

C@ucAsia

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POWER

and

GENDER

photo by Diana Petriashvili, Georgia

Uzbekistan: power of repression

DANGEROUS CRIMINALS BEHIND THE BARS constitutional government feels safe

UZBEK AUTHORITIES IMPRISONED AT LEAST TWO HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS: UMIDA NIYAZOVA AND GULBAKHOR TURAEVA

Besides being a human rights activist, Umida Niyazova is also a journalist. She is charged with several articles of the Criminal Code simultaneously: "Illegal border crossing," "smuggling," and "Collection and Distribution of materials threatening public security."

Umida was arrested at the very end of January, on her way back to Tashkent from Bishkek. Customs discovered discreditable materials in her computer: reports of human rights organizations. Although these materials can anytime be downloaded from internet, Umida's notebook seems to be specific threat to the constitutional order. Soon after she was arrested, the main charge was surrounded by multiple variations, including promotion of fundamentalism and 'slander' on May 2005 Andizhan events. Umida can be imprisoned for 5 to 10 years.

The prosecutor general's office dismissed an intercession of Ezgulik human rights organization, requesting access to Niyazova's case and to change the preventive punishment. Presently, Umida is kept in jail. According to her relatives, they are unable to visit her.

According to anonymous sources, Umida is being exposed to severe moral pressure and thorough interrogations. There is also information, that Niyazova is forced to take psychoactive drugs. According to some sources, Umida's case is studied by the National Security Service, as the latter interrogates Umida's colleagues who worked with her in Internews and Freedom House.

Freedom House calls for immediate release of Umida Niyazova:

"Arrest of Umida Niyazova is a revolting and disgraceful case. Ms. Niyazova was an active human rights activist, and the Freedom House believes that her work is exactly the reason behind the accusations against her," Jennifer Windsor, Freedom House executive director states. "It is known that the Uzbek government tortures prisoners and arrested, and we seriously worry about the well-being of Ms. Niyazova."

"We appeal to the governments of the United States and the European Union to make public statements

on this issue. It is necessary to notify the Uzbek government that the international society is informed about the arrest of Ms Niyazova and it watches carefully all the developments," Windsor noted.

Uzbekistan is considered to be the country with one of the most repressive regimes in the world. After Andizhan conflict, the government of Uzbekistan began cruel persecution of independent medias, civil society organizations and human rights activists. In the Freedom in the World, the annual report published by the Freedom House in 2006, Uzbekistan gained the lowest grades in the "political rights" and "civil liberties" topics.

*(Freedom House press release,
January 30, 2007)*

AT THE SAME TIME INVESTIGATION OF GULBAKHOR TURAEVA CASE CONTINUES

According to Uznews.net, Andizhan district department of the National Security Service continues investigation of Andizhan-based human rights activist Gulbakhor Turayeva, who is charged with encroachment on Uzbekistan's constitutional order.

According to Gulbakhor Turaeva's husband, Farid Yangildin, the Andizhan department of the NSS charges his wife with the Criminal Code's article 159 - "Encroachment on the Constitutional Order of Uzbekistan." Gulbakhor was arrested on January 14, and since that time, according to Farid Yangildin, family members are unable to see her.

Gulbakhor Turaeva, is pathologist doctor, 40-years-old mother of four children, the youngest is only 6 months old. She was arrested on January 14, 2007 at the border when returning back home from Kyrgyzstan. Customs service officers found in her bag 123 books belonging to Mukhammad Salih, the leader of opposition democratic party Erk and Rauf Parfy, poet.

*(internet sources along
with C@ucAsia's own information)*

PROTEST ACTIONS

WERE ORGANIZED

in the countries of the region
demanding to free the arrested
human rights activists

CaucAsia international Coalition expresses its solidarity with Umida and Gulbakhor. Journalists community of the region categorically demand to change the preventive punishment for the mothers of young children. Even in the case if texts and photos found in their portable computers is a dangerous crime against the authorities.

CaucAsia, International Network of Gender Journalists, continues collecting signatures under the demand to free the human rights activist.

You can leave your signature at the web page created by [CaucAsia's Ukrainian group:](http://petition.org.ua/?action=view&id=349)
<http://petition.org.ua/?action=view&id=349>

You may sign in Ukrainian, Russian or English. All signatures will be forwarded to official structures of Uzbekistan and to international human rights organizations.

