

C@ucAsia

international coalition of gender journalists

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photo by Diana Petriashvili, Georgia

RUSSIA, GEORGIA

and

GENDER

WHY GENDER?

Certain special services mutually rush around in different directions, following their careers. Sometimes they arrest each other, which is also within the game's rules. It should not affect us. We, the population of these countries, have our own problems and companies.

But all of a sudden, one intelligence service becomes so impudent that does not consider it necessary to hide its actions. The second one gives this mistake or a provocation inadequately loud publicity. Instead of solving the issue quietly, deporting the officers, or diplomatically exchanging spies. Instead of it, loud shows are organized with ministers fighting each other in front of TV cameras. And we watch these shows on TV, entirely ruled by money. We create the audience and contribute to this psychosis.

On the both sides of the border, there are men dressed in expensive suits. They fight and try to

scare each other, demonstrating the resources that they possess only by occasion and only temporarily. And there start conflicts, deportations and wars. "Why Gender?" I am asked. In the pre-trial deportation cells there are as many men as women and children. This is right; but gender is not only about one's biological sex. It is also about the power, as a man in pre-deportation cell is not always entirely a man, just as a woman in power is not entirely a woman. And there are too many men in power and too many of women who have already packed the clothes of their kids to be deported. Russia-Georgian conflict was in its climax, when unknown murderer killed Russian journalist. She wrote not on army, and not on special services. Not on Chechnya, not on corruption or tortures. She wrote about the people who suffered because of that. And she was killed for that. A weak woman, a weaker sex - whatever they call us! - was killed in the country, whose culture glorifies femininity and motherhood.

Nadezhda AZHGIKHINA,
Russia

death and life

she was THE ONLY HOPE for many people

female journalism is likely
to rehabilitate our profession

Politkovskaya differed from other journalists covering North Caucasus by endless stream of people, who wanted to meet her. Mothers of Russian soldiers, relatives of Chechen hostages, women and children, old veterans and refugees - all these people, who were not always adequate and were not needed by anyone else, kept meeting the journalist. Sometimes her conversations with them developed into newspaper articles, sometimes they did not, but the people, invisible to newspaper readership were getting not only moral support, but also practical help from Anna Politkovskaya. The number of these people is higher than that of official investigations launched after the journalist's publications.

Sometime ago, at a meeting on extreme journalism, my colleagues from BBC and NBC argued about wither a reporter can express his feelings when working in a 'hot spot,' and if he should try helping those who suffers. Journalists spoke about some of their successful and award-winning colleagues, who committed suicide because they failed to help those injured refugees, and dying children, who made them popular. When there appears a question of helping children in Africa, Chechnya or Ryazan, it happens that some of our colleagues take care of the children, treat them, send to schools, find money for them, or simply take them to their houses, without feeling themselves as heroes. It is a very normal attitude for some people.

No matter what people say, there is a separate sector of the media, the women's reporting; which continues, at some point, rehabilitation of our profession, reminding us of principles of civil service, of conscience, responsibility and sympathy for those who are poor and weak. Generally, editors get tired of these kind of reporting, which goes beyond the limits of genres and editorial policies, and ignores the



crowds of people wanted to meet her, for many she was the only hope

photo from Anna Politkovskaya's memory website
<http://politkovskaya.novayagazeta.ru/>

principles of political expediency. These women reporters show to an average reader some non-traditional priorities, like a baby's tear or a personal responsibility of each of us for the developments in the country. These strange women cover war in their own way, noticing people's faces and the details that remain invisible to the majority of war reporters: ill children, lost and forgotten olds, captured soldiers, broken-hearted parents of peaceful victims and other. It happens not only in Russia, but practically in the entire world, where women reporters write on the tragic events. Their view on these events is not liked by everyone; but without this precise and intent women's look the picture of the today's world would not be full. Until this alternative exists, free and independent journalism with the human face exists as well.

In the society, there are different viewpoints on the development of Russian media, its role and influence. Every journalist is free to choose the kind of reporting and the viewpoint he shares. The choice Politkovskaya made is shared by the minority of our colleagues, but at the same time, I would not speak about the lack of significance of this kind of journalism. The history of Russian journalism has many examples when the importance of a media source was not depending on the circulation, and when even one lonely voice, which reminds of honor, good, and personal dignity, tips the scales. In modern Russia, these concepts are connected with women's names: Galina Starovoitova, Larisa Yudina, Anna Politkovskaya. Very different women. Very similar women.

Will we manage to stop this tragic list?

Olga LIPOVSKAYA,
Russia

now news

INSPIRED BY THE MEMORIES

this context includes
discharge of murderers,
raids against Georgians,
and murder of journalist

One of my English friends replies to any mention of current horrors as saying: what's new?

