhava

The football celebration that took place at the Dinamo Arena on August 11, took place without the Georgian presence despite the scenarios of the enemy of the European Youth Olympic Festival, President Giorgi Margvelashvili and Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili sat next to each other. The President of Georgia was probably watching the Barcelona-Sevilla match on TV from his house in Dusheti. The President did not explain his absence at this important event but his press office made it known long before the match that the President had decided not to attend the match. Explaining his absence at the opening of the EYOF, he directly said that he as a president “had no role” in the opening of the festival and for that reason he would not attend it. To put it simpler, the President was not given the right to address young sportsmen at the EYOF and he boycotted. However, as ever the presence and absence of Georgia’s Prime Minister and President continues to stir debate about their respective roles and who exactly is seen as the country’s figurehead.

The political game between the President and the Prime Minister has long culminated on into open confrontation. The President, who has been accused of a lack of gratitude, on his side reminds his former team of their pre-election promises. The tension reached a point when the Speaker of the Parliament had to make a special statement in order to appease the Georgian Dream MPs. “It is high time for the Georgian Dream to get used to the idea that President Margvelashvili is not part of the political team of the Georgian Dream Coalition, even though he was nominated by the Coalition. He has never said that and I would even add that our constitutional system defines that,” Usupashvili said on Artia TV. President Margvelashvili reminded his former team members of the same thing when the Georgian Dream members asked the President to recall the pre-election period and Bidzina Ivanishvili’s choice. “I am the President elected by the Georgian population who gave an oath to the people of Georgia and not to the Georgian Dream, that I would serve the country, not a political party. This is how the President has responded to the claims of the government party. However, the main concern is whose side Usupashvili takes when the matter comes to a crucial phase. The Georgian media is already announcing the emergence of a new oppositional power and this power plans to gather around President Margvelashvili. In an interview with the Aavaal-Dasavali newspaper, editor of the newspaper Kronika Plus, Eliso Kiladze says that negotiations for the shaping of such a political power are underway. Representatives of the United National Movement, Free Democrats and Margvelashvili are meeting each other in Turkey. “Special agencies will not find it hard to confirm that negotiations are underway in Turkey. Now the sides are agreeing on the place of the new political movement on the oppositional wing and the role of the President in this movement,” Kiladze says.

It is becoming clear the Prime Minister with his cabinet and the President with his administration are two independent branches. They have their own competences and spheres of influence. On one side, there is Prime Minister Gharibashvili who is shaping into a new type of leader and is uniting voters of different views and interests. On the other side there is Giorgi Margvelashvili who is also a new type of a leader. However, until now he has been uniting anti-Prime Minister voters. In this case, the United National Movement is unacceptable for both of them, something made clear during the discussion of the draft law on tapping. Back then, non-governmental organizations refused to register their projects in the name of the United National Movement and supported Republicans. It is also interesting that President Margvelashvili fired Vano Machavariani from his administration who was connected to the United National Movement and hired Kakha Kuchonidze who is associated with the Republicans. Republicans and Free Democrats on their side have already been named as alternative opposition powers to the United National Movement. Autumn should be interesting as we see the final confrontation scenes between the President and the Prime Minister when the Parliament will start working on collecting 76 votes to resolve the veto of the President.

7 Years On from War, Georgia Still Plagued by Russian Occupation

By Nino Japarashvili

Georgia has long experienced serious difficulties proving that Moscow had planned and implemented a military operation against the country in 2008, as most of the information sources in the aftermath of the war between Russia and Georgia cited the EU-sponsored report stating that the war was started by a Georgian attack. It added that this was not justified by international law, disregarding the context at the time in which the country was subjected to long-term intensive Russian provocation along the administrative boundary line, where the Russian Federation had been mobilizing heavy military armor and troops.

Even though the Russian military aggression in Georgia was obvious and there were facts that the Kremlin launched a large scale military attack against the country, many in the West disregarded Tbilisi’s claims of being the victim. Alongside the American reset policy, countries in Europe and else where continued “business as usual” with Moscow.

The Georgian state would restate its position with regards to Russian actions only five years after the war, as Ukraine, another post-Soviet state, faced open military confrontation from the Russian side, when in 2013 Russia annexed Crimea in Ukraine and started supporting destabilization efforts in Eastern Ukrainian regions, arming rebels and sending Russian troops on the ground.

The crisis in Ukraine reaffirmed that Russia’s war with Georgia had been part of a fight the Kremlin had started in the region to counteract the spread of democracy with the help of the EU’s trans-formative policies. Moscow had become seriously concerned with the developments in the post-Soviet space, as some neighboring states began to pursue a European agenda.

