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## Interview: Guram Chakhvachze

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# Russia is pressuring Georgia in the South Ossetian crisis

*Guram Chakhvachze is a member of the Executive Committee of the National Democratic Party of Georgia, founded in 1911, and of the State Council of Georgia. He was interviewed by Rachel Douglas on June 24. The interview has been translated from Russian.*

**EIR:** In January of this year, *EIR* published an interview with Dr. Vladimir Kilasonia, a leader of your party, in which he spoke about the hopes of your party that the situation in Georgia could stabilize, after the departure of former President Gamsakhurdia. Today, however, it was reported from Tbilisi, that people supporting Gamsakhurdia tried to seize key buildings, the television station, and so forth. The visit of Russian President Boris Yeltsin was postponed. How do things stand in Georgia now?

**Chakhvachze:** Today at about 4 a.m. a group supporting former President Zviad Gamsakhurdia entered the city with an armed force, and they seized the television tower and the television building. Several hours later, they were arrested. The police reported to us that there was shooting at the television building. There were casualties, but we don't know how many. We know for sure, that five people were killed. And the whole group that was supporting Gamsakhurdia has been arrested.

One striking element in the report is that while those people were being detained, citizens of Tbilisi came out into the street, came to the television building, and they wanted to seize the attackers. The Guard was forced to shoot into the air to frighten them off; so the Guard had to protect the attackers.

Briefly, that is how we can characterize the situation. And, as we know, there was supposed to be a meeting today in Dagomys between Mr. Yeltsin, [Georgian President Eduard] Shevardnadze, and [Ukrainian President Leonid] Kravchuk. I don't know what information you received, but we know that Shevardnadze did fly there and the meeting took place.

**EIR:** Why did the conflict over the South Ossetian region flare up?

**Chakhvachze:** We think that the question of so-called South Ossetia is a very convenient option for Russia to pressure Georgia, and Russia exploited this option against Georgia very well. Georgia had come out of isolation and was beginning to develop ties with the civilized world, but Russia does not want to give Georgia up. For 200 years, Georgia was first

in the Russian Empire, and then in the Soviet Union.

There are problems there. The State Council of Georgia was trying in every way possible to settle the situation by political, peaceful means. There were meetings with the leadership of North Ossetia [a district in the Russian Federation, bordering Georgia], and there were hopes to settle all this by normal, civilized measures. Unfortunately, this cannot be said about the position of Russia.

The information that people get from that region is very one-sided. It gets reported that the Georgian side is shooting, but not that shooting has also come from the Ossetian side. Naturally, we are not responsible for this shooting. There are groups there that are not under control. They are just citizens, both from their side and from ours. But the truth should be told, and the information put out should be correct.

**EIR:** What relation do the statements of Russian Federation leaders concerning South Ossetia, have to the so-called Grachev Doctrine? Grachev is the commander of the Russian Armed Forces, who said they have the right to intervene to protect Russians living in other countries, former Soviet republics. But the inhabitants of this region are not Russians, rather Ossetians.

**Chakhvachze:** I should say that the problem here concerns the Ossetian population. We have no problems with the Russian population. If Russia imposes some kind of sanctions or employs force against Georgia, Russia should take into account that not only Georgians live there, but also Russians, with whom we have normal, very good relations.

I think Russia wants to defend the rights of the Ossetian population in the same way as, in the not so distant past, somebody wanted to defend the interests of the working people of Czechoslovakia, of Hungary in 1956, and of Afghanistan. And I think that one should not, for the sake of one's own interests, play with the fate of nations.

**EIR:** How do you assess the situation in the Transcaucasus region as a whole, and how do you view the possible involvement in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan of other countries, for instance Turkey, which is a NATO member?

**Chakhvachze:** Looking at that conflict, which is a war between two states, we see that Azerbaijan is gravitating towards Turkey and seeking support there. Armenia, on its

side, has certain preliminary ties with Iran. So, naturally, with two such countries there is a struggle going on, concerning political spheres of influence.

I don't know how far this will go. I know for sure that it is a very, very difficult question. We are well informed about this, because we live right next to them and we are maintaining neutrality. We have relations with the Armenians, and with Azerbaijan. We understand this situation very well. I think that the hand of Russia is somehow involved here, too. Russia wants to extract some fruits from this conflict. It all began when these were republics in the Soviet Union.