Actually, she is right, there is nothing new. Yesterday jury discharged murders of a Vietnamese student. Some of them were discharged, others were acknowledged guilty, but in different cases. To put it briefly, Vietnamese student who died from 17 knife thrusts, does not matter. "Where do these jurors come from?" I asked myself. From here, from the people I belong to.

All the developments are very natural, including the murder of journalist Anna Politkovskaya, another honest and fair person. My friend and Anna's colleague Nadya Azhgikhina told me that she believed Politkovskaya was the "conscience of journalism." But Russian president said at his press conference in Germany that "her influence on the country's political life was very insignificant." And he is right, this scoundrel, because his people support him. If the population would not support Russian president, it would not be so active when electing him. Meanwhile, the president's rating is unbelievably high as the end of his second term approaches. The people also support purge of the 'Georgian mafia,' which is believed to exist even among writers and intelligentsia; the searches take place in Moscow and Saint Petersburg and in my native Kirovskaya oblast, where law-enforcements simply check out Georgian last names. The new term, 'ethnic criminality' appeared and has already become quite popular; and its neutral com-



Actually, there is nothing new about today's situation
photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

ponent 'ethnic' clearly means 'Georgian.' Many people do realize that the new sanctions punish people for the actions of the Georgian president, who carries out policy of immature nationalism; and that the deportation of all Georgians and the ban of money transfers etc are exaggerated measures. People do realize it, but keep feeling quiet pride for the president who knows how to teach a lesson to all those who does not 'respect' us.

There is a phrase in one popular Soviet movie: "They are not stupid, they are inspired by memories." I mention it to refer to the nostalgia about unlimited power and control during Stalin's era. This nostalgia seems to be extremely strong in the Russian people, and despite there already appeared new post-Soviet generation, the perception of the society remains the same.

In this surrounding, I feel myself as an alien. Liberal values, human rights, tolerance and all that - they are simply words, which are easily erased by successful TV presenters like Vladimir Solovyev and Gleb Pavlovsky. My people lives in the reality without these unnecessary words, boycotting these values. My people are represented by 12 jurors, who easily write off 'a second-rate Vietnamese'.



photo from Novaya Gazeta website <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/>

Lubov SOKOLOVA,
Russia

conscience

FIGURE OF INSIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE

"not a big deal, if reporter gets killed," authorities hint

The flowers brought to the house where Anna Politkovskaya lived, were still fresh when the highest authorities announced their verdict: "Her influence was insignificant." And the entire country made deep-drawn sigh: officials got the directive to take it easy; the influence was insignificant, and thus, the loss is not a big deal. At least there was no hateful rhetoric, no declarations on the plan to unveil and punish guilty.

To pay tribute to Anna Politkovskaya's memory is now a personal business of everybody, who was shocked when learning about the murder of the woman whose influence turned out to be insignificant.

Anna is the 261st journalist, who was killed in Russia during 10 years. If this crime ever gets unveiled, we

will find out, who committed it and for what reason, just as it was in the case of Galina Starovoitova. The most comfortable version seems to be vindicated: she had money with her, and was killed because of this money. There is nothing extraordinary about it. After the murder of Politkovskaya, it was even easier to calm down the situation. The choir of those who repeat "nothing special" suggests to count how many law-enforcements died during 10 years in Russia. And if you compare this index with death-rate resulted from consumption of low-quality alcohol, the death of a journalist working for a limited circulation newspaper will be considered as a drop in the ocean. In the case of Anna Politkovskaya, investigation of her life is way more important. I have never been her fan, and I do not generally agree with everything she

wrote. But she lived and proved the possibility of living this life so as she did. Uncompromising stand was never encouraged, but until she died, this position kept being a personal choice. This choice turned out to be fatal.

On the ninth day, club of regional journalism of Perm held a meeting dedicated to the memory of Anna Politkovskaya. Non profit organization Social Initiatives Support Fund "Civil Position," non-profit organization Freedom Fund, regional journalism club, and Open Russia social organization held video conference with Zoya Yeroshok, writer of Novaya Gazeta and a friend of Anna Politkovskaya.

Zoya Yeroshok worked together with Anna Politkovskaya for seven years. On October 16, she spoke about the life of the person she knew. And it became clear, that Anna was killed for her professionalism that was making her to come to the point in everything she did. She was too prominent against the background of the majority, who believe that journalism is service. The space that used to be occupied by her is now empty.

Lubov Bikkel, writer of Delovoe Prikamy newspaper, brought to the meeting newspapers that came out in Stockholm after the murder. For the entire first week, the topic was on the front pages of Swedish media. The reaction of other European countries was analogous. It is obvious that the death of Anna Politkovskaya brought a serious damage to the international image of Russia. When evaluating the level of the journalist's influence, experts applied the data generally used for planning PR-actions: they simply calculated the rating of the newspaper where the journalist worked. Ratings are good to study the budget of advertising companies, but they are not any good in connection with the human factor. Thesis on insignificance of Anna Politkovskaya's influence could probably work internally; in a very closed country, where even the president does not venture to be uncompromised. Is it a proper thesis for Russia?

