

Abkhazians - Who are they?

(An Express-Sketch)

Y.N. Voronov

Abkhazia, Apsny – this is a mini-republic on the Black Sea coast of the Caucasus. Its native inhabitants are the Abkhazians – Apsua, representing, although not a numerous but yet a very ancient, active, mountain nation whose history is a mystery in many ways. Who are they? Where did they come from? Whom do they resemble most? What role did they play and are called upon to play today in the world community of people? Science is now already giving fully synonymous and sufficiently instructive answers to these and to many other questions.

Abkhazian – a Lingorelic of the West Caucasia

The problems of the origin of the Abkhazians and their place in the system of the nations of the world over two centuries draw the attention of investigators – travellers, ethnographers, historians, linguists, archaeologists, anthropologists and representatives of other humanitarian disciplines. Written pieces of information, from which historians draw their conclusions, are scanty, and the times they embrace do not go beyond the 2000-years boundary from our days on. Archaeology has a firm basis in ethnogenetic questions only when there are suitable written sources. Ethnography and anthropology have still narrower possibilities. And here the language plays its decisive role, in whose structure and vocabulary ancient pages of the history of the Abkhazian nation are preserved, the most important information about its sources, the environment of the primary life of its people, ties and contacts with other nations, and other interesting information.

Fame about the many languages of the Caucasian Mountains has long since spread throughout the world. The ancient Greek geographer Timosfen in his days determined the number of nations gathered in Dioscuriada (today Sukhum, the capital of the Republic of Abkhazia) to be 300, while the Roman historian Pliny Sekund left evidence according to which Romans conducted their affairs in this city with the aid of 130 translators. Masud an Arab author of the 9th century, wrote: “ Only Allah will be able to count the different nations living in the mountains of Caucasia. The mountains of Caucasia are mountains of languages.” There are few places in the world able to compete with the Caucasus in the number of languages; and, as a rule, these are usually mountain regions- the Himalaya and Hindu-Kush in Asia, the Andes and Cordillera in America. It is beyond question that the contact of multilingual people with the mountainous conditions that maintain many relics of the living world, is quickly obliterated in any conditions of flat lands.

The Abkhazian language, together with other closely related languages (Abazin, Ubykh, Adygei and Kabardin) form the West-Caucasian (Abkhaz-Adygei) language group, today numbering over 700 000 people and connected with each other according to the following diagram:

parent – Abkhaz-Adygei language

Ubykh

Abazin

Abkhazian

Adygei

Kabardin

West-Caucasian languages are characterised by their distinctive structure, and their phonetics system reveals great divergence. Combined vowels predominate, while there are very few independent vowels – there are 2 in the Abkhazian language, 2 with stress in the Abazin and 1 in the unstressed syllable, and 3 in the Ubykh. The number of consonants varies much more: in the Ubykh language there are 82 consonants, in the Bzyb dialect of the Abkhazian language – 67, in the Adygei – 55, in the Kabardin – 48. P.K. Usler – the founder of the first Abkhazian alphabet – wrote the following about the complications of pronunciation of Abkhazian words: “Not only Europeans but even a native of Caucasia considers Abkhazian pronunciation the most difficult and least accessible for the non-Abkhazian. This language makes a strange impression on the one who hears it for the first time. You can say about the Abkhazian language that it reminds you of the buzzing of insects”. Up till recent times West-Caucasian languages also preserved a special fund of lexicographic elements that functioned in the hunting environment (the “forest language” of the Abkhazians, the “hunting” language in the Adygeis). Linguists succeeded in revealing over 250 of them, inherited from the parent language state of stems and affixes that were from time immemorial common for these languages and including appellations of cosmic phenomena, terms of relationship the name of parts of the body, a number of animals and plants, personal pronouns, numbers and several verb.

Linguists consider the time of the existence of the Abkhaz-Adygei parent-language to be the 3rd century B.C., i.e., its break-up into three main branches (Abkhazian-Ubykh-Adygei) began approximately 4000 years ago. The well-known Russian linguist N.S. Trubetsky formed an hypothesis over half a century ago according to which the West-Caucasian languages in their origin were related to the East-Caucasian languages (Chechen, Ingush, Batsbi, Avar, Lezgin, Dargin, Tabassari, etc.), forming with them a single “North-Caucasian” language family. As it is becoming ever more obvious, representatives of this family occupied a much wider territory in ancient times than today. On the one hand, the hypothesis on the relationship of the Abkhaz-Adygei languages with the Khat, whose bearers lived 4-5 thousand years ago in Asia Minor, has received wide acknowledgement in modern science. On the other hand, proof has been established about the common roots of the proximity of the modern Nakh-Dagestan languages to the extinct languages of the Khurr and the Urart, living 5-3 thousand years ago on the territories of the present Armenian uplands and contiguous regions of East Transcaucasia and Near East. Therefore, the North Caucasian languages today represent a special relic of the one time extensive language community that existed, according to specialists, about 7 centuries ago, enveloping the whole Caucasus and wide regions southwards. In the thirties-sixties of the 20th century an hypothesis was energetically propagated in Soviet science according to which the Abkhaz-Adygei, Chechen-Ingush and Dagestan languages were related to the Kartvel (Georgian) and form a single “Iberi-Caucasian family” of languages with them; however, this hypothesis has been acknowledged as scientifically groundless today.

The people speaking in the parent-Abkhaz-Adygei language, were occupied, as the data of linguists affirms, with agriculture, animal husbandry, the production of various handicrafts and the processing of metal. In favour of the idea that the bearers of the parent-language lived approximately in the same natural conditions in which the present Abkhaz-Adygeis live and shaped within the West-Caucasian region is proved by their common lexicon (“sea”, “coast”, “fish”, “mountain (wooded)”, “ice”, “hoarfrost”, “cold”, “frost”, “forest (leaf-bearing)”, “forest (coniferous)”, “silver fox”, “fir”, “beech”, “cornel”, “chestnut”, “wolf”, “bear”, etc.). Toponymical data given by N.Y. Marr, I.A. Javakhishvili, S.N. Janashia, S.D. Inal-ipa, etc., were used for confirmation of this idea.

At the same time, successes in lingual reconstruction lately has allowed us to glance even more deeply into the history of the Abkhaz-Adygeis. Today the fact of the distant relationship (in pronunciation) has been established (S.A. Starostin and others) between the North-Caucasian, Sino-Tibetan (Chinese, Tibet, East-Himalayan, etc.) and the Enisei (Kat, etc.) languages, on whose basis the Sino-Caucasian macrofamily was reconstructed, including the majority of the non-stratum languages of the Old World, bringing out the depths of relationship with the Indian (Californian, etc.) languages of the sub-American continent. At the same time, language ties have been discovered (through West-Chad

languages) between the Nakh-Dagestan languages and the Afro-Eurasian macrofamily that brings up to the epoch of racial formations and the moment of the origin of Homo Sapiens, with the African ancestral-homeland in the Middle East (about 30 centuries ago), from where their settlement in Europe, in the Caucasus and in East Asia began.

In absolute figures, the division of the North-Caucasian languages according to the suppositions of linguists, took place somewhere in the 4th century B.C. From that time on the Abkhaz-Adygeis could confidently be localised in the East Black Sea area. The disintegration of the Sino-Caucasian macrofamily, whose cradle was located to the south of Caucasia, is dated from one single hypothetical parent – language, out of which all the presently known live and dead languages had sprung, is considered beyond the boundaries of the 13th-14th centuries B.C., i.e., to the higher paleolithic times. In that epoch, as anthropological material proves, discovered in Kholodny Grot (Central Abkhazia), the local population was still characterised by mark Negroid features. The constant infiltration of Indo-Europeans from the south and north during the following centuries changed in a relevant manner of anthropological image of the local population; however, the languages maintained their amazing archaic and original pure structure and sound, presenting a boundless source of information on the ancient history of the nations of the Caucasus.

Ecological Recesses in the Ethnogenesis of the Abkhazians

Since man and all his creations are part of the biosphere and landscape of our Mother Earth an account of appropriate natural peculiarities (reliefs), hydrography, etc. could be of great help in the decision of complex questions on the lineage of nations. In the given case, it is necessary to turn the attention of the reader to the conserving and differentiating role of the West-Caucasian ravines and mountain passes in the history of the Abkhaz-Adygeis.

In discussing the question of the lineage of the Abkhazians, investigators have named two directions that the ancestors of this nation took to their present place of abode: from the North Caucasia, where the Abazins, Adygeis and Kabardins, akin to the Abkhazians, live today, and from the south, from Asia Minor, by way of Colchis. It is known that language disintegrations are realised through the intermingling of parts of the bearers of a parent-language into the other, geographically isolated regions – ecological recesses (mountains, rivers, etc.). The structure (besides later subdivisions of the Abazins) of the West-Caucasian language community is 3-dimensional. That is why it surmises no less than three stages of emigration, connected with full or partial departure from the recesses – parent-homeland that had existed in the 3rd century B.C. Let us glance briefly into the more possible variants of such emigrations, taking the geographical peculiarities of West Caucasia into account.

In conformance with the first variant, the cradle of the Abkhaz-Adygeis should have been localised on the northern slopes of West Caucasia, in the Transkuban recess (G.A. Melikishvili, M.D. Lordkipanidze, etc.), from where in the span up to the 1st century A.D. (and in the opinion of such enthusiastic authors as P. Ingorokva, also after 16th century A.D.) part of the population there intermingled with that of the Black Sea coast area, filling three ecological recesses – the north-west Bzyb mountain range (Zikhs, later Ubykhs) between the Gagra and Aj-Amgra ranges (Abazgs, later bearers of the Bzyb dialect of the Abkhazian language), and the south-eastern of the last range up to the river Ingur (Apsils and Misimians, later bearers of the Tsebeldian and the Abjui dialects of the Abkhazian language). Not having any other real proof, some investigators strive to find confirmation of this hypothesis in archaeological materials that would prove penetration of elements of the Maikop and dolmen cultures in the 3rd – first half of the 2nd centuries B.C. on the territory of the present Great Sochi and north-western Abkhazia (up to the Kodori), of bearers who hypothetically made room for and assimilated ancient population (the conjectural parent-Kartvel) of the region. However, seeing as from the second half of the 2nd century B.C. the southern cultural sources predominated absolutely in West Caucasia, then the hypothesis about the migration of the forebears of the Abkhazians from the north at the turn of our era and, the more so, in the 17th century, is deprived of any kind of archaeological grounds.

The result of the second, southern variant, is that the parent-homeland of the Abkhaz-Adygeis was the Colchis

ecological recess and the north-eastern regions of Asia Minor adjoining it, where already at the turn of the 2nd – 1st centuries B.C. supposedly related Adygei-Apsils Kashki-Abeshls lived (O.M: Japaridze, G.A: Melikishvili, V.G. Ardzinba, etc.). In this case it is necessary to allow for the intermingling (along the coastline through the east Black Sea area corridor and through the passes) of direct language forebears of the Adygeis during the 2nd-early 1st century B.C. on the northern slopes of West-Caucasia. The ancestors of the Zikhs-Ubykhs then occupied the recess between the Gagra range and Tuapse, connecting the neighbouring territories with quite difficult seasonal paths. The parent-Abkhazian tribes as the initial part of the community, continued to live in Colchis, where they were found by authors of ancient times, as Apsils, Abazgs and Sanigs. The wide cultural “expansion” from Colchis along the Black Sea coast (up to the modern Gelenjik to East Transcaucasia and to the northern slopes of the Central and West Caucasus reached its apogee in the 9th-7th centuries B.C. (“Colchis-Koban metallurgical province”). The last important migrations on review were already made through the written sources of a 2000-anniversary range of some of the Adygeis migrating to the east (Kabardins) and some of the Abkhazians to North Caucasus (Abazins), while a return migration on serious scale was not observed. On the other hand, what was quite indicative was the migration of the names: the name of Abkhazians – “Abaza” removed from the territory of the present Gudauta region (historical Abazgia) onto an extensive region of North-West Caucasus, while the ancient name of Ubykhs (“Zikhs”) in the developed and late Middle Ages detoned also the Adygei population of the Kuban area.

The basic conclusion of the primary biologically conditioned direction of ethnic migrations to West Caucasus from the south-east to the north-west is stressed by the process of historical differentiations of the Kartvel (Georgian) language groups, which is also 3-dimensional. The Kartvel languages belong, together with Indo-European, as well as the Ural, Altai and other Eurasian languages in the stratum macrofamily, whose disintegration began approximately 12-13 centuries ago. In its turn, the disintegration of the parent-Kartvel language community, existing from the 3rd century B.C., began (according to Morris Svodesh) about the 19th century B.C. through the division of the Kartvel-Zan parent language. In spite of this linguists surmise that the Svan language, longer than other Kartvel languages, remained on a level of basic language. A new segmentation from approximately the 8th century B.C. brought about the divisions of the youngest language in this system, the Zan (Megrelo-Chan). The historical differentiation of the Kartvel languages can be expressed in the following diagram:

parent-Kartvel language

**Svan Kartvel Zan Megrel
 (Chan)**

As in the case of the Abkhaz-Adygeis, investigators reconstructed two variants of migration, which brought about the disintegration of the parent-Kartvel community. The first variant orientates us again to the Colchis ecological recess and offers an examination of its place in the adjoining north eastern region of Asia Minor as a universal Kartvel parent-homeland. For an explanation of the present existing situation, we have to acknowledge that the Svans remained on the territory which was once occupied by bearers of the common parent-Kartvel language, and its Kartvel-Zan part on the boundary of the 3rd – 2nd centuries B.C., and migrated, let’s say, to the eastern Transcaucasian recess through the present Likh mountain range; there, after a thousand years one more disintegration took place, resulting in the ancestors of the Megrel-Chans returning to the Colchis recess again and driving the Svans away into the mountains. This sufficiently illogical and so far not provable variant is faced by another, a more grounded one, as it seems, and concludes that the parent-homeland of the Kartvels was not within the limits of West Transcaucasia in the north-eastern regions of Asia Minor, from where the region under examination the Svans had migrated to in the beginning (either directly through the ravine of Chorokh and along the seacoast to present-day Colchis, or, which is more logical, along the Kura gorge and the region of East Transcaucasia adjoining it, and further to the west). At the start of the 1st century

B.C. a disintegration took place of the parent-Kart-Zan community and their intermingling to the north along two roads – the Karts drove the Svans into the mountains north-east of Colchis, and the Zan tribes advanced to the Colchis ecological recess, having driven the parent-Abkhazians away to the north. Both the common situation (the primary “parent North-Caucasian” Khurrito-Urat element in Transcaucasia up to the early 1st century B.C., the localisation of the ancient Kartvel tribes of Kardu - Kartys, Kulkha-Kolkhovs, Lusha-Lazovs, etc., to the north-eastern regions of Asia Minor point to the historical reality of such a variant; significant traces of Kartvel-Indo-European ties, which come only from a non-stratum macrofamily, but which can also explain the locality of the Kartvel parent-homeland in the sphere of action of the Khettsk-Luvi language world, and so on), as well as the direction of major natural migrations, experiences by the population of the region during the last two centuries. It is indicative in relation with this that the Svans, between 6th and 11th centuries migrated from the upper reaches of the river Rion to the west to the upper reaches of the Ingur, and today have reached (in separate groups) the region of Gagra and Sochi. An important linguistic indication on the difficulties of connecting the Svans with the ancient population of the Colchis lowlands, whose economy from time immemorial was characterised by an expressive agricultural-animal husbandry mode of life and a developed metallurgy, is the absence of terms in the Svan language, common with other Kartvel languages, connected with a settled agricultural culture, and also those denoting “copper-bronze”, “flax”, “iron”, “horse”, etc. It was namely the Karts-Kartvels who, in the 8th-11th centuries of our era, having forced the Likh mountain range, split the Megrel-Chan (Lazs) community, forming on its territory the Kart-language Imeretia, Guria and Ajaria. A return migration of human masses to Colchis on such a scale and with such results was not noted. What was particularly indicative was that the mentioned migrations of Kartvels to the Colchis recess coincided with the Abkhazian Kingdom of the 8th-10th centuries in time, when most favourable conditions had taken shape for a return migration of the Abkhazians – to the south-east. However, that did not happen.

All that has been said stresses the validity for the supposition of an advantageous north-western direction of the natural migratory streams of population in this region during the ancient era and the Middle Ages. From the moment man had settled in West Caucasia, the southern influence predominated – from the side of Asia Minor and the Middle East. It was from there that in the old, old days, bearers of the parent-Abkhaz-Adygei language had moved to the West Transcaucasian valleys, descendants who like many other relics of live nature up to this day (thanks, I repeat, to the conservation traits of the mountains) quite firmly maintain their population here. The Apsils, who had given the Abkhazians their name (Apsua), and their direct descendants – bearers of the Abjui dialect in this chain – comprise one of the most important protective links, taking upon itself for over many centuries the main burden of opposing assimilatory-migratory influences from the south east.

The History of the Abkhazians Narrow Territorially and General

Just as the biography of every person is formed as a result of his interrelations with people and objects surrounding him, the history of every nation is shaped from facts of its interrelations with neighbouring nations. The history of the Abkhazians is no exception here. The territory they had settled on always served as a sort of bridge for them between North Caucasia and the coast of the Black Sea. The second direction of contact was determined by the sea – from time immemorial ships sailed towards Asia Minor and the Crimea. No small role was also played by the fact that the founding of the triangle, occupied by the Abkhazians, was open to influence from the south-east, from where a lowland road led (“Abkhazian Road”), used by the conquerors and merchants. The economy, politics, culture of the population of the area took shape in this quite intricate system of contact, reacting sensitively to all outside changes, and restructuring in accordance with them.

It is characteristic for every territory to have its own set of archaeological and architectural monuments. An idea of the national culture is formed through their originality. The linking of natural ancient regional traits with concrete

modern ethnology received dissemination in a domestic national-administrative state system, resulting in a situation when articles and equipment began to be used for the founding of the rights of representatives of one or another nationality to power over a given territory, i.e., items began to be allotted a concrete language (!). In the meanwhile, most of the works made by man are the fruit of diverse attempts and interactions of multilingual individuals and collectives. Ethnographers (on the example of the North American Indians) have not accidentally noted regularity, according to which accumulation of characteristic substantial signs were observed not in the centre of the settlement of one or another tribe, but in the region of intertribal ties. The Abkhazians were never an exception in this.

From the moment of the settlement of this territory by man during the whole of the Stone Age, roads were of chief importance along which an infiltration of groups of people came here from the south-east, pertinent to experience in working on stone, on an ancient import – the volcanic glass, obsidian. In the Bronze Age West Caucasia represented a remote periphery of the Asia Minor variant of a Middle East cultural community. The Transcaucasian pass roads were conducive to the spreading of the monumental tomb-dolmens on both sides of the Main Ridge. The idea of the dolmen creations, in the opinion of a number of authoritative investigators, was brought into West Caucasia by sea through the Mediterranean already at the end of the 3rd century B.C. In the early Iron Age, besides the influence from Asia Minor, the state of Urarta played a decisive part in the formation of the local material culture. From the 8th century B.C. onwards the influence of the Aegean world (through the Hellenes) increased. Thanks to the Greeks, cities and state structures connected with them began to appear on the Caucasian shores. By the 3rd century B.C. the entire lives of the local population, including the mountain valleys, were imbued with the elements of Greek culture. The marketplace in Dioscuriada (Sebastopol, now the capital of the Abkhazian Republic, Sukhum) won world fame. Sources inform us that during the Hellenic epoch (3rd – 1st centuries B.C.) representatives of up to 300 tribes and nations concluded business deals here. Industrial winemaking progressed, amphoras with the Dioscuriada trade mark were manufactured, and they even minted their own coins. Ancient Abkhazia on the Black Sea preserved its decisive role in the economy, politics and culture up to the epoch of the Iran and the Arab conquests in Colchis (6th-8th centuries B.C.), periodically returning to that role also in subsequent times (up to the beginning of the 20th century).

Special significance was acquired by the Transcaucasian pass roads in the 6th-8th centuries B.C., thanks to which a branch of the Great Silk Route went through the territory of Abkhazia, connecting the Mediterranean Sea with India and China. The burial vaults of representatives of the ancient Abkhazian tribes of Apsils and Abazgs contain wide assortments of crockery, arms, items of clothing, adornments, coins, etc., connected by provenance with dozens of centres of Europe, Asia and Africa and with particular obviousness stressing the predominance of the innovative possibilities of Her Highness Dame Fashion before all manifestations of traditionalism. The pass roads played an important role in the establishment of early-feudal Abkhazian Kingdom, when at the end of the 8th century with Byzantine weakening, the Khazar Kingdom took a hand in the matter, including by that time North Caucasia within its limits. The subsequent history of the Abkhazian Kingdom was again connected with Byzantine, stimulating its flowering in the 10th century and bearing influence on the life in the area up to its very decline in the 15th century. From the end of the 11th and up to the mid-13th centuries, the Abkhazian provincial government, on autonomous grounds, entered the composition of the “Kingdom of the Abkhazians and Kartvels”, and later partially (“Upper Abkhazia”) was annexed to Megrelia, its neighbour of the east.

The 14th-17th centuries are characterised in the area's history by a revival and deepening of the Mediterranean Sea ties. Trading stations of Genoa on the coastline of Abkhazia played a special part in this, leaving a deep trace in the local economy, political history and culture. In this period the pass roads became enlivened once again, connecting the maritime centres with North Caucasia and Povolzhje (the Golden Horde), and in multilingual Sebastopol (modern Sukhum) the mint began to function again. Imported clay and glass (including the Venetian), crockery, arms sets of belts, adornments and other overseas articles began to widespread in local life. It became customary among soldiers in the mountain valleys to wear earrings in one or in both ears (like the European sailors).

The increasing Turkish presence weakened towards the end of the 15th century, and then, in general, traditional

ties broke off with Europe. The 18th century passed under the sign of advantageous influences in the Osman (Ottoman) Empire area, using Abkhazia as their main launching pad in the conquest of West Caucasia. In this period firearms, the characteristic Caucasian daggers, a certain cut of dress (Cherkess, Bashlyk, etc.), pipes for smoking, became widespread in the region, and an original Abkhazian style of cooking was created, inimitably uniting the fruits of overseas countries – corn, beans, pepper, etc. Since 1810 a process of Europeanization began intensively in Abkhazia, in the main through Russia. The Caucasian war turned into a horrendous misfortune for the Abkhazians and particularly the mahadzhir period directly after it (1866-1877), when thousands of Abkhazians were forced to migrate to Turkey, from where they scattered all over the world. On their hearths, in the second half of the 19th century, appeared the farmsteads of Greeks, Bulgarians, Armenians, Russians, Ukrainians, Megreles, Germans, Estonians and other emigrants, imparting to the rural area and urban cultures, features of compound and variety.

Abkhazia is a country of a vivid language culture, whose sources go back to the upper paleolithic epoch. Characteristic traits of this culture are the ritual hues of the body in multicoloured tattoos, traces to the early Iron Age; idolisation of groves, trees, animals, the natural elements, that drew the attention of the travellers also in those olden times and later in the Middle Ages; the rite of the second burial in dolmens and jugs; known from monuments of the Bronze and early Iron Age, and again receiving prevalence in the late Middle Ages in the form of the hanging of the dead from trees; the custom of cremation of the dead and burying them on special public squares or in jugs was noted from the early Iron Age and the late epoch of antiquity; the variety of signs (over 80) of heathen burial customs of the Apsils from the 3rd century B.C. to the 7th century A.D.; the place for idolisation of mountain spirits on the passes and on mountain paths, where varied offerings accumulated (the tips of arrows and other items) in the 11th-15th centuries and later; facts of the revival of heathenish in the 18th century and its original and diverse survival in the everyday life of Abkhazians today.

At the same time, Abkhazia is also a country of the oldest Orthodox Christianity in the Caucasus. Here, already at the end of the 3rd century A.D., communities of exiled Christians formed, and in the year 325 the Pitiunt Bishop Stratofil placed his signature under protocols of the Vselensky Nikeisk Cathedral. Officially, Abkhazians (Apsils, Abazgs, etc.) adopted Christianity in the 6th century during Emperor Justinian's time, when in the littoral and mountain zone many early-Christian churches were built. From the 4th up to the 10th centuries the Abkhazian church was administratively subject to Byzantine (Constantinople, Antioch, etc.), while the territory of Abkhazia itself was within the bounds of the Abkhazian kingdom autonomous – the main temples of the 10th century were constructed not in the capital of the kingdom, Kutaisi, but in the zone nearest to the sea and Byzantine, between Pitsunda and Bedia. This status was maintained also in the Byzantine occupation period in the 11th century, after which, supposedly, for some time the local church was dependent on the East Caucasian (Mtskheta) Catholicity and the Alany Metropolitanate. From the mid-13th to the 17th centuries Abkhazian Catholicity preserved its independence, sustaining close ecclesiastical ties with Kartlia, Byzantine, Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine. It is not by chance that it was namely the Antioch Patriarch who arrived in Abkhazia to displace the bishops-slave-traders in the 17th century, and the Greek written language that predominated undivided up to the 10th century on the territory of Abkhazia and was used one parallel with the Georgian language from the end of the 10th up to the 16th century. In the 19th – early 20th centuries, Christian religion again put forth sufficiently deep roots in this area.

Besides the Orthodox religion, Catholicism in its time also played a definite role. At the beginning of the 14th century, for example, there was a Catholic episcopal faculty in Sebastopol, and there was also a Catholic cemetery functioning there. The local population became acquainted in the 6th century with particulars of the religion of the Iran fire-worshippers. The stone icons in the second half of the 6th-7th centuries have to mitre symbol from Tsebelda on them. Abkhazians came into contact very early with other world religions – Judaism and Islam. Jewish people had settled in local cities already in the period of antiquity. Their communities existed in the period of the Middle Ages in Gagra (11th century) and in Sebastopol-Sukhum (14th century). Abkhazians first came into close contact with their Islamic ancestors in the first half of the 8th century. A Muslim community existed in Sebastopol-Sukhum at the

beginning of the 14th century. The Islam influence in the area grew stronger from the end of the 16th century (tombs with inscriptions, names of princes, etc.). In the 18th – beginning of the 19th centuries several wooden mosques functioned in Abkhazia, but pigs were still bred in every village. Survivals of Islam are preserved even today in the everyday life of the Abkhazians.

Abkhazians – Blood-Relatives of All Nations on Earth

The history of man offers a whimsical twining of territorial, economic, language, cultural and psychological reality on which one more important nation-forming layer is built, connected with the genetics of the human factor, on which politicians and the historians hired by them, for some reason prefer not to linger. At the same time, fixation of Negroids in the upper paleolithic strata of Kholodny Grot and a language proximity to the Mongoloids directly indicate true genetic ties with representatives of these ancient human races. Today, however, Abkhazians are a clearly expressed European type. This is explained by the constant penetration of bearers of a relevant anthropological type into their territory.

Without touching on the compulsory, but badly documented, ties up to the period of the written language, I will stop at proof of those epochs which are already sufficiently elucidated through written and archaeological sources. In Gienos (modern Ochamchira), founded over 2500 years ago on the Abkhazian seacoast by the Miletsys, local household utensils were found in houses of the first settlers, brought in the homes of Greeks by their wives, who willingly welcomed the colonisers into the native environment. Greek-Abkhazian marriage ties increased in the Hellenic epoch (end of the 4th - 1st centuries B.C.). In the 1st-3rd centuries A.D., in the course of wide political and cultural contacts with Rome, the foundation of an Abkhaz-Italian blood relationship was laid. In the 4th-5th centuries A.D., during the Roman-Byzantine rule (Sebastopol, Pitiunt, etc.), suburbs were erected – the kanabas – in which the demobilised-soldiers lived with their families. Undoubtedly, quite a few men and women of the local population made up those families. In the 6th century A.D., Prokopi Kesariisky, in relations with the Abazgs – forebears of the Bzyb Abkhazians – stressed forthwith that “the Roman soldiers... long ago” had settled “among them in many ways”. Evidently such settlements were accompanied also by similar marriage ties. The interrelations between the garrison and the people of Greek-Roman cities servicing them and then settling among the inhabitants of the foothills and mountain valleys, often turned into punitive expeditions and pogroms (such an episode, vividly written by Ksenofont, took place in the outskirts of Trapezunta at the end of the 5th century B.C.). The result was always violence and the birth of “war children”. The kidnapping of women by mountain dwellers was common, too. Living jointly for 1200 years on one territory with the Greeks could not but leave a serious imprint in the genetics of the Abkhazians (like their neighbours – Ubychs, Adygeis, Megrels, etc.), making practically all of them blood relatives with the Hellenes.

Abkhazian contacts with the North-Caucasian tribes were long and varied, in the first place (1st-12th centuries A.D.) with the Alanys, the forebears of present-day Ossets. The presence of the Alany element in Abkhazia is documented through sources from the 1st to the 2nd century A.D., and in the archaeological – from the 4th to the 6th century. The result of the Abkhaz-Alany ties was not only the spread of conformable elements of material culture (ceramics, arms, etc.) and the transference of Narty legends, but also in the appearance of many half-breeds who later infused (depending on the situation) into the father's or the mother's environment. A definite contribution to the genetics of the Abkhazians was made in the 6th century by the Persians, through whose actions, pertaining to the Apsil women of the gently, turned into catastrophe for the Iranian garrison of Tsibilium in the year 550 A.D.

In the 6th century A.D., for the first time in the internal regions of Abkhazia, the Lazys were formalised in written sources – forebears of the contemporary Megrels, with whom (marrimonial) relations were particularly intensive in the contact zone along the Ingur. Infiltration of the Megrels into the south-eastern regions of Abkhazia was to have increased from the end of the 19th century, when the Bedia's episcopacy was founded there, whose rule spread

also along the left bank of the Ingur. At the turn of the 13th-14th centuries Megrelia annexed the eastern regions of the Abkhazian (Tskhumsk) provincial government up to Anakopia. This battle lasted up to the 17th century, when Italian and Georgian sources placed the western political boundary of Megrelia at first of Kelasur, then up to the Kodori and, finally, to the Ingur river. In the late Middle Ages, as a result of the assimilatory processes in the territories conquered by the Megreles ("Upper Abkhazia"), an intermingling of the peasants, as a result of church gifts and the endless wars between the Abkhazians and the Megreles, drew them quite closely together in the genetic sense. Not so intensive but also resultative were sporadic contacts between the Kartvels-Georgians (the battle at Anakopia in the 8th century, contacts in the 11th-13th centuries, etc.), and the Svans. This process continues to this day.

Apart from the indicated nations representatives of many other languages and cultures have lived and worked on the territory of Abkhazia during the last two thousand years. Here we should mention Jews, Germans, Armenians, Arabs, Khazars, Turks, Mongols, Italian and even Chinese among them. The first mention in sources of information, for example, of representatives of Slav tribes, arriving on the territory of Abkhazia, goes back to the middle of the 6th century. The roads and blood of Russians and Abkhazians intertwined closely also during the period of the neighbouring Tmutarakan and Abkhazian states, and on the Middle Ages slave-trade roads of the Mediterranean, the Black Sea area and Povolzhje, during the Cossack forays along the eastern Black Sea shore area. Not only the cultural but also the kinship of the Abkhaz-Russian contacts that took shape in the 19th-20th centuries are sufficiently deep. One expressive example – 27 years after the annexing of Abkhazia to Russia there were 120 fugitive Russian soldiers who had married Abkhazian women and coped with the Abkhazian language in only the one mountain village of Abkhazia – Tsebelda. In that same 19th century the Abkhazian Negroes aroused great interest among those who happened to arrive here...

Class-dynastic marriages were of particular significance in the local history of the feudal epoch. A Kartvel woman – the wife of Leon I and a Khazar woman – the mother of Leon II were at the cradle of the Abkhazian kingdom in the 8th century A.D. In the following period, up to the beginning of the 19th century, as a rule, the wives and mothers of local tsars and princes were Greeks, Ossets, Armenians, Polovchanins, Kartvels, Megreles, etc... but very rarely representatives of the nationality their husbands ruled. The bride arrived at her new place of residence with a multiple retinue, comprising relatives, girl friends, soldiers, handicraftsmen, and other kinsmen, who then scattered among the local population and countryside.

However, it was not only the many representatives of the newly come nations who left an imprint in the genetic of the Abkhazians. The latter played a transient role in the formation of the genetics of many nations of Eurasia, especially of the Mediterranean Sea region. And here slave-trade was of basic importance. The Black Sea littoral of the Caucasus from time immemorial was called the "mine of slavery". This "mine" was intensively developed from the 6th century B.C. era up to the 19th century A.D. For 2500 years dozens, hundreds and at times thousands of people were annually taken away from here, mostly young people. During the Hellenic period slave-trade made up an important profitable part of the economy of the natives of the area – the Geniokhys. In the 6th century A.D. the rulers of Abazgs earned quite well on the markets of Byzantine by selling emasculated boys from among their kinsmen. During this period, as a result of only one raid of the Persians, 40 Abazg boys were collected as hostages and drove to Iran. Slave-trade reached a particularly high scale in the late Middle Ages. At the beginning of the 19th century Keleshbei Chachba (Shervashidze), in discussing points of an agreement with Russia, requested the preservation of his right to trade in people. Slave labour from Abkhazia and related territories played an important role in the economic and cultural blossoming of the Black Sea and Mediterranean areas. Everywhere – from Damascus to Paris – the labour of Caucasian emigrants was evident: cities were built with their participation, temples and castles erected, roads laid, ships built, and sown lands were widened... The fate of the slaves was not always tormenting and unfruitful, however. Having settled down all over the civilised world, they forgot their own language and became familiar with foreign ones, changed their religions, set up families and reared children and grandchildren. Some perished doing backbreaking work, many became military leaders, while the girls became the wives of magnates and sultans. Today, innumerable

descendants of those who had once been forcibly taken away from the Black Sea coast, including, undoubtedly, Abkhazians, live among the Turks and Arabs. Jews and Greeks, Yugoslavs and Italians, French and Spanish, Iranians and Armenians, Russians and Tatars, without being aware of their origin. Mahadzhir period made its contribution to this process, too.

Abkhazia – a Country with a 2500-year Statehood

Early-class social relations in Abkhazia were formed already at the end of the 3rd-2nd centuries B.C., when an increase of additional products liberated social forces able to co-operate in the building of monumental stone tomb-dolmens. The community gentry of the following period were significantly represented in the burials of the 8th-6th centuries B.C., where many bronze and iron items were found, indicating the intensive contacts with that ancient state of Transcaucasia, Urart, and also with the early-class formations of Iran, Asia Minor and Balkan, the Kimmeriisk-Seythian world.

Statehood as a system of survival, based on a centralised concentration and distribution of products, was brought to Abkhazia by the Greeks-Miletsys, who founded here the city-states of Dioscuriada (modern Sukhum), Gienos (modern Ochamchira) already at the beginning of the 6th century B.C. These and a number of other maritime centres (Eshera, Pitiunt) were for the following 600 years decisive seats of political life in the area. The “Colchis Kingdom” in the 6th – 1st centuries B.C., within whose boundaries the territory of modern Abkhazia supposedly was, relates to the number of historical myths, designed by scientists and politicians from the end of the thirties of the current century (“epoch of Lavrenty Beria”). At the turn of the 4th-3rd centuries B.C. (on the basis of the symbiosis of the Hellenized military-agricultural native summit and “the new aristocracy” in the visage of the trade-handicraft elite of Dioscuriada) in the maritime area of central Abkhazia a Hellenic state (“kingdom”) sprang up with a tyrannical ruling system. At the end of the 2nd century B.C. the examined territory was included in the composition of the Pontiisk kingdom of Mitridat VI Eupator. He aided the organisation of the Dioscuriada mint, whose products were current all over the Black Sea area.

The oldest early-class states of Abkhazians were the “kingdoms” of Sanigia, Apsilia and Abazgia, noted in sources of information since the 1st century A.D. and enveloping the entire territory of the present Republic of Abkhazia. This state was politically dependent on the Roman Emperors, who affirmed the local tsars and controlled them through the maritime settlements of Sebastopolis (ancient Dioscuriada) and Pitiunt, where a garrison of Roman soldiers was quartered. After the transfer of the capital of the Empire to Constantinople, the political, economic and cultural Roman-Byzantine presence in the area was strengthened. In the first half of the 6th century A.D., on the eve of the invasion of the Persians and their North-Caucasian allies into Colchis, Byzantine attempted to unite the parent-Abkhazian nationalities (Apsils, Abazgs, Misimians, etc.) and the West Kartvels (Lazks, Svans) within the framework of a vassal buffer formation – the Lazsk kingdom. For two-three decades a situation took shape in Colchis similar to that of the mid-20th century – the Abkhazians, on autonomous principles, entered the state of the western Kartvels – Lazys, which in turn became practically part of Byzantine Empire. After the victory over the Persians, Byzantine sensibly rejected the “matriarchy” principle and administratively levelled the nationalities living here within the framework of their own imperial borders. During the following 200-odd years the territory of Abkhazia was included in the eastern Black Sea province of the Empire and was considered to be a part of the “Roman land”.

Victory over the Arabs at the walls of Anakopia (modern Novy Afon), the main fortress of the Abazgs, was conducive to a new unification forming of the whole of Colchis under the rule of the Byzantine protégé Leon I Abazg. The nephew of the latter, Leon II, at the end of the 8th century A.D. taking advantage of a weakening Empire and the strengthening of the Khazar rule, proclaimed his independence and transferred the capital of the Abkhazian kingdom to ancient Kutaisi. The next 200 years were an epoch of blossoming for the Christian Abkhazian kingdom, keeping allied

relations of Byzantine, and gradually absorbing the majority of the east Georgian lands within its political limits. In the 10th century Abkhazia bordered with Armenia on the south-east.

From the end of the 10th century representatives of the South-Georgian Bagratid family were affirmed on the Abkhazian throne. They did not leave any telling imprints on the direction and quality of the state policy and its name. “The Kingdom of Abkhazians and Kartvles” acquired a final federal structure during the time of David IV Stroitel, when the capital of the kingdom was transferred to Semi-Muslim Tiflis. Strictly, Abkhazians, as before, presented a clearly expressed autonomous political structure. For a big part of the 11th century it was occupied by Byzantine, and in the 12th-13th centuries Tskhumi-Sukhum served as the residence of the ruling princes Chachba (Shervashidze).

The late Middle Ages history (14th-17th centuries) of the Abkhazian principality is a chronicle of the desperate struggle of its administration and people for the preservation of the independence from the Megrel and Imereti rulers who repeatedly endured defeat and had to turn to the Kartlian tsars (modern East Georgia) for help in suppressing the Abkhazians. The territory controlled by the Abkhazian princes now narrowed, now widened again, but not once were the demonstrative Georgians or others able to announce that Abkhazia had ended its autonomous existence. Even the building of the biggest defensive-delimitation construction of the Caucasus across the principality during the period of the 30-years Abkhaz-Megrel war – the 60-kilometre long Kelasuri (Grand Abkhazian) wall, undertaken during the second quarter of the 17th century by the rulers of Megrelia with the aim of fortifying “Upper Abkhazia” for themselves, could not subjugate the Abkhazians; they took this menacing obstacle by storm and restored their ancient political and ethnic borders up to the river Ingur.

The 17th – beginning of the 19th centuries was a time of growing political contacts with the Osman (Ottoman) Empire, whose government, with the aim of spreading its influence in the Caucasus, placed its stake namely on Abkhazia, bearing its special position in the region in mind. The Turkish Garrison was quartered in Sukhum-Kale and Anakopia. At the end of 18th century the Abkhazian principality was headed by Keleshbei Chachba comprising 25000 soldiers out of whom 600 were on military galleys, cruising along the coastline, keeping the inhabitants from Batumi to Gelenjik in constant terror.

The far-seeing politician Keleshbei, at the cost of his own life, placed the Abkhazian principality within the bounds of the Russian state (the manifesto was signed by Alexander I in 1810) as an autonomy, which it preserved up to 1864. Later Abkhazia was renamed a Sukhum military department, with a direct Russian administrative rule. In 1883 the “department” now as a “province” entered the composition of the Kutaisi military region. Cities were built, roads laid, electric stations, schools, libraries, hospitals and theatres constructed, their own Abkhazian written language was compiled on the basis of Russian graphics, and their own gifted intelligentsia appeared – teachers, literary men, artists, military men, officials. The widowed Empress Maria Fyodorovna entered into morganatic marriage with Abkhazian Prince Georgi Chachba. In a special appeal, Emperor Nicholas II in 1907 lifted the “guilt” of the Abkhazians, levelling them in rights with all the citizens in the Empire.

The Abkhazian “hundred” accomplished many heroic exploits on the fronts of the First World War. That is how the premises of the national resurrection of the Abkhazians were formed.

In March 1917 a Provisional Government of their own was set up in the Sukhum district. Seven months later the districts entered the federal foundation in the south-east union of Cossack soldiers, the mountain dwellers of the Caucasus and the free people of the steppe. That is when the declaration on self-government and the constitution founded on this principle were adopted. In June 1918 the Sukhum district was occupied by the Georgian expeditionary detachments of General Mazniev (Mazniashvili). A year later the name “Abkhazia” was restored, however subsequent attempts for a legal registration of the Abkhazian “autonomy” within the framework of the Georgian Democratic Republic were unsuccessful.

In March 1921 the Abkhazian “Kiaraz” detachments, supported by units of 9th Red Army, liberated their own area, following which the independence of the Abkhazian SSR was proclaimed. A year later, under pressure of Josiph Stalin, the Abkhazian SSR and the Georgian SSR signed a federal agreement which, in 1931, was violated (Stalin was

actively aided in this by a native of Abkhazia, Lavrenty Beria). The result was that Abkhazia, as an autonomous republic, was included in the composition of “unitary” Georgia. From the thirties a forced Georgianization of Abkhazia became one of the chief functions of the administrative system of Georgia: even during the heat of battle with the Nazis (World War II) for the Caucasus, providing for refugees arriving in Abkhazia from the east was a primary task. To the same aim was the eviction of the Greeks from there in 1949. About the unfavourable changes for the Abkhazians in the demographic sense in Abkhazia during the last 100 years can be ascertained from the following table:

Years:	1886	1897	1926	1939	1959	1970	1989
Abkhazians	58 963	58 697	55 918	56 197	61 193	83 097	93 267
Georgians	4 166	25 875	67 494	91 967	158 221	213 322	239 872
Russians	971	5 135	20 456	60 201	86 715	79 730	74 913
Armenians	1 049	6 552	30 048	49 705	64 400	73 000	76 541
Greeks	2 149	5 393	27 085	34 621	9 111	13 000	14 664

The colonial regime and systematic infringement on the national dignity aroused repeated mass protests and demands on the restoration of the status of the twenties and of the transfer of Abkhazia into the structure of the Russian Federation. On August 25, 1990 the Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia adopted a Declaration on the state sovereignty of the Abkhazian Soviet Socialist Republic. In March 1991, at the referendum held on the future of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Abkhazia declared for an equal place in its structure, while Georgia voted for its disintegration.

* * *

And so, the question: “Abkhazians, who are they?” can be briefly replied to the following way: Abkhazians are not biologically or historically distinct from other people on Earth, comprising an equal part of human society. But the special feature of the Abkhazians is in that their language, not changed during thousand of years, does not recur anywhere else in the world, and especially in that they preserve the language that has long since died out on related territories of Eurasia ... For millions of years nature has gathered diverse samples of her creations in this reverse spot. These are deposits of ancient oceans – limestone in whose compactness the deepest and widest caves in Eurasia are hidden, and the unique flora of over 60 varieties of plants that have not been preserved anywhere else, and containing the biggest beech and fir trees in the whole world, and the Abkhazian bee with the world’s longest proboscis. In line of these relics is the Abkhazian language, a lingo relic of West Caucasia. In a moment of the profound fragility of the socio-economic system of life on an enormous scale, enveloping the territory of the former USSR and its satellite, the multinational population of little Abkhazia courageously overcomes national bitterness “brewed” on historical forgetfulness and isolation, trusting in its prayers to God, its geographical position and its good sense, common to mankind, which so far successfully co-operates of our common survival in this grim and yet so beautiful world.

Be happy, Abkhazia!

Epilogue to the Second Edition

This work was written to the order of the editorial staff of the international annual “Science and Humanity” at the end of 1991. But it was published in Sukhum on the eve of the invasion of the Shevardnadze formations. The greater part of the edition was destroyed by the invaders and the text was subjected to the ignorant criticism in the newspaper “Democratic Abkhazia”.

Recognition of all the legislative acts of the former USSR and the Georgian SSR had become invalid, back with the realities of the civil war in Russia of 1918-1920, Abkhazia, willing to fill the legal vacuum abolished the corresponding Stalin’s and Berya’s document of 1931 on the Abkhazia’s enjoyment the rights of an autonomous republic within Georgia putting “The country of Apsuaa” (Apsny) beyond the borders of the later.

The highest spheres of the world community the disintegration of the USSR had generated from and the party administrations of Union Republics took no notice of the former of autonomous formations beyond the Russian Federation. Consequently, the Georgian authorities had faced the problem of “territorial integrity” with two possible ways: either to recognise the Republic of Georgia as a federal state or to conquer again the seceded territory.

Having come to power through the blood coup the General-Traitor Shevardnadze, instead of civilised procedures has chosen the second way – by force. With a support of the UNO and a number of the leading states (USA, Germany, Turkey, Russia) thankful to Shevardnadze for his accomplice of the chaos in the USSR, the later got his “portion” of the Soviet arms and moved his stormers to Abkhazia on 14th August of 1992 for forage and murder.

Autumn, winter, spring and summer of 1992-1993 had turned the recently flourishing health resort republic – the “All-Union pearl” into the zone of large scale ecological catastrophe, having divided the 70 year peaceful Abkhazia into three parts: Gudauta and Gagra regions, blockaded mountainous part of the Ochamchira region including Tkvarchal and the occupied seaside from Sukhum to Ochamchira.

Shevardnadze’s envoys – Ioseliani and Kitovany, like locusts had attacked Abkhazia with a licence to shoot suppress and rob the multiethnic population of Abkhazia, the place, where hundreds were killed, every fiftieth wounded, exiles and every fourth robbed within 8 months.

Thousands of civilians were tortured for their convictions, national belonging, weakness of will, being young or old age. The people were beaten up, raped, stabbed, burned out, ignored; gardens and crops destroyed, citizens were forced to load their belongings into the plunderer’s vehicles; ransom was taken for preservation of the children’s lives and vanished ones. Many villages were wiped off, the city of Sukhum was destroyed and looted as well. Dozens of architectural monuments were destroyed and disfigured; the Abkhazian State Archives, the Abkhazian Institute of Language Literature and History, the Republican Library ruined; the Russian Drama Theatre burned out; museums, institutes, schools, libraries, private archives, factories, undertakings and trade institutions looted; pianos, tape recorders, pictures, mirrors, books and furniture shot through.

With the blessings of Shevardnadze the greatest tragedy had happened in the Dal Gorge, where on 14th December 1992 the Russian helicopter MI-8 with more than 60 people on board: 13 pregnant, 28 children and other ones perished. The burnt down bodies were rummaged in search for gold teeth, rings and other “trophies”. Politicians of Russia and other countries have forgiven their social ally Shevardnadze this very crime too.

All this wild rivalry to the Abkhazian land collapsed, because “Abkhazia is not Georgia”. Abkhazians, Russians, Georgians, Armenians, Greeks and other citizens of the republic demonstrated a rare tolerance and formed a community against the disintegration of the USSR. Shevardnadze’s intellect has given birth to monsters, subjecting the population of Abkhazia to torments.

But Abkasia is alive. In these difficult conditions shortages the Abkhazians, Armenians, Kabardins, Adygs, Chechens and other representatives of ethnic groups side by side with the Abkhazians resisted the enemy demonstrating heroism and human solidarity to the country in misfortune. Collective of staple products is being organised everywhere.

