

C@ucAsia

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photo by Diana Petriashvili



GRIMACE OF DEMOCRACY

*Our correspondent
took this photo on November
7 in Tbilisi*

*In the evening of the same
day Georgian president stated
in his televised speech:
everything corresponds to the
standards of "democratic
countries."*

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Referring to democratic countries and the standards they have is very common for every countries in transition. But the democracy con-jurations do not necessarily bring you to democracy itself. There are pseudo democratic authorities. Quasi opposition that corrects it. Imitation of the people's protest. It is very easy to use the language of cliché and symbols! But they are only a screen to hide the authority's efforts to strengthen its special services and its fight with the opponents. Opposition, the (quasi) protector of the people in reality solves its own political and career problems only. While the (pseudo) protesting people is not interested in the demands stated by the opposition; its motives behind the protest are different: unemployment and low pensions...

Democracy is a sweat dream of the mankind. It is like happiness, which can not be entire and final. The countries in transition practice pseudo-democracy, the democracy which is being displayed selectively: yesterday there was

a democracy, today we will have time-out...

Or recent political experience brings several sad thoughts.

The thought about the opposition, which is far from being an example for democratic thinking and actions.

The thought about the democracy rhetoric, which is nothing but camouflage for dishonest people.

The thought about the biggest part of the population, which does not take part in this democracy: women, poor, disabled, all kinds of marginals.

The thought about having no civil institutions the people could appeal to. The people who come to the protest actions do not have their representatives among the authorities.

We used to be one huge country occupying one sixth part of the world, we are now the transit territory. For many years already, we are considered as countries in transition.

WHERE are we transiting to?

C@ucASIA:



photo by Diana Petriashvili

November 7-12, Tbilisi

November 7

Dear colleagues, you asked for the details of what is going on in Tbilisi. To be honest, nothing good is taking place. Frankly speaking, the developments are quite tragic indeed.

Hugs, C@ucAsia

Just a minute ago special duty service entered Imedi TV company office - anchors managed to announce it, we heard some noise and the channel went off the air. All more or less fair TV channels were switched of during five minutes, all others show the joyful picture of a peaceful life. As the president put it, we enjoy the same life as "democratic countries." Amen. ...only pro-governmental Rustavi-2 remains on air. Despite being very loyal to authorities, the channel expressed its support to Imedi, maybe because it used to be in analogous situation 4 years ago... But Rustavi-2 will definitely be put down, as it has no support outside of Georgia.

...nobody could imagine that this situation could be possible - when special duty forces enter the independent TV channel and simply switch it off. I don't even know what the situation could be compared to. Maybe to 1970s in Chile?

C@ucAsia

...Volodya, Mahbuba, Nina, Alla, Ruta, Tabya, Rano, Lena, Muborak, Nastya, Kadyr, Almaz, Galya, Olena, Nurzhan, Olga, Larisa, Lilit, Liana, Marina, Sveta, Anara, Tamara, Mehriban, Oksana - and all others, who called and wrote to us! Thank you for your support. We are having a state putsch, junta... Place the

FEEDBACK:

I hate politicians and their fight for the power, when ordinary people become victims
I share your feelings, as I am from the country, which had the same experience. I hope your political scenario will be different, however. I hope that God grants you power and strength and that he makes your politicians be wiser. Hugs to you, dear friends.

Mahbuba, Tajikistan

How can I help you? We are receiving very confusing and mutually exclusive information... Please keep writing! Although, the state of emergency might cause switching off internet providers.

Vladimir, Ukraine

I fear for you! I just keep crying, it is so stupid.

Nastya, Irkutsk, Russia

Stand firm, C@ucAsia!!! We are with you, we remember, love and follow all the developments that take place in Georgia. Let us know if you need help.

Ruta, Tallinn



*Democracy
was
perfectly
secure*

*photo by
Diana
Petriashvili*

accent on 'state,' because state is the main character in this putsch. Rustavi-2, the only TV channel working, has just broadcasted the statement by the prime minister: the president has issued a decree on introducing state of emergency in Georgia, the parliament has to adopt it within 24 hours. According to the decree, local mass-medias will be limited. What else can be limited about the media?!

Yours, **C@ucAsia**

...I promised to share news with you, but I am no more certain about being able to do so. Just in case - there are two links on Georgian news below. Hope, they will not be shut down:

<http://www.newsgeorgia.ru/>

<http://www.civil.ge/rus/article.php?id=14778>

Thank you for your support and solidarity,

C@ucAsia

November 8

Throughout 24 hours, we received hundreds of letters from our friends and colleagues. Because of the lack of the time, we can not reply to all of you personally, sorry - I will write a collective letter.