Alma BEKTURGANOVA-ANDERSEN,
Denmark

afterwards

FLOWERS FOR ANNA

they appeared at the Russian embassy in Comenhagen, but were soon taken away

Anna Politkovskaya was well-known in Denmark. Here she received one of international awards; one of her books, "Putin's Russia," was translated into Danish. I am the citizen of Kazakhstan, now I live in Denmark, and should not be anyhow related to the Russian politics. However, all of us, emigrants from post-Soviet countries, are viewed as Russians in Europe. Sometimes we automatically feel pride, resentment or disappointment about developments in Russia. Russia still unites many Russian-speaking people, who are not indifferent about how the country is liked by our neighbors, friends and relatives. Many of us are oversensitive when reacting to those mistakes that Russia does in its foreign policy.

I heard so many condolences from Danish people! They were telling me about how much pain they felt about the murder of Russian journalist. These were ordinary people, we did not talk about politics, we spoke only about human life and about memory.

I felt so ashamed when found out that the Russian embassy ordered to take away the flowers brought in memory of the killed journalist. It is unbearable to realize that a person remains to be a small change for political games even after the death.

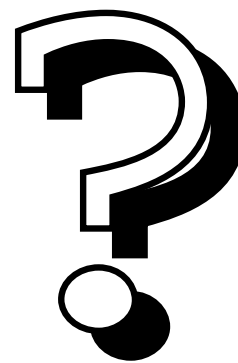
This is the point of view of an ordinary woman, who values every life of a human. This is why it's time for us to get the power, until the decisions undertaken by men did not destroy this world.



Russian embassy in Denmark. On the first day, when it became known about the journalist's murder, there were flowers here...

photo by Alma Bekturganova-Andersen, Denmark

WHAT TO DO WITH GEORGIA make friends... forget... "suppress"...



Novaya Gazeta, the newspaper Anna Politkovskaya worked for, asked its readers this question

The website of the newspaper suggested three possible replies, as listed in the title

During the first week, 11444 people participated in voting, and their number increases every hour. The overwhelming majority (68%) chose "make friends" version, 32% of votes are shared equally by the two other versions of reply. This is the comment of the website's editor:

The activeness of readers is so high that by publishing the new issue, number of voted will increase by at least thousand persons. It was proved by the letters we receive to the special address created so that the readers could share their views with us: gruzia@novayagazeta.ru. An absolute majority of the letters state that the law-enforcement bodies used a provocative and unwise statement of high-ranking politicians to organize a new sinecure for themselves. From now on, no Georgian will walk in Russian cities free of charge!

There were several letters from Black-Hundreders, who insist on "suppression." However, we will not publish their messages, because we support freedom of SPEECH, and not the freedom of abuse and offenses. Go ahead and find among your associates someone who can state your position distinctly and grammatically, without violating the basic law of this country, and we will publish your opinion, even if you make only 1 percent of the voted. The letters sent to the website can be found here:

<http://2006.novayagazeta.ru/nomer/2006/78n/n78n-s34.shtml>

C@ucAsia remark:

on the morning of October 18, when we were finishing page-proofing of Russian version of the magazine, the proportion of the replies looked in the following way:

"MAKE FRIENDS":
7925 readers, or 69%

"FORGET":
1846 readers, or 16%

"SUPPRESS":
Georgians would like
1756 web guests, or 15%



on our way back home there is some time to think

photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

Marina YARDAEVA,
Russia

chain reaction

FROM THE CAPITAL, "GEORGIAN MOPPING-UP" MOVED TO RUSSIAN PROVINCES

In Perm,
law-enforcements do not deny
possibility of strengthening control over Georgian migrants

Worsening of Russia-Georgian conflict has already appeared in Russian regions. In Primakamye, the crisis in the two countries relations reflected in the generally tense situation and in the beginning of anti-Georgian attitudes. It is possible that in the future Perm will face particular examples of pressure on persons bearing Georgian citizenship.

Victim or offender?

Several weeks ago, cafe Pirosmeni, which is owned by Georgian national Giorgi Tsintsadze, stopped working. It turned out to be impossible to find out official reasons of closure. According to the workers of the store, located in the same building, all employees of the cafe suddenly left the building they used to rent. According to the law-enforcement agencies, they unveiled number of violations of the use of cash-machines.

This was the only incident for now, but Georgian entrepreneurs feel uneasy. Co-owner of Mimino bar, Svetlana Talakhadze, said: "I am Russian married to a Georgian. I am afraid that my last name could affect my business. We opened the bar 12 years ago, together with my partner Valentina Borisova; imagine her feelings if we face pressure."