The Russian version of the petition is available at [GenderMediaCaucasus website:](http://www.gmc.ge/images/SOSUmidaNiyazova.html)
<http://www.gmc.ge/images/SOSUmidaNiyazova.html>

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SOLIDARITY

***GenderMediaCaucasus, Journalists Association
CaucAsia, International Coalition of Journalists***

Ruta PELS,
Estonia

power of moment: pre-election

PARADE OF PROMISES

OF MEN AND WOMEN

as closer the elections are, as brighter is this show

the problem is that the elected women, just as men,
do not always keep their promises



make your dance vivid and dynamic! After the elections, no one will remember the details of your dance

photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

Estonia is getting ready for parliamentary elections. Portraits of Riigikolu member candidates are displayed at the buildings, newspapers and magazines. On my way home from work I pass by posters with pretty young blond women, representing different political parties.

Reading political slogans is funny. One I saw recently in the bus read: "Vote for Centrists, if You Want This Bus Move!" Another political advertisement said: "Money won't make you happy!" That was the opinion of Rightist Estonian Party. The third poster I saw the other day displayed a portrait of young blond woman, saying: "Vote for professionalism and competence!" I agree that these qualities are very useful for an MP. This young girl symbolizes these qualities, I guess.

I looked up in the internet to find out more about the blondie. She will soon turn 25, she has an Estonian name and Armenian surname, she was born in North-

East Russia, she graduated from university and diplomats' school, now she is a political scientist, but is focused on energy issues. For some reason I recalled frequent power cuts, that appear not only in the nights, but in day time as well... Suddenly I opened the young beauty's televised interview. She represents entrepreneurs party supporting liberal economy. She says quite confidently that increase of budget-paid salaries to the EU level is not a good idea, as it will cause further increase of the salaries for private sector employees. She says nothing about the inflation, which was the reason of postponing Estonia's entrance into the Euro zone. But I remember the leader of this party as saying that if Estonia wouldn't have Euro by 2007, he'd eat his hat There is no Euro, but he still wears his hat.

Today's politicians are not any better than their predecessors. And women are not any better than men. This fact was noted by one of the magazine articles about the Tallinn vice-mayor Olga Sytnik (she recently turned 26, in charge for municipal economy and roads).



a well-trained blond can help any advertisement campaign

photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

The political advertisement of vice-mayor was promising a lot to women students, mothers, and pensioners. But she forgot to promise at least something to single women, who want to get married. My colleague noticed it as soon as she saw the poster. She said she will never vote for the Centrists, because they forget about the significant part of the electorate, the single women.

...It is good that among the candidates there appear more youth and more women. The promises of young people sound more optimistically. But the editor of one Estonian newspaper said recently that she will not support the interests of any political party. As the editor put it, none of the parties has the strategy, but shares their short-lived promises only.

At the last parliamentary elections the situation seemed to be the same. As the result of the pre-election campaign, 18 percent of women were elected to the parliament (not bad, even if compared with neighboring Scandinavia). The parliament speaker's position was occupied by an astronomer, academician of Estonian Academy of Sciences, Ene Ergma, one of three candidates for the last year's presidential elections. Now she is the parliament speaker. The second vice-speaker is also a woman, Maret Maripuu, who used to chair Tallinn city hall.

Some of women MPs are very active, others are quiet. It is significant that there is one, who never said anything, while being the member of parliamentary commission on defense. But her name today is again among the leading candidates to Riigikolu.

Presently, there are two women ministers in Estonia; one of them is in charge for the agriculture, the other one is occupied with education and science. While being busy with quite painful education reform that is aimed to switch Russian schools to Estonian language, Minister Maylis Reps found time to get married and to give birth to son in 2004 and to daughter in 2006 at the age of 32. During her pregnancy, she was not skipping governmental sittings, and was frequently visiting schools with her baby daughter. This is the second time that Centrists entrusted her with the ministerial duties - she was in charge for science and education in 2002-2003 as well.

Besides the education and science minister, there are many women in Estonia, who achieved success in politics, economy, culture, science and social life. The most prominent of them are generally invited to the presidential reception on the Independence Day, February 24. For many years, long live broadcasts are televised by different TV channels of Estonian television. But as people say, this year the president plans to make the activity shorter (people dubbed it 'penguin show,' as men's tail-coats do remind you penguin's feathering.

Now, on the threshold of the elections scheduled for March 4, parties boast about the number of young candidates and women in their lists. The biggest number of women are in the lists of Social-Democrats, which is understandable because of their social-oriented program. Women are exactly who could take better care of pensions and allowances, children and olds. At the elections to the European Parliament, social-democrats won a brilliant victory, maybe they will be just as lucky at the local parliamentary elections? There should be someone to protect the interests of those we call socially unprotected.

