

# The Army and Society in Georgia

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## The Army and Society in Djavakheti

*by David Darchiashvili,  
Akhalkalaki, Ninotzminda, Tbilisi, May 1998*

Nowadays Djavakheti, the historical territorial province of Georgia, is no longer a single administrative unit. On the one hand, it is under the president's representative in the Samtskhe-Djavakheti region, on the other, it consists of two districts - Ninotzminda and Akhalkalaki. Nevertheless, apart from a national identity, its native residents are distinguished by specific, Djavakh self-identification. Due to historical origins, the ethnographic past and present, specific climate and geographical environment, and stereotypes in people's perception, Djavakheti may be regarded as a separate cultural and territorial complex.

The two districts stretch over some 2,600 square kilometres. According to the 1989 census, there were two towns and more than 90 villages, while the entire population of Djavakheti totalled 109,000 residents. As an upland region, Djavakheti has been famous for its basalt and obsidian mines, and especially for potato farming and cattle breeding. Swiss styles of cheeses produced in Djavakheti were well known during the times of the Russian Empire.

The current economic crisis has made a remarkable impact on the region. Local revenues are among the lowest in Georgia. About 2,000 residents of Djavakheti have emigrated to Russia since 1990, while seasonal work in the Russian Federation remains one of the basic income sources for the rest of the population. Djavakheti has substantially fallen behind the other regions in land privatisation. Poor traffic and telephone communications pose exceptional problems. The local railway system does not operate, while deterioration of the roads to Tbilisi (through Tzalka) urges Djavakheti to develop closer economic ties with neighbouring Armenia. Not long ago these factors contributed to the alienation between the local population and the central government in Tbilisi. Besides, economic hardships sometimes made popular discontent politically sensitive there.

Both the declines in privatisation and Armenia-oriented trading have geo-political and demographic grounds. After re-gaining independence, the Georgian leadership was especially cautious about privatising lands in the frontier regions, including Djavakheti. As to contacts with Armenia, they are conditioned

by the fact that ethnic Armenians constitute more than 90 percent of the local population.

Today, the problem of Djavakheti is a specific one. The region is under Georgian sovereignty but dominated by the Armenian majority and one of the largest military bases of the Russian Troops in Transcaucasus is located there. Hence, this fact must be taken into account during the social and economic rehabilitation of the region and its development and integration into the common Georgian political and economic system. From this viewpoint, the importance and peculiarities of civil-military relations in Djavakheti deserve special examination.

Historically, Djavakheti used to be an outpost on the road from the Southwest to the central areas of the South Caucasus and, therefore, many times turned a cockpit of the region. These factors have determined radical ethnic changes in the population and the exceptional role of the military in the life of the region.

Once a manor of Georgian landlords, Djavakheti was conquered by Turkey in the 17th century. From 1829, Russia, who turned it into a significant operational base of the Russian army, controlled the Akhalkalaki fortress. Numerous wars also changed the demographic situation in the region. The Russian military administration encouraged Armenians from Anatolia and small groups of Russian sectarians to settle in Djavakheti. After the 1944 deportation of the local Muslims, the Armenian population appeared in the overall majority.

The Russian military and local Armenians have developed close co-operation. This was conditioned by two reasons: Armenian refugees from Turkey were loyal to their protectors, while military infrastructure made a considerable impact on the local economic and social life. The former strict Soviet frontier regime even more strengthened this co-operation as it imposed entrance restrictions in frontier areas for residents of other regions. Prior to the break-up of the USSR, Djavakheti was a half-closed region where servicemen enjoyed extraordinary influence, while a lot of local residents were involved in logistical supplies or intelligence-gathering missions.

The Soviet Union has collapsed and Djavakheti is now a part of independent Georgia. However, the military and social situation in the region remains almost unchanged. The Georgian-Turkish border is still controlled by Russian frontier guards, the Russian military base is, as usual, stationed in Akhalkalaki, while locals are anxious to continue their co-operation with the Russian military, especially against the background of general economic stagnation in Georgia.

According to some estimates, salaries paid to local residents working at the Russian base total almost one million new Russian Roubles every month. Some 500 Djavakhetians work at a factory that is housed on the base. A lot of residents occupy most of the numerous civil jobs (personnel of the officers' mess, school, kindergarten, hospital, etc.) in the base. More than half of some 3,000 servicemen of the Akhalkalaki base are also local residents. The monthly salary of a Russian soldier who serves on contract - \$100 - is rather attractive for them. Djavakheti profits by the functioning of the base and the presence of the Russian frontier troops in some other ways too. The base pays for electricity and the Russian military purchases goods at local markets. According to the head of the Ninotzinda Post Office, the Russian base accounts for about 90 percent of all the mail fees there. Besides, to export basalt to Russia locals usually join up with Russian military columns.

Of course, all this business is not quite legal. The Russian armed forces must be manned by Russian citizens. It is unclear whether the local military personnel of the base have obtained Russian citizenship lawfully. Sometimes, Djavakhetian conscripts who have to be drafted into the Georgian army enlist at the Russian base without changing their citizenship. Exports of basalt behind the shield of Russian military automobile transportation also may be viewed as illegal. However, such illegal activities are the only source of income for a

lot of local residents; and secondly, state structures responsible for maintaining law and order seem unable or unwilling to fulfil their tasks. Locals say a Georgian passport costs them \$150, while those who come back to the region after schooling or working abroad have to pay even higher fees to be re-registered in the region. People often complain about corruption of the Georgian traffic police as well. That is why, they say, Djavakhetian exporters have to seek shelter in Russian military transport columns or prefer to trade with Armenia.

Given national movements and ethnic conflicts in Transcaucasus, the relationship between the Armenians of Djavakheti and the Russian military has a political bearing. Armenians of Karabakh often visit the Russian base in Akhalkalaki to buy armaments. The local nationalistic organisation "Djavahk", which was against deployment of Georgian troops in Djavakheti and demanded political autonomy of the region, has intensified its activities. In 1995-96 the "Djavahk" were going to launch a referendum on transforming the region into a separate administrative-territorial unit. Under such circumstances, quite a few Georgians regard local civil-military relations as a Russian-Armenian alliance. Many in Tbilisi feared that Djavakheti could have turned into a new "Karabakh".

Still, the development of events has shown that Djavakhetians are interested in the functioning of the Russian base foremost because of the above mentioned social and economic benefits. So territorial integrity of Georgia will hardly face a new, "Djavakhetian" threat, provided Tbilisi pursues a cautious and reasonable policy. This is reflected in local Georgian-Armenian civil-military relations that has started to develop in Djavakhetialongside with the Russian-Armenian ones.

