

Russian Woman Accuses Georgia's Ex-Prime Minister of Bigamy, Fraud

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Bidzina Ivanishvili

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Georgia just had a telenovela moment when a vengeful ex comes out of the woodwork. A certain Inga Pavlova, a Russian citizen who claims to be the former wife of Georgia's perceived shadow-ruler, billionaire former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, has emerged from the shadows to accuse Ivanishvili of bigamy and financial funny business.

In a video posted this weekend on YouTube, the little-known Pavlova announced that she intends to sue Ivanishvili, who continues to tower over Georgian politics, for supposedly using her name without her knowledge to set up companies and for divorcing her without compensation.

But Pavlova did not just air her personal grievances. She also questioned Ivanishvili's political record and praised his arch-foe, former President Mikheil Saakashvili, who is wanted in Georgia on several criminal charges and continues to shake his fist at Ivanishvili from self-

imposed exile.

Whether Pavlova, thought to be a resident of Moscow, could be serving as a chess piece in these political titans' battle is anyone's guess.

Ivanishvili has neither confirmed nor denied that he was married before, though he had a thin-skinned reaction to one question in 2013 about his past, asserting that he has done nothing wrong.

Pavlova has her own take on that. Reading from an apparent script, she said she married Ivanishvili in 1991 in Paris and divorced him three years later.

She claimed that she has not heard from Ivanishvili since, and only came across a 2012 ad for his Georgian Dream coalition by chance.

But what really caught her eye, she alleged, was a mention in the ad by Ivanishvili's wife, Ekaterine Khvedelidze, that the two had married in Paris on Oct. 18, 1991. That date was roughly a month before Ivanishvili and Pavlova had married, she claimed.

"This means that in 1991 Bidzina Ivanishvili married two women at the same time," she charged.

Moreover, she alleges that papers she obtained show that Ivanishvili registered some of his Russian companies in her name, and owes her compensation for fraudulently using her name for business transactions.

But questions also persist about Pavlova — namely, why she has waited 20 years to seek compensation for her divorce, and precisely now to demand payment for the alleged misuse of her name in Ivanishvili's company registrations.

Ivanishvili has not yet responded to the allegations. Mainstream media in Georgia have avoided the topic, although some pro-opposition outlets have run with the ball.

Their motivation is clear. Pavlova terms "credulous" those who brought Ivanishvili's Georgian Dream to power in 2012. Saakashvili, she is convinced, had "successfully led Georgia toward democracy for 10 years." (Actually, he took office in 2004.)

Repeating the ongoing criticism over Ivanishvili's alleged gray-cardinal role in Georgian politics, Pavlova claimed that her ex, "as a genial businessman," has "thought up a new form of state administration, which has not existed before in the history of humankind."

"See, I had a genius of an ex-husband," she continued, woodenly. "He made \$5 billion in Russia through some obscure, magical ways. He divorced me without paying me anything, came to power in Georgia and controls the government from his house."

Many Georgians still stroke their chins suspiciously over Ivanishvili's motives for entering politics and then, at least formally, quitting politics. His shadowy road to riches in Russia also raises a few eyebrows.

A Georgian investigative piece that focused on his marital past appeared in 2013, but few

ordinary Georgians doubt his image as a doting family man.

Why Pavlova would suddenly emerge to do so now is open to speculation.

Georgia, though, has grown accustomed to sudden grand appearances and disappearances — Ivanishvili himself, for instance, before bringing down Saakashvili, and, then, leaving his supporters in charge and walking back into his glass palace.

No doubt, more such drama is to come.

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