But it's a pity that not all the women who gain power remember about the responsibility for the electorate. Many of them do not even hide their intentions - to have guarantees, different benefits and parliamentary pensions in the future.

Vladimir KHANAS,
Ukraine-Serbia

power of moment: post-election

WILL GORDANA BE PRIME MINISTER?

will Serbians
learn Ukrainian lesson?

We, the leaders of Ukrainian NGOs, working at power and political parties monitoring, arrived in Serbia a week after the parliamentary elections in Serbia.

By that time, the president of Serbia Boris Tadic, has already started consultations with political parties on the composition of future government. The slogan of the president's pro-Western Democratic Party was "Vote, the life won't wait," while the slogan of the New Serbia Democratic Party headed by the former prime minister of Serbia Voislav Koshtunitsa was "People know better!" In his pre-elections campaign, the president insisted on the improvement of relations with the European countries, while the leader of Serbian government stated that the primary task was to stabilize national economy.

Local analysts describe Tadic as leftist centrist, and consider Koshtunitsa as a rightist centrist, although there is no significant difference in these parties' programs. The first party won 64 mandates, and the second one - 47. If their efforts are united, the democratic parties have all opportunities to form governmental coalition. The first session of the new parliament is scheduled for February 25. The most important question now is about who will become the head of the new government.

Tadic voiced his wish to appoint his party member, but Koshtunitsa responded: "We are open and we do expect that other parties will be responsible as well." It is understandable that Koshtunitsa's associates do not really like the president's intention to fill both top-positions by his party representatives. Voislav Sheshel, the head of radical ultra-national party also waits impatiently for the negotiation results. The party received 81 seats, and together with the former president's Slobodan Miloshevich Socialists Sheshel's coalition would receive 91 seats out of 250. Radical's slogan was "We will not give away Kosovo!" In the case if the democrats fail to agree with each other (as it happened in Ukraine and number of other transitional countries) radicals will get the opportunity to win.

At the background of this tense situation, I managed to interview the chairwoman of the Democratic Party and the Chairwoman of parliamentary committee of foreign affairs of Serbian Skupshina Gordana Chomich. Despite of difficult talks within the coalition, she is very optimistic. She told the Ukrainian delegation about the Serbian civil society development after 2000 and about the democratization of political parties. The influence of NGOs, especially women's NGOs were exactly what forced the legislators to introduce 30-percent gender quota. Today, Serbia has guarantees that there will be at least 30 percent of women in the government.



right now, the candidacy of Gordana Chomich is viewed as one of the most possible

photo by Vladimir Khanas

As for the prime minister's position, my Serbian colleagues said that the candidacy of Gordana Chomich is viewed as one of the most possible.

"Political parties do not like to be reformed, as a rule, they are quite conservative. This is why we need to have reformers within parties, and of course the pressure of the civil society is extremely important. This is a long-term process, but it is very important," Chomich stated. Transparency of the actions should be the base of any agreement, she adds. Ms. Chomich annually reports on her financial status and incomes of her family members. She uses public transport to go to work.

She is especially interested in gender policy of her country. In June 2006 Chomich became the head of women's forum of Serbian Democratic Party and was one of the initiators of adopting the laws on family and labor, that widened women's rights. Special commissions were formed in 94 municipalities and regulatory acts, providing equal opportunities to women and men were adopted.

Together with number of NGOs, a big action entitled Women's Government was held in Serbia. Local residents voted for women's government every week through newspapers, internet and SMS-messages. Gordana Chomich commented: "That was the only way to show to the society how big the women leaders' potential is nation-wide." Chomich believes that social organizations became the catalysts of institutional description of women's rights.

I asked her: "If you'd become the prime minister of Serbia, what would be your first steps?"

"My actions would not differ from those of any member of my party. First of all, all my actions would correspond to the Serbian legislation. We would discuss and define the most important issues once a week. And of course, I would continue refreshing my online journal."

(her journal can be viewed at the Serbian Skupshina portal:

<http://www.parlament.sr.gov.yu/content/cir/aktivnosti/skupstinske detalji.asp?id=580&t=1>

Gordana Chomich is well-informed about the failures of Ukrainian democrats during the formation of the coalition. We would like to wish luck to the Serbian colleagues.