In fact, no Armenians of Djavakheti had been drafted into the Georgian army until 1996 for the reason of the army-building problems, as well as the aforementioned distrust and fear of new conflicts. The situation has changed with 44 conscripts of the Ninotzinda district who were called up for the military service in 1996 and 60 in 1997. Small wonder enlistment offices have difficulty drafting the required number of conscripts. In Ninotzinda 200 conscripts are trying to avoid the military service. To encourage the others, Arzumanian, the district military commissar, drafted his relatives first. At the same time, local conscripts enjoy some special privileges - they are drafted only into the neighbouring Akhaltsikhe Brigade or the Djavakheti-based units of the Georgian Frontier Department and are often permitted to leave temporarily for home. Such unwritten rules are widely applied in other Georgian military units too. In purely Georgian regions, the number of conscripts avoiding the military service is almost the same. Actually, alienation of local Armenians from the rest of Georgia with respect to the military service seems to be abating. These days most of the refusals to serve in the Georgian army are linked to hard conditions in the barracks rather than for ethnic reasons.

The new thing for the region is a Georgian frontier checkpoint that opened about three kilometres from the Ninotzinda district centre 10 months ago. It is under the Akhaltsikhe training centre of the Frontier Troops and still is not engaged in controlling the border. Therefore, its functional effectiveness remains minor. But thanks to this checkpoint, for the first time, dozens of young Georgians and Armenians have had an opportunity to serve together in Djavakheti under the Georgian banner. At a rather noteworthy meeting with Georgian frontier guards one of the "Djavahk" leaders said had it been some years ago, he would not have allowed to open the checkpoint but now he was already out of business. Meanwhile, the Frontier Troops Command is going to enlarge the checkpoint in order to take control of the Georgian-Armenian border. Tbilisi and Erevan are now negotiating the issue.

Times are gradually changing in Djavakheti. Although the Russian Rouble is still dominating the region, the Georgian Lari is little by little gaining a foothold in the local market. Despite the above mentioned traffic problems, Kakhetian wine, Borjomi mineral water and Tbilisi-made Coca-Cola are on sale in Akhalkalaki alongside with the Armenian beer. Georgian banners or writings in

Georgian no longer cause discontent. A branch of the Georgian university has begun to operate in Ninotzinda. Earlier, there were branches of only Russian and Armenian universities. However, the final stability and transformation of the regional or ethnic self-identification into the sense of common citizenship are still a long way off and this is the problem not only of Djavakheti but of the whole Georgia. The distrust between Georgians and Armenians has yet to be overcome - in the Ninotzinda streets Georgian soldiers are still asked whether their presence here will benefit Djavakheti. For the time being the local military procurator's office abstains from instituting legal proceedings against those who refuse to serve in the army in order not to create grounds for new ethnic conflicts.

To rule out ethnic conflicts completely, social and economic developments in the region must be given special attention. Roads should be repaired, the Georgian legislation translated and distributed, local civil initiatives encouraged and supported. Civil-military relations, too, must be brought into the focus of concern.

Djavakhetians are still viewing the Russian military machine as their most essential source of income. At the same time, Armenians of Djavakheti have historically regarded the Russian army as the guarantee of stability. Today, there is also the Georgian military force in the region. Of course, it is still too weak if compared with the Russian one but it may help attenuate the lack of confidence between the Georgians and Armenians. Such hopes are based on traditional respect Djavakhetians have for a man in the uniform. All this may come true if the local Armenians will regard the Georgian army as theirs. On the other hand, until Tbilisi creates economic alternatives in the region, any actions against the Russian base will prove disadvantageous. At present, this base looks like an economic body rather than a military one. Its current organisation - old and devastated buildings, officers preoccupied with their daily problems and outsiders freely hanging around on its territory - reminds of a demoralised, aborigine-manned legion of the late Roman Empire. If there is any danger posed by this base, it must be neutralised by winning over the local population - its main pillar. Pragmatic Djavakhetians want to know what the Georgian government will give them instead of the Russian base.

## **General Interview with General Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili,**

*Chief of the General Staff of the Georgian Armed Forces [interview was made in June]*

*by Lela Djandjalashvili*

Lela Djandjalashvili: General, let us begin our dialogue with the last events in Abkhazia nicknamed the "six-day war" by the people. Did the Georgian army participate in the conflict and what is the situation after the parties reached a truce?

General Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili: Only guerrillas took part in the fighting. Thanks to their great efforts, some 30,000 civilians escaped being killed and got the hell out. Apart from the guerrillas, the Internal Troops also helped to evacuate the civilian population. They are still deployed in the region alongside with the Peacekeeping Force. There were no MOD units - as to Internal Troops, they kept away from engagements. Their mission aimed only to evacuate civilians. Only the president can order us to wage a war. Georgia has honestly fulfilled all the terms of the cease-fire agreement: guerrillas were withdrawn from the conflict zone and no Georgians are fighting now. Abkhazia, however, has yet to pull out its combatants.

L.D.: During the Gali events, the Georgian president said he knew well the current state of the army and, therefore, opted for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. No doubt, Georgian policy disapproves of a war, but it would be

interesting to learn the situation in the army. If, say, the president decided to declare a war, could he pin his hopes on the military?

J.P.: Of course, the army still suffers from a number of ills. This is maybe what the president tended to say. But we must take into account recent appointments of a new defence minister and chief of general staff. Let them take their time. The army does exist but it is not so efficient as it should be. Everybody in Georgia must know it. By and large, today a new war would mean a political fiasco for the state. If you asked me whether I believe in peaceful solutions to this problem, as a military man I would answer that I'm a serviceman and must implicitly obey orders. But as the saying goes "If you want a peace, get ready for a war".

L.D.: What problems did you inherit?

J.P.: I'd like not to answer this question. The situation is not so worse. It's no use speaking about the past mistakes. At least some progress has been achieved. Although there were problems in relations between the former defence minister and the parliamentary committee [for defence and security], they seemed to be more of personal nature. The parties managed to co-operate anyway, thanks to General Nikolaishvili, then deputy defence minister. Now the main thing is to carry out such immediate reforms that may enable to create an efficient army.

L.D.: General, you are now leading the General Staff - a body which has been created just recently. In many foreign countries, the defence ministry is responsible for political management and administration, while the general staff carries out pure military functions. Will Georgia apply the same model?