The transformative power that comes with closer association with the West, and in particular with the EU, is seen as a major threat to the authoritative regime in the Kremlin. Democratic developments in Russia’s immediate neighborhood may motivate the Russian population to question their form of governance, leading to a process that could result in a regime change, or could stimulate the Russian oligarchic system to become involved in a power struggle, a process which may end with mass chaos in the country.

In order to thwart Georgia’s continuous efforts to gather around President Margvelashvili and Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili continue the three Articles 1 and 2 of the EU’s Open Door strategy, which was concluded in 2008. In the last 7 years, Moscow has declared the two breakaway regions in Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as “independent states” and signed the so-called “treaties” which was concluded in 2008.

In 2011, Russian troops in South Ossetia launched the so-called “borderization” process, installing wire fences deep into Georgian territory. Such actions were conducted in the immediate vicinity of the villages of Didi Khvirlavi and Kveshi, southeast of Tskhinvali. Later, in 2013, a new wave of intensified fencing efforts by the Russian Federation took place in the village of Dishi: metal fencing posts were installed about 120 meters into Thilisi-administered territory. Also, in the village of Davni, Russians moved the administrative boundary line deeper into Georgian territory.

As Georgia proceeds with the implementation of the Association Agreement (AA) and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), together with further plans to liberalize travel with the EU, and its decision to open a NATO-Georgia joint Training and Assessment Centre this year, there is no sign that Russia will ever respect Georgia’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. In July 2015, illegal placement of signs on the territory adjacent to the village of Tsetebani of Gori municipality, and the village of Orchosani, in the occupied Akhalkalaki district, near Georgia’s main highway continued. Similar border signs were placed on the territories adjacent to the villages of Tseronisi and Tamarasheni.

As Georgia and Ukraine continue to be affected by Moscow’s destructive policies, the West is focused on the lean nuclear deal and the anti-terrorism campaign in the Middle East, where Russia plays an important role. In this situation, the Russian Federation remains perceived an “indirect” threat to security and peace in Europe, and its aggression continues to quietly trouble the governments and people in non-EU Eastern European states.
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Rustavi 2 Case: Attempted Subordination of Georgian Media?

By Zviad Adzinbaia

An ambiguous statement by Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili has confused Georgian society. The PM appears to regret backing sanctions against Russia for annexing Crimea and occupying South Ossetia, a statement that the Russian government has been using to justify its decision to impose a counterclearsanction against Georgia for his second thoughts.

"I am sure internal destructive forces do not want our relations with Russia to be normalized, while our interest is to restore them to a neighboring status. The process has started, though Garibashvili concluded.

According to the PM, the Ministry of Agriculture said that they will survey the quality of wine and any other product exported to Russia. Garibashvili added that he personally opposed Georgia joining the EU sanctions against Russia following the latest statement by the Russian's Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Well-Being (Rospatrubezhas) about the possible counterclearsanction against Georgia for its decision to join the EU sanctions.

The PM expressed satisfaction with negotiations regarding Russia. "The first thing is to be very careful about the process that borders Georgia’s occupied territory approaching a crisis point. "I am sure that our relations with Russia will continue to develop in a positive manner. The process has started, though". Garibashvili concluded.

Analysis: By the Georgian government playing obscurantist politics? How could one explain the PM’s vacillating statement while the same Garibashvili continuously confirms Georgia’s ‘irreversible’ course toward the EU and NATO? Considering Georgia’s geographic location, it would be more logical for the country to opt for a west or east value systems. However, the battle starts when the north, Russia appears on the horizon, with no soft power but hard power better of any attraction.
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Georgia Provides Water to Save Iran's Urmia Lake

Alilu emphasized that the main parts of the water transfer project need to be implemented in Iran and it is predicted that it will be completed within two years.

Recent research revealed that in September 2014 the lake’s surface area was about 12 percent of its average size in the 1970s, a far bigger fall than previously thought. ‘The drying trend of the lake would have continued unchecked as it was during the previous government, very soon five provinces would have faced serious environmental hazards, and potentially grave human catastrophe,’ he said. In July 2014, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani approved plans for a 14 trillion rial program (over $500 million) in the first year of a recovery plan. The money is supposed to be used for water management, reducing farmers’ water use, and environmental restoration.

Several months earlier, in March 2014, Iran’s Department of Environment and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) issued a plan to save the lake and the nearby wetlands, which called for spending $225 million in the first year and $1.3 billion overall for restoration.

Katskhi Pillar Among Top 20 Bizarre Churches

By Tamar Svanidze

Katskhi pillar, a natural limestone monolith located in Imereti, Western Georgia, has been listed among the top 20 most bizarre looking churches in the world, according to entertainment website LoWire.

The site stated “If you can make it here, you just might get to see some of heaven in this church. It sits on top of a 130 foot high rock formation and has been home to a monk for the last 20 years. Most interesting part? He uses a rusty old ladder to get up and down from the church and calls it the stairway to heaven.”