AT THE SAME TIME IN UKRAINE:

Oksana RAICHINETS

democracy-woman=NON-democracy

THEY STILL
DON'T UNDERSTAND
the issue entirely
but there are grounds for optimism
MP Oksana Belozir believes

In January, Supreme Rada rejected the draft amendments providing equal rights and opportunities to women and men in the elections process. Some of male politicians explained this fact as saying that the male parliament is afraid of competition with female politicians.

What do women think about it? Here is the interview with probably the only gender issues lobby. Oksana Belozir is the elected member of the Supreme Rada, deputy head of pro-presidential Our Ukraine faction, ex-minister of culture of Ukraine



Oksana Belozir, Supreme Rada member, deputy head of pro-presidential Our Ukraine faction, ex-minister of culture, and the main lobby of gender issues in Ukraine.

photo by Supreme Rada press-service

- The parliament rejected those amendments, that could increase number of women in the elections lists; this has demonstrated ones again the rigidity of our politicians, their indolence, and incomprehension of the problem. Ukraine presently begins to realize what kind of tragedies there appear because of misbalance of men's and women's roles. Among them

there are mass labor migration where women are the majority of migrants (80%), broken up families, homeless children, low social status of women, misbalance of labor market, high mortality rate of men, limits of opportunities for women. An adequate response to these problems should mean bringing more women to politics and power. This is the only measure that would enable us to start new approaches. Working at the state service is not only the opportunity to influence policy, but also means creation of additional working places, and additional social guarantees for women.

Today, the level of women's representation remains very low. According to the results of parliamentary elections 2006, only 8.2% of women got to the Supreme Rada. As the result, five committees of the SR do not have women within them. This means that Ukrainian women do not have their votes in such fields as the fight with criminality, national security, fuel and energy complex, nuclear policy, construction, urban municipality, transport and communication. There are no women in the Ukrainian cabinet of ministers.

Nevertheless, the year 2006 turned out to be quite significant. The law on Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men came into force. With the adoption of this law, many Ukrainian politicians, who did not even want to hear about "gender issues" previously, had to realize the importance of this law's implementation. Gender expertise of the legislation began, heads of the districts began creating 'road maps' for moving to gender equality. Word-combination "gender policy" was included in the lexicons of experts, media, and general public.

In 2006, parliamentary hearings of gender-related topics were held in parliament twice: the first hearing concerned general state of equal rights and equal opportunities, the second one was focused on domestic violence.

The first Interparliamentary round table on legislative provision of equal rights and opportunities was organized together with the UN Development Programme. Parliament members of six countries (Belarus, Georgia, Lithuania, Finland, Sweden, Ukraine), all different considering the levels of parity democracy development met together.

Under the initiative of Ukrainian parliament members, it was decided to create Interparliament assembly of parity democracy. It is planned that parliament members of our countries will be involved in the work of the assembly as well as the representatives of executive authority, diplomatic corps and the society. I will be proposing this idea for consideration of the Equal Opportunities Committee at the Parliament Assembly of Council of Europe at its next session.

Tamara HOVNATANYAN,
Armenia

power of mandate

WOMEN NOT ALLOWED!

this political line has its own rules and myths

"Our parliament reminds casern," Ermine Nagdalyan, member of the National Assembly said. 7 women MPs do not influence the choir of 124 men. The latter had several times admitted that gender misbalance negatively influences the atmosphere in the parliament. But these frank confessions alone do not change the atmosphere within the National Assembly. In the past, there were only 4 women in the Armenian parliament, which is 3% percent of the total parliament members. Presently, the percent of women parliamentarians is 5.3%, and we keep being behind the international standards.

Male parliamentarians generally speak out about gender misbalance twice a year: at women's days on March 8 and April 7, and once every four years, right after the elections. This is when they start feeling surprised about the lack of women in the parliament. However, as the next elections approach, the feeling of regret disappears and men start fighting for the parliamentary seats.

I tried to examine obstacles that appear on women's way to big politics, and spoke with experienced women politicians of Armenia.

Granush Akopian, member of the National Assembly, head of one of permanent parliamentary commissions:

"You don't have to have a lot of money. A candidate's moral and political image is more important than the finances. I don't understand it, when those women who have no useful resources for the society, voice their wish to become parliament members. I think they should thoroughly consider all "pros" and "cons" and ask themselves wither they are ready for the fight and if they will be useful for the electorate."