Moral support of the fighting people of Abkhazia for their freedom and justice is broadening. There will be a day on this blessed land of Apsny as soon as the alliance arose by there current redivision of the world will be settled down and all over the arc of instability and calamity will be restored from the Balkan to the Pamirs.

Epilogue *to the English Edition*

Late in April, 1993, the Parliamentary delegation of the Republic of Abkhazia (consisting of Mr. S. Lakoba, Mrs. L. Kvarchelia and author himself) visited the UK with the aim to inform the governmental organisations on the situation in Abkhazia and gave a file in the war communiqué. Meetings were held at the British Parliament, Foreign Ministry, the London, Oxford and Cambridge Universities, in the Edinburgh and Kilmarnockas well with the participation of intergovernmental and human rights organisation. Documents witnessing the Shevardnadze regime, that runs counter to the main principles of the Universal Human Rights Declaration were distributed among listeners.

During the talks, it was repeatedly pointed out that Abkhazia bear the same relation to the NATO countries as the UK does; that in the 1st century B.C. both Abkhazia and England were within the borders of the Roman Empire; that volunteers speaking diverse languages came into fight in Abkhazia; that they were on the same mission as the well-known poet Lord Byron, who died for the liberty of Greece; that even in 1862 the Abkhazian delegation held talks with the Prime-Minister of the UK Mr. Lord Palmerson in London; that in 1919 English General Briggs not only recognised, the right of Abkhazians to determine their fate independently, but set up the British Representation in Sukhum, the capital of Abkhazia as well.

People everywhere tried to get deep into the matter and offer something to help the people of Abkhazia – with kind words, money, medicine and i.e.

The year of hostilities made the small coastal republic known to the world and establish fraternal relationship beyond its bounds with scholars, politicians, scientists, artists, business people and ordinary ones.

As an equal member of the UNPO, Abkhazia de facto joined independent political unities of the world community.

Joint efforts of the people of good will, who represent different countries and the ability to govern had been laid down in the grounds of the Abkhazian statehood promoted the liberation of Sukhum, capital of Abkhazia, on 27th September 1993 and later reach the river Ingur, that borders neighbouring Mingrelia and Georgia with Abkhazia.

However the victory did not bring peace to the long-suffering land. Having failed to suppress people of Abkhazia, Shevardnadze called his confederates from Russia and UNO for help, some of them ventured to accuse Abkhazia of the aggression and occupation of their own capital and territory. The government of Russia imposed the blockade having deprived the small Abkhazia with hundred thousands of old people, women and children of electricity, bread, water, medicine, fuel and other means of vital necessity. The Russian-Abkhazian border on the river Psou was turned into a dirty business to profit at the Abkhazians misfortunes; that is temporary closing of economic structure and preservation of the conditions of war, criminal and gang's activity which is continuation of the acts of Shevardnadze's guardsmen in Abkhazia as robbery, violence and killings.

The government of Abkhazia together with the citizens of Abkhazia, at the expense of losses managed to stabilise the situation preventing people from plunging them into new clashes, convincing the international missions (JEO, USA, Congress, CSCE and i.e.) of the necessity to recognise the Republic of Abkhazia as an equal party at war, able to join the round table talks. On the 30th of November the first round table talks were held in Geneva to find ways to establish peace in the region.

The negotiations continued in Moscow, Geneva, New York, Sochi. Vladislav Ardzinba, head of the Republic of Abkhazia visited Switzerland and USA held a briefing at the UN headquarters in Geneva, created a favourable

impression with his European manners and ways of thinking. In May 1994 in Krasnodar an agreement was signed on Abkhazia's entry into the association of the Republics, Krai and Regions of the North Caucasus and the South of Russia. At the end of June the CIS peace-keeping forces were deployed along the Abkhazian-Georgian border on the Ingur River.

The Abkhazian side proceed from the very fact of the existence of the independence from Georgia, the state that emerged after the collapse of the USSR – the Republic of Abkhazia gained the right to self-government as Georgia together with the world community declared all the legislative acts and the constitution of the soviet period invalid having done with the juridical document that included Abkhazia within the bounds of Georgia.

The main condition to provide cease fire, in the region is to recognise the right of Abkhazians to hold referendum to determine their own fate and the status and ensures the observation of the Universal Human Rights Declaration and other international acts that protect the rights of the states, communities and people. That might has been a position taken by the UNO under the influence of the doubtful charm of Shevardnadze appraising Abkhazia as illegitimate within the countries of terrestrial globe, but it does not mean that the country is to be eliminated. Abkhazia exists, this very fact is to be recognised in accordance with moral and cultural standards common to all mankind.

The English speaking countries today have their particular responsibility and abilities to get knowledge on the subject, the implementation of which serve God and the interest of people.

Abkhazia

The Abkhaz's ancestors were part of the broad conglomerate of tribes that populated the Eastern shores of the Black Sea more than 2000 years ago. Abkhazia covers 8.700 square km and had 525,061 inhabitants in 1989, 44 percent Georgian (Kartvehan), 17 percent Abkhazian, 16 percent Russian and 15 percent Armenian. Rural population among the Abkhaz 52 percent (1989).

According to Abkhazians, Abkhaz population are not less than 100.000, but they are a minority group in their own republic. The 1989 Soviet census gives the share of Abkhaz in Abkhazia as 17 percent. The largest group in the Republic were Georgians, and the rest primarily Russians and Armenians. As mentioned earlier the situation has not always been like that.

A Russian census from 1886 gives an Abkhaz figure of 59.000 constituting more than 85 percent of the population in Abkhazia.



In 1823 there were as many as 321.000 Abkhaz according to Abkhaz figures. Various sources agree that the population was at least halved after the final Russian colonisation of the North Chechnia in 1884 a fate similar to that of the related Circassians Further north. The group of Abkhaz emigrées consisted mostly of Muslims, which is the main reason why today's Abkhaz are more than 10 percent Christian. The exodus paved the way for an active Russian settlement policy that succeeded in increasing the number of Georgians and Russians in Abkhazia more than 50 times during 100 years. The above-mentioned demographic processes are closely related to the major issues and claims of the Abkhazians: the repatriation on their diaspora and the strengthening of Abkhaz language and culture after many years of Georgian and Russian influence and repression.

After Bolshevik revolution

Bolshevik power was established in 1918, to endure only 40 days when the Menshevik Georgia, protected by German and British forces, incorporated the area. The Abkhaz supported the Bolsheviks in their struggle for more independence. In 1921 Soviet power was re-established, and Abkhazia and Georgia signed a Union treaty. Abkhazia was recognised as a Soviet republic by the Bolshevik leaders of Georgia. In 1922, Abkhazia and Georgia entered the Transcaucasian federation as equal parts.

In 1931 however, Abkhazia was once again subordinated to Georgia as an autonomous republic. Abkhaz resistance to collectivisation was considerable, and an Abkhaz ASSR was established to please native and Russian Communist cadres in the area.

During the repressions in the late 1930s and early 1940s forced assimilation and Georgianisation of Abkhaz took place, led by Beria, head of the Transcaucasian federation at the time. Many Georgians settled in Abkhazia, Abkhaz language was no longer taught in schools, and many prominent Abkhaz were killed. After Stalin, there was again room to work for Abkhaz culture, also thanks to international attention because of the Abkhaz's supposed longevity. In the 1970s, a national movement was formed with the goal of seceding from Georgia and become part of the RSR. In 1978, Abkhaz intellectuals wrote an open letter to Brezhnev, expressing their concern for their ethnic population, and were met by certain economic concessions. An Abkhaz university was established in Sukhum.

Declaration of independence

In 1989 on the 9th of April (the Bloody Sunday), there were armed clashes between Abkhaz and Georgians. During the summer the conflict between Georgians and Abkhaz culminated, and in August 1990, Abkhazia declared its sovereignty and war broke out. The recent conflict in Abkhazia escalated after Shevardnadze came to power in 1992 and the Georgian parliament decided to reinstall the Georgian constitution of 1921, which does not mention Abkhaz. The Abkhaz parliament reacted to this humiliation by reinstalling their constitution from 1925 when Abkhazia was a Soviet republic.

Abkhaz invitations to talks were ignored by the political leadership in Tiflis until Georgia had the army occupy Sukhum and the southern part of Abkhazia in August 1992. However, the

Abkhaz mobilized and were able to stop the Georgian advance with the aid of North Caucasian volunteers. After 13 months of war the Georgian troops were driven out of Abkhazia in September 1993. During the war the Abkhaz were supported not only by the North Caucasian minorities but by local Armenians and Russians. Also volunteers from the diaspora supported Abkhazia, mainly by providing financial support and lobbying for international understanding. It was Russia's role which has raised the most concern. Cossacks and volunteers from the Russian army took part in the fighting, and weapons and other materials were delivered from the backdoors of Russian army depots. Russian fighter planes were also spotted over Abkhazia. But whether Russia or maybe the Russian army acting on its own has taken an active part in the war has still to be confirmed. The UN became involved, and negotiations between Georgian and Abkhaz leaders began.

In June 1994 Russian peace keeping troops on behalf of CIS, and approved and observed by the UN, entered the border zone between the Georgian and the Abkhaz armies. It will be a major function of peace keeping arrangement to secure a safe return of the Georgian refugees. Most of the Georgians, who represented almost half of Abkhazia's population before the war, fled. Abkhazia has so far refused to let Georgians who participated in the fighting return.

Abkhazia, once a flourishing tourist resort, is today physically and economically exhausted. Many cultural items and symbols of Abkhaz history such as the National Archives have been destroyed. Many items of value, historical artefacts as well as computers and other modern technology, have reportedly been transferred to Tiflis.

The Abkhazians in history

Christianity was introduced to the population in the 6th century, when they entered into protection of the Byzantine Empire under Justinian. With the rise of Islam in the 7th century, the fall of Sassanid Persia and the weakening of Byzantium, Abkhazia was formed as a principality that came to affiliate with the Khazar Khanate from around 800 A.D. as its prince married a Khazar princess. In the 10th century, Abkhazia became part of the Georgian state of the time (the Bagratid dynasty), during a period of anarchy between vassal princes and nobility.

From around year 1000 there were several Turkish-Mongolian invasions, and in the 14th century the Georgian state fell. Bagratid rule in Abkhazia was replaced by a feudal principality under Ottoman sovereignty. Muslim influence was again strong in the area, especially after 1578, when Abkhazia became a vassal principality under the Ottomans. Islamization of the population culminated much later, however-towards the end of the 18th century. But Christianity was still the faith of a large minority of the Abkhaz.

Russian annexation of the area, starting in 1801, brought Abkhazia increasingly under Russian influence. Russian-Turkish revalidation led to a split in the Abkhaz elite, mainly along religious divisions. The Russo-Turkish war of 1827-28 strongly enhanced the Russians' position. Conflicts between Russians and Abkhaz

increased in the 1830s and 1840s, when the Russians used Abkhazia as a base for campaigns against the Cherkess, that are ethnically close to the Abkhaz.

Colonisation of the Abkhaz territory began even before 1810, but Abkhaz self-administration lasted until 1864.

Many Abkhaz emigrated in this period, and there was a major uprising in 1866 as a protest against Russian land reforms and taxation system. In the 1870s approx. 200.000 Abkhaz (1/2 of the population) were forced to emigrate, as they were declared to be unfaithful subjects of the tsar. This out-migration had two important consequences: Firstly, most of those who left were Muslims, so that the majority of the Abkhaz in Abkhazia was suddenly Christian. The other main consequence was that the Abkhaz became a minority in their own land as large territories lay open to immigration by Russians, Georgians and others.

A Short Chronicle of Events of the 1992-93 Georgian-Abkhazian War

August 14, 1992

Georgian troops enter Abkhazia, move through Gal, Ochamchira, and Gulripsh, and occupy the eastern corner of Sukhum.

August 18, 1992

Georgian troops take control of Sukhum. They remove the State flag from atop the Government House. In the Ochamchira region, which is in their hands, partisan bands actively oppose them. In the city of Grozny, the Parliament of the Congress of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus adopts a resolution to dispatch to Abkhazia groups of volunteer fighters.

August 19, 1992

Georgian troops take control of the city of Gagra.

August 25, 1992

The commander of the Georgian army, G. Qarqarashvili, issues an ultimatum: the Abkhaz are to halt their unsuccessful war within 24 hours. "Even if 100,000 out of the total number of Georgians perish," Qarqarashvili states, "we shall wipe out the entire population of you Abkhazians."

September 3, 1992

In Moscow, B. Yeltsin, E. Shevardnadze, and V. Ardzinba hold a meeting. They sign a summary document, in which it is agreed that the war shall be halted from 12 o'clock on September 5; that the opposing military forces shall be pulled back everywhere; that Georgian fighters

should choose some other place for relocation; and that the legally elected authorities of Abkhazia shall be allowed to resume their work.

September 5, 1992

The two sides cease fire and begin mutual reconciliation. Then, at 12.10, Georgian artillery breaks the peace by shelling Abkhaz strongholds in the village of Eshera. At 22.30 Georgian fighters renew the offensive.

September 9, 1992

Abkhazians and Georgians negotiating in Sukhum agree to cease fire on the 10th of the month. Georgian fighters disregard this agreement, as well as two subsequent cease fire agreements on the 15th and 17th of the month.

October 1-6, 1992

Georgian troops are expelled from Gagra and its environs. On the 1st of the month at 17.00 hours the Abkhaz fighters attack, taking control of the village of Kolkhida (Psakhara). Georgian air force starts to bomb Gagra, resulting in many civilian casualties. At a meeting in Sukhum E. Shevardnadze declares: "Gagra always belonged to us and it must continue to belong to us -- we shall soon get it back." Abkhaz fighters liberate the hamlet of Leselidze (Gechripsh) and set up the Abkhaz flag on the Abkhaz-Russian border. Georgian troops cross the Psou and flee headlong to Russian territory. They surrender their weapons to the Russian border guards.

October 23, 1992

Georgian special forces in Sukhum burn down the state historical archive of Abkhazia and the archive of the Institute of Abkhazian language, history and literature.

December 14, 1992

Georgian troops in the village of Lata shoot down a Russian MI-8 helicopter with 60 passengers, including women and children, all of whom perish.

Second Year of the War

July 27, 1993

An agreement to end the war is signed in Sochi.

August 9, 1993

In a statement sent to B. Yeltsin and Boutros Ghali, V. Ardzinba draws attention to the

contempt with which the Georgian side is treating the Sochi agreement, continuously shelling Abkhaz military divisions and ignoring the timetable for the withdrawal of Georgian military forces from Abkhazia.

August 22

According to a statement by the joint commission for exercising control, the Abkhaz side had acted in accordance with the timetable for the pulling back its forces, but the Georgian side did not fulfill its obligation.

August 24

B. Yeltsin and V. Ardzinba meet in Moscow. The Russian president is made to understand that the Georgian side is ignoring the Sochi agreement.

September 16-24

The final assault by the Abkhaz fighters. On 16th September they begin attacks on the Eastern front. On 17th of the they take control of the river Gumsta. On 20th of the month they order the Georgians to lay down their weapons and withdraw, departing via a safe corridor, but the Georgians do not answer. On 21-26th of the month crossfire continues on the main streets of Sukhum. Abkhaz fighters attack successfully at Ochamchira.

September 30

HISTORICAL OUTLINE

6th Century B.C

The Greeks established trading posts in Abkhazia, a Caucasian land, then known as Colchis at the Eastern end of the Black Sea. Their cities, especially Dioscurias (now modern day Sukhum) grew to be a prosperous trade center.

First Century B.C.

The Romans fortified Sukhum. The peoples' longevity was reported.

523 A.D.

Abkhazia became part of the Byzantine Empire. Christianity was adopted.

780 - 978

The Kingdom of Abkhazia flourished and the Abkhazia Dynasty extended its way over much of what is now Western Georgia.

1300-1500

A portion of Abkhazia was under the Mingrelian Rule

1500 - 1680

The Abkhazian Chachba Dynasty drove the Mingrelians out and established the boundaries that exist to this day.

1578

Abkhazia was invaded by the Ottoman Empire

18th Century

Abkhazia, in alliance with Georgia, made repeated efforts to drive out the Turks.

1801 - 1804

Various Georgian areas (Kartli and Kakhetia-1801, Mingrelia-1803, Imeretia and Guria-1804) came directly under Russian Rule (voluntarily seeking protection from Ottoman Turks and Iran).

1810

Tzar Alexander the First, issued a Charter to the ruling Prince of Abkhazia acknowledging Abkhazia as an autonomous principality under the protection of Russia.

1864

After prolong fighting across the entire region of the Caucasus, Abkhazia was the last Caucasian principality to be forcibly annexed to the Russian Empire. Russian oppression was so severe that over the next few decades more than half of the Abkhazian population fled to Turkey and the Middle East.

1917 - 1918

Abkhazia joined the Republic of North Caucasus. The Mensheviks took over the government of Georgia and succeeded in annexing Abkhazia.

March 1921

The Bolsheviks overthrew the Mensheviks in Georgia. The Abkhazian Soviet Socialist Republic was established separate from Georgia and headed by Nestor Lakoba.

1922

Abkhazia was a signatory to the formation of the USSR acting as a sovereign Abkhazian Republic.

1925

Abkhazia adopted its first Constitution under which it was united by a Special Treaty of Alliance with Georgia.

1931

Stalin (Georgian) and Beria (Mingrelian) reduced Abkhazia to the status of an autonomous Republic within Georgia.

1937 - 1953

Forced mass immigration into Abkhazia was carried out from Western Georgia (Mingrelia) by Stalin and Beria. In Abkhazia, as well as other regions of the USSR, mass oppression was carried out, thousands of intellectuals were persecuted. Abkhazian schools were closed. Abkhazians were punished for speaking their own language. The Cyrillic based Abkhazian script was replaced by one based upon the Georgian alphabet during this period.

1978

Abkhazian intellectuals signed a letter of protest to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR complaining about the status of Abkhazia and blamed the Georgian leaders for pursuing a "Beria" policy aimed at the "Georgianization" of the Republic. Major demonstrations at Lykhny (a sacred place in Abkhazian tradition) followed. The Abkhazian campaign, to be incorporated in the Russian Federation, was rejected by Russia and Georgia. Instead, concessions were made to the Abkhaz, including the opening of the University and TV broadcasting in Abkhazia. During that year (1978), Moscow allocated millions of rubles to help Abkhazia. The Abkhazian government never received the moneys. The sum was dispersed to restrain the Abkhazian people's protest at the existing conditions.

1988 - 1989

Leaders of the National Movement in Georgia demanded the abolition of the "Autonomies within Georgia along with the secession from the USSR

1989 - 1990

Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic unilaterally adopted a number of measures which essentially affected the secession of Georgia from the USSR and abrogated all legal acts that united Georgia and Abkhazia under the Soviet power.

1990

On the eve of the signing of the new Soviet Union Treaty, Abkhazia, like all of the other autonomous Republics, declared its sovereignty. On the next day Georgia declared the abrogation of the Abkhazian Declaration of Sovereignty. Georgia abrogated the autonomy of Ossetia leading to the armed conflict between South Ossetia and Georgia.

1992

Abkhazia declares its sovereignty of its on territory and proposes a federative treaty to Georgia to fill in the "legal vacuum" that emerged after Georgia's unilateral abregation of all Soviet legal documents. Exactly 20 days after being accepted by the United Nations, on August 14, Georgian troops entered the territory of Abkhazia without any notification to the Abkhazian government and launched a land and air attack on the southeast part of Abkhazia ant is capital city.

Bloody fighting continued for 14 months.

1993

On September 30, Abkhazian forces - backed by the Confederation of the Peoples of the North Caucasus Organization finally ousted the Georgian troops from the territory of Abkhazia

1994

In April, joint Declaration of the Political Settlement was signed by the parties to the conflict - the UN, Russia and OSCE, in the presence of the UN Secretary General. The Declaration outlined principles for the peaceful settlement of the conflict on the basis of equality of the parties.

In May, negotiations under the auspices of the UN sanctioned the deployment of the CIS peace-keeping troops to separate the parties to the conflict.

November 26, Abkhazia ratifies its Constitution as a sovereign state.

Abkhazia (quite separately from any region belonging to Georgia) comes under the protection of Tsarist Russia, and administers its own affairs until 1864

Tsarist Russia finally crushes North Caucasian resistance, and the majority of the Abkhazians (along with

related Circassians and all the Ubykhs) go into exile in Ottoman lands, leaving the Northwest Caucasus decimated of its native population.

Further expulsions of Abkhazians to Turkey occur after trouble connected with land-reform in Abkhazia following the Russo-Turkish war.

Population of Abkhazia: Abkhazians 58,961, Mingrelians 3,474, Greeks 2,056 Armenians 1,337, Russians 972, Estonians 637, Georgians 515, Others 1,460

Soviet commune exists for 40 days in Abkhazia before it is forcibly annexed by the Georgian Mensheviks. (see C. E. Bechhofer "In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus", London 1921.)

Soviet power is re-established on March 4. Abkhazian Soviet Republic is recognized by Georgia's revolutionary committee on May 21. Special "contract of alliance" is signed between Abkhazia and Georgia on December 16.

Abkhazia and Georgia together enter the Transcaucasian Federation

Adoption of the Abkhazian Constitution, enshrining its republican status with treaty ties to Georgia.

Stalin reduces the status of Abkhazia to that of an autonomous republic *within* Georgia.

Start of Beria's anti-Abkhazian drive, involving forced immigration of thousands of non-Abkhazians (especially Mingrelians), placing the local administration in Kartvelian hands, changing the Abkhaz alphabet to a Georgian base, closure in 1944-45 of Abkhazian schools, replacing them with Georgian schools, banning the Abkhaz language; post-war plan to deport the entire Abkhazian nation, using Pavle Ingoroqva's "theory" of their supposed arrival in Abkhazia only in the 17th century as "justification".

Deaths of Stalin and Beria mean reversal of the anti-Abkhazian drive; new script based on Cyrillic is devised, Abkhazian schools reopen, and administration put back in Abkhazian hands.

130 Abkhazian intellectuals write to Brezhnev to request permission for Abkhazia to secede from Georgia and join Russia because of ongoing Georgian encroachment on the rights of Abkhazians. In compensation, the Abkhazian State University is opened (with Georgian, Russian and Abkhazian sectors) to serve the needs of higher education in Western Georgia. The 130 signatories of the letter lose their jobs.

As a result of agitation by Kartvelian nationalists (Gamsakhurdia, Kostava, Chanturia), ethnic clashes take place in Abkhazia over attempts to open a branch of Tbilisi University in Abkhazia's capital, Sukhum, aimed at undermining the official university established in 1978.

As in other autonomous republics throughout the USSR, the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet declares sovereignty over its territory.

An absolute majority of the entire eligible electorate of Abkhazia vote in March to remain within Gorbachev's proposed restructured USSR rather than run the risk of joining a chauvinistically inclined Georgia in its bid for independence.

Following the abolition in Tbilisi of all Soviet legislation affecting Georgia and the reinstatement of Georgia's 1921 pre-Bolshevik Constitution, Abkhazia reinstates its 1925 Constitution as a temporary measure since no formal status was assigned to Abkhazia in the 1921 Georgian Constitution, whereas the 1925 Abkhazian Constitution allowed for a federative relationship between the two equal republics of Abkhazia and Georgia.

While negotiations on the nature of future federal ties between Abkhazia and Georgia are in progress, Shevardnadze, head of the State Council that had come to power in Tbilisi as a result of an illegal coup which ousted Pres. Gamsakhurdia in January 1992, launches the invasion of Abkhazia. His excuse is that ministers kidnapped by Gamsakhurdia's supporters are being held in Abkhazia, whereas they are actually in Mingrelia. A few days later Georgian Defense Minister Kitovani admits that the real reason behind the invasion is to bring down the Abkhazian administration of Vladislav Ardzinba.

Allied troops, composed of Abkhazians, other non-Kartvelian residents of Abkhazia, and North Caucasian volunteers, expell Shevardnadze and his fighters.

Abkhazia, Georgia and the Caucasus Confederation

Stanislav Lakoba

The post-Soviet period, reminiscent of and in many cases seeming to repeat, the events of 1917-1921 after the break-up of the Russian Empire, has demonstrated quite clearly that the difficulties in Abkhazian-Georgian relations cannot be resolved by those two countries alone, without involving the Caucasus as a whole in this issue.

At the same time it is obvious today that the entire Caucasus has become the arena for a struggle for energy resources and fierce clashes between the geopolitical and strategic interests of Turkey and Russia, Iran and the West. The marked weakening of Russia's position in this key

region was a result of the war in Chechnya and of the continuing complete blockade of Abkhazia. The battle for the pipeline, or rather for the route for transporting Caspian oil, cannot fail to influence political developments and automatically puts the people of the Caucasus on the knife edge between war and peace.

In this state of imbalance, neighbouring countries and powers are trying to create their own areas of responsibility, new alliances and regional as well as international associations under the aegis of the United Nations, the OSCE and NATO. Over the centuries the entire Caucasus, or portions of it, has been alternately or simultaneously part of Iran, Turkey or Russia, which still regard these territories as traditionally theirs. Thus Turkey sees a substantial part of the Caucasus as part of an extensive Turkic state, Turan. Iran in turn sees the future of some Caucasian countries in an alliance including Iran itself and certain Central Asian republics. Russia, though still laying claim to Transcaucasia ("Transcaucasia" is a peculiarly Russian term, resulting from its wars with Iran and Turkey), mostly because of oil, is now forced to keep an eye on the North Caucasus, realising late in the day what is happening on its southern flank.

Early pacification of the explosive Caucasus region is most unlikely, given this distribution of forces in obvious conflict. As regards the prospect of future state and legal relations between Abkhazia and Georgia, the way forward seems to be within the framework of a Caucasus Confederation.

Not long before the break-up of the USSR the eminent Sovietologist A. Avtorkhanov gave the following warning and advice:

Caucasians must understand that if they fight among themselves they will never be either free or independent. In the eyes of the outside world such a region does not deserve freedom, but should be permanently occupied by a strong state and its armed forces... I would recommend all autonomous regions in the Caucasus to combine in one republic, which already existed under the name of "Gorskaya Respublika" (Mountain Peoples' Republic). In spite of our multilingual nature, but in view of our common historical, social, cultural and geopolitical heritage, the outside world gave us one general national name - the Russians called us the "Caucasus gortsy" (mountain people)" and in the West we were known as "Circassians". We have never known racial discrimination or religious friction.

The idea of a Caucasus Confederation had its origins in the spring of 1917 and was developed further in 1918. Caucasian unity was proclaimed at the first Mountain People's Congress on 1 May 1917 in Vladikavkaz. At the Congress the "Alliance of United Mountain People of the North Caucasus and Dagestan", headed by T. Chermoev, a Chechen, R. Kaplanov, a Kumyk, P. Kotsev, a Kabardian, V. Dzhabagiev, an Ingush, and others, was officially established. The Abkhazian people also became full members of this alliance. A Mountain Peoples' Government

was formed in November 1917. S. Ashkhatsava represented Abkhazia in it.

On the eve of this important event, on 8 November 1917, the Abkhazian People's Congress in Sukhum elected the first parliament, the "Abkhazian Peoples Council" (ANS) and the following vital documents were approved: "Declaration by the Abkhazian People's Congress" and the "Constitution of the Abkhazian People's Council". It is interesting to note that the representative of the Abkhazian Parliament gave the following address on 19 November 1917 in Tiflis at the opening of the first Georgian parliament (the Georgian National Council): "I am happy that the high honour of conveying warm greetings to you on behalf of the Abkhazian People's Council has fallen to my lot. The Abkhazian people, as part of the Alliance of united mountain peoples, congratulate fair Georgia on its first steps on the way to national self-determination... The Abkhazians, having formed an alliance with their northern brethren are therefore convinced that in the near future they will join the noble Georgian people in a common alliance of all the peoples of the Caucasus. In this future alliance the Abkhazian people see themselves as full members of the United Mountain Peoples' Alliance".

However, according to Emir-Khassan, a prominent figure in North Caucasus emigration, this was the period when a number of mistakes were made, which led to the isolation of the South Caucasus from the North Caucasus and the creation of the "so-called Transcaucasian Federation". Emir-Khassan observed:

The differences that began to appear even during the first revolutionary period became even more pronounced. A narrow national egoism flourished. The minds of Caucasian statesmen were entirely directed to organising separate nations; each one was protecting and establishing only his own frontiers, without regard to what neighbouring peoples were doing.

The situation in the North Caucasus very quickly worsened, with the increasing savagery of the civil war and the formation in March 1918 of the Terek Soviet Republic. However, the previous 1st Mountain People's Congress still traced "the outlines of national ideology", which led the North Caucasus to proclaim its independence within a year. It is clear from the minutes of the first meeting of the Batumi peace conference dated 11 May 1918 that it was attended by delegations from Germany, Turkey, the Transcaucasian Republic and the mountain peoples of the North Caucasus and Dagestan. On the same day the independence of the Caucasus Mountain Peoples' Republic and its separation from Russia were announced. The Republic included Dagestan, Chechen-Ingushetia, Ossetia, Kabarda, Karachai-Balkaria, Abkhazia and Adygeya. Its territory extended from the Black Sea to the Caspian and amounted to 260,000 square kilometres, with a population of almost 6.5 million.

The deputies from the Abkhazian People's Council, A. Shervashidze (Chachba), T. Marshaniya, S. Basariya and others then appealed to the Turkish government and declared at the Batumi

Conference that "Abkhazia does not wish to be included in the group of Transcaucasian peoples, but aligns itself with the North Caucasus union of mountain peoples, which should build a separate state under the protection of Turkey". Later, during the years of Stalinist repression, particularly in 1937-1941, this was the pretext for eliminating practically all the Abkhazian intelligentsia, who were in sympathy with the idea of a Caucasus Confederation.

The territory of the independent Mountain Peoples' Republic of 1918, which was recognised internationally, coincided precisely with that pan-Caucasian area that had been involved in the mountain peoples' national liberation campaign in the nineteenth century and developed under the banner of Shamil. After Shamil had been forced to lay down his arms in 1859, the Ubykh, Adygeyans and Abkhazians continued their unequal struggle with tsarism for a further five years. This ended on 21 May 1864 with a parade of Russian and Georgian forces on the Krasnaya Polyana, in historic Abkhazia. This marked the end of the Caucasian war (1817-1864). The historian Ali Sultan made the following comment with regard to the tragic events of those years:

In none of the conquered regions did Russian imperialism produce such devastation as it did in the North Caucasus. Here, as a result of many years of aggressive war, many localities settled since ancient times disappeared from the face of the earth, the boundaries of areas settled by individual autochthonous tribes were altered and the cultural monuments of the past and an ancient civilisation were destroyed. In many cases entire ethnic units were uprooted and sent into the unknown... The western provinces of the Caucasus, Western Adygeya and Abkhazia were particularly hard hit: their populations were forced into large-scale emigration in the second half of the nineteenth century and found refuge in what was then the Ottoman Empire.

This is a suitable place to note that on 9 May 1984 the US Congress approved an address of welcome to the peoples of the North Caucasus to mark the 66th anniversary of their declaration of independence. On that portentous day Congressman Robert Roy addressed the House of Representatives on the anniversary of the proclamation on 11 May 1918 of the Caucasian Mountain Peoples' Republic. The Congress documents also included a "Brief historical note on the struggle by the oppressed peoples of the Northern Caucasus for independence..."[

The Transcaucasian Democratic Federal Republic (ZDFR) broke up after the formation of the Mountain Peoples' Republic and on the same day, 26 May 1918, following an ultimatum by Turkey, the Democratic Republic of Georgia was proclaimed (the Azerbaijan Republic was proclaimed on 27 May and the Armenian Republic on 28 May). This period in the history of the Caucasus has been called the "Caucasian May", and it was said in this connection in one of the proclamations: "When the anti-nationalist storm of bolshevism was raging in Russia, the idea of healthy national statehood was triumphant in the Caucasus".

The instrument of Georgian independence was adopted on the day on which the republic was formed (26 May 1918); however, this did not define the frontiers of Georgia. Preliminary outlines of the frontier were drawn for the first time by someone with a very keen interest in the matter, in a secret letter to Tiflis dated 28 May 1918, by the German general von Lossow, who undertook to make every effort to ensure that "Germany would assist Georgia in securing its frontiers".

However, even von Lossow, an ally of the Georgian government and at the same time a supporter of the Caucasian Confederation, proposed the temporary inclusion of the Sukhum district - Abkhazia - within Georgia (i.e. within Germany's area of influence) with a reservation to prevent interference by his ally (Turkey). In commenting on this letter the international lawyer Z. Avalov (Avalishvili), a distinguished figure in the Georgian republic, wrote:

The reservation in the letter is curious: the Sukhum district (including Gagry) shall be part of Georgia until Georgia forms a separate state within the Caucasus. However, should a confederation of Caucasian peoples (*italics mine - S.L.*) be formed involving Georgia the population of the Sukhum district should be allowed to determine its position among the Caucasian countries. In other words, in this case the population of Abkhazia would have the choice of union with Georgia, entering the Union of Mountain Peoples or being part of the Caucasus Confederation as a separate state-canton (*italics mine - S.L.*). It is apparent from this what importance was attached to the plan for political union of the Caucasian peoples at the precise time when circumstances made dissolution of the Transcaucasian Union essential.

Thus Abkhazia was outside Georgian territory when Georgian independence was proclaimed on 26 May, because since 11 May 1918 it had been part of the Caucasus Mountain Peoples' Peoples' Republic, which unfortunately lasted for only a year.

In breach of the arrangements with Abkhazia, as early as 17-19 June 1918, troops from the Georgian republic supported by the military might of Germany landed in Sukhum and virtually occupied the country. General A.S. Lukomskii, Denikin's comrade-in-arms, wrote in this connection: "Taking advantage of German support, Georgia occupied Abkhazia and the Sochi district against the wishes of the population ..." [By this time Abkhazia was in an extremely difficult position, because it was virtually deprived of real support from the "Mountain Peoples' government" due to the increasingly brutal civil war in the North Caucasus. However, the Mountain Peoples' Republic government condemned the Georgian invasion of Abkhazia. Thus in June 1918 the Foreign Minister of the Caucasus Mountain Peoples' Republic (Gaidar Bammat) lodged a protest with the government of Georgia and with Schulenburg, the head of the German government diplomatic mission in the Caucasus about the incursion by German troops into Sukhum and "the presence of Georgian bands in Abkhazia".

Several months later, in August 1918, T. Chermoev, the president of the Mountain Peoples' government, again protested to the German government about the occupation of Abkhazian territory by Georgian troops supported by regular German army units. At the same time he gave a warning that the peoples of the North Caucasus, linked to Georgia by "race and a long-standing community of interests" must not allow any political complications to interfere with their drive for "the closest possible ties, up to and including confederation" (*italics mine - S.L.*), and subsequently

On behalf of my Government I protest in the strongest terms against Georgian policy in Abkhazia, a constituent part of the Federal Republic of the Union of Caucasus Mountain Peoples (*italics mine - S.L.*) and my Government considers it essential for Georgian troops, civil servants and emissaries to be withdrawn from Abkhazia immediately, in order to avoid the serious complications that may result from this Georgian Government policy.

It was during this period, in June-August 1918, that Aleksandr Shervashidze, Tatash Marshaniya, Simon Basariya and other influential Abkhazians appealed for aid to Abkhazian Makhadhirs living in Turkey whose forefathers had been compelled to leave their motherland in the nineteenth century as a result of the Russo-Caucasian war. The people and parliamentary deputies of Abkhazia regarded the forcible action by Georgia as armed intervention in the Mountain Peoples' State. Noi Zhordania, the president of the Georgian Republic government, recalled that at that time the representatives of the North Caucasus gave Georgia an ultimatum: "Abkhazia is ours, get out!" The Turks in their turn were dreaming of Sukhum and planning to "protect Abkhazia from the Georgians" with the help of the Chechens.

On the night of 27 June 1918 an Abkhazian armed force from Turkey landed near the River Kodori. Turkey was not involved in this conflict at the official level; the landing party was essentially an armed force of the Mountain Peoples' Republic. In addition, German sources make clear that in June-August 1918 the "Mountain Peoples' government" was still laying claim to Abkhazia and the port of Sukhum. It is not surprising, therefore, that there were repeated seaborne landings by Abkhazian makhadhirs in Abkhazia during the same few months. These aspirations were fundamentally at variance with German policy interests in this region.

The Mountain Peoples' Republic government continued to regard Abkhazia as part of its state, in spite of the fact that it was occupied by Georgia. Thus a coloured ethnographic and political map of the Caucasus Mountain Peoples' Republic intended for the Paris Peace Conference was printed in French on the orders of the Mountain Peoples' Delegation in 1919 in Lausanne (a representative of Abkhazia also travelled to the conference as part of the Mountain Peoples' delegation). On this map both Abkhazia and South Ossetia were shown as within the Mountain Peoples' State, not in Georgia.

Carl Erich Bechhofer, who was in the Caucasus at the time, described Georgian government policy as follows:

The "Free and Independent Social-Democratic State of Georgia" will remain in my memory forever as a classic example of an imperialistic "small nation", both in the matter of external territorial seizure and in bureaucratic tyranny within the country. Its chauvinism passes all bounds.

The Georgian politician Z. Avalov also described the situation at the time very accurately:

At the beginning of 1921 Georgia had a simple party organisation in its government and in the form of the Constituent Assembly...Georgian democracy in 1918-1921, which was a form of social-democratic dictatorship, i.e. right-wing Marxism, was the preparation for the triumph of Soviet dictatorship in Georgia.

The "Mountain Peoples' Government" was forced to emigrate in 1921 as Soviet power became established in the Caucasus. In the 1920s and 30s representatives of the Caucasus Mountain Peoples' Republic in Prague, Paris and Warsaw published the journals "Vol'nye gortsy", "Gortsy Kavkaza", "Severnyi Kavkaz", etc. During this period the political exiles carried out an enormous amount of research on the future national state structure of the Caucasus. They published a large number of articles, recommendations and books on this pressing problem, and on 14 July 1934 in Brussels representatives of the national centres of North Caucasus, Georgia and Azerbaijan signed an international treaty of great political importance - the Caucasus Confederation Pact - with a place kept in the pact for Armenia.

The Caucasus Independence Committee and the Caucasus Confederation Council, the governing body in all diplomatic activity, were set up at the same time. The Caucasus Confederation was to have been an alliance of states retaining a sovereign existence but bound together by several common ties: common customs frontiers, defence and foreign policy. The Caucasus Confederation Pact has been called a "tactical-strategic document".] The Polish journal "Vostok" made this comment in 1934: "An independent and united Caucasus will cease to be a source of military conflict and will become a vital element in maintaining the overall balance".

Eminent political figures spoke in defence of the Caucasus Confederation, but were against a "Caucasus community" on a federal basis, rightly regarding it as an imperfect model. Thus B. Bilatti wrote:

A federation cannot stand compulsion... A federal link can be forged only between materially

and spiritually equal values; otherwise it is likely to turn into a screen, under cover of which the strong will strive to absorb the weak. The great-power aspirations of large nations are organic phenomena derived from the very nature of mankind, and for that reason the cohabitation of large and small nations, even where such cohabitation is initially absolutely voluntary, is likely to end in conflict. This has been the fate of all states in which small nations have united round large nations. The former were either absorbed by the latter or finally joined forces to bring down the state and free themselves from the tie...

The issue of Caucasian unity was raised several times, but came into the open again on the eve of the break-up of the USSR, when Georgian-Abkhazian differences reached their high point and developed into conflict on 15-16 July 1989. This was the negative background against which a hasty consolidation of the North Caucasus nations and Abkhazia took place. The foundations of this movement were laid in Sukhum, the capital of Abkhazia, on 25 August 1989 at the first congress of Caucasus mountain peoples, which formed the Assembly of Caucasus Mountain Peoples (AGNK), by analogy with the 1917 United Mountain Peoples' Alliance.

The second AGNK congress on 13-14 October 1990 in Nal'chik (Kabardino-Balkaria) was a vital stage. It was announced then that a period of practical work to implement a programme for a new state structure for the North Caucasus and Abkhazia was on the way. Special attention was given to the unity of the Caucasus nations, put into effect on 11 May 1918 by the proclamation of an independent state - the North Caucasus Republic.

Great events followed this congress. The Russian Federation showed signs of breaking up after the collapse of the USSR, and the existence of former "union-republic" small empires was called into question. The resolve of the Chechen nation, the proclamation of an independent Chechen Republic and the election of a president in October 1991 raised the Caucasus mountain peoples' movement to a new level. The third AGNK congress was held in Sukhum in the context of the political turbulence in Chechnya (on 1-2 November 1991). It was attended by plenipotentiary representatives of the Abaza, Abkhazian, Avar, Adygeyan, Aukhov-Chechen, Darghin, Kabarda, Lak, Ossetian (North and South Ossetia), Circassian, Chechen and Shapsug nations. Representatives of social and political movements in Georgia were also present. In his speech a Georgian parliamentary deputy also called for the entire Caucasus to merge to form a "single fist".

Following a proposal by the deputies the AGNK was changed to the Confederation of Caucasus Mountain Peoples (KGNK) and a little later, in Grozny in 1992, was renamed the Confederation of Caucasus Nations (KNK). The following declaration in particular had been made at the third KGNK congress:

It is quite probable that, in the first stage at all levels, the Caucasian autonomous republics and

oblasts will declare themselves sovereign states, and after this act of national self-assertion will in all probability begin to unite to form a new alliance - a Caucasus Confederation, which Chechnya, Dagestan, Georgia, Ingushetia, Ossetia, Kabarda, Karachai-Balkaria, Abkhazia, Adygeya, etc. may join as equal members.

A Treaty was signed at the third congress and a "Declaration on a Confederated Alliance of Caucasus Mountain Peoples" was adopted. Decisions were taken to form a Caucasian Parliament, an Arbitration Tribunal, a Defence Committee, a Caucasus Communities Committee and other structures for confederation, the headquarters of which would be in Sukhum.

Even during the Georgian-Abkhazian war, in April 1993 at the London conference on the problems of the North Caucasus, representatives of Abkhazia also put forward a plan for the Caucasus Confederation.

Under present conditions, such an alliance of sovereign Caucasus states in the form of a confederation is becoming a matter of particular urgency. Even in 1934 Emir Khassan was stressing in his paper "A Caucasus Confederation" that "the Caucasus can be liberated and can retain its freedom only provided that all the Caucasus nations unite fully".

Today it is quite obvious that only the Caucasians themselves, within their own union and with the support of the international community, are capable of settling vexed questions and resolving conflicts in the North and South Caucasus. Inter-Caucasian peacekeeping forces will also be needed to implement such a programme. At the present stage this seems to be essential in building a "Caucasian home" and, as the Azeri academic R. Aliev rightly observed, the "concept of inter-nation reconciliation" must prevail in this process.

Of course, today it would be Utopian to raise the matter of immediate union of all states and nations in the Caucasus to form a confederation, in view of the political, territorial and religious differences between them and the lack of any single unifying ideology. However, it seems quite possible at this stage to create the nucleus of such a confederation, which could consist of, for example, three countries: Abkhazia - Georgia - Chechnya. Unfortunately some Georgian academics have seen the threat of "Georgian centrism" in this model; the problems inherent in this will recede into the background, while the importance of the Caucasus Confederation to the world community may become of paramount importance.

Later Ingushetia, Dagestan, Ossetia (North and South), Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia, Adzharia, Kabarda, Karachai-Balkaria, Circassia, Adygeya, etc. may join the A-G-C triangle, given the enormous popularity of the idea of a confederation among the Caucasian nations. A horizontal, not a vertical, structure for state legal relations among the Caucasian countries in a confederative alliance can solve the basic problem: together or apart? It appears that in such a confederation not only Georgia and Abkhazia but other Caucasian states will be

both together and apart at the same time in their mutual relations. This is undoubtedly necessary at the present stage in order to overcome the existing mistrust and to build relations among the nations of the Caucasus based on equality and trust. It is quite probable that in the historical long term the Caucasus Confederation will transform itself into a federation, but this will occur peacefully and painlessly. However, to propose federal relations in the Caucasus today means complicating the situation and resorting to force and compulsion, which will never lead to pacification and stabilisation throughout the Caucasus. There cannot be partial freedom: only the Caucasus as a whole can be free.

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Theory and Experiences of Ethnonational Conflict Regulation: Their Relevance to the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict

Maarten Theo JANS

This chapter consists of 2 parts (1, 2, and notes)

Part 1

Internal, ethnonational conflicts: dynamics and difficulties

At the end of the 1980s, the gradual weakening of the communist dispensation in the Soviet Union occasioned a reorganization of inter-group relations, often to the detriment of peaceful coexistence and moderation. Titular nations of Union republics and Autonomous republics found themselves locked into a process of self-definition and a quest for national and international legitimacy. The consolidation of the new states in terms of borders, population and political power brought about a nationalizing tendency which, despite existing ethnic heterogeneity, sought a close fit between the nation and the state, thereby alienating the minorities in the new states. Nationalist policies and rhetoric speedily filled up the ideological space vacated by the exit of communism. Ghia Nodia correctly points out that not only was the rise of primordial nationalist feelings spurred on by the end of communist encapsulation, but these feelings were effectively stimulated through the introduction of democratic principles.

Democratic politics require the definition of the demos. Democracy, understood as the rule of the people by the people, begs the question of what is to be understood as "We, the people". Group definitions inherent in nationalism proved to offer the most powerful instrument for identifying the players in the new democratic game. Insider/outsider stigmatization occurred during the definition of the demos along nationalist lines, and this gave rise to violent ethnonational tensions. The problematic necessity of defining the demos in new democratic states, as argued by Nodia, is, however, only one of the conflict-prone features of democracy. Democratic institutions also firmly install the elements of competition and group support in society. Access to political power in democracies depends on the degree of group support one manages to gain in an electoral competition. Elections are little more than a struggle for support, a competition between groups. Ethnonational definitions provide an easy and obvious basis for securing group support, support which is indispensable in the competition for power. Politicians will therefore find it tempting to use ready-made ethnic definitions for rallying popular support.

States with century-long traditions of dealing with ethnonational diversity in a democratic context (such as Belgium, Canada, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) have never ceased to be troubled by ethnonationalist mobilization. Even the textbook example of ethnonational peace and calm - Switzerland - is increasingly confronted by inter-group friction. It should hardly be surprising, therefore, that the end of communism and the subsequent introduction of democracy has given rise to a large number of internal, ethnonational conflicts. Many former

Soviet states are currently struggling to come to grips with the problems of (ethnonational) diversity under the new post-communist, democratic dispensation. The nature and complexity of internal conflicts based on ethnonational division renders regulation and accommodation particularly difficult. In general, the marrying of diverging interests requires a concerted effort, and the addition of an ethnonational dimension increases even further the difficulties inherent in regulating a conflict.

Ethnonational identities base their credibility and legitimacy on an interpretation of the historical past. The reference to mythical forefathers, battles, homelands, etc., entrenches the national self-perception in history. By bringing history back into the picture, ethnonationalism also brings historical wrongs and traumas back to centre-stage in politics and conflict. But historical traumas cannot be relived in a more satisfactory way. Historical legacies are the structural foundations of a conflict situation, and it is not possible to erase them. Conflicting players seeking settlement thus have no alternative but to accept the remnants of frustration which history has left them. The past cannot be regulated. This means that historical traumas are difficult to address in concrete bargaining terms.

As Donald Horowitz points out, ethnonational affiliations tend to permeate all features of social life, especially when ethnic tensions emerge. In a conflict, an ethnonationally divided society no longer consists of workers and employers, buyers and sellers, conservatives and liberals, but essentially of members of different ethnonational groups, as the ethnonational dimension supersedes all other forms of social segmentation. By homogenizing the members of an ethnonational group, ethnonationalism also becomes intimately linked with other forms of social affiliation.