**EIR:** Now a question about Georgia. Many people in the West and around the world remember Eduard Shevardnadze from when he was U.S.S.R. minister of foreign affairs, in the period when various unseemly agreements were worked out between the Gorbachov regime and western countries, under the rubric of the new world order of Bush and Gorbachov. What kind of role is this former KGB and Communist Party official, Shevardnadze, playing today—a positive one?

**Chakhvachze:** We think that, at the present stage of things, Shevardnadze's main actions have been positive. We evaluate positively his efforts, directed at getting Georgia out of this dead-end situation. On the whole, there are certain elements with which we may not agree, but I think, at this stage of things, Mr. Shevardnadze is acting positively.

**EIR:** How do you view the possible establishment of a constitutional monarchy in Georgia, with a role for members of the Bagration family?

**Chakhvachze:** The idea of a constitutional monarchy is an institution that was traditionally developed in Georgia. There was not absolute monarchism in Georgia. The simple people loved their czars; Georgians had a different attitude [than others did], historically, to their czars. Then, after the first occupation by the Russian Empire at the beginning of the 19th century, all the Bagratons left Georgia. For Georgians, the czar personified, was a symbol of Georgia, of its statehood.

As to whether a constitutional monarchy would be possible in Georgia today, I think that it is a matter of time and we should not rush ahead with this. But if in the future there will be such a system in Georgia, it will be a purely European one, so to speak, because this will also be a parliamentary republic and the czar will be a symbol of the nation.

Concerning the dynasty, so far there is a bit of a muddle there. The visit of [National Democratic Party leader] Georgi Chanturiya and Temur Zhorzholiani [of the Monarchist Party] to Spain showed this.

**EIR:** I read about that and was quite interested. But I wanted to ask if you are not concerned by the fact that the king would be coming from western Europe, from Spain, where over many years the family would have developed close ties with foreign interests, with the European oligarchy, etc.? At various times in history, members of the Bagration family had

very close contacts and collaborated with prominent figures precisely from the most imperialistically inclined section of the Russian aristocracy.

**Chakhvachze:** In general, here's how we are thinking about it. Those descendants of the Bagration family who are adolescents were supposed to come to Georgia and grow up in a Georgian atmosphere, if you understand. . . .

**EIR:** To learn the language?

**Chakhvachze:** The language, Orthodoxy, everything that would be fitting for a czar. So that they would not only study the language, but their mentality and thinking would become purely Georgian, and they would understand what Georgia is, that it is their homeland, and so forth.

As for all these things in the West, I don't think I can speak definitively. The West is what it is, but we have special relationships, because we always gravitated to the West, to the Christian world—being surrounded as we were, Georgia's geographical position being what it is. So there were many cultural ties, with Byzantium, with Rome. Such cultural ties were preserved, and we want to develop these in a normal way, not so that there would be misunderstandings.

**EIR:** I have two questions on economic themes. I know that you personally have taken part in discussions about the LaRouche program, the "Paris-Berlin-Vienna Productive Triangle." How is the situation in Georgia's economy today? Is progress possible under present conditions?

**Chakhvachze:** Things are very, very difficult economically in Georgia now. The first and most important reason is the political instability of Georgia's situation, which has to do both with the internal situation, and also the threat from Russia. If Georgia were politically stable, it would still be difficult to develop economically out of this dead-end, but the external situation makes it even harder.

There are some reforms going on, but there is not yet a clear-cut concept and direction. All the campaigns and reforms that were done in eastern Europe or now in Russia, we have, too—discussions on privatization, and all that. But we are not satisfied with this yet. I think that all these processes must be accelerated, in order to create our own, independent economy system. On the one side, that means internal reforms, and on the other, I would put it this way: We are looking realistically at the West, so that there might be a partnership with the West, because without help with respect to new technologies, new equipment, it will be difficult for Georgia. And it is the West that has the new technology and innovations. The West should look at Georgia as a partner.

**EIR:** In an interview published in the newspaper *Svobodnaya Gruzija* [Free Georgia] on March 31, Mr. Chanturiya talked about the electoral platform of your party as follows: politically an Anglo-American model, but a German model in the realm of economics. Do you know what he is referring to, with this "German model"?

