

INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF THE INTERVIEW

On March 7, 1992, Eduard Shevardnadze, the former Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, arrived in Georgia. His arrival followed an armed coup d'état that had overthrown the government of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the previously elected president. Shevardnadze took control of the government from the leaders of the coup and gradually began consolidating power.

Shevardnadze's presence in the country was soon followed by international recognition for Georgia. Over time, despite being engulfed in civil strife and war, the situation in the country stabilized. State institutions were developed step by step, and on August 24, 1995, the first Georgian constitution after the collapse of the Soviet Union was adopted.

Despite this relative stability, the state faced severe economic instability exacerbated by an energy crisis and widespread corruption. During this period, discontent with Shevardnadze's government grew. Youth protest movements appeared, with university students taking an active role. Their primary target was corruption within universities.

In 2001, students at Tbilisi State University established the youth political movement "Kmara." The emergence of such movements encouraged student protests to extend beyond university campuses, taking on a broader anti-government character.

A turning point that sparked widespread public protests, eventually culminating in the Rose Revolution, was the November 2, 2003, parliamentary elections. The government's mass falsification of these elections triggered protests in the capital and other regions. Ultimately, on November 23, 2003, President Shevardnadze resigned and new elections were called.



Kmara anti-government poster



Kmara activists of "Kmara", 2003

STUDENT MOVEMENTS AND THE ROSE REVOLUTION: THE STORY OF GIORGI MELADZE

Giorgi Meladze is an associate professor of law at Ilia State University. Since the late 1990s, starting from the age of 19-20, he has been actively involved in student protest movements. This included being a member of Kmara, which significantly contributed to mobilizing young people during the Rose Revolution.

Meladze shares his perspective on the Rose Revolution as well as what happened after the peaceful regime change on November 23, 2003. He discusses the processes that preceded the revolution, the prevailing sentiments within society, and the willingness to bring about change that facilitated both resistance and inevitable transformation. Giorgi emphasizes that, despite this readiness for change, the Rose Revolution exhibited a spontaneous character.

To thoroughly understand the Rose Revolution and its aftermath, it is crucial to consider events from various perspectives. In this regard, Giorgi Meladze's account is valuable as it highlights the role of a young civil activist and the risks faced by participants in mass protests.

The narrator notes that the government resulting from the revolution initiated various reforms. While he acknowledges that the changes created an environment that allowed him to grow as an activist, he believes this may have been a unique privilege for him personally.

In the second part of the interview, Meladze discusses both the successful and unsuccessful reforms implemented by the new government, including police reform.

As with all oral histories, this narrative reflects the subjective experience and memories of the narrator. The information gathered in the interview is not necessarily generalizable to all activists who were in a similar position.

TIMELINE AND TERMS

- **March 7, 1992:** Eduard Shevardnadze returned to Georgia.
- **August 24, 1995:** The first post-independence constitution is adopted.
- **2001:** The formation of the student movement Kmara.
- **September 17, 2003:** Special forces raid the homes of Kmara activists several times.
- **November 2, 2003:** Parliamentary elections are held; the results are not recognized by opposition parties.
- **November 14, 2003:** Protesters surround parliament and the Chancellery with a living chain, demanding the resignation of President Shevardnadze.
- **November 22, 2003:** The first session of the newly elected parliament is disrupted by mass protests.

— **November 23, 2003:** President Shevardnadze announces his resignation.

— **March 28, 2004:** Parliamentary re-elections are held.

ASSIGNMENT: DISCUSSION AND ROLE-PLAY **(25 MINUTES) (IX-XI CLASSES)**

Objective: To help students understand the events of the “Rose Revolution” from different perspectives, encourage critical thinking, and develop teamwork skills through role play.

Necessary Materials:

1. Interview (oral history) with Giorgi Meladze
Timecodes:
 1. **1:16–4:44** (Goals and Expectations)
 2. **4:45–8:02** (The Motivations of a Civil Activist)
 3. **8:32–11:51** (Citizens' Expectations Before the Revolution and the Post-Revolution Reality).
2. Flipchart (for writing down the main points)
3. Papers and writing materials
4. Role-play instructions

Preparation:

1. Introduction and Context Setting (5 minutes)

- Provide a brief introduction and description of the Rose Revolution and its significance to Georgia’s recent history.
- Contextualize the interview by analyzing the motives and experiences of the civil activist, highlighting that this is a personal, subjective story.