J.P.: In our country, the defence minister is a military man. He has his own apparatus, which helps him manage and maintain the armed forces. In developed countries, the office of defence minister is a civilian one, while the military are under civil and democratic control. In our case, the similar control is exercised by the following means: the parliamentary defence and security committee, the National Security Council and the President as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. At present, Georgia still falls short of the Western principles but they are gradually gaining foothold here. Prior to the new defence minister's appointment and the outset of reforms, the armed forces had their Main Staff. Today we have the practically complete General Staff, though its lower divisions are still being developed. Now I am in charge of many new bodies, which were not subordinate to the Main Staff earlier. All this aims to improve the operational management of the army. Nowadays, the General Staff commands all our armed forces. The Armed Forces as usual embody several services - the Ground Troops, Navy, Air Force and Anti-Aircraft Defence Troops - but their staffs are directly subordinate to me. I have to administer operational performance of these services. Chemical and engineer troops, too, are now under my command. The personnel department has been also subordinated to the General Staff. In brief, we are preparing grounds for such a situation when, as you say, the General Staff will supervise personnel training and combat readiness. The MOD is also undergoing some other structural reforms. For instance, the Department of Armaments and the Logistics Department have been merged under one of the defence ministers. The status of the Department of Combat Training was increased. From now onward Mr. Lekveishvili, a deputy defence minister, will command it in co-operation with the General Staff. Besides, while the former defence minister had 12 deputies, there are now only four of them, including one civilian - he is also a parliamentary secretary and is responsible for foreign military relations and, to some extent, civil control over the army. He deals with both foreign and domestic political aspects. The whole structure and regulations of the MOD will have to change because of these reforms. In other words, we are going to shift to the western model of management. This is the first step.

L.D.: What is the Chief of the General Staff General Pirtskhalaishvili's conception?

J.P.: I think the country should identify its vital interests and then develop a strategy to defend them, including a military doctrine. Although we have already the doctrine, it looks as if we were starting from scratch. It is not dangerous, however. Our doctrine is a defensive one and the army should be adequate. We need a relatively small regular army with well-trained reserves. As to

activities of the General Staff, it has to carry out military reforms as soon as possible. We have already set the list of priorities. These are first of all professionalism, trained personnel and perfect combat readiness of the troops. We have professionals but their knowledge must be used properly. We should alter usual procedures. My deputies and I must work directly in the units. I have to learn the current state of the troops, their problems and required means to improve their combat efficiency. Late at night on June 4 we gave an exercise alarm and examined the Koda garrison and three units in Tbilisi. Results of the exercise can be regarded as satisfactory. David Tevzadze, the defence minister, took part in the examination. All the other units will also have to pass similar exercises. Traditionally bad information has been reported from the Akhaltsikhe brigade. A complex commission will soon inspect the brigade. Serious disciplinary measures will be introduced in the army. We will no longer stand commanders who are unable or unwilling to take care of their soldiers. Hungry servicemen are worse than the enemy. Besides, soldiers are our sons - their well being is our top priority.

Officers, too, are our concern - their salaries are expected to grow in January. A draft on the status of servicemen has been brought in the parliament. Unless it is approved, the military will remain socially unprotected. We aim to cure the well-known ills of the army - short rations, the lack of ammunition, desertion, etc. I'd like to officially declare that soldiers can no longer complain about poor meals. Newly appointed officials of the MOD managed to confirm that the budget allocates quite enough money for foods supplies. However, budgetary instalments are often transferred with delays. It may be explained by economic crisis in the country.

L.D.: How much time will the reforms take?

J.P.: Basic changes related to structural re-organisation have to be completed by the end of the year. A new stage of exercises started on June 1 and will last until October. The following inspection will clearly show efficiency of the reforms, while the results of the exercises will help determine future plans. We are currently working out a ten-year concept of the army building. Over this time the armaments and supplies in the army must improve. We have no possibilities for total rearmament and have to use the existing stockpile of weaponry. At the same time, combat efficiency of the troops will gradually increase. By the way, we are now forming a new training centre. In a while you may come and see positive results.

L.D.: What about officers' training?

J.P.: Foreign countries provide great assistance with this respect. Our officers are being trained in Russia, Germany, Turkey, and USA. In the near future 385 students and officers will be sent to Russian military colleges and I am now leading the selection commission. Of late, Bulgaria has offered significant assistance programs. We are also setting contacts with Slovakia. Turkey, our active partner, has allocated \$5.5 million to develop our most important fields. USA is rather helpful and attentive. Just recently, the head of intelligence of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has visited Georgia, while a Georgian platoon is going to participate in joint manoeuvres in the USA. Our co-operation in the framework of the NATO Partnership for Peace program is very important. So the situation seems to be quite good. I am hopefully waiting for the time when 100 our servicemen, who are being trained abroad, get back and join the army.

L.D.: And finally, what are the prospects of the army building in Georgia?

J.P.: There are very good prospects. We will soon have some perfectly trained units. I took office in the hope of such a success. After the new minister's appointment and other staff changes, the government pays much more attention and renders greater help. Not long ago the Tbilisi municipality decided on patronage of one of the military units. We have excellent relationship with Interior and Frontier Troops. On the whole, I can tell you that, as people say, this is my third return to the Georgian army since 1990 and I feel really happy now.

## **The Six-Day Georgian-Abkhazian War Politicians' view**

*by Lela Djandjalashvili*

### **What Has Happened In Gali?**

Lela Djandjalashvili, a reporter of the *Army and Society*, asked several Georgian MPs of various political orientation to comment on the May 20-26 events in the Gali district of Abkhazia nicknamed the "six-day war" by the Georgian mass media.

#### **Kakha Chitaia, the chairman of the parliamentary foreign committee**

Such kind of events cannot be viewed in a separate context. There are several clear-cut levels. The lowest one: Vladislav Ardzinba, the Abkhazian leader, was alarmed that Georgian refugees were getting back and settling in Abkhazia. They more or less arranged their daily life and this process could have been stopped only by force. There were no guerrillas, for instance in 1994, when Abkhazians already attempted to halt these processes and, as a result, a part of the population might have attempted to solve this problem on their own. True, there were some talks about the necessity to regain Abkhazia by force but I disapprove of such methods. Later, a few guerrillas emerged in the region, while local Georgians launched several folk holidays - perfect grounds for provocation. But this is a rather superficial analysis. The main point is that there is also another level - some Russian forces that are against real independence of Georgia on the one hand, and those who have pragmatic interests related to oil transits on the other. Georgia has made great efforts to convince foreign oil companies that the government controls all the territories, which are under the acting Georgian jurisdiction. But these forces are against it. On the whole, the Russian security services are very proficient in subversive activities. They worked out a perfidious plan and used urgent problems of Gali to give birth to a new conflict. As a result, Shevardnadze faced the dilemma: he should have either taken up the gauntlet and waged a large-scale war or encountered a strong negative charge - incur the new refugees' wrath. The inner political situation was taken into account as well. It looked as if an invisible conductor waved the baton and numerous political parties simultaneously demanded the president to resign. Say, he did, would it help regain Abkhazia, facilitate democratic reforms or defeat corruption? The president made the right but rather unpopular decision in the best interests of the country. I do not consider the Gali events a defeat, though the civil population there has to live under awful conditions. From the military viewpoint, the result was different. Quite a strong guerrilla movement has been created. It does not obey the president and is rather difficult to control but may expedite peace processes we are aiming at.

