

Newsletter May 2012

Maria Plieva - Blogger and Peace Activist from South Ossetia



Photograph: Bertold Fabricus

Since February 2012, Maria Plieva has been a guest at the Hamburg Foundation for Politically Persecuted People. She still has to get used to feeling a certain sense of security. In her home country South Ossetia, fear was her constant companion.

As soon as she left the house, she would check if someone followed her. Walking along the streets, she would be insulted, her opponents would threaten to rape and beat her to death. Maria Plieva is quite aware that these threats are not empty ones: she remembers the names of many fellow activists who had fatal accidents in suspicious circumstances, or were murdered by unknown assailants.

In her blog www.roks-alana.livejournal.com, the journalist regularly analyzes the political situation in North and South Ossetia. Three years after the war for the region of South

Ossetia, which under international law belongs to Georgia, the situation remains tense, she says. It is very important to her to emphasize the fact that this matter is a conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia and not, as seems to be the general perception of the West, a Russian-Georgian dispute over the territorial sovereignty. Along with Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, Russia is one of the only countries to recognize South Ossetia's independence. The rest of the international community still considers this region a part of Georgia.

None of the conflicting parties involved is interested in a peace process in the region, the 28-year old journalist Maria Plieva claims. For this reason, the Deputy Director of the Georgian-Ossetian Civil Forum in association with Georgian and Ossetian human rights lawyers is advocating a dialogue for peace between the conflicting nations; a dialogue, which is a thorn in the flesh of the Georgian government as well as the South Ossetian regime and its Russian consultants. As a result, Maria Plieva has repeatedly been attacked, imprisoned, and threatened.

During her one-year stay in Hamburg, she would like to learn German, see a Rammstein concert, and write, write, write. At the moment, she savors in being treated respectfully. „Reporters without Borders“ in Berlin nominated Maria Plieva for the Foundation's fellowshipship.

INFORMATION ON SOUTH OSSETIA

Maria Plieva dreams of an independent small state of South Ossetia, as it last existed in the 14th century. She does not doubt the economic viability of her country. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, South Ossetia prospered due to border trade and the export of timber and other resources,

she explains. Only when Georgia and later Russia closed the borders, did the economic stability collapse.

Maria Plieva is not fazed by the fact that the state only has 45,000 residents who inhabit an area equaling one third of Schleswig-Holstein.

EDITORIAL



Ole von Beust

Former First Mayor D. Ole von Beust appointed new Executive Director by the Board of Directors

Dear Friends and Supporters of the Foundation,

On March 13, 2012, I was unanimously appointed Executive Director of the Hamburg Foundation for Politically Persecuted People by the Board of Directors. I am thus succeeding the former First Mayor Dr. Klaus von Dohnanyi, who has held this office for 20 years. I am delighted that the Foundation's founder von Dohnanyi will continue to support our work as Honorary Chairman According to the Foundation's statute, the acting First Mayor, currently Olaf Scholz, occupies the position of Chairman.

*The Foundation's identity will not be altered by the „mayoral troika“. **The Hamburg Foundation for Politically Persecuted People IS and REMAINS** a non-party, non-governmental, and non-profit organisation. It is our concern to offer a safe haven for the politically persecuted, giving them the possibility of raising their voices unharmed.*

Since its establishment, the Foundation has provided refuge for 130 journalists, writers, poets, painters, photographers, lawyers and human rights activists as well as their families. Each year - depending on the donated amount - five to eight guests can be accommodated in Hamburg and thus be protected.

To be able to continue with our work, however, we rely on your support in the future! On our new website you can also donate directly online.

I look forward to the work ahead as well as your input!

Yours sincerely,

Ole von Beust

Malik Bobaev - Radio Journalist from Uzbekistan



Photograph: Deutsche Welle

Malik Bobaev works as a journalist for the radio station „Uzbek Voice of America“. For the first time in 2010, he received a prison sentence as a result of his critical media coverage. The court based its decision on alleged defamation, libel, and breach of public order. Yet, they dropped the possible sentence of five to eight years in prison - following international protests and the personal plea of a US representative - instead imposing a heavy fine on him.

Despite the issued verdict, Malik Bobaev knows that his case is not closed. Further evidence is being collected, among others his articles and talks abroad, as, for example, in Hamburg and Berlin. Bobaev is cer-

tain that a second indictment against him is being prepared – and that the next time around he will be sentenced to a long prison term. As many of his colleagues, he is afraid of having to spend several years in prison. The rule of law in Uzbekistan has proven notoriously deficient. There is no functioning legal system. Political and discretionary sentences are being passed, which are supposed to intimidate journalists and make them practice self-censorship. Foreign correspondents, who critically report about Uzbekistan, are expelled from the country without much ado.

For more than 18 years, Malik Bobaev has written about the violation of human rights, about child labour on the cotton fields, and about corrupt government and court officials. In fact, the 41-year old journalist explains, Uzbekistan is endowed with the best prerequisites to reestablish economically and culturally significant times, when the capital city Tashkent used to be a major and prosperous trading hub along the historical Silk Road. In order to forge a country, in which - after so many years – Uzbeks can live freely and without fear and turn against the corrupt regime of Islam Karimov and his clan – to reach this aim, the radio journalist Malik Bobaev is currently promoting his ideas from Hamburg.

INFORMATION ON UZBEKISTAN

With 28 million people living there, Uzbekistan is the most densely populated Central Asian country. Since its independence, the former Soviet republic is being ruled by the authoritarian government of President Islam Karimov. Time and again, his regime is violating the citizens' human rights. Free media and independent journalists

are being subjected to suppression. An independent civil society does not exist due to political repression. To Germany, Uzbekistan is an important partner in ensuring the supply of Bundeswehr troops stationed in Afghanistan. The supply of the German military operation is run via the Uzbek airbase Termez.

ANNIVERSARY FILM ON YOUTUBE

As of now, you can watch the film of the Hamburg Foundation for Politically Persecuted People „25

Years: Voices for Freedom“ on Youtube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mk0F8AX-68A>

MORE NEWS



Die Hamburger Stiftung für politisch The Hamburg Foundation for Politically Persecuted People is proud to present its new website: www.Hamburger-Stiftung.de including the option to donate online.

We would like to thank our Foundation guest G.M.B.Akash from Bangladesh (2006) for allowing us to use his award-winning photographs for our new online appearance. You will certainly want to see more of his work: Look at his exceptional image galleries at www.gmb-akash.com · www.akash-images.com · <http://gmbakash.wordpress.com/2012/04/19/travel-junction-part-i/>

From now on, you will also find the Foundation's entry in the digital online encyclopedia Wikipedia: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamburger_Stiftung_f%C3%BCr_politisch_Verfolgte

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Ole von Beust

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