Firstly: thank you so much for worrying about us, for supporting us and for being so solidary. It is very important to us.

Secondly: many of you asked about the main essence of the political conflict we are having. I will try to put it very briefly and schematically. There is the authority, which has an absolute majority of its representatives in parliament; and there is opposition - weak, poorly organized, and not very much respected. It manages to consolidate and to gain support of the national oligarch and of the TV station he finances. If not the latter, the protest

I realize that words do not help the situation, unfortunately... But I don't know what kind of action we should perform. I so much want to help you! And I am sure there are many people who want to help.

With respect, Tatiana, Kharkiv, Ukraine

To be honest, I am shocked! President Saakashvili has always been unpredictable, but now he has stepped beyond all the limits.

Almaz, Kyrgyzstan

Can you write at least once a day saying that you send hugs to us and that you plan to write tomorrow again?

I heard something on CaucAsia today on TV, but did not understand what was that about. Feel so worried now.
Galina, Moscow, Russia

It all is becoming very serious and sad. Stand firm, my dear.

Lena, Estonia

I can not find words. I used my internet resources to forward

your messages to 4 thousand subscribers. Please be careful. Do not forget that we are with you, and ready to help.

Mehriban, Baku, Azerbaijan

IN ESSENCE

**Democracy reminds
lemon tree in a flower-
pot. You take care of it,
but fruits are small and
bitter anyway.**

Svetlana Kurs, Belarus



"How was it possible?!" This question was in everyone's eyes and on everyone's lips.

photo by Diana Petriashvili

actions would be unlikely to become so large-scale. After bringing nearly 100 thousand people to the parliament square, the opposition failed to keep these people protesting - less than half of initial number of protesters appeared in front of the parliament on the very next day. The reason behind it is that people came to the meeting because of their social problems, while the opposition kept talking about elections dates and mechanisms etc. The people was not really interested in it, as they had a different pain. Besides this, it became colder and started to rain. The very final cause of loosing people's support was the televised statement of former defense minister Irakli Okruashvili. He was represented as the main victim in the fight for democracy, which was quite silly. The people lost interest in the protest actions.

And all of a sudden the authority imposed extremely illogical actions. On the fifth day of the protest (when the number of protesters was less than one thousand) the authorities attack the protesters and disperse the action in a very cruel way - using special duty units, tear-gas, batons, rubber bullets, and water-jets. Moreover, police keeps chasing people after the disperse and beats them! It hunts the protesters at Rike square in Tbilisi, the place designed for open-air merrymaking, where the protesters where not disturbing public transportation. The authority bursts into the private TV company and switches it off the air, with millions of people watching it live. After all, it announces state

We, the 'revolutionists,' understand you perfectly... I really hope that you'd be updating us on any developments. But also, please send us some mobile phone number, to share SMS at least, if you don't have internet.

Alla, Kyrgyzstan

Hello all!

News websites are still available, and there are some news on Russian TV. But I am not sure at all that this TV news reflects truth and says everything.

Kazakhs like to talk a lot, Georgians are way more impulsive - they act instead of talking. I personally like it more, as it is faster and easier to understand. But it is also more dangerous. We really worry about you, and really hope that people obtain what they deserve. God help you to avoid victims. Be careful!

Nina, Kazakhstan

Is the prime minister among the president's supporters? Has the ruling elite consolidated against the opposition, or does the opposition enjoy support of someone within authorities? Our TV does not answer these questions. Stand firm. Try to survive.

Luba, Perm, Russia.

Dear beloved Georgian colleagues! Our newspaper had Tbilisi-based reporter working these days, thus we know pretty much of the developments. I don't want to comment - everything is clear and obvious without commenting. I just want to support you. Stand firm, we hope for the better.

Tamara, Yerevan

We worry about you so much.
Respect,

Liana, Saratov, Russia

SHORT COMMENTS:

We build everything quickly, be it democracy or a new airport building. Both fall apart eventually.

Diana Petriashvili, Georgia

Hello! Hope you still can read this. Our countries are governed by not the best people in the world, but we are exactly those who suffer. How are you? The news from Georgia are disgusting for me. It is all so very familiar: special duty service beating people in the streets.

Svetlana, Minsk, Belarus

I kept think of you. We feel pain for what is going on in Georgia. We hope that there will not be many victims. I wish you strength and courage. It will be difficult for quite a long time. We will keep waiting for good news. God help you!