#### **Vakhtang Rcheulishvili, the chairman of the Socialist Party**

It was a serious defeat of Georgia and I can tell why. The Georgian president had declared that he knew the country's economy and the state of the army like the back of his hand. If so, why did he fall for this provocation? When speaking about provocation I mean the Georgian press reports which prior to these events had claimed that we would no longer stand humiliation and that the guerrilla movement was strong enough to defend residents of Gali. That is why the Gali population felt hopeful about protection. But the guerrillas will be never able to defend the people. While the Gali residents were in high spirits, the Abkhazian forces backed by North Caucasian mercenaries entered the region and swept them out. The Citizens' Union, the ruling party, is using methods of the Green movement. It had organised unjustified protest actions at the Inguri River

[the actual border between Abkhazia and Georgia - L.D.] before the outbreak of the "six-day" war. It is understandable when the opposition launches protest actions in front of the Russian Embassy, but the ruling party's similar actions look ridiculous. They may be provoked by agents of any country but people pay dearly for their mistakes. I feel sorry for the president, who fell for the provocation, and even more for the Gali residents who are now so embittered that believe no government at all. Provocations will not cease but our reaction to them should be adequate.

## **Ada Marshania** **MP for Abkhazia**

I've got not enough information to make any political analysis. The only thing I know is that our citizens in Gali appeared unprotected. If we pursue other interests there, let's evacuate the civil population first. The state has to defend its citizens. I think it is the first and foremost goal of the government, while regaining lost territories must be on the second place. What do we need these territories for, if all the people there died out? I see so many blunders and such a lack of co-ordination on the part of Tbilisi that I would be not surprised if we fell for any kind of provocation. Moreover, we ourselves create favourable grounds for provocations. I did not believe the statements claiming Gali to be under our control. More importantly, I've got not special but common information from my relatives, other MPs and mass media. I was very much surprised to learn that some MPs had visited guerrillas' bases. Was it really so necessary or was there really a need for the folk holidays? If they were going to celebrate these folk holidays only, this must have been done more discreetly. Local Abkhazians should have been also invited. Such un-serious decisions are made all too often. I'm Abkhaz and I want Georgian and Abkhaz peoples to live together peacefully just as we used to do for centuries.

## **Military Chronicle**

*Georgian press reports*

### **Abkhazia: the "Six-Day" War**

Abkhaz armed forces were put in full alert on May 6, after the Tbilisi-based Supreme Council of Abkhazia shifted its office from Tbilisi to Zugdidi (western Georgia) and deployed its law-enforcement forces in the Zugdidi district - along the Inguri river (the actual Georgian-Abkhaz border). The Abkhaz government would respond with adequate measures, Sergey Bagapsh, the prime-minister of Abkhazia, said. Sukhumi claimed that about 300 Georgian guerrillas had intruded into the Gali district of Abkhazia and started preparations for a large-scale subversive mission. According to Abkhaz sources, they were encouraging Georgian residents of the district (especially women and children) to leave temporarily their homes and stay for some time in hide-outs in case new hostilities began. Confederation of the Highland Peoples of the Caucasus led by Usup Soslanbekov has promised Abkhazia its support if there is a new war.

"Resonance" No. 121, May 7, p. 2

"Droni" No. 51, May 9-12, p. 3

According to available intelligence, the current Abkhaz armed forces embody 5,000 servicemen (with mobilisation capacity up to 30,000 men), 34 tanks, 70 armoured personnel carriers, 78 artillery systems, 3 aircraft and 20 warships. "Akhali Taoba" (New Generation) No. 124, May 8, p. 6

Georgian guerrillas raided an Abkhaz militia station in the village of Repi, the Gali district, on May 18 killing 17 militiamen. The guerrilla warfare in Abkhazia may soon intensify, Djemal Gakhokidze, the Georgian security minister, commented on the incident. He underlined that the Georgian government had nothing to do with the guerrillas.



On May 20 heavily armed Abkhaz punitive force - about 1,500 servicemen with T-72 and T-55 tanks, armoured personnel carriers and 122-mm artillery systems - entered the Gali district. Georgian guerrillas armed with only submachine and machine guns and grenade launchers began trench warfare to defend Georgian villages. The most severe fighting occurred near the villages of Khumushkuri, Zemo Barghebi, Sida and Saberio (the control panel of the Inguri Hydro, the largest Georgian hydroelectric power plant, is situated in this last).

Due to the outbreak of new hostilities in the Gali district, David Tevzadze, the Georgian defence minister, visited Zugdidi and held talks with Gen. Korobko, C-in-C of the Russian Peacekeeping Force, on May 21. Meanwhile, the Georgian armed forces were put in full alert. The Interior Ministry and the Frontier Department of Georgia, too, reinforced their patrol missions.

Zurab Zhvania, the chairman of the Georgian parliament, cut short his visit to Turkey due to the fighting in Gali. Professor Levan Aleksidze, the president's advisor for international law, argued that the last events in Gali must be viewed in the light of the gradually worsening situation in Russia - miners' strikes, financial problems, etc. Russian radical opposition, in his opinion, believes that a new war in the South Caucasus may help impeach Boris Yeltsin, President of Russia. The UN Security Council denounced hostilities in Gali at its May 21 sitting and called upon both parties to stop violence.

At a sitting of the National Security Council of Georgia on May 21 Eduard Shevardnadze said Georgia was able to defend Georgian residents of the Gali district not only by peaceful means. An Abkhaz delegation led by Tamaz Ketsba arrived in Tbilisi the same day for talks with the Georgian leadership.

At an extraordinary session of the co-ordination council of the Georgian-Abkhaz talks (which functions under the aegis of the Geneva negotiations on Abkhazia) in Tbilisi on May 22, Georgia and Abkhazia endorsed a draft protocol obliging Sukhumi to withdraw its forces from Gali and Tbilisi to stop guerrilla warfare in the region. Thus Georgian authorities indirectly acknowledged that they had certain control over guerrillas, experts said. However, on the next day Shevardnadze once again stated that the Georgian government had nothing to do with guerrillas in Gali. At the same time, Tamaz Nadareishvili, the chairman of the Tbilisi-based Supreme Council of Abkhazia, declared that the Interior Ministry and Security Ministry of Abkhazia (based in Tbilisi) were actively involved in the fighting.

