

South Ossetia Claims Independence After Russian Withdrawal

By CAREY AVERBOOK AND APRIL PULLIUM

Several months after intense fighting broke out between Russia and Georgia, Russia has finally completed the process of withdrawing troops from Georgia.

Russian troops had remained in Georgia since the conflict between the two countries escalated to brief warfare in August. As of October 8, the Russian troops are only present in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, two regions that recently declared their independence from Georgia.

In the 1920s, South Ossetia was formed in Georgia while North Ossetia became a part of Russia. In 1989, violence flared between Georgians and Ossetians. A year later, violence surrounded South Ossetia's declaration of its intent to secede from Georgia and become independent.

Since this time, the Georgian government has remained strongly independent from Russia while the provincial government of South Ossetia, which many people still consider a part of Georgia, has maintained close relations with Russia.

This past summer,

this history and more modern conflicts led to a climax of violence and tension to arise.

Fighting between Georgia and Russia began in August when Georgia sent troops to the separatist region of South Ossetia in an attempt to maintain control over the region.

Russia then proceeded to invade South Ossetia in response; almost 70,000 people in South Ossetia

have Russian passports. However, Russia's strong support of the region's separatist movement was also directly stated as additional motivation.

The most intense violence lasted only a week; however, it took several months for Russia to fulfill their obligations under a cease-fire agreement signed with Georgia.

The terms of the cease fire were negotiated by French president Nicolas Sarkozy with the support of the European Union.

Many Western countries, including the United States, supported Georgia's claims of sovereignty over the disputed territory.

Though the US avoided military involvement, President Bush and Condoleezza Rice cautioned Russian authorities, saying that Russia should not attempt to undermine the sovereignty of Georgia's government.

Despite the U.S. government's admonishment, Russian president Dmitri A. Medvedev formally recognized the independence of both South Ossetia and Abkhazia, another separatist region.

Medvedev has claimed that Russia's actions are, "the only way to save the lives of the people," but has also stated that Russian support of the separatist movements is an act of retaliation against the West for the earlier Russia-opposed separation of Kosovo from Serbia.



Picture from: http://alex.pp.ru/log/South_Ossetia_recognition_2.jpg

Young South Ossetian men celebrate Russia's recognition and military confirmation of their independence.

Study Guide on At-A-Glance Proves Helpful

By WILLIAM CONDON

Did you know that there's "A SIMPLE GUIDE TO BEING A SUCCESSFUL STUDENT AT NCSSM"?

Don't worry; you're not alone. Two-thirds of students asked in a recent survey didn't know it, either. "It would be a nice idea," said senior Justin Huang.

Surprise! It's there - right down at the bottom of At-A-Glance. This curious document promises to "Improve your grades" and "build your confidence" so that learning can be "a successful experience rather than a stressful chore [!]"

The author of this purportedly wonderful guide prefers to remain anonymous - I needed to dig into the source code to find that Dr. Warshaw was the original author, and that Dr. Alston had last revised it. It was only when I happened by Dr. Morrison's website that I found he'd actually written the last section, on math.

When I first read this article (I was being a good, conscientious rising junior), I thought it was overkill. It says to look over the textbook before reading, outline as you read, review and reorganize your notes after every class session, do extra problems besides those the teacher assigned, and schedule your whole week in advance.

As I proceeded through first trimester, doing well without doing any of these things, I persisted in that opinion.

However, when classes got tough, I ended up following the study guide without realizing it! As I look back over this guide, I realize how other sources have repeated what it says.

"Do practice problems!" said senior Kavya Seker when asked for advice.

"Most students, when they get a test back, just forget about it," and so they fail, said the late Dr. Houpe.

Adler and Van Dooren's How To Read a Book goes over much of what the Study Guide says: skim beforehand for major points, outline as you read, and go back over afterward. This "will increase your understanding and retention of the material," says the Study Guide.

In short, everyone should look at the Study Guide. They might not need it now - but it'll prove valuable advice when the going gets tough.

MSA Hosts Fast-a-Thon During Ramadan

By AVANI UPPALAPATI

Students participating in Fast-A-Thon broke fast together at sunset on September 23rd in the Student Center. The Muslim Student Association (MSA) hosted the event to promote Muslim awareness.

MSA is designed to bring Muslims on campus together and educate the public about Islam by hosting publicized events that all students may participate in. The club hosted Fast-A-Thon during Ramadan to help students understand what millions in poverty go through every day. After taking part in the event, Alex Williams, a senior, said "I feel culturally literate."

After a whole day of fasting, those involved came together at 7:11 p.m. to break the fast with Middle Eastern cuisines provided by members of MSA, the Pasta Appreciation Club, and catering from Baba Ganoush and International Delights.

Before breaking the fast, Ali Aslam, a graduate student at Duke University, informed students on the importance of fasting and other practices during Ramadan. Fasting is the fifth pillar of Islam, and it gives Muslims an opportunity to renew relations with God, the Qur'an, family, and friends. Junior Danbi Yi explained "Seventy-five percent of the reason I did this [fasted] was that I wanted to pray, and twenty-five percent was to understand what it means to have no food."

Muslims prepare for each day of Ramadan by waking before dawn, praying, and eating an early breakfast. During daylight hours, one may rinse the mouth with water, but may not swallow. At the end of the day, Muslims break the fast together and perform maghrim, the prayer after sunset.

Undergoing this ordeal for a month compels individuals to think about how fortunate they are. Ali Aslam informed us that "We [those who fast] experience ... togetherness that is comforting ... and also electrifying." Yi concurs by saying "The Fast-A-Thon is nice experience to share with the people" and is also glad that she had this intimate connection with God. During Ramadan, followers of Islam should be generous and conscious of their actions. Aslam explained that during this month of fasting, "Everyone is trying to be the best person we can be."

Many students appeared famished and were relieved to partake of the various rice and chicken dishes along with lentils, pasta, pita bread and baklava. Students had various motivations and sentiments regarding their involvement in the event. Williams also said, "It [fasting] is respectable, but I don't think it's necessarily that crucial." He believes simply observing other cultures is enough if one seeks to understand the opportunities that one has.

MSA hopes to host more such events throughout the year. It may collaborate with other religious clubs on campus to host discussions or debates in order to promote religious awareness and tolerance.