Hugs, Marina, Tallinn, Estonia



There was no panic: we simply realized that we had to take care of our respiratory tract and about our further lives.

photo by Diana Petriashvili

of emergency and bans all news programs except for the state TV.

Today's day was quite disturbed and uneasy. TV is silent, many newspapers did not come out today, many websites did not add any news, those that keep working, refer mostly to the state sources. It was written that several opposition leaders are under investigation and will be arrested and charged in espionage. Other opposition leaders obey state of emergency, and, fortunately, ask people to restrain from disobedience actions. The hatred against law-enforcement agencies is now evident. It is very painful for the national feeling of a small country.

It was stated that life is back to normal and that the state of emergency will soon be cancelled. The main avenue in Tbilisi was surrounded by police, no public transportation is available there, and two metro stations are closed for public. This is the situation for November 9 midnight.

The main emotion now is confusion and the feeling of some craziness. As if someone would switch off air for you. Or, if you'd wake up in a different place from where you went to sleep. I am not sure that I don't violate the state of emergency rules, when writing it. The life has suddenly so much changed, and nobody knows what happens next.

I am an optimist and I hope for the miracle, when everything goes back to normal and we wake up after a nightmare. I hope that common sense finally wins. Thank you again for solidarity,
yours - **C@ucAsia**

Shocked. I am in Moscow right now. Have just looked through new e-mails. Your politics is, as always, stormy and violent. When will it all end???
Umida, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Dear **C@ucAsia**! I am very worried about the recent events in Georgia, are you okay? Hope everyone is okay. Drop a couple of lines, when possible.

Elena, Russia.

We had the same feeling after the recent murder of local journalist Alisher Saipov. It was hard not clear, what was the country we woke up on the next day. Of course, the events are different, but general attitude is the same. Unfortunately, our pseudo-democrats discredited the idea of democracy so much that sometimes you don't even want to use this word - 'democracy.' In April, our authorities dispersed the meeting as well; we also were shocked about it. Take care, none of political fights could be more important than a human life. I really hope that Georgia will remain free, beautiful and rich country of our annual conferences...

Almaz, Osh, Kyrgyzstan

It is great that you can share the news. Hope, life will be back to normal soon. We really worry about you and about Georgia, which we love very much. Just in case - drop us a phone number we could use.

Love, Alik, citizen of the World

We worry about you. Hope it will not cause disappointment with democracy. There were only first steps made.

Lilit, Yerevan, Armenia

Dear **C@ucAsia** I felt so scared and sad after reading your message. I had the same feelings one year ago - on the second anniversary of the Orange Revolution. That was the biggest loss, that makes my heart pain. I feel very ashamed about none of my friends, who participated in the Revolution, went to Maidan. But all of us still has that Freedom in our hearts, and nobody will take it away from us. I really want to believe in it! If everyone will stand for his freedom, there will be nobody paying attentions to unfair politicians and their poor promises.

Be strong, our hearts are with you. If everything is too bad, just move to Kiev... Life is not perfect here, but journalists still can work, and people are not beaten in the streets. I strongly believe that Georgian people will be enjoying life, and not thinking about politics constantly.

With love to Georgia and Georgians,

Oksana, Kiev, Ukraine

November 9

Ekho Moskvi Radio journalists appealed to the Georgian president regarding closure of *Imedi* TV station:

<http://echo.msk.ru/doc/640.html>

Any person can sign the appeal sending the message to the following address:

exom@mail.ru

The *Ekho Moskvi* Radio website has a public opinion poll on Georgia-Russian relations. Responding to "Where is now more democracy, in Georgia or in Russia?" 82 percent of the interviewees in air and 61% on the website said Georgia is more democratic. Another link is the petition to the government of the United States, the UN, Council of Europe and the European Union. The petition was created by Georgian human rights activist Anna Dolidze and it is also open for signatures:

<http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/stop-abuses-by-the-government-of-georgia.html>

With solidarity and believing in common sense,

Yours, **C@ucAsia**



the rubber bullet does not kill when shooting your trust to the authorities.

photo by Diana Petriashvili

I remember our Ukrainian colleagues going through the lessons of sympathy and disappointment with their politicians, and I remember Russian lessons as well. As soon as opposition's political slogans and promises transform from theory into practice, force is being used - and this is one of the indexes of 'democracy' maturity. It is very difficult to link democracy with social needs. I agree with Almaz: be careful and do not let any side manipulate yourself. You have your own goals and your own destiny in this world.