2. Divide into Groups and Distribute Roles (5 minutes)

- Divide students into groups of 4–5 members.
- Assign each group a different role related to the Rose Revolution:
 - Group 1:** Civil activists (protest participants)
 - Group 2:** Government representatives
 - Group 3:** Ordinary citizens
 - Group 4:** International observers (foreign journalists, diplomats)

3. Prepare for Discussion (10 minutes)

- Provide orientation questions for each group:
 - For Civil Activists: Why did you participate in the Rose Revolution? What future expectations did you have?
 - For Government Officials: How did you perceive the protests? How did you plan to maintain order?

- For Ordinary Citizens: How did the protests affect your daily life? Did you hope for change?
- For International Observers: What was your position regarding the events in Georgia? What international significance could the peaceful revolution in Georgia have?
- Ask students to note the main arguments and interesting points to use during the role play.

4. Prepare the Role-Play

- Each group should prepare a short role-play plan from their perspective (2–3 minutes) to represent their position or action during the events of the Rose Revolution. They can choose from:
 - A public assembly/protest
 - A meeting between government officials discussing how to respond to the protests
 - An everyday conversation between ordinary citizens expressing their hopes, fears, and anxieties

5. Present the Role-Play Performance

- Each group has 2–3 minutes to present their position to the class through their role-play.

6. Summary Discussion (2–3 minutes)

- After all groups have presented, summarize the task with a short class discussion. Reflection questions may include:
 - Do all parties perceive large protest movements in the same way? What common and distinguishing features did you observe in the positions of the different groups?
 - How did the role play help you understand the complex events of the Rose Revolution?
 - Did you learn something new and interesting from this assignment?

ALTERNATIVE ASSIGNMENT: UNDERSTANDING THE ROSE REVOLUTION THROUGH ROLE-PLAY (40 MINUTES TOTAL) (IX-XI CLASSES)

Objective: To explore the events of the Rose Revolution from multiple perspectives, enhancing critical thinking and developing collaboration skills through role play.

Materials Needed:

1. Excerpts from the interview with Giorgi Meladze
2. Flipchart for notes
3. Papers and writing tools
4. Role-play instructions

Assignment Steps:

1. Introduction and Context Setting (5 minutes)

- Begin with a brief, engaging introduction to the Rose Revolution, emphasizing its impact on Georgian society.
- Introduce the civil activist Giorgi Meladze and highlight why his personal story is valuable for understanding these events.

Timecodes:

1. **1:16–4:44** (Goals and Expectations)
2. **4:45–8:02** (The motivations of a Civil Activist)
3. **8:32–11:51** (Citizens' Expectations Before the Revolution and the Post-Revolution Reality).

2. Watch Interview Excerpts (10 minutes)

- Play the selected excerpts from Giorgi Meladze's interview that capture his experiences and insights.
- Ask students to note down key words, emotions, or events that resonate with them.

3. Group Formation and Role Assignment (5 minutes)

- Divide students into three groups:
 - Group 1:** Civil activists (protest participants)
 - Group 2:** Government representatives
 - Group 3:** Ordinary citizens
- Clearly outline each group's perspective relating to Giorgi's experiences.

4. Group Discussion and Role-play Preparation (10 minutes)

- Provide each group with tailored discussion prompts:
 - **Civil Activists:** Highlight what motivated Giorgi and others to protest. What were they hoping to change?
 - **Government Representatives:** Consider how the government might have reacted to the protests. What challenges were they concerned with?
 - **Ordinary Citizens:** Discuss how the protests might have affected daily life, as described by Giorgi. What were the public's hopes or worries?
- Instruct them to create a short (2–3 minute) role-play script, incorporating insights from the video.

5. Role-play Presentations (9 minutes; 3 minutes per group)

- Each group acts out their scenario, utilizing direct references and emotions highlighted in Giorgi's narrative.
- Encourage creativity and emphasize emotional aspects to enhance understanding.

6. Reflection and Summary Discussion (6 minutes)

- Lead a class discussion with questions like:
 - What were some of the different perspectives you noticed?
 - How did Giorgi's personal story enrich your understanding of these events?
 - What new insights do you have about the complexities of such a historical moment?