



Coyote Meets Trainers

Coyote is a curious little creature and is fond of wandering around Europe to meet trainers in the field. Are you interested in getting a picture on how your colleagues in the field of training think and feel? Then this is your section.

All of you know of course Queen Tamara and her favourite city Trabizond, can draw the map of Sakartvelo by heart and consider Batumi as the place to be for your summer-, sun-, and sea-holidays. And without any doubt, all female singles among the Coyote readers are still waiting for the return of Zviad Cham-sakhurdia on a big white horse.

Not Nana Saginashvili. Sparkling big eyes eager to read the interview even before it was written, she is not waiting for anything at all. Dynamic hands express her energy and readiness to act. She has a hunger as deep as the Black Sea itself: for knowledge, know how and information that she wants to take home to Georgia. Because even if she has an international mind and spirit, she loves the country where she lives and works.

Having studied to become a schoolteacher, she worked from 1995 till 2000 in the State Department of Youth Affairs of Georgia as an advisor of international relations.

Interview



by Leen Laconte

Nana:

But all of a sudden my whole life changed. Everything turned upside down and inside out. I was flabbergasted. What was the cause? Me taking part in an Intercultural English Language Course in 1998 in London. Being outside my country for the first time, meeting people with whom it was so easy to talk to, seeing 'normal' things from a stranger's perspective...but most of all getting know-how and energy to act and change things at home. All of a sudden I felt very confident and powerful and I wanted most of all to pass that feeling on to others.

Coyote:

I can imagine that this is not an easy thing to do when you work in the State Department?

Nana:

Of course not, especially not in Georgia. Working for the government is not exactly very rewarding. You earn only about 20 Euro a month. But that is not even the most annoying aspect. A lot of people in Georgia earn nothing at all. What really bothered me a lot is the image of corruption, lethargy and bureaucracy our government and administration have. Experience and qualifications are not enough to find and keep your place in such a structure. You need a protector. I was sick of it. I wanted to change things and all of a sudden it was clear to me that I, as a person with my qualities and beliefs could do much more outside the government than inside it. So I quit my job.

Coyote:

You quit your job in a country where the unemployment figures are sky high?

Nana:

Exactly. 41,66% of the Georgian population is under 35 and I do not know how many, but the majority has no job...Young people run around in a vacuum facing a sad economic situation.

Young people are faced by many problems and the current political-economic changes affect young people's socio-economic and spiritual well being. What basic things that we need most, are not there. People are forced to live in a day to day existence. It is painful to see so many educated young people leaving the country trying to save their families.

You must understand that there is not what you call a 'middle field' in my country. Most of our young people have no idea about what the place of young people in society can be, what rights they have or what can be done about the lack of rights. Young people should learn about human rights, it would prepare them for the future. NGOs, private organisations and governments have to pay more attention to the participation of young people in social life. They must create elementary conditions for the development of future generations.

Coyote:

I am sure a lot of politicians will agree with what you say. But it is not a matter of words is it?

Nana:

Exactly. I appreciate the recommendations on teaching and learning about human rights in schools, adopted by so many governments, but in Georgia things should be DONE. That is why I left my job and established an organisation called "International Union ERTOBA". ERTOBA means "cohesion", to be together. It is a nongovernmental, non-profit, non-political organisation. Our aims and objectives are to develop relations with governmental, non-governmental and international organisations. But most importantly, we want to implement concrete projects: to support the organisation of tourism, to run cultural activities, to develop peace initiatives, to work in the ecological and social fields like health, fighting drugs and alcoholism and so on. We organise quite a lot of training activities, i.e. on minority issues, drug abuse, young people's rights, and conflict management... We also organised a Georgian language course for foreigners. Next to all that we have our charity actions in co-operation with children's hospitals. We also offer free medical services for children and send young people to summer camps abroad.

Coyote:

I kind of think that our readers need to be introduced a bit more to Georgia and the Black Sea to be able to really grasp what you are doing. Can you tell us something on their role in history and what they mean in contemporary society, globally and locally?