Warm regards,

Larisa (other part of the hemisphere)

Let me express my support and bitterness to you. I am not an optimist, and I think that current developments in Georgia and Russia are the beginning of even more disgusting situation. Hope I am mistaken.

Always with you,

Olga, Russia

I am very worried about the developments in Georgia and about you. Hope God will protect you from everything bad. Political regimes always wreak their anger on journalists. Be careful for the sake of Allah!

Sincerely yours,

Kadyr, Kyrgyzstan

I am with you with all my heart! We want to live in a rightful state, where the rights and interests of all people are protected by the law. When taking part in political processes, we really hoped that we'd live in the state like that.

Hugs, Nurzhan, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Thank you so much for your "letters from the underground"! The situation in Georgia is very sensitive and personal to us. You know the reasons. Here in Ukraine, we went through different 'post-Orange' problems... The only think I know is that remaining an optimist is very important in any case.

*Hoping for the better and supporting you,
Olena, Kiev*

CHOISE...

**We do have democracy.
We are only missing democrats.**

Mikhail Zadornov, Russia

...OF OPINIONS

**We have plenty of democrats!
But no democracy around.**

Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

November 10

We have no other choice other than making an extraordinary issue of **C@ucAsia** with the impressions of what we went through recently and what we have ahead. Analogous events and developments take place not only in Georgia, Ukraine or Kyrgyzstan, but everywhere in former Soviet Union. I suggest the title for the new issue - "diseases of democracy," or "Grimaces of Democracy," which is even clearer. Let's work. Our life is not about states of extraordinary, but is about journalists working with us.
Yours, **C@ucAsia**

November 11

We finally got punishment for misunderstanding democracy - 15 days of state of emergency, which foresees limitations for free distribution of information, the right to hold demonstrations and strikes. The Georgian parliament adopted today the presidential decree on introducing the state of emergency for the term of 15 days. "I do not exclude that we cancel the state of emergency earlier," the parliament speaker Nino Burjanadze stated.
All the best to you, **C@ucAsia**

November 12

Hello all! First of all would like to calm you about the life and safety here: everything is okay, we have gas and power, and also access to sun and air. We even have internet. As for democracy, do be honest, we used to have shortage of it previously as well;-)) We work in a regular mode, collecting stories for **C@ucAsia** extraordinary issue dedicated to the problems of democracy in our countries. We have already started receiving texts.
Yours truly - **C@ucAsia**

There must be some powers that do not like Georgia's democratic development. From the other hand, democracy means learning lessons for the people. There is no other alternative to develop political culture. 15 days of living underground is not the biggest problem, it probably even has its positive sides. At least, it gives you some time to think about the mistakes, your own and those of other people. Making right conclusions is the most important here.

In Tajikistan, 'the fight for democracy' caused start of civil war, and we still face its effects, such as terrible poverty, corruption and non-competency of our leaders... I hope God will help you to avoid this fate.

I think that formation of democratic culture through education is the most effective solution. That means that all the people should know that law is the most important and the same for all.

When the authorities are subordinated to people, when human rights are respected in families, schools, offices - everywhere. When the people respect the authorities they elected.

That will be when we will have enough energy to solve all the problems accumulated during centuries.

I hope God grants you strength, courage and wise for being able to cope with today's situation. You have a lot of friends and supporters, and I am among them.

Muborak, Tajikistan-Denmark



Everyone has to do his job, but sometimes you should not be the best worker.

*photo by
Diana Petriashvili*

photo by Diana Petriashvili



HARD TO BREATHE

Nino SUKHIASHVILI
Georgia

democracy having break

*four years ago I was one of those who took part in "anti-state activities."
Today I believe more than ever that victors need never explain*

I perfectly remember one summer day when we, the young defenders of democracy protested against violator policemen in Borjomi. Policemen beat us. Today's influential MP, a well-known leader of the National Movement of Georgia Giga Bokeria suffered more than others. Beaten, he turned his head to the policemen and said: "I feel sorry for you. When the new government will appear, you will again be obedient to it, as slaves. I am a free person, and I will always fight for ideas one can live or die for." That was what Giga said...

Then we had the Revolution, and those people who came to power, for some reason put an absolute trust in obtaining justice. They received all they strove for, using legal and illegal methods.

I thought that the life would become easier after the revolution. That one could get a job after going through a fair competition, that the court would become fair, media would be free, and that human rights would be protected.