Svetlana added that she hopes the problem of 'Georgian mopping-up' will not touch our region. There were some rumors that Georgian restaurant Sunny Ajaria was also closed recently. The owner of the restaurant is David Bolkvadze, Georgian, a member of the Perm Legislative Assembly. In reality the restaurant was not closed, however, several checks were held there recently, employees were told that the checks were held in accordance with the annual plan. "It is strange," Ludmila Netrina, the manager of Sunny Ajaria said, "they used to check us once a year, but it is already the second check in 2006. There were no violations found, but we do feel aggression towards Georgians. I think carrying out of this policy is very wrong, as it results in mutual hostility."

Working in a regular mode

Press secretary of local Rospotrebnadzor stated that planned checks take place regardless of the owners' ethnicity. The head of the office working with the organized crime said approximately the same: "If you mean control over migrants, it is being held constantly to unveil individuals staying here illegally, regardless of their ethnicity. Closure of cafe Pirosmeni should not be connected with some anti-Georgian policy; the work of ten trading points, that have nothing to do with Georgia, was suspended simultaneously. Recently, our law-enforcement agencies detained four thieves; all of them are Georgian migrants. It is not in any relation with anti-Georgian attitudes in the country."

Statistics

According to the official data, "10-15% of migrants from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine work legally; for the natives of China and Vietnam this index makes 35-45%. There is only 1% of Georgian migrants who work legally at the territory of Russia." The law-enforcement agencies of Perm stated they do not have alike statistics for the region.

Another interesting statement: "Among the citizens of Georgia, staying at the Russian territory, every the 100th commits crime, while among Kazakhstan citizens, only every the 1000th breaks the law." During 9 months of 2006, there were several hundreds thousands crimes unveiled in Perm. 21 out of the total number were committed by Georgians. There are approximately 2 thousand Georgians living in Perm, so we can calculate the percentage.

Recently, Fontanka.ru website published an article saying that the website has "the texts of orders, where the law-enforcements are urged to hold large-scale activities on "Georgian shakedown."

APROPOS in Saint Petersburg

Internet newspaper ZAKS.RU held journalist investigation of the deportation of Georgian citizens and the actions against Georgian migrants.

The newspaper published two documents, two telegrams sent to the heads of local interior ministry offices.

The first document orders to hold "large-scale activities to unveil and deport the citizens of Georgian republic, who illegally stay at the territory of Russia."

The second telegram demands daily report regarding the number of Georgian citizens detained for crimes and administrative violations, with data regarding how much drugs and guns did the detained posses.

The citizens of Georgia, who await for the court decision on their deportation, stay in extremely bad conditions, Zaks.ru quoted lawyer Yuri Schmidt as saying. According to Schmidt, the detained stay in pre-trial cell for a long time, even after the verdict on their deportation is announced. Some of them agree on going back home at their own expense.

Schmidt also stated that the head of one of the pre-trial detention cells told him that he was asked to keep the detained there the longest possible. The pre-trial cells are overcrowded and dirty. Besides this, in number of cases, the decisions on deportation were imposed against the people who stayed at the territory of Russian Federation legally. Yuri Schmidt believes that the deportation of persons who do not have a right to stay in Russia is legal and corresponds to all international norms. "But we object this campaign, as it is directed against particular ethnicity, and thus is discriminative. We would like to initiate studying this issue at the Governor's Council on Human Rights," Yuri Schmidt stated.

finally the guilty is found!
she is exactly
the one in charge
for Georgia's
foreign and internal
policy

*photo by
Polina Miloradovich, Georgia*



Roza KUKHALASHVILI,
Georgia

why

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Is the campaign adequate?

Why so much aggression?

Why Russia does not spare even its citizens, Georgians?

There is only little support expressed to Georgians. **Why** is the Russian society silent?

Why?

These questions today worry everyone in Georgia. We ask them each other, they compose our stream of consciousness today.

Russia has suddenly declared a war against not only immigrants, but even those Georgians who are its citizens. Simultaneously, Russian officials express their readiness to protect so-called Russian citizens in Tskhinvali and Sukhumi. Where is the logic?

Almost all strategic units of Georgia are privatized by Russian companies, and nobody here in Georgia will ever have an idea to suppress local Russians. It is different in Russia - even well-known Georgians who represent Russian intelligentsia face problems in today's Russia. Why?

Today in Russia everything Georgian is being persecuted: people with Georgian last names, Georgian culture, Georgian wine and mineral water... It reminds the situation that appeared in the last century, hatred towards non-Aryans. It ended with the Nurnberg process, with Russia being the main prosecutor...

