The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

How Rivals Use Canards to Villify Tbilisi

By Paul Rimple

January 22, 2012



Prior to preparing for his visit with U.S. President Barack Obama in Washington on Jan. 30, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili spent much of January cutting ribbons at the opening of new hospitals and clinics that have been popping up across the country like weeds. The construction of these new units was financed by various Georgian insurance companies. For the record, the United States is not spending $5 billion to build new facilities in Georgia in anticipation of war with Iran.

It would be a good story if it were true, but the fact is that Russia Today, David Icke, Alex Jones and thousands of crazy left-wing bloggers have picked up on the canard spread by Elizbar Javelidze, the education minister under Georgia's first post-Soviet president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia.

Since being deposed, Javelidze has become a permanent fixture in Georgia's opposition periphery, known for making wildly ludicrous charges — for example, that Tbilisi Mayor Givi Ugulava intends to overthrow Saakashvili. He appeals to a fringe element of Georgian society that is waiting for the Gamsakhurdia government to be restored even though its leader has

been buried three times in the last 20 years.

The rest of Tbilisi stopped listening to Javelidze years ago and finds it preposterous that any non-comedian would ever quote him. Nevertheless, Russia Today published a story on Jan. 10 based solely on his claims that Saakashvili's dream city, Lazika, is being built to house a U.S. military base, that a submarine port is being constructed at the Kulevi oil terminal and that a secret airport has been built in southern Georgia. Media from around the world pounced on the story despite the total lack of corroborating evidence.

Another marginal opposition figure, Nestan Kirtadze of the Georgian Labor Party, has also taken to fabricating stories at the expense of her country's security. Again, Georgians are so accustomed to the harebrained drivel coming from the Labor Party that most people just rolled their eyes when she stated that Saakashvili is going to Washington to negotiate the construction of U.S. military bases in Georgia. The Kremlin, however, is fully aware that even if it were true, Kirtadze would be the last person to actually know about it. Yet it is the kind of statement the Kremlin exploits to bolster its anti-Georgian and anti-U.S. position.

Between chuckles, we forget such people can be dangerous. While their target is Saakashvili, their words are being used against the interests of the country and threaten a fragile peace in the entire region.

Paul Rimple is a journalist in Tbilisi.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/01/22/how-rivals-use-canards-to-villify-tbilisi-a12034