Besides the purely ethnic dimension, ethnonational conflicts involve religion, ideology, economic interests, partisan politics, etc. These bundles of intertwined interests and demands are hard both to disentangle and to satisfy. The regulation of ethnonational conflicts presents the difficult task of reducing complex and intertwined demands into disentangled, workable packages of issues to be addressed. Moreover, national identities and the emotions they awaken correspond to the basic human need for self-definition in a changing and puzzling environment. Ethnonational identities infuse emotions and psychological needs into conflicts. Disputes tend to revolve around issues related to a sense of belonging, security and national pride - all of which are highly emotional and non-negotiable matters.

Zartman singles out another typical and problematic characteristic, namely, the asymmetric nature of many internal ethnonational conflicts. Tensions between insurgents and incumbents are often characterized by an asymmetry in coercive capacity, legal position, international support, numbers and administrative or bureaucratic capacity. Such asymmetric relations are less amenable to regulation because the stronger party has little incentive to deal with the weaker side on an equal footing, while the weaker side will invest more in attempts to change the disadvantageous balance of power than in attempts to settle the conflict.

Internal conflicts display a recurrent pattern, in which one side tries to maintain the

asymmetry which the other side is seeking to redress. Asymmetric internal conflicts are likely to remain in a state of constant flux until some level of symmetry is reached or until the existing asymmetry is no longer perceived by either side as sufficient reason not to seek a joint settlement. Needless to say, such realizations may only emerge when both sides have exhausted one another in conflict, at the expense of a great deal of time, energy and bloodshed.

Once violent acts have been perpetrated, internal conflicts often enter a spiral of violence. Repetitive cycles of violence can be arrested, but they do jeopardize the chances of a future settlement, not least because the harm inflicted raises the level of frustration which will need to be addressed in a settlement. Violence also decreases the possibility that the warring partners will perceive each other as credible and acceptable partners in dialogue.

Conflicting parties often find the thought of being on speaking terms with those who have allegedly committed atrocities against them to be unacceptable. Inter-group violence involves regular armed forces, but it also attracts uncontrolled, disparate armed groups lead by warlords or common criminals. These irregular forces gain prominence during the conflict, a prominence they are likely to lose once the peace process is on track. Though they have no vested interest in the specifics of a settlement, their lack of hierarchic control puts them in a position to derail the settlement process by not complying with agreements or by breaking fragile cease-fires.

As noted earlier, ethnonationalism touches upon many aspects of social life. Territorial, linguistic and socio-economic delimitations are part of how ethnonational groups define themselves. The overwhelming variety of ethnonational identities is made up of different mixtures of similar constituent elements. The apparent diversity of ethnonational symptoms should not distract us from identifying the similarity of underlying causes that can be found in cases of ethnonational hostility. When the specific features of each single conflict are temporarily put aside for the sake of generalization, we find that a common thread running through many ethnonational conflicts is a basic fear of extinction. Insurgent ethnonational groups in Canada, Belgium, the Basque country, Northern Ireland and South Africa, to name but a few, have all been driven by a primordial fear of being overwhelmed or, as Horowitz puts it, of being swamped by ethnonational outsiders. This anxiety often reflects the numerical inferiority of the ethnonational group or a downward demographic trend. Even where demography does not lend legitimacy to fears of extinction, the perceived disappearance of important ethnonational markers (language, customs, culture) will. Flemings were always the largest group in the Belgian population. Despite Flemish numerical preponderance, the higher social status associated with French language use stimulated an increased "frenchification" of the Flemish population. The gradual retreat of the Flemish language in favour of French led to the perception that a crucial defining characteristic of "Flemishness" was under attack. Flemings felt engulfed by the French language, and the nationalist movement capitalized on the fear of extinction of "Flemishness" in Flanders. Generally, fears of extinction - which are present in many if not all ethnonational conflicts - will need to be reduced or proved unwarranted if regulation is to be successful. In practice, this anxiety will only be allayed once

institutions have been established that guarantee the continued survival of the ethnonational group. The ongoing tensions between Quebec and anglophone Canada are evidence that even the most (socio-economic) successful states remain ineffective as long as they fail to provide sufficient guarantees of ethnonational survival.

The Regulation of Internal Conflicts: What are we Aiming at?

Pointing out the complexity of ethnonational conflict is one thing, suggesting how conflicts can be reduced and satisfactorily managed is another, even more demanding exercise. There are no uniform, straightforward answers to the question of how to reduce ethnonational conflicts. Each conflict is different -for example in time, space, parties involved, intensity, issues, etc. - and it is likely that different conflicts will require different approaches. A technique which was successful in conflict A may prove to be irrelevant - or worse still, detrimental - in conflict B. It therefore makes little sense merely to copy successful structures from one country to another in the hope of producing results which will reduce the conflict. Different diseases require different treatments.

Even if we are aware of the need for context-specific regulations, the path to be pursued needs to be specified. What precisely is meant by conflict regulation or conflict reduction? Should the intended regulation merely focus on the cessation of violent interactions, or should it do away with all sources of friction between groups in order to be deemed successful? Clearly, the first stumbling-block in dealing with internal, ethnonational conflicts is the difficulty of defining conflict regulation itself.

One could uphold an intuitive notion of peaceful coexistence devoid of conflict, but hardly any ethnonationally divided country (except perhaps Switzerland) would fit in with this intuitive notion of conflict regulation. All states characterized by ethnonational segmentation have experienced some degree of inter-group friction and conflict. If we were to accept the absence of conflict as the ultimate aim of conflict regulation, hardly any ethnonationally divided state would qualify as a case of successfully regulated conflict. The absence of conflict cannot be used as an operational indicator of the success of conflict regulation.

Once ethnonational tensions have occurred they will affect future relations between the opposing groups. No regulation or pacification will succeed in turning the clock back. In this sense, conflicts can never be "resolved" or ended in an absolute sense. The conflictual acts which occurred during the tensions will continue to affect and colour interactions between the groups, even if pacification has decreased the intensity of the dispute. Settlements cannot efface previous conflictual acts, nor will every source of friction be brought to a mutually fully satisfactory outcome in an agreement. The heritage of past conflictual acts and the remnants of dissatisfaction on one or both sides will often contain the seeds of future conflict between ethnonational groups. Settlements may decrease the amount of overt hostility or violent interaction, but they will never end or bring about the disappearance of conflict.

Strategies aiming at the annihilation of conflict between (ethnonational) groups are unrealistic

and often even undesirable. It could be argued that inter-group conflicts are a perfectly normal and essential feature of politics. If societies consist of different individuals organized in different groups, it is likely that these groups will develop dissimilar sensitivities, needs and preferences, which are a corollary of their group or individual differences. The institution which, following the formulation of dissimilar interests, processes these different interests into a common policy outcome, is the state. The creation of policy outcomes applicable to all involves high stakes, divergent interests and intense competition between these group interests, often resulting in disagreement and conflict. In the policy process, the competing groups resort to a number of coercive, persuasive, bargaining and other tactics to achieve their desired outcome. The heated competition to determine policy outcomes clearly involves conflictual relations. It is commonplace to portray conflictual relations in politics as detrimental, dysfunctional and counterproductive to the functioning of a political system. All too often there is a tendency to overlook the fact that these conflicts identify the relevant issues, they clarify the sensitivities and importance attached to these issues by societal players and they also illustrate the power balance between groups. In this respect, conflicts are an essential and even a functional feature of politics, allowing the production of realistic, balanced and sensitive policy. The point here is that the goal of conflict regulation cannot be the disappearance of conflict. Conflicts are a normal and functional corollary of group differences. Conflict-regulating strategies should aim at controlling and orienting the conflict towards stable outcomes, rather than investing in the creation of conflict-free environments.

The proposed view - that conflicts are part and parcel of political decision-making - should not be interpreted as an unqualified plea for the uncontrolled proliferation of conflicts. Tensions and conflicts often escalate and lead to highly sub-optimal outcomes or even to the collapse of the policy-making institutions. Regulatory strategies should focus on avoiding such detrimental escalation by stimulating the recognition and acceptance of divergent interests as the starting-point from which differences can be processed into stable policy outcomes. Conflict regulation techniques will not succeed in resolving conflicts, but will at best manage to channel damaging tensions towards outcomes which allow for the coexistence of competitive groups. Having reduced unwarranted expectations of the capacity of regulatory acts to end conflict, we now propose the following definition: the successful regulation of internal conflicts occurs when group dissatisfactions and opposing interests are confronted and addressed in a political system and conflicting demands are subsequently processed, at the lowest possible cost and risk, into stable policy outcomes. Some elements of this definition of conflict regulation require closer scrutiny. First, regulation requires dissatisfactions to be voiced and responded to by the conflicting parties. Without clear statements of group discontent, there is little to which regulatory techniques can be applied.

If the deprived group fails to mobilize (for lack of organizations, infrastructure, communication, etc.), it may not be effective in putting forward demands. Once grievances have been voiced, the group in relation to which the discontent is expressed needs to recognize and attend to the problem. This is certainly not always the case, as the (dominant) group, to which demands are addressed, can choose to ignore or deny the existence of this dissatisfaction. By denying the existence of a conflict, the (dominant) group legitimizes its lack

of response and avoids taking any policy steps designed to reduce the dissatisfaction. These two conditions for successful conflict regulation are often lacking. Conflicts may seem to have been pacified, but the apparent calm is merely due to the failure of dissatisfied groups to put forward their demands or the result of a (dominant) group's preferring to deny the existence of a problem for as long as it can.

Second, successful conflict regulation involves the processing of conflicting demands at the lowest possible cost and risk. It is not possible to indicate precisely the point at which conflicts are processed at the lowest cost and risk. Such operationalization requires quantifiable indicators of costs and risks and a thorough understanding of how the conflicting parties assess these costs and risks. The general notion of lowest possible costs proposed here is that the amount of resources, time and energy devoted to dealing with the conflict does not interfere with the successful formulation of other policy outcomes. Conflict regulation can be deemed successful (where all the other conditions are met) if the cost of dealing with the conflict does not hamper the policy-making capacity of the political system. The regulation of a conflict can drain a substantial amount of resources, to the extent that all other policy issues need to be put on hold, leading to a policy blockage and the inability of the political system to function at all. Such instances of policy-making overload are failures of conflict regulation, even if they come about without violence. Next to costs, the element of risk needs to be taken into account. The costs involved in regulation may be low while the chances of jeopardizing the continued existence of the political system may very be high. If the regulation of conflicts involves bringing the political system time and again to the brink of disintegration and collapse, then the techniques applied are unsuitable for repeated use and, therefore, unsuccessful.

Third, successful conflict regulation should result in the formulation of stable policy outcomes. A stable policy outcome is perceived as one from which none of the parties has an incentive to deviate. There is no incentive to deviate because, in the given circumstances, all the other reasonably possible outcomes could be expected to leave each of the parties worse off. A stable outcome does not necessarily correspond to the full realization of one or both parties' goals. It is likely to leave a residue of dissatisfaction on each of the opposing sides. Despite falling short of a full realization of their goals, both sides can adhere to the outcome and render it stable because they are aware that the struggle for maximum individual gain leads to mutually inferior outcomes.

Inherent in the above description of a stable outcome is the fact that the stability achieved is unlikely to be maintained indefinitely. Changing circumstances (changing environments, needs, leaders, etc.) can alter and decrease the benefits linked to an outcome, thereby making other outcomes more desirable. Conflicting parties seeking the regulation of their differences should therefore be prepared for an ongoing process of establishing new stable outcomes. Longevity of outcomes can be pursued by entrenching them in institutions. Institutional frameworks (constitutions, bureaucracies, jurisprudence, etc.) tend to reinforce and attribute a certain "robustness" to outcomes, thereby prolonging their existence. Institutionally embedded outcomes can be expected to be more resistant to change, but there is ample

empirical evidence that even institutionalized outcomes are not immune to changing needs and environments.

The definition of conflict regulation presented in this paper can be regarded as fairly pragmatic for several reasons. First, the termination of conflict (understood as the end of tension and friction between groups) is rejected as a goal of conflict regulation. The aim is not to abolish conflict, but rather to limit some of its destructive consequences. Conflicts between groups cannot and should not disappear. Instead, conflict regulation should aim to process conflicting demands, at a low cost and low risk, into stable outcomes. In more concrete terms: conflicting groups should learn not to avoid living in disagreement, but to live with disagreement. Second, the definition is not centred on the presence or absence of violence. On the one hand, the absence of violence - desirable as this may be - is no guarantee of successful coexistence. Non-violent conflict situations may be accompanied by high costs and risks and a failure to produce stable policy outcomes, rendering group coexistence fragile or even unbearable. On the other hand, the use of violence does not necessarily entail the failure of conflict regulation.

Law enforcement or the voicing of discontent can take a violent form. Such eruptions of violence do not, by definition, jeopardize the success of regulation or group coexistence. Although the use of violence in conflicts is not a suitable indicator for determining the failure or success of conflict regulation, it is unlikely that violence will be part of a successful regulation strategy, as the use of violent means to enforce an outcome is usually a costly, risky undertaking and leads to hotly contested, and therefore unstable, outcomes.

Joint Decision-Making as the Optimal Approach to Conflict Regulation

Three ways of settling a conflict may be discerned: an external authority can impose a solution upon the conflicting parties, the conflict can result in an outcome through a number of unilateral actions, or the conflicting parties can decide to settle their differences jointly. It will be argued that the latter approach is both normatively and factually the preferable procedure for regulating conflict.

Conflicting parties deciding to settle their disagreements jointly accept that the formulation of a conclusion to the conflict shall be dependent on the agreement of both sides. This necessity for mutual agreement has important consequences for the nature and quality of the decision-making process.

The pursuit of a mutually acceptable outcome implies an interactive process. First of all, the grievances and demands of both sides are put forward. These grievances will need to be addressed if an outcome is to ensue, and this forces all participants to note and act upon the dissatisfactions expressed by their opponents. Moreover, this exchange of information clarifies the sources of discontent, the relevant issues and the relative importance attached to the matters in dispute. It cannot be assumed a priori that the adversaries have adequately assessed the contentious issues. Conflicting parties often have only indirect information regarding how far the opponent is willing to go. One side's sensitivities, intentions and real

goals are often uncertain or blurred by their opponent's negative perceptions. Confrontation and the exchange of information and perceptions are instrumental in forging workable definitions of the conflict situation. Joint decision-making encourages conflicting parties to redefine their own positions and, more importantly, to reconsider their perception of the opponent in the light of conveyed information.

Through the interactive exchange of information and the subsequent adjustment of perceptions, opponents gain knowledge of each other's goals and bottom lines. This exchange of information reduces the element of uncertainty in the interaction. The importance of minimizing uncertainty and achieving certainty cannot be overestimated, as certainty with regard to the relevant features of the conflict situation (issues, opponent, minimum demands, etc.) allows for the emergence of mutual trust in the joint decision-making process. Conflicting parties operating under conditions of great uncertainty as regards their opponent's motivation, means and goals cannot be expected to develop sentiments of trust vis-a-vis an unpredictable adversary. The exchange and adjustment of information reduces uncertainty, increases the predictability of the opponent's behaviour and favours the emergence of trust. Conversely, uncertainty in interactions is a factor which inspires feelings of fear and vulnerability - feelings which, according to psychological theory, are highly conducive to violent reactions.

As was mentioned in the introduction, a number of scholars have pointed out the problematic asymmetric nature of most internal or ethnonational conflicts. Generally, the asymmetry can be qualified as a power imbalance, based on coercive, legal or moral grounds, between the dissatisfied group and the incumbents. Such asymmetry is deemed problematic because equals are said to make peace more readily and more easily than unequals. Adversaries seeking conflict regulation through joint decision-making accept, by implication, that settlement can only occur if both sides agree. Joint decision-making, therefore, equalizes the relative weight of asymmetric adversaries in the formula for the final decision.

As unanimity is essential to this formula, both need to agree, so each of them has the power of veto. Joint decision-making entails an equalization of power in the decision which might not be paralleled by equality in the coercive or legal capabilities of the conflicting parties. This equalization of power in decision-making is one possible reason why rival groups reject joint settlements, because their favourable power position on the battlefield is significantly curtailed by the equalizing effects of joint decision-making. In general, jointly accepted outcomes will be less power-induced than those which are the result of unilateral or external (hierarchical) actions. This does not mean that conflict regulation through joint decision-making will be devoid of power struggles or the effects of bargaining power. The degree of dependence, the availability of alternatives, the consequences of non-agreement and the salience and importance of the issues at stake for each of the parties will largely determine the parties' strength in the joint decision-making process. Power relations between the conflicting parties will still be a crucial variable in this process, but imbalances will be partially redressed by their equal share in the formula for the final decision.

Finally, outcomes resulting from joint decision-making will incorporate the minimum demands of each of the parties. Under unilateralism or imposed regulations, there is no guarantee that the needs of both sides will be addressed in the final outcome. The unanimity rule implicit in joint decision-making means that, in order to be mutually acceptable, an outcome should satisfy at least the minimum needs of both parties. This mutual satisfaction of minimum needs renders the outcome more stable than unilateral or imposed solutions, which are likely to give rise to dispute and the re-emergence of inter-group hostilities.

At the start of this section we stated our conviction that joint - as opposed to unilateral or hierarchical - decision-making is the most beneficial approach to conflict regulation. Joint decision-making encourages a full discussion of all dissatisfactions through a clarifying exchange of information, which reduces uncertainty and allows for the emergence of trust. Moreover, the unanimity rule partially reduces asymmetry and guarantees that at least the minimum demands of the opposing sides will be part of a mutually accepted outcome. The inclusion of minimum demands increases the stability of the outcome, as each side receives a share of satisfaction.

Part 2

Bargaining and Negotiations: the Stuff Joint Decision-Making is Made of

Juxtaposed interests and demands in a conflict situation will not simply dissolve once joint decision-making has been selected as the procedure for regulation. But there is still a need for a painstaking search for an outcome that offers a mutually satisfactory balance between the juxtaposed demands. The process of weighing up these demands and finding ways of rendering incompatible interests more compatible under joint decision-making involves a bargaining process.

As bargaining is so central to decision-making, we shall explore this concept further. A standard definition of bargaining is offered by Rubin and Brown. According to these authors, the bargaining process should display the following characteristics:

1. at least two parties are involved in the interaction;
2. these parties have a conflict of interest with respect to one or more different issues;
3. whether or not previously acquainted, the parties are temporarily involved with one another in a voluntary relationship;
4. the essential activity in this relationship involves either the exchange of one or more specific resources or the resolution of one or more issues among the parties (or both);
5. the nature of this activity is sequential rather than simultaneous, in the sense that there is a presentation of proposals or demands by one party followed by the evolution and presentation of counterproposals by the

other, until a resolution or impasse occurs.

The above paragraph gives a good description of bargaining, but reveals little of the nature of the relationship which binds bargainers. Negotiations often signal the beginning of co-operative coexistence. Nevertheless, they should not be perceived as a purely co-operative activity. Conflictual attitudes remain an important feature of a bargaining process. Bargaining relations are best understood as mixed-motive relationships. The relationship combines a concern for co-operation with conflictual attitudes. Bargainers are separated by some conflicting interests and linked by some common interests. The conflictual element can be traced back to the fact that each bargainer aims at maximizing his/her benefit in the outcome bargained for. The struggle by each bargainer to obtain a favourable outcome, in a context of incompatible interests, entails conflict. Without diverging interests, the parties would not need to bargain - to reach the desired goal, it would be enough to co-ordinate their actions. Despite the conflict-prone configuration of interests, bargaining processes have an important co-operative dimension. The incentive for co-operation comes from an awareness by the bargainers that their goals cannot materialize without the some degree of participation by their adversaries. The parties must feel that goal achievement is to a large extent dependent upon the agreement of the opponent. The combination of co-operative and conflictual stimuli locks bargainers into an almost "schizophrenic" relationship which Schelling describes as "incomplete antagonism" or "a precarious partnership". For an interaction to be defined as a bargaining process, both the conflictual and the co-operative dimensions need to be present. Interactions lacking the mixed-motive characteristics are either open conflict or co-ordination settings which, as Bacharach and Lawler succinctly state, have little bearing on a bargaining situation: "If they had no incentive to co-operate, they would not bargain at all, if they had no incentive to compete, they would not need to bargain". The definition formulated by Rubin and Brown clearly points to the dynamic nature of bargaining. Negotiations are portrayed as a process which can be summarized in a number of subsequent stages. Several authors (Rangarajan 1985, Gulliver 1979) have analysed bargaining processes from this developmental perspective. Bargaining is presented as a sequenced process in which the negotiators move through distinct phases, each of them containing different problems, until a solution or collapse follows.

Though the authors define the phases differently, the sequenced descriptions of bargaining are roughly parallel. For our present purposes, a short summary of the essential bargaining phases will suffice:

1. The initial phase consists in the expression and recognition of discontent. The parties voice their dissatisfaction with the existing state of affairs, and this dissatisfaction is noted. Through tacit bargaining, the parties signal and test each other's willingness to commence negotiations.
2. If the discontent expressed is responded to in a positive fashion, indicating that the party addressed acknowledges the problem, the phase of "negotiation about negotiation" (NAN) can begin. During the NAN a consensus on basic attributes of the bargaining setting is sought. This

involves decisions about a mutually acceptable arena or forum for negotiations, the agenda, rules about decisions, the number and type of actual negotiators and the acceptance or rejection of preconditions to negotiations. Each of these decisions can be the object of dispute and bargaining. Many negotiations reach the NAN stage but then collapse because of disagreement on the fundamentals of the setting for the bargaining. Often, unresolved disagreements during the NAN phase point to a lack of commitment by the parties to the bargaining process.

3. Once the basic features of the negotiations have been agreed upon, substantive bargaining can take place. The real bargaining usually starts with the bargainers stating their maximum demands and the legitimacy of their enterprise. The aim of the entire process that follows these statements is to bridge the differences between the adversaries. This necessitates an identification of the crucial issues at stake. Negotiations are simplified by concentrating on a number of priority issues. In order to narrow the differences on priorities, initial demands can be redefined in more manageable terms. Another, much-used technique for narrowing gaps in initial expectations is the exchange of benefits and disadvantages between negotiators. If the bargainers have asymmetrical priority lists, the log-rolling technique can be applied. Log-rolling is an exchange of concessions on issues of differing importance to the bargainers. Each bargainer gets his/her way on one issue in exchange for making a concession on another issue of lesser importance to him/herself.

4. A last and often underestimated phase concerns the implementation or execution of the agreement. This is the stage at which poorly-negotiated agreements often collapse. During implementation, the ambiguous nature of stipulations and a lack of genuine consensus tend to surface forcefully. Agreements usually require re-negotiation and monitoring devices to keep the implementation of the agreement on track.

Turning Adversaries into Co-Operative Negotiators: Stalemate and Interdependence

As indicated above, the factor spurring the opponents to co-operate in bargaining is their acknowledgement that they depend on each other for reaching their individual goals, their awareness that they cannot reach a desirable outcome on their own, without the inclusion of their adversary. The perception that unilateral alternatives are ruled out points to the interdependence of the opponents. The degree and nature of their interdependence has important consequences for the bargaining process.

When alternatives are scarce and the failure of the negotiations is imminent, the negotiators will be confronted with a stalemate. Their commitment to the bargaining process will depend on how they assess this deadlocked situation. In a case of great interdependence (few alternatives and strong probability of stalemate), the evaluation of the stalemate situation in terms of costs and benefits will be determined by the importance to the bargainers of the issue(s) at stake. Bargainers with few alternatives who attribute a high priority to the issue(s) under negotiation are likely to regard a stalemate as undesirable. Bargainers for whom the issue(s) at stake has (have) a low degree of salience will tend to assess the deadlocked

situation as bearable.

The degree of interdependence is the basic variable that determines the bargainers' commitment to the bargaining process. Players who feel that they can gain satisfaction independently, or by drawing on alternative resources that do not involve their opponent, have little reason to invest in the troublesome process of finding a mutually acceptable outcome. On the other hand, those who are aware of their mutual dependence have no other option than to commit themselves to negotiations. The failure of negotiations in cases of low interdependence leaves the players to their (unilateral) alternative options. Failed negotiations in conditions of great interdependence leave the players facing a stalemate, since there are no alternatives. A high degree of interdependence thus implies a scarcity of alternatives and a high probability of stalemate in the event of failed negotiations.

The degree of interdependence is thus crucial to understanding any bargaining process. A clear assessment of interdependence indicates the extent to which bargainers have alternatives to joint decision-making in trying to secure an outcome, and it clarifies the likelihood of stalemate when negotiations collapse. Bargaining theory focuses mainly on processes occurring during negotiations (agenda, stages, tactics, concession rates, threats, etc.), but under-emphasises determining features outside the direct negotiations. The extent to which players have alternatives to bargaining and their appreciation of failed negotiations are elements fashioned outside the negotiations but which have a direct impact on the negotiation.

A number of recent studies in the field of international relations have addressed the question of when conflicts are "ripe for resolution". These studies have investigated the conditions necessary for prompting players to seek a settlement rather than the continuation of hostilities. The generally accepted conclusion is that conflicting players cease hostilities when confronted by a "mutually hurting stalemate". This "mutually hurting stalemate" is defined as "the point where parties no longer feel they can use force to gain unilateral advantage and become willing to consider other options". At this point the parties perceive the costs and prospects of continued confrontation as becoming more burdensome than the costs and prospects of a settlement (Zartman, Hampson, Druckman). The concept of "hurting stalemate" goes a long way towards encapsulating the constellation which promotes bargaining and joint decision-making. Stalemate indicates that players feel they cannot improve their position by continuing the hostilities.

Furthermore, stalemate is supposed to harm both sides, which suggests that the players will not merely cease hostilities but need to invest actively in altering the stalemate. Zartman's concept of "mutually hurting stalemate" amounts to a necessary but not sufficient condition for describing a conflict as "ripe for resolution". A hurting stalemate indicates the point where the conflicting players no longer perceive the continuation of open hostilities as a beneficial strategy. The decision to stop fighting necessarily entails a simultaneous decision to begin co-operating. In a situation of hurting stalemate, unilateral actions merely cease to be a viable strategy - they do not preclude the emergence of other non-co-operative interactions.

Instead of seeking a joint settlement, the players may - and often do - seek to involve external players who can enforce an outcome hierarchically. Or the adversaries may invest in rendering the condition of stalemate less harmful by increasing their self-sufficiency. All too often, players confronted by a hurting stalemate in a conflict develop a capacity to live with the deadlocked situation, preferring to accept a state of inertia than embark on the cumbersome process of settling the conflict jointly.

Though useful, the concept of "hurting stalemate" only partially describes the constellation leading to joint settlement. An additional factor is needed to push conflicting players towards the bargaining table to work out a joint settlement. Beside a hurting stalemate, a perception of great interdependence has to be solidly entrenched in the minds of the adversaries. It is not enough to be blocked in a conflict: opponents also need to realize that their fates are intimately linked and that there is little prospect of this changing in the near future. As long as the conflicting parties feel that the net result of the conflict can be an outcome which does not take into account the position of the adversary, joint settlement is unlikely to ensue. A joint settlement can only occur when the adversaries realize that living with the opponent is difficult, but living without the opponent is impossible.

Two cases of successful conflict regulation - namely, Belgium and South Africa - are enlightening in this perspective. Ethnonational and racial tensions have been prominent for decades in these countries. Though the two countries have not experienced similar levels of violence, these tensions were highly divisive and dominated politics in both countries in recent decades. Despite high ethnonational/racial polarization and juxtaposed interests, both conflicts resulted in a negotiated settlement. There was no outright cessation of (violent) inter-group hostilities, but each settlement produced a stable outcome in the sense that none of the key players (ANC, NP in South Africa and Christian Democrats, Liberals and Socialists in Belgium) subsequently sought to change the fundamentals of the agreement. The analysis of what led South Africans and Belgians to overcome their outstanding differences by working out a joint settlement can contribute to a general understanding of what drives players to joint decision-making.

During the 1970s and 1980s, tensions between Flemings and Francophones increasingly immobilized the functioning of national government. The power-sharing arrangement in force in the national government produced a stalemate whenever an ethnonational conflict occurred. Parity rules, consensus decision-making in the national government and a number of special majority requirements tempered a direct translation of Flemish demographic predominance into a corresponding share of decision-making power. Flemings and Francophones carried roughly equal weight in policy decisions. Although temporary power imbalances occurred between the ethnonational groups, institutionally-gearred unanimity or consensus rules precluded the continued dominance of either side. A system based on unanimity decisions (whether de facto or formal) and diverging interests is, of course, easily stalled. The unanimity rule implies a right of veto for every participant. Each party has the capacity to stall the process and is likely to do so when interests are perceived to be incompatible. Ethnonational mobilization in Belgium infused decision-making with just such incompatible zero-sum

perceptions and this, under the unanimity rule, led to a recurrent stalling of policy-making. The recurrent pattern of government crises and collapse over ethnonational issues during the late 1970s and 1980s led to what Zartman described as a "mutually hurting stalemate".

Similarly, towards the end of the 1980s the South African government and the anti-apartheid movement had reached stalemate stage. The apartheid regime had encountered insurmountable difficulties in containing an increasingly strong and efficient anti-apartheid movement. By the beginning of the 1990s, the ANC-led movement was drawing support from almost every segment of black society (unions, churches, students, women, traditional leaders, homeland populations, etc.). Anti-apartheid mobilization could bring the country to a virtual standstill. The opposition strategy, aimed at making the black population ungovernable, was not without success. The National Party government managed to maintain only limited control over its territory, at very high policing and security costs. The invigorated anti-apartheid movement of the 1980s could corner the regime, but it was still not in a position to overthrow it. The South African government, bureaucracy and security forces still represented a formidable opponent, no longer able to crush the opposition but certainly able to maintain white rule for some time to come. The main conflicting players, the NP government and the ANC, were clearly locked into a stalemate position. The lack of a clear power preponderance on either side limited the potential success of unilateral actions. Two roughly equal sides were at loggerheads, and the continuation of open (violent) conflict was not expected to alter this balance of power in the near future.

As was mentioned before, the concept of stalemate goes a long way towards encapsulating the constellation leading to joint settlement. However, it also overlooks an important feature that was present in the South African and Belgian cases. It was not the mere acknowledgement of a stalemate that drew Belgians and South Africans to the bargaining table. Besides the mutual recognition that the continuation of overt hostilities would merely harshen the stalemate conditions, the conflicting players also realized that they were highly interdependent. The stalemate situation indicated that the existing conflict strategies were counterproductive. A stalemate demonstrates the erroneous nature of current strategies but leaves a number of non-co-operative options open. The realization of interdependence narrows these alternatives down to one single option, namely, a joint and mutually acceptable settlement.

Flemings and Francophones were aware that the only way out of the stalemate would have to be a mutually acceptable joint settlement. The ethnonationally mixed nature of central institutions and the Brussels region, together with supra-ethnonational loyalties to the Belgian state and its symbols, are but some of the contextual features which forced the conflicting players to see their inherent interdependence within the Belgian state. Not only were conflicting ethnonational groups part of the conflict, but they would also have to be integral parts of any reform or new dispensation that sought the regulation of the conflict. A similar realization of inherent interdependence occurred in the South African case.

Here, stalemate between the apartheid government and the ANC-led movement signalled the failure of existing strategies on both sides. In addition, the realization of interdependence

fuelled the notion that any new democratic solution would have to incorporate the desires of both sides. The territorial dispersal of whites on South African soil ruled out white secession as a realistic strategy. Moreover, whites were aware that any new political dispensation would reflect the demographical preponderance of blacks in South African society. In short, whites realized that the change from the current strategy (continued racial segregation) could not be outright white separation and would entail a considerable degree of black rule. Under the influence of Joe Slovo, the ANC leadership revised its demand for a direct transition to full majority rule (which would of course be black rule). Like the white leaders, the ANC was aware that, despite its obvious numerical and political strength, it could not "go it alone". The white minority could still block any real democratic transition. Furthermore, white control over the financial and economic sectors would remain a crucial variable under the new dispensation. In short, stalemate revealed that existing strategies on both sides were leading only to a dead end, while interdependence ruled out all other unilateral strategies and pointed to joint decision-making as the only realistic solution to the conflict.

Suggestions for the Settlement of the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict

In the previous sections, general insights into conflict regulation and joint decision-making have been presented. In this paper, theory is not treated as an end in itself. What matters here is the relevance of theoretical insights to understanding and suggesting approaches to the regulation of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict. Little reference will be made to the precise empirical elements of the conflict. The emphasis of the following paragraphs is on broad dynamics and general suggestions for improved plurinational coexistence in Georgia and Abkhazia.

Given the problematic, asymmetric nature of internal conflicts, it seems important for the opposing parties in the conflict to perceive and treat each other as equals. Discrepancies in the status of the opponents encourages the weaker side to improve the balance of power in its favour. The lack of equality between adversaries often leads to situations where the inferior side either refuses to negotiate or negotiates while continually investing in extra-negotiational strategies in order to strengthen its position at the bargaining table. Perceptions of equality should not be interpreted as actual equality of resources (military, economic, demographic, etc.) or as a need for purely symmetrical solutions. What is meant here by perceptions of equality is that the adversaries should fully recognize that they cannot impose an outcome upon their opponent.

Low intra-party cohesion and extremist flanking is a phenomenon that has derailed many a negotiation process. The activities of poorly controlled extremist flanks can not only create distrust and doubts concerning the bona fide intentions of the negotiators, but can also significantly jeopardize the satisfactory implementation of a negotiated agreement. Weak leadership control over grass-roots supporters and extremists increases the element of uncertainty in negotiations. It casts doubt on the legitimacy and representativity of the negotiators and on their capacity to reciprocate concessions and, most importantly, it invites scepticism as to whether the opponent can and actually will live up to the agreement during its

implementation phase. Many agreements falter during implementation, the phase where general, often ambiguous, stipulations need to be translated into concrete measures. Implementation will forcefully bring to the fore any lack of consensus there may be in agreements concluded under duress or clouded by imprecision. It is clear that during implementation, which is a highly sensitive phase of conflict regulation, intra-party rivalry and extremist flanks can hamper the appropriate execution of an agreement to the point of derailing the entire settlement process. It is therefore imperative that both the Georgian and Abkhaz governments acquire full control over their internal forces. Disparate actions by the Abkhaz militia and unco-ordinated incursions by armed IDPs (internally displaced persons) into the Inguri security zone feed distrust at the bargaining table and hinder the co-ordinated implementation of agreements.

Conflict regulation strategies should aim at the formulation of stable outcomes. In a previous section, joint decision-making was singled out as the most efficient strategy for achieving such stability. This is based on the principle that an agreed outcome is likely to incorporate demands from both sides. The opposing parties in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict should therefore accept the idea that any solution to their dispute will require each of them to make concessions in order to alleviate their opponent's difficulties. Exploiting the opponent's short term weaknesses to enforce an outcome may be beneficial for domestic purposes, but an outcome achieved in this way is unlikely to remain uncontested in the future. There can be no clear winners or losers in joint decision-making. A clear designation of victorious or defeated negotiators is the most fertile soil for revanchist conflict in the future. The Abkhaz quest for a political status as close as possible to independence is a maximalist strategy that does not take into account Georgian concerns. The Georgian insistence on the return of refugees and IDPs prior to an overall political settlement, meanwhile, disregards basic Abkhaz anxieties.

None of the strategies cited constitutes an adequate basis for successful joint decision-making, because they each aim at maximizing individual benefits, whereas the prime concern should be the establishment of a joint benefit. As long as the conflicting parties merely put forward their own demands without consideration for their opponent's position, interactions will retain a purely competitive rather than a problem-solving quality.

The above suggestions essentially amount to attitudinal and strategical changes which should ideally be thoroughly instilled into the adversaries at the outset of the negotiations. These suggestions have to do with a problem-solving disposition prior to joint decision-making. Interactive dynamics occurring during the settlement process are at least as important as the a priori disposition of the adversaries. The numerous reports by the United Nations Secretary-General on the situation in Abkhazia give a rather gloomy picture of the dynamics during this settlement process. Despite a number of meetings and (partially- or non-implemented) agreements between the opposing parties, hardly any real progress seems to have been made towards a comprehensive settlement. Although the meetings between the Abkhaz and the Georgians have been described as negotiations, it is this writer's opinion that hardly any real bargaining has taken place. The trading of benefits and concessions and the exchange of

proposals and counterproposals, which Rubin and Brown identified as the key characteristics of bargaining settings, have not developed in the Abkhaz-Georgian talks. It appears that the negotiation process has come to a halt at the NAN phase (negotiations about negotiations). Negotiations have been hampered by disagreement over the elementary features of the setting for the negotiations. Dissension arose over typical NAN issues, namely, the composition of the Georgian delegation at the bargaining table or the question of whether to refer in the title of the negotiations to the "conflict in Abkhazia" or the "Abkhaz-Georgian conflict".

Furthermore, in none of the talks has there been a genuine consensus on the composition and ordering of the agenda items. The Abkhazians insisted on a political settlement before the return of the IDPs and refugees; the Georgians sought to address these items in the reverse order. The Abkhazians demanded a discussion of the terms of their sovereign status (an independent or confederal state) and rejected the examination of anything short of outright sovereignty; while the Georgian negotiators refused to consider the Abkhaz agenda and insisted that arrangements going beyond an autonomous or federated status for Abkhazia could not form the basis of the negotiations. The talks that followed the unresolved agenda disagreements lacked the indispensable interaction of give-and-take and fell short of genuine consensus. Each side confined its bargaining activity to a repeated submission of its own demands and a subsequent refusal to yield.

Despite the very clear stalemate in the conflict, the conflicting parties did not succeed in starting substantive bargaining. This stalemate is surely one that hurts both sides. Georgians are left with about 260,000 refugees whose continued presence is a serious burden on Georgia's economic recovery. Abkhazia finds itself under an economic blockade and virtually cut off from the outside world, which refuses to recognize an Abkhazian state outside Georgian state borders. Yet the "mutually hurting stalemate" does not seem to be pushing the parties to regulate their differences. It is this writer's view that there are three principal reasons which have kept the adversaries from genuinely seeking conflict resolution, in spite of a prominent "hurting stalemate":

1. insufficient acknowledgement of interdependence
2. failure to recognize and act upon the opponent's underlying position, and
3. the absence of an emergent political formula which could constitute a way out of the conflict. None of these three causes of the impasse is fixed or static. Each of them can be remedied so as to stimulate more effective efforts at regulating the conflict.

The denial of the inherent Georgian-Abkhazian interdependence is especially prominent on the Abkhaz side. The Ardzinba government mainly focuses on unilateral strategies (referendums, elections, the drafting of a constitution, the return of the diaspora) in an attempt to consolidate the independent status of Abkhazia. The Abkhaz side seems to view continued

coexistence with Georgians within Georgia as the least desirable option. According to a senior Russian diplomat, the Abkhaz agenda could be summarized as "to freeze the situation, as happened in Cyprus, allowing time for a return of the Abkhaz diaspora and for the immigration of North Caucasians. Putting the situation on hold for the long term would have the further advantage of gradually accustoming the international community to the fact of Abkhaz independence". In summary, the Abkhaz side seems to be under the impression that a future without Georgia (and Georgians) is feasible, so they dismiss the notion of Abkhaz-Georgian interdependence. The numerous, unanimous UN resolutions in support of Georgia's territorial integrity and the Russian-Georgian blockade are all measures designed to prevent Abkhazia from pursuing an independent, unilateral strategy. Moreover the future of an independent Abkhazia under a newly enforced blockade, internationally isolated and with a large group of increasingly hostile IDPs at its borders, does not seem all bright by any standards. So far, attempts to prevent Abkhaz unilateralism have been expressed in a negative, sanctioning vein. There also needs to be more insistence on confronting the Abkhaz side with the cost of its de facto independence and the benefits and rewards of accepting its interdependence. Instead of merely using penalties as a stick, Georgia and the international community could offer more political and economic carrots to attract Abkhazia to a negotiated solution. This combination of positive and negative sanctions should not, however, be used to pressurize the Abkhazians into endorsing the Georgian proposals, but merely to end unilateralism and to produce a more compromise-oriented Abkhaz bargaining strategy.

A lack of political will to act upon the opponent's underlying positions can be found on both the Georgian and the Abkhaz sides. The combined Georgian proposals for a return of the IDPs and a federal state, as they now stand, seem very generous but actually offer very little to allay deep-seated Abkhaz fears of Georgian domination. The rigid Abkhaz bargaining stance seems to be fuelled by a strongly held sense of demographical and cultural insecurity. Abkhaz references to the fate of the vanished Ubykh people (the last Ubykh language speaker died in 1994), who populated the Russian Black Sea coast, are a very clear indication of the primordial Abkhaz fear of extinction. Georgian settlement proposals should offer the Abkhaz the most solid guarantees possible of their continued demographic and cultural survival. The Georgian federal proposals do not provide such guarantees. Even in an asymmetric federal arrangement with considerable autonomy for Abkhazia, it is unclear how an Abkhaz political elite could retain control over its territory if Georgian refugees and IDPs returned. The return of the IDPs and a federal arrangement could simply result in the ethnic Abkhazians (17% of the Abkhaz population in 1989) again becoming a regional demographic and political minority. Federal autonomy for the Abkhaz region, repopulated by the IDPs, would thus amount simply to autonomy status for a region that was politically controlled by a Georgian population. The protection of ethnic Abkhazians would then depend solely on the goodwill of the Georgian elites. Given the violent events of the past, it is not surprising that Abkhazians reject this option. The formulation of a mutually acceptable outcome will thus require a search for problem-specific arrangements that provide real guarantees for the ethnic Abkhazians. A first step towards such solutions would be a Georgian acknowledgement of the Abkhaz fear of extinction.

Abkhaz demands for an independent or confederal state also disregard the Georgians' underlying goals. There is a consensus among observers and the international community that the current state of affairs, with tens of thousands of IDPs outside Abkhazia, is an abnormal and untenable situation that cannot be perpetuated. The Abkhaz reluctance to accept significant numbers of refugees and their vision of Abkhazian statehood indicate a total disregard for Georgian concerns. Clearly, the Abkhaz proposals include just as many guarantees for the protection of returned Georgians as the Georgian federal proposals do for the ethnic Abkhaz, that is, next to none. In this respect, Georgia's insistence on the maintenance of its territorial integrity is perfectly understandable.

What would be the position of Georgian refugees and IDPs in an independent Abkhazia? In seeking the protection and safeguarding of its interests, the Georgian population in Abkhazia would find itself at the mercy of an Abkhaz political elite. Again, given the recent history of violent strife, this prospect is hardly one that appeals to the Georgians.

In summary, the institutional proposals of both parties have insufficiently addressed the basic goals of their counterparts. Abkhazian proposals in no way accommodate Georgian needs. The Georgian federal proposal of 1996 does not respond to the inherent Abkhazian desire for guaranteed political and cultural survival. The Abkhaz confederal proposal does not offer sufficient guarantees that future conflicts between both communities will not lead to secession. A regulation of this conflict is unlikely to be achieved as long as the parties involved continue to pursue exclusive goals which do not incorporate the interests of their opponent. Instead of a rigid adherence to initial demands and a refusal to yield, a bridging technique could be applied. Seeking regulation through bridging means that neither party has its initial demands met, but a new formula is devised that satisfies the main interests underlying these demands. Pruitt and Carnevale provide an elegant example of bridging: "...as in the case of two people who were fighting over an orange. The problem was completely solved when it was discovered that one wanted the pulp to make juice and the other wanted the peel to put in a cake." In a similar vein, Abkhazians and Georgians could investigate the purposes for which they desire the metaphorical orange. An identification of these purposes could perhaps lead to the formulation of more compatible sets of interests. Bridging would involve a reformulation of the issues at stake, based on an analysis of the underlying interests of both sides. In addition to mutual insensitivity to the opponent's underlying interests, negotiations are seriously hampered by the absence of an emergent political formula that could appeal to both sides. In other words, there seems to be no obvious way of separating the orange peel from the pulp.

The following guidelines may make a modest contribution to the formulation of a way out of the Georgian-Abkhazian impasse. A bridging solution could be based on a federal structure in which

- 1. Abkhazia has autonomous status,**
- 2. within Abkhazia, territorial units are used where possible,**

- 3. within Abkhazia, non-territorial spheres of authority are applied where necessary, and**
- 4. Georgians and Abkhazians share power in the regional Abkhaz government.**

The key element in the above suggestions is that the ethnically mixed parts of Abkhazia would be ruled not by a territorially defined government but by one whose jurisdiction covered population groups rather than territories. For example, the Abkhazians living in ethnically mixed parts of Abkhazia would be under the government of the Abkhaz community, whose authority extended to all Abkhazians in Abkhazia. Those parts of Abkhazia that are relatively homogeneous could be governed by purely territorial governments. The non-territorially defined governments (Abkhaz) could be put in charge of all ethnically sensitive areas (language, education, immigration, security, etc.). Of course, non-territorial government could not, in the nature of things, be used in all fields of political regulation. A number of clearly territorial matters (natural resources, pollution, transport, communication, regional public infrastructure, criminal law, etc.) cannot be governed by non-territorial entities. A vast number of areas of competence will have to be organized on a territorial basis and will require substantial Georgian-Abkhaz co-operation.

Thus a regional Abkhaz government in which Georgians and Abkhazians share power on an equal basis or via mutual veto rights could be considered. An additional guarantee for the Abkhazians could consist in a federal constitutional stipulation that any federal regulation (of the overarching Georgian state government) affecting Abkhazia (the entire region) would have to be ratified by a majority of the Abkhaz community representatives (the non-territorial government of ethnic Abkhazians). Through the combined use of territorial and non-territorial definitions, both Georgians and Abkhazians could enjoy considerable autonomy within the same region. In addition, mutual checks and balances and powers of veto would preclude the domination of one group over another.

These preliminary and cursory suggestions obviously overlook a number of practical complications and difficulties. Nevertheless, they could marry the basic Georgian demands with the underlying Abkhazian goals. These suggestions entail the return of the IDPs, and Georgia's territorial integrity would be restored in a federal context. Ethnic Abkhazians would gain substantial self-rule, a disproportionate share of regional government power, and rights of veto in relation to federal and regional regulations affecting their community and territory.

Clearly, it will be up to the warring parties to devise their own solutions to the conflict. The role of foreign experiences and proposals can at best be a source of inspiration - they will not provide all the answers. The most serious obstacle to the settlement process is not a technical, but rather a psychological one. Each side is unwilling to drop its unilateral strategies in favour of an evaluation of its opponent's underlying desires. Without a genuine willingness on both sides to consider the opponent's demands, a way out of this complex conflict remains distant.

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ABKHAZ

(Own name:Apsua)

Indigenous North West Caucasian people some 90.000 to 100,000 of whom live in Abkhazia. According to Abkhaz sources, half a million Abkhaz live in exile in Turkey and the Middle East, where they constitute part of the Circassian diaspora.

Abkhaz are closely related to Abaza, who moved east wards between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, where they took to Islam under the influence of their new neighbours. They now live in Karachai-Cherkessia. Until the 1860s they were seen as one people living at the eastern coast of the Black Sea.

Abkhaz territory came under Russian rule in 1864, and Abaz in the early nineteenth century. Both peoples are absolute minorities in their republics. Many particularly Muslim Abkhaz, fell victim to a comprehensive population transfer program between Turkey and Russia. When they left their land was given to Christians.