Russia was rather quick to respond to the hostilities in Gali. After receiving Shevardnadze's urgent telegram, Igor Sergeev, the Russian defence minister, ordered the Russian Peacekeeping Force in the region to protect Georgian civilians. On the other hand, some Georgian sources say Abkhaz separatists took advantage of recent rotation of Russian peacekeepers and hired free Russian servicemen for their operations in Gali.

At its May 23 extraordinary sitting, National Security Council of Georgia discussed the situation in the Gali district and ordered the Georgian foreign and defence ministries to use "direct contacts with international organisations, CIS countries, respective Russian and Abkhaz structures", and ensure withdrawal of Abkhaz "gunmen" from the district and safety of local Georgian civilians.

Georgian power ministers launched a closed-door meeting in Zugdidi on May 24 to discuss the situation in Gali, while the Main Military Procurator's Office officially declared that no Georgian soldier or officer of the regular army were participating in the armed confrontation in the Gali district. There was engagement only between the Abkhaz punitive force and guerrilla units made up of local Georgian residents, the Office said.

On May 23-26, some units of the Georgian Internal Troops were deployed in the district to help evacuate civilian population. Explaining the Gali events at the beginning of June, David Tevzadze said the 1st Brigade of the Internal Troops was deployed in the district on May 23 and was ordered to maintain "a corridor"

for civilians to flee the region. According to the Sukhumi-based Abkhaz radio, Georgian servicemen actively participated in the fighting together with guerrillas, while Georgian helicopters were incessantly transporting fresh troops and ammunition across the Inguri river. The radio blamed Russian peacekeepers for neglect of duty and their failure to block operations of Georgian forces. Abkhaz authorities also accused MP Irakli Batiashvili, the former chief of the information-analytical agency (now the State Security Ministry) of patronising the guerrillas. The headquarters of the Russian Peacekeeping Force said Russian peacekeepers kept out of the combat.

By May 26 Abkhaz forces had taken control of almost the whole Gali district. About 30 thousand Georgian refugees reportedly fled to the town of Zugdidi and the government had to take extraordinary measures for their accommodation. Georgian and Abkhaz delegations reached a truce on May 25 in Gagra (Abkhazia). According to the agreement, both parties had to withdraw their armed forces from the Gali district beginning at 6 a.m. on May 26. A special commission made up of representatives of UN and other international organisations was set up to supervise the cease fire.

According to the Procurator's Office of Georgia, during the May 20-26 events in Gali the Georgian side suffered the following casualties: 6 persons are missing, 35 civilians and 17 servicemen were killed, 24 were wounded, 56 are taken POWs. Besides, 1,695 houses of local Georgians were burned down. Georgian sources claim Abkhazia's losses to be much greater - at least 300 killed and dozens wounded.

The Senaki brigade of the MOD led by general Gudjar Qurashvili, then commander of the MOD infantry troops, took part in the fighting in Gali and withdrew after the May 25 truce, one of the Georgian guerrillas told journalists on condition of anonymity. There were, in his words, mainly young recruits who had served only 5-6 months. The Georgian forces, he said, were pulled out of the region so rapidly that some of the soldiers got lost in the district. But for local residents and guerrillas they would have been killed.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 138, 140, 151; May 22, 24, June 4; pp. 2, 3

"Sakartvelos Respublika" (Republic of Georgia) No. 122, 123, 125-126; May 21, 22, 24-25; pp. 1, 2

"Droni" No. 57, May 23-26, pp. 1, 2

"Resonance" No. 137, 139, 140, 141, 153; May 23, 25, 26, 27, June 8; pp. 1, 2

"Kviris Palitra" (Palette of the Week) No. 22, June 1-7, p. 9

"7 Dge" (7 Days) No. 58, 59; May 20-21, 22-24, pp. 1, 2

For the last year 14 generals and 26 members of the Georgian parliament have visited Gali and promised local Georgians their support in case of a new war, Erekle Kolkheli, a resident of the Gali district, claims in his letter to the newspaper. On May 22, in his words, a Georgian battalion [he does not specify whether it was the regular army or the Internal Troops] led by two generals [no concrete names are specified] crossed the Inguri river and took positions in the district. One of the generals warned local guerrillas that the battalion would assist them in fighting but none of its servicemen must be killed or wounded. "Otherwise I will be arrested", he said. In the general's words, neither the president nor the National Security Council were informed about operations of the battalion. On May 24, after the Abkhaz forces launched their main assault, a group of Georgian ministers [it is still not specified whether they were from the central government or Tbilisi-based Council of Ministers of Abkhazia] arrived at the positions of the Georgian forces and promised them tank and artillery support. However, they broke the promise and on May 25 the battalion and guerrillas had to retreat.

"Resonance" No. 146, June 1, pp. 1, 19

No servicemen of the MOD has fought in the Gali district, an official of "one of the Georgian power structures" says in his interview with the newspaper. In his words, news about participation of the Senaki brigade in the fighting was incorrect but General Gudjar Qurashvili indeed took part in the May 21-26 events as a military consultant. On May 21 a 120-men Georgian detachment [it is again

unclear whether it was the regular army or the Internal Troops] was deployed at the village of Tagiloni with the only mission to maintain a "corridor" and help guerrillas evacuate civilian population. "We found complete chaos there", the interviewee says. There was no intelligence about the enemy and friendly troops, while tactical command and planning were distinctively poor. After intense fighting the detachment had to retreat and took positions at the village of Pirveli Otobaia. The assaulting Abkhaz force, in his words, totalled about 500 heavily armed servicemen, with 3 combat infantry carriers and some artillery systems. The Abkhaz and Georgian troops were in close contact (50-70 metres of distance) and fighting was so intense that reminded of the 1993 battle in Sukhumi. Abkhaz troops, the interviewee claims, were aided by the Russian commando unit "Black Souls" of the Gudauta-based Russian Airborne Regiment, while Abkhaz carriers had a writing "PF" - peacekeeping force (MC in Russian). The detachment for its part was backed by the guerrilla unit "Forest Brothers". Just thanks to the latter the Georgian servicemen escaped being surrounded and eliminated. After a six-hour combat the detachment was forced to retreat. General Qurashvili reportedly fought as an ordinary soldier alongside with the ranks.

"Resonance" No. 156, June 11, p. 7

Kakha Targamadze, the Georgian interior minister, has denied having any contacts with guerrillas. "As a Georgian and a citizen I would like to fight together with guerrillas but as the interior minister I have no relationship with them". He acknowledged that detachments of the Georgian Interior Ministry were deployed in Gali to help evacuate civilians from the Gali district.