But instead of it we had November 7. Many people expected that the president would at least speak live on TV addressing to the population. On November 7, when the streets of Tbilisi were crowded, a group of women, mostly teachers of local schools, gathered in front of the Khashuri municipality. They protested against their relatives, sons and daughters were beaten up in the capital. I wrote down what they said.

Tsira, action participant:

"I protest against the violence practiced by the authorities. One can not treat his people like that. It was obvious that the protesters were defenseless. Why were they beaten and poisoned with gas? I voted for the president and for the National movement and I feel ashamed about it now. We remember November 2003 events in Tbilisi. That was the time when Shevardnadze's police did not do anything to the peaceful demonstrators.

Nino, teacher, action participant:

"I was told that these policemen and special duty service guys are not Georgians. I don't believe that they are foreigners, but it is even worse, if it is true. I participated in November 2 action, it was a protest against cynical, inhuman attitude towards people. Our people suffered a lot and will suffer again, but it is impossible to restrain from protest when the authorities make fun of unemployed people, who have no perspective at all."

Mary, 60 years old, action participant:

"In my age, there is no future for me. But neither my sons have any perspective, they don't have jobs. I have no idea what to do. There is a new fountain by my house. People said, authorities spent 800 thousand to make it. It does look beautiful, I admit, but there is no sanitation system on my street! Don't forget that it's 21st century now. I think, if you want to get to NATO and the European Union, you start with sanitation, not fountains..."

Soon, local security officers came to the action and women had to stop the meeting. In the evening, I spoke on the phone with my friend in Tbilisi. "I stayed at home," he said, "but when they entered Imedi TV, I couldn't stand it and went out." The friend of mine was shot with a rubber bullet in his head. We talked a lot about the politicians, who use and manipulate our hearts and naive feelings.

It was very hard to breath in Georgia on November 7...

ECHOED DEMOCRACY: PREVENTIVE ACTION IN BATUMI

On the next day after demonstration dispersal in Tbilisi, a large scale protest action took place in my hometown Batumi. Initiated by the youth and student organizations, the protest action began in the noon. During 1.5 hours, the number of participants increased to more than 3000 people. No incidents took place during the action, because the biggest part of Batumi-based policemen were sent to Tbilisi, and because it was clear for everyone that any incident could cause serious problems.

Early in the morning on the next day, several buses with special duty service officers arrived to Batumi Sea Academy. The special duty service shot rubber bullets at the students without warning, they threw capsules with tear gas in the crowd and battoned some of the action participants.

At the same time, another group of special duty forces entered the courtyard of Batumi State University. The special duty batoned not only students, but also the University lecturers. Among the beaten up there were several pregnant women. Lecturers and students managed to block entrances to the university building, thus not letting the special forces in.

But that was not the end of the special duty hysteria. In the afternoon, the troops entered secondary schools and drove out students and teachers from there!

Under the policemen request, local TV-25 channel stopped working.

From my own experience, I assume that journalists are being watched and that their telephones are listened.

*Zaza PATARAVA,
Batumi, Georgia*



photo by Diana Petriashvili

SILENCE NEXT



"Look what a perfect silence there is in Tbilisi and in other regions," Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili said on November 12 when meeting secondary school teachers, "we haven't have such quiet environment for quite a long time."

After the meeting dispersal, and media limitation introduction it indeed was very quiet. The population was receiving official information in small portions from the state television only, opposition leaders became very peaceful and non-talkative. Politics is being quietly discussed in the kitchens.

And as the time passes by, it becomes clear that the authorities do not plan to justify themselves and to put themselves right to their people. It does not dilate on the reasons of peaceful demonstrations dispersal. It does not even question the peaceful nature of dispersed protest actions and does not seem to worry to prove the coup d'etat plan.

The authorities simply keeps silence.

And they said everything they had to say in this silent manner.

Anna Datoshvili (photo by Diana Petriashvili)

Diana PETRIASHVILI
Georgia

private and social

HOW DO WE CONTINUE LIVING TOGETHER?

Salome is a human rights organization activist. She works for quite influential NGO. Salome hates all forms of violence, strongly believes in democratic value and is indignant with media suppression.

Salome likes her job and enjoys building her career in the human rights field.

Everything would be fine, if not Avto. Avto, Salome's husband is a special service officer.

He also likes his job and works at his career development. Avto believes that order is the most important for the state he serves to. He accepts existing methods of obtaining the order and does not think much about democracy. Salome watches expansion of Avto's powers in perplexity and feels that her civil position strengthens.