The pillar is located near the town of Chiaurara, western Georgia and is approximately 40 meters tall, overlooking the small river valley of Kastkhura. The cliff was unclimbed by researchers until 1944 but was only systematically studied from 1999 to 2009. The studies determined that the ruins dated from the 7th or 8th century.

Currenty the Georgian Orthodox Church has built a small new church at the top of the pillar. It is reached by a vertigo-inducing iron ladder located on the upper half of the pillar. The remains of a believer, who died at the pillar at an unknown date, are kept in the new church building.

Women are not allowed to climb to the top of the pillar.

AUGUST 14 - 20

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Minister of Agriculture, Otar Danelia, following a meeting with Georgian wine and alcoholic drinks producers in Georgia, also attended by the head of the Georgian Wine Agency, Giorgi Samanishvili, announced that the Georgian government will subsidize grapes.

Danelia stated that the exact details of the subsidy arrangement will be confirmed in the coming days. Last year the Government allocated a subsidy for white grapes of 35 tetri per kilogram and red grapes at 15 tetri per kilogram.

The minister noted that this year Georgia's grape harvest will increase by at least 30% due to, he claims, different government initiatives, such as the anti-hail system.

Danelia was also questioned about the potential Russian embargo. Earlier, the RIA Novosti information agency reported that Russia's Consumer Rights Protection Service Rospotrebnadzor had been making allegations of safety violations on the part of Georgian wine producers.

The Minister noted that the Russian authorities have not taken any official decision on this matter. “We are not aware of any official information or decision taken in Russia. The barriers which have been related to cargo, they do not exist anymore; as far as we have been informed, tracks have passed customs without any difficulties. Trade is also continued in the same regime. Nothing outstanding has happened, in principle. We plan to intensify cooperation and we do not expect any problem at this stage,” Danelia noted.
By Eva Bochorishvili

Countries hold foreign-exchange reserves to meet their short and long term international payment obligations, including the servicing of external debts, and to intervene in the foreign exchange market during periods of excessive currency fluctuations. Additionally, adequate foreign-exchange reserve holdings boost market confidence in a country's ability to meet its external obligations and to absorb any unforeseen external shocks or unexpected capital movements.

What is an adequate level of foreign reserves? One common rule of thumb is that reserves should cover at least three months’ worth of goods and services imports. However, with the change in the patterns of global trade and currency crises, including a number of currency crises, several other measures have come into use: the percentage of reserves to total external debt maturing over the next year; the ratio of reserves to broad money; the ratio of reserves to the size of the current account deficit; and the ratio of reserves to possible variations in capital flows into the country. However, bigger isn’t always better, as extensive reserve accumulation has its cost. By buying foreign currency to accumulate reserves, the domestic currency is kept weaker than it would be otherwise, thus stimulating export-oriented production at the expense of domestic-demand driven growth.

Using the three months import rule, Russian and Azerbaijani reserves, boosted by energy export earnings, covered more than half year’s worth of imports as of end-2014. However, even these hoards of reserves could not insulate these countries’ currencies against continuous pressure from lower oil prices. Keeping exchange rates stable quickly eroded reserves, forcing their central banks to sharply devalue their currency. Thus, the traditional reserve yardstick is a good rule of thumb, but an insufficient criterion to measure adequacy of reserves. On the other hand, without massive foreign-exchange reserves, several countries have faced far more serious challenges.

Using the traditional yardstick of three months imports, Georgia’s foreign-exchange reserves, fed by strong inflows, have been more than enough since 2009. However, as the country started to experience a fall in exports and remittances at the end of 2014, the central bank used part of its reserves to avoid excessive volatility of the lari, thereby leading to a slight decrease in reserves. However, NBG’s interventions were limited, allowing the lari to float and maintain some stability. Doing otherwise would only have wasted Georgia’s foreign currency reserves and slowed the reduction in imports necessary for balancing external financing shortages. At the same time, the weaker lari helped to maintain price competitiveness of Georgian exports, as trading partners’ currencies also weakened against the dollar. With this adjustment, the central bank reserves declined marginally and remain adequate to cover three months of imports in 2015, boosting market confidence in the ability of the country to meet its external obligations.

The NBG holdings of foreign reserves are also required to manage government’s foreign exchange operations, bypassing the foreign exchange market: the NBG may sell foreign currency reserves in good times becomes an automatic function of the state budget resulted in an increase in reserves. This enabled the NBG to supply the needed foreign currency to the private sector, thus balancing Georgia’s total foreign exchange position and relieving the pressure on the lari. Notably, NBG’s FX interventions on the buying side increased the money supply, and consequently the inflationary risks. Selling foreign currency decreases the money supply, creating liquidity risks and dampening growth prospects. The NBG uses various policy instruments to sterilize the effects of FX interventions - NBG’s certificate of deposits or government securities are used to absorb excess liquidity in the banking system, while short-term liquidity is supplied by refinancing loans.