"Resonance" No. 157, June 12, pp. 1, 3

Guerrilla warfare will cease only after Abkhazia is regained, Irina Sarishvili-Chanturia, the leader of the National Democratic Party, commented on the May 20-26 events in Gali. However, the government, in her opinion, should abstain from large-scale military operations until Georgia builds a strong army and foreign countries become strategically interested in Georgia's territorial integrity (due to the coming Caspian oil transits).

"Resonance" No. 141, May 27, pp. 1, 2

The Institute of Demography and Sociological Studies held an opinion poll on the last events in the Gali district: 64% of the respondents approved Shevardnadze's decision to avoid a new war in Abkhazia and not to use the Georgian army in Gali, 18% suggested that Georgia must wage a war against Abkhazia right away, 18% had no answer. It must be mentioned that there were no refugees among the respondents.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 139, May 28, p. 1

In its May 27 statement the Foreign Ministry of Georgia denied that the Georgian MOD troops took part in the May 20-26 fighting in the Gali district of Abkhazia. As to some detachments of the Interior Ministry of Georgia, the statement said, in accordance with the May 25 cease-fire agreement signed in Gagra they had to "ensure separation of conflicting parties and evacuation of civilians".

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 140, May 29, p. 1

On May 31 in the town of Zugdidi refugees from the Gali district halted a vehicle of the Russian Peacekeeping Force with three Russian soldiers and took one of them hostage. They claimed that he had helped the Abkhaz forces during the recent combat in Gali. Avtandil Ioseliani, the head of the State Intelligence Department of Georgia, said he knew little about the incident. The soldier was released a few days later.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 148, June 1, pp. 1, 3

"Sakartvelos Gazeti" No. 5, June 1, p. 1

An armoured personnel carrier of the Russian Peacekeeping Force was exploded at a mine near the village of Otobaia, the Gali district, on May 30. Its driver was badly wounded and put to hospital in Sukhumi. Four other peacekeepers were lightly wounded.

"Resonance" No. 146, June 1, p. 2

## **The Army Life**

According to Nodar Shapatava, an expert of the parliamentary health care committee, a serviceman of the Kukia-deployed MOD military unit (one of the districts of Tbilisi) has developed a skin disease linked, as medical examination revealed, to radioactive wastes. The total number of radiated Georgian soldiers has thus reached 12.

"Resonance" No. 115, May 1, p. 6

Capt. Nika Djandjghava, former intelligence officer of the MOD reconnaissance department and hitherto the only Georgian professional ranger (he has graduated a U.S. rangers' college), has got back to Georgia from the French Foreign Legion. He resigned and voluntarily left for France some months ago due to "disagreement" with then defence minister Vardiko Nadibaidze's army-building policy. "I could not stand that Soviet-like system", he says in his interview with the newspaper. Now Mr. Djandjghava believes that the new defence minister, David Tevzadze, will succeed in reforming the army.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 130, May 14, p. 5

## **The Army Building**

On April 30 the parliament passed a bill on the Internal Troops of Georgia. It specifies the Internal Troops as a part of the Georgian military forces placed in the system of the Interior Ministry. The mission of the Internal Troops is defined as follows:

- to assist the police and security services in maintaining law and order;
- to fight against terrorism and organised crime;
- to defend most important state objects and protect special cargo transportation (in co-operation with the State Safeguard Service);
- to guard prisons and the Supreme Court, convey prisoners and defendants;
- to take part in the country's defence.

Commander of the Internal Troops is appointed by the interior minister and approved by the president. The Internal Troops are manned by conscripts and volunteers. In two months after the new law is published, the president has to approve combat regulations of the Internal Troops.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 119, May 2, p. 1

The newly appointed defence minister of Georgia, David Tevzadze, has introduced a new scheme of office hours in the MOD: from 8.00 a.m. till 6.00 p.m. with 2-hour break. Personnel of the MOD has to work 5 days a week save deputy ministers and heads of departments, who work also on Saturdays but this working day will be shorter.

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 106, May 5, p. 1

During his brief visit to the Poti sea port at the beginning of May, David Tevzadze, the defence minister, examined the Poti Shipyard. The city municipality agreed to cede this promising enterprise to the MOD. The issue, however, has yet to be approved by the president. Besides, Mr. Tevzadze inspected the Poti Joint Naval Base and attended joint naval manoeuvres of the MOD and the Frontier Department.

"Droni" No. 49, May 5-7, p. 1

Gen. Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili was appointed head of the General Staff of the Armed Forces and the first deputy defence minister instead of Gen. Zurab Meparishvili, who had retired from the army. Most experts consider Pirtskhalaishvili's candidature the best since he has passed both the Soviet and the NATO military schools.

Mr. Pirtskhalaishvili, born in the town of Lanchkhuti (western Georgia) in 1947, has graduated Tbilisi State University in Mechanics and Mathematics and Frunze

Military Academy of Moscow (named after Michael Frunze - well-known Russian commander of the Red Army in 20s). He used to serve in Ukraine, commander of a motorifle division being his last position there. In 1988 Mr. Pirtskhalaishvili was awarded the rank of general and got back to Georgia an year later. In 1989 he was assigned as Military Commissar of Georgia, while in 1991, in times of ex-president Zviad Gamsakhurdia, he was appointed defence minister. In 1996-97 he held the office of deputy defence minister and resigned on May 25, 1997, after an argument with then defence minister, Vardiko Nadibaidze. Afterwards, he worked as an advisor to the chairman of the parliamentary defence and security committee. For the last three months he has been studied in George Marshall Centre of Strategic Studies and Defence Economy (Germany).  
"Resonance" No. 122, May 8, p. 2

"I'm not in a position to solve political problems", David Tevzadze said at his May 12 press-conference when asked about the prospects of the Russian-Georgian military co-operation. "Will Russia be Georgia's strategic military partner?", journalists asked. "It's not up to me to chose strategic partners", Tevzadze answered. As to possible withdrawal of the Russian frontier guards, and on the whole the Russian troops, from Georgia, the minister once again stressed that these issues were within the competence of politicians. Mr. Tevzadze is against shifting to a professional army right away. One of its main flaws of the current army, desertion, may be defeated only by eliminating its reasons, such as, say, unbearable service conditions in the barracks, the minister said. In his opinion, mere arrests and trials will hardly improve the situation. "What is your attitude towards the guerrilla warfare in Abkhazia?", journalists asked. "I don't know what you mean", was the reply. According to Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili, who attended the press-conference, the MOD plans to set up special training centres for officers and pay more attention to training of reservists. Mr. Tevzadze added that he would use any possibility to sent young Georgian officers into foreign military colleges, all the more so most of high ranking Georgian officers have already approached their retirement age.  
"Resonance" No. 126, May 12 ,pp. 1, 2