Anonymous opinion:

"Elections is a deal, a large business. And as we know, there is no place for women in the large business. The only trump card of the women candidates is their reputation, their biography, their

voters' love and honor. But this trump card is nothing if compared to the resources used by their male competitors in the elections fight."

Another anonymous confession:

"If elections would be fare, I'd propose my candidacy to the majority system."

Ludmila Arutunyan, sociology professor:

"Majority elections is the gladiators fight. As to my knowledge, there were no female gladiators in the history."

Alvad Petrosyan, National Assembly member:

"Majority elections are closed for women, and women should not boast about being able to break this wall."

In general, these are quite wide spread explanations of women's failures. As a rule, women dislike the use of so-called 'dirty technologies,' and harshness of elections fight. From the other hand, by stepping aside from the elections process, women deprive the society a chance to change the prevailing political culture.

The next political elections in Armenia will take place in 100 days. In this term, politicians will have to implement another special operation in order to obtain parliamentary seats. Mandates are now more demanded than previously - after the adoption of constitutional amendments late last year, parliamentary form of government has become stronger. Will women find their place in the line for mandates?

Roza KUKHALASHVILI,
Georgia

power of seat

FEAR OF COMPETENCY

what if she's smarter than me?



photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

Some time ago, Georgian Revolution of Roses activated women politicians. Besides the parliament chairwoman, we had 5 female ministers, including that of foreign affairs, and rector of the main state university. But after series of governmental reshuffles, these women disappeared. In the local parliament women make 10 percent. According to the results of the recent local governance elections, women got 11.5 percent of mandates in total.

What happened? Do we face severe deficit of appropriate women candidates? The problem is that competent and professional women make men feel uneasy. It is hard to work with them, they are too straight, they are uncompromised. And the majority of male leaders doesn't want to have additional problems.

Here is an example. Georgian society is very much interested in the reasons behind the resignation of Rusudan Lortkipanidze, the rector of Tbilisi State University. Before being appointed as the university head, she was an ambassador to Italy. She worked at the new position for only one year. Unofficially, it is known that the only reason for her resignation was the critical analysis of one of the education ministry's decrees. Instead of eliminating the docu-

ment's imperfection, it was decided to get rid of the critic. And a too smart woman was replaced by a more yielding man. The same story is about the ex-minister of foreign affairs Salome Zourabichvili.

There are plenty of examples like this in all governmental structures, both in the country's capital and in its provinces. Endless reorganizations are a good possibility to get rid of disagreeable women. However, there may be certain 'happy ends.' After graduating from the university, a friend of mine began working at one of the institutions. Soon after the appointment, she was promoted to the deputy head position. Her boss was a man with a very difficult character, and the majority of the employees could not get along with him. He soon replaced all of his responsibilities on his young deputy. She worked on weekends, and never had vacations, because the boss practically could not control the situation. For some reason, it did not hinder him being a big boss.

When we were young, our opinion about our male bosses was not always an adequate. We used to believe that they are strong leaders. But later we realized that the majority seriously lacks professionalism and a simple conscientiousness.

Diana PETRIASHVILI,
Georgia

see and think

THREE SKETCHES ABOUT POWER



*there are plenty of autocrats in our life.
And not only in our life.*

photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan

SKETCH NUMBER ONE **power of stereotypes**

WOMEN RULE

despite everything

A couple of days ago, I watched a daily police report. Car accidents were leading. One drunk driver hit a foot-passenger; another drunk driver drove into a moving train, the third drunk driver pulled his car into the river to demonstrate insubordination to the police officers. The only sober driver, shown in that report, was an elderly mini bus driver, who slipped on the ice-crusted ground. All the drivers were male.

At the end of the report, the authors presented their special project, a story about women drivers. A young police officer appeared on TV.

"Driving women is a very serious problem," he said, "women have orientation problems, they are less concentrated. They lack self-control." He continued with certain resentment in his voice:

"And you can't even detain a woman, as generally she won't be violating the rules!"

Voice-over explained:

"Women do not make accidents, but they create emergency situations for men."

It should be noted that the author of the report was woman. She illustrated the text with the shots taken at the 'car cemetery,' and the report was over. It included neither statistics, nor any evidence of gender differences in the manner of driving. The report simply said ones again that 'women are stupid' and that was it.

Imagine that you are in the company of several women and tell them an anecdote about a pretty blond driver. What, do you think, the ladies' reaction would be? They will laugh at the stupid sexist joke, and maybe even tell you a couple of alike. This is some sort of women's hobby - they like to admit once so often that they are clumsy and fool. Because otherwise they can be made fun of. But if you agree with stereotypes, you can be accepted into the men's company. And in a men's company, everyone is highly qualified.