The Abkhaz Language

1. Abkhaz belongs to the small North West Caucasian language-family whose other members are Circassian, the virtually extinct Ubykh and Abaza. There may well be a distant genetic relationship with the remaining two North Caucasian families (North Central Caucasian and North East Caucasian, or Daghestanian), but no such link can be demonstrated with South Caucasian (Kartvelian). From a purely linguistic point of view Abaza can be viewed as a divergent dialect of Abkhaz, though for geo-political reasons both were awarded literary status in the early days of Soviet power in the Caucasus. The two main dialects of Abkhaz are (northern) Bzâp and the literary (southern) Abz'âwa. Both are spoken in Abkhazia, which since 1931 has had the status of an autonomous republic within (the former Soviet) Georgia. The designation "Abkhaz" derives from the Georgian ethnonym, though that in turn ultimately comes from Greek.

2. Like all members of the family Abkhaz is characterised by:

(a) a minimal (viz. two-term open vs close) vertical vowel-system, though the orthography indicates vowel-phones in addition to these two phonemes;

(b) a large consonantal inventory, made up of the standard Caucasian opposition between voiced vs voiceless aspirate vs voiceless ejective obstruents with widespread use of the secondary articulatory features of palatalisation and labialisation -- Abz'âwa has 58 consonantal phonemes, Bzâp 67;

(c) simple noun-morphology, Abkhaz possessing only one formally marked case (the Adverbial);

(d) polysynthetic verb-forms, which, in addition to incorporating markers for the normal verbal categories of tense, aspect, mood and causation, recapitulate almost the entire syntax of the clause by means of a complex system of pronominal cross-referencing affixes that shew agreement with subject, direct object and indirect-oblique objects, e.g.

sara' a-píYâ's a-sap'â'n s-xarp (0-)a-la-l-sâ-r-dZYdZYa'-(0-)jt'

I the-woman the-soap my-shirt (it-)it-by- her-I-cause-wash-(PAST-)FINITE

"I got the woman to wash my shirt with (the) soap"

3. Word-order is predominantly Subject-(Indirect/Direct) Object-Verb, possessor precedes possessed, most adjectives follow their nouns, postpositions rather than prepositions exist; intransitive subjects and direct objects are marked alike within the verb, leaving transitive subjects to be treated differently, which makes the language Ergative in structure. If a clause is defined as a word-sequence containing a finite verb, then subordinate clauses as such (as in

North Caucasian languages generally) are rare, since non-finite verb-forms are employed, relative pronouns and subordinating conjunctions as separate word-classes being absent, e.g.

sara' a-sap'â'n s-xarp (0-)a'-la-z-sâ-r-dZYdZYa-(0-)z a-píYâ's
I the-soap my-shirt (it-)it-by- whom-I-cause-wash (PAST-)NON.FINITE the-woman

"the woman whom I got to wash my shirt with (the) soap..."

4. Iranian, Turkish, Kartvelian (Mingrelian and Georgian) and especially Russian influences are present in the vocabulary, particularly in the semantic fields relating to objects and concepts within the sciences and politics. Morphology seems unaffected by foreign influence, though the occasional use of a full subordinate clause (with, for example, the speech-particle íYa "having said" serving as conjunction) may be due to Russo-Kartvelian influence.

5. According to the 1989 Soviet census there were 102,938 Abkhazians in the whole USSR, of whom 93.3% spoke Abkhaz; of this total 93,267 lived in Abkhazia itself. An indeterminate number of Abkhazians, possibly more than reside in the (former) USSR, live in the Near East, predominantly Turkey, where at least the older generations have succeeded in preserving their language.

6. The assignment of literary status to Abkhaz, with all that this entails (publishing of papers, journals and books; teaching of the language throughout schooling and use of it as the actual means of instruction for the first few grades in local-language schools before transference to Russian; radio- and, since 1978, TV-broadcasting), have helped guard against its disappearance within Abkhazia. No such benefit accrued to those Abkhazians living beyond the USSR's boundaries, with the result that especially amongst the younger generation language-retention is probably less strong than amongst their Soviet coevals. However, the opening of Soviet borders in the late 1980s and the subsequent collapse of the USSR have led, and will undoubtedly continue to lead, to closer ties between home- and emigre-communities. This will surely guarantee the survival and indeed strengthening of the language, which represents the only one the two communities share and which will underpin the consolidation of their ethnicity that both seem to desire. Renewed pressure on Soviet Abkhazians from their Kartvelian neighbours (see 8) has had the natural, if unintentional, consequence of awakening amongst them a determination not lose their language to the advantage of Russian, which is the main *lingua franca* of Abkhazia and which Abkhazians know much better than the Kartvelians, thanks to their educational system.

7. The first script devised for (Bzâp) Abkhaz was that proposed in 1862/3 by the man who laid the foundation for the study of North Caucasian languages, the Russian soldier-linguist Baron Peter von Uslar. A series of adaptations were made for the occasional publications that preceded the Soviet period, and it was the 55 character script of A. C`'oc"ua, first utilised in

1909, that was adopted for the literary language as part of the Soviet drive to eradicate illiteracy throughout the Union. In 1926 this was replaced by the complicated 75 character Analytical Alphabet of (Scottish-Georgian) Nikolai Marr. This in turn yielded to the Latin-based script of N. Jakovlev in 1928. When the Young Written Languages of the USSR were forced to move to Cyrillic-based scripts in 1936-38, Abkhaz (along with South Ossetic) was compelled to accept a Georgian-based orthography, which lasted until the death of (Georgian) Stalin. Since 1954 the present Cyrillic-based script has been in use. It is cumbersome, containing 14 characters not found in Cyrillic, and inconsistent. There are suggestions that a new Latin-based orthography should now be created.

8. The development of the written language has not been smooth. Apart from the disruption occasioned by so many changes of script, the attempt, begun in the 1930s before his elevation to office in Moscow by (Mingrelian) Lavrent'i Beria, to georgianise Abkhazia, which was the motivation behind the introduction of the Georgian-based script in 1938, culminated during the war in the replacement of Abkhaz-language schools by Georgian schools and a ban on both the teaching of, and publication in, the Abkhaz language. This policy was only reversed after the deaths of Stalin and Beria and explains why Bagrat' Dz'anas'ia's Abkhaz-Georgian Dictionary, completed in 1938 and thus utilising the Georgian alphabet, was only published in 1954. The State Programme for the Georgian Language, the draft of which appeared in November 1988 and which was passed into law in August 1989, makes no provision for the minority- languages of Georgia but does require not only that Georgian be taught in all schools throughout the republic but also that candidates for higher education establishments in Georgia first pass a test in Georgian language and literature. As stated above, Georgian is little heard in Abkhazia and thus poorly known among the Abkhazians. Therefore, at a time when Russian was the predominant second language (Mingrelian a third for many Abkhazians) such provisions in this Programme only served to reinforce the suspicions about Kartvelian intentions towards Abkhaz language and culture that had been harboured since the middle years of the century. Following the expulsion of so many Abkhazians to the Ottoman Empire after Russia's conquest of the North Caucasus in 1864 and the forced immigration into Abkhazia of Slavs, Armenians and especially Mingrelians during the 1930s the Abkhazians are a 17% minority on their own territory. But the determination to halt any further decline and to keep the language alive both at home and amongst the emigre;-communities is likely to produce a flourishing of literature, given the importance of the written word for any literate society at the end of the 20th century and the consequent choice of a literary career by those with the necessary talent. However, Abkhazia's desire to leave Georgia, the Kartvelians' unyielding attitude to such aspirations, and the political turmoil in Georgia at the time of writing make for an uncertain future.

9. Dârmit' Gulia (1874-1960) is justifiably regarded as the Father of Abkhaz Literature. He wrote the first novel, published the first volume of verse and founded the first newspaper in the language. His output also contains plays, translations, historical and ethnographical writings. He lectured on Abkhaz for a time (1924-25) at Tbilisi University. Samson C`'anba (1886-1937) lay the foundations for Abkhazian drama. The fact that both these pioneers were southern Abkhazians helped to establish the southern dialect as the literary norm. Amongst living writers Bagrat' S`'inkwba is universally acknowledged to be a master in both prose and

poetry; his novel "The Last of the Departed", which deals with the aftermath of the migration to Turkey of the entire Ubykh nation (cousins of the Abkhazians) in 1864, is available in English. Ivan Tarba (b.1921) and the children's author Neli Tarba (b.1934) are also highly regarded. Abkhazian folklore shares with that of other North Caucasian peoples the epic Nart sagas, an edition of which, containing 42 tales, was published in 1962.

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Dr. B. George Hewitt
Reader in Caucasian Languages,
School of Oriental and African Studies
University of London
England

Dr. Philol. Khibia Amichba

*The Abkhazian language and its place
in the Caucasian family of languages.*

"Our language is also our history.

There is more living illustration

of the peoples, than bones, weapons

and graves – it's their languages."

/Jacob Grimm/

The territory of Abkhazia was populated from ancient times, and the richest archaeological excavations illustrate this. From antique times the different information on the history of Kolhida, especially about Abkhazia, was compiled from original sources of Ancient Greece (Aristotel, Strabon, Timosphen, Klaudi Ptolemei and others) and Rome (Dion Kassy, Appian, Phlavy Arrian, Plynii Secund etc.).

By the Middle Age History of Abkhazia the valuable information is contained in the works of Italian travelers and missionaries (Arkangelo Lamberty, Juseppe Judichi (XYIIc.), Dortelli D'Askoli, Barbaro (Venetian diplomat (XYc), George Interiano(XYIc), Tsampy, Raspony (XYIIc.)and others); Arabian and Persian travelers (Masudi (Xc.), Ibn-Haucal(Xc.), Abulfeda (XIYc.) and others).

From ancient times, side by side with legends about Prometheus, who was chained to the mountains and the golden fleece, which was connected with the Caucasus, there were a lot of legends about an unusual polylingual of its inhabitants. About many tribes of the Caucasus is said by "Father of History" Herodot. The Rome historian Pliny Secund left his information, according to which the Romans managed with the help of 130 interpreters in Dioskuria, that later was renamed in Sebastopolis /the modern Sukhum, the capital of Abkhazia/. Masudi, the author of X-th century, wrote: "There are about 72 tribes in these mountains, and each tribe has its own Tsar, its own language, which is quite different from all the others.,. Only Allah can count different peoples living in the Caucasus. The mountain Caucasus

is a mountain of languages. "2

Nowadays, you will be quite right, if you call the Caucasus by the name "A mountain of languages" , in spite of the fact that both its languages and its speakers suffered greatly.

Today more than 50 languages are spoken in the Caucasus. Among them there are Indo-European (Russian, Ukrainian, Armenian, Ossetic), Turkic languages (Azerbaijani, Kumyc, Karachaevo-Balkarian), Semitic (Isorian) a.o.

The majority of the Caucasian languages are autochthonal /about 40/. They are divided into 4 groups: Abkhazo-Adygian, Nakh, Daghestan and Kartvelian.

Abkhazo-Adygian group in its turn is divided into two groups: Abkhazo-Abazian (Abkhazian and Abazian languages) and Adygian (Adygean, Kabardinian-Cherkessian languages). The intermediate position between them is occupied by the Ubykh language, which has already disappeared even in Turkey. All these languages, except Ubykh, are represented in the Caucasus.

Abkhazians are the autochthonal population of the Caucasus, whose ancestors lived on the territory of Abkhazia from the ancient times. The documents of archeological excavations testify diversified economy and versatile spiritual life of ancient abkhazian tribes- Apsils, Abasgoos, Sanygoos, Misimians and others. The name of the Apsils tribe has been preserved to this day in the self-name of the Abkhazian people - Aps-ua, and the Abkhazian's name for their country - Apsny. The names "Abkhaz", "Abaza", "Apsua" are the modifications of the same ethnonyms, which go back to one root (ps, bz). The terms "Abkhaz", "Mother-land", "Ancestor", "Soul" have the same root "ps", in the Abkhazian language the word "Mother-country" /apsadgyl/ means "the Land of soul", and the language of the Abkhazians /aps-shva/ - "the Song of Soul",

The Abkhazian language - is the native language of Abkhazians, which live in Republic of Abkhazia and it is also spoken in many countries of the world /Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Germany, USA and others/ by the descendants of makhadgers, which were exiled by force from Abkhazia in 19 century.

Nowadays Abkhazian language is represented in Republic of Abkhazia by two dialects: they are - Abzuyian and Bzypian. The Abzuyian dialect is the basis of literary language.

Abkhazian language has developed for thousands years. By the beginning of XX century it reached the highest level of its development. Some scientists think that this fact is connected with the writing language, which Abkhazians had long ago. Academician Klimov sayst: "If it is possible to prove, that Maikop inscription, dated by 12-13 centuries is interpreted in Abkhazian language as Turchaninov supposes, then we shall be faced to the most ancient written monument- on the territory of the USSR". As a fact, the epithet name Lasha /I q of XIII c./, which can be translated from Abkhazian as "Enlightener", may be considered as the first proved written word.³

The scientist and the teacher Machavariani wrote about the Abkhazian language: "The Abkhazian language is very flexible and sonorous; it gives not only the solemn tones, but it caresses an ear with the tenderest expressions. Both terrible sounds of the nature and the melody of the quiet wind puff, the streamlet purl,sorrow and joy, anger and kindness,- are fully expressed in this language".⁴

The Abkhazians were always very careful with their language,with their folklore monuments. For its develop- ment the young written Abkhazian language had a well-made "oral literary language", the example of which is the heroic epos of "Nartaa", the true stories,legends, heroic and everyday songs.

Together with other Caucasian languages, the Abkhazian language is referred to a number of well-investigated languages. From ancient times a lot of famous scientist-travellers from different countries visited Caucasus and paid a great attention to this language.

The first notes of real linguistic material in the Abkhazian and Abaza languages were made by the famous Turkish traveller Evlia Cheleby (1641). He made his notes in Arabian alphabet, "The Abaza language is very unusual and splendid", - he wrote. A little later I.A. Gueldenstaedt represented a very considerable material in Abkhazian language and made the first genetic classification of Caucasian languages. G.Rosen was the first, who paid attention to the scientific study of the Abkhazian language.

The first full description of Abkhazian grammar belongs to the famous Russian Caucasian investigator Uslar /1862/. Uslar's work was translated into German by Shiefner. Many works on structure and senarate questions of the Abkhazian language belong to Marr, Charaya, Dirr, Genko, Deeters, Dumezil, Schmidt, Bowda, Dzanashia a.o. At present time the study of the Abkhazian language is very intensive held in scientific centres of Europe and USA. The

scientist-linguists from Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Makhachkala, Nalchik, Maikop, Cherkessk, Sukhum and others investigate it.

The large work on the investigation of the Abkhazian language was made by Academician Marr. His works "About language and history of Abkhazians" /1938/ and "Abkhazo-Russian dictionary" /1926/ didn't lose their value. Marr appreciated the significance of the Abkhazian language for linguistic theory very highly:

"The Abkhazian language linguistically is on one of the highest rungs of human speech and among languages akin to it, occupies that same rung as English does among European languages. The Abkhazian language is more changable new type. Dialectological wealth of Abkhazian speech, which was without writing till XIX century, is very valuable for the science with its material lighting many facts of the cultural history in the Ancient-East world".5.

The Abkhazian alphabet was worked out by Uslar in 1862 on the basis of Russian graph. After that the Abkhazian literary language began forming. The graph of Abkhazian writing was changed many times. In 1926 an analytical alphabet of Marr appeared. In 1928 - there was an alphabet on Latin graphical basis, in 1938 - on the Georgian basis and since 1954 - on the Russian one.

The working Abkhazian alphabet contains 40 signs, which can give 62 phonemes as well as in combinations and by themselves.

The Abkhazo-Adygian languages have the richest consonant systems in the world in spite of the fact, that they are very poor with the vocal ones. In the Abkhazian, Abazian and Ubykh languages there are only two vowel phonemes: (a) and (?) which can form other vowels (e), (o), (i), (u) as a result of assimilation and combining with half-vowels, which haven't phonem meaning in vocabulary.

Consonant system of the Ubykh language is characterized by 80 phonemes, the Abkhazian literary language by 55 ones (the Bzyp dialect - b? 67 ones). The peculiarity of the Abkhazo-Adygian languages is the presence of the whistling and hissing spirants and affricates. There are palatalized and unpalatalized, labialized and unlabialized consonants. In the Abkhazian language the roots usually contain one syllable (ab - a father, a-tsla - a tree a.o.).

The stress in the Abkhazian language is dynamic, intensive, but not fixed (a'la - an eye, al'a - a dog, a'cva - a dream, acv'? - a skin a.o.). Assimilation, reduction and combining are widespread in phonetic process.

The morphological type of the Abkhaz is characterized as agglutinative (with polysynthetism). The simple system of the names and complex system of verbs are very typical for morphology in this language. The Abkhazian language differs from the other Caucasian languages by the absence of declination, that is compensated by the verb structure. The number, locative particles are the same for both a name and a verb. The nouns are divided into

two classes: a class of a person and a class of a thing. Common nouns have definite and indefinite, possessive categories, number and other grammar classes.

Adjectives don't differ from the nouns morphologically. Qualitative adjectives are put after the nouns (auau' bzia - a nice man). Relative adjectives stand before the definite word (alasa kasy-a wollen shawl). Comparative degree is expressed by the description (eiha ibziou - better). Numerals are characterised by the expression of ? person category or a thing category / adzy-one(a person class), aky-one(a thing class)/. There are 3 personal pronouns. The categories of a woman and a man are marked in the 2 and 3 person singular, and in the 3 person singular the category of a man is combined with a category of a thing. Personal pronouns have full and short forms /sara - sa - I/.

Pronoun-possessive prefixes are used in the function of possessive pronouns (s-napy - my hand).

Verb in the Abkhazian language is characterized by a complex system of conjugation and word-building. There are some peculiarities which depend on static and dynamic, transitivity and intransitivity of a verb. Transitivity and intransitivity of a verb is defined by a place of person class showing in the verb itself /for example a verb of labile construction: transitive verb "isdzakh'ueit" – "I am sewing smth", intransitive verb "sdzakhueit" "I sew".

The dynamic verbs have all the forms of tenses and moods. Negative affix is' "m" /sykam – "I am not here"/.

There is also a personal - class inclination, it means that the verbs are inclined by persons and by grammatical categories of a person and a thing.

There are some moods in the Abkhazian language: indicative, imperative, conditional, subjunctive, finite and infinitive forms.

The system of preverbs is very complex. There are preverbs only of direction /"aa" - to the speaker, "na" - from the speaker/ and the preverbs-bases, which are from the roots -a'-tza-la-ra -to go under smth, a-kha-la-'ra- to go upstairs/, a very rich system of preverbs in verbs is compensating by a weak development of postpositions.

Morphologically the verb can express the categories of causative, reciprocity, possibility a.o. There are no voices in the Abkhazian language. The position of transitivity of the verb to the voice is neutral.

Different tense forms in Infinitive with relational prefixes (i) and (z), which mean a subject and an object in dependence from

the verb and person, expressed in it, are used as preverbs.

Adverbial modifiers are morphologically expressed in a verb by *means of verbal particles /s - the adverbial modifier of reason, sh - the adverbial modifier of manner, akh'- the adverbial modifier of place, an -the adverbial modifier of time/.*

The qualitative adverbs are the verbal adverbs with suffixes /ny - ipshdza-ny – beautifully/. Some particular adverbs are represented without any special affixes.

In the Abkhazian language the postpositions and preverbs are used instead of prepositions in verbs. There are no conjunctions (relative pronouns "what", "who" "which", "when"), because the subordinate clause is absent in the Abkhazian language. The function of conjunctions are expressed with verbal particles.

There is a number of interjections in Abkhaz. They are: address /ua/, the interjection of blame /nykh-nykh/, motive /hai,amarja/, pity /gusha/.

The main member of the sentence is a verb. Besides a verb-predicate, there are also a noun and an object /direct and indirect/. There are not complex sentences in the Abkhazian language. Function of the subordinate sentences make verbal adverbs, participial and other infinitive constructions.

Vocabulary of the Abkhazian language mainly forms age-old root of the word and its derivatives. Nowadays about 400 words expose, they are rising to the old language condition /which ???? the natural phenomena, names of elements of wild flora and fauna, terms of relationship, numerals of the first ten and so on/.

Apparent specific character of vocabulary, which differs the Abkhazian from all the other Abkhazo-Adygian language, makes a rich stratum of navigation terms and it testifies the close contact of the Abkhazians to a sea /ag'ba - a ship, ashkhua - a boat, a-pra -a sail, azhvua - an oar /.

Onomatopoeia is one of the considerable way of word-building and is highly developed in the Abkhazian language.

Vocabulary is mainly increased by means of word-building and borrowings. Besides of many new Russisms, the most considerable stratum of borrowings make up the Turkisms. In the Abkhazian language they all came out from Turkish and then with its help Ara-bisms and persisms appeared too.

Intra-group lexic¹ borrowings are related to the times of hegemony of Adyg feudal lords in the North-West Caucasus /adygisms are in Ubykh and Abkhazo-Abazian dialects /in the Abkhazian language "adagua - the Kabardian "dagu"- "deaf", Abkh. "apasa"- Kabardian "pas"- "early"/.

There are some difficulties to expose such borrowings because they are not clearly detached from their promordial common Vocabulary.

Side by side with above-named borrowings, the Indo-Europeisms are represented, they are especially close by their onomatopoeia to their old Indian correspondences: in Abkhaz "akata" - "net" - Old.-Ind. katah - "net", in Adygean "as'a", Kabardian "az'a" - "he-goat", Abkh. - 'adzar'" - kids - Indian "ajah" - "he-goat".

In common, a definite cultural tradition, of Romap-names is observed in Kolhida and in Abkhazia independently from times and ways of its penetration. So in II century one ruler's name was Julian, in the YIIc. - the region Lazica was ruled by Sergiy, in the YIII - Absyi ruler Marin was known.

The similar tradition of Abkhazo-Italian cultural and historical mutual relations was renewed in the Middle Age Period, when the Italian, trading stations were existed, on the East Shore of the Black Sea.

The question is, that in XIY-XY c. Genoese trading stations were in the following places: in Gagra /Gacary/, near the village Ala-khadzy /Santa-Sofia/, in Pitzunda /Pezonda/, in the region of Gudauta /Cavo di Buxo/, in Novy Aphon /Nicoffa/, in Sukhum /Sevastopoli/ and by the river Ingur /Sant-Angelo/. The most important Genoese settlement in Abkhazia was Sebastop1 /Sukhum/, which was protector's residence of all trading stations on the Black Sea Shore of the Caucasus.

All this testifies, that the versatile relations were never broken between Eastern Black Sea Shore and the Mediterranean, in particular, the Apennines. The historical phenomena always found its reflexion here, and first of all, in the language. The Abkhazian language preserved its wonderful archaic system and sounding and represents itself like an inexhaustible well of information of the Abkhazian ancient history.

At the same time, it is enriching and widening, and it reflexes the present day of the Abkhazians, being a state language of the Republic Abkhazia and a native language of the Abkhazians abroad.

The Abkhazian language is the language of Republican newspapers and magazines. Numerous belles-lettres, social and political, teaching and methodical literature for different educational institutions are published. Radio and local television programmes are conducted in Abkhaz. The State Theatre, Philharmonic Society and other hearths of national culture perform original and translated plays in the Abkhazian language. Schools, High educational institutions, radio, television, theatre, belles-lettres help widespreading of the Abkhazian literary language.

Many large epic works, novels and stories are created in the Abkhazian language. They are characterized, by an usual expressiveness. The main works of the Abkhazian writers, short stories by Lakrba, novels by Gulia and Shinkuba are translated into many foreign languages.

Besides the Abkhazians, many other nationalities are represented on the territory of Abkhazia: they are — the Russians, the Ukrainians, the Byelorussians, the Greeks, the Turks, the Tatars, the Armenians, the Jews and the others. They all love and respect the Abkhazian language. Many of them know it perfectly; their children learn it at school, special teaching and methodical literature is created for them.

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The Historical Symbolism of the Abkhaz National Flag

The open white palm on the red background is a symbol of Abkhazian statehood, which was formed at the time of the Abkhazian Kingdom (VIII-X centuries) and encompasses twelve centuries. Such a representation is attested on the coloured Genoese portalans (sea-charts) of the XIII-XIV centuries. A dark-red flag with white palm flew in the Middle Ages above the town of Sebastopolis (otherwise San-Sebastian and the classical Dioskuria, which was founded by the ancient Greeks in the VI-V centuries BC), on which site stands today's capital of Abkhazia, the city of Sukhum.

The seven 5-pointed stars above the palm are the seven main regions of historical Abkhazia: Sadz (Dzhigetia), Bzyp, Gumaa, Abzhwa, Samurzaq'an, Dal-Ts'abal, Pshoy-Aybga. These incorporated the ethnic territory of the Abkhazians from the River Khosta (frontier with the Ubykhs) down to the River Ingur (frontier with Mingrelia) and from the Black Sea to the Caucasus Mountains. Apart from this, the number '7' for Abkhazians (as for many other peoples) is viewed as sacred and is widely attested in their religion, mythology and traditional culture. Also endowed with esteem is the constellation known commonly by the title 'The Seven Brothers'.

The 5-pointed star is widespread among the Abkhazians as an ancient astrological symbol. It is found, moreover, on the antique amphors of the Apsilians, the ancestors of the Abkhazians, mentioned by Graeco-Roman authors in the I-II centuries AD.

At the same time the proportions of the flag, the number of stars and the sequence of green-white stripes reflect the fundamental look of the historical flag of the independent North Caucasus Republic (known in the literature as the Mountain Republic), which was proclaimed on 11 May 1918 and which existed for one year. At that period seven states were included in the composition of the Mountain Republic: Daghestan, Chechen-Ingushia, Ossetia, Abkhazia, Kabarda, Adygheia, Karachay-Balkaria. However, already in the second half of June 1918 Abkhazia, though part of the Mountain Republic, was occupied (and remained occupied until February 1921) by the military forces of the Georgian Democratic Republic; in February 1931, with the active participation of Stalin and Beria, Abkhazia was annexed by Soviet Georgia.

The green-white sequence of seven stripes (four green, three white) is an indication of the religious tolerance of the Caucasian peoples in the minds of whom Islam (the green) peacefully coexists with Christianity (the white). Abkhazia, as an ancient Christian land from the IV-th century, together with two others (Ossetia and Kabarda), was represented on the flag of the Mountain Republic by a white stripe.

The modern flag of the Republic of Abkhazia, approved by its Parliament in Sukhum on 23 July 1992, symbolises the fundamental stages in the development of the statehood of the Abkhazian nation, one of the oldest autochthonous ethnic groups of the Caucasus, whose language, culture and traditions are especially close to and cognate with those of the North Caucasian peoples, in particular the Abazinians, the Adyghe, the Kabardians, the Ubykhs, the Cherkess, etc...

The North Caucasian Diaspora in Turkey

By

Egbert Wesseling

The Abkhazians living in Turkey have preserved very well the customs, languages and dances carried there from Abkhazia by their ancestors. The etiquette of the Abkhazians [*apswara*] is strictly

observed. Of late they have been asking us to send them copies of the alphabet, books, teaching manuals, films on Abkhazia, recording of songs, language-primers. In hundreds of letters sent to the homeland there resounds a passionate longing to become acquainted with the life and culture of the Abkhazians residing in the motherland, and we believe that the time will soon come when many of them, setting foot on soil of their forebears, will say: 'Greetings, our father Caucasus, greetings, our mother *Apsne!*'¹

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1989, when the conflict between Abkhazia and the central government of Georgia began, the Abkhaz² formed only a 17.8 per cent minority in Abkhazia.³ In August 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic, with most of its ethnic Georgian members absent, declared independence. The Abkhaz nationalists took the lead in this process, supported by most other ethnically non-Georgian groups.⁴

Their demographic weakness was a major concern for the Abkhaz national movement. To secure ethnic survival, independence from Georgia and a change in the republic's ethnic balance was considered desirable. Remigration of the Abkhaz diaspora became a cherished goal of the separatist government of Abkhazia, and a source of concern for ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia.⁵

The vast majority of the North Caucasian diaspora, several millions of people, lives in Turkey and the wars in the Caucasus have strongly enhanced national feelings among them. They identify with the cause of the Abkhaz and the Chechens. When the wars broke out, meetings were held, solidarity committees were established, money was collected, and volunteers joined the separatist armed forces. These activities met with a great degree of sympathy among the Turkish public. At present, Chechen flags and portraits of Dzokhar Dudayev can be seen all over Turkey, and money is collected at virtually every bus station.⁶

There exists a great deal of speculation about the significance of the diaspora's contribution to Abkhazia and Chechnya, but the extent of their efforts needs yet to be investigated. This paper offers a short introduction to the North Caucasian diaspora in Turkey. It is based on interviews and publicly available sources. There has been no research done in Turkey and the Caucasus region, which makes it far from comprehensive.

2. SOME BASIC FACTS

2.1 Semantics

There are over 40 North Caucasian peoples. Linguistically, they can be divided into the indigenous Northwest Caucasians, North Central Caucasians, Dagestanians/Northeast Caucasians, and a variety of non-indigenous peoples. The Northwest Caucasians consist of three groups: Circassians, Ubykhs and Abkhaz-Abazinians. The Circassians are further subdivided into the western tribes of Shapsugh, Bzhedugs, Temirgoys and Abzaks - together known as Adyghe - and the eastern Besleneys and Kabardians.⁷ The Northeast Caucasians consist of the Ingush, the Chechens, and the Dagestani peoples, of which the Avars, Dargins, and Lezgins are the most important. Ethnically unrelated to these peoples, but also regarded as North Caucasian because of their age-old presence in the region are i.a. the Kumyks and the North Central Caucasian peoples, the Karachai and Balkars, who speak Turkic languages, and the Ossetians, who are linguistically of Iranian pedigree.⁸

In Turkey, the word "Cherkess", Russian for Circassian, is used to designate any North-Caucasian. Neither the state administration nor the average Turkish citizen usually distinguishes between the different North Caucasian peoples. The North Caucasians themselves do not object to this practice. They often use the word Circassian/Cherkess for all Northwest Caucasians and are conscious of the fact that they all share a common heritage. Circassians usually call themselves Adyghe.⁹ The identity of North Caucasians generally includes awareness of the name and precise location of their ancestors' villages.¹⁰

2.2 Population

The demographic data provided by the Turkish census do not categorize the North Caucasians separately. Turkish law reserves the status of national minority to non-Muslim peoples only. The Turkish census does include a category "mother tongue", though. Unfortunately, pressure to register as a Turkish speaker seems to have influenced the available statistics. State functionaries have allegedly falsified data in order to increase the ratio of Turkish speakers.¹¹ The 1960 census gave only 63,000 North Caucasian speakers.¹² The 1965 census found 58,339 persons speaking Circassian as their mother tongue and 55,030 as a second language.¹³

Current estimates of the number of North Caucasians in Turkey range from one to six million, depending on the sources used. The North Caucasian organizations usually claim three million or more. The vast majority of them are Circassian.¹⁴ Estimates of the number of Abkhaz in Turkey range from 30,000 up to 300,000.¹⁵

The fact that figures on the North Caucasian diaspora can differ widely is not only due to bias or flawed statistics, but also to differences of perception. Many people of North Caucasian descent have a mixed ethnic identity as a result of assimilation and intermarriage.¹⁶

2.3 Geography

The North Caucasians in Turkey originally lived in dispersed settlements, mostly in Western and Central Anatolia. The percentage of North Caucasians that live in rural communities has rapidly decreased over the past 25 years, due to urbanization and emigration. Estimates by diaspora organizations suggest that in 1995, 60 per cent of the North Caucasians in Turkey lived in cities. Outside the three main centres Ankara, Istanbul and Samsun, there are organized communities in Adana, Adapazari, Antalya, Ayancik, Balikesir, Bandirma, Burhaniye, Bursa, Çorum, Denizli, Duzce, Erbaa, Eskisehir, Gaziantep, Gönem, Izmir, Izmit, Kahramanmaras, Kars, Kayseri, Konya, Ladik, Mersin, Orhangazi, Reyhanli, arkisla, Sincan, Sinop, Sivas, Soma, Sungurlu, Susurluk, Tufanbeyli, and Yalova.¹⁷

North Caucasians are well represented among Turkish guest-workers in Western Europe. Their organizations lack unity, not unlike their parent organizations in Turkey.¹⁸

2.4 Language

Minority languages in Turkey have been eroded by urbanization, and by the fact that education and the mass-media are all in Turkish language only. Publishing in another language is forbidden under Law No. 2932 of 19 November 1983.¹⁹ It is not uncommon for children to be forbidden to speak a language other than Turkish at school.²⁰

All members of the diaspora speak Turkish; for most of them it is their first language. Only in isolated rural areas have they fully preserved their own language and cultural identity. Urbanized North Caucasians quickly adopt Turkish language and customs and among the urbanized youth, knowledge of the language of origin is exceptional.²¹ In some cases, internal assimilation has taken place, as in the case of the Ubykh, who quickly adopted the language of the Circassian majority around them.²²

In the North Caucasus itself the different ethnic groups have generally preserved their own languages, with the exception of the Abkhaz. Urbanized Abkhaz have often been Russified.²³

During its *de facto* independence from 1991 to 1994, Chechnya established a rich variety of contacts with the North Caucasian diaspora, including provision of language schools for Turkish Chechens. A Chechen-Turkish College was established in Grozny and hundreds of Chechens enrolled in Turkish, Jordanian, Syrian, and Egyptian universities.²⁴

2.5 Religion

Christian Georgians and Christian Abkhaz cannot live together, but Christian Abkhaz and Muslim Adyghe can! Nowadays, people can no longer be judged on religious grounds. Everyone who wants to become one with the motherland can overcome the religious problem. The motherland wants us to return to overcome the population shortage.²⁵

The indigenous populations of the North Caucasus are Muslim, with the exception of the Abkhaz and the Ossetians who are, with few exceptions, Christian. While Islam is of great importance for the social life and ethnic identity of the Northeast Caucasians, religion is a marginal social factor in North Ossetia and in the Northwest Caucasus, including Abkhazia.²⁶

The North Caucasian diaspora is entirely Muslim, including its Abkhaz and Ossetian members. Within the North Caucasian diaspora it is generally presumed that they were deported from Russia because of their religion. Islam forms an integral part of their identity and has historically been an important motive for their loyalty to the Turkish state.²⁷

It came as a shock to members of the diaspora to find out in the late 1980s that the Abkhaz in the homeland were Christian Orthodox, if religious at all, and that the other Northwest Caucasian peoples, though officially Muslim, had no interest in religious teaching. Religious radicals within the diaspora community even proposed to cut contacts with the Abkhaz for this reason.²⁸ In reaction, the Government of Abkhazia has undertaken to construct a mosque in Sukhumi to satisfy the religious needs of members of the diaspora.²⁹

3. A SHORT HISTORY OF THE NORTH CAUCASIAN DIASPORA IN TURKEY

3.1 The Exodus

After a long and cruel war against the Russian Empire, the Northeast Caucasians were defeated in 1858, and the Northwest Caucasians in 1864. On 14 April 1864 a victorious Prince Mikhael met with the leaders of the Adyghe tribes in Sochi and told them to leave the high mountains and settle in the plains. Those who refused were ordered to leave the Russian Empire within one month, or otherwise be considered prisoners of war. Panic followed and many listened to promises of peace and wealth in the Ottoman Empire. All of the Ubykhs, the majority of the Circassians, and very many Abkhaz left for the Ottoman Empire.³⁰ In the Northern Caucasus, their lands were taken by Slavs, in Abkhazia by Georgians, Armenians and Greeks. Emigration of North Caucasians even continued after the establishment of the Bolshevik regime in the Soviet Union. The Northwest Caucasian peoples became minorities in their native lands.³¹ The number of North Caucasians who left for the Ottoman Empire between 1859 and 1881 is estimated at two million. Conditions were extremely bad and possibly 20 per cent of them died of malnutrition and disease. Another half million migrated between 1881 and 1914.³²

The North Caucasian refugees were used by the Ottoman Government to strengthen its grip on the empire. In Asia Minor, they were resettled in regions where the Government had only limited authority, where Muslims formed a minority, or where unrest had broken out. It was government policy to allow only one North Caucasian family for each four Turkish families.³³ The refugees were dispersed over the Empire for fear of their militant character and many were brought to Syria, Palestine and the Balkans. The latter group was forced to resettle in Asia Minor after the 1878 Berlin Treaty forbade their presence in the European parts of the Ottoman Empire.³⁴

The emigration was a disaster for the North Caucasian peoples. Usually, they were resettled on poor land and they often had to fight for possession of the land that had been allocated to them. The Ubykh nation disappeared entirely. The last Ubykh speaker, Tevfik Esenç, died in Turkey in October 1992.³⁵ The disappearance of the Ubykh has made a great impression on the North Caucasians, reviving memories of the 19th century genocide and strengthening the consequent desire for political independence.³⁶

4. ASSIMILATION AND ORGANIZATION

4.1 General

Since the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in 1918, minorities have been subjected to a strong turkification policy. Under the "Surname Law", minorities are obliged to adopt Turkish names with the result that only a few North Caucasians in Turkey still bear their ancestral names. Use of North Caucasian languages is still actively discouraged.³⁷

In rural areas opposition to assimilation is strongest and there are hundreds of local North Caucasian cultural centres and organizations. Here, North Caucasian traditions are still generally respected and there is still strong pressure to marry inside the group.³⁸ Half of the North Caucasians in Turkey are believed to be fully assimilated, while at the same time being aware of their ancestry.³⁹ The popular view of ethnicity is quite realistic in Turkey. People identify their neighbours as Cherkess, Tatars, Kurds etc. with little tension arising.⁴⁰

North Caucasians are generally respected in Turkish society. They are not victims of prejudice, there are no complaints about discrimination against them and they are well represented in high state functions. To name just one of the many examples, during the 1980s, the President of the General Staff, at the time one of the most powerful positions in the country, was an ethnic Chechen, DoZan Güres. He regularly attended North Caucasian cultural events.⁴¹

The North Caucasian organizations in Turkey are still mainly active in the cultural field.⁴² They are subject to numerous legal and political restrictions. The 1938 Turkish Law on Associations does not permit associations to carry out political activity. Furthermore, Turkish law prohibits political parties based on ethnicity. Permission must be asked for large gatherings, while major events in Turkey are usually closely monitored by the authorities.⁴³

Many organizations are legally insecure and can be closed down on the orders of the local police or municipality. Those that have managed to obtain the status of foundation (*vakif*) are better protected by law. A *vakif* must have an educational or social purpose and possess a minimum amount of capital.

There is a wide proliferation of organizations as a result of the geographic dispersal and ethnic division of the North Caucasian diaspora. The weakness that this division brings about is realized, but has as yet not resulted in effective unification or centralization. The older generation dominates the governing bodies of the organizations. The issue of leadership is another factor that has kept the North Caucasians divided. During meetings at the end of 1992, the organizations in Ankara and Istanbul both demanded that the seat of any central body must be in their own city. Another major obstacle is the abundance of candidates for leadership.⁴⁴

4.2 North Caucasian Organizations 1864-1950

While most North Caucasians settled in the country, the social and intellectual elites opted for Constantinople. They generally identified with the Turkish state, the Muslim hereditary enemy of Russia, and encountered no difficulty integrating. With the adoption of the Turkish Constitution of 1908, the North Caucasians obtained a number of important civil rights. They played an important role in the young republic. North Caucasian organizations flourished. The most prominent of them was the Çerkess Ittihad ve Teavun Cemiyeti (Circassian Union and Aid Association), 1908-1923. The main Circassian newspaper was *Çerkes Yardimlasma Dernezi*.⁴⁵

The proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in 1918 brought a sharp regression to the social and political life of the North Caucasians, partially due to the Circass Ethem event. Circass Ethem was a celebrated army officer, an ethnic oehapsugh from Balıkesir, who became a national hero during the First World War and played an important role in the suppression of the Bolu, Düzce and Yozgat riots of 1919. He wielded considerable military power through his units, which showed great personal loyalty to him. After the war he ran into political difficulties with the Governor of Yozgat and eventually refused to acknowledge the authority of Kemal Atatürk. He was officially

declared a traitor in 1920 and fled to Greece. His case was used by the Government of Turkey to discredit North Caucasians.⁴⁶ A number of villages in Balıkesir were cleared of North Caucasians and the state developed a turkification policy for North Caucasians.⁴⁷

In 1923 it became an official Government policy to promote Turkish identity and a sense of national unity among the ethnically heterogeneous population. As a result, most North Caucasian organizations were abolished, their schools were closed and their publications were prohibited. Only organizations stating that they represented North Caucasian Turks were allowed to continue to operate. They were strongly anti-communist and supported the idea of Turkey as the new homeland.⁴⁸

After the Second World War, the restrictions on cultural activities were slowly modified. In the early 1950s there were over 30 registered North Caucasian associations, where North Caucasian history, culture, language, dance and customs were taught to the younger generation. A North Caucasian intelligentsia was emerging, keen on its ethnic identity.

4.3 North Caucasian Organizations 1950-1989

The organizations that came to the fore in the 1950s tried to unify the North Caucasian peoples in Turkey in an effort to counter assimilation tendencies. This failed because of the heterogeneity of the North Caucasian peoples and because it contradicted the state's policy to build a Turkish identity for all citizens.⁴⁹

Gradually, political opinion within the North Caucasian diaspora started mirroring the political divisions within Turkish society. During the late 1960s, a leftist, pro-Arab and anti-Western current emerged that pointed to the fact that under communism, the North Caucasians were allowed a degree of self-rule and that they could study their own history and languages. They rejected the concept of Turkey as the new homeland and revived the repatriation ideal. They criticized the cultural and political pressures that North Caucasians faced in Turkey and praised the practice of local self rule and the official support for North Caucasian culture in the Soviet Union.⁵⁰

The young radicals failed to impress the assimilated urban groups or the rural majority and many North Caucasians continued to call themselves Turks rather than Circassians. Circulation of the publications of the urban elite was limited and most village dwellers remained only dimly aware of developments in the North Caucasus.⁵¹ But among the growing North Caucasian communities in the cities their ideas found numerous followers. The leftist tradition is still strong in the cities. In their publications, the downfall of the Soviet Union is depicted as an American triumph, and the ensuing Caucasian wars as consequences of the introduction of capitalism.⁵²

The slow democratization process in Turkey which had started in the 1960s opened the way for a renaissance of North Caucasian organizations. The associations often had a small library, organized festivities and lectures, and housed a folklore dance group.⁵³ Usually they had very limited financial means and lacked any political programme.⁵⁴

Like all of the civic society in Turkey, all North Caucasian organizations were closed down after the military coup of 1980. They re-emerged in the late 1980s. By then, Islamist ideas added new divisions to the North Caucasian diaspora, although efforts to establish Islamist North Caucasian organizations have so far been unsuccessful. However, there exists an Islamist North Caucasian periodical which is published in Kayseri.⁵⁵

4.4 North Caucasian Organizations 1989-1996

Until the late 1980s, the activities of North Caucasian organizations had essentially been aimed at fostering ethnic cohesion and countering turkification.⁵⁶ The *perestroika* policy of the Soviet Union made it possible for the diaspora to visit the land of their ancestors and to invite scholars and political activists from the North Caucasus. They toured to lecture on history and language and generated great enthusiasm for the national cause in the

homeland.⁵⁷ Periodicals in Turkey started to publish contributions by intellectuals from the North Caucasus. In 1991 a Turkish-Adyghe dictionary was published in Maikop, Adyghea.⁵⁸

Links were established between cities in the North Caucasus and Turkish cities with sizeable North Caucasian populations.⁵⁹ Previously, the smaller North Caucasian ethnic groups like the Abkhaz, the Dagestanis, the Karachai, the Balkars and the Chechens had usually joined the larger Circassian organizations, but now each ethnic group started to interact with the corresponding republic. Therefore a great number of local new organizations were established along ethnic lines.⁶⁰ Groups of young Caucasians started to proclaim their non-Turkic identity and protested loudly against decades of national suppression in Russia and in Turkey. They objected to the non-political and careful attitude of the elder generation.⁶¹ Right-wing North Caucasian organizations developed the ideal of setting up an Islamic North Caucasian society in a secular free-market North Caucasia.⁶²

One of the turning points in the North Caucasian revival was the 1989 Kafkas Kültür Dernezi congress in Ankara to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the 1864 exodus. A large number of politicians and activists from outside Turkey participated. Contacts were established which boosted the level of activity and led to many institutionalized links between the diaspora and the North Caucasus.⁶³

In November 1987 a local coordinating body had been established in Ankara, the Kafkas Kültür Dernezi.⁶⁴ The wish to streamline efforts in support of the Abkhazian and Chechen separatist movements led to attempts to unite the diaspora. On 18 October 1990, Kafkas Kültür Dernezi became a coordinating body for eleven Northwest Caucasian organizations. One of its purposes was to stimulate remigration through the establishment of contacts with republics in the North Caucasus and assistance to returnees.⁶⁵ A further expansion took place in October 1992 in Ankara, when a meeting organized by Kafkas Kültür Dernezi of 20 North Caucasian associations established a federative body, the Kafkas Dernezi (Kaf-Der), with 23 branches, which replaced the Kafkas Kültür Dernezi.⁶⁶ This is at present the main North Caucasian organ at a national level, dominated by Northwest Caucasians.⁶⁷

To the ethnic and regional diversity of the diaspora is at present added the division between groups that favour orientation towards Turkey and those who focus on developments in the North Caucasus. On 6 June 1992, a revolution took place within the Ankara branch of Kafkas Dernezi. For the first time there were competing candidates for the election of the association's governing body. The opposition advocated closer cooperation with the Turkish authorities, but was defeated by the group that wanted greater focus on developments in the North Caucasus, an active repatriation policy and establishment of relations with the North Caucasian diaspora outside Turkey.⁶⁸

Kaf-Der is sometimes at odds with the richer Birlesik Kafkaseyi Konseyi, the two Dostluk Klubü Dernezi organizations and œamil EZitim ve Kültür Vakfi. The latter organizations are dominated by businessmen and do not actively oppose assimilation. They believe that the North Caucasian cause is best defended through loyalty to Turkey, while within the Kaf-Der it is widely believed that Turkish ethnic chauvinism, being official state policy, constitutes a major problem for the North Caucasians, and that Turkey, because of its friendly relations with Georgia and Russia, is partly responsible for an on-going genocidal war on Abkhazians and Chechens.⁶⁹ Kaf-Der strongly supports the struggle for independence of Abkhazia and Chechnya.⁷⁰ Officially, Kaf-Der is a politically neutral, cultural body, but it counts among its members a number of well known activists with leftist opinions.⁷¹ Its 1995-96 programme includes facilitating economic links with the North Caucasus and initiating exchange programmes for students.⁷²

The divisions within the North Caucasian community are not only a source of weakness, but also a sign of vitality. Encouraged by massive sympathy among the Turkish public for the Chechen resistance against Russia, the diaspora organizations have rediscovered their *raison d'être* and they attract increasing numbers of assimilated North Caucasians who used to show little interest in the North Caucasus. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to find reliable information about current membership of North Caucasian organizations.