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Should Georgian National Bank be Stripped of Supervision Function?

By Nato Chakvetadze

There are active debates ongoing about the Bill of Amendments to the Organic Law on the National Bank of Georgia (NBG). The main question is whether the central bank’s supervisory powers need to be removed from the NBG or not. This topic became very real upon registration of the Bill by the Budget, Financial and Economic Committee of Parliament of Georgia, on May 21 which aimed at creating a fully independent supervisory authority.

No specific issue is mentioned in the Explanatory Notes to the Bill regarding what had pushed them to initiate division of the institution. The only purpose admitted is that there are many examples from abroad where independent supervisory authorities are functioning successfully; therefore, the same model should be applied here.

But what would this change mean for the economic life of the country? Does this model represent the best international practice in the field? And what are the risks associated with the enactment of the Bill?

Since the argument in support of separating the supervision from the NBG is based on foreign practice, it is likely to be quite limited. In the Explanatory Notes to the initial version of the Bill, 10 European countries are cited as successful examplars of so-called “independent” supervision models. Those were Denmark, Belgium, Luxembourg, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, United Kingdom, Austria, Germany and France. However, this was in the last decade. Now, after the separation of the supervision failed, 9 out of the 10 mentioned countries have implemented counter-reform and the other (Sweden) is planning to do so. It should be noted that the supervision function is under the Central Bank (Central Reserve System) in the 11st as well.

As for the European Central Bank (ECB), it openly supports keeping the supervision function within the frames of National Banks (NBs). The ECB has even increased the quality of banking supervision through creating the single banking supervision mechanism at community level (Source: Directive 2002/77/EC of the parliament and of the council, 10/22/2002). The position is based on long experience accumulated in this field of securing financial stability. The global and Eurozone financial crisis of 2008-2009 has clearly revealed flaws in the banking supervision and confirmed an advantage of keeping the function within the NBs (Source: European Central Bank, Recent Developments in Supervisory Structures in the EU member states, Report 2010). The crisis has led to changing the trend, which was started in the 2000s. The historic opportunities of the countries that stripped the supervision function from NBs a few years ago started to implement counter-reforms. In 25 out of 28 cases, the NBs have regained the prerogative of banking supervision or their role has been significantly strengthened. This was because of the resulted loss of confidence of supervision from NBs prevents them from implementing their ultimate task – to secure monetary policy and maintain financial stability. The crisis has clearly demonstrated that the NBs are not able to adequately respond to financial turmoil occurring in the world without belonging to finan-
cial market supervision, because the lack of in-
nformation disables NBs which struggles to make well-advised decisions about market interventions.

In addition, the existence of a supervision function within the frames of the NBs secures institutional strength and high quality of political independence of both authorities, which is directly proportional to the quality of contribution they make to the financial stability of the country.

Today, in the overwhelming majority of EU countries, regulating and supervisory authorities for banking supervision are within the NBs (except Latvia, Poland and Malta) or are strongly engaged in this activity (Source: Basel Committee official web site, regulatory and supervisory authorities database). Apart from national supervision, the ECB also takes part in banking supervision within the European institutions in countries whose NBs do not have such a function (Source: ECB, Guide to Banking Supervision, November 2014). Accordingly, the provision stated in the Explanatory Notes states that the reform is dictated by the best international practices, yet it does not correspond to the reality.

On the contrary, it is an odds with the recommend-
ed position of the ECB regarding the supervision and experience of the EU countries. Moreover, the decision happens to be the best practice of Basel Committee “Core Principles for Effective Banking Supervision”, which is accepted for use by EU banking authorities.

We need to admit that the Bill violates the EU-Georgia Association Agreement 2015, Section 2, Paragraph 2.5. According to the agreement, review of law related to the NBG needs to be conducted based on EU expertise and involvement of the ECB. In the Extraordinary Notes to the bill, it is written that no external involvement has been secured.

When discussing the case of Georgia we need to consider that we have had a similar experience in the past. The supervision function was stripped from the NBG in 2008 and returned the very next year. The change was a reflection of the processes developing in the world; just like other countries, we have also faced the negative economic consequences of separation of these two functioning bodies. It is interesting to ponder what has triggered the desire to go through the same misleading path instead of seeking effective ways to deal with the real economic challenges, especially today when the country’s econ-
yomy is in a really difficult condition.

Moreover, according to the Constitution of Georgia, the NBG is an independent institution which is responsible for conducting the monetary policy, ensuring price stability and contributing to the soundness of the financial sector (Sources: The Constitution of Georgia, Article 95 and The Supervisory Council of the National Bank of Georgia fulfilling its constitutional duties will become questionable if the supervision function is removed. At the same time, since the change is politically motivated and its goal is to establish control over the financial sector through supervisory activity, the amendment would weaken the inde-
pendence of the NBG. This suspicion was derived from the provision of the Bill, according to which the Government would take an absolute majority of seats in The Supervisory Council (5 members out of 7 will be Government nominated candidates).