...Be them drivers or parliamentarians.

SKETCH NUMBER TWO
power of batons

SITUATION
SOS
REACTION
LOL

One of Georgian newspapers has recently published a story on how the municipality of Western Georgian town Zugdidi fights with cattle, when it enters the center of the town.

"For the third unauthorized walk, your cow will be shoot at the scene," the title of the witty article read. "Well-trained guys of the municipal observation service are good shooters," the article said, adding that the service was created back in 2005, i.e. when today's Tbilisi mayor Gigi Ugulava was the governor of the region Zugdidi belongs to. "Local TV reporters have old historic shots showing Ugulava chasing a huge pig in the park," News Georgia agency quoted the newspaper. "Ex-governor Ugulava kept shooting at the pig, but failed to kill it; he had to smash it with the baton to slaughter "

This article was posted at one of Georgian forums. Some of the forum users said there should be the criminal code article punishing alike actions. But the majority of users (to my horror) considered the story to be funny:

"What's the tragedy?!" "There are only few vegetarians in Georgia." "Yeah, go ahead and find lawyers for those pigs and cows." These posts were accompanied with smilies: LOL, which means 'laughing out loud.'

But the situation is SOS, rather than LOL. The situation, when a high-ranking municipal official kills the pig in the center of populated area is considered not as something extremely discrediting, but as a funny story...

Isn't our reaction too non-adequate?!

It is very hard to realize that our authorities are such as they are. But it is even harder to realize that it is such because of us; because when we look at the lawlessness and dull cruelty, we laugh: "LOL!"



*what about horses?
 May they enter the town?
 photo by Diana Petriashvili*

SKETCH NUMBER THREE power of pincers and scalpel

CONSPIRACY OF DOCTORS

horrors of childhood

I have one extra tooth. If you don't believe me, let's go to see a dentist together. Here is what will happen at dentist's office. Looking into my mouth, a dentist will call all his colleagues and trainees. And a big turmoil will take place.

Some twenty years ago, my parents discovered that my teeth grow not in the way they are supposed to, but in the manner they want to. And my life had changed: dentists appeared in it. I hated them and was very scared of them.

My parents used the tactics of persuasion ("it won't hurt you at all, they'll just make your teeth grow straight"), but my grandma kept trying to fool me ("we'll go to see aunt Zhenya tomorrow"). It is a very unpleasant feeling, to realize that your adult family member, a person who has the power, lies to you; and that you are going to meet not Aunt Zhenya, but a scary and guileful woman with cold hands that smell like medicine.

However, after several failures grandma had to change her tactics and addressed to persuasion as well: "You will be ashamed of your malocclusion when you grow up," she used to say with irritation, "and you won't get married with ugly teeth like that!"

But nothing helped my grandma: I grew up with the certain feeling of satisfaction and pride for the independence of my teeth. As I was growing up, I kept feeling that I am not ashamed of my toothy smile, and liked to inform grandma about it once so often.

Thus, life was fun, until I first felt the toothache. It was terrible. Because I failed to disregard my memory about the first visit to dentist office.

...The walls in an empty corridor had plenty of pictures on - mainly, heroes of Russian tales and cartoons. They all looked sickly-sweet and insincere to me. I think it is quite cynical: to entertain the kids doomed to the first contact with the torture instrument.

"Just look at this pretty chair," a woman in white said, "sit down and we will fly far away from here."
"We will fly to your home, in Tbilisi," she went on, and I thought that the idea was great, as the doctor clanked instruments.



Dear God, please tell them that my body belongs to me only!

photo by Diana Petriashvili

"Gumboil," she said by the way, "it's better to extract this tooth."

She bended over my mouth and - tore away my head. I heard my wild scream echoing in the empty corridors. The painted animals turned pale.

That was my first meeting with the Soviet medicine, which believed that local anesthesia is the evil. It is not a big deal to extract a milk-tooth of a five years old kid, that time's doctors believed.

The horror terrorized me for many years. I used to recall it each time, seating in the dentist's chair. Once seated, I would immediately think of the painted cartoon animals on the walls of my first dental clinic to get up and leave the doctor's room. When doing so, I used to feel some sort of malicious joy: "Thanks God, I am adult! I can leave this place anytime I want."

Finally, I got rid of that terrible fear, but it's another story.