Other Russian politicians say that in reality they like Georgian people, and that the "special measures" are introduced to our politicians. Just curious - will any Georgian politician ever appear in terrible pre-trial cells, where the deported are kept, or traveled on cargo planes, like the deported have to do? Despite of so much pain and humiliation, I am sure that the attitude between the two peoples will not worsen, because our ties started centuries ago; and xenophobia launched by particular politicians will not worsen them.

I am also sure that if there would be more women in the both countries' authorities, including law-enforcement sectors, we would not face today's disgrace. This is what gender balance is for. The Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council was adopted six years ago, but political practices remain the same.

Vladimir KHANAS,
Ukraine

apologies

WHERE IS OUR SOLIDARITY WITH GEORGIA?

they militarize this world, and we have to disentangle

In 1997, on behalf of Nova Ukraine organization, I promoted the candidacy of Viktor Yushenko, then the chairman of the National Bank of Ukraine, for granting him the status of freeman of Ternopil.

Much water has flowed under the bridges since then, Yushenko has become Ukrainian president, and the entire world knows about his friendship with Mikheil Saakashvili. They were together nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. I was proud for being able to demonstrate Ukrainian photo exhibition Women at Barricades at Tbilisi journalists conference. I was happy about the creation of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development - GUAM and believed that Ukraine could become a locomotion of democracy at the post-Soviet space. I sincerely believed that differences in our nationalities, religions and genders will not separate the people. Georgia-Russian conflict made me to doubt sincerity of Ukrainian politicians and their ability to react adequately to the international developments.

Today, I would like to apologize for my country and its leadership. We should not be silent and indifferent; the ideals of democracy are not generally upheld at meetings. I understand the worries of the Ukrainian politicians, who

explain their disgraceful silence by internal political problems between the authorities and the opposition. It seems that they care only about their own security and ministerial positions. In their worries, they have forgotten that their neighbor is in trouble and needs their help.

I spent several days trying to find clear position reflected by Ukrainian websites. Here is what I found:

"GUAM calls on the Russian Federation to be more self-restrained with Georgia." Along with this, GUAM welcomed the decision of the Georgian leadership to handle Russian officers as the measure was aimed at relaxing tensions. GUAM also welcomed Russia's commitment to pull-put its troops from Georgia during 2008.

GUAM countries stressed that the existing problems, including conflicts' resolution, should be solved through negotiation process.

Fraza websie, October 6, 2006:

Announcement of the year of Georgia in Ukraine will be a stimulus for further activation of Ukrainian business and Ukrainian investments in Georgia, Georgian ambassador to Ukraine Grigol Katamadze stated. The ambassador noted that the new migration policy imposed by

Russia against Georgia, would not affect the number of Georgian citizens arriving to Ukraine.

Fakti i Kommentarii website, October 19, 2006:

The statement of the Communist party leader regarding the contraband of Ukrainian tanks to Georgia was not approved, however, prosecutor general's office unveiled facts of illegal sale of military equipment abroad. The leader of Communist party Petr Simonenko released information regarding alleged illegal sale of weapons to Georgia. According to the chief communist of Ukraine, Kiev has already sent 40 tanks and is presently preparing for the sale of for SU type pursuit planes, Osa type jet complex and BUG system. In this regard, communist intend to initiate creation of parliamentary investigation commission to study these facts.

I will not comment on any of the released information. I am ashamed. It's a shame that so many people believed in commitments of friendship and mutual help. In reality, Ukrainian (and Russian, and Georgian and other) politicians care only about the power they have, and not about the people. Some of them deport women and children, while others do their best to make a profit out of this.

I asked volunteers of the international organization AISEK, together with the Men's Adaptation Center, to hold online poll on the development of Georgia-Russian problem.

Elena: Russia and Georgia will be friends forever. Regardless of what politicians do, ordinary people will stay friends.

Petr: We must stay friends, regardless of what politicians do! We share the same religion, and we have so much in common in our histories and cultures.

Irina: Russia will not be a friend to anyone, it wants to be a boss, it will always have its imperialistic interests.

Anuta: We simply should stop paying attention to the politicians. Ordinary people has nothing to do with their statements. Georgians love Russians, I hope Russians share this feeling.

Pavel: It seems to me that everybody agrees with the statement that Russia interferes in Georgia's internal affairs and makes problems for the country's territorial integrity.

Bogdan: International society has now another chance to realize that Georgia is an independent and all-sufficient subject of international law.

Valentina: The number of alike conflicts will not lessen, until this policy is implemented by men. Similar conflicts will keep appearing in other countries as well, as men militarize this world, and do not care about the people.

There were a lot of replies; we omitted the most harsh statements. I will never believe that this situation would appear in the case, if women would equally participate in heading the states.

Everybody, including myself is in charge for what happens. We are too delicate when fighting for the democracy.