Another debated issue is the right of the Parliament of Georgia to dismiss the head of the Supervisory Council as the criteria for dismissal is very vague.

As mentioned above, the Georgian economy and banking sector is facing big challenges. The reasons are multifold, but mostly they originate from external economic factors, such as: processes on international markets, which led to strengthening of the US dollar against all major currencies, including the Geo-

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UNFPA is the lead UN Agency that supports the government and Youth NGOs and initiative groups, active in youth-related issues including healthcare, social protection, education, employment, development, and civic engagement will participate in the intellectual game. The winner teams will be awarded gifts and certificates by UNFPA Georgia Country Office.

The aim of the International Youth Day is to encourage young people plan and implement activities for increased public awareness on youth agenda. This year, this day is commemorated under the theme “Youth Civic Engagement,” to celebrate the actions that young people take around the world to improve their well-being and that of their communities and underline the importance of youth civic activism for sustainable development. UNFPA is the lead UN Agency that advances the rights and opportunities of young people. UNFPA's efforts to promote youth leadership and participation enable young people to develop the skills, knowledge and support needed to make informed decisions about their bodies, lives, families, communities, countries and the world. UNFPA has been supporting the government in development of the National Youth Policy and the Action Plan in Georgia, which aims at establishing the enabling environment for comprehensive development of Youth to fully realise their potential.

Lela Bakradze, Assistant Representa- tive at UNFPA Georgia Country Of- fice: “Young people are driving change towards a better future in the world. Unfortunately, there still exist barriers precluding their full development and participation. Even today, adolescent girls are often burdened by child marriage, sexual violence and unplanned pregnancies, preventing their development and full participation. It is impossible to achieve country’s sustainable development without investing in power of youth, their education and health, and enhanced civic engagement, as well as without creating equal opportunities for all adolescents and young people for development of their full potential. This can be only achieved by multi-sectoral approach in partnership with young people.”

The event is organized with the support of UNFPA Georgia Country Office by the Youth Initiative Group established within the Advocacy Campaign “Youth Voice.” The campaign is a regional initiative taking place in the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia region, which aims to ensure a broad consultation and coordination with the young people in the region and their full participation in the ongoing discussion around the post-2015 development framework.

SOCIETY

g.Vino: “Georgian with a European twist”
By Joseph Larsen

Erekle II Street in Old Tbilisi is lined with popular restaurants. But when I walk up to g.Vino, I know that it’s different from the others. The waiter is attentive without being pushy, the interior feels more spacious than usual, the lighting is just right for a summer evening. It’s non-smoking, a nice touch. There is outdoor seating but I choose the air-conditioned dining room, it being a sweltering Au- gust night.

I look over the menu while a gritty voice moans over blues guitar in the back- ground. The food is definitely Georgian, but different from other Georgian dishes I’ve tasted before. There is kharcho, a hearty meat soup, as well as several dishes featuring khomi (Georgian polenta). Then there are some obvious imports: gurja, aiyar, hummus.

“We liked places like this … tapas style,” co-owners Lida and Mamuka tell me as we bite into a plate of cheeses, dips (including caramelized onions with sour cream and goat’s cheese) and bread baked just a few feet from the table. “As customers we know what customers want. It’s Georgian with a European twist, and European with a Georgian twist,” add the owners.

A while later the waiter brings over a platter of dzhioebi, melted, aged goat’s cheese with fresh bread slices to dip. “The menu is simple and it isn’t dif- ficult to prepare,” I’m told. “You just use good ingredients, and the outcome can’t be bad.” All ingredients are sourced from farms near Tbilisi, meaning the food has a particularly fresh flavor. It also means the menu is always being tweaked, be- cause the same small batches of cheese, for example, aren’t produced year round. g.Vino has great food, but it’s obvi- ous that much of the clientele is there for the beverages. Lida and Mamuka special- ize in pairing dishes with authentic Geor- gian wines produced using natural meth- ods. Neither claims to be a wine connois- seur – “sometimes I can’t even distin- guish the flavor,” Mamuka admits – but they know a good wine when they taste one.

The menu features rich reds and crisp whites, as well as a selection of the strong yellow wines common to Georgia’s wine region of Kakheti. Every wine they serve (mostly Georgian but with a smattering of Italian and Spanish varieties) is pro- duced using natural methods.

Natural winemaking, Mamuka ex- plains, means that “you only intervene in a very limited way, when you grow the grapes and when you make the wine.” In Georgia, that means the grape juice is placed in an earthenware jug called a qvevri, which is then stored underground for fermentation. This keeps the liquid at a constant temperature for the duration of the process.