The renaissance of the ethnic identity of the North Caucasians in Turkey is not reflected in a campaign for minority rights. Some radicals have started demanding Caucasian language education and activists have started using their original family names, but they did not win over any of the major organizations.⁷³

4.5 The International Dimension

The North Caucasian communities in the Middle East are relatively strong. In Jordan there is a Circassian community of about 95,000, mostly Kabardian and Adyghe, but also including about 15,000 Chechens. In Syria, the Circassian community counts over 110,000. There is also a small Circassian community in Israel, mostly ethnically Shapsugh, and a community of 1,500 in Iraq. During the war with Iran in the 1980s, the Iraqi Army counted eight Chechen generals among its ranks.⁷⁴ Only Jordan and Israel permit Circassian language schools. In all these countries the Circassians are relatively well represented among the professional military and in the public service. They generally combine identification with the fate of their peoples in the North Caucasus with loyalty to their country of residence.⁷⁵

Due to the well disposed attitude of their countries of residence, the Circassians in the Middle East have generally preserved their language and many of their customs. Most of them marry within their own ethnic group.⁷⁶ In the Jordanian parliament, there are three seats reserved for North Caucasians, two for Circassians and one for a Chechen. The current Chechen deputy is considered to be aligned with the pro-Moscow government in Grozny, while one of the Circassians, Mrs. Tujan Feisal, has been appointed spokeswoman for Dudayev. She organises support meetings for Chechnya and coordinates relief efforts.⁷⁷

The breaking up of the Soviet Union led to the establishment of an international North Caucasian body. On 19-20 May 1991, the Kafkas Kültür Dernegi represented the Circassian and Abkhaz diaspora in Turkey at the All-Circassian Congress in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria. During the congress, the All-Circassian World Federation was founded, later to be called the International Adyghe and Abkhaz Federation.⁷⁸ At present the Federation, of which Kaf-Der is a member, is based in Maikop, Adyghea. The purpose of the organization is to foster solidarity among Circassians of the diaspora and in the mother country and to assist in remigration.⁷⁹ All the major organizations of the Circassian diaspora are members of the Association. Its first president, Yuri Kalmykov, a Kabardian, was the Justice Minister of the Russian Federation, but resigned on 8 December 1994 in protest at the decision to attack Chechnya.⁸⁰ The Federation is a member of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization in The Hague.

5. THE NORTH CAUCASIAN DIASPORA AND THE WARS IN ABKHAZIA AND CHECHNYA

The wars in the Caucasus have brought a reawakening of our national identity, but also new anxieties: feelings of helplessness and weakness because we cannot influence these wars that take place within the borders of other states. [Süleyman Yançatarol].⁸¹

5.1 The War in Abkhazia

The demise of the Soviet Union in December 1991 was preceded by the emergence of vicious forms of national chauvinism. As early as 1988, the leading Georgian nationalist Zviad Gamsachurdia used alleged discrimination against Georgians in Abkhazia as a focus of his political campaign. He argued that the Abkhaz national identity was an artificial construction, an instrument in the hands of Russian imperialism. Many Abkhazians regarded the breaking apart of the Soviet Union as a chance to undo what they regarded as the annexation of Abkhazia by the Socialist Soviet Republic of Georgia in 1931. Tension between separatists and Georgian nationalists escalated, and in July 1989 twenty people died during inter-ethnic clashes in the capital of Abkhazia, Sukhumi.⁸²

On 28 October 1989, Zviad Gamsachurdia became the leader of Georgia. On 9 March 1990, Georgian independence was declared. The new Government of Georgia adopted a series of measures that minorities considered serious infringements of their rights.⁸³ In August 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the Abkhazian

Autonomous Republic, with its ethnic Georgian members absent, declared national sovereignty. From that moment on, Abkhazia acted as an independent country.⁸⁴

The Government of Abkhazia devoted much attention to its relations with other North Caucasian peoples. They organized cultural manifestations that generated great enthusiasm among North Caucasian peoples in Russia and in the diaspora.⁸⁵ The foreign policy of Abkhazia was based on friendship with the Soviet Union, later the Russian Federation, and the bolstering of the Abkhazian nationality. The latter was to be achieved i.a. by mobilizing the potential of the Abkhaz diaspora.⁸⁶

On 14 August 1992 Georgian troops invaded Abkhazia. Tens of thousands of Abkhaz, Russians, Armenians and Greeks had to flee before the ill-disciplined Georgian forces. Initially, the Georgians were victorious, but after their failure to capture Gagra in early September 1992, the tide turned. Irregular troops from the North Caucasus came to the aid of the separatists. The Russian army allegedly helped Abkhazia with weapons, air support and occasional military operations. The Georgian forces were ousted from Abkhazia in September 1993. The Abkhazian advance led to a massive exodus of ethnic Georgians from Abkhazia. Both parties to the conflict have been accused of systematic violation of human rights.⁸⁷

The Abkhaz desire for independence was partly driven by fear of extinction. As a result of the 19th century exodus and Russian and Georgian migration politics, the proportion of Abkhaz in Abkhazia had dropped from almost 100 per cent in 1864 to 18 only per cent in 1989.⁸⁸

The invasion by Georgian forces of Abkhazia in August 1991 and their criminal behaviour created shockwaves among the North Caucasian communities in Turkey. They fully identified with the separatist side. Reports about deliberate destruction by Georgian forces of all major archives, scientific institutes, libraries, museums and theatres in Abkhazia, of ethnic cleansing, looting, rape and wanton destruction caused acute fear of another genocide.⁸⁹

5.2 The Abkhazian Republic and the North Caucasian Diaspora

During the mid-1970s, repatriation of members of the diaspora to the North Caucasus became possible. The legal procedure for repatriation was regulated by the laws of the Soviet Union and later the Russian Federation. Members of the North Caucasian diaspora were given Russian citizenship relatively quickly, even though there existed no special legislation for them. Georgia effectively opposed all repatriation of Abkhaz.⁹⁰

Abkhaz nationalists considered the precarious demographic situation in Abkhazia a threat to their national survival and hoped for the return of the diaspora. Repatriation of the diaspora became a cornerstone of Abkhazian policy since the *de facto* self rule in 1990 and the separatist Government of Abkhazia regards the members of the diaspora as refugees from the time of the Russian conquest, with the right to repatriation and Abkhazian citizenship. The Government of Georgia is strongly opposed to this policy.⁹¹

In 1991 a decree was issued, giving returnees wide-ranging privileges in privatization and in entrepreneurial activities. In 1992, the Abkhazian Presidential Commission on Co-Nationals was established to facilitate remigration, headed by the returnee Chkotua Otkai.⁹² In addition, a number of non-governmental organizations were established to assist returnees, notably Apsadgil and the Demographic Fund. With financial help from organizations in Turkey, three specialized educational institutes have been established in Abkhazia, where returnees teach.⁹³ It was decided to build a mosque in Sukhumi and a huge monument stretching into the Black Sea, symbolizing the deportations of the 1860s and the hoped-for return of the diaspora.⁹⁴ Both endeavours were held up by the war. On 23 March 1993, the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet adopted a bill by which all descendants of the 19th century emigration were granted the right to full citizenship.⁹⁵

5.3 The North Caucasian Diaspora and the War in Abkhazia

On 16 August 1992, demonstrations were held in Istanbul and Ankara against the invasion of Abkhazia and the passive attitude of the Government of Turkey. Thousands of North Caucasians went into the streets, impressing not only the Turkish public, but also themselves. The North Caucasians suddenly had become a political factor in Turkey and Kaf-Der started an active lobbying policy that focussed on the governments of Turkey and the Russian Federation.⁹⁶

New organizations supporting the Abkhazian cause proliferated. The most important of these, the Kafkas-Abkhaz Dayanisma Komitesi, was founded in August 1992 by Abkhazians who had thus far taken part in larger, Circassian dominated, organizations. The Kafkas-Abkhaz Dayanisma Komitesi wanted the Circassian diaspora to engage in building a new Abkhazia and established close contacts with the Government of Abkhazia. The Committee was radical and aroused a lot of enthusiasm, notably among the youth. Abkhaz solidarity committees emerged among the North Caucasian diaspora outside Turkey as well. The Committee was meant to serve as a coordinating body for the many local initiatives, but did not fully achieve this aim. It did engage in lobbying activities, but never developed into an effective political body.

On 22 August 1992, a joint statement of all North Caucasian organizations in Turkey was published, denouncing the Georgian invasion.⁹⁷ For the first time the diaspora felt it had a common cause. The response to the many appeals for money and goods to support Abkhazia was massive. Hundreds of young men volunteered to fight in Abkhazia, and many more planned to remigrate to Abkhazia to regain the ancestral lands. *Nolens volens*, cultural organizations gained political meaning.⁹⁸ The war also boosted the interaction between North Caucasian communities in Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Germany, the United States and the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States.⁹⁹

In August 1992, the President of the International Adyghe and Abkhaz Federation, Yuri Kalmykov, expressed the radical mood among North Caucasians when he warned President Eduard Shevardnadze that if a general mobilization were instituted in Georgia, he would respond by calling all the diaspora North Caucasians to take up arms against the Georgians.¹⁰⁰ This and similar statements have generated speculation about the involvement of the diaspora in the war in Abkhazia and later also in Chechnya. When the war in Chechnya broke out, Yuri Kalmykov resigned as Russian Minister of Justice. The International Adyghe and Abkhaz Federation lost the tacit support it had received from Russian government circles before. Its third international conference which was planned in Sukhumi in 1995 was cancelled because of the Russian blockade of Abkhazia.¹⁰¹

On 27 November 1992, the Birlesik Kafkasya Konseyi Dernegi was established at the initiative of the Kafkas-Abkhaz Dayanisma Komitesi. The Konseyi included businessmen who offered to coordinate the assistance given to the Abkhazian Republic and to assist in the development of business relations between Turkey and Abkhazia.¹⁰²

When Georgia invaded Abkhazia on 14 August 1992, the international community, including Turkey, generally regarded the conflict as an internal affair of Georgia. Initially, the outburst of North Caucasian solidarity was met with unease by the Turkish authorities. A planned 6 September 1992 meeting of the diaspora in Istanbul was prohibited by the Vice-Governor of the province, and there were complaints that the media were subjected to pressure to ignore the pro-Abkhazian activities of the diaspora.¹⁰³ The fact that the Government of Turkey ignored what the diaspora considered an attempt to destroy the Abkhaz people, created much anger. The North Caucasians had always been loyal to the Turkish state, and the radicals saw the Turkish passivity as a betrayal of this loyalty.¹⁰⁴

At present, contacts with the North Caucasian diaspora in Turkey is vital for Abkhazia. All road links via Georgia have been blockaded since 1992 and in 1993 the Russian Federation closed its border with Abkhazia. The only outside connection left is by relatively small boats to Northern Turkey.

5.4 The North Caucasian Diaspora and the War in Chechnya

In response to the Russian Army's attack on Chechnya, on 18 December 1994, the Kafkas-ÇeÇen Dayanisma Komitesi was established in Ankara by several North Caucasian associations. The board is all-Chechen, but other North Caucasians and also Turks became actively involved in its work. A number of members of parliament from major Turkish nationalist and religious parties, notably the main religious opposition party, Refah Partisi, have functions within the committee. The committee has no institutional links with cultural North Caucasian organizations, but there is some important personal overlap.¹⁰⁵ The membership of the Political Commission of the Committee includes Abüllatif œener, member of parliament for the Refah Partisi, and Rauf Bozkurt, president of Kaf-Der. The committee serves as a coordinating body for similar organizations outside Turkey. It supports the Chechen struggle for independence e.g. through fund-raising - most of it comes from ethnic Turks - and humanitarian assistance. The committee funds i.a. medical care for Chechen fighters. The money that is collected for transfer to Chechnya itself is channelled through people who have been nominated by President Dzhokar Dudayev. Officially, the total amount collected by 28 March 1995 was US\$ 550,000.¹⁰⁶

The Kafkas-ÇeÇen Dayanisma Komitesi lobbies in favour of the Chechen struggle for independence, both at the national and the international level. It is actively engaged in mobilizing pressure on the Turkish authorities to make them take a tough stand against Russian policies in Chechnya.¹⁰⁷ The outspoken political character of the committee represents a sharp break with the traditional activities of diaspora organizations.¹⁰⁸

There is no reliable information on the number of diaspora volunteers that have joined the war in Chechnya, but their number is probably insignificant. The Kafkas-ÇeÇen Dayanisma Komitesi claims that there are 50 Turkish citizens fighting on the Chechen side of the conflict, including both North Caucasians and ethnic Turks.¹⁰⁹ The Kaf-Der Bülten in 1995 mentioned only one North Caucasian from Turkey who had died in Chechnya, Hüseyin Gülseren.¹¹⁰ There are indications that members of the North Caucasian diaspora in Turkey have been discouraged from participating in the war in Chechnya because of the implications for Turkey's relations with the separatist Government of Chechnya and because so few of them can speak sufficient Chechen or Russian.¹¹¹

According to *Pravda* on 4 March 1996, two diaspora organizations, the Committee for Cooperation with Chechnya and the Committee for Cooperation with the Peoples of the Caucasus, have become conduits for financial support and arms for the regime of Dzhokar Dudayev. *Pravda* claimed that between January and April 1995, nearly US\$ 700,000 was brought to Chechnya through these channels with assistance from Turkish special agencies.¹¹² This amount does not seem to be an exaggeration.¹¹³

The *Pravda* report further stated:

Turkey played a major role in securing weapons for the Chechen army. The first shipment of weapons and ammunition arrived from Turkey on trucks in November 1991, under the guise of humanitarian aid. The issue is that after German unification, Turkey, through NATO channels, received large quantities of formerly Soviet arms from storehouses in the German Democratic Republic. A significant portion of them was easily transported to Chechnya through Azerbaijan.¹¹⁴

These claims have never been substantiated.

On 17 January 1996, Tatyana Samolis, press secretary to the Russian Federal Foreign Intelligence service, said during a press conference: "The diaspora there [in Turkey] is very active. In our view it goes beyond the bounds of simply humanitarian aid." Grigory Karasin, the director of the information directorate of the Russian Foreign Ministry added at the same occasion: "We informed the Turkish side on more than one occasion about dangerous, anti-Russian actions by extremist circles of the Chechen diaspora and by Dudayev's commissars on the territory of Turkey."¹¹⁵

In January 1996, the Russian Government officially complained to the Government of Turkey that it allowed Chechens a free hand and failed to prevent members of the North Caucasian diaspora from training and sending forces to fight in Chechnya.¹¹⁶

5.5 The January 1996 Black Sea Hostage Taking

On 16 January 1996, the ferry *Avrasya*, which was due to leave Trabzon port for Sochi in Russia, was hijacked by gunmen who demanded the end of the siege in Pervomayskoye.¹¹⁷ Three of the five hijackers, including the leader, Mohammed Tocsan, were Turkish citizens of the North Caucasian diaspora. In Turkey, reports circulated that the hijackers were linked to the extreme rightwing organization, Milly Hariket Partise (better known as Grey Wolves), and Muslim fundamentalist organizations like Nizam-i Alem Ocaklari and the Hezbollah. On 19 January 1996, the Governor of Trabzon, Alladin Yüksel, accused North Caucasian groups of maintaining close relations with the Hezbollah.¹¹⁸ On 20 January 1996, an unspecified State Prosecutor in Düzce repeated this accusation.¹¹⁹ In a broadcast telephone interview on 18 January 1996, Mohammed Tocsan categorically denied having any links with political organizations.¹²⁰

Mohammed Tocsan, a veteran of the wars in Abkhazia and Chechnya, claimed that he belonged to the North Caucasian Union of Cherkessian and Abkhaz Turks.¹²¹ This was denied by North Caucasian organizations in Turkey, who quickly distanced themselves from the hijackers, calling them "a few adventurous students, with whom we have no relations",¹²² while expressing sympathy for their goals. All indications point to an isolated action by a group of people who were unusually closely connected with the fighting in Chechnya.

There was great relief among diaspora organizations when the hijacking ended without bloodshed. The Turkish press generally praised the restraint shown by both the hijackers and the Turkish authorities, and expressed much understanding for the hijackers' motives.¹²³

5.6 Repatriation

The guesses one sometimes hears about hundreds of thousands of Circassians wanting to return to the Northwest Caucasus are unrealistic. Certainly, some will return, but numbers will only become significant when there is a prosperous and stable situation in the area.... One should not forget that many Circassians in the diaspora are loyal and contented citizens of their respective country, who often like to boast about their Circassian descent, but will not put their words into practice, once this becomes feasible." [Rieks Smeets]¹²⁴

During the late 1960s, repatriation became a cherished ideal among the North Caucasian diaspora. After contacts had been re-established with the North Caucasus during the late 1980s, the idea received much enthusiasm in Turkey and the support from republics in the North Caucasus. Nevertheless, the repatriation movement never gained momentum. The number of returnees are counted in the hundreds rather than the thousands. "The return movement is only significant in the imagination of Cossacks and Georgians, who are afraid that we will take back our land."¹²⁵ A number of delegations visited the North Caucasus around 1990 to study prospects for repatriation programmes. The visitors were disappointed with the low standard of living in the North Caucasus. Another problem was the fact that the Abkhaz in Abkhazia appeared to be Christians and that the other North West Caucasians showed no real interest in religious teachings.¹²⁶

Responding to an invitation by the Government of Abkhazia, a large delegation of the diaspora paid a visit to Abkhazia on 6 July 1992. They were informed about the economic prospects of Abkhazia and about recent measures to encourage mass return, including the allocation of land, notably in the Ochamchira area.¹²⁷ The ambitious programme that was meant to result from this trip was frustrated by the outbreak of the war.

Nevertheless, hundreds of people have returned to the North Caucasus. Remigration to Abkhazia started in 1989. According to Chkotua Otkai, it continued until the Russian blockade of Abkhazia in 1993.¹²⁸ Most people who did remigrate were young men, who planned to create a basis for existence before marrying or having their family come over. When the war came, they either joined the Abkhazian army or returned to Turkey.¹²⁹

It is not unusual to come across a members of the diaspora in the North Caucasus. They are not only returnees, but often businessmen, students or participants in exchange programmes who spend a period in the country of origin of their ancestors. The Abkhaz State University of Sukhumi offers scholarships for students from Turkey, and so do the universities of Maikop (Adyghea) and Nalchik (Kabardino-Balkaria).¹³⁰

In the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, the Georgian side accuses Abkhazia of encouraging the settlement of large numbers of North Caucasians, including members of the diaspora, in areas such as Gali region.¹³¹ There are no impartial sources of information on this issue, nor any reliable figures.¹³² According to Professor Levan Alexidze, remigration to Abkhazia started as early as 1989, when 80 Abkhaz of Syrian nationality settled in Abkhazia.¹³³ In Georgia, the opinion can be heard that power in Abkhazia is no longer in the hands of native Abkhazians, but North Caucasians, including members of the diaspora.¹³⁴ Considering the fact that all Government posts and leading state appointments are held by native Abkhazians, this appraisal could be an exaggeration.

According to Abkhazian sources, in 1992 an estimated 150 North Caucasians went from Turkey to fight in Abkhazia. Three quarters of them are believed to have been of Abkhaz descent.¹³⁵ Allegedly, a comparable number of North Caucasians from Jordan and Syria volunteered. Some of these people have remained in Abkhazia after the war.¹³⁶ Unofficial groups in Syria and Jordan organized the recruitment of volunteers. There have been volunteers killed in action and taken prisoner.¹³⁷ "The Abkhazian authorities acknowledged that [during the war] they had received significant financial assistance from the Abkhaz diaspora, in addition to an unspecified number of essentially free-lance fighters."¹³⁸

6. PROSPECTS

The resurgence of Caucasian national feelings has been called the "resurrection of the virtually comatose",¹³⁹ but should perhaps rather be termed the "coming out" of a group of ethnic minorities in Turkey. The North Caucasian organizations in Turkey still lack unity, follow-through, funding and cadre, but the wars in the Caucasus have enormously increased their motivation and the scope of their activities. The proliferation and expansion of local organizations has created awareness of the necessity to join forces. The organizations' involvement in the wars in the North Caucasus is officially limited to humanitarian and financial assistance. There are no reasons to believe that they are also actively involved in military matters on a significant scale.

Even though the return ideal is still very much alive, only a small group of highly motivated individuals have actually taken the step to settle in the North Caucasus. The members of the diaspora are generally too well integrated in Turkish society for any massive return movement to be likely, even if the situation in the North Caucasus should dramatically improve. Integration has gone so far that some linguists have expressed serious doubt whether North Caucasian languages have any real future at all in Turkey, Syria or Jordan.¹⁴⁰ The successful integration also forms a major obstacle to the development of North Caucasian nationalism in Turkey.

The North Caucasians do have the potential to play a role in future Turkish politics. In this respect, the development of the Kafkas-ÇeÇen Dayanisma Komitesi is noteworthy. It is well rooted in major political parties and actively lobbies for changes in Turkish foreign policy. It accepts the support of nationalist and religious parties, who try to capitalize on the overwhelming support for the Chechen cause among the Turkish population. This support also forms a source of concern. Identification with right-wing and religious groups could result in internal division and political marginalization; but on the other hand, the material and moral support is quite welcome.¹⁴¹

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APPENDIX I: LIST OF NORTH CAUCASIAN ORGANIZATIONS¹⁴²

Abkhaz Kültür DerneZi One in Istanbul and one in Ankara. Both linked to local organizations.

Abkhazia ile Dayanisma Komitesi Also referred to as Kafkas-Abkhaz Dayanisma Komitesi. Founded in August 1992. Coordinating body for support to the Abkhaz struggle for independence.

Alan Kültür ve Yardimlasma Vakfi Ossetian, founded in 1990 in Istanbul, has a branch in Ankara. Its president is Halis Asetey.

Çardak DerneZi Chechen Organization in Istanbul, people originating from the village Çardak. They form the nucleus of the Kafkas-ÇeÇen Dayanisma Komitesi.

Kafkasyalılar Kultur ve Yardimlasma DerneZi. Chechen, in Ankara; the official name does not mention it is a Chechen association, but members are almost exclusively Chechens.

Dostluk Klubü DerneZi Ankara; small grouping, established by business people to improve cooperation between small businessmen in Turkey and the North Caucasus. They have diverging ethnic backgrounds; the Klubü is well integrated in Turkish society and does not actively resist assimilation.

Dostluk Klubü DerneZi The same as above, but in Istanbul.

Istanbul Kafkas Kültür DerneZi One of the main organizations in Istanbul.

Kafkas-Abhazya Kültür DerneZi Abkhazian, established in 1967.

Kafkas DerneZi Also known as **Kaf-Der**; President is Rauf Bozkurt; the organization unites most of the local Kuzey Kafkasya Kültür Dernekleri, which at present are in the process of changing their names into Kafkas Derneği [name of the place] œubesi. With branches in Adana, Ankara, Antalya, Balıkesir, Burhaniye, Bursa, Orhangazi, Çorum, Erbaa, Gaziantep, Gönem, İzmir, Ladik, Mersin, Reyhanlı, Sarkisla, Sincan, Sinop, Soma, Sungurlu, and Susurluk.

Kartal Kuzey Kafkasya Kültür ve Dayanisma DerneZi Dagestani.

œamil EZitim ve Kültür Vakfı Small grouping, founded by well integrated Northeast Caucasians; the organization used to be close to right-wing Turkish nationalist circles and to strive for the liberation of all "Turks" in the USSR; nowadays they are more moderate in this respect.

Birlesik Kafkasya Konseyi Derneği Caucasian Council, in Ankara; President is Enver Kaplan. Retired bureaucrats have a majority among its founding members. They follow a line close to Turkey's official foreign policy.

Kafkas-ÇeÇen Dayanisma Komitesi The board is all-Chechen, but many other North Caucasians and Turks are actively involved in its work. President is Fazıl Özen. The committee was established on 18 December 1994. Coordinating body for assistance to Chechnya. The committee engages in political lobbying in support of the Chechen struggle for independence.

Kafkas Derneği Ankara œubesi Ankara branch of Kafkas DerneZi. Until 1992, the organization published *Kafdağı*.

Samsun Kuzey Kafkasya Kültür DerneZi Samsun branch of Kafkas DerneZi.

Other places with major organizations: Sakarya (Adapazari, two organizations in Adapazari, one Abkhazian, one Circassian), Kayseri, Düzce (one Abkhazian, one Circassian).

APPENDIX II: LIST OF SELECTED PERIODICALS

Periodicals published by North Caucasians in Turkey tend to be short lived. What follows is a selection of the most important ones.

KafdaZi Bi-monthly organ of the Ankara Kuzey Kafkasya Kültür DerneZi, led by Aslan Ari; main mouthpiece of the repatriation ideal, ceased publishing in 1993.

Kaf-Der Bülten Monthly organ of the Kafkas Derneği

Kafkas GerçeZi A quarterly, printed in Samsun that gives much attention to political developments in the Caucasus. Opposed to Turkification, but not very supportive of repatriation. Edited by Sefer Berzeg

Kuzey Kafkasya Bi-monthly publication since 1970, Istanbul. Expressing ethnic pride, but not pro-repatriation. Circulation of about 1,500

Marje Leftist monthly, linked with *Kafkas DerneZi*. Ceased publishing in 1994

Yeni Kafkasya Istanbul monthly, circulation in 1993 over 16,000

Kayseri Islamist periodical, published in Kayseri

NOTES

1. "History of Abkhazia", in Russian, by a collective group of writers, published in Sukhumi, 1991. Quoted in B.G. Hewitt, "Abkhazia: A Problem of Identity and Ownership", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (1993), p. 267
2. The term "Abkhaz", both as an adjective and as a noun, will be used in this paper to refer to ethnic Abkhaz, while the term "Abkhazian", as an adjective and as a noun, will be used to refer to the Abkhazian Republic and its inhabitants
3. Egbert Wesselink, *Minorities in the Republic of Georgia* (Brussels: Pax Christi International, 1992), p. 12
4. *Ibid.* p. 41
5. Tamaz Nadareishvili, Prime-Minister of the Government of Abkhazia (anti-separatist division), Sukhumi. Personal interview, 1 August 1992; Sergei Shamba, Member of the Supreme Soviet and President of the Abkhaz People's Forum, and Natela Akaba, Vice-President of the Commission for Human Rights and Inter-Ethnic Relations of the Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia, Sukhumi. Personal interview, 31 July 1991
6. Mehmet Tucuncu, President of the S.O.T.A. Foundation. Personal interview, Haarlem, 30 May 1996
7. Rieks Smeets, "Circassia", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (March 1995), p. 109
8. Julian Birch, "The Georgian/South Ossetian Territorial and Boundary Dispute" in John F.R. Wright, Susan Goldenberg, Richard Schofield (eds.), *Transcaucasian Boundaries* (London: University College London Press, 1996), p. 152; Peter Alford Andrews, *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey* (Wiesbaden: Dr Ludwig Reich Verlag, 1989), p. 170; B.G. Hewitt, "Demographic Manipulations in the Caucasus (with Special Reference to Georgia)", *Journal of Refugee Studies*. Vol. 8, No. 1 (Winter 1995), p. 49
9. Smeets, "Circassia", p. 111
10. Rieks Smeets, Lecturer in Caucasian languages, University of Leiden. Personal interview, 12 January 1996; Süleyman Yançatarol, Vice-President of *Kafkas DerneZi*, Ankara. Telephone interview, 26 February 1996
11. Batiray Özbek, "Tscherkessen in der Türkei" in Peter Alford Andrews, *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey* (Wiesbaden: Dr Ludwig Reich Verlag, 1989), pp. 588-9
12. L. Nestman, "Die ethnische Differenzierung der Bevölkerung der Osttürkei in ihren sozialen Bezügen" in Peter Alford Andrews, *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey* (Wiesbaden: Dr Ludwig Reich Verlag, 1989), pp. 572

13. Lowell Bezanis, "Soviet Muslim Emigrés in the Republic of Turkey", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Winter 1994), p. 141; Özbek, p. 590
14. Andrews, p. 58
15. *Milliyet* [Ankara], "Ünlü Portreler", 18 January 1996, p. 7
16. Özbek, p. 590; Bezanis, p. 66
17. This list is not exhaustive, but it covers all major centres. See *Kaf-Der Bülten* [Ankara], "Kaf-Der œubeleri", No. 19-20 (March-April 1995), pp. 20-21; Bezanis, p. 142; Smeets. Personal interview, 12 January 1996; Süleyman Yançatarol, Vice-President of Kafkas Dernezi, Ankara. Letter to the author, Ankara, 26 February 1996
18. Yançatarol, interview, 26 February 1996; Zehai Baydilli, Leader of the Circassian Cultural Organization in the Netherlands, affiliated with Kafkas Dernezi. Telephone interview, 19 March 1996
19. Bezanis, p. 92, quoting *Resmi Gazete*, No. 23, October 1983, pp. 27-28
20. Baydilli, telephone interview, 10 April 1996
21. Janet Mayragül Çorlu, *Circassians in Istanbul* (Istanbul: Nart Yayıncılık, 1993), p. 18; Fathi Recep, Member of the Board of the Circassian Cultural Organization in the Netherlands, affiliated with Kafkas Dernezi. Telephone interview, 8 April 1996; 21.1229 Yançatarol, letter, 26 February 1996
22. Smeets, interview, 5 February 1996
23. Yuri Voronov, Historian, President of the Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights and Inter Ethnic Relations of Abkhazia. Personal interview, Gagra, 1 December 1993
24. Omer Faruk Guvener, former teacher at the Chechen-Turkish College in Grozny. Letter to the author, Redlands [California], 1 April 1996 (electronic communication)
25. *Marje* [Ankara], Hilmi Özen, "Anavatanda Bütünlesmek", August 1992, p. 30
26. Bishop David of Sukhumi. Personal interview, Tbilisi, 26 July 1991; Shamba and Akaba, interview, 31 July 1991
27. Smeets, interview, 16 February 1996
28. *Marje* [Ankara], Hilmi Aççumy, "Çerkes Milliyetçiliginin Esalari", July 1992, p. 29; Viacheslav A. Chirikba, Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Abkhazia. Personal interview, Leiden, 28 December 1995
29. Chirikba. Personal interview, Leiden, 28 December 1995
30. Yuri Voronov, the eminent historian who was brutally murdered in Sukhumi in 1995, estimated in December 1993 that 60 per cent of the Abkhaz left for the Ottoman Empire in 1864 and ensuing years. Personal interview, Gudauta, 4 December 1993
31. Hewitt, "Demographic Manipulations in the Caucasus", p. 50

32. Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 56; Paul B. Henze, "Circassian Resistance to Russia" in Marie Benningsen Broxup (ed.), *The North Caucasus Barrier* (London: Hurst, 1992), p. 104
33. *Ibid.*
34. Özbek, p. 585
35. Hewitt, "Demographic Manipulations in the Caucasus", p. 49
36. John Colarusso, "Abkhazia". Paper presented at the Conference on the Contemporary North Caucasus, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 22-23 April 1993, p. 11
37. Bezanis, p. 141
38. Çoslu, p. 18
39. Bezanis, p. 141
40. Bezanis, p. 66
41. *Milliyet* [Ankara], "Ünlü Portreler", 18 January 1996, p. 7; Kenan Furat, University of Utrecht. Personal interview, Utrecht, 2 February 1996
42. Yançatarol, letter to the author, 26 February 1996
43. Bezanis, p. 70
44. *Yeni Kafkasya* [Istanbul], Muammer Tunce, "Gündem", March 1993, p. 5
45. Çorlu, p. 11
46. Çorlu, p. 12
47. Çorlu, p. 13
48. Bezanis, p. 141
49. Özbek, p. 581
50. Bezanis, p. 141
51. Baydilli, telephone interview, Amsterdam, 1 February 1996
52. *Marje* [Ankara], Abraham Çetaw, "Politik Yorum", August 1992, p. 21
53. Çorlu, pp. 15-16
54. Bezanis, p. 69

55. Baydilli, telephone interview, 8 April 1996
56. Bezanis, p. 68
57. Bezanis, p. 85
58. Edited by Yasin Çelikkiran Tesu and published in 1991 in Maikop. *Kafkasya* [Samsun], "Türkiye'de Kuzey Kafkasyalı'larla İlgili Yanınlar", January 1992, p. 51
59. *Marje* [Ankara], "Çerkeslerin Örgütlenme Sorunları", June 1992, pp. 24-25
60. Fathi Recep, interview, 8 April 1996
61. Bezanis, p. 85
62. *Marje* [Ankara], Hilmi Özen, "Bugün Dönüş Amaç Olmaktan Çıkmıştır", November 1992, p. 29
63. Erol Taymaz, Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Middle East Technical University of Ankara. Letter to the author, 6 May 1996
64. *Kaf-Der Bülten*, "Birlik ve Dayanışma Yolunda", No. 19-20, March-April 1995, p. 14
65. *Marje* [Ankara], Mehmet Urun, "Adighe Cumhuriyeti", July 1992, p. 19
66. Kafkas Derneği, also known as Kaf-Der, is often still referred to as Kafkas Kültür Derneği
67. *Marje* [Ankara], Sönmez Baykan, "Bir Ulus Olmak, Bir Vatan Sahip Olabilmek İçin Birleşmek Zorundayız", October 1992, pp. 4-5
68. *Marje* [Ankara], Ömer Cahim, "Gündem", June 1992, p. 40
69. Baydilli, interview, 1 February 1996
70. *Kaf-Der Bülten* [Ankara], "Kaf-Der'in Kafkasya Politikası", No. 19-20 (March-April 1995), p. 16
71. Fathi Recep, Member of the Board of the Circassian Cultural Organization in the Netherlands, affiliated with Kafkas Derneği. Telephone interview, 8 April 1996
72. *Kaf-Der Bülten* [Ankara], "Kafkas Derneği Genel Merkezi 1995-96 Faaliyet Programı", October 1995, p. 6
73. As can be seen in periodicals like *Marje* and *Kaf-Der Bülten*, where authors started to sign their articles with North Caucasian names
74. *Washington Post*, Yo'av Karny, "Home away from Homeland: Around the Middle East, the Resilient Chechens Have Made Their Mark, 25 May 1995
75. Yo'av Karny, publicist. Letter to the author, Washington, 22 April 1996
76. *New York Times*, Yo'av Karny, "Survival and Suicide in Russia's Shadow", 28 January 1996

77. Imad Jaimoukha. Letter to the author, 6 May 1996 (electronic communication)
78. *Marje* [Ankara], "Çerkeslerin Örgütlenme Sorunları", June 1992, p. 24-25. The organization is also known as the International Cherkess Association.
79. *Marje* [Ankara], "Dünya Çerkes BirliZi TüzüZü", September 1992, pp. 45-7
80. *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* [Munich], "Former Russian Justice Minister on his Resignation", 13 December 1994 (electronic version)
81. Yançatarol, letter, 26 February 1996
82. Wesselink, pp. 40-41
83. Wesselink, pp. 14-15
84. Wesselink, p. 41
85. Wesselink, p. 30
86. Shamba and Akaba, interview, 31 July 1991
87. Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), "Report of a UNPO Coordinated Mission to Abkhazia and Georgia", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (March 1995)
88. B.G. Hewitt, "Abkhazia: A Culture on the Brink", London 1993, unpublished manuscript, p. 1
89. Stanislav Lakoba, "Abkhazia is Abkhazia", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (March 1995), p. 101; Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, "Report of a UNPO Coordinated Mission to Abkhazia and Georgia"
90. Viacheslav Chirikba, Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Abkhazia. Letter to the author, Leiden, 6 February 1996
91. *Ibid.* 92. Chkotua Oktai, President of the Abkhazian Presidential Commission on Co-Nationals. Letter to the author, Sukhumi, 17 April 1996.
93. Oktai, letter, Sukhumi, 17 April 1996
94. An exhibition of these projects was held in Sukhumi on 2 August 1991. Visited by the author.
95. Oktai, letter, Sukhumi, 17 April 1996
96. Rauf Bozkurt, President of the Kafkas DerneZi, Ankara. Telephone interview, 9 February 1996
97. *Marje* [Ankara], "Abhaz Delegasyonunun Abhazya Cumhuriyeti Incelemeleri", August 1992, p. 43
98. Çoslu, p. 16
99. Bezanis, p. 142

100. Colarusso, p. 13. See also a later statement by Kalmykov, 20 September 1995: "The 'joint training' of Russian and Georgian border guards on the border between Russia and Abkhazia along the river Psou will inevitably lead to armed conflicts. Any action aimed at strangling Abkhazia will not leave the related Adyghe-Abkhaz nations indifferent. Nor will the larger diaspora abroad ... remain indifferent." Quoted in *Central Asian Survey*, "Council of the Federation, Parliament of the Russian Federation: Deputy, State Duma 1993-1995", Vol. 15, No. 1, 1006, p. 119.
101. Baydilli, telephone interview, 8 April 1996
102. *Marje* [Ankara], "Kafkas Konseyi Kuruldu", January 1993, p. 26-29.
103. *Marje* [Ankara], letter of the Vice-Governor of the Province of Istanbul, Erol Gökberg, dated 4 September 1992, September 1992, p. 44
104. *Marje* [Ankara], Sönmez Baykan, "Bir Özgürlük Okyanasudur DaZli YüreZi Emperyalizmin Oyununu Mutlaka Bozacaktır", August 1992, p. 3
105. Fazil Özen, President of the Kafkas-ÇeÇen Dayanisma Komitesi. Telephone interview, 12 April 1996
106. *Kaf-Der Bülten* [Ankara], "Dayanisma Komitesi Faaliyet Raporlari", No. 19-20 (March-April 1995), p. 8
107. *Ibid.* p. 10
108. Özen, interview, 12 April 1996
109. Özen, interview, 12 April 1996
110. *Kaf-Der Bülten* [Ankara], [obituary notice], no. 19-20 (March-April 1995), p. 3
111. Thomas Golz, independent researcher on the Caucasus region. Electronic communication, 23 January 1996
112. *Asbarez on Line* [Glendale], 4 March 1996, quoting *Pravda* [Moscow], 4 March 1996
113. During a meeting of representatives of European branches of North Caucasian organizations in Amsterdam on 28 March 1995, it was claimed that over 2 million German Marks had already been collected for humanitarian aid to Chechnya in West European mosques only. The author was present at this meeting.
114. *Asbarez on Line* [Glendale], 4 March 1996, quoting *Pravda* [Moscow], 4 March 1996
115. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts* [London], "Russia Warned Turkey of Chechen Activity, Say Intelligence and Foreign Ministry Officials", 19 January 1996, quoting *NTV*, [Moscow], 17 January 1996
116. *InterPress Service*, "Turkey-Russia: Ankara's Relief and Pride at End of Crisis", 19 January 1996 (electronic version)
117. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts* [London], "'Caucasian Turks' Hijack Ferry in Turkish Port Trabzon", 18 January 1996, quoting *TRT TV Ankara* [Ankara], 16 January 1996
118. *Cumhuriyet* [Ankara], "Baskinda Hizbullah Kukusu", 19 January 1996, p. 2

119. *Cumhuriyet* [Ankara], "Eylemciler, Sorguya Alinmali", 20 January 1996, p. 4
120. *Cumhuriyet* [Ankara], "Savaslar Sona Ermeli", 18 January 1996, p. 4
121. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts* [London], "Trabzon Hijackers State their Case on Turkish TV", 18 January 1996, quoting *Istanbul Kanal-D Television* [Istanbul], 17 January 1996. He probably meant the International Circassian and Abkhaz Federation. Due to flawed translations, frequent change of names and the fact that associations are made up of groups with differing names, there is some confusion about the names of North Caucasian organizations
122. *InterPress Service*, 19 January 1996
123. See the numerous articles and commentaries on the issue in the leading Turkish newspapers *Cumhuriyet* [Ankara] and *Milliyet* [Ankara], during the second half of January 1996
124. Smeets, "Circassia", p. 125
125. Baydilli, telephone interview, 10 April 1996
126. Chirikba, interview, 20 January 1996
127. *Marje* [Ankara], "Abhaz Delegasyonunun Abhazya Cumhuriyeti Incelemeleri", August 1992, p. 42.
128. Otkai, letter, Sukhumi, 17 April 1996
129. Personal interview with unidentified North Caucasians from Turkey, Sukhumi, 21 December 1993
130. *Kaf-Der Bülten* [Ankara], "Kafkasya'da EZitim Olanaklari", August 1995, p. 20; *Kaf-Der Bülten* [Ankara], "Maykop'ta EZitim", September 1995, p. 10
131. Alexander Kavsadze, Deputy Prime Minister of Georgia. Personal interview, Tbilisi, 8 December 1993
132. Greg Hansen, former United Nations volunteer based in Gali region in 1994-95. Personal interview, Amsterdam, 1 April 1996
133. Professor Levan Alexidze, Deputy Dean of the University of Tbilisi and President of the Georgian State Committee on Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide in Abkhazia. Personal interview, Tbilisi, 10 December 1993
134. Iorik Marshania, First Deputy Prime Minister of the Abkhazian Republic (anti-separatist Government of Abkhazia, in exile). Personal interview, Tbilisi, 8 December 1993
135. Chirikba, interview, 16 January 1996
136. Ruslan Jaritsba, Mayor of Gagra. Personal interview, Gagra, 2 December 1993
137. Imad Jaimoukha, leading member of the Circassian community in Jordan. Letter to the author, 6 May 1996. (Electronic communication)
138. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Georgia/Abkhazia, Violations of the Laws of War and Russia's Role in the Conflict*, Vol. 7, No. 7 (New York/Washington, March 1995), p. 43

139. Bezanis, p. 85

140. Smeets, "Circassia", p. 125

141. Yançatarol, letter, 26 February 1996

142. This list is far from complete, but it is believed that the most important organizations are included.

Half a decade has gone by since the war in Abkhazia ended. Ever since then, Abkhazia has been isolated, blockaded, terrorized, and ignored. Neither the blockade, nor the sustained level of Georgian terrorism, nor the severing of communications could force the people of Abkhazia to surrender their hard-won freedom. After half a decade of de facto independence, in October 1999, Abkhazia held a referendum on independence, which passed by a large majority

APSNY

REPUBLIC OF ABKHAZIA

ACT OF STATE INDEPENDENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ABKHAZIA

Abkhazian Statehood stretches over 12 centuries of history. For centuries the people of Abkhazia have had to struggle to preserve their independence. Since the start of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the people of Abkhazia have intensified their struggle for their lost State independence. The adoption on 25th August 1990 of the "Declaration of State Sovereignty" by the Supreme Council of Abkhazia was a first step to its restoration. The disruption of state-legal relations between Abkhazia and Georgia initiated by the Georgian authorities and the subsequent Abkhazo-Georgian war of 1992-1993 resulted in the independence of Abkhazia both de facto and de jure. The Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia, adopted by the Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia on 26th November 1994, became the legal basis for the independent State - the Republic of Abkhazia (Apsny), already created de facto.

On 3rd October 1999 a referendum was held to ascertain the citizens' attitude to the current Constitution. On the referendum day there lived on the territory of Abkhazia 219,534 citizens eligible to vote, i.e. 58.5% of the pre-war number of voters. 87.6% of the registered voters took part in the referendum, which comprised more than half of the pre-war number of voters. 97.7% of the voters approved the Constitution currently in force. Under the Constitution and the Law of the Republic of Abkhazia On National Voting (Referendum), democratic rule shall form the basis of the state authority in the Republic of Abkhazia; the people shall exercise their power either directly by means of referendum or through their representatives.

In such a way the people of Abkhazia have reaffirmed their determination to proceed with building a sovereign, democratic State functioning in accordance with law, a subject of international law, and to seek its recognition by the international community. The rights and freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, On Civil and Political Rights and other universally recognised international legal acts are among the most fundamental principles of the Constitutional system of the Republic of Abkhazia. The Republic of Abkhazia intends to build up its relations with other States on the basis of equality, peace, good-neighbourly relations, respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, and other universally recognised principles of political, economic and cultural cooperation between States.

Proceeding from the above, we appeal to the UN, OSCE, and to all States of the world to recognise the independent State created by the people of Abkhazia on the basis of the right of nations to free self-determination.

President of the Republic of Abkhazia V. ARDZINBA

Speaker of the People's Assembly of the Republic of Abkhazia S. DJINDJOLIA

Deputies of the People's Assembly of the Republic of Abkhazia

The city of Sukhum, 12th October 1999

C O N S T I T U T I O N

OF THE REPUBLIC OF ABKHAZIA (APSNY)

Adopted by the 12-th session of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia on the 26-th of November 1994 and approved by the national voting on the 3-rd of October 1999 with amendment adopted by the national voting (referendum) on the 3-rd of October 1999.

City of Sukhum 2001

We, the people of Abkhazia, exercising our right to self-determination, aspiring to promote general welfare, internal tranquillity, respecting human rights and freedoms, establishing civil peace and harmony, solemnly proclaim and institute the Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia.

CHAPTER I

PRINCIPLES OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM

ARTICLE 1. The Republic of Abkhazia (Apsny) is a sovereign, democratic state, established historically under the right of a people to free self-determination, and functioning in accordance with law. The names "The Republic of Abkhazia" and "Apsny" are interchangeable.

ARTICLE 2. Democracy shall be the basis of state authority in the Republic of Abkhazia. The bearer of sovereignty and the only source of authority in the Republic of Abkhazia shall be its people - the citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia. The people shall exercise authority directly or through their representatives.

ARTICLE 3. The Republic of Abkhazia which is subject of international law, enters into treaty-based relations with other states. The rules of conclusion, promulgation, ratification and denunciation of international treaties shall be established by the law.

ARTICLE 4. The Republic of Abkhazia consists of the historical provinces of Sadz, Bzyp, Guma, Dal-Tsabal, Abzhywa, Samyrzakan which are the present day Gagra, Gudauta, Sukhum, Gulrypsh, Ochamchyra, Tkwarchal and Gal districts within which the cities of Gagra, Gudauta, New Afon, Sukhum, Ochamchyra, Tkwarchal and Gal are located. The territory of the Republic of Abkhazia is indivisible, inviolable and inalienable.

ARTICLE 5. In the Republic of Abkhazia the land and other natural resources are the property of the people and shall be used and protected as a basis for life and activity of the citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia. The issues of ownership, use and disposal of natural resources shall be governed by the laws of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 6. The official language of the Republic of Abkhazia is Abkhazian. The Russian language as well as the Abkhazian language shall be recognized as the language of the government, public and other institutions. The state shall guarantee all ethnic groups living in Abkhazia the right to use freely their own languages.

ARTICLE 7. The state exercises its authority on the basis of a separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers. The legislative, executive and judicial branches of power shall be independent.

ARTICLE 8. In the Republic of Abkhazia, local governments, independent within their jurisdiction, shall be recognized and ensured. These local governments shall not be part of the system of state administration.

ARTICLE 9. The present Constitution shall have supreme legal authority. The laws and other legal instruments, adopted in the Republic of Abkhazia, shall comply with this Constitution.

ARTICLE 10. The Republic of Abkhazia shall have its own symbols: the state flag, national emblem and national anthem. The description of these symbols shall be established by constitutional law. The capital of the Republic of Abkhazia is the city of Sukhum (Akwa) .

CHAPTER 2

HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS OF A CITIZEN

ARTICLE 11. The Republic of Abkhazia shall recognize and guarantee the rights and freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International covenants of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights and other universally recognized international legal instruments.

ARTICLE 12. Basic rights and freedoms are the birthright of human beings. Everyone is born free. All are equal before the law and the court without distinction of race, nationality, sex, language, origin, property status or position, domicile, religion, beliefs, ideology or other considerations.

ARTICLE 13. Inalienable human rights and freedoms are the right to life, freedom, immunity and to ownership of private property.

ARTICLE 14. Everyone has the right to freedom of private life, personal and familial confidentiality, freedom to protect one's honour and dignity, freedom of conscience, of religion, creativity, thought, speech and belief.

ARTICLE 15. No-one can be subjected to torture, violence or other cruel or degrading treatment or punishment.

ARTICLE 16. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of movement and choice of domicile, confidentiality of correspondence and other forms of communication.

ARTICLE 17. All people shall have the right to freedom of association and to hold peaceful rallies, assemblies, marches and demonstrations.

ARTICLE 18. Prohibited shall be the formation and activities of non-governmental associations, parties and movements whose aims and operations include the forceful transformation of the constitutional system, the undermining of state security, the creation of armed groups, the incitement of social, racial, ethnic and religious discord.

ARTICLE 19. Everyone shall have the right to a home, economic freedom, and freedom of labour, the right to education and leisure, medical care and social welfare.