APPEAL

of the Georgian international Association
Tetri Mandili (White Kerchief)
to the President of Russia,
Mr Vladimir Putin,
and the society of Russia

Mister President!

We are the women of different nationalities and religions, citizens of Georgia, the country which has been an example of tolerance for several ages. In tragic days for us, in September 1993, we recalled our old tradition: to stop a fight, women through kerchief between the enemies. In 1993, 2 thousand women of different nationalities went to the front line to stop senseless bloodshed in Abkhazia. We would never think that we would need so much braveness and self-sacrifice at the end of the 20th century. Our action lasted for 4 days. Unfortunately, it did not bring any result, but caused large resonance in different countries.

As for today, what is our fault? Why such a campaign is being imposed against our country? Why should we create new borders in the era of globalization and abolishment of old borders? Georgia never faced anti-Russian attitudes, our entire history is the example of it. Regardless of how provocative Russian media sources are, Georgia will not reply with hatred. Even back in 1993, we extended our hands to our Abkhaz and Ossetian brothers and sisters. We have nothing to divide between each other, this land is so small and this life is so short. It is impossible to stir up hatred, to call for revenge, to turn people into refugees. Let us just stop and thank God that we are alive. And continue living as good neighbors.

...When Boris Pasternak was leaving Tbilisi last time, he told his friend, the son of Titsian Tabidze, killed in 1937, and told him: "Nita, when you go back home, look for my heart, I have left it there..."

On behalf of the committee of the International Association Tetri Mandili -

Keti Dolidze,
film director

Lali NIKOLAVA,
Georgia

at home among "strangers"

STEP-CHILDREN OF THE MOTHERLAND

luckily, not all Russians have left Georgia

Besides deporting Georgians, Russian authorities call back their own citizens. However, during these nervous weeks only those Russians have left Georgia, who was strictly recommended to do so. Others continue living in Georgia and do not plan to live.

I spoke to several Russians living in Tbilisi, here is what they told CaucAsia

Vera G. (30 years old): WE SHOULD THINK AND SPEAK NOT ABOUT POLITICS, BUT ABOUT EVERY SINGLE PARTICULAR PERSON

We, the Russians, live quite a difficult life, just as the entire population of Georgia. Recently, I saw it on TV that a Georgian man was deported from Russia, while his Russian wife and their kids were taken to one of those pre-trial detention cells, were they had to stay for several days together with criminals and other scary people. Can you imagine this situation? She is an ordinary woman, and had to stay there with her teenage children. This Georgian person was going crazy, but could not change anything. It is a real tragedy. This man said that his neighbors, in Russia, found out about his wife and kids, and went to police demanding to release them. And you know what happened? This woman, the wife of the Georgian was requested to sign some paper where she officially REFUSED from her Georgian husband. She signed it, because she wanted to take her kids away from that terrible place. Can you imagine? The man was crying, when he told his story. Of course, her 'refusal' is only on the stupid bureaucratic paper, but I think, it does influence family relations.

Varvara, (50 years old): "THEY ARE MINING US"

Luckily Georgian authorities did not copy the actions of Russia, that does them credit. Yes, there are no threats for Russians living in today's Georgia. But I don't think it's a guarantee. We are simply lucky to have tolerant leadership now. But if political situation in Georgia ever changes, problems can appear here as well, and the centuries-long friendship and cultural ties will not help anyhow in circumstances like this. It is very easy to set one nation against another. Georgians and Abkhaz are so very close to each other, but we see what happened. If the Russian authorities would think of us, the Russians, they would never act this way. But they don't care about us at all.

Nadezhda M. (60 years old): HOPING FOR MIRACLE

My late husband was Georgian, I have been living in Tbilisi for 35 years already. My older daughter married Russian and lives in Moscow for 18 years. The second daughter married Georgian and lives in Tbilisi, but her husband also left for Moscow to work there. I do not work, my daughter used to send money from Moscow monthly, to support me. The tensions between Georgia and Russia are very painful for my family. My Georgian son-in-law lives in Moscow with the family of my older daughter, and now he is afraid to leave the house.

He did not have any other options rather than to go to Moscow. Three years ago, he lost his job, and tried to find a new one, but failed. He kept looking for a job for three years, and finally decided to go to Moscow; they have two small kids.

LETTERS from RUSSIA

Dear colleagues!

I don't even know what to say about Russia-Georgian relations. I console myself that people learned to realize that alike problems represent part of political squabbles, that are not related to the real attitude towards Georgia and Georgians. It is very sad that our lives are in the hands of visible and invisible men, who do not care about us at all. But we can not change this situation because these men are so active and so productive in creation of new problems, that even the most active citizens fail to keep pace with their reaction. Less active population has already given up, and prefers not to fight with the politicians.

