

He who is active wins

or

Don't imagine propaganda to have been invented by communists

On 1st February there began in Geneva and it continues to this day a UN session dealing with the defence of human rights, where, together with other questions the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict has been discussed. The deputy-chairman of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights and Interethnic Relations, Ramaz K'itimatshvili, took part in the session from Georgia. In his words, both good and bad were said at the session:

Well, let's begin with the good

It was good that no-one even for a moment placed the question of Georgia's territorial integrity in any doubt, and they are suprised at our nervousness on this point.

To be honest, our nervousness is the result of our ignorance. At the time we declared our independence with much ado. In fact this was just a meaningless scrap of paper and nothing more. Georgia got its independence when the Soviet Parliament announced the self-dissolution of the Soviet Union. This is an elementary point of international law which, unfortunately, the majority do not know. When in Tskhinval and Gudauta they declared their independence, we put on a shew of hysterics not knowing that these too were just meaningless scraps of paper. However much they may declare independence, Abkhazia and the former South Ossetia can be awarded it only by the Georgian Parliament. However bad a view we may have of the Georgian Parliament, I don't think things are likely to come to that!

The same applies to the designation of these provinces. Both have styled themselves 'republics'. Jurisdiction here too belongs only to the Georgian Parliament. They can call themselves 'khanates' or 'pashates' -- as they wish. We, though, go wild over this question, when, I repeat, this happens to us out of our plain old ignorance.

It's understandable -- for 70 years we were an occupied country, we participated in no international processes -- how should gain knowledge? But, regrettably, not even now are we in the international arena.

What do you mean?

I am forever hearing people say that we have no money for embassies. True, but why don't we have, let's say, embassies in Tashkent or Baku? Is hard currency needed here too? No, cash is being spent on other things or priorities; or neglect of embassies is part of the political plan with us. Some former Soviet diplomats do not understand that Soviet diplomacy will bring Georgia no benefits. They fail to understand that Georgia will never have such embassies as the USSR, huge in status, leading posts, secretaries, translators, agencies etc... Today we have need of a few persons with energy who know how to drive, use a computer, speak foreign languages and, if necessary, make their own lunch. The USSR was a super-power -- Georgia is a country that has just taken its first foot-steps. How can we pursue similar diplomatic policy? To tell the truth, though, we are pursuing no diplomatic policy at all. We have no foreign policy either. It is no secret that last year our first successes were linked precisely to foreign policy. At that time Shevardnadze personally was in control of foreign

policy. Now Shevardnadze has innumerable problems to solve, beginning with Abkhazia and ending with the crime-wave.

The situation is worse as regards foreign propaganda. Many suppose propaganda to have been invented by the communists. Today politics does not exist without propaganda. In America the biggest ministry, even bigger than the Pentagon, is the Ministry of Propaganda. And America also reckons that propaganda should be at the highest level, though what should America have to propagandise? We, however, are slandered for trampling human rights under foot and for oppressing ethnic minorities, and yet we have propaganda on no level at all.

To be concrete?

I'll adduce a few examples: last year in September and this year in February I appeared on London television in connection with the problems of Abkhazia. Between these two appearances the point of view of the Georgian side was not represented on London TV. Instead, almost every week on TV there appear for the Abkhazian side representatives of pro-Abkhazian locals and Russians -- all of them, naturally, against us.

A very strong disinformation-machine is active abroad. Its centre is now in London, where official representatives in Western Europe of the regime now fled are operative, along with the ideologue of the Abkhazian separatists, George Hewitt, and a group of communists with pro-Russian orientation under the supervision of Donald Rayfield who are alarmed that Georgia has broken with Russia and communism etc.. They are sufficiently active, and innumerable slanderous articles are being published about Georgia. From our side there is no reaction. Equally in Germany a serious agitation is in progress against us. On our side again nothing is being done.