On May 12 David Tevzadze ordered to dismiss Valery Buchukuri, the head of the MOD Logistics Department, and Temur Karmazanashvili, the head of the division for agricultural support of the same department, for "critically" poor foods and ammunition supplies in the army. The order underlined that Georgian servicemen regularly get insufficient and low-quality nourishment. Col. Tamaz Tsiramua was appointed acting head of the Logistics Department.  
"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 129, May 14, p. 3

David Tevzadze has dismissed Capt. Otar Chkhartishvili, C-in-C of the Georgian Navy, for financial violations revealed in the Navy. The case was brought before the Main Military Procurator's Office. Capt. Gennady Haydarov, hitherto the head of the naval department of the Joint Military Academy of Georgia, was appointed acting commander of the Navy.  
"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 122, May 21, p. 1

On June 17, 1992, then defence minister issued Order 103 to create a new structure within the MOD - military police (MP). Its temporary regulations precisely defined the mission, structure and responsibilities of the MP but in fact, due to that time's circumstances, the MP turned into an ordinary combat unit which took part in the Abkhaz war and the civil war in western Georgia. On June 7, 1994, Supreme Commander of the Military Forces - the president - issued Order 13 to reorganise the MOD. One of its provisions dismissed the MP since this institution did not match "the requirements of the time" and "paralleled law-enforcement bodies". An year later the president considered it necessary to restore the MP and made a respective provision in his December 1995 decree on complex measures for developing Georgian armed forces. However, nothing has been done ever since and the issue remains unsettled. Meanwhile, without the MP, Vazha Shanidze, the former commander of the MP, argues in his interview with the newspaper, neither Nadibaidze, the former defence minister, nor Tevzadze, his successor, will be able to build a modern army. Instead of being dismissed, in his opinion, the MP should have been reorganised into a separate structure - not

within the MOD or any other body - as its competence covers all the military forces.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 141, 142; May 25, 26; pp. 3, 4, 9, 10

Prior to the collapse of the USSR, 318 aircraft and helicopters of the Soviet army used to be deployed in Georgia. By 1992 the Soviet military aviators had withdrawn from Georgia and left behind one combat aircraft and 12 helicopters, most of them being out of date. Georgia also took over nine entirely devastated military airfields. The current Georgian Air Force desperately needs new aircraft and, more importantly, professional aviators. In 1995 some Georgian officers were sent into Russian military aviation colleges. First of them have already graduated and got back as instructors. As to the aircraft, just recently the government has purchased a number of Czech training planes (L-9) which were deployed at the 3rd Training Centre of the Air Force. The first graduates of the Joint Military Academy of Georgia - would-be pilots and mechanics - are expected to begin their service in the Centre this June. According to Major Trifon Tzikarishvili, Chief of the Staff of the Centre, insufficient food supplies urged the Centre to rely entirely on its own farming. Besides, the Centre has been supplied with neither uniforms nor special aviation jackets for the last year. As a result, servicemen have to wear sport costumes and boots, while officers buy their uniforms on their own salaries.

"Droni" No. 59, May 28-30, p. 4

The Georgian anti-aircraft troops are equipped with rather out-of-date radars and have in fact no interceptor aircraft, General George Kvinikadze, C-in-C of the Georgian Anti-Aircraft Defence Troops, says in his interview with the newspaper. As a result, they can detect trespassers but are unable to force them to land. Russia allocated \$2 mln to the Georgian anti-aircraft defence since Georgia became a member of the CIS collective anti-aircraft system. Although Georgia has received only a part of this money so far, it was enough to restore radar stations. However, just Russian aircraft, in Kvinikadze's words, top the list of intruders trespassing the Georgian borders.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 145, May 29, p. 6

According to the Georgian president's order, the following persons were appointed deputy defence ministers: General Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili - the first deputy and the Chief of the General Staff, General Robert Tavadze - deputy for logistics, General Omar Lekveishvili (former National Security Council secretary) - deputy for combat training and education, General Grigol Katamadze (diplomat by profession, former specialist of the Foreign Ministry department for international economic relations and envoy to Ukraine) - deputy for state policy and foreign military relations. The latter is the first-ever civilian deputy defence ministry in the history of the Georgian army. Thus the number of deputy defence ministers reduced from 12 to 4.

"Resonance" No. 144, May 30, p. 2

"Sakartvelos Gazeti" (Newspaper of Georgia) No. 3, May 30, pp. 1, 2

## **Visits. Negotiations. Co-operation**

David Tevzadze met a delegation of the German Bundeswehr led by Gen. Karl Heinz Firek, deputy chief of the General Staff of the German defence ministry, on May 5. Georgian-German military co-operation would help maintain stability and regional security in the Caucasus, Mr. Tevzadze said. The delegation and Georgian experts are going to work out a draft 1998 Georgian-German co-operation program which will be reportedly focused on personnel training.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 121, May 6, p. 3

Ukraine has become the second CIS country (after Russia) to appoint its military attaché in Georgia. Gen. Ivan Gnidenko - a graduate of Frunze Military Academy and Academy of the General Staff of the Armed Forces (both in Moscow) - was assigned to the post. Ukraine now promises Georgia significant assistance programs in the army-building, first of all in personnel training. By September the Ukrainian government is expected to satisfy Georgia's request to train 16

officers in Kiev Academy and Kharkov Aviation Institute, with all the expenses being covered by Ukraine. More 15 officers may also be sent to Ukrainian navy, aviation and reconnaissance military colleges, provided Kiev agrees. Besides, Ukrainian experts will help to take stock of all the armaments left behind in Georgia by the Soviet army, classify them and decide their further utilisation. "Droni" No. 55, May 19-21, pp. 1, 2

On May 19, at a briefing in the MOD, Guram Nikolaishvili, deputy defence minister, introduced Harry Morgan, an officer of the U.S. Defence Ministry. In Morgan's words, in the framework of the Georgian-American 1998 military co-operation plan the USA has granted Georgia \$500 thousand to develop a management program for the country's defence resources. The program aims to find out whether defence resources of Georgia are used in optimum way. "Meridiani 44" No. 56, May 20-22, p. 3

Col. Revaz Gvritishvili, the head of the MOD Communications Department, has participated in joint manoeuvres held in Germany under the auspices of the NATO Partnership for Peace program with participation of 28 countries, including some former Soviet republics. The manoeuvres aimed to train NATO standards of military communications. Meanwhile, Capt. David Gugulashvili and Senior Lieutenant Gia Bezhitashvili took part in another PFP training - air force manoeuvres - held in Arizona, USA. "Akhali Taoba" No. 123, May 7, p. 2