In the evening the couple argues:

"It is oppression of the free media!" Salome says. "The media, which belongs to an oligarch, aiming to discredit the authorities, police, and myself," Avto strikes back.

"But there is ground for being discredited, there are reasons!" Salome moves into high gear.

"What's the reason about? All they want is to free local mafia!"

"Your moral limits are set too low," Salome gets mad, "you are a typical censor."

"You are now defending the coup d'etat supporters! And you want to take this country back to corruption and devastation!"



they had to do their job, they had to appear in that difficult situation.

photo by Diana Petriashvili

Salome and Avto, loving wife and husband, argue every night.

Their children worry, cry and speak about politics with each other.

In the morning, Salome switches on instant message service and writes to me:

"I'd never think it would be so hard."

She goes on after a while:

"It is a completely different psychology. A completely different attitude to work, to life. These are not civil persons, they are very different, like aliens. They were taught for a long time to be like this. You don't have to be a villain to shoot demonstrations, but it is quite desirable. It is like a second foreign language for me, like German that I study at work. But Avto also learns a lot at his work.

How should we continue living?"

Vitaly MOROZ
Ukraine

positive sight

GEORGIA

AS A PRACTICAL LESSON *not a cause for scandals*

When covering events in Georgia, many Ukrainian newspapers used the titles saying that it was "The End of Georgian Democracy." Both respective international media services and little boys with camera in their hands had a chance to give their own estimation to the developments.

However, these evaluations were not stipulated by in-depth analysis of the complicated situation. Hasty conclusions is one of the main problems of journalists. In Ukraine, this is the general style of all media's work.

Not only in Ukraine, but in other countries that are sympathetic to Georgia, the reaction to the recent events was very painful. Saakashvili's presidency was viewed as the chance of sovereignty of the people. Georgia could be a perfect example taking place on the background of Ukraine's quite chaotic democracy Ukrainians got pretty tired of. The Ukrainians' reaction to Georgian events was deep disappointment, which is very normal, considering our previous delight.

However, in order to make Georgian events useful for Ukraine, we need to take a sober view of things. These events can help us to get rid of the romanticism, which interferes Ukraine' development since 2004. Georgia has just given a very good signal to Ukraine: "Be more pragmatic in your control over the authorities! Do not let the events develop as they were developed in Tbilisi!" - this is what the message says.

The Georgian situation is very difficult because of unresolved internal conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It is obvious, that the dramatic events will later be viewed in this context as well. However, we need to remember that challenges of democracy are an evident sign of having the democratic model, which might be having problems at this stage. The events that took place in Georgia remind the importance and necessity of tolerance to the society; the tolerance for both the authorities and the opponents.



*it is a good lesson for the future.
But what should we do right now?*

photo by Diana Petriashvili

Oksana RAICHINETS

Ukraine

without diplomacy

ALL PRESENTS STOLEN

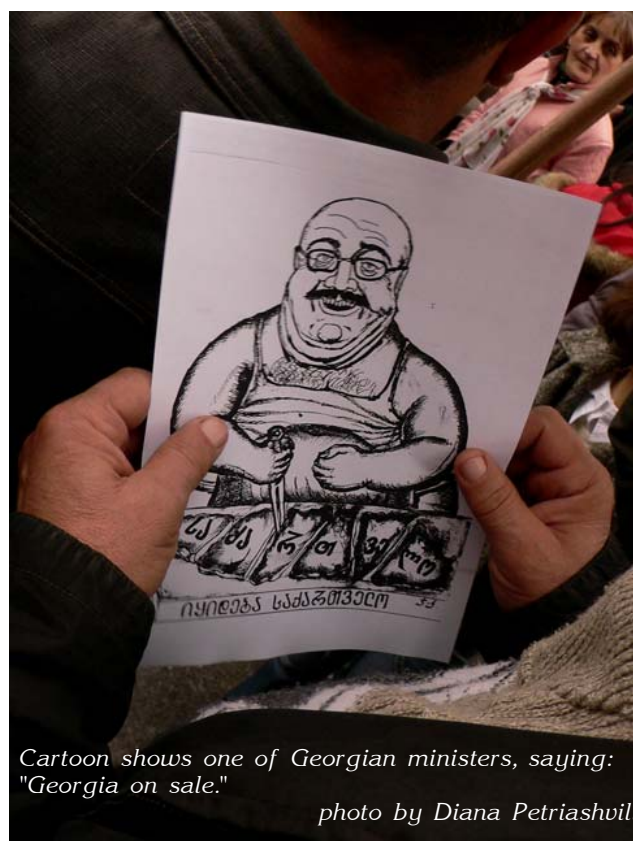
only paper wrapping available

I don't know what democracy is. All I have and can use is the nice paper it was wrapped up with. There is wrapping, there is no present we were promised to get after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

I remember November 2004, when the first orange ribbons appeared on the trees, road posts and cars in Ukraine. Something real and important was taking place. That was the time we believed that we actually could change something, we could do everything we consider important, we would win no matter what.