The first wine we taste is chinuri, an easily-palatable red made in central Geor- gia, not far from Tbilisi. It goes well to wash down our plate of artisan cheeses with honey and green and red olives (I’m slightly disappointed to learn that olives are not grown in Georgia). Later, while John Lennon plays in the background, Mamuka will uncork a bottle of kisi, a “quite rare” wine from Kakheti with an amber color and deep flavor.

“We are looking for new producers all the time,” Lida tells me. “We want to find new wines, good wines, obviously, and promote them here. Discover them.” Sourcing wines locally and from small producers also helps conserve rare spe- cies of grape, some of which would dis- appear if they weren’t used in the winemaking process.

I’m thoroughly impressed with each of the flavors presented. But g.Vino’s fresh approach to the restaurant business means more than fresh food and natu- rally-produced wines. It’s also about per- sonal. They hire only people brand-new to the restaurant business. Neither our waiter, nor the manager nor any of the cooks had restaurant experience before being hired on at g.Vino.

“We’re tolerant if they [the staff] make a mistake, but not tolerant if they don’t like what they do,” Lida tells me. The lightbulb finally goes on. I knew some- thing was different, better, about this place. It wasn’t really the wines, cheeses and caramelized onion dips, although those were all great. It was the atmo- sphere. The staff at g.Vino work there because they have enthusiasm for the res- taurant business. That’s something you don’t often see in Tbilisi.

Lida and Mamuka’s philosophy can be expressed in eight words: “if staff is happy, the customer is happy.” I’m no philosopher, but in this case, the approach definitely works.

g.Vino opened in March 2015 and serves a variety of locally-sourced wines and fresh cheeses.
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**Georgian Music Prodigy Beka Gochiashvili Plays for Tbilisi Flood Victims**

Beka Gochiashvili, a 13-year-old pianist and composer, has dedicated a special concert to the Tbilisi flood victims of June 13. The 19-year-old musical prodigy, who has already been recognized by Chick Corea and Stanley Clarke, among others, has played a considerable role in the world of jazz.

Gochiashvili believes that this path was, and is, and will be a very big part of his life. His father, Valeri, who played a major role in his career by Tengiz Chitaishvili, classical music classes at a school headed by Tengiz Chitaishvili. By age eight, Beka was three years old when he watched Standards II by Keith Jarrett, Gerry Peacock and Jack DeJohnette – the video recording that triggered his devotion and passion for this sophisticated and powerful performance style. Subsequently, a young Valeri, his father, advised them to enroll Beka in a prominent jazz piano professor in Georgia. The then most prominent jazz piano professor in Georgia. Valeri ran back to the room, and he could not believe what was happening. A few months later, a much grander toy replaced his rubber pacifier, a piano.

Gochiashvili, who played an invaluable part who played a major role in his career by Tengiz Chitaishvili, classical music classes at a school headed by Tengiz Chitaishvili. By age eight, Beka won a competition at the Schwagam Classical Music Festival in Germany, where he performed pieces by Ravel, Mozart and Handel. Afterwards, at 11 years old, he participated in Sukrahli Jazz Festival in Latvia, where his performance caught the ears of Lenny White and Victor Bailey. The same year he played at the 10th International Festival “Georgians Play Jazz” held in the great hall of Tbilisi SOUM.

Some crucial moments for Gochiashvili’s career came when in April 2008 the US Embassy in Tbilisi hosted two State Department-sponsored cultural envoys – jazz pianist Dan Tepl and Joel Harrison, Artistic Director, President and Chief Executive Officer of the American Pianists Association, who performed with Beka. The well-known musicians highly acclaimed Beka’s unique talent.

Beka is one of the best jazz pianists I’ve heard anywhere, “mentioned Condolezza Rice, then the US Secretary of State and an accomplished pianist herself, in her remarks at the conclusion of her visit to Georgia in July 2008. Through the efforts of Ms. Rice, Mr. Harrison and John Tef, an US Ambas-ador in Georgia, Beka and Ramishvili travelled to New York in 2008 to par-ticipate in auditions at the Juilliard School and at the Manhattan School of Music, where Gochiashvili continued his studies sociology and piano.

In 2009, the Development and Re-forms Fund of Georgia awarded Beka a full scholarship for studies at the pre-college division of the Juilliard School, where he takes jazz piano classes with Frank Kimbrough and classical piano classes with Victoria Mushkatkol. Currently he attends the Professional Performing Arts School in New York. After graduating from the prestigious Juilliard School, the then 19-year-old pianist was to live in the US and visit his hometown rarely; but on August 12 Gochiashvili performed as part of a trio with his friends Martin Jaffe – bass and Jimmy Macbride – drums. Now, he is an established member of the Stanley Clarke Band and has touched down in the jazz world after the last year. His name is recognized in the jazz industry by people all over the world. His debut with American Jazz pianist and composer Chick Corea, who said: “Beka Gochiashvili is one of the best young piano prodigy. You’ll be seeing a lot of him in the next few years.”