*Lubov Shtileva,
Murmansk*

I believe that our friendship will not disappear. We used to have worse times, and the politicians left, but the people remained the same. We will survive! The most important is that politics is very far from normal men and women, this is a typical display of unsolved masculine problems.

Hugs,

*Nadezhda Azhgikhina,
Moscow*

How are you? To tell you the truth, we are afraid about you, and about ourselves and about the relations between our countries. It's a real crazy house! It is unclear for me, if the recent developments take place in accordance to the central orders, or our local authorities initiate new problems themselves. Here, all Georgian cafes and restaurants are in trouble, even those belonging to Georgians who live in Russia for 15-20 years. The cafe of the head of

We don't know what to do now. My daughter calls from Moscow crying, my son-in-law feels terrible, as he appeared in dependent situation... We hope for a miracle, maybe everything is settled finally?

Lydia B. (72 years old): FINAL JOURNEY

I spent my entire life in Georgia, I am respected here, and loved by my friends. I was married to Armenian, we did not have children, and I appeared alone, as he died. From one hand, I am afraid that someday I will get ill, and will need someone to take care of me. This is why I was thinking about selling my apartment and going to my relatives in Kaluga. But from the other hand, if I sell everything and go to Russia I will never be able to come back here, because of the politics... I will not be able to see the people I love and spent my life with, I will not be able to see the places that are native to me. That would be my final journey.

APROPOS
GEORGIAN BRANCH
OF RUSSIAN FIRM FABERLIC
CONTINUES WORKING

I lived my entire life in Georgia and never felt any suppression. Today's escalation of tensions did not affect our work at this stage. I hope we won't face any problems. We, the local Russians are simply indignant at the official Russia's attitude towards Georgians. We protest against it and condemn it! Why ordinary immigrants should suffer because of the fact that Russia does not like the policy carried out by Georgian authorities? It is very mean and cruel, it is unworthy of a great country!

I work in Tbilisi in Faberlic, the Russian company. There was no special attention to our activities recently, and that does Georgian authorities credit.

*Lubov Chukanova,
 Tbilisi branch manager*

Tamara C. (56 years old): WILL NEVER LEAVE GEORGIA

I live in Georgia since I turned 24. My husband was in army in Chelyabinsk, and after the service he brought me here, to Georgia. We have three adult sons. Despite we got divorced ten years ago, I never wanted to leave Georgia. People here are very warm and kindhearted, I have many friends here. We went through hard times, through the civil war, cold and hunger, together

My sister keeps calling me from Russia begging to go back there. I guess, Russian media distorts the information, because each time I talk to my sister, I feel like Georgia will be starving soon. But this is not right, Georgia is a democratic state and the young Georgian leadership does everything in order to develop the country. Thanks God, both of my sons work and earn money to take care of the family

Irina K. (46 years old): WE HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE ANNOYING POLITICS

My grandson goes to a Russian school, which was recently visited by the president of Georgia. The president went to school to let local Russians know once again that they are respected Georgian citizens. This is a big support, I think. Because when the head of the state cares about prevention of chauvinist attitudes in the country, political problems get less severe for ordinary people.

Polina M. (47 years old): I AM SICK AND TIRED OF THIS!

I am a journalist, a Russian, I live in Georgia for more than 20 years and feel myself Georgian. I can say that I have two motherlands, a small one and a bigger one; and I love both. To be frankly, it's hard for me to define, which one I love more; but I feel that Georgia loves me more than Russia! The latter does not love me at all and treats me as a hated stepdaughter, a social outcast. Russia does not view me as a Russian. It's a whole big deal for me to get visa, as I have a Georgian last name and not clearly Russian face. And I keep facing problems everywhere, at airport customs, at passport controls, at Russian consulates. It feels that I am responsible for the entire Georgian politics. I am not in love with our authorities, and I am quite skeptical about that modest success Georgian democracy made. "You, the Georgians..." - my Russian opponents say, and I do not feel like unveiling my real nationality. Let it be a tiny tribute to my beloved Georgia.

Georgian diaspora was closed as well. The cafe of a popular wrestling coach, and Olympics champion D. Mindiashvili, was checked several times. Ordinary people is shocked, even central TV channels admit it.

Vladimir Aleshechkin,
 Krasnoyarsk

Hello! I am glad to address to you and to support you and Georgia in this difficult period.

We have launched a new gender project, that was implemented last year in Russia, and now we would like to expand its limits. Necessary information can be found here: <http://www.mediasoyuz.ru/news/index.php?id=608>

Last year, the project collected 397 works of journalists covering women's problems in politics, business, family, labor market and problems of equal rights and equal opportunities. With the expanded geography, it will be possible to systemize the processes taking place in the society and to increase journalists' interest towards the women's issues.