But one year later, when the Freedom Day was still celebrated, and two days later, when it was not already celebrated, I felt that everything had changed. How did it happen that such a big public confrontation lead into only one victory of a 'democrat' Yushenko over 'bandit' Yanukovoch? Why did it again cause sharing out influence and money, and why all those Maidan fought against came to power again?

Back in 2004, when seating in the cold tent at Maidan square in Kiev, all of us had to think of the new rules of the democratic game. Firstly, we had to create a list of top-important tasks: increase the life level, setting the industrial and trade volumes, entering certain international unions within set terms, building civil society in accordance to the time schedule, holding particular reforms within particular time. We had to agree, that the new authorities resign if they fail to fulfill the promises. We could actually create a social council of Maidan veterans, who'd control the authorities.



Cartoon shows one of Georgian ministers, saying: "Georgia on sale."

photo by Diana Petriashvili

After a revolution, there is always a time for reaction.

The longer we live in the pseudo-democratic state, the more absurd life is.

I still don't know what democracy is. I don't even want to pronounce this word. I don't know who had stolen present, but neither I want to be satisfied with the wrapping.

Zulfia ISMAILOVA

Tajikistan

edge

DEMOCRACY PERVERSION

WE ARE TIRED OF IT!

I get aggressive, when I hear the word "democracy." Because the meaning of this word was perverted and changed beyond recognition. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many little kings obtained power in their small new states; many of them keep their posts until the rest of their lives to pass it to their sons by right of succession. The people keeps silence, just as back in the middle ages, because otherwise they'd be punished in the middle age manner. But back then people did not know about democracy. It was easier for them to live, as they did not hear this word from the authorities, 'incorruptible' medias and foreign benefactors... I am especially fascinated with a situation when former associates denounce each other if they can not agree. Or a situation, when 'independent journalists' attack a former state official, who was fired.

The regime of all central-Asian states is a hypocritical totalitarianism, when words conflict with actions. Older people's reaction is disappointment, while younger people become cynical and mercenary.

What should an ordinary person think of democracy, if she has to walk to work during 4 days, as all the roads are blocked because the president celebrates the anniversary of his presidency? All the houses on his way are brightly painted. The hall

of festive session was full of elderly persons, who peacefully slept during the entire ceremony, waking up for applause only. Almost all the younger are far away from their motherland, working abroad to earn money for their kids or for getting married. They are all contemptuously dubbed as Gast Arbeiter, regardless of the education or intellect they possess.

Their young wives dream about having their husbands home for vacations.

Children have not seen the time, when there was constant power and gas supply.

A friend of mine was hinted at the fact that the municipal services do not like her surrounding. She was at that me discussing a private family affair with an opposition party member.

But we should indulge our authorities, because we are those who made them act like this. Many of us nod to anything they say, and thank them for anything they do. I do not act like that, but I am also in charge. I am not a fighter, I hate troubles. Besides this, I have plenty of relatives and friends, who would get in trouble if I'd be ore active. When the people losses all patience and goes to the streets, they will not be fighting for the power, but will be demanding a possibility to feed their children.



photo by Gennady Maksimov

Marina MAKSIMOVA
Estonia

april echo

BRONZE SOLDIER WATCHING US

*out of sight, but on mind
of Estonian Russians*

It was a paradox: yes, the monument of liberator was moved from the city center to the military cemetery in the outskirts. It disappeared from sight, but entered each house.

More than six months passed since Tallinn April events. A lot was said about the event, and I don't think I will be able to add anything new. But I would like to talk about the changes of an ordinary average Russian living in Estonia. April events turned out to be a deep trauma for Russian community. From the beginning, the feeling of shock and unreality was dominating; watching TV that showed demonstration dispersal people could not believe that it was possible for their hometown. They looked at the helicopters flying in the sky and could not understand where they were. Inanity was really shocking. Later the people felt numbness: they did not cry, did not feel pain - they felt too scary for that. Time was necessary to pass to realize what had happened. It was necessary to keep living: going to work, meeting Estonian colleagues or relatives, taking care of children and explaining the situation to them somehow. The majority of people understood that it was impossible to keep living without defining their personal attitude to what had happened.