## CIS sets up its own 'Blue Helmet' force

The July 6 Community of Independent States (CIS) summit in Moscow approved the creation of CIS "Blue Helmet" units for deployment in the former U.S.S.R. The decision occurred three days prior to the July 9 opening of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) summit in Helsinki, in which the U.S., Britain, and others sought to approve plans for NATO forces, under CSCE or U.N. guise, to deploy in the former Soviet Union. The Moscow summit was attended by 10 of the 11 CIS heads of state, and the "Blue Helmet" decision was unanimously approved.

The CIS resolution was in effect an endorsement of the "Grachev Doctrine"—the June 5 declaration by Russian Defense Minister Gen. Pavel Grachev that no foreign military forces could be sent into the former Soviet Union.

The plan called for CIS "Blue Helmets" to be sent to Moldova and to the Georgian region of South Ossetia. In the latter case, agreement was reached in parallel talks held in Vladikavkaz, the capital of neighboring North Ossetia, which is in the Russian Federation. The plan entails a CIS force of 3-4,000 troops, drawn equally from Russian and Georgian units, and contingents composed of South Ossetian units and North Ossetian "volunteer" units, to jointly patrol a security corridor inside South Ossetia.

The Moscow CIS summit also resolved to dispatch forces to Karabakh, the Armenian enclave within the territory of Azerbaijan, but this is currently out of the question

as Azerbaijan is de facto out of the CIS. Azerbaijan President Elcibey refused to attend the summit. The 10 Presidents who attended endorsed a resolution giving the Azerbaijan Parliament until the next CIS summit, to be held in the Kyrgyzstan capital of Bishkek (the former Frunze) on Sept. 25, to ratify the CIS treaty.

The departure of Azerbaijan from the CIS has created an ominous "grey zone" in the Transcaucasus because the conflict raging in Karabakh is technically a conflict on the territory of Azerbaijan. NATO involvement has been under way since May, and at least 150 retired Turkish officers up to the rank of general have been advising, serving with, and in many cases exercising operational and staff planning command of the Azerbaijani forces. The Turkish presence and an arms pipeline from Turkey to Azerbaijan, have been decisive in the rapid buildup of an Azeri Army and its successes in the offensive to conquer Karabakh. Azerbaijan will likely use the CSCE summit to call for a NATO-CSCE intervention into Karabakh.

In Moldova, a CIS force, possibly joined by contingents from Romania and Bulgaria, will arrive in July.

On July 7, the Moldova Parliament approved nearly unanimously the dispatch of such a force, drawn from Russia, Ukraine, Byelarus, Bulgaria, and Romania.

As Russian President Boris Yeltsin said July 6, the troops would be stationed between Moldovan forces and the Russian-Ukrainian irregulars. Moldovan forces, however, continue to bombard cities in the Dniestr region. On July 7, they shelled the city of Dubossary, and 22 people were killed. Defense Minister Grachev announced that he will not tolerate "any further attacks" on the Russian 14th Army or on "Russian speakers" in the republic.

—Konstantin George

**Chakhvachze:** I would say that as to both political organization and economic organization, our position is similar to the German, because we are a Christian party and on major points we are akin to the Christian Democratic model.

Also in the organization of the state—the administrative division of Georgia is by territory [*krai*]. Germany has its territorial *Länder*, we will have the territories, because that is how we were organized, historically. We will have seven territories, plus Tbilisi. And also, the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic.

In economics, the Christian model is the concept of the social market economy. But this does not mean that we took everything and simply copied it. What we liked and what is appropriate for Georgia, we took, because such structures already exist in those countries, and it is necessary to make use of them; we shouldn't re-invent the bicycle. As for an Anglo-American model, I don't think so, I'm not so sure about that.

**EIR:** Mr. Chakhvachze, as an American I would like to thank you personally, for signing the call for a reconsideration of the LaRouche case, for justice, which was published in the *New York Times*.

And my last question is, do you have any greetings to American members of the Schiller Institute and supporters here of Lyndon LaRouche?

**Chakhvachze:** When I signed that, I can tell you that for us America was a country where human rights are not violated. Based on the information I had about Mr. LaRouche, I thought that it was impermissible to put a person in prison for that. He has the concept of the Productive Triangle. Maybe that idea, that concept is not adopted, but to deprive a person of his freedom—for me that is simply incomprehensible, and it should be clarified and these cases reconsidered. I would like for truth to win. This is what I would wish for Mr. LaRouche and for the Schiller Institute in America.