ARTICLE 20. A person's home is inviolable. No-one shall have the right to enter a person's home against his will, except in cases prescribed by the law or on the basis of a court order.

ARTICLE 21. Everyone shall be guaranteed state and judicial protection of his rights and freedoms.

ARTICLE 22. In the Republic of Abkhazia the principle of presumed innocence shall hold sway. All accused persons shall be presumed innocent until proven guilty and their offence established by a judicial verdict having the force of law. The accused shall not be obliged to prove his innocence.

ARTICLE 23. Every person detained or arrested shall be entitled to the assistance of a lawyer from the moment of detention or arrest and shall have the right not to make any statements in the absence of a defence lawyer.

ARTICLE 24. No-one shall be tried a second time for an act for which he has already been found guilty by a final court judgement.

ARTICLE 25. Laws which establish or aggravate guilt shall have no retrospective effect.

ARTICLE 26. Everyone shall be entitled to reimbursement by the state for damage caused by illegal actions of state organs and their officials.

ARTICLE 27. No citizen of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be deprived of his citizenship, expelled from the country or extradited to another state.

The Republic of Abkhazia shall guarantee its citizens protection and support beyond its frontiers.

ARTICLE 28. Any citizen of the Republic of Abkhazia having reached 18 years of age shall be entitled to all rights and be subject to all obligations set forth in this Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 29. All citizens and residents of the Republic of Abkhazia must pay taxes as required by the law.

ARTICLE 30. Everyone who happens to be in the territory of the Republic of Abkhazia must abide by its Constitution and its legislation.

ARTICLE 31. Everyone shall respect the rights and freedoms of others.

ARTICLE 32. Everyone shall respect and protect the environment.

ARTICLE 33. Defence of the Motherland is the duty and responsibility of each citizen of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 34. The listing of certain rights in this Constitution shall not be interpreted as a denial or impairment of other rights universally recognized by international legal instruments.

ARTICLE 35. No law abolishing or impairing human rights and freedoms shall be adopted or promulgated in the Republic of Abkhazia. Certain limitations of rights and freedoms can be introduced only by the constitutional laws whenever this might be necessary for the protection of the constitutional system, for security and public order, protection of health and morality as well as in the event of natural disasters, a state of emergency or martial law.

CHAPTER 3

LEGISLATIVE POWER

ARTICLE 36. All legislative authority established by this Constitution shall be exercised by the People's Assembly - the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 37. The Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia shall consist of 35 elected members, called Deputies. Parliamentary elections shall be universal, equal, direct and shall be conducted by secret ballot.

The term of office of the Parliament is limited to five years. The procedure for the election of Deputies shall be established by constitutional law.

ARTICLE 38. Any citizen of the Republic of Abkhazia who has reached 25 years of age and has the right to vote shall qualify to be elected as a Deputy.

Holding office as President of the Republic of Abkhazia or as a member of the Cabinet, being employed in state organs and in the judicial system, as well as the holding of any other paid job, apart from teaching, scientific research and artistic pursuits, shall be incompatible with the membership in the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia.

For their work, Deputies shall receive a monetary remuneration paid by the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 39. Deputies shall enjoy personal immunity for the whole term of their office. They shall not be detained, arrested or searched unless they are caught in crime and shall not be examined, except in instances when this is prescribed by law, for the purpose of guaranteeing the security of other people. The issue of divesting a Deputy of his immunity is within the competence of the Parliament.

ARTICLE 40. Deputies shall not be bound by an imperative mandate.

ARTICLE 41. The first session of the newly-elected Parliament shall be called by the President of the Republic of Abkhazia within a month from the day of election.

ARTICLE 42. The Parliament shall elect from among its members the Speaker, the Speaker's deputies and other officers and form parliamentary commissions and committees.

The Speaker shall preside over parliamentary sessions, assist Deputies in the discharge of their duties, provide them with necessary information and sign Parliamentary resolutions .

Before the Speaker is elected, the first session of the newly elected Parliament shall be presided over by its eldest Deputy.

ARTICLE 43. From the moment the newly elected Parliament starts its work, the term of office of the preceding Parliament shall expire.

The Parliament shall hold its sessions not less than twice a year (spring session and autumn session).

The order of work of the Parliament shall be determined by regulation.

ARTICLE 44. Any decision by the Parliament shall require a quorum. The adoption of legislative acts, with the exception of cases specifically provided for by the Constitution, shall require a simple majority of all the Deputies. For the adoption of Constitutional Law and when a qualified majority is necessary two-thirds of all the Deputies' votes shall be required.

ARTICLE 45. Each Bill passed by the Parliament shall be submitted to the President of the Republic of Abkhazia. If the Bill is signed by the President it shall be promulgated within fifteen days from the date of its approval by the Parliament. The law shall come into effect from the moment of its promulgation, except in cases where a later date is specified by the law itself.

In the event that the Bill is not approved by the President, it shall be returned, with the President's objections, to the Parliament. If on second consideration thereof the Bill is passed by a qualified majority, the President shall be obliged to sign and promulgate it.

If the Bill is not returned by the President within ten days after submission, the Bill shall become a law, as it would if it had been signed by the President. The Bill shall not become a law if, due to the adjournment of a meeting, it could not be returned to the Parliament.

ARTICLE 46. The right to initiate legislation in the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia belongs to its Deputies, the President of the Republic, the Supreme Court and the General Prosecutor of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 47. The Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia shall:

- 1) adopt the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 2) decide upon changes in administrative-territorial divisions;
- 3) hear the President's address on the situation in the country, the principal aspects of domestic and foreign policy of the state and methods of their implementation;
- 4) consider and approve the state budget and exercise control over its execution;

- 5) adopt a criminal code and criminal judicial procedure, corrective labour law, civil code and civil judicial procedure, arbitration and other legislation, as well as laws on the judicial system and prosecution laws;
- 6) provide the interpretation of the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 7) establish state decorations, honourable titles and army ranks of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 8) ratify and denounce the interstate treaties and agreements of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 9) elect the Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia and the Speaker's deputies;
- 10) dismiss or appoint, on the nomination of the President the General Prosecutor, the Chairman of the National Bank and other officials in accordance with the law;
- 11) take decisions on any vote of no-confidence in individual Cabinet members;
- 12) impeach the President of the Republic of Abkhazia with a view to his dismissal;
- 13) grant amnesties;
- 14) decide upon the declaration of war and the conclusion of peace;
- 15) determine the immunities of Deputies of the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 16) decide upon the legality of the imposition of a state of emergency and martial law;
- 17) exercise other powers entrusted to it by the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Abkhazia.

CHAPTER 4

EXECUTIVE POWER

ARTICLE 48. The Executive Power in the Republic of Abkhazia shall be vested in the President of the Republic of Abkhazia.

The President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be the Head of State.

ARTICLE 49. The election of the President shall be universal, direct, equal and secret ballot. He shall hold office for a term of five years.

Any person of Abkhazian nationality who is a citizen of the Republic of Abkhazia and who is not younger than 35 years and not older than 65 years and has the right to vote, is eligible to be elected President of the Republic of Abkhazia.

The same person shall not hold office as President for more than two consecutive terms.

ARTICLE 50. The President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall assume his duties the moment he is sworn in and cease the discharge of his duties upon the expiry of his term of office, the moment a newly elected President of the Republic of Abkhazia is sworn in.

The order and terms of presidential elections in the Republic of Abkhazia shall be established by constitutional law.

ARTICLE 51. On assuming office, the President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall in the presence of the members of the Supreme Court in the Parliament take the oath approved by the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 52. Throughout the term of his office, the President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall suspend his membership of political parties and non-governmental organizations.

The President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall not be a Deputy or hold any other position in state organs, non-governmental organizations or business structures.

At the appointed time the President shall receive an emolument, allocated by the Republic of Abkhazia, for his services.

ARTICLE 53. The President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall:

- 1) ensure the observance of human rights and freedoms, of the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Abkhazia and its international obligations;
- 2) determine the principal direction of domestic and foreign policy;
- 3) officially represent the state in international affairs;
- 4) sign international instruments and interstate treaties;
- 5) take measures to ensure the security and territorial integrity of the Republic of Abkhazia, form and head the Security Council, the status of which shall be determined by law;
- 6) approve the military doctrine of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 7) serve as Commander- in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 8) appoint and recall diplomatic representatives of the Republic of Abkhazia in foreign states and international organizations;
- 9) approve programmes in the field of state, economic, social, cultural and national development;
- 10) ensure the implementation, in the territory of the Republic of Abkhazia, of the financial and credit policy as well as policy in the fields of science, education, culture, health-care, environmental protection and social welfare;
- 11) ensure consistency in the legislative regulation of issues of citizenship, property, budget and financial system, taxation, environmental protection and civil service;
- 12) have the right to attend sessions of the Parliament and be given the floor at any time on his demand;

- 13) impose in accordance with the law a state of emergency or martial law in the Republic of Abkhazia in the interests of the security of its citizens, with the subsequent approval of Parliament;
- 14) present in accordance with his powers, to the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia nominations for the election to the posts of the Chairman of the National Bank, General Prosecutor and other officials, as well as submit to the Parliament his proposals for their dismissal;
- 15) set dates for Parliamentary elections;
- 16) appoint and dismiss heads of executive authorities in the cities and districts of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 17) consider issues of organizational structure and the work of executive authorities;
- 18) abrogate any orders, instructions or regulations of ministries and departments, heads of executive authorities of cities and districts, as well as of organs of local government which contradict the Constitution and the legislation of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 19) call a referendum on his own initiative, or on the demand of the Parliament, or on the demand of the Supreme Court of the Republic, in accordance with the rules and procedures established by the law;
- 20) address the Parliament with annual reports on the situation in the country, on the principal direction of state domestic and foreign policy, present the draft of the state budget and report on its execution;
- 21) have the right to demand extraordinary sessions of the Parliament;
- 22) resolve in accordance with the law, the issues of citizenship of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 23) grant pardons;
- 24) award state decorations, confer honourable titles, military and special ranks;
- 25) establish standards, units of weights and measures;
- 26) discharge other duties and responsibilities entrusted to him under the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 54. The Vice-President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be elected simultaneously with the President of the Republic. The nomination of the Vice-President is made by the nominee for the Presidential post.

Any citizen of the Republic of Abkhazia, not younger than 35 and not older than 65, having the right to vote, can be elected Vice-President.

Throughout his term of office, the Vice-President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall suspend his membership of political parties and non-governmental organizations.

The Vice-President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall not be a Deputy, nor hold any other posts in state, non-governmental organizations, or business structures.

At the appointed time the Vice-President shall receive an emolument, allocated by the Republic of Abkhazia, for his services.

ARTICLE 55. The Vice-President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall carry out on the instruction of the President his assignments, deputize in the event of the President's absence or his inability to discharge his duties.

ARTICLE 56. To provide general guidance for the executive branch, throughout the country, the President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall direct the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Abkhazia.

The Cabinet shall be formed by the President of the Republic and shall be accountable to him.

The Cabinet shall consist of Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers, and other officials as provided for by the law.

ARTICLE 57. The Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Abkhazia shall have the right to resign either collectively or individually.

The resignation shall be submitted to the President of the Republic, who shall have the right to accept or to decline it.

ARTICLE 58. The Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia can express its lack of confidence in an individual Cabinet member and refer it to the President of the Republic, whose decisions on such issues shall be final.

The organization and order of work of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be determined by Constitutional Law.

ARTICLE 59. The authority vested in the President of the Republic shall not be used to alter the constitutional system, or to dismiss other legitimately elected institutions of state power or suspend their function.

ARTICLE 60. Within his powers the President of the Republic on the basis and in pursuance of the laws in force, shall issue orders and edicts which shall be mandatory throughout the territory of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 61. Decisions of the President which do not comply with the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Abkhazia can be abrogated by decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic.

ARTICLE 62. During a state of emergency, natural disaster or hostilities the President of the Republic shall have the right to issue mandatory decrees with full legislative force for immediate execution with simultaneous notification of the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia thereof.

ARTICLE 63. The President shall enjoy personal immunity. His dignity and honour shall be protected by law.

ARTICLE 64. Should the President violate his oath or breach the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Abkhazia, he can be relieved of his duties. Such decisions are taken by the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia - on the basis of Supreme Court findings - by a two-thirds majority of its Deputies voting by secret ballot.

ARTICLE 65. The President of the Republic of Abkhazia may tender his resignation at any time. The question of his resignation shall be resolved by the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia. The decision shall be taken by a qualified majority.

ARTICLE 66. If the President is relieved of his duties, dies, resigns or becomes incapable of discharging the President's duties, his responsibilities shall be assumed by the Vice-President of the Republic. In the event that both the President and the Vice-President are relieved of their duties, die, resign or become incapable of discharging the President's duties, they shall be assumed by the Prime-Minister of the Republic of Abkhazia.

Should none of the above be capable of attending to the President's duties they shall be taken over by the Speaker of the Parliament.

ARTICLE 67. The authority of the Acting President shall remain in effect until the reasons for the President's inability to discharge his duties are removed, or a new President is elected.

The election of a new President shall be conducted within a three month period.

The Acting President shall have no right to hold a referendum or to suggest amendments or revisions of clauses and provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia.

CHAPTER 5

JUDICIAL POWER

ARTICLE 68. In the Republic of Abkhazia justice shall be administered only through the courts. Economic disputes shall be settled by the Court of Arbitration. The judicial system in the Republic of Abkhazia shall be established by Constitutional Law.

ARTICLE 69. Citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia, 27 years of age and above, with higher legal education and no less than five years experience in the legal profession can qualify as judges.

The Chairman and members of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Abkhazia, judges of lower level courts, the Chairman and judges of the Arbitration Court shall be elected by the Parliament on the nomination of the President of the Republic.

ARTICLE 70. The discharge of a judge's duties is incompatible with any other official post in state institutions as well as any other paid job, apart from teaching, scientific research and artistic pursuits.

For their work, judges will receive a monetary remuneration paid by the Republic of Abkhazia at the appointed time.

ARTICLE 71. Judges shall be elected for a term of five years. Judges are inviolable, independent and subordinate only to the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Abkhazia.

Criminal proceedings against a judge cannot be instituted other than under the procedure established by law. A judge's term of office can be terminated or suspended only under the procedure of, and on grounds established by, law.

ARTICLE 72. Court examinations in all courts shall be open to the public except in cases established by the law. The legal procedure shall be adversarial with both sides having equal rights.

ARTICLE 73. The Supreme Court of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be the highest judicial authority.

The Supreme Court of the Republic of Abkhazia shall:

- 1) examine cases of all issues concerning the compliance of decisions taken by the President, the Parliament and other organs of state power or local administration with the Constitution;
- 2) examine cases of disputes between the state and local governments;

- 3) examine cases concerning the results of elections and electoral procedures;
- 4) have the right to settle any disputes concerning the Constitution or express its opinion thereon;
- 5) execute legal proceedings in criminal, civil and administrative actions;
- 6) supervise the legality of the settlement of cases by all the courts in the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 7) provide all courts with guiding clarification on the issues of judicial proceedings.

ARTICLE 74. The courts of the Republic of Abkhazia shall pronounce judgements in the name of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 75. The General Prosecutor of the Republic of Abkhazia and local Prosecutors subordinate to him, shall supervise the legality of criminal investigations, support the public prosecutor in court proceedings, bring suits to protect the interests of the Republic and its citizens, appeal against unlawful decisions and acts of state institutions, local governments and officials.
The prosecuting institutions in the Republic of Abkhazia constitute a single system and shall discharge their duties independently of any government bodies whatsoever.

ARTICLE 76. The General Prosecutor of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be appointed and dismissed by the Parliament at the proposal of the President.

Other Prosecutors shall be appointed by the General Prosecutor of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 77. The authority, organizational structure and the functions of the prosecuting offices shall be established by law.

CHAPTER 6

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

ARTICLE 78. Local governments shall be established in districts, cities and other settlements.

ARTICLE 79. Local government shall be exercised by citizens by way of direct expression of their will and through the elected institutions of local government. Heads of executive authorities in the cities and districts of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be appointed by the President of the Republic from among the members of local government institutions. The composition, organizational structure and powers of local government institutions shall be established by the law.

ARTICLE 80. Local governments shall approve the local budget, local taxes and dues; own, use and manage municipal property; ensure the maintenance of public order; establish their own internal structures and settle economic, social and other matters that are not excluded from their competence or relegated to state organs.

ARTICLE 81. State institutions shall not curtail the rights of local governments established by this Constitution and the laws. Any interference in the legitimate activities of local governments shall be inadmissible.

ARTICLE 82. Local governments shall have the right to a legal defence to ensure free and unimpeded discharge of their duties.

CHAPTER 7

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS AND REVISION PROCEDURE

ARTICLE 83. Suggestions concerning the amendments and revision of the Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia can be made by the President of the Republic, the Parliament, the Supreme Court and the General Prosecutor of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 84. Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be adopted by a two-thirds vote of the total number of Deputies.

CONSTITUTIONAL LAW OF THE REPUBLIC OF ABKHAZIA ON THE PROCEDURE OF BRINGING THE CONSTITUTION INTO EFFECT

The Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia resolves that:

- 1.** The Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia shall come into effect on the day it is adopted, except for Article 44, which shall take effect after the election of a new Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia.
- 2.** Laws and other enactments, which have been in force in the territory of the Republic until this Constitution comes into effect shall be applied in the parts that do not contradict the Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia.
- 3.** From the day the Constitution comes into effect, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia and its officers shall be called according to the Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia as follows:
Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia - People's Assembly - Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia;
Chairman of the Supreme Council - Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia;
First Deputy Chairman of the Republic of Abkhazia - First Deputy of the Speaker;
Deputy Chairmen of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia - Parliament Speaker's Deputies;
Commissions of the Supreme Council - Commissions of the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia.
- 4.** The Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia shall discharge its duties in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic until a new Parliament is elected. Any decisions of the Parliament shall be taken by a majority vote of the Deputies.
- 5.** The first President of the Republic of Abkhazia and the first Vice-President shall be elected by the Parliament of the Republic.
- 6.** The Council of Ministers (the Government) of the Republic of Abkhazia and all other functioning structures of power shall continue to discharge their duties until new institutions are established in accordance with this Constitution.
- 7.** Under this Constitution the election of a new Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be conducted on the basis of the appropriate law in 1995.
- 8.** Once the Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia comes into effect all types of courts shall retain their authority until the expiry of the term for which they were elected. All vacancies shall be filled in accordance with the procedures established by this Constitution.
- 9.** This law shall come into effect on the day of its adoption.

VLADISLAV ARDZINBA
Chairman of the Supreme Council
of the Republic of Abkhazia

City of Sukhum
26 November 1994
No. 188-c

Chapter 1

The Basics of the Constitutional Order

Article 1

The Republic of Abkhazia (Apsny) shall be a sovereign democratic state based on law, which has historically become firmly established by the right of nation to self-determination. The Republic of Abkhazia and Apsny shall be equivalent names.

Article 2

The sovereignty of the people shall be the basis for the State authority in the Republic of Abkhazia. The sovereignty bearer and sole source of authority in the Republic of Abkhazia shall be its people, i.e., the citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia. The people shall exercise their authority directly or through their representatives.

Article 3

The Republic of Abkhazia as a subject of international law shall enter treaty relationship with other states. The procedure for concluding, publishing, ratifying and denouncing international treaties shall be specified by law.

Article 4

The Republic of Abkhazia consists of the historical provinces of Sadz, Bzyb, Guma, Dal-Tsabal, Abjua, Samyrakan, which are the present day Gagrsky, Gudautsky, Sukhumsky, Gulripshsky, Oчамchirsky, Tkuarchalsky and Galsky districts within which the cities of Gagra, Guaduta, Novi Afon, Sukhum, Oчамchira, Tkuarchal, and Gal are located. The territory of the Republic of Abkhazia is indivisible, inviolable and inalienable.

Article 5

Land and other natural resources shall be property of the people and shall be used and protected in the Republic of Abkhazia as a basis of life and activities of its citizens. The issues of ownership, use and disposal of natural resources shall be governed by the laws of the Republic of Abkhazia.

Article 6

The official language of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be the Abkhazian language. The Russian language, equally with the Abkhazian language, shall be recognized as a language of State and other institutions. The State shall guarantee the right to freely use the mother language for all the ethnic groups residing in Abkhazia.

Article 7

The State authority shall be exercised in the Republic of Abkhazia on the basis of a division into legislative, executive and judicial power. The legislative, executive and judicial powers shall be independent of each other.

Article 8

Local self-government shall be recognized in the Republic of Abkhazia, which shall be independent within its authority. Local self-government institutions shall not be part of the State bodies.

Article 9

This constitution shall have a superior legal force. The laws and other legal acts adopted in the Republic of Abkhazia shall comply with the Constitution.

Article 10

The Republic of Abkhazia shall have its own symbols, i.e., a national flag, a National Emblem, and a national anthem, the description of which shall be established by constitutional laws. The capital of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be the city of Sukhum (Aqua).

Chapter 2

Human and Civil Rights and Freedoms

Article 11

The Republic of Abkhazia shall recognize and guarantee the human rights and freedoms fixed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International covenants of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, or in other universally recognized international legal acts.

Article 12

The basic rights and freedoms belong to people from birth. Each man is born free. all people are equal before the law and court irrespective of race, nationality, sex, language, origin, property status or position, domicile, religion, beliefs, ideology or other consideration.

Article 13

Normal human rights and freedoms are the right to life, freedom, immunity and to ownership of private property.

Article 14

Everybody has the right to the freedom of private life, to personal and family secrets, to the protection of honor and dignity, to the freedom of conscience, religion, creative work, thought, speech and convictions.

Article 15

Nobody shall be subject to tortures, violence, or other cruel or humiliating treatment or punishment.

Article 16

Everybody shall have the freedom of travel, of choosing the place of residence, of correspondence, and other ways of communication.

Article 17

All people shall have the right to freedom of association and to hold peaceful rallies, assemblies, marches and demonstrations.

Article 18

Forbidden shall be the formation and activities of association, parties and movements whose aims and operations include the forceful transformation of the constitutional system, the detriment of state security, the creation of armed groups, the incitement of social, racial, national and religious discord.

Article 19

Everybody shall have the right to dwelling, economic freedom and freedom of labor, education and rest, medical service, and social security.

Article 20

The human dwelling shall be inviolable. Nobody shall have the right to penetrate a dwelling against the will of the person living in it except in cases specified by law, or on the basis of a court order.

Article 21

Everybody shall have a state or judicial protection of his or her rights and freedoms guaranteed.

Article 22

A presumption of innocence principle shall be in effect in the Republic of Abkhazia. An indictee shall be considered not guilty until his or her guilt is proved and asserted by a sentence of court which has taken legal effect. An indictee shall not be obliged to prove his or her innocence.

Article 23

Every detainee shall have the right to resort to the help of a lawyer from the moment of detainer, and shall have the right not to testify in the absence of a lawyer.

Article 24

Nobody shall be tried twice for a deed in respect of which a conclusive verdict of guilty has been once brought in already.

Article 25

A law which establishes or aggravates the responsibility may not be retroactive.

Article 26

Everyone shall be entitled to reimbursement for damage inflicted by illegal actions of state organs and officials.

Article 27

A citizen of the Republic of Abkhazia may not be deprived of Abkhazian citizenship, deported from the country, or extradited.

The Republic of Abkhazia shall guarantee protection and patronage to its citizens abroad.

Article 28

Citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia who have reached the age of 18 shall be in full possession of all the rights and duties established by this Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Abkhazia.

Article 29

All the citizens and residents of the Republic of Abkhazia must pay taxes according to the procedure established by law.

Article 30

Everyone present in the territory of the Republic of Abkhazia must abide by its Constitution and its legislation.

Article 31

Everybody shall respect the rights and freedoms of other people.

Article 32

Everybody shall respect and protect the environment.

Article 33

Defense of Motherland is the duty and responsibility of each citizen of the Republic of Abkhazia.

Article 34

A mentioning of some rights in the Constitution shall not be interpreted as a denial or derogation of other rights commonly recognized by international acts.

Article 35

No law which cancels or derogates human rights or freedoms shall be adopted or promulgated in the Republic of Abkhazia. Some restrictions on rights and freedoms may be imposed only by constitutional laws should a necessity arise to protect the constitutional order, to ensure security and public order, to protect health or morals, as well as in cases of natural calamities, state of emergency, or martial law.

C O N S T I T U T I O N
O F T H E R E P U B L I C O F A B K H A Z I A

(APSNY)

Adopted by the 12-th session of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia on the 26-th of November 1994 and approved by the national voting on the 3-rd of October 1999 with amendment adopted by the national voting (referendum) on the 3-rd of October 1999.

City of Sukhum

2001

We, the people of Abkhazia, exercising our right to self-determination, aspiring to promote general welfare, internal tranquillity, respecting human rights and freedoms, establishing civil peace and harmony, solemnly proclaim and institute the Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia.

CHAPTER I

PRINCIPLES OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM

ARTICLE 1. The Republic of Abkhazia (Apsny) is a sovereign, democratic state, established historically under the right of a people to free self-determination, and functioning in accordance with law.

The names "The Republic of Abkhazia" and "Apsny" are interchangeable.

ARTICLE 2. Democracy shall be the basis of state authority in the Republic of Abkhazia.

The bearer of sovereignty and the only source of authority in the Republic of Abkhazia shall be its people - the citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia. The people shall exercise authority directly or through their representatives.

ARTICLE 3. The Republic of Abkhazia which is subject of international law, enters into treaty-based relations with other states. The rules of conclusion, promulgation, ratification and denunciation of international treaties shall be established by the law.

ARTICLE 4. The Republic of Abkhazia consists of the historical provinces of Sadz, Bzyp, Guma, Dal-Tsabal, Abzhywa, Samyrzakan which are the present day Gagra, Gudauta, Sukhum, Gulrypsh, Ochamchyra, Tkwarchal and Gal districts within which the cities of Gagra, Gudauta, New Afon, Sukhum, Ochamchyra, Tkwarchal and Gal are located.

The territory of the Republic of Abkhazia is indivisible, inviolable and inalienable.

ARTICLE 5. In the Republic of Abkhazia the land and other natural resources are the property of the people and shall be used and protected as a basis for life and activity of the citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia.

The issues of ownership, use and disposal of natural resources shall be governed by the laws of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 6. The official language of the Republic of Abkhazia is Abkhazian. The Russian language as well as the Abkhazian language shall be recognized as the language of the government, public and other institutions. The state shall guarantee all ethnic groups living in Abkhazia the right to use freely their own languages.

ARTICLE 7. The state exercises its authority on the basis of a separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers. The legislative, executive and judicial branches of power shall be independent.

ARTICLE 8. In the Republic of Abkhazia, local governments, independent within their jurisdiction, shall be recognized and ensured. These local governments shall not be part of the system of state administration.

ARTICLE 9. The present Constitution shall have supreme legal authority. The laws and other legal instruments,

adopted in the Republic of Abkhazia, shall comply with this Constitution.

ARTICLE 10. The Republic of Abkhazia shall have its own symbols: the state flag, national emblem and national anthem. The description of these symbols shall be established by constitutional law.

The capital of the Republic of Abkhazia is the city of Sukhum (Akwa) .

CHAPTER 2

HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS OF A CITIZEN

ARTICLE 11. The Republic of Abkhazia shall recognize and guarantee the rights and freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International covenants of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights and other universally recognized international legal instruments.

ARTICLE 12. Basic rights and freedoms are the birthright of human beings. Everyone is born free. All are equal before the law and the court without distinction of race, nationality, sex, language, origin, property status or position, domicile, religion, beliefs, ideology or other considerations.

ARTICLE 13. Inalienable human rights and freedoms are the right to life, freedom, immunity and to ownership of private property.

ARTICLE 14. Everyone has the right to freedom of private life, personal and familial confidentiality, freedom to protect one's honour and dignity, freedom of conscience, of religion, creativity, thought, speech and belief.

ARTICLE 15. No-one can be subjected to torture, violence or other cruel or degrading treatment or punishment.

ARTICLE 16. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of movement and choice of domicile, confidentiality of correspondence and other forms of communication.

ARTICLE 17. All people shall have the right to freedom of association and to hold peaceful rallies, assemblies, marches and demonstrations.

ARTICLE 18. Prohibited shall be the formation and activities of non-governmental associations, parties and movements whose aims and operations include the forceful transformation of the constitutional system, the undermining of state security, the creation of armed groups, the incitement of social, racial, ethnic and religious discord.

ARTICLE 19. Everyone shall have the right to a home, economic freedom, and freedom of labour, the right to education and leisure, medical care and social welfare.

ARTICLE 20. A person's home is inviolable. No-one shall have the right to enter a person's home against his will, except in cases prescribed by the law or on the basis of a court order.

ARTICLE 21. Everyone shall be guaranteed state and judicial protection of his rights and freedoms.

ARTICLE 22. In the Republic of Abkhazia the principle of presumed innocence shall hold sway. All accused persons shall be presumed innocent until proven guilty and their offence established by a judicial verdict having the force of law. The accused shall not be obliged to prove his innocence.

ARTICLE 23. Every person detained or arrested shall be entitled to the assistance of a lawyer from the moment of detention or arrest and shall have the right not to make any statements in the absence of a defence lawyer.

ARTICLE 24. No-one shall be tried a second time for an act for which he has already been found guilty by a final court judgement.

ARTICLE 25. Laws which establish or aggravate guilt shall have no retrospective effect.

ARTICLE 26. Everyone shall be entitled to reimbursement by the state for damage caused by illegal actions of state organs and their officials.

ARTICLE 27. No citizen of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be deprived of his citizenship, expelled from the country or extradited to another state.

The Republic of Abkhazia shall guarantee its citizens protection and support beyond its frontiers.

ARTICLE 28. Any citizen of the Republic of Abkhazia having reached 18 years of age shall be entitled to all rights and be subject to all obligations set forth in this Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 29. All citizens and residents of the Republic of Abkhazia must pay taxes as required by the law.

ARTICLE 30. Everyone who happens to be in the territory of the Republic of Abkhazia must abide by its Constitution and its legislation.

ARTICLE 31. Everyone shall respect the rights and freedoms of others.

ARTICLE 32. Everyone shall respect and protect the environment.

ARTICLE 33. Defence of the Motherland is the duty and responsibility of each citizen of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 34. The listing of certain rights in this Constitution shall not be interpreted as a denial or impairment of other rights universally recognized by international legal instruments.

ARTICLE 35. No law abolishing or impairing human rights and freedoms shall be adopted or promulgated in the Republic of Abkhazia. Certain limitations of rights and freedoms can be introduced only by the constitutional laws whenever this might be necessary for the protection of the constitutional system, for security and public order, protection of health and morality as well as in the event of natural disasters, a state of emergency or martial law.

CHAPTER 3 LEGISLATIVE POWER

ARTICLE 36. All legislative authority established by this Constitution shall be exercised by the People's Assembly - the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 37. The Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia shall consist of 35 elected members, called Deputies.

Parliamentary elections shall be universal, equal, direct and shall be conducted by secret ballot.

The term of office of the Parliament is limited to five years. The procedure for the election of Deputies shall be established by constitutional law.

ARTICLE 38. Any citizen of the Republic of Abkhazia who has reached 25 years of age and has the right to vote shall qualify to be elected as a Deputy.

Holding office as President of the Republic of Abkhazia or as a member of the Cabinet, being employed in state organs and in the judicial system, as well as the holding of any other paid job, apart from teaching, scientific research and artistic pursuits, shall be incompatible with the membership in the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia.

For their work, Deputies shall receive a monetary remuneration paid by the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 39. Deputies shall enjoy personal immunity for the whole term of their office. They shall not be detained, arrested or searched unless they are caught in crime and shall not be examined, except in instances when this is prescribed by law, for the purpose of guaranteeing the security of other people. The issue of divesting a Deputy of his immunity is within the competence of the Parliament.

ARTICLE 40. Deputies shall not be bound by an imperative mandate.

ARTICLE 41. The first session of the newly-elected Parliament shall be called by the President of the Republic of Abkhazia within a month from the day of election.

ARTICLE 42. The Parliament shall elect from among its members the Speaker, the Speaker's deputies and other officers and form parliamentary commissions and committees.

The Speaker shall preside over parliamentary sessions, assist Deputies in the discharge of their duties, provide them with necessary information and sign Parliamentary resolutions .

Before the Speaker is elected, the first session of the newly elected Parliament shall be presided over by its eldest Deputy.

ARTICLE 43. From the moment the newly elected Parliament starts its work, the term of office of the preceding Parliament shall expire.

The Parliament shall hold its sessions not less than twice a year (spring session and autumn session).

The order of work of the Parliament shall be determined by regulation.

ARTICLE 44. Any decision by the Parliament shall require a quorum. The adoption of legislative acts, with the exception of cases specifically provided for by the Constitution, shall require a simple majority of all the Deputies. For the adoption of Constitutional Law and when a qualified majority is necessary two-thirds of all the Deputies' votes shall be required.

ARTICLE 45. Each Bill passed by the Parliament shall be submitted to the President of the Republic of Abkhazia. If the Bill is signed by the President it shall be promulgated within fifteen days from the date of its approval by the Parliament. The law shall come into effect from the moment of its promulgation, except in cases where a later date is specified by the law itself.

In the event that the Bill is not approved by the President, it shall be returned, with the President's objections, to the Parliament. If on second consideration thereof the Bill is passed by a qualified majority, the President shall be obliged to sign and promulgate it.

If the Bill is not returned by the President within ten days after submission, the Bill shall become a law, as it would if it had been signed by the President. The Bill shall not become a law if, due to the adjournment of a meeting, it could not be returned to the Parliament.

ARTICLE 46. The right to initiate legislation in the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia belongs to its Deputies, the President of the Republic, the Supreme Court and the General Prosecutor of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 47. The Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia shall:

- 1) adopt the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 2) decide upon changes in administrative-territorial divisions;
- 3) hear the President's address on the situation in the country, the principal aspects of domestic and foreign policy of the state and methods of their implementation;
- 4) consider and approve the state budget and exercise control over its execution;
- 5) adopt a criminal code and criminal judicial procedure, corrective labour law, civil code and civil judicial procedure, arbitration and other legislation, as well as laws on the judicial system and prosecution laws;
- 6) provide the interpretation of the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 7) establish state decorations, honourable titles and army ranks of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 8) ratify and denounce the interstate treaties and agreements of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 9) elect the Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia and the Speaker's deputies;
- 10) dismiss or appoint, on the nomination of the President the General Prosecutor, the Chairman of the National Bank and other officials in accordance with the law;
- 11) take decisions on any vote of no-confidence in individual Cabinet members;
- 12) impeach the President of the Republic of Abkhazia with a view to his dismissal;
- 13) grant amnesties;
- 14) decide upon the declaration of war and the conclusion of peace;
- 15) determine the immunities of Deputies of the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 16) decide upon the legality of the imposition of a state of emergency and martial law;
- 17) exercise other powers entrusted to it by the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Abkhazia.

CHAPTER 4

EXECUTIVE POWER

ARTICLE 48. The Executive Power in the Republic of Abkhazia shall be vested in the President of the Republic of Abkhazia.

The President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be the Head of State.

ARTICLE 49. The election of the President shall be universal, direct, equal and secret ballot. He shall hold office for a term of five years.

Any person of Abkhazian nationality who is a citizen of the Republic of Abkhazia and who is not younger than 35 years and not older than 65 years and has the right to vote, is eligible to be elected President of the Republic of Abkhazia.

The same person shall not hold office as President for more than two consecutive terms.

ARTICLE 50. The President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall assume his duties the moment he is sworn in and cease the discharge of his duties upon the expiry of his term of office, the moment a newly elected President of the Republic of Abkhazia is sworn in.

The order and terms of presidential elections in the Republic of Abkhazia shall be established by constitutional law.

ARTICLE 51. On assuming office, the President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall in the presence of the members of the Supreme Court in the Parliament take the oath approved by the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 52. Throughout the term of his office, the President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall suspend his membership of political parties and non-governmental organizations.

The President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall not be a Deputy or hold any other position in state organs, non-governmental organizations or business structures.

At the appointed time the President shall receive an emolument, allocated by the Republic of Abkhazia, for his services.

ARTICLE 53. The President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall:

- 1) ensure the observance of human rights and freedoms, of the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Abkhazia and its international obligations;
- 2) determine the principal direction of domestic and foreign policy;
- 3) officially represent the state in international affairs;
- 4) sign international instruments and interstate treaties;
- 5) take measures to ensure the security and territorial integrity of the Republic of Abkhazia, form and head the Security Council, the status of which shall be determined by law;
- 6) approve the military doctrine of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 7) serve as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 8) appoint and recall diplomatic representatives of the Republic of Abkhazia in foreign states and international organizations;
- 9) approve programmes in the field of state, economic, social, cultural and national development;
- 10) ensure the implementation, in the territory of the Republic of Abkhazia, of the financial and credit policy as well as policy in the fields of science, education, culture, health-care, environmental protection and social welfare;
- 11) ensure consistency in the legislative regulation of issues of citizenship, property, budget and financial system, taxation, environmental protection and civil service;
- 12) have the right to attend sessions of the Parliament and be given the floor at any time on his demand;
- 13) impose in accordance with the law a state of emergency or martial law in the Republic of Abkhazia in the interests of the security of its citizens, with the subsequent approval of Parliament;
- 14) present in accordance with his powers, to the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia nominations for the election to the posts of the Chairman of the National Bank, General Prosecutor and other officials, as well as submit to the Parliament his proposals for their dismissal;
- 15) set dates for Parliamentary elections;

- 16) appoint and dismiss heads of executive authorities in the cities and districts of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 17) consider issues of organizational structure and the work of executive authorities;
- 18) abrogate any orders, instructions or regulations of ministries and departments, heads of executive authorities of cities and districts, as well as of organs of local government which contradict the Constitution and the legislation of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 19) call a referendum on his own initiative, or on the demand of the Parliament, or on the demand of the Supreme Court of the Republic, in accordance with the rules and procedures established by the law;
- 20) address the Parliament with annual reports on the situation in the country, on the principal direction of state domestic and foreign policy, present the draft of the state budget and report on its execution;
- 21) have the right to demand extraordinary sessions of the Parliament;
- 22) resolve in accordance with the law, the issues of citizenship of the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 23) grant pardons;
- 24) award state decorations, confer honourable titles, military and special ranks;
- 25) establish standards, units of weights and measures;
- 26) discharge other duties and responsibilities entrusted to him under the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 54. The Vice-President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be elected simultaneously with the President of the Republic. The nomination of the Vice-President is made by the nominee for the Presidential post. Any citizen of the Republic of Abkhazia, not younger than 35 and not older than 65, having the right to vote, can be elected Vice-President.

Throughout his term of office, the Vice-President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall suspend his membership of political parties and non-governmental organizations.

The Vice-President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall not be a Deputy, nor hold any other posts in state, non-governmental organizations, or business structures.

At the appointed time the Vice-President shall receive an emolument, allocated by the Republic of Abkhazia, for his services.

ARTICLE 55. The Vice-President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall carry out on the instruction of the President his assignments, deputize in the event of the President's absence or his inability to discharge his duties.

ARTICLE 56. To provide general guidance for the executive branch, throughout the country, the President of the Republic of Abkhazia shall direct the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Abkhazia.

The Cabinet shall be formed by the President of the Republic and shall be accountable to him.

The Cabinet shall consist of Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers, and other officials as provided for by the law.

ARTICLE 57. The Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Abkhazia shall have the right to resign either collectively or individually.

The resignation shall be submitted to the President of the Republic, who shall have the right to accept or to decline it.

ARTICLE 58. The Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia can express its lack of confidence in an individual Cabinet member and refer it to the President of the Republic, whose decisions on such issues shall be final.

The organization and order of work of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be determined by Constitutional Law.

ARTICLE 59. The authority vested in the President of the Republic shall not be used to alter the constitutional system, or to dismiss other legitimately elected institutions of state power or suspend their function.

ARTICLE 60. Within his powers the President of the Republic on the basis and in pursuance of the laws in force, shall issue orders and edicts which shall be mandatory throughout the territory of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 61. Decisions of the President which do not comply with the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Abkhazia can be abrogated by decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic.

ARTICLE 62. During a state of emergency, natural disaster or hostilities the President of the Republic shall have the right to issue mandatory decrees with full legislative force for immediate execution with simultaneous notification of the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia thereof.

ARTICLE 63. The President shall enjoy personal immunity. His dignity and honour shall be protected by law.

ARTICLE 64. Should the President violate his oath or breach the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Abkhazia, he can be relieved of his duties. Such decisions are taken by the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia - on the basis of Supreme Court findings - by a two-thirds majority of its Deputies voting by secret ballot.

ARTICLE 65. The President of the Republic of Abkhazia may tender his resignation at any time. The question of his resignation shall be resolved by the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia. The decision shall be taken by a qualified majority.

ARTICLE 66. If the President is relieved of his duties, dies, resigns or becomes incapable of discharging the President's duties, his responsibilities shall be assumed by the Vice-President of the Republic. In the event that both the President and the Vice-President are relieved of their duties, die, resign or become incapable of discharging the President's duties, they shall be assumed by the Prime-Minister of the Republic of Abkhazia. Should none of the above be capable of attending to the President's duties they shall be taken over by the Speaker of the Parliament.

ARTICLE 67. The authority of the Acting President shall remain in effect until the reasons for the President's inability to discharge his duties are removed, or a new President is elected.

The election of a new President shall be conducted within a three month period.

The Acting President shall have no right to hold a referendum or to suggest amendments or revisions of clauses and provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia.

CHAPTER 5 JUDICIAL POWER

ARTICLE 68. In the Republic of Abkhazia justice shall be administered only through the courts. Economic disputes shall be settled by the Court of Arbitration. The judicial system in the Republic of Abkhazia shall be established by Constitutional Law.

ARTICLE 69. Citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia, 27 years of age and above, with higher legal education and no less than five years experience in the legal profession can qualify as judges.

The Chairman and members of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Abkhazia, judges of lower level courts, the Chairman and judges of the Arbitration Court shall be elected by the Parliament on the nomination of the President of the Republic.

ARTICLE 70. The discharge of a judge's duties is incompatible with any other official post in state institutions as well as any other paid job, apart from teaching, scientific research and artistic pursuits.

For their work, judges will receive a monetary remuneration paid by the Republic of Abkhazia at the appointed time.

ARTICLE 71. Judges shall be elected for a term of five years. Judges are inviolable, independent and subordinate only to the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Abkhazia.

Criminal proceedings against a judge cannot be instituted other than under the procedure established by law. A judge's term of office can be terminated or suspended only under the procedure of, and on grounds established by, law.

ARTICLE 72. Court examinations in all courts shall be open to the public except in cases established by the law. The legal procedure shall be adversarial with both sides having equal rights.

ARTICLE 73. The Supreme Court of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be the highest judicial authority.

The Supreme Court of the Republic of Abkhazia shall:

- 1) examine cases of all issues concerning the compliance of decisions taken by the President, the Parliament and other organs of state power or local administration with the Constitution;
- 2) examine cases of disputes between the state and local governments;
- 3) examine cases concerning the results of elections and electoral procedures;
- 4) have the right to settle any disputes concerning the Constitution or express its opinion thereon;
- 5) execute legal proceedings in criminal, civil and administrative actions;
- 6) supervise the legality of the settlement of cases by all the courts in the Republic of Abkhazia;
- 7) provide all courts with guiding clarification on the issues of judicial proceedings.

ARTICLE 74. The courts of the Republic of Abkhazia shall pronounce judgements in the name of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 75. The General Prosecutor of the Republic of Abkhazia and local Prosecutors subordinate to him, shall supervise the legality of criminal investigations, support the public prosecutor in court proceedings, bring suits to protect the interests of the Republic and its citizens, appeal against unlawful decisions and acts of state institutions, local governments and officials.

The prosecuting institutions in the Republic of Abkhazia constitute a single system and shall discharge their duties independently of any government bodies whatsoever.

ARTICLE 76. The General Prosecutor of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be appointed and dismissed by the Parliament at the proposal of the President.

Other Prosecutors shall be appointed by the General Prosecutor of the Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 77. The authority, organizational structure and the functions of the prosecuting offices shall be established by law.

CHAPTER 6

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

ARTICLE 78. Local governments shall be established in districts, cities and other settlements.

ARTICLE 79. Local government shall be exercised by citizens by way of direct expression of their will and through the elected institutions of local government.

Heads of executive authorities in the cities and districts of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be appointed by the President of the Republic from among the members of local government institutions.

The composition, organizational structure and powers of local government institutions shall be established by the law.

ARTICLE 80. Local governments shall approve the local budget, local taxes and dues; own, use and manage municipal property; ensure the maintenance of public order; establish their own internal structures and settle economic, social and other matters that are not excluded from their competence or relegated to state organs.

ARTICLE 81. State institutions shall not curtail the rights of local governments established by this Constitution and the laws. Any interference in the legitimate activities of local governments shall be inadmissible.

ARTICLE 82. Local governments shall have the right to a legal defence to ensure free and unimpeded discharge of their duties.

CHAPTER 7

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS AND REVISION PROCEDURE

ARTICLE 83. Suggestions concerning the amendments and revision of the Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia can be made by the President of the Republic, the Parliament, the Supreme Court and the General Prosecutor of the

Republic of Abkhazia.

ARTICLE 84. Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be adopted by a two-thirds vote of the total number of Deputies.

CONSTITUTIONAL LAW OF THE REPUBLIC OF ABKHAZIA ON THE PROCEDURE OF BRINGING THE CONSTITUTION INTO EFFECT

The Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia resolves that:

1. The Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia shall come into effect on the day it is adopted, except for Article 44, which shall take effect after the election of a new Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia.

2. Laws and other enactments, which have been in force in the territory of the Republic until this Constitution comes into effect shall be applied in the parts that do not contradict the Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia.

3. From the day the Constitution comes into effect, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia and its officers shall be called according to the Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia as follows:

Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia - People's Assembly - Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia;

Chairman of the Supreme Council - Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia;

First Deputy Chairman of the Republic of Abkhazia - First Deputy of the Speaker;

Deputy Chairmen of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia - Parliament Speaker's Deputies;

Commissions of the Supreme Council - Commissions of the Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia.

4. The Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia shall discharge its duties in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic until a new Parliament is elected. Any decisions of the Parliament shall be taken by a majority vote of the Deputies.

5. The first President of the Republic of Abkhazia and the first Vice-President shall be elected by the Parliament of the Republic.

6. The Council of Ministers (the Government) of the Republic of Abkhazia and all other functioning structures of power shall continue to discharge their duties until new institutions are established in accordance with this Constitution.

7. Under this Constitution the election of a new Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia shall be conducted on the basis of the appropriate law in 1995.

8. Once the Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia comes into effect all types of courts shall retain their authority until the expiry of the term for which they were elected. All vacancies shall be filled in accordance with the procedures established by this Constitution.

9. This law shall come into effect on the day of its adoption.

VLADISLAV ARDZINBA

Chairman of the Supreme Council
of the Republic of Abkhazia

City of Sukhum

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The Georgian-Abkhazian conflict

THE SECURITY OF THE CASPIAN SEA REGION

Alexander Krylov

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I. Introduction

The Abkhaz have long populated the western Caucasus. They currently number about 100 000 people, speak one of the languages of the Abkhazo-Adygeyan (west Caucasian) language group, and live in the coastal areas on the southern slopes of the Caucasian ridge and along the Black Sea coast. Together with closely related peoples of the western Caucasus (for example, the Abazins, Adygeyans and Kabardians (or Circassians)) they play an important role in the Caucasian ethno-cultural community and consider themselves an integral part of its future. At the same time, the people living in coastal areas on the southern slopes of the Caucasian ridge have achieved broader communication with Asia Minor and the Mediterranean civilizations than any other people of the Caucasus. The geographical position of Abkhazia on the Black Sea coast has made its people a major factor in the historical process of the western Caucasus, acting as an economic and cultural bridge with the outside world.