Nana Saginashvili



Nana:

Georgia is located in the Southern Caucasus. It covers an area of 67.9 thousand square kilometres. The capital is Tbilisi. Georgia is a country with cultural traces that go back to 1000 years BC. The Georgian language is not similar to any other language. It has a peculiar vocabulary, syntax, phonetics and alphabet, which originated in antiquity. In the thirties or forties of the fourth century AD, Christianity was declared an official religion. Currently, several religious groups are represented in Georgia: Christianity, Islam, Judaism and others.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Georgia was declared a colony by Russia. In 1918, Georgia declared itself independent but in 1921 it was invaded by the Red Army of Russia. Georgia restored its independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990. Georgia became a member of the United Nations in 1992 and a member of the Council of Europe in 1999.

The Black Sea plays an important role in the development of the economy and culture of the country. One of the main tendencies in its economic co-operation is the development of a common transport network joining all our countries. There is a very attractive project to build a ring road around the Black Sea. But the major large-scale transport project, the pipeline construction and the establishment of power and communication systems cannot be implemented if tension is rising in our region, which can have an awful effect on regional co-operation.

Therefore, the importance of the Caucasus as a geographical and state-political area is currently growing. The Caucasus is the world's crossroad of Asia and Europe, East and West, North and South. During the last years, the amount of global programmes, such as Euro-Asian projects, East-East-projects, Traseca, the pipeline, or the Great Silk Road-project, have been growing.

Caucasus as a region and Georgia as a country hold key positions. Modern international programmes and projects are good for the strategic development of the region but that young people benefit from this is extremely important. That is why it is necessary to start to build a society where young people have their space, place and opportunities to act, to organise and to work.

Coyote:

I see there is a lot of work on the grassroots level, still you also organise international training activities, and quite a lot of them. How come?

Nana:

The main work is on a day-to-day basis with as many Georgian young people as possible. It is not really a political or a principle choice. It is just like that ... when we announce our local or regional training activities we invite young Georgian participants. Young people in Georgia are so glad that at last something is happening. They want to meet, to discuss, they are so eager. They talk with each other about our society, our politics, our problems and challenges. They are very active. When they go back home they start to organise their own local meetings and projects. It is amazing how successful we are in initiating and supporting new youth projects throughout the country... with our basic-training activities.

But I also know that Georgian young people do not have a lot of opportunities, practically none, to leave the country and to meet other young people from other countries. Since I have experienced how inspiring this can be, I decided to organise international training events in Georgia. In that way Georgian young people have the advantage of the training and of the intercultural confrontation.

Coyote:

What exactly are the subjects you are dealing with in your training activities?

Nana:

Intercultural learning; we play games, young people love them. They

even invent new ones on the spot. They like to discuss about corruption and how we can fight it as young people in our local communities. Rights of young people are another favourite subject. Young people in Georgia like to be among young people. They enjoy this new possibility to talk amongst themselves without the interference of adults or politicians... I can tell you, It is far easier to discuss corruption if the debate is not led by those considered to be corrupt.

Coyote:

You are one of the few people I have met who seem to have a very clear and explicit mission in life. Can you tell us a bit, what this mission is all about?

Nana:

"Love your life, make it more perfect, beautify all things in your life. Seek to make your life long, and put its purpose in the service of your people". It is a saying by Tecumseh. He was an American Indian Chief.

I think mankind came to earth as truth, just as all other parts of nature did. Yet there are those who corrupt this truth and call it a lie. I call that the "Big Lie". I speak out, in the hope of awakening others so that the old mind-set of corruption can be changed into honesty and fairness. I try to give that kind of honest energy with the intent of helping to open the eyes of others. There are those of us who know these things, either because we are involved or have experience, or because we just "know" that something is terribly wrong when certain people on this planet treat others in ways that are opposed to the meaning of love and self-respect and all the rest of creation. I am against all kinds of violence. I don't understand the language of the weapon. The world is faced with a cruel reality. We have no right to speak in the name of peace if we use guns. Violence cannot be eradicated by violence. Only dialogue will establish the future society on the basis of peace, democracy, solidarity and tolerance. I as a trainer am responsible for that.

Coyote:

What would you do with one million Euro?

Nana:

I would create a land of peace. Peace comes within the souls of men and we need to take time to enjoy living and life and each other. "The price of hating another human being is loving oneself less". I honour the place of love, of truth, of light and of peace. Please, take a moment, even if it is only ten seconds, and stop and smell the roses.

Coyote:

One story before we go to sleep?

Nana:

I remember one very small story. It is called "The never ending story". A little boy is given a final wish to save the world from destruction. He wishes that the one person who has the ultimate power "had a heart".

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This interview was conducted by Leen Laconte.