I am sending to you the package of documents on City of Women project, we will be glad to receive competition works from Georgian colleagues and wish them good luck.

Sincerely,
 Nadezhda Ilinskaya,
 Saint Petersburg

APROPOS
COMPETITION!
for mass-media
of Russia, Baltic
and CIS states
"City of Women"

Package of documents for participants can be found here:
<http://www.mediasoyuz.ru/actions/GV>

APPEAL TO RUSSIAN OFFICIALS

We, the participants of the Women for Peace and Integration international conference, appeal to the society of Russia, and, first of all, to Russian women, with our deep anxiety regarding the wave of xenophobia against national minorities, immigrants, foreign students, ethnic Caucasus nationals. As for the latter, persecution of Georgian nationals, that has become permanent and well-organized, is very dangerous.

Russia has always been multi-national country with deep traditions of peaceful co-existence and mutual understanding between different cultures. We express our hope and assuredness that modern democratic Russia will keep these traditions as its most valuable heritage.

Armenia, Jermuk, October 11-14, 2006

meamwhile

B R A V O !

GROUP OF YOUNG RUSSIANS CHANGED THEIR LAST NAMES

TO GEORGIAN AS A PROTEST

In Petersburg, six young people decided to change their last names to Georgian to express their protest against the persecution of Georgians in Russia



not only brave, but also principal. Bravo, guys!

photo from internet-resources

According to the Radio Freedom <http://www.svobodanews.ru/Transcript/2006/10/19/> the action was organized by the members of youth branch of Yabloko political party together with journalists of Novaya Gazeta.

Alexander Shurshin, member of Yabloko expressed his wish to become Shurshiashvili, while his colleague Alexandra Garmazhapova will become Garmashvili. The registration office met the request with understanding, noting that Russian and Georgian people have always been historically close to each other, the radio station said.

Later the same day action participants moved to other registration offices together with journalist of Novaya Gazeta Tatyana Likhanova, and four students, Daria Makukhina, Marina Potekhina, Grigory Pashukevich and Maria Nefedova have also changed their last names to Georgian ones. This extraordinary action attracted attention of the media. "When we left the registration office, we saw police waiting for us outside, and the first thought was that they came because we became Georgians now," Alexander Shurshiashvili, previously Shurshev, told the radio station, "But in reality, they came because there was crowd outside," he added.

"Our goal is to change the attitude of the people, not the authorities. We fear that the society, that watches TV and listens to the speeches of particular officials, will probably start sharing anto-Georgian attitudes. This is very dangerous," Shurshiashvili noted. "When we had difficult relations with Ukraine, I happened to be in Kiev and bought a wonderful cover for my international passport there, saying "Ukrainian passport." This was how I expressed my point of view regarding those events," Alexander Shurshiashvili said. "I have the same cover now, and when a police officer stops me in the street to check documents, they probably think that I could be illegal migrant and thus additional source of cash for them. But when they open the passport, they see my Russian citizenship and get very disappointed. That's my lesson of tolerance. Now I will even have Georgian last name. Well, it's necessary to teach them tolerance, at least this way," he believes.

According to Fontanka.ru internet newspaper , migration services of Saint Petersburg are likely to get additional job, as they will have to check more people with suspicious last names. "Since the very beginning of anti-Georgian campaign, many thematic forums and internet societies on Georgian culture and history appeared in the internet. In one of its stories, Fontanka.ru asked the question, wither Yabloko ("apple" in Russian) political party ever planned to change its name to Vashli ("apple" in Georgian)?

"It is interesting that almost all parents of the youth, who changed their last names supported their children. One of the students, Dasha Makhinidze said: "My mom believes that a person should uphold his civil position by all means. She even blessed me, when I was going to the registration office. It's not a big deal that I'll have a foreign family. Instead we are supported by Georgian diaspora," she told the internet newspaper. "Some Georgians met the group of Russian students thanking them for their action. Police, standing outside of the registration office appeared to be quite loyal towards the 'new Georgians.' It seems that the action will be continued, as 22 people joined it right in front of the registration office," Moskovsky Komsomolets newspaper wrote. Journalists of Saint Petersburg have also reacted to the campaign. On October 19, reporters of the local branch of Ekho Moskvi radio station presented their names in Georgian manner to express solidarity with the campaign. For example, Valeriy Nechai became Nechaishvili; tatyana Troyanskaya called herself Troyanidze, Daria Lagutina was Laguchava, Nikolai Nelubin - Nelubashvili, and Kirill Manjula - Manjuladze. "We decided to oppose suppression of the people based on their nationality. All citizens should be equal, regardless of their last names," the journalists stated.

Source:
 News Georgia, referring to corresponding websites:
<http://newsgeorgia.ru/analytics/20061019/41828106.html>



We will see each other soon!

photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan

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