Second example: on 17 February in Arkansas [sic!] in the State of Georgia on the initiative of the Carter Centre there took place a large gathering at which the conflict in Abkhazia (along with many others) was discussed. Representatives of both parties to the conflict were invited to the gathering. The Abkhazian delegation was under the supervision of Ardzinba; the delegation included Sergei Shamba and others. The report-giver was George Hewitt. No delegation went from Georgia. I personally contacted the Carter Centre. They told me that they had sent the invitation two months earlier but had not even received an answer. At the last minute, however, someone did travel from Georgia, but they did not include him in the programme nor did they give him the right to deliver a paper.

Did Ardzinba actually attend the meeting?

No, but when it is written in the programme that Ardzinba is the leader of the Abkhazian delegation this is a signal that the Abkhazians responded with respect to the Carter initiative. The Georgians behaved with disrespect insofar as we did not even send them a reply. At this time it would have been possible for us to write to them that Eduard Shevardnadze would lead the Georgian delegation to the gathering. Of course, he could not have gone, but the appearance of his name in the programme would have created a quite different mood.

Third example: at the end of January in London there took place a conference devoted to the Abkhazian conflict organised by the international organisation International Alert. No Georgian delegation attended the conference. Not only

that -- in December International Alert sent its report to Georgia and asked for a commentary. The Abkhazians sent their commentary the very next day; from us, of course, they received nothing. As a result of this only two documents circulated at the conference: that presented by the Abkhazians and that presented by George Hewitt. When I asked the English why they had done this, they replied that those concerned had done it themselves.

I don't know whether this is all the result of incompetence or is being done deliberately.

In the West a general opinion is quite actively being created that is hostile to Georgia. And this at a time when without Western assistance Georgia cannot stand on its feet. At the end of the Second World War, without the Marshall Plan, Europe could have achieved nothing. Us, however, they feed on fairy-stories: just work hard and all will be well. Georgia needs elementary help, and unless we shew an interest in raising our abused authority in the West, no-one will give us any further help.

When one sees all this, one cannot help being seized with pessimism. I repeat, nothing is threatening Georgia's territorial integrity. In Geneva it was unequivocally stated that the USSR split into 15 republics, and this is the final number accepted by the world. By the way, the Russians too know this. In Geneva the head of the Russian delegation, Tishkov, acknowledged that changes to the frontiers of Georgia are impossible. Subsequently he offered us the following model by way of advice: «Chechenia thinks itself independent, and we help to create this illusion for it. You too treat Ardzinba and Kulumbekov in the same way.» There is, probably, a grain of reason in such an approach, but unlike mighty Russia Georgia does not have the right to pursue such a policy.

So you are offering us the creation of our own propaganda-machine?

If not an ambassador, in a few strategic centres we should nevertheless have our representatives -- let them be just journalists -- so that they might create the general opinion abroad.

Probably one form of this is the appointment of a commercial representative of the leader of the country. For example, one such representative has already been appointed in Gt. Britain.

Here too a great mistake has been made. Our trade-envoy has been given a building for his office by the Islington local council. Islington is a London borough, which is in the hands of the communists [sic] For example, the Red Flag flies over the Town Hall, in the hall stands a bust of Lenin... At the British Foreign Office they asked me with surprise why we had not gone to them. Does this need any thinking about? By the way, Georgia was the first foreign country which contacted the Islington local council.

Probably this became another excuse for, as *The Georgian Bell-Tower* asserts, the relationship of Gt. Britain to Georgia and specifically Eduard Shevardnadze being especially «cool»

Unlike the editor of *The Georgian Bell-Tower*, I have been at the British Foreign Office, where they told me: «The one reason why we still have any sympathy with Georgia is Eduard Shevardnadze, whom we trust [sic!!!]»

I add here that the English organisation for the defence of human rights mentioned in this same paper does not in general exist in England. On the other hand, I was at the most authoritative international organisation, Amnesty International, where they informed me officially that Georgia is on their white list, there being no political prisoners at this moment in Georgia.

And so, if any misfortune awaits us, that too will result from our stupidity. Not a single country's agency will be able to do us as much harm as we'll bring upon ourselves.

P'olit'ik'a

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