Beka and Corea played together with Corea in 2012 when the American musican came to Georgia and performed in the Tbilisi Jazz Club. “Chick Corea was someone I always dreamt about to meet with. It was my childhood dream to meet a person to whom I had been listening my entire life,” Gochiashvili told GT.

Gochiashvili does not forget his second parents, Nora and Gia Shengelais, who have done a lot for him; “I want this to be known forever what these people have done for me – it’s huge,” he said.

Numerous diplomas were awarded to Beka Gochiashvili for participation in the Georgian-German Festival for Young Musicians-Performers Tbilisi-2008 and the competition in a con-cert (Children’s Album) dedicated to 165th anniversary of Pyotr Tchaikovsky, and a diploma participation in an international festival held in Germany in 2004.

Beka Gochiashvili is an incentive pio-neer for Georgian Jazz and music in general, which is developing. Importantly, Beka Gochiashvili is loyal to his home country, and states he would only ever play Russia’s Kremlin if it gave up Georgia’s occupied territories.
International company Intertek held corporate management audit of the Georgian Railway and confirmed its full compliance with the ISO 9001 standard.

Georgian Railway wishes you a pleasant journey!
Ukrainians, Svans and Many More In Cosmopolitan Canada

By Tony Hanmer

How do I remember when Canada officially became a nation-state in the modern sense of the word? For me, it’s easy: my birth year minus a century, 1867. July 1st, Canada and I are less than two years from turning 150 and 50, respectively.

There have been many waves of settlers here for thousands of years, beginning (it seems) with those crossing the Bering Strait from Asia and working their way all the way down to Patagonia, Bering Strait from Asia and working their way all the way down to Patagonia, their way all the way down to Patagonia, and then return to Ukraine to bring his family, if conditions were suitable. Nonetheless, it must have been very hard at first. And despite this, they made a go of it, and their success is echoed in the many Ukrainian names still found in this province and elsewhere in Canada.

New language, climate, unfamiliar ways. But they found and helped each other, found lives for themselves, and grew to work. Their past, preserved lovingly as if it were a version of a Little House on the Prairie TV village set, is here for all to see and experience first-hand. This country as a nation-state might be young compared to many others, but even a century of its immigrants’ progress has much to show and remind us. Even up in Svaneti, where my wife and I have one foot in the 19th century, one in the 21st. Wood heating and the internet, chickens and luxurious indoor plumbing, our own garden and the latest electronics. We can certainly relate.

Tony Hanmer runs the “Svaneti Renaissance” Facebook group, now with over 1000 members, at facebook.com/groups/SvanetiRenaissance/.
He and his wife also run their own guest house in Etseri:
www.house.svaneti

Society

CULTURE

Bronze Sculpture Discovered In Georgia Goes on Display in Los Angeles

An ancient statue dating back to the Bronze Age and discovered in Georgia goes on a display among the ancient world’s masterpieces in Los Angeles. After the long term collaboration of the Georgian National Museum and J. Paul Getty Museum unidentified bronze statue named Torens of Youth dated 2nd - 1st century BC discovered in Vani settlement, western Georgia were available to go on a display at the exhibition in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

A major exhibition named Power and Pathos: Bronze Sculpture of the Hellenistic World was open at the Los Angeles Getty Museum on July 28 and will last until November 1.

Before moving to Los Angeles, following exhibition was presented at the Palazzo Strozzi in Florence and after Getty Museum, exposition will move to the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

Other pieces which are exhibited at the Los Angeles Getty Museum are from world’s leading ancient museums, such as the British Museum in London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Galleria degli Uffizi and the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Florence, the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples, the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, the Musee du Louvre in Paris, and the Vatican Museums.

The exhibition in Los Angeles is organized by the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi in Florence and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, with the participation of the Tuscany’s directorate general for archaeology and it represents one of the largest exhibitions of this kind.

National Museum of Georgia is temporary housing of the statue, but as soon as Otar Lordkipanidze Vani Museum-Reserve will finish its large scale reconstruction works in 2016 the bronze torso of a youth will be returned at the original place.
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**SPORTS**

Barcelona Overcome Spirited Sevilla to Clinch Super Cup in Tbilisi Epic

By Aleksei Vonwitt

They came, they played, they entertain.

Months of frenzied hype was justifi-
ded in the space of two hours as Bar-
celona and Sevilla served up an al-
thundering goal thrashing.

A goal-fest in the opening five min-
uutes alone, told the tale of the tale.

The Andalusians failed to grab the spoils
while the Blaugrana had three goals
in the opening 10 minutes.