Georgians and Abkhaz have been neighbours from time immemorial. The Georgians currently number about 4 million people. The process of national consolidation of the Georgian nation is still far from complete: it includes some 20 subgroups, and the Megrelians (sometimes called Mingrelians) and Svans who live in western Georgia are so different in language and culture from other Georgians that it would be more correct to consider them as separate peoples. Some scholars, Hewitt, for example,¹ suggest calling the Georgian nation not 'Georgians' but by their own name, Kartvelians, which includes the Georgians, Megrelians and Svans.² To call all the different Kartvelian groups 'Georgians' obscures the true ethnic situation. Increasingly, scholars prefer to distinguish between Georgians, Megrelians and Svans, the Georgians being the population of eastern Georgia.³

Historically, Georgian-Abkhaz interaction has alternated between close cooperation and bitter fighting. The beginning of the current Georgian-Abkhaz conflict can be traced back to the 1870s when, after the end of the Caucasian war, there was a mass resettlement of Abkhaz to Turkey (the Mahajees). As a result the Abkhaz territory along the Black Sea-divided into two parts, the north-west (Bzibean) and the south-east (Abjuan)-has since been populated by various nationalities, including Armenians, Greeks, Megrelians and Russians, thus giving modern Abkhazia its multi-ethnic character.

The Georgian nationalist movement that emerged in the 19th century defined the 'primordial Georgian territory' as being that which lay within the borders of the medieval Georgian empire of the 10th-13th centuries. This ignored the initially multi-ethnic character of the state. The first attempts by the movement to base the development of the Georgian state on these 'historical lands' were made after the Russian Empire disintegrated, during the period of the independent Georgian republic (1918-21). In Abkhazia and other ethnic minority areas a policy of assimilation began, with the mass resettlement of Georgians to Abkhazia and the declaration of Georgian as the state language. This policy combined with acts of

violence and robberies by the Georgian armies caused many protests among the population of Abkhazia, including some of the local Megrelians.⁴ The establishment of Soviet rule in Abkhazia in March 1921 was, therefore, welcomed by the people and heralded as the end of national oppression and of the Georgian occupation.

In 1921 Abkhazia received the status of a Soviet Republic allied with Georgia by a special treaty, but its status was downgraded in February 1931 to that of an autonomous republic within Georgia with the aim of facilitating the assimilation of the Abkhaz by Georgians. Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Joseph Stalin (a Georgian) regarded the Abkhaz as a primitive people who were to be assimilated by the 'culturally advanced' Georgians.⁵ The period from 1931 to the early 1950s was particularly tragic in the history of Abkhazia. It saw the 'Georgianization' of Abkhazia, which for all intents and purposes meant the genocide of its indigenous population and included the physical extermination of the Abkhaz intelligentsia, the expulsion of Abkhaz from the management of all administrative and public organizations and state enterprises, the closure of Abkhaz schools and the forcible enrolment of Abkhaz children into Georgian schools, the prohibition of teaching in the Abkhaz language in high schools, the replacement of Abkhaz names with Georgian ones, restricted social security for persons of Abkhaz ethnicity, unwritten privileges for Georgians, the massive resettlement of Georgians into Abkhazia, the persecution of Abkhaz culture and the falsification of Abkhaz history.⁶

All through the Soviet period the main goal of the Georgian leadership and of the Georgian nationalist movement as a whole was the creation of a consolidated Georgian nation in the shortest possible time. With Stalin in power, when the influence of the Georgian lobby in the Kremlin was at its greatest, this policy was carried out by repressive methods. Some peoples were deported from Georgia (Greeks, Kurds and Meskhetian Turks). Others, not even related to the Kartvelians, were declared part of the 'Georgian tribes' and along with Svans and Megrelians were quickly assimilated.

After Stalin's death the Georgian lobby in the central Soviet Government remained but was weakened. From the mid-1950s the Georgian republican authorities were forced by the Soviet Government to stop the worst forms of discrimination against the Abkhaz, but the mass resettlement of Georgians to Abkhazia continued. As a result, at the end of the 1980s the share of Abkhaz in the 525 000-strong population of Abkhazia was reduced to 17.8 per cent while the share of the Georgian population reached 45.7 per cent.⁷ In the mid-1950s, in line with the ideological goals of the resettlement policy, a theory was fabricated declaring the true Abkhaz to be 'an ancient cultural Georgian tribe living on the territory of Abkhazia' and describing the modern Abkhaz as descendants of backward highlanders, Apsuaers,⁸ who ostensibly moved into Abkhazia from the north in the 17th century.⁹ The thesis of the 'resettlement of the Apsuaers' became part of a racist theory asserting a supposed primordial superiority of the 'civilized' Georgians over their neighbours—a theory which dominated in Georgian science and public consciousness. Widespread promotion of this theory caused sharp protests from the Abkhaz intelligentsia and aggravated inter-ethnic relations. Tensions between Abkhaz and Georgians became particularly evident in 1957, 1964, 1967 and 1978 when there were mass protest actions by the Abkhaz population and only emergency intervention by the central government prevented further escalation of the conflict.¹⁰

At the end of the 1980s, in conditions of a growing crisis of the central government, the contradictions between the Abkhaz and the Georgians assumed much sharper forms. The Georgian nationalist movement raised demands for national independence and the creation of a mono-ethnic Georgian state within its 'historical borders'. The Abkhaz actively opposed Georgian separatism. The 'Abkhaz letter' of 1988 formulated a demand for the restoration to Abkhazia of the status of Soviet Socialist republic it enjoyed in 1921-31."

In 1989-91 a wave of inter-ethnic conflicts swept through Georgia, behind which Georgian radicals saw the 'hand of Moscow'. In fact the growth of inter-ethnic tensions could be attributed to the activists for Georgian independence, who called for policies of 'de-Armenianization' and 'de-Azerbaijanization', the abolition of all autonomies, and even a state birth control programme to limit the expansion of the non-Georgian population. In 1990 the ultra-radical (later President) Zviad Gamsakhurdia elevated the idea of a mono-ethnic Georgian state into official policy. The autonomy of South Ossetia was abolished and open persecution of the non-Georgian population began.¹²

In Abkhazia, following major clashes in 1989 between Abkhaz and Georgians, the conflict was reflected in legislation. Under the slogan of a return to the independent republic of 1918-21, Tbilisi annulled all legal acts of the Soviet period, including those on the allied status of Georgia and Abkhazia (1921) and on the autonomy of Abkhazia within the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic (1931). In response, in August 1990, the Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia adopted a Declaration of the State Sovereignty of the Abkhazian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. It declared Abkhazia a 'sovereign socialist state having all the power of authority on its territory except the rights voluntarily delegated by it to the USSR and Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic by the previous agreements'.¹³ A 'war of laws' followed: all Abkhazian legislation was annulled by the Georgian Government. As a result authority was increasingly paralysed in Abkhazia and Tbilisi rapidly lost control of the situation.

After Gamsakhurdia's overthrow in January 1992 the situation in Abkhazia deteriorated further. The war which broke out in 1992-93 was the peak of the conflict between Abkhazia and Georgia, characterized by the aspirations of the Abkhaz to secure their national and physical survival and by the desire of the Georgians to achieve national consolidation on the basis of their own ethnos and to create a mono-ethnic Georgian state on a territory with a multinational population and within completely artificial borders.

Originally Georgian propaganda justified the military intervention in Abkhazia by the need to protect the safety of the railways and to free Georgian officials taken hostage by followers of Gamsakhurdia. Realizing the absurdity of these allegations, President Eduard Shevardnadze later laid the blame for starting the war on Tengiz Kitovani, Minister of Defence for Georgia and a member of the Military Council that had overthrown Gamsakhurdia, alleging that Kitovani had ordered the army into Abkhazia without Shevardnadze's knowledge. Shevardnadze described the Georgian Army's actions in Abkhazia as intolerable: 'I will not even mention the inadmissible methods they used. Tanks, armoured vehicles, removal of the flag from the House of Government as if it were a foreign country . . . Much of what was done then cannot be justified and cannot be regarded as normal'.¹⁴

In fact there is no doubt that the Georgian-Abkhazian war was provoked not by the situation in Abkhazia—the situation there was calmer than in neighbouring Megrelia, where numerous armed gangs of 'Zviadists'¹⁵ were operating—but by the situation in Tbilisi following the overthrow of Gamsakhurdia. It was probably the personal interests of the members of the Military Council (later the State Council of Georgia) that were behind the military campaign in Abkhazia. For each of them: 'A victory over Abkhazia could be a new important step in his political career. For Shevardnadze, however, this war could open much broader prospects. For the "new opposition" he was a former opponent, a stranger; he was still a Russian citizen with a Moscow residence; his strength was the support he received from Moscow, but he could never achieve the admiration among the Georgian people that Gamsakhurdia enjoyed'.¹⁶ For Shevardnadze therefore a war in Abkhazia was absolutely necessary: without it, the consolidation of his personal power and defeat of his political opponents were inconceivable. In fact it was the war in Abkhazia that allowed him to put down public discontent in Megrelia,¹⁷ to strengthen his own position in Tbilisi, and to dismiss and then arrest those who had overthrown Gamsakhurdia and invited Shevardnadze himself to Georgia

(for example, Djaba Ioseliani and Tengiz Kitovani). Thus the Georgian-Abkhazian war was the price which the population of Georgia paid for Shevardnadze's return to power.

Shevardnadze probably received approval for a military operation in Abkhazia from Russian President Boris Yeltsin. It was hardly coincidental that one day before fighting broke out Russia transferred tanks, helicopters, artillery pieces and other military equipment to the Georgian armed forces. However, in spite of its overwhelming superiority in arms and numbers over the Abkhaz militia, the Georgian Army failed to achieve a quick victory.

The massive and fierce resistance that the Georgian Army met came as a surprise for the Georgian leaders, but was completely natural: the Abkhaz population regarded the Georgian military intervention as a real threat to its very existence.¹⁸ The Abkhazian leadership, relying on the support of the public, also succeeded in quickly creating Abkhazian territorial armed forces. They received fast and effective help from the neighbouring peoples of the North Caucasus as a result of the traditional ethnic solidarity among the Abkhaz-Adygeya peoples. Furthermore, the activities of the Georgian leadership appeared so scandalous and unfair that there was a large influx of volunteers from different parts of the former Soviet Union, including Chechens, Ossetians, Russians and Ukrainians, to fight the Georgian Army. Usually these volunteers formed international brigades but the Cossacks from southern Russia formed their own units.¹⁹

Initially the Abkhazian armed forces experienced an acute shortage of arms. There is widespread opinion in the West that they received their arms from the Russian military.²⁰ In the view of the present author, based on numerous interviews with local veterans of the Georgian-Abkhazian war, arms were indeed often purchased from the Russian military but this was the result of private deals, reflecting the progressive disintegration of government authority under Yeltsin, and did not represent a refined Byzantine approach to the conflict on the part of the Russian authorities. Moreover, when the Georgian Army was defeated at Gagra in 1992 the Abkhazian Army seized a large amount of modern military equipment, including tanks, surface-to-air missile systems and artillery pieces, which eased their arms and ammunition shortage.

The Georgian-Abkhazian war lasted over a year and was very bloody and destructive. About 20 000 civilians died in Abkhazia;²¹ material damage was estimated at \$11.5 billion.²² The war resulted in a fundamental change in the ethnic groups in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict. Although the attitudes of Georgians, Megrelians and Svans differed,²³ the local Georgian population on the whole supported the military action. Other ethnic groups, initially neutral in the conflict, later adopted a pro-Abkhaz position as a result of robberies and other excesses by the Georgian military. Thus, since 1992 the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict has assumed the character of a confrontation between the Georgian state and the local Georgian community, on the one hand, and the rest of the multi-ethnic population of Abkhazia, on the other hand.

II. The post-war situation

After the defeat of the Georgian Army and the flight of part of the local Georgian population from Abkhazia,²⁴ the political position of the Abkhazian leadership solidified. The overwhelming majority of the population consistently supported independence and a strongly pro-Russian orientation. Internal political stability allowed Abkhazia's leaders to resolve the country's economic problems in spite of isolation from the outside world.

Abkhazia's economic achievements were especially evident in comparison with Georgia's. Its social and economic infrastructure was restored without foreign aid and relied entirely on Abkhazia's domestic potential. The greatest success was in the production of electric power. While in Georgia over the past eight years the energy crisis has resulted in restrictions on public electricity consumption (to six hours per day, and during the winter months of 2001 only one or two hours per day), in Abkhazia there were no such

restrictions and electric power tariffs for ordinary consumers remained the lowest throughout the former Soviet Union. In 1999 Abkhazia harvested about 10 000 tons of tea and 1000 tons of tobacco, while exporting over 20 000 tons of citrus crops, achieving a positive trade balance for the first time since the end of the war.²⁵

After the breakup of the Soviet Union the leaders of Abkhazia considered reunion with Russia a priority task. An appeal of the Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia to the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation dated 23 March 1993 asked it to 'return the Republic of Abkhazia into the Russian fold, or to place it under the protection of Russia in the appropriate international legal form';²⁶ A resolution adopted at a mass meeting held in Abkhazia on 16 April 1995 repeated the request to the Russian Government for a reunion of Abkhazia and Russia.²⁷ However, there was no positive reaction to these requests. Russia's policy was clearly pro-Georgian policy at that time, and the Abkhazian leadership was forced to work towards legalizing the state's independence. On 3 October 1999, along with the presidential elections in Abkhazia, a referendum was held in the country in which the overwhelming majority of Abkhazians (97.7 per cent of voters) supported the creation of an independent and democratic Abkhazian state.²⁸ On the basis of the result, on 12 October 1999 Abkhazia adopted an Act of State Independence of the Republic of Abkhazia.²⁹

Understanding that in the circumstances it would be impossible to achieve de jure recognition of Abkhazia's independence by the world community, the Abkhazian leadership agreed to possible coexistence with Georgia in a 'common state' within the borders of the former Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. At the same time Abkhazia rejected the status of autonomy and agreed to build relations with Georgia only on the basis of equality within a common state whose functions would be limited to foreign policy, defence, finance, border protection and customs services. Initially the Georgian leadership agreed with this approach. It was reflected in the joint Statement on Measures for a Political Settlement of 4 April 1994 in which Georgia and Abkhazia agreed to act as equal sides and pledged to resume official relations on this basis.³⁰ Later, however, the Georgian leadership changed its position and refused to build relations with Abkhazia on the basis of equality.

The Georgian leadership did not blame Abkhazia's secession on its own policies but interpreted it as an annexation and occupation of the primordial territory of Georgia and as 'aggression of international terrorism against a sovereign state';³¹ For Tbilisi the only acceptable resolution to the conflict was to grant Abkhazia the status of autonomy inside the unified Georgian state, and neither the future structure of the Georgian state nor a possible form of autonomy for Abkhazia were even discussed.

For the whole post-Soviet period Georgia's policy of state-building has been conducted on the basis of rigid unitarism. The result of this policy was a profound economic crisis and the progressive disintegration of Georgia. The government in Tbilisi lost control over all the autonomies that existed during the Soviet period (Abkhazia, Adzharia and South Ossetia), over Javaheti with its compact 130 000 Armenian population, and over many mountain areas such as Svanetia and the Pankisi gorge, which is populated by Chechen-Kistins.

The ruinous character of the policy of building a mono-ethnic state in a country where the share of ethnic minorities in the population is over 30 per cent was absolutely clear. However, the majority of Georgian legislators continued to take a negative attitude to any measures that might 'undermine the unity of the Georgian state';³² The 1995 constitution proclaimed Georgia 'an independent, unified and indivisible' state and the term 'federalism' is not used in it. The constitution proclaims that 'citizens of Georgia regulate matters of local importance through local self-government as long as it does not encroach upon national sovereignty'. It also states that 'when conditions are appropriate and self-government bodies have been established throughout the territory of Georgia, the parliament shall be formed with two chambers: the Council of the Republic and the Senate'. In the future the Senate will

consist of members elected from Abkhazia, Adzharia and other territorial units of Georgia as well as five members appointed by the President.³³

Consisting exclusively of ethnic Georgians, the political leadership of Georgia³⁴ did not even consider the possibility of starting national construction on the basis of federalism rather than on the basis of a unitary state.

The Abkhazian problem remains the highest priority on Georgia's security agenda and it influences its approach to other conflicts. As one South Ossetian leader observed, 'a Georgian-Ossetian settlement will hardly be possible before a Georgian-Abkhazian settlement as South Ossetia does not anticipate having a status lower than that of Abkhazia'.³⁵ It is also clear that Adzharia will adopt a similar position. Although the Adzharian Government has not formally declared its intention to secede, it operates in a completely independent way and disregards the Tbilisi authorities. The customs, the office of the public prosecutor, the courts, the police and the coastguard are under its full control. Posts with armed units have been set up on the administrative borders of Adzharia to prevent any armed infiltration from Georgia. The authorities of Abkhazia and Adzharia maintain constant contact, and during the Georgian-Abkhazian war Adzharia declared its neutrality. The Adzharian authorities take their own position on the issue of the Russian military presence in the South Caucasus. They oppose the withdrawal of the Russian troops from the territory of Adzharia and have openly declared a pro-Russia policy.³⁶

Tbilisi's control over Javaheti is similarly only nominal. Its Armenian population is pro-Russian and pro-Armenian, and is increasingly demanding autonomy.³⁷ With the progressive disintegration of the Georgian state, such compact national minorities living in Georgia as the Megrelians and Svans, and then Georgian sub-ethnic groups such as the Cahetians, Gurians, Khevsurs and Tushins, may also demand autonomy. The possibility of the country splitting into many different parts as it was in the 13th-18th centuries until Georgia became part of the Russian Empire may therefore again become a reality. This would mean not only the collapse of the Georgian state but also a tragedy for the Georgian people.

It is logical therefore that the Georgian Government is only ready to give Abkhazia autonomous status. It has concentrated all its diplomatic efforts on the Georgian refugee problem. The return of the Georgian population to Abkhazia, which the Georgian leaders insist on, will obviously result in a renewal of hostilities, as it is completely unacceptable for the people of Abkhazia and its leadership. Natella Akaba, an Abkhazian political analyst, writes that among those who fall under the definition of 'refugees':

There are many people who committed criminal and military offences in 1992-93. Abkhazia is a small country: everybody knows nearly everything about their neighbours; the names of those who in the late 1980s demanded the liquidation of the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic and who in August 1992 wrote to the Georgian leaders asking for Georgian troops (which ended in bloody clashes) are well known. If they come back, another war will be inevitable.³⁸

At the same time neither the population of Abkhazia nor its leaders object to a gradual, staged return of refugees, first of all to the Gali region. However, the leadership of Georgia is strongly against this mode of resolving the refugee problem. In the opinion of Russian political analysts these objections are raised because 'a staged return of refugees presents a threat [to Georgia] of their "political" assimilation and gradual integration into the Abkhazian state, in particular because the Sukhumi authorities are taking appropriate steps in this direction: among the deputies of the Abkhazian Parliament there are now two Georgians/Megrelians elected by the population of the Gali region'.³⁹

The mass return of Georgian refugees on which the Georgian leadership insists does not mean a peaceful resolution of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict but is actually intended to help to create favourable conditions for a new military campaign for the conquest of Abkhazia, and after that of other rebellious regions and peoples in Georgia.

III. The position of Russia

The official position of the Russian Federation on the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict is based on the recognition of the inviolability of Georgia's territorial integrity, inside which Abkhazia should be given broad political rights. On the basis of this position Russia has acted as an intermediary helping the conflicting sides conclude the Memorandum of Understanding (December 1993), the Agreement on Refugees and the Statement on Measures for Political Settlement of April 1993. At the request of both sides, in July 1994 a Russian peacekeeping force numbering about 2500 soldiers moved into a security zone along the Georgia-Abkhazia border.⁴⁰

Soon after the deployment, Russian diplomacy ceased to take the interests of the Abkhazian side into account and began to act as a lobbyist for Georgian interests. The then Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrey Kozyrev, drew himself a plan for the economic suffocation of Abkhazia, having shown a good understanding for the specific features of its subtropical economy.⁴¹ Under this plan, in December 1994 the Russian Government established a 'special' regime of economic and political relations with Abkhazia which actually meant a blockade of Abkhazia and its isolation not only from Russia but also from the rest of the world.⁴² The purpose of Russian diplomacy at that time was to force the Abkhazian Government to accept such conditions as would mean full capitulation to Tbilisi.⁴³ However, the economic and political blockade of Abkhazia not only did not help resolve the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict; it strengthened the animosity of the population of Abkhazia towards Georgia. It did not, however, result in anti-Russian feelings: both the Abkhazian authorities and the general public viewed it as the result of diplomatic intrigues by Tbilisi with the Georgian lobby in Moscow and of Western pressure on Russia.

The blockade of Abkhazia completely contradicted Russia's national interests, and it was severely criticized in both houses of the Russian Parliament.⁴⁴ It could have meant the destabilization of the situation and the undermining of Russia's positions in the entire western Caucasus. However, it was never completely implemented because of the progressive crisis of the Yeltsin Administration and its inability to persuade the regions to implement decisions taken at the federal level. Many subjects of the Russian Federation-Bashkortostan, Tatar-Stan, Krasnodar Krai (territory) and the republics of the North Caucasus-continued political and economic relations with Abkhazia against the wishes of the central government.

Georgian-Russian cooperation did not bring either side the expected benefits. It did not protect Russia's geopolitical interests and did not guarantee the preservation of its military bases in Georgia. The Georgian Government was extremely disappointed that Russia did not expand the powers of its peacekeeping force by giving it police functions over the entire territory of Abkhazia: according to Tbilisi's plans, Russia should first pacify Abkhazia and then return it to Georgian rule.

Long before Yeltsin's departure from office in December 1999 the policy of Tbilisi turned anti-Russian. In the hope of military intervention by the West in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, Georgian diplomacy called for the creation around Russia of a 'belt of democratic states' and actively supported the idea of creating a uniform Caucasus (without the participation of Russia); the policy aimed to destabilize the situation in the North Caucasus and remove Russia from the South Caucasus.

Many Georgian leaders are convinced that after the disintegration of the Soviet Union the confrontation between Russia and the West continues. They therefore pin their hopes on military intervention by the West in the Abkhazian conflict since, in their opinion, the Abkhazian problem is not only Georgia's problem but 'is linked to those world processes of which we are eyewitnesses; that is, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the beginning of a new redistribution of the world . . . Georgia becomes a stable partner of the West which, in its turn, tries to complete the process which has been started-to crush the Russian Empire by all possible means'.⁴⁵

Such a policy adopted by Tbilisi could only worsen relations with Russia. It is sharply criticised by the Georgian opposition who regard it as 'unceremoniously ignoring Russia's national interests' and as a manifestation of 'irrational Russophobia' on the part of the Georgian Government.⁴⁶

With Vladimir Putin's rise to power, Russia ceased to consider Georgia as its political ally in the region. Its position on the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict also changed. In September 1999 Putin, then Russian Prime Minister, annulled the 'special' regime on the border with Abkhazia, thus lifting the economic blockade.⁴⁷ In November 2000, the President of Abkhazia, Vladislav Ardzinba, visited Moscow for the first time in several years for bilateral Abkhazian-Russian consultations on political and economic issues. In particular, discussions focused on the Abkhazian leadership's desire to maintain the Russian military presence in the South Caucasus as it is the one major factor for stability, and on its opposition to the proposed closure of the Russian military base at Gudauta in Abkhazia.⁴⁸

When frontier areas of Georgia were transformed into rear bases for Chechen separatists and there were allegations that official Tbilisi was supporting them,⁴⁹ there was a crisis in Georgian-Russian relations. In December 2000 Russia (for the first time within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the CIS) introduced a visa regime for citizens of Georgia; however, the regime did not apply to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The conclusion can be drawn that Russia has begun to develop a new system for addressing its interests in the South Caucasus. Active participants in this system are now not only Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia but also the unrecognized states in the region, including Abkhazia. Thus all the states in the South Caucasus that exist de facto may form important elements of stability and political balance in the region, which is a strategically important one for Russia.

IV. The position of the West

The Western countries support Georgia's territorial integrity and take a one-sidedly pro-Georgian position. During the Georgian-Abkhazian war the West did not condemn Georgia for excessive use of force and did not express concern over the violations of basic human rights and individual freedoms perpetrated by the Georgian military. It approved the introduction of repressive sanctions against Abkhazia as 'the most effective means of achieving political peace',⁵⁰ refused to consider the security needs of Abkhazia and concentrated all its criticism on the Abkhazian leadership.⁵¹ This unbalanced position only increased the mistrust between the conflicting parties and caused the Abkhazian Government to take a negative attitude to any Western diplomatic initiative.

Meeting the leaders of the three South Caucasus states at the UN Millennium Summit in New York in September 2000, then US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright 'made it clear that all future American Administrations will continue to consider the post-Soviet space a zone of the US strategic and vital interests',⁵² NATO's adoption in April 1999 of the concept of humanitarian intervention, which meant that military intervention by NATO in the internal affairs of foreign states would be permissible, raised hopes in Georgia that a military action similar to that carried out by NATO in Yugoslavia might be taken in Abkhazia.

Georgia has expressed its interest in replacing the Russian peacekeeping force with other foreign forces.⁵³ Although this initiative found support in Turkey and Ukraine, the West refused to consider sending forces to Abkhazia as it could not risk 'sustaining losses there similar to those incurred in previous years by the Russian contingents participating in peace-making operations'.⁵⁴

Hoping to attract the military intervention of the West in the conflict, Georgia expressed its determination to join NATO quickly.⁵⁵ This appeared impossible. Conditions for the acceptance of new members include economic stabilization, the resolution of conflicts on the territory of an applicant, the attainment of NATO standards of military equipment and training, and constructive relations with neighbours. As a result, despite the

constant expansion of cooperation between Georgia and NATO in the military sphere, the West has limited its activity in the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict to sending military observers.⁵⁶

In recent years the policy of Western countries in the Caucasian region has been increasingly influenced by the 'oil factor'. In the mid-1990s the Western countries adopted a new energy security doctrine which called for the diversification of energy transport routes to Europe. The European Union (EU) introduced the TRACECA (the Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia) and INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe) projects.⁵⁷ On this basis development began of a new system of transport routes for petroleum and gas to Europe from Central Asia and the South Caucasus. An oil pipeline from Baku to Supsa was laid through the territory of Georgia, its final section being close to the zone of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict. The economic penetration of the West into the South Caucasus and Central Asia also led to an increase of its political influence in these regions.

The construction, with Western investment, of a new system of oil and gas pipelines that would bypass Iran and Russia was received with apprehension in Russia as it could deprive it of revenues from oil transit. Repeated statements made in Western countries to the effect that they 'refused to consider the region as part of the Russian sphere of influence',⁵⁸ while at the same time regarding it as a zone of NATO's strategic interests, were recognized by Russia as clear proof of the West's ambition to exclude it from the region.

V. Conclusions

At present the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict has little chance of being resolved politically: the interests of the conflicting sides are in complete contradiction. While political efforts to halt the fighting have so far been unsuccessful, the resumption of hostilities would cause the destabilization not only of Abkhazia but also of the entire west Caucasian region. It is unacceptable, therefore, either from the point of view of Russia's interests (the threat of destabilization in the North Caucasus) or from that of the West (the danger of military operations spreading to the systems of oil and gas pipelines between Central Asia, the Caucasus and the outside world).

The political normalization of the conflict is impossible unless Georgia puts an end to its policy of unitarism. A single Georgian state within the borders of the former Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic is possible only as a federation of equal peoples like Belgium or Switzerland. Each people must be granted its own form- of statehood and representation in the central government. There should also be international guarantees of the rights of ethnic minorities and of the territorial integrity of Georgia. On the other hand, a continuation of the policy of unitarism may result in the further disintegration of the Georgian state; in that case Abkhazia may aspire to international recognition as an independent state.

Contradictions between Russia and the West in the South Caucasus present a serious potential danger. Under the existing conditions of general instability in the region, further escalation may be caused with the minimum of effort. Russia and the West should, therefore, be interested not in continuing their rivalry but in closer coordination of their regional policies. The basis of such cooperation might be mutual recognition of each other's strategic interests in the region. The development of a coordinated policy might be an effective means of stabilizing the entire Caucasian region and creating a basis for the resolution of local conflicts, including the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict.

Coppieters et al. (note I)

1. Hewitt. G. (ed.), *The Abkhazians: A Handbook, Peoples of the Caucasus Handbooks* (St Martins Press: New York, 1999), pp. 13-16. See also Coppieters, B., Darchiashvili. D. and Akaba, N. (eds). *Praktika Fnderali:ma: Poiski Aliernativ diva Gruzii i Abkha:ii* [Practice of federalism: exploring alternatives for Georgia and Abkhazia] (Ves´mir: Moscow. 1999) p. 21.
2. The names ´Georgia´ and ´Georgian´ most likely derive from the Persian ´Gurgistan´ and ´Gurg´ ("the country of wolves´," "wolf"). They first appear in Russian chronicles and documents in the 15th century. The Megrelians are the most numerous in the Kartvelian linguistic group: estimates range from 20% to 30% of the group. This is the primary factor which has prevented their rapid assimilation by Georgians.
3. Mehtiev, A., ´Baku i Tbilisi nuzhny drug drugu´ [Baku and Tbilisi need each other], ´e:avisimaya Ga:eta, 17 Sep. 1992; and Zhidkov, S., *Brosok Malov Imperil* [The spurt of a small empire] (Adygeya: Maikop, 1996).
4. Mescheryakov, N. V., ´Men´shevistskom rayu: iz vpechatlenii poezdki v Gruzii´ [In Menshevik paradise: from impressions of a trip to Georgia] (Gosizdat: Moscow, 1921); and Denikin, A., ´Ocherki russkoy smuty´ [Studies in Russian troubled times] (Slovo: Berlin. 1925).
5. Stalin, 5.. *Sochineniya* [Works] (Politizdat: Moscow, 1946), vol. 2, pp. 350-51.
6. Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Sociopolitical Studies, *O Bezopasnosti Rossii v Svyaii s Sobytiyami v Abkhazii* [On Russia´s security in connection with events in Abkhazia], Analytical paper (Russian Academy of Sciences: Moscow, 1993), pp. 3-4.
7. *Belaya Kniga Abkhazii: Dokumenty, Materialy, Svidetel ´stva* [White book of Abkhazia: documents, materials, evidence] (Vnekom: Moscow, 1993), p. 30. The remainder of the population was made up of Armenians, Greeks, Russians, Ukrainians and others.
8. From the Abkhaz´ own name for themselves, ´Apsua´.
9. Zorzoliani., G., Lekishvili, S. and Toidze, L., *Istoricheskkiye i Politiko-Pravovyye Aspelay Konfliktla v Abkhazii* [Historical and politico-legal aspects of the conflict in Abkhazia] (Metsniereba: Tbilisi, 1995), pp. 12-13; and Pipia, B. and Chikviladze, Z., *Raspyalaya Gruziiya* [Crucified Georgia] (Pechatny Dvor: St Petersburg, 1995), p. 9.
10. Vasilyeva, O., *Gmziya kak Model´ Pos´kommunisticheskoy Transformatsii* [Georgia as a model of post-communist transformation] (Gorbachev-Fond: Moscow, 1993), p. 31.
11. *Abkhaziya v Sovetskuyu Epokhu: Abkhazskkiye Pis´ma /1947-1989*; *Sbornik Dokumemov* [Abkhazia during the Soviet epoch: Abkhaz letters (1947-1989): Collection of documents] (El-Fa: Sukhumi, 1992), vol. 1, p. 435. The appeals by Abkhaz political and public figures to the central Soviet Government known as the ´Abkhaz letters´ played an important role in the Abkhaz national movement and the history of inter-ethnic relations in Abkhazia. The story of the Abkhaz letters was published in this collection.
12. Vasilyeva (note 10), pp. 29-46.
13. *Deklaratsiya o gosudarstvennom suverenitete Abkhazskoy Sovetskoy Sotsialisticheskoy respubliki: Prinyata X sessiyey Verkhovnogo Soveta Abkhazskoy ASSR 11 sozyva 25 avgusta 1990 goda´*; [The Declaration of the state sovereignty of the Abkhaz Soviet Socialist republic adopted by the 10th session of the 11th Supreme Soviet of the Abkhaz ASSR, 25 Aug. 1990], available at URL ; and *Abkhaziya: Khronika Neob ´yavlennoy I´oynu* [Abkhazia: chronicle of undeclared war] (Luc´h: Moscow, 1992), part 1, pp. 12-15.
14. Kalinin. Yu., ´Zerkala separatizma: Eduard Shevardnadze v pervyye rasskazal o taynakh nachala gruzino-abkhazskoy voyny´ [Mirrors of separatism: Eduard Shevardnadze discloses for the first time mysteries of how the Georgian-Abkhazian war began], *foskovskiy Komsomolets*, 10 Feb. 1996.
15. Followers of Zviad Gamsakhurdia.
16. Zhidkov(note3).
17. Gamsakhurdia was a Megrelian. and it is in Megrelia that the influence of his followers, the ´Zviadists´, is strongest.
18. One month after the hostilities began the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Abkhaz Republic adopted a special resolution which described ´mass terror, physical extermination of people, torture of prisoners and hostages carried out by the State Council of Georgia in Abkhazia as an act of genocide of the Abkhaz nation´. ´On genocide of the Abkhaz nation´. Resolution no. 10-127, Gudauta, 16 Sep. 1992.
19. *Konfederatsiya gorskikh narodov Kavkaza vstupayet v boy´* [The Confederation of Caucasian Mountain Peoples joins the fight], *Krasnaya Zve:da*, 27 Aug. 1992, p. I; and Leontyeva. L., ´The path of war´, *Moscow News*, 6-13 Sep. 1992.

20. Gru:iya/Abkha:iya: Narusheniya Zakonov Vedeniya Voyny i Rol; Rossii v Konflikte [Georgia/ Abkhazia: violations of the laws of war and Russia's role in the conflict] (Human Rights Watch: Helsinki. 1995).
21. Slabli:atsiva Mezhetnicheskikh i Sotsiokulturnykh Otnosheni na Kavka:e [Stabilization of inter-ethnic and socio-cultural relations in the Caucasus] (Etnosfera: Moscow, 1999), p. 87.
22. Mukhin, V., & Abkhaziya nikogda ne stanet avtonomnoy edinitsey Gruzii; [Abkhazia will never become an autonomy of Georgia], Nezavisimaya Gazeta. 29 Sep. 2000.
23. The attitude taken by Megrelians towards the war is described in Zhidkov (note 3), pp. 236-37.
24. According to the Department of Statistics of the Government of Abkhazia, by 1995 the population of Abkhazia was reduced to 313 000, of which 29.1% were Abkhaz, 28.7% Georgians, 19.8% Armenians, 16.5% Russians, 2.6% Ukrainians, 1.1% Greeks and 2.2% others. Krylov, A.. Post-Sovetskaya Abkha:iya: Traditsii. Religii, Narod [Post-Soviet Abkhazia: traditions, religions, people] (OOAgent: Moscow, 1999), p. 11.
25. Mukhin (note 22).
26. Gruzino-Abkhazskiy Konflikt: Proshloye, astovascheye. Perspective Uregulirovaniya [The Georgian-Abkhazian conflict: past, present and prospects of settlement] (Institute of Diaspora and Integration, Institute of the CIS Countries: Moscow, 1998), p. 27.
27. Obrashcheniye skhoda mnogonatsional;nogo naroda Abkhazii, posvyashchennogo 185-letiyu dobrovol;nogo vkozhdeniya Abhazii v sostav Rossii; [Appeal of the mass meeting of the multinational people of Abkhazia devoted to the 185th anniversary of the voluntary entry of Abkhazia into Russia], Sukhumi, 16 Apr. 1995 (copy in SIPRI archive).
28. See the Internet site of the Republic of Abkhazia (Apsny), URL.
29. Akt Gosudarstvennoy Nezavisimosti Respubliki Abkhaziya [Act of state independence of the Republic of Abkhazia], Sukhumi. 12 Oct. 1999 (copy in SIPRI archive).
30. The text of this Statement was published in Sukhumi on 5 Apr. 1994.
31. Gru:ino-Abkha:skiy Konflikt (note 26), p. 15.
32. Gru:ino-Abkha:skiy Konflikt (note 26), p. 15.
33. The Constitution of Georgia, available at URL .
34. Coppieters et al. (note 1), p. 48.
35. 35 Hanbabjan. A., & Gruziiya-Abkhaziya . . . Obsuzhdeniye konstitutsionnogo statusa samo-provozglashennoy respubliki chrevato ser; yoznymi posledstviyami; [Georgia-Abkhazia. . . Discussion of the constitutional status of the self-proclaimed republic is fraught with serious consequences], & e:a-visimaya Ga:eta, 19 Sep. 2000.
36. Soidze, O. and Berdzenishvili. D., Protivostoyaniye mezhdru Tbilisi i Batumi ili o problemakh sobrannosti natsii i polnote gosudarstva; [Confrontation between Tbilisi and Batumi, or on problems of consolidation of the nation and completeness of the state], Tsentral;naya A:iya i Kavka: (Lulea), no. 2 (2000), p. 214. On the Russian military presence, see section III in this chapter.
37. Soidze and Berdzenishvili (note 36), pp. 217-18.
38. Akaba, N., & Georgian-Abkhazian conflict: rooted in the past, resolved in future; Central Asia and the Caucasus (Lulea), no. 6 (2000), p. 119.
39. Gncino-Abkhazskiy Konflikt (note 26), pp. 19-20.
40. The number of Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia is not constant. Initially they numbered 2500. but by the end of 1996 that was reduced to 1500. By the end of 2000 the number of Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia was 1747. Figure supplied by the Russian Embassy in Stockholm. 26 Feb. 2001.
41. Gruzino-Abkha:skiy Konflikt (note 26), p. 25.
42. Government of the Russian Federation Decree no. 1394. 19 Dec. 1994.
43. The dominance of the Georgian lobby in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was largely explained by a & personnel heritage; left by Eduard Shevardnadze, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR under Mikhail Gorbachev. Reflecting this, in the middle of 1990s a popular joke was to call the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia.
44. Resolution of the State Duma no. 1640, 2 June 1997; Appeal of the Federation Council to President Boris Yeltsin no. 166, 15 May 1997; and Appeal of the State Duma to the Government of the Russian Federation, 11 Jan. 1999.
45. Nadareishvili, T., & Ya ne nadeyus; chto abkhazskiy vopros reshitsya mirnym putyom; [I do not believe that the Abkhazian problem will be resolved peacefully], Tseniral;naya Aziva i Kavkaz (Lulea), no. 2 (2000), p. 27.

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47. Government of the Russian Federation Decree no. 1029. 9 Sep. 1999.
48. O kharaktere rossiyskogo-abkhazskikh peregovorov´ [The character of the Russian-Abkhazian negotiations], Apsnipress (Sukhumi), no. 225 (22 Nov. 2000). In June 2001 the Abkhazian leadership initiated a blockade of the base at Gudauta, thus preventing its closure and withdrawal of military equipment from the base. TV1 (Tbilisi), 14 June 2001, in ´Georgia: Abkhaz foreign minister says Russian hardware should remain in Abkhazia´, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report-Central Eurasia (FBIS-SOV), FBIS-SOV-2001-0614, 14 June 2001; and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), RFE/RL Newsline, vol. 5, no. 127, Part 1 (9 July 2001).
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52. Nuriev. E., ´No war, no peace in the Caucasus: the geopolitical game continues!´, Central Asia and the Caucasus (Lulea), no. 6 (2000), p. 13.
53. Gruzija predlagayet peresmotret´ mandat mirotvortsev´ [Georgia propose to review the peace keepers´ mandatel, Segodnya, 24 Mar. 1997. p. 1. See also Lynch, D.. The Conflict in Abkhazia: Dilemmas in Russian ´Peacekeeping´ Policy (Royal Institute of International Affairs: London. 1998), pp. 31-36.
54. Coppieters et al. (note 1), p. 58.
55. Associated Press, ´Georgian leader hopes to join NATO´;, 29 Apr. 1999.
56. In the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOM1G), tasked with verifying the compliance of both sides with the ceasefire agreement.
57. For details see the TRACECA Internet site, URL ; and the INOGATE Internet site, URL .

A Short Chronicle of Events of the 1992-93 Georgian-Abkhazian War

August 14, 1992

Georgian troops enter Abkhazia, move through Gal, Ochamchira, and Gulripsh, and occupy the eastern corner of Sukhum.

August 18, 1992

Georgian troops take control of Sukhum. They remove the State flag from atop the Government House. In the Ochamchira region, which is in their hands, partisan bands actively oppose them. In the city of Grozny, the Parliament of the Congress of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus adopts a resolution to dispatch to Abkhazia groups of volunteer fighters.

August 19, 1992

Georgian troops take control of the city of Gagra.

August 25, 1992

The commander of the Georgian army, G. Qarqarashvili, issues an ultimatum: the Abkhaz are to halt their unsuccessful war within 24 hours. "Even if 100,000 out of the total number of Georgians perish," Qarqarashvili states, "we shall wipe out the entire population of you Abkhazians."



September 3, 1992

In Moscow, B. Yeltsin, E. Shevardnadze, and V. Ardzinba hold a meeting. They sign a summary document, in which it is agreed that the war shall be halted from 12 o'clock on September 5; that the opposing military forces shall be pulled back everywhere; that Georgian fighters should choose some other place for relocation; and that the legally elected authorities of Abkhazia shall be allowed to resume their work.

September 5, 1992

The two sides cease fire and begin mutual reconciliation. Then, at 12.10, Georgian artillery breaks the peace by shelling Abkhaz strongholds in the village of Eshera. At 22.30 Georgian fighters renew the offensive.

September 9, 1992

Abkhazians and Georgians negotiating in Sukhum agree to cease fire on the 10th of the month. Georgian fighters disregard this agreement, as well as two subsequent cease fire agreements on the 15th and 17th of the month.

October 1-6, 1992

Georgian troops are expelled from Gagra and its environs. On the 1st of the month at 17.00 hours the Abkhaz fighters attack, taking control of the village of Kolkhida (Psakhara). Georgian air force starts to bomb Gagra, resulting in many civilian casualties. At a meeting in Sukhum E. Shevardnadze declares: "Gagra always belonged to us and it must continue to belong to us -- we shall soon get it back." Abkhaz fighters liberate the hamlet of Leselidze (Gechripsh) and set up the Abkhaz flag on the Abkhaz-Russian border. Georgian troops cross the Psou and flee headlong to Russian territory. They surrender their weapons to the Russian border guards.



October 23, 1992

Georgian special forces in Sukhum burn down the state historical archive of Abkhazia and the archive of the Institute of Abkhazian language, history and literature.

December 14, 1992

Georgian troops in the village of Lata shoot down a Russian MI-8 helicopter with 60 passengers, including women and children, all of whom perish.

Second Year of the War

July 27, 1993

An agreement to end the war is signed in Sochi.

August 9, 1993

In a statement sent to B. Yeltsin and Boutros Ghali, V. Ardzinba draws attention to the contempt with which the Georgian side is treating the Sochi agreement, continuously shelling Abkhaz military divisions and ignoring the timetable for the withdrawal of Georgian military forces from Abkhazia.

August 22

According to a statement by the joint commission for exercising control, the Abkhaz side had acted in accordance with the timetable for the pulling back its forces, but the Georgian side did not fulfill its obligation.

August 24

B. Yeltsin and V. Ardzinba meet in Moscow. The Russian president is made to understand that the Georgian side is ignoring the Sochi agreement.

September 16-24

The final assault by the Abkhaz fighters. On 16th September they begin attacks on the Eastern front. On 17th of the they take control of the river Gumsta. On 20th of the month they order the Georgians to lay down their weapons and withdraw, departing via a safe corridor, but the Georgians do not answer. On 21-26th of the month crossfire continues on the main streets of Sukhum. Abkhaz fighters attack successfully at Ochamchira.

September 30

Abkhazia is liberated.

A NOTIFICATION AND EVALUATION ON THE INCREASING SPECULATIONS ABOUT ANOTHER ATTACK ON ABKHAZIA BY GEORGIA

As The Caucasian Abkhazian Solidarity Committee; we call upon our Government, Turkish Public, our Community, the Media, and the international institutions, particularly the EU, UN, and OSCE to assume the responsibility for avoiding a tragedy.

While Abkhazia, an exceptional part of the Caucuses, was hoping to establish a permanent peace with Georgia after the war of 1992-1993; attempts to solve the problem by using force have been revived due to the American-supported government change in Tbilisi. The Committee having been founded by the Turkish citizens and civilian organizations with Caucasian origin during the Abkhaz-Georgian war, felt the necessity to express its concerns on the sensations that the Georgian authorities re-try invasion with the army established by the American support and supposedly-illegal paramilitary groups that they had tried before with the non-uniform groups of released prisoners and nationalist guerillas.

The Committee is a civilian initiative that had served as a bridge between Abkhazia and Caucasian Diaspora in Turkey of 7 million people, providing coordination and information flow among official channels; and has carried on its mission until recently since the end of the war. It has been informing the governmental authorities, related embassies and missions, non-governmental organizations and official institutions all over the world not about Abkhazia only, but also Chechnya, South Ossetia and other problems in the region.

Due to this special mission, the Committee wants to share the speculations taking place in domestic and international press and intelligence sources about that Georgia is going to launch another armed attack against Abkhazia in the next spring, at the latest.

We want to make clear that such a military action without any just or legal basis would generate tragic consequences and never help to build peace in the region.

Uncompromising Attitude of the Georgian Administration

It is obvious that Abkhazia and Georgia had never had the convenient environment to establish peace. As it is evident, the war that started on 14th August 1992 ended on 30th September 1993 with the defeat of Georgia and on 14th May 1994 International Peace Keeping Forces were deployed on the common frontiers of the parties.

The meetings between the parties on 4th April 1994 in Moscow, in 1998 in Athens, in 1999 in Istanbul, and in 2001 in Crimea did not lead to the desired peace; because the Georgian government could not come up with an acceptable solution proposal on Abkhazia's future status. Moreover; Tbilisi, with the support of Moscow, succeeded to convince Commonwealth of Independent States to apply an economic embargo against Abkhazia so that Abkhazian people got isolated from the rest of the world. As a result of this; all the visits and aids to Abkhazia were prevented and Abkhazian people were deprived from the freedom to travel, communication, and education. This inhuman situation holds for the moment at its highest levels.

Because of the uncompromising approach of Georgia, the Abkhazian Republic has announced its "de facto" independence and declared sovereignty by establishing its state organs after the war.

Several proposals made by Abkhazia to establish a federal or confederal state were constantly turned down by Georgia. Georgian government considered that Abkhazia becomes an autonomous body with minority rights was the only way to settle the conflict. The content of this proposal was more limited with Saakashvili's Presidency. According to Tbilisi, Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts were going to be solved through peaceful meetings in a democratic environment; yet the status envisaged for both nations could not be explained. The military and administrative measures applied to the Acara Autonomous Government during Saakashvili's Presidency lay bare what they understand from democracy and peaceful solution.

Georgian-Abkhazian Relations

For a healthy evaluation of the Abkhazian-Georgian conflict, the past political relations between the two should be put forth clearly. The Abkhazian nation is an autochthon community on the lands they are living today. This fact is verified through the archeological and anthropological studies in Abkhazia. The oldest sources indicate that Abkhazians founded administrations compatible with the legal and political circumstances of the day. In addition to this, it is evident that from time to time they developed joint governments with Georgians. The maps dating back to the 4th and 10th centuries display the region including the Georgian geography as "the Abkhazian County". Even the Dede Korkut epics call Abkhazia as "the Abkhazian Khanate". The attempts to change or deny these facts are obviously irrelevant. When the Georgian administration joined the Tsardom in 1801, the Abkhazian authorities stayed out of this structure.