## Miscellany

In the framework of reforms in the Russian armed forces, the Russian Air Force Command has ordered to dissolve Logistics Support Troops of the Vaziani military airfield (a Russian military base 20 km east from Tbilisi) known as the 137th Russian base. According to George Yuabov, the former commander of the Troops, 250 his servicemen will be replaced with a small unit to guard the airfield and its depots. Actually, it means that the airfield - the only Russian military one in the Transcaucasus - is going to be closed. According to informal sources, Mr. Yuabov himself was relieved since he strongly objected to this plan. The press-centre of the Headquarters of the Russian Troops in Georgia said, however, that Yuabov resigned for health problems. Due to its strategic location and significance, the airfield has been always viewed as one of the main Russian "strongholds" in Transcaucasus. In Soviet times quite a large force used to be deployed there: two regiments with Mig-23 combat aircraft and Su-17 bombers. In summer 1992 this "armada" was withdrawn from Georgia. The airfield, however, still retains its significance. For some last years, lots of armaments, cargoes (wine, alcohol, etc.), not to mention valuable antiques, have been exported from Georgia through Vaziani without any customs control. Just the Vaziani airfield provided the Headquarters of the Russian Troops in Georgia with the easiest access to the Russian bases in Akhalkalaki and Batumi (Georgia), Gyumri (Armenia) and Gudauta (Abkhazia). According to some informal sources, during the war in Abkhazia Abkhaz armed forces got Russian armaments just through this airfield. Nowadays, a lot of Russian armaments are still deployed in Vaziani: one tank battalion (31 tanks T-72), 56 armoured personnel carriers (BTR-70, BTR-80) and combat infantry carriers (BMP-1, BMP-2), 16 artillery systems, 5 helicopters (Mi-24), more than one thousand tons of aircraft bombs and missiles. "Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 128, May 13, p. 3  
"Kviris Palitra" (Palette of the Week) No 20, May 18-24, p. 9  
"Resonance" No. 133, May 19, p. 3

On May 18 Eduard Shevardnadze, Niko Lekishvili, the state minister, and some other high ranking officials visited the Georgian enterprise "Orbi" which is going to launch joint production of armaments - pistols, rifles and shot-guns - together with the German company "Zig Arms Zauer". In Soviet times the "Orbi" used to manufacture communication devices. Now it will assemble the weapons using imported parts as well as some produced by the enterprise itself. According to Djimsher Akhobadze, the director general of the "Orbi", the enterprise currently employs 150 workers but their number will reach 600 next

year. Four specialists of the enterprise have passed special training in Germany.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 132, May 19, p. 1

American and British experts of arms control together with their Georgian colleagues have completed a three-day mission in the framework of the Open Skies Observation Flight program. American reconnaissance aircraft carried out inspection flights over almost the whole Georgian territory. Georgia is the first Caucasian country to co-operate with the West in the framework of this program.

"Resonance" No. 139, May 25, p. 2

## Press Digest

A strong army reserve is one of the most serious army-building problems the newly appointed defence minister David Tevzadze has to tackle, the "7 Dge" (No. 56) argues. Last year, Georgian high schools (with military departments) trained 4,582 reserve officers: 113 of them were called up for the military service in 1997, and 313 this year. More than 4,500 reserve officers are expected to graduate military departments of high schools in 1998. However, given the yearly number of graduates of Joint Military Academy of Georgia, it may be assumed that in 2 or 3 years there will be no vacancies in the army for reservists. Such a situation calls into question the very need for preparing officers at military departments of civil high schools, the newspaper claims and provides the following arguments:

- reserve officers, as a rule, get poor military training in civil educational institutions let alone complete absence of special psychological preparation;
- reservists still learn old, Soviet armaments even though Russia itself has already gave them up;
- a majority of students attend military departments of high schools only for fear of being drafted as soldiers;
- a too large number of available reservists leads to corruption in enlistment offices;
- compulsorily drafted officer will hardly serve honestly.

For the last 10 years, more than 50,000 reservist officers have been trained in Georgia. In case of mobilisation, in the newspaper's opinion, each of them will require at least 4 or 5 inferiors with respective ammunition and arms. But Georgia in fact hardly needs and is surely unable to maintain such a large military force. Actually it means that most of the Georgian reserve officers will never enlist the army and even their mobilisation in case of a war remains doubtful. The existing training system for reserve officers was created to fit the needs of 4-million Soviet army. Now it is high time Georgia shifted emphasis from quantity to quality. In other words, the Georgian army should have fewer but better trained reservists, the "7 Dge" concludes.

The "Droni" (No. 49) highlighted the problem of Georgia's share of the former Soviet military property. In 1992, according to the newspaper, the number of the Soviet military objects on the Georgian territory totalled 4,821. Georgia took over 2,760 of them by 1995. The newspaper used the following table to illustrate what Soviet armaments Georgia has inherited.

	Armaments of the Georgia-based Soviet troops (in 1992)	Armaments ceded to Georgia
- aircraft and helicopters	318	1 aircraft/12 helicopters
- warships and boats	133	none
- tanks/armoured personnel carriers	2,620	320
- Submachine/machine guns	152,290	10,265
- howitzers/grenade launchers	2,950	485
- ammunition	4,040 vans	230



It's noteworthy that Russia ceded mostly out-of-date armaments - T-55 tanks (only in 1995 the Georgian army got 30 modern T-72 tanks), BMP-1 combat infantry carriers, the missile launcher "Grad" (Hailstorm) - and withdrew modern ones such as powerful "Uragan" (Tornado) missile launchers and BMP-2 combat infantry carriers. Further still, the Russian armaments were passed into possession of Georgia right prior to the Abkhaz war. For instance, the Georgian army took over the armaments of the 10th Akhaltsikhe Motorifle Division in July 1992 - a month before the war burst out. But no sooner the war began than Russia announced its decision to stop economic and military co-operation with Georgia. It seems that Moscow was interested to encourage Tbilisi to start that "foolish adventure" but did not want Georgia to win, the newspaper argues. In 1996 Russia offered Georgia to purchase \$28 million worth (plus transportation expenses) of armaments: 78 tanks T-72, 64 combat infantry carriers BMP-1, 9,000 tons of ammunition, 500 Kalashnikov submachine guns, 450 machine guns, 12 Mig-23 aircraft, etc. Moscow demanded, however, that the contract could be signed only after the Georgian parliament ratified the Georgian-Russian agreement on military bases. The Georgian government turned down this proposal.