By half-time, the score was 2-0 in
favor of La Masia’s prodigies.

In the second half, the home side
served another two goals,
leaving the Sevilles with nothing to
show for their efforts.

The final score of the match is
2-2, with Barcelona emerging as the
victors.

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**GENESIS Continuing to Protect Georgia’s Vulnerable Youngsters**

Meri Tsalakhashvili

The association GENESIS was es-
established 20 years ago to support
and promote the health and well-being of
orphans, street children and the most
vulnerable populations of Georgia. It helps
these vulnerable groups within the
Georgian population gain access to
healthcare services, promotes healthcare
awareness and brings together commu-
nities to make sustainable changes. The
organization has carried out projects
with the help of Swiss, Dutch and Ger-
man donors. Georgia Today met Maia
Mgaloblishvili-Ryan, doctor pediatri-
and founder of Genesis and talked with
her in detail about the association.

Maia Mgaloblishvili-Ryan – “We
founded the association GENESIS in 1995
and our whole attention was paid to un-
derprivileged children and young
people. From the beginning we started
with orphans and social workers who
had parents but due to poverty they
could not afford to look after them and
they were sent to the children’s home,
and later to the orphanage. By that time,
6000 children were in those institutions
for young people under 18 years.
1000 children under permanent care that
included medical assistance too as we
are working with them in Adjara.

During this time, along with the
charity clinic where surgery, therapy,
cardiology, ultrasound services and labora-
tory was available and all this we did
only with our own funds. If there was
a great need for surgery, the children
were taken to the hospitals. Then the state
could not afford to help. Generally, we
were helped by Swiss agencies and Ger-
man foundations but we also had pri-
vate donors. During this time, along with
the charity clinic we opened medical assistance
clinics for poor people in Adjara and it still works there and
in Kakheti. At this time, when the primary
health care system was destroyed, we
served 15 000 residents with very com-
plex medical assistance with the support
of Netherlands Oxfam for 10 years.

As for the children deprived of
parental care, these houses were closed
in 2005 during deinstitutionalization.
As a result, some of the children re-
turned to their parents, or were adopted
and others reached 18 years of age
and left the houses. Currently, 44
small houses function and there are 8-10 chil-
dren, totally 600 children. Another
5000 teenagers would receive state aid,
but very little. A certain number of chil-
dren again returned to the streets. We
served 15 000 residents with very com-
plex medical assistance with the support
of Netherlands Oxfam for 10 years.

In the process, we learned
how to work with different gov-
ernment bodies and presented a
bill in the parliament and asked to grant
young people leaving care socially
valuable status. The work in this direc-
tion continues. We hope that along with
the government and other organizations
will be involved in this process. We
have a large group of disabled children
and adults to care for. We mainly work
with them in Adjara. Our first clinic,
which is located there, is a neuro
and orthopedic rehabilitation center
which we open with the help of the Dutch
and the Japanese people. Later, a rehabili-
tation services center was added to it.
Next it has been bought by the Minis-
try of Health of Adara and is operated
with the involvement of the local mu-
icipality. I would like to note that the
government of Adara works very ef-
ficiently. It is a very productive body
because it’s much quicker to bring their
attention to the problem and their re-
sponse is very good. We have innate
physically and mentally disabled chil-
dren Dyspraxia and dyslexia are atten-
dition deficit hyperactivity disorders.

If these children’s IQ is fine but their
perception and concentration skills
need help from a young age but the
system is not yet implemented. One
child in 10-12 suffers from dyslexia.
There are no statistics of it in Georgia
but these are world statistics. These
orders are absolutely curable.

One more thing that we have seen
so far is children’s rights violations.
Domestic violence, violence outside,
bullying, neglecting, pressure. There
is also sexual abuse and an increased
number of suicides in teens in Geor-
 gia. This does not happen only due to
social or economic conditions. There
are other forms of child neglect occur-
ing in rich families. In such facilities,
a child might feel abandoned because of
their parents’ lack of time. Strange as
it may sound, children’s overloading
with school subjects is a form of vio-
 lence. Very often children have no free
time. According to the convention play-
 ing and leisure time is a child’s right
that is violated in these cases. Intensive
work is to be conducted in schools with
parents in order to build public aware-
ness on the child’s rights. Children’s
rights violations are not infringed only
with physical or sexual abuse. A child
needs free space and a real childhood.
If the child’s rights are violated in ma-
terially perfect families, imagine what
kind of violence happens with unac-
compained children. Our work has
shown us a clear picture of what is hap-
ing in this direction.

In 2013, UNICEF published a report
regarding this issue. There are other
countries’ reports where it is written
in detail what each teacher should know.
We want to launch a child abuse pre-
vention program and safeguard the en-
vironment in kindergartens and schools,
and currently are working on this issue.
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