The most significant part of it is that my teeth turned out to be extremely healthy and uncommonly strong.

Maybe because I did not entrust them to Soviet doctors' care.



puppets have different fates and different puppeteers...

photo by Diana Petriashvili, Georgia

Alina SHAPOVALOVA,
Turkmenistan

power of despotism, power of love

POWER MARKED BY MINUS, POWER MARKED BY PLUS

a tale with happy middle,
however,
it is not all that simple

Domestic violence in Turkmenistan is generally explained by combination of circumstances. As a girl is given in marriage and her parents get the bride-money, she becomes the property of her husband and his family. When trying to protect yourself, a girl is unable to consider the support of her parents family; in 9 cases out of 10, she will be forced to go back to her husband. Police is unwilling to investigate the domestic violence cases, and social centers or domestic violence centers could play an important role, but there are no such organizations in Turkmenistan.

...Everyday I open my inbox with the feeling of hope, but I don't find the long-awaited message. What does she do in England?! Is it so difficult to drop a couple lines?

I guess, when you are too happy, you don't feel like sharing your happiness with others.

I have been knowing Tanya for 15 years already. She is jolly, chatterer woman who likes to host guests most of all. Those who did not know Tanya well enough, believed that she was a very happy woman - she is pretty, always on good mood and has two sons, both tall and handsome. But her friends knew that Tanya had to mask bruises, and, at least once a month, to spend nights at her friends. Once she knocked on my door with a bundle in her hands: "Help me to find an apartment, I left my husband." We, Tanya's closest friends, new that her husband Ashir was villain, but we wouldn't think he was a monster of cruelty. Tanya told me everything she used to hide.

Ashir grew up in a traditional Turkmen family with an absolute cult of father; and not just father, but a tyrant father, who demanded complete submission of his wife and two sons. "When we were newly married, I once entered a room and saw my mother-in-law washing her husbands feet. Once my father-in-law saw me, he said that I should learn to do it for Ashir. At that moment mother-in-law began pouring water on his legs, but the water was hotter than he expected. He hit her in the face with all his might and than turned over the basin with water on her head.

Back in 1995, we, several activists, decided to unite for creation of the Center of Women's initiatives. First of all, we intended to find an appropriate building to make a shelter for women there. The shelter was planned for those women, who became the subject of violence, and those who got pregnant without being married.

Our plans failed to come true. We were told that Turkmen mentality would not let women's shelter exist, as alike problems should be solved within a family, or if the worst comes to the worst, by law enforcement agencies...

I kept thinking about these old plans that we had, when opening my door to Tanya, again escaped from her husband. Which family could solve her problem, if her parents died when she was a teenager? How could her today's family solve any of her problems, if her husband locks the sons and beats his wife in his bedroom? And what could the police do in this 'common' case? If everybody beats their wives in Eastern families?!

We found an apartment for her. Ashir stayed in the four-room apartment, and did not let his wife to take anything from the house. Besides this, she had to hide from him. But on that day, Ashir hunted her, and came to Tanya's new apartment when she had her son's party. The son's 18 years old friends simply beat him and put him in the elevator. This is when everyone realized that there was no safe place for Tanya neither in this town, nor in our country.

Someone decided to place Tanya's photo at a dating web-site.

Duncan was the first person who contacted her on the same evening. "60 years old English, single, old salt, who wants to find someone to walk hand in hand in the rainy weather." He liked Tanya from the first sight. Soon he called, and then sent her invitation and money to come to Birmingham. Tanya did not listen to any arguments about common sense, she got the visa in three days, bought a ticket and just left. Their first phone call sounded so happy. As I spoke to both of them, I kept asking myself: aren't they 16 years old, these two crazy lovers?!

Tanya came back after three weeks. I asked her, how was walking hand in hand in rainy weather. Great! Tanya said happily. Duncan asked her to marry him, and said that he'd buy a house, so that she becomes its real host.

Their wedding party took place a year after their first online date. "I don't have much time for dating, Duncan explained the rush, "we have plenty of things to do in this life."

"You know," Tanya wrote me in one of her letters, "I am completely in his power, strange though, this power brings me only happiness. I guess I had to go through all that to meet him finally.

... Some time ago I met Ashir. "I hate her, I hate you, I hate all of you!" he hissed. He lost his power. I keep checking my inbox, but there is nothing there. Maybe, it is snowing in England, and they went skiing. Or maybe they walk together, hand in hand.



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photo by Diana Petriashvili, Georgia

hi from Georgia

MANY THANKS TO MY ROTARY FRIENDS!

Rotary club was established in Tbilisi in 1997. And since that time it is actively involved in solving many important health problems in Georgia

Among the most important projects implemented jointly by the Tbilisi Rotary Club and the Bristol Rotary Club was the donation of equipment and stationary to the Child Hospital in Tbilisi. The equipment enabled the hospital to perform difficult heart surgeries for the children patients. Another significant project was implemented in collaboration with Miami Rotary, it was aimed to support deaf and mute children through providing the latter with hearing equipment. The result of joint work includes creation of medical center at Tbilisi Technical University, setting-up Medical Center at Tbilisi Airport, donation of ambulance cars to the local Craniological Center, provision of Greece medical center in Tbilisi with necessary equipment and many, many others.

I want to note that none of these projects would happen if there would not be help from our Rotarian friends; all these important steps would never be made if not the patience of our friends and partners. Let me tell you a brief story about how we managed to save lives to thousands people. That happened because of the collaboration of Tbilisi Rotary Club and Toms River, Hamden Rotary Clubs.

I met Mr. Mike Beyer, a person, who did very much to save women's lives, in 2000. That time, I received an e-mail from him, saying that Mike Beyer worked at the project helping a child in Tbilisi with severe heart problem. Mike Beyer planned to visit Tbilisi to study the case on the scene, and thus he contacted me as charter president of Tbilisi Rotary Club. But unfortunately, that time Mr. Beyer could not arrive.

In 2002, when I was hosted by my Rotarian friend Gale Wayman, I visited Toms River Rotary Club and met Mr. Beyer there. It was a great opportunity to thank him for saving a little girl's life.

After the 'Rose Revolution' in Georgia, in late 2003, Mr. Beyer sent me a greeting letter and I mentioned among other our charity work in the project Tbilisi Rotary Club worked in collaboration with Women's Center .

I told him that breast and cervical cancer is a major health problem in Georgia, and that it is a leading cause of cancer-related deaths in women in Georgia. Since 1997, the country did not practice screening examinations, women generally see a doctor only in extreme circumstances. This is probably one reason why the 4 stage of breast cancer has the highest percentage among new registered cases, and that is why the prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of disease are of great importance. Another reason is the environmental factor of iodine deficiency, which is associated with the development of mammary pathology and cancer. National Program covers operation expenses but generally women apply top late, but yearly reveal of cases would save life of thousands women.



Mike Beyer and Lynda Hammond
with colleagues

There was an urgent need to find ways to reduce this coming burden, and by this reason doctors member of Tbilisi Rotary Club are voluntarily involved in the project ran by the Women's Center. The project is focused on teaching the population breast self-examination, but doctors could not provide screening, as they did not have necessary equipment.

Mr. Beyer replied that he could help us with the Ultrasound equipment, which would solve the problem partially. Mrs Lynda Hammond President -elect of Hamden Rotary Club joined the work and did her best to donate the equipment to the medical institutions. Because of Mr. Beyer's and Ms. Hammond's goodwill, kindness and readiness to help, Ultrasound equipment was donated to the Women's Center and to Tbilisi State Medical University.

As some time passed by, I was invited to attend annual meeting in Commission on the Women's Status in New York.

My Rotarian friend learned about me being in New York and organized there a party for me. I was very excited because of the care and - because of the activities they implement worldwide for the people. That time my friends decided once again to help us with colposcope and fetal dopler.

Because of bureaucratic legislation of Georgia, two more years passed before the Women's Center finally got the donated equipment. It was ready for shipment in February 2006, but it took one more year to collect necessary documents in the US and to grant it the status of humanitarian donation. This year the corresponding Georgian legislation has changed, the procedures were simplified and finally Women's Center received this extremely necessary and vitally important equipment.

During all this period, our friend did all the best to help us, kept sending all requested documents and supported us morally as we continued working together.

A working group on creation of special program on screening cervical cancer and for licensing and re-certification doctors was created at the Women's Center. Today, the Center provides free of charge Ultrasound and Colposcope examination to the victims of domestic violence, trafficking and to children with disability.

I want to thank all of the Rotarian friends from Tomas River and Hamden Rotary Club for making difference and for caring. Special thanks to Mr. Beyer and Ms. Hammond.

All my Rotarian friends of Toms River, Hamden Rotary Clubs many thanks to you!

*Ia VERULASHVILI,
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