In my opinion, April events were the most destructive for the following fields:

Health

Many demonstration participants suffered during the dispersal, one of them died. But one doesn't have to go to the streets to become a victim of post-trauma stress. Many of those who precisely watched TV, had to admit sudden weakening of their physical or psychological health.

Their further symptoms were common for post-trauma stress: compulsive thoughts, sleeplessness, hallucinations.

It was an unpleasant surprise for many people to discover strong reaction to certain events and incentives, reminding April events (such as police uniform, helicopter in the sky, sounds of siren). These irritants can cause strong stress anytime.

Relations

Problems appeared mostly in the mixed companies. Those who used to get along fine, stopped greeting each other and talking. Some people were fired, some resigned. Specialists working at the society integration admitted that their work came to grief. Many business contacts with Russia were under the threat, and not only Estonian companies were in trouble; quite unexpectedly for Russians living in Estonia, their Russian partners reacted to the events as saying: "Nothing personal. But we don't want to

invest in your country's economy anymore." People having mixed families had also suffered. The people, who seemed to love each other and had common children, stopped seeing each other as family and friends. Children suffered the most in this situation.

Feeling Safe

Tallinn was always believed to be a safe city. Unfortunately, after April events people lost confidence in their safety. After the demonstration suppression, wise people asked the authorities if they did anything to avoid these developments.

Perspectives, Hopes

Disappearance of long-term life perspective is a typical symptom of post-traumatic stress. April events had changed many people's hopes that the authorities would sooner or later regain consciousness and change the attitude towards Russians. The life showed: yes, the attitude will definitely change, but not for the better. Integrated Russians, speaking fluent Estonian and loyal to the state, were especially disappointed. They used to shut their eyes on many problems and adjusted themselves to many sit-

uations. But the life proved that they failed to get any privileges. They now say: "If we'd know this would happen, we would live our lives in a different way, maybe in another country."

Many Russian parents feel ashamed for the April events when talking to their children. Many of protesters were very young, and dared to protect the memory of their ancestors. Now the parents think that they should earlier protest as well, and that they could defend the interest of their children, if they would not be afraid back in the time, when they were young: "Maybe authorities would not dare to move the monument, if wouldn't be silent?"

Attitude towards Country

Presently, Estonia is not an attractive country or Russians to live in. In early 1990es there were hopes for the changes, but they have disappeared. Those people, who planned emigration, but kept postponing, were pushed to move by April events. Immigration of able-bodied people is not advantageous for Estonian economy: many fields are already lacking personnel. Estonian Russians possess certain qualities that are needed in other countries - they are all-sufficient, psychologically ready to live in a different language society, professionalism and education.



Bronze soldier is out of sight now, but it is on the mind of many people.

*photo
by Gennady Maksimov*



photo by Diana Petriashvili

Svetlana KURS
Belarus

metaphor and analysis

SHEEP ON THE SHIP

imitation of storm during calm

We can imagine our country as a small ship surrounded with storming hostile ocean - the European Union. The ship has a very disciplined crew and a very imperious captain. The captain stands on the captain's bridge watching carefully his dashing seamen rushing around and scrubbing the deck, so that stormy wind and sea water do not get inside and does not drown our ship. Boatswains control the seamen's work. The hold is crowded with the slaves, the ordinary Belarus people, who stay there in pitch darkness, having no idea of what the outside world looks like. Once a week the captain tosses us candies and tells long fairytales. This is how we know about how much we owe him and his crew, who save us from hostile ocean.

Only some of us know that there is no ocean and that the captain is indeed the biggest threat for us. But those who know the truth, are only slaves or degraded seamen, and nobody believes them. It is easier to believe in the brilliant captain, who has a

lot of bread and candies, and who tells us sweet fairytales. We are powerless slaves, we are as obedient, unsuspecting and credulous, as sheep. And we can be anytime sold, like sheep.

Human curiosity is the only thing that can help us. Maybe once we will defend our own scare and will go up to the deck to see what is going on there. That will be the time, when many of us will get angry at the lying captain, and will throw him into the water...

In my imagination, Belarus is an insane ship. We reached the time, when the concept of "Belarus Democracy" is viewed as an oxymoron.

We haven't always been slaves, and haven't always been afraid of the open air.

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