

Georgian monarchists want power this year

by Mark Burdman

The drive for restoring the monarchy to the former Soviet republic of Georgia is escalating dramatically, with former Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze evidently in the middle of it.

According to the Spanish daily *El País* of Jan. 31, envoys claiming to represent an all-party consensus in Georgia were scheduled to arrive in Spain on Feb. 7, to formalize concrete plans for restoring the Bagratian royal house *during the course of 1992*. Georgy Chanturia, leader of the National Democratic Party and one of the envoys, told the Trilateral Commission-linked Madrid daily: "Our mission is to meet the Bagratians, the Georgian Royal Family, and take the heir back to Tbilisi." Chanturia is being accompanied by Temur Zhorzholiani, head of Georgia's Monarchist Party. Their interest focuses not on the actual pretender, Jorge, but on his 19-year-old son, Irakly. States Chanturia: "His coronation will take place before the end of the year."

The Bagratians were last in power in Georgia nearly two centuries ago, in 1801-02, so the British and their Spanish royal buddies are really reaching into history's garbage can in this power bid!

Since Irakly, who has been a student in the United States, has no knowledge of the Georgian language, nor of the country's traditions, there is talk of forming a "Regency Council" for him, which would be put together by intimates of Irakly, by the Georgian Orthodox Church Patriarch Ilya II, by a representative of the Georgian intelligentsia, and by Chanturia and Zhorzholiani.

In their interview with *El País*, Chanturia and Zhorzholiani say that they will stay in Spain for one week, then will go on to Rome, bringing with them the three young Bagratian princes, to visit Ketovan Bagratian, who is married to Rome's Prince Orsini. They plan to meet Pope John Paul II. However, if for some reason this meeting doesn't come off, they will bring the three princes to Moscow, for meetings there.

A pragmatic alliance

The Georgian delegation to Spain claims to be speaking in the name of all the political forces that have been involved in the past weeks' efforts to overthrow the tyrannical regime of Zviad Gamsakhurdia. According to statements they have made to *El País*, these include the Georgian Military Council, the Provisional Government, and Patriarch of the Georgian

Orthodox Church Ilya II. They are reportedly carrying a letter from the patriarch to King Juan Carlos of Spain.

Chanturia says candidly to the Madrid daily that their support for monarchy is not based on "principle," but on "pragmatism."

According to information obtained by this news service, Chanturia has recently been visiting the British and French embassies in Moscow, to discuss future political options for Georgia. It is a certainty that high-level circles in Britain, in the orbit of the British monarchy and old "Georgia hand" Sir Fitzroy Maclean, are actively backing the monarchical restoration in Georgia. The line coming from Chanturia, as per his "pragmatist" view, is that bringing in the monarchy, perhaps together with Shevardnadze, will help win support and money from the West for Georgia. Similar pragmatism leads him to gush praise for the Spanish constitutional monarchy, and to talk of the similar dispositions of Georgians and Spaniards, during his *El País* interview.

However, it should be stressed that Chanturia and Zhorzholiani do *not* have the support of all opposition forces, according to *EIR's* independent reading of the situation. Elements within the coordinating council of anti-Gamsakhurdia groups either are opposed to bringing back the monarchy or have not stated a position. Also, within the Bagratian royal family itself, there are deep splits emerging, with the sister of the pretender Jorge having recently told the press that he is unfit to rule a country, and that a monarchy could do nothing to solve the main problem facing Georgians, namely, finding food.

Shevardnadze, the 'communist monarch'

Chanturia told *El País* that "it is not to be excluded" that Shevardnadze—labeled by the paper "the former communist monarch of Georgia"—could form part of the Regency Council that would advise the young monarch.

On Feb. 4, Shevardnadze praised Georgia's "democratic revolution," in statements made on Georgian television. According to a Radio Moscow synopsis, he welcomed the downfall of the "dictatorial regime" of Gamsakhurdia.

His comments were made as the ruling Military Council in Georgia announced that it was establishing its control over western Georgia, although there were still demonstrations and protests in the capital Tbilisi. A leader of the Military Council stated that "provocateurs will be shot."

Radio Moscow commentator Leonid Zhukov, reporting on the developments in Georgia on Feb. 6, commented that "the bid to restore the monarchy is gaining momentum," and that in his discussions with "high-ranking officials" in the republic, "most spoke in support of such a state model." In 1989, when the monarchist party was set up, "the idea of a restoration seemed exotic, unrealistic," Zhukov said. "But the monarchy idea won support, with the growing disillusion with the Gamsakhurdia regime. This model is seen as more appropriate to Georgia."