In the course of time, balances in Caucuses shifted in favor of Russia as opposed to both the Ottomans and the Western states; and it became impossible to protect its Black Sea shores and fortresses for the Ottomans.

Although the Democratic Georgian Republic founded by the local feudal principalities with the support of Mensheviks and protection of Germans in 1918 signed an agreement with some Abkhazian feudal landlords on annexation of Abkhazia to Georgia, this incident has been totally distorted and used against the Abkhazians.

1. While the Georgian Republic had the opportunity to reach Anapa, it never claimed possession on these lands. Abkhazia was invaded within this operation, as well.

2. With its own revolutionary units, the Abkhazian people fought for independence against The Georgian republic and expelled both the Abkhazian landlords having signed the agreement and the Georgian troops from their lands.

3. On 11th May 1918, Abkhazia joined the Mountaineer People Republic as "Independent Abkhazia" and did not encounter any objection from Georgia. In the following months, after the formation of the USSR Abkhazia publicly declared its request to join the Union as a republic with equal rights and status as the Georgian Republic on 26th March 1921. This declaration was approved by the Caucasian Bureau on March 28th. The same request was sent to Lenin on March 31st, yet was not responded due to his sickness at that time. However, it is evident that an affirmative decision of Lenin was prevented by the Nations Commissioner Stalin who is of Georgian origin. He had been imposing to the revolutionary Abkhazian authorities to compose a federation with Georgian Republic based on equal rights. This is exactly why the requests of the Abkhazian administration for financial aid was not taken into account. On 21st May 1921, Georgian administration accepted the Abkhazian declaration and announced with a statement to public. In addition to this, there were statements on the accession of Georgia and Abkhazia to the South Caucasian Confederation as states with equal rights.

However; the fact that Stalin was in power with the assistance of KGB President Beria in charge of Abkhazia during these developments, hindered the Abkhazian people from getting a victory in their the independence struggle and a legal recognition of Abkhazia. Here it should be noted that the 1921 Constitution of Georgia did not include Abkhazia and Abkhazian people. Consequently, Abkhazia declared sovereignty by making its own constitution, yet it was not recognized by neither the USSR or Georgia and it was decided that the two sides should prepare a common constitution in 1927. The 2nd and 3rd articles of this new constitution ratified by the Georgian Parliament envisaged a loose federative structure for two parties and defined the common sovereignty areas.

However in 1931, due to the pressures from Stalin and Beria, these legal developments were ruled out and Abkhazia was coerced to an autonomous structure dependent on Georgia. The Abkhazians having ignore this proposal resumed the administration according to the 1925 constitution which continued with ups and downs until 1990's. During this period, an autonomous republic status under Georgia was desired for Abkhazia, yet the independence struggle of the Autonomous Abkhazian Administration against Georgian government did not come to an end.

For a comprehensive evaluation of this process, the following points should be noted:

1. While the Georgian government joint the USSR as an independent republic, it did not incorporate Abkhazia in terms of geography, people, and administration.
2. The developments and documents on the status and independence of Abkhazia were acknowledged by the Georgian authorities.
3. The status changes against Abkhazian were dictated to it with pressures from Stalin and Beria.
4. Abkhazia did not accept submission and continued to fight for independence.

When the USSR went through the dissolution process, Georgia has been the first to declare independence. In fact, according to the common opinion of Western states, the biggest role in the disintegration of the Union was carried out by the Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Shevardnadze who is of Georgian origin. Consequently, Georgia has been immediately recognized as a unitary state by the Western institutions such as the UN without any legal or political analysis. Actually it was natural that the West that had been following policies against the USSR treated Georgia with sympathy. As soon as Georgia declared independency, it announced to break all the links with the Union and resume the 1921 Constitution. The Western states, including Turkey, competed to accept this. However, there were problems unsolved, especially the situation of the Autonomous Abkhazian Republic. Georgia had left the Union without any proposal on its status. The new structure did not include any information on Autonomous Abkhazia, neither in legal terms nor de facto. However, this Constitution did not have any article on Abkhazia being annexed to Georgia. Moreover, while Georgia were joining the Union, it left Abkhazia out. Therefore, the unitary Georgian state having been recognized by the West and Turkey without any proper research or assessment, chose to be accepted by the world by leaving the matters

related to Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Abkhazians in abeyance. In return, Abkhazia asserting that this situation was unacceptable and that their status must be defined, as well, declared sovereignty under 1925 Constitution and made a call for meeting with Georgia.

Georgia not only refused these declarations and invitations, but also launched an operation on 14th August 1992 for invasion of Abkhazia by releasing and arming all the prisoners.

On the discussions about the status, the following points should be noted:

1. Georgia omitted that the 1921 Constitution that it had used as a basis for independence and unity in fact envisaged a loose federation (almost a confederation) and a status ad arrangements that make up a valid structure in terms of international law.
2. Both by this constitution and by integration with the USSR, Georgian authorities accepted that Abkhazia does not belong to Georgia regarding land, population, and administrative matters.
3. Recognition of a state having been founded with a federal constitution as a unitary state is impossible in legal terms. However, the West made this mistake without any relevant analysis, due to their sympathy towards Shevardnadze and disintegration of the USSR.
4. Relying on this, Georgia did not include Abkhazians in any administrative initiative and took the decisions about their status by its own.

As a matter of fact, it was this unilateral behavior of Georgia that paved the way for a war in the region.

Obviously, the war ended with the victory of Abkhazians. There were some factors that were not taken into account by Shevardnadze and his administration who were so optimistic that they were making plans of drinking coffee in Sokhumi.: North Caucasians who are brothers of the Abkhazians and all the Caucasian people in diasporas have been on Abkhazians' side with all their spiritual and material supports. There should be no doubt that they will do the same in case of a new war as they did 14 years ago.

The Political Positions of Parties

Objectively, the case can be summarized as following: Abkhazia that established its own administration and sovereignty with the end of the war has been carrying on its *de facto* independence. Especially with the agreement of 4th April 1994 by 4 parties (Abkhazia, Georgia, Russia, and OSCE) the international legitimacy of the State of Abkhazia became definite. Even if it is not recognized *de jure* in meetings and agreements, it is recognized *de facto*.

As mentioned above, Abkhazia made proposals including federal or confederal solutions, yet they were turned down by Georgia. It is impossible for Abkhazia to accept any status offered by the domestic law of Georgia. Abkhazia used this opportunity and has persistently defended its independence thesis. Therefore, a contemporary democracy and administration have been developed in Abkhazia; parliamentary elections have been held under international observation; and the elected President has come into power. The legislative, executive, and judiciary powers of state have been developed in compliance with modern law. The Abkhazian people have taken these results as psychologically, politically, and legally indispensable.

Despite this reality, Abkhazia cannot become visible in the international arena due to its lack of *de jure* representation rights, while Georgia's independence and unity have been internationally recognized. This situation creating difficulties for Abkhazia in getting international, political, and legal support is constantly being abused by Georgia.

The following points remained unsolved, as well:

1. The local and foreign military units trained by Georgia are located in Pankisi and Kodor Valleys constantly threat Abkhazia, and are not withdrawn despite the attempts from Abkhazia.
2. Georgia is not willing to abolish or reduce the embargo against Abkhazia. Moreover, the commercial ships carrying aids to Abkhazian people are detained and unloaded by Georgia in Poti port, although they do not carry military equipment.
3. The fact that these ships are taken to Poti port with the escort of boats that had been granted by Turkey to Georgia, cause serious concerns for both Abkhazians and 7 million Turkish citizens with Caucasian origin; since these boats being used against their Abkhazian brothers had been purchased partly with the taxes of these 7 million people.
4. The Abkhazian citizens with Georgian origin settled in Gal region according to agreements by two parties are constantly instigated against Abkhazia.
5. In this region, terrorist acts against Abkhazian people and government are conducted by the gangs.
6. Despite the agreement of 4th April 1994, the parties cannot reach a consensus on the return of Georgian refugees to Abkhazia due to the uncompromising approach of Georgia.

As mentioned above, Georgia has been abusing its advantageous position against Abkhazia. In addition to this, it makes the solution of such matters harder that Abkhazian people get passport from Russian Federation, Abkhazia sells electricity to Russia, Russia extends the railway to Abkhazia.

Moreover, the Georgian authorities' attempts to put pressure on Abkhazia by generating some disagreements with Russia and raising tension is far from facilitating the settlement of the conflict. Georgia also makes the solution of problems harder by taking and reflecting the Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts as a domestic matter. As a matter of fact, all the Caucasian people and the ones in diaspora have been interested in the problems of their brothers in the region. On the contrary to Georgian claims, the Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts exceeded the Georgian borders and became a common problem of all the Northern Caucasians in both homeland and in diaspora. Therefore, they have to be solved through fair and peaceful ways based on realities, principals of international law, and human rights.

Evaluation and Conclusion

1. For the time-being, the actual war between parties has come to an end, while the legal and diplomatic struggle continues at its highest levels.
2. The meetings until now have not brought forth any results meeting the requests and needs of Abkhazian people.
3. The Georgian government maintains its harsh and irresponsible approach relying on the opportunities given by the international community.
4. The embargos against Abkhazia have become harsher, and the Georgian authorities do not have any attempts to facilitate this.
5. Abkhazian people and government are determined to sustain its *de facto* position despite all the difficulties they face.
6. The Georgian authorities avoid reflecting the realities on the problematic matters such as refugees to the international community. They constantly omit the Abkhazian citizens of Georgian origin (60.000 persons) that have returned to Gal region. With that method, they try to keep the refugee problem alive and thus receive aid. However, the Georgians in Gal region do not receive any share from these grants, and the donors ignore this situation.

When we evaluate the events as per today:

1. After the election of Saakasvili as the President which is called as a "velvet revolution", there has been observed some changes in the approach of the Georgian administration to Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts and their solutions.
2. As mentioned above, it is a fact that the Western states and the USA that have been on the Georgian side due to some political, religious, and strategic reasons support Saakashvili administration against Russia, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia. This support is provided as military aid and training

and financial aid through some non-governmental organizations in Georgia. This help encourages Georgia to become harsher and to rely on military methods to solve the conflicts.

3. As a matter of fact, nowadays, news in American and Russian press are alerting that Georgia will start the war in the next spring.

4. The first signals of this were given in Acara region by Saakashvili. This operation can be seen as the beginning of the will to solve the problems through military force.

5. It is not difficult to imagine that the USA gets into contact with Russia on the Great Middle East Project and its geo-strategic objectives about roads to energy resources in Caspian Basin and that Abkhazia and Georgia questions come up during these meetings. As a result, it does not seem impossible that Georgia would venture such as war, given the support it gets from the West and Turkey.

6. We can add to these facts that Saakashvili came into power having been equipped with the education he had got in the in the USA based on American policies and political projects on Middle East and Caucuses, we can easily imagine he would tend to refer to military solutions of conflicts.

After evaluating all these realities, we need to underline the following points:

1. Georgia had never been an independent and unitary state except the short period that it acquired with the approvals of Ottomans and Tsardom Russia after the 1774 Kaynarca Agreement. During the nation-building movement when all the communities were in the course of founding their own nation-states, the Georgians assented absolute Russian sovereignty. This consent continued until the disintegration process of the USSR.

2. In the near past, Abkhazian people and government have not voluntarily been in any cooperation or administrative corporation with Georgia. As mentioned above, Abkhazia's legal and political status was defined as a part Georgia by the pressures from Stalin and Beria. Similarly, a nation was divided into two parts as Southern and Northern Ossetia without any legitimate ground and the Southern part was annexed to Georgia.

3. The fact that the Western states preferred to support Georgia with practical reasons without having done any relevant research on the political history of the region , while the US took Georgia as a potential military base encourage the Georgian authorities to omit the realities.

4. The Georgian administration tend to treat arbitrary due to the Georgian belief to be superior to the neighboring nations

CALL

We call upon the Georgian people and administration, the US and EU, the State Turkish Republic that we have proudly been residing in to take the following requests into consideration:

Given these realities; supporting the Georgian government militarily, politically, or financially against Abkhazia and Ossetia due to some interests and aims is not right. If this support will continue anyway, it should serve to establish peace in the region. Otherwise, it will cause more grief, increase unsolved problems, and lead to the extension of war, rather than peace. Moreover, the donors will obviously not get what they expect, and the stability in Caucasus will be seriously affected.

Once again we want to emphasize that the war will have a long run, thousands of innocent people will die, children will lose their parents, one way or another the rest of the Caucasian nations will take part in this war which will obviously lead to negative outcomes for the whole region.

Our Abkhazian brothers do not have any other homeland to go. Therefore, there is not difference between dying and losing this struggle for them. They will carry on this war, regardless of the conditions.

As the Caucasian-Abkhazian Solidarity Committee; on behalf of the Abkhazian and Ossetian people and administrations, 7 million Turkish citizens with Caucasian origin and our brothers in diasporas, we ask the entities helping Georgia to stop their support and try to facilitate the settlement of the conflict with peaceful means based on law and human rights. Date : 09.02.2006

Issue : 2006 / 008

On Behalf of the Caucasian Abkhazian Solidarity Committee

President İrfan Argun

ABKHAZIA IS ABKHAZIA

by Dr. Stanislav Lakoba (abridged)

A REPORT AT A LONDON CONFERENCE ON NORTH CAUCASUS AND ABKHAZIA 23th April, 1993

Abkhazia today resembles the surrealistic paintings of Dali: pictures of a 100 year-old husband and wife being shot at point-blank range, of Georgian SU-25 fighters of Russian make dropping cluster-bombs on a funeral procession in Kutol, of a brother being killed while following his brother's coffin so that two coffins have to be interred while fighter-planes are still overhead, of helicopters firing at the beaches in Sukhum on a summer's day, of tanks destroying villages, of soldiers killing little girls, burning families, slaying the wounded and cutting prisoners of war to pieces...

The fact is that people are being exterminated and the world is keeping silent... Well, almost -- for such news-agencies as Reuters, AP, the BBC, whenever they refer to us, our standard epithets are 'separatists' and 'rebels' ... How is it that we are separatists when we are actually not separating from anybody or attacking anybody? Are there any resolutions of the Abkhazian Parliament adopted before August 14, 1992 (or even several months afterwards) which have declared cessation from Georgia? There is not one! In fact, it was the Abkhazian side that suggested building our relations with Georgia on an agreed, federative basis. Therefore, it was the Abkhazian side which came out with proposals that would preserve the unity of Georgia. The response was the despatch to Abkhazia of tanks, fighter-bombers and guardsmen armed to the teeth...

In his speeches on Georgian radio on 7-8 December 1992 the leader of Georgia openly called for the possible annihilation of the Abkhazians. He said: "The fate of Georgia, her way to freedom and independence, is being decided in Abkhazia today. That is why I have called on every citizen of Georgia to make his contribution to this fight for freedom and independence. I repeat-- I have taken this decision against my will and my own beliefs. I know this is not right, but there is no other way". Then he said: "This war should not be a long one. The world believes us, and we would not let it down. We are for peace, and we must end this war as soon as possible. By the 3rd millennium Georgia will be the happiest country in the world". Freedom and independence for their own people and dictatorship and open chauvinism towards other people -- this is the double standard that underlines the Georgian policy in Abkhazia.

It is not by chance that in 1989 after the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict Academician Sakharov in one of his last articles called Georgia a 'mini-empire' (Ogonek 1989, 31). Later, describing the relationship between Abkhazia and Georgia, he wrote: "I tend to justify the Abkhazian position. I think we should regard with special attention the problems of small peoples: freedom and rights of big nations should not be exercised at the expense of small ones" (Znamya, 1991, 10, p.69).

The question of territorial integrity that has been so often raised lately is actually associated not with Georgia proper but with the former minor Soviet Empire, i.e. with the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia (1921-1931) was included as an autonomy under Stalin's dictate. As for the so-called Abkhazian 'separatists', they respect the territorial integrity of Georgia in her original ethnic borders, while the territory from the river Ingur up to the river Psou is considered to belong to the Republic of Abkhazia after the break-up of the USSR and the liquidation of the Georgian SSR.

In the 20th century the leading circles in Georgia made several attempts to annex Abkhazia. First, in June 1918-March 21, when the Georgian troops invaded Abkhazia and occupied part of its territory. This is one of the darkest periods in Abkhaz-Georgian relations within the living memory of many Abkhazians. The imperial nature of the Georgian Democratic Republic of that period was noted by Bechhofer. In his book, *In Denikin's Russia*, which was published in Britain in 1920, he writes: "I shall always recall the free and independent social-democratic state of Georgia as a classic example of an imperialistic small nation as

regards the annexation of territories beyond its borders and bureaucratic tyranny inside the country. Its chauvinism exceeds all limits". The second attempt to annex Abkhazia was made in February 1931 and it was actually implemented after Nestor Lakoba, Prime Minister of Abkhazia, had died -- he was poisoned by Beria in Tbilisi in December 1936. This policy continued from 1937 to 1953 (the year of Stalin's death).

The war unleashed on 14 August 1992 is the 3rd attempt to annex Abkhazia. On the very first day of aggression the Georgian military said to the Abkhazians whom they arrested: "This is the end of Abkhazia. All the remaining Abkhazians will do what the Georgians tell them". This was documented by the Abkhazians Public Prosecutor's Office on 24 February 1993. Shevardnadze is accomplishing what Zhordania, Stalin and Beria began...

It is interesting to note that the current Georgian leadership itself did everything to tear Abkhazia away. Backed by the Russian armed forces, they organized a coup in Tbilisi. In February 1992 the Military Council of Georgia abrogated the Constitution of the Georgian SSR of 1978 and re-instated the Constitution of February 21, 1921, in which Abkhazia is not specified as a subject of state-legal relations. Considering that the Constitution of the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic of 1978 was adopted in conformity with the Constitution of the Georgian SSR of 1978, and the Constitution of the USSR of 1977, the abrogation of the latter deprived the Constitution of the Abkhazian ASSR of its legal basis. To overcome the legal vacuum in relations between the two republics, on July 23, 1992, the Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia resolved to reinstate the Constitution of Abkhazia of 1925. Abkhazia at that time was united with Georgia by a 'special Union treaty'.

For years Georgia and Abkhazia had fixed territories and borders -- for 300 years the river Ingur divided Abkhazia and Georgia. When speaking of the borders of Georgia or any other republic of the former USSR it is not correct to regard the admission of these republics to the UN as an argument in favor of the international-legal recognition of their territories and borders, because by the time of the break-up of the USSR the territories and borders of national state entities were of an administrative internal political nature, NOT international borders. They were established by the imperialistic communist regime and merely divided administrative regions of the former USSR NOR sovereign republics. The very fact of Georgia's admission to the UN deserves special attention. This international organization was joined by a state in which the leaders had come to power as a result of a military coup. The conclusion suggests itself that it is Shevardnadze NOT Georgia who has been admitted to the UN!

The people of Abkhazia are being subjected to physical genocide: on Georgian occupied territories ethnic cleansing is taking place. The aim is to Georgianize Abkhazia and make it part of a Georgian unitary, mono-ethnic state. In the territories captured by the Georgian troops, the Abkhazian, Armenian, Russian, and Greek population is being systematically persecuted, ousted or killed. Hundreds of them are being subjected to torture or humiliation. Since the beginning of the war about 1,000 people from the Abkhazian side have been killed (i.e. every hundredth person), and more than 3,000 have been wounded; almost half of the population of the republic have become refugees. The eastern part of Abkhazia, the blockaded town of Tkuarchal and the whole Ochamchiran region are in an extremely difficult situation today. Seven Abkhazian villages (Kendegh, Tamsh, Adzjebzha, Merkula, Mokva, Beslakhuba, Kutol) have been burned down. The villagers are cut off from the outside-world and are experiencing shortages of food. However, they are desperately resisting the far greater numbers of the enemy-forces. Today you will not find Abkhazians in Ochamchira; they have been either expelled or killed. The Tbilisi authorities did their utmost to transform the

political conflict into an ethnic-political one. Having sent in their troops, they gradually got the local Georgians (so-called, for they are largely Mingrelians) involved in this war. One cannot help recalling the statement made by the Georgian general Qarqarashvili, whom Shevardnadze called 'a true knight'. He said he was ready to sacrifice 100,000 Georgian in order to annihilate the 97,000 Abkhazian population (women, children and old people, of course, included).

The purposeful destruction of the historical and cultural centers and monuments of the Abkhazian people resulted in the burning down of the Archives, Institute, Libraries and Theatres. The Museum and Art Gallery have been plundered. The University and Institutions carrying Abkhazian names were put in the hands of looters. Invaluable manuscripts, historic documentation, folklore and linguistic records perished in the flames. Every possible thing is being done to deprive the Abkhazian people of their history.

The Parliament of Abkhazia and Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, V. Ardzinba, sent 12 appeals to the UN hoping that they would be heard. As it appeared, our appeals for help further aggravated our extremely difficult situation. Several missions of the UN and CSCE that visited Abkhazia at the invitation of Tbilisi took a pro-Georgian position, giving priority to the principle of the so-called territorial integrity of the former Georgian SSR over that of human rights and the right of people to self-determination.

As is well known, Georgia insisted on the problems of Georgia and Abkhazia being discussed in the Security Council. Ardzinba sent an open letter to the Secretary General of the UN, in which he expressed his readiness to present the Abkhazian point of view at a Security Council meeting. According to Article 2 of the UN Charter, a representative of the Republic of Abkhazia has the right to take part in such discussions. To our regret, this constructive proposal on the part of the Abkhazians remains unanswered to the present day.

We are conscious of the fact that the war with Georgia, which has a population that exceeds the number of Abkhazians 40-fold, is disastrous for us. But we have simply no choice. A possible way out of the situation is the withdrawal of all Georgian troops from Abkhazia, and only after the introduction of peace-keeping forces. There will be no winners in this war. Sartre once said: "When you learn about the details of a victory, it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between the victory and the defeat"! At this point it is possible to consider several ways to achieve a peaceful solution to this military conflict:

1. If before the armed aggression of Georgia against Abkhazia on 14 August 1992 the Abkhazian people and the Parliament of Abkhazia expressed their desire to have federative relations with Georgia, and this desire was voiced in the draft-treaty published on the initiative of the Abkhazian side before the war, then today, after the atrocities and the bloodshed, we can only talk about confederative ties with Georgia at best. There are, however, very few supporters of this idea on either side.
2. Very popular among the multi-ethnic inhabitants of our Republic and among many deputies is the idea of Abkhazia as a neutral state, a kind of 'Caucasian Switzerland'. We are a country situated at the juncture of East and West with a good communication-system: sea-ports, railway-lines, airports, and highways (including those via the mountains to the North Caucasus). Abkhazia can also become a gateway to the Middle East. Such a state would be in the interests of Russia, the west and Turkey. As long as 1919 the English Military Command and General Denikin demanded the immediate declaration of Abkhazia as a neutral state and the withdrawal of Georgian troops beyond the river Ingur.
3. Abkhazia sees her future in such a community as the Caucasian Confederation, the predecessor of which is the Confederation of the People of the Caucasus, an influential and authoritative organization that was

established in August 1989 in Sukhum. It unites today 16 ethnic groups living in the area from the Caspian to the Black Sea.

For many centuries Abkhazia had formed a single whole with the North Caucasian world in linguistic, ethnic, cultural, political and economic respects. This to a great extent concerns the ties between Abkhazians and the peoples who are closely related to them, the Adyghels, Karbardians, Cherkess, Ubykhs and Abkhazians. Abkhazian people also long traditional ties with the south of Russia, specifically the Cossacks who, with their original culture are close both to Russia and to the Caucasus. In 1917 Abkhazia was a full member of 'The Union of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus' and 'The South East Union of Cossacks, Mountain Peoples and the Free Peoples of the Steppes'.

Meanwhile, the war in Abkhazia becomes more violent. The Georgian soldiers are killing civilians. Russia at the same time is negotiating an agreement with Georgia. Under various pretexts, including incidents when Russian military bases in Georgia come under armed attacks, weapons, ammunition and military equipment are still being handed over to Georgia. The question of the Russian-Georgian border is also being considered.

Thus, in February 1993, Shevardnadze publicly stated that one of the aims for concluding a treaty with Russia was to have from her as many armaments as possible. And Kitovani, Minister of Defense, complained: "We are ready to become an outpost for Russia in the Caucasus". To become one, Georgia has to be a strong state. At the same time Russia did not transfer even the 10% of military technology due to us. The North Caucasus, people of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Mingrelia and the so far peaceful Adjara feel concerned about such action and statements.

In violation of the Resolutions of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation of 25 September and 25 December 1992 the military equipment is regularly being handed over to Georgia. At the end of March Major-General Boris Dykov, assistant-commander of the Transcaucasian Military Forces, gave out the information that "one division has gone over to the Georgian armed forces and by the end of the year 34 military camps are supposed to be given to Georgian" (Nez.Gaz., 1993, 25 March).

The impression that Georgia wants to withdraw the Russian troops from its territory seems to be incorrect. On the contrary, the leading circles of Georgia are afraid of losing their support. As Shevardnadze stated at the end of last year, the Georgian borders would be unprotected if the Russian troops left Georgia. This was confirmed by Deputy Ada Marshania, who pointed out that the Russian troops should be withdrawn from Abkhazia, but not from the rest of Georgia, that actually has no army of her own to protect her borders.

The question of withdrawing the Russian troops from Abkhazia was raised in the talks in Sochi. We can only guess what was being said behind closed doors! The Abkhazian representative was not admitted, even as an observer. This is another attempt to decide our future behind our backs.

At the present time Georgia is the main destabilizing factor for the political situation in the North Caucasus and southern Russia. That is why some of the statements of the analytical review of 22nd January 1993 made by the president's information service, seems strange. It says: "To hold power Shevardnadze needs more serious support on the part of Russia. Not only economic and spiritual ties connect Russia and Georgia. Geopolitical and military realities push them towards each other".

On the Brink of War

Peace talks will resume no sooner than the blockade of Abkhazia is lifted

**Izida Chania, Express Chronicle, Sukhum
May 23, 1997**

"The signing of the peace treaty is an extremely important event and a great achievement for Russian President Boris Yeltsin and for the Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov," said Abkhaz President Vladislav Ardzinba of the recently signed peace treaty. Abkhaz politicians pointed to the similarity between the Chechen agreement and the agreement signed by Abkhazia and Georgia on April 4, 1994, saying that if a similar document were to be signed by Abkhazia and Georgia, this would be an important step in restoring peace and mutual trust. Apparently, Abkhazia's leadership is ready to support any initiative in this direction.

The reality of the situation gives few reasons to predict any such developments, or any further progress toward peace at all. Georgian extremist politicians - the same ones that were initially in favor of war with Abkhazia - have done all they could to heighten tensions. Time has passed, but their slogans remain the same. "The problem of Georgian-Abkhazian relations can only be solved through military means," they say, and call for the withdrawal of CIS peace-keeping troops from Abkhazia. But even prior to their withdrawal, they want to get a bonus: the Gal region of Abkhazia. It was with this very goal, and with the support of Russia, which still cannot decide what its policy in the Caucasus should be, that leaders at the CIS summit agreed to widen the mandate of the peace-keeping forces as proposed by Georgian leader Edward Shevardnadze.

Immediately, Russian military emissaries started flocking to Abkhazia, trying to persuade the Republic's leadership that it is somehow necessary to widen the zone controlled by the peace-keepers. After the last visit by General Zavarzin, second in charge of the CIS military command, there should be few doubts that, even when faced with a pull-out of the peace-keepers, Abkhazia will not surrender territory peacefully. A letter to the CIS Commander by Sergey Shamba, Abkhaz Foreign Minister, says as much: "Attempts to exploit the peace-keepers for political reasons will destabilize the region."

The decision of the CIS leaders is a concern not just for the Abkhaz, but for the various international organizations as well. International visitors have now added another stop to their tour: a session with the peace-keepers, during which (usually, behind closed doors), they discuss questions concerning cooperation between the peace-keepers and the UN observers, and other such questions.

What will Abkhazia do if the peace-keepers pull out? Everybody wants to know the answer. It is unclear, how real a prospect that is. Probably just as real as the flooding of the territory with volunteers from Northern Caucasus. Abkhaz military people generally answer the question by saying that they are ready.

All of this will only become clear in July, when the peace-keepers' current mandate expires, and the CIS leaders once again assemble in Moscow to discuss its renewal. Upon their decision depend further developments in the zone of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict.

Meanwhile, Abkhazia endures the CIS economic blockade, completely isolated, and without phone service... With no plans to surrender. "How long can you endure the blockade?" asks a foreign diplomat. The answer is: a long time. But that is not the point: as Sergey Shamba says, the blockade is not conducive to the peace process; negotiations will not resume until the blockade is lifted.

Fast and Loose with Independence

**Izida Chania, Express Chronicle, Sukhum
June 6, 1997**

It seems that the Russian media has recently declared a media war against Abkhazia. A Moscow colleague of mine, stopping in Sukhum for a day, was outraged: "My editor wants to know, when the war will begin, and there is nothing going on!" Georgian media gleefully upheld Russian media's initiative, giving variety to the planned war. They are reported to be blowing up imaginary munitions dumps, they make phantom appearances on the field of battle, retired ministers organize batallions - all on paper. Imaginations are inflamed. Abkhazia cannot adequately disprove these rumors because of the lack of phone service. But that is unimportant. If journalists expect a war, there must be something behind that. So let us put questions of conscience and professional ethics aside: why are they doing this?

"It's the start of the holiday season," says a cynic, offering media competition as an explanation. This explanation may be sufficient. But there are analysts who think that the renewed interest in Abkhazia is the work of Georgian and Russian politicians, who are laying the ground-work for the next CIS summit, where the mandate of the peace-keeping forces will again be up for discussion. Georgia and Russia want to widen this mandate, while Abkhazia does not. There is only one way to solve this problem: by creating the perception amongst the CIS populace that the conflict in Abkhazia is flaring up and requires Russian intervention. Whether it is called "widening the mandate" or "occupation," the essence is the same.

Why does Russia need this? Russia has just signed a peace treaty with Chechnya, in effect, setting it free. What does it want in Abkhazia? And why is it that, as a mediator in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, Russia can only conceive of Abkhazia as part of Georgia?

Some Abkhaz analysts think that it must be critically important for Russian politicians to coerce at least one "separatist" back into their "native" empire, so that there are no more precedents. An additional goal is to tie Georgia to Russia by making Russia the guarantor of Georgian-Abkhaz agreements. Under such conditions, it is critically important for Abkhazia not to allow the peace-keepers' zone of control to widen. And that is precisely what this small country is doing.

It seems that Abkhazia's position with regard to the peace-keepers' mandate has caught the eye of the foreign diplomats, who come to the Republic for official meetings. They seem unusually mellow in their tone, and they apparently want to find out for themselves whether the Abkhaz are really ready to dismiss their mediators (i.e., the Russians). And they also struggling to make a prediction as to what will happen if and when the peace-keepers pull out. It would seem that Russia has something to think about as well.

Post-war Developments in the Georgian-Abkhazian Dispute

**by George Hewitt
Parliamentary Human Rights Group
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For more information, contact Lord Avebury, Chairman of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group:

Telephone: 0171 274 4617
Fax: 0171 738 7864
Email: phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk or 100275.1565@compuserve.com
Mailing address: House of Lords London SW1A 0AA

George Hewitt is lecturer in Caucasian Languages at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London and has travelled extensively in Georgia and Abkhazia since 1975. His publications include grammars of both languages and since 1985 he has published a number of articles on the politics of the region.

Introduction

One of the new states to emerge from the break-up of the USSR in 1991 was the republic of Georgia in Transcaucasia, with a coast-line along the eastern littoral of the Black Sea. The north-western section of the republic had since 1931 consisted of the Abkhazian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Abkhazians are a North West Caucasian people (like the Circassians, Abazinians and Ubykh) and are totally unrelated to the Georgians, who are one of the four Kartvelian peoples (the others being Mingrelians, Svans and Laz). For a variety of reasons, which are extremely pertinent to the recent tragedy of the region, the Abkhazians had been reduced to just over 17% of the population of their ancestral homeland by the time of the last Soviet census in 1989. One consequence of the virulent chauvinism which characterised the unofficial, anti-communist leadership that became ever more vocal and powerful in the Georgian independence-movement from 1988 were the ethnic clashes which occurred in Abkhazia (specifically the capital Sukhum and the southern town of Ochamchira) on 15-16th July 1989. With independence for Georgia and one of the leading demagogues, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, as president, tensions between Sukhum and the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, continued to worsen. Gamsakhurdia was ousted as a result of intra-Kartvelian feuding in January 1992, and the former General Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party (1972-85), Eduard Shevardnadze, who had come to world-prominence as Soviet Foreign Minister (1985-90), returned to his former fiefdom in March. The result for Abkhazia, when Shevardnadze sent in his forces on 14th August, was a devastating war.

That war ended in total Georgian defeat and humiliation on 30th September 1993. It is with events since that defeat that the following paper is concerned. Those interested in a detailed discussion of the background to the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict should consult my 1993 article, which takes the conflict upto the end of 1992 and includes among its appendices the English translations of both the Constitution of the Confederation of (Mountain) Peoples of the Caucasus and the draft-treaty proposed before the war by the Abkhazians for confederal union with Georgia - a variant bringing the conflict upto the start of 1994 but minus its forerunner's appendices came out in Wright et al. (1996). Another discussion, but with differing emphasis, is available in my first 1995 article. Rachel Clogg (1995) translated some highly revealing old KGB materials relating to Georgian activity in Abkhazia in the 1940s, and my own further translations of relevant materials are available this year (1996). Those wishing to find out more about Mingrelians and their language can consult my second 1995 publication.

A brief list of important events relating to the history of Abkhazia is given in [Appendix 1](#). In Appendix 2 there is the English translation of a shortened version of a piece 'Chronicle of the Patriotic War' which appeared in the Abkhazian newspaper 'Abkhazia' on 30th September 1994 - this translation, together with the original Abkhaz and a vocabulary, will appear in George Hewitt and Zaira Khiba's 'An Abkhaz Newspaper Reader' (to appear in December 1996). Appendix 3 is the English version of the important agreement between the Abkhazians and the Georgians, signed in Moscow on 4th April 1994.

Aftermath of the war

Apart from the fact that a war took place with all the consequences in terms of death, destruction and displacement of populations, little has changed since the final days of the USSR. The future political status of Abkhazia (now coupled with the question of the refugees) remains at the root of the problem, both locally and internationally. The background, then, has an all too familiar ring about it, as the following discussion, divided thematically, should demonstrate.

1. Politics

After the expulsion from Abkhazian territory of the bulk of the invading forces on 30th Sept 1993, the immediate problem for the authorities in central Georgia was to ward off the threat posed by Gamsakhurdia (the ousted, democratically elected president of Georgia) and his supporters based in the western Georgian province of Mingrelia, which splits Abkhazia from Georgian-speaking areas proper. As Shevardnadze's defence seemed to evaporate in town after town, Gamsakhurdia set out from Mingrelia towards Georgia's second city, Kutaisi, and threatened to march on Tbilisi itself. Shevardnadze, whose entire career had (?has) been predicated on serving the Kremlin's interests in Georgia, finally gave up his attempt to keep Georgia out of the CIS and applied for membership (against a background of opposition in Parliament, ongoing even in 1996). Russia sent aid, supposedly humanitarian and of a nature to protect bridges and other transport-facilities in the west. The Gamsakhurdia-rebellion straightaway crumbled in the face of this notionally humanitarian aid, and government-forces re-established a shaky control throughout most of Mingrelia. Over the New Year 1993-94 Gamsakhurdia died under still uncertain circumstances.

Despite huge sympathy for the Abkhazian cause in Russian circles, under the influence of the Foreign Ministry, then in the hands of Shevardnadze-protege Andrei Kozyrev, an embargo was placed on Abkhazia. Even so, during this period the Abkhazians were chiefly occupied with trying to clear the last remnants of fighters from high in the Kodori valley, inhabited largely by Svans, and to secure their border with Georgia (specifically Mingrelia) along the R. Ingur. The UN had had a small presence in the shape of a group of observers in Abkhazia even before the end of the war, but now under UN auspices (Ambassador E. Brunner of Switzerland being Boutros Ghali's personal representative for the purpose) a series of meetings between Georgians (delegation-head for most meetings was Dzhaba Ioseliani, strong-man leader of the Mkhedrioni, or Cavalrymen, militia - he was eventually manoeuvred out of political life by Shevardnadze in 1995) and the Abkhazians (delegation-head was the then-Premier, Sokrat Dzhindzholia), with the Russians as facilitators (under Deputy Foreign Minister, Boris Pastukhov) began, usually alternating between Geneva and Moscow. These meetings led to the most significant political development so far, namely the "Declaration on measures for a political settlement of the Georgian/Abkhaz conflict", signed in Moscow on 4th April 1994 (see Appendix 3). A quadripartite commission (Abkhazian, Georgian, Russian, UNHCR) would be established to process applications for the return of refugees from Georgian soil, a peace-keeping force would be introduced, and UNOMIG expanded. Article 6 reads: 'Abkhazia shall have its own Constitution and legislation and appropriate state-symbols, such as anthem, emblem and flag'. Article 7 continues: 'The parties held discussions on distribution of powers on the understanding that any agreement on this issue is part of a comprehensive settlement and will only be reached once a final solution to the conflict has been found'. Furthermore, Article 5 stated that the details of the proposed peace-keeping operation would have to be agreed by both parties.

The 'Quadripartite agreement on the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons' includes in Clause 3c the following exclusions to the right to peaceful return without detention, arrest, etc...: 'This immunity does not extend to an individual in cases where there is serious evidence that

- ✦ they committed military crimes or crimes against humanity, as defined in international documents, or
- ✦ they committed serious criminal offences, or

- ♦ they earlier took part in military actions, and at the present time are members of armed formations prepared for military activities in Abkhazia'.

Already on a visit to New York in March Abkhazian President, Vladislav Ardzinba, had been pressured to accept peace-keepers throughout the territory of Abkhazia, which he rejected as being tantamount to occupation. Also, murky behind-the-scenes diplomatic activity was taking place under the guise of an organisation universally known as 'Friends of Georgia (FOG)' (which includes the UK, US, France, Germany and Russia), but, by the history of its actions, it has been manifestly shewn to be concerned only with bolstering the position of Shevardnadze rather than the well-being of all parties to the various conflicts disfiguring post-Soviet Georgia. Also, Russia and Georgia were growing ever closer - a military/economic agreement was signed on 14th February. In the event, the agreement on the introduction of 3,000 CIS (essentially Russian) peace-keepers along the Ingur and the delimitation of the various security-zones was signed on 14th May. In the Protocol it is stated: 'While carrying out their mission they are to observe the local laws and decrees and not create any obstacles for the activities of the local administration'.

Since spring 1994 there has been little progress - on the contrary there have been signs of attempts to go back on the accords of 4th April, which Abkhazia interprets as accepting it as a state-entity of equal status to Georgia. On 21st August Abkhazia signed a treaty with Tatarstan (part of the Russian Federation), to the ire of Moscow. Contrary to the April agreement, the head of the peace-keepers, Kondratiev, attempted to arrange a mass-crossing of the Ingur by refugees, which was in response to an order from Russian Defence Minister, Pavel Grachev (baptised in Tbilisi following the Georgian-Russian rapprochement with Georgian Defence Minister, Nadibaidze, as his godfather!), ordering the use of 'all available force' for the purpose. Prompt response from the Abkhazian population demonstrated beyond any doubt that such tactics would not be tolerated. On 26th November Abkhazia passed its new constitution (as it was entitled to do according to the April agreement), Article 1 stating:

'The Republic of Abkhazia (Apsny) shall be a sovereign democratic state based on law, which has historically become firmly established by the right of a nation to self-determination'.

Contrary to what is widely believed in the West, Abkhazia has never declared independence from Georgia, neither before nor during nor after the war, as indeed is made clear in this opening statement. Objections have been raised about the promulgation of this constitution both in Georgia and the West on the grounds that Georgia did not sanction it.

In December 1994 Yeltsin's adoption in Chechnia of the Shevardnadze-strategy for dealing with troublesome North Caucasians, namely attempted obliteration in all-out war, cast a shadow over attempts to solve the problem of Abkhaz-Georgian relations, particularly as Shevardnadze gave his unconditional backing to Yeltsin right from the start of this genocidal campaign - did Yeltsin covertly back Shevardnadze's initial invasion of Abkhazia, as many believe? Unlike the former apparatchiks still in power across most of the North Caucasian republics, Abkhazian president, Vladislav Ardzinba, did not put his signature on the document circulated by Yeltsin for rubber-stamp approval of his Chechen policy. Supposedly in a move to prevent Abkhazian fighters travelling to help the Chechens in return for strong Chechen support in 1992-93 but actually to pressure Abkhazia into being more compliant towards Georgia, Russia had closed its border with Abkhazia over the R. Psou on 19th December. In November Boutros Ghali had accepted an Honorary Doctorate from Tbilisi University, and in February 1995 his representative, Amb. Brunner, said that it was time for Abkhazia to cash in on their gains; at the talks in Geneva a FOG representative helpfully reminded the Abkhazians of the distinct lack of Western concern for the fate of the Chechens, adding that the Abkhazians had it in their own hands to destroy their own people - at an earlier round the French Ambassador had reportedly informed the Abkhazian delegation of a Georgian plan to divide Abkhazia on racial lines and that FOG endorsed this idea... Interestingly, FOG's insistence on thwarting the Abkhazians' right to self-determination contrasts markedly with the attitude of the British Foreign Secretary to self-determination in another of the world's trouble-spots: on the Radio 4 programme "Any Questions" Malcolm

Rifkind stated in the very week that this article was drafted that he was in favour of self-determination for the Palestinians, and that, if such was their wish, they should have a state independent of Israel.

In March 1995 a Russo-Georgian agreement was initialled granting Russia the right to keep military bases in Georgia (including one in Abkhazia) for 25 years. During talks in Moscow on 30-31st August Abkhazian Foreign Minister, Leonid Lakerbaia, objected to moves to go back on the position agreed in April 1994, and the Abkhazian Parliament rejected the draft-protocol proposed by Russia on 24th July for Abkhazia to become part of a Georgian federation. Russian Premier V. Chernomyrdin visited Tbilisi on 15th September to agree at government-level the Russo-Georgian agreement (even though this has still not received parliamentary ratification) - alarm in Abkhazia was caused by reports that Russia would give Georgia landing-craft and even possible help in a sea-borne invasion north of the Gal province in S. Abkhazia. A limited boat-link between Trebizond and Sukhum had been established (to the intense displeasure of Tbilisi), and following orders from Russia's Foreign Ministry the port of Sukhum was closed to Abkhazian shipping on 30th October on the spurious grounds that this crucial route for supplying Abkhazia with essential supplies was being used for drug-smuggling. At the same time the travel-documents that Abkhazians had previously been using to travel not only to Russia but to Turkey and the West suddenly became invalid in Russia - even if individuals had visas to travel to the West, Russian border-guards, though letting Abkhazians cross the Psou (usually after a bribe had been paid), prevented them from leaving Russia, which is surely in contravention of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights which states in paragraph 12(2): 'Everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own'. In advance of a meeting in Moscow of the CIS heads of state on 19th January 1996, Shevardnadze sent Yeltsin a detailed paper on his ideas for resolving the Abkhazian problem, which in essence amounted to a total blockade of the republic. In advance of this meeting on 5th January the port of Sukhum had been closed to all shipping by order of the Russian government. The CIS meeting approved Shevardnadze's proposal effectively to strangle Abkhazia. According to Monitor (29th March), Ardzinba stated on 27th March that, unless these sanctions are removed, he would arrange an immediate referendum on whether Abkhazia should rejoin Georgia or secede and request annexation by Russia. Pressure from the Russian Parliament has led to a certain degree of backtracking from the 19th January decision, but (?illegal in international law) travel-restrictions and the port-blockade still apply. The Georgian side has for some time also been pressing for the peace-keepers to take on police-duties, which the Abkhazians absolutely reject (as indeed does the head of those peace-keepers himself).

2. Refugees

The world's media really only started paying attention to the war in Abkhazia during the final days when Shevardnadze, instead of behaving like a sensible head of state doing all in his power to solve a crisis of his own making peacefully from his capital, was held up with his fighters in Sukhum and was thus in a life-threatening situation. As the Kartvelians were routed, much of the Kartvelian population, which in the final Soviet census of 1989 had made up (if the figure of 239,872 is to be believed) around 46% of Abkhazia's population, fled. This was portrayed as an example of the phenomenon, which had become as a result of the multitude of examples in the former Yugoslavia a media-fad, of "ethnic cleansing", even though there was no such policy on the part of the Abkhazian authorities, and even though most of those who took flight did so before the appearance of the troops of the Abkhazian alliance.

The first accurate assessment of this flight of Kartvelians from Abkhazia that I saw was as late as 26th June 1994 in a report from Reuters - see also 'Report of a UNPO Coordinated Mission to Abkhazia and Georgia' (also from July 1994), stating: 'The majority of Georgians [sc. Kartvelians], however, fled before Abkhazian and Northern Caucasus troops arrived'.

Not only was the nature of the mass-Kartvelian withdrawal from Abkhazia misdescribed to the disadvantage of the Abkhazians, the numbers of those involved were wildly exaggerated. Initial reports spoke of 200,000 exiles, though this has increased to 250,000 (from at least the time of the April 1994 accords) and even to 300,000 (e.g. during Shevardnadze's London visit in February 1995) in the course of various propaganda-statements from Georgian leaders. The higher the number, the more sympathy the world is likely to show towards the situation in

Georgia proper and, more significantly, the greater the likely aid to the Georgian side of the Ingur. But what is worrying is the way that international bodies (from the UNHCR down) have simply accepted these figures at face-value without carrying out any sort of check themselves.

Since by no means all Kartvelians (largely Mingrelians) left Abkhazia in 1993, it is unlikely that the number of refugees reached even as many as the lowest of the three figures quoted above. Only on 15th September 1995 did the British Foreign Office minister responsible for the area, Sir Nicholas Bonsor, finally acknowledge the inaccuracy of the figures regularly bandied about by the UN and UNHCR in their unquestioning acceptance of typically unreliable information stemming from Tbilisi.

From the start of the post-war period the Abkhazians have been condemned for the reduction in Abkhazia's Kartvelian population and have been urged to permit the complete return of these displaced persons - e.g. from Security Council 3332nd Meeting of 31st January 1994: 'Condemning any attempts to change the demographic composition of Abkhazia, the Council recognized the right of all refugees and displaced persons to return without precondition'. In the first place this international concern has been concentrated on only persons displaced from Abkhazia to Georgia (viz. the Kartvelian exiles), but during the 14-month occupation by Kartvelians of the southern half of Abkhazia many Abkhazians, Armenians, Russians, Greeks (see, for instance, Clogg 1994) and Jews were forced into exile, and they most assuredly did not seek refuge on the Georgian side of the Ingur. What concern has been shewn for these, or what help has been given to facilitate the return to Abkhazia of those amongst them who wish to go back? The Georgian authorities have been repeatedly calling for a total, mass-return of exiles. As Marrack Goulding, UN Under Secretary General for Political Affairs, welcomingly acknowledged in a private letter on 22nd May 1995, this is, of course, out of the question. On 15th March 1995 Ardzinba offered (and this offer is still in force) to vet 200 applications per week (sc. in accordance with the quadripartite agreement of the previous year), also expressing a willingness to register the many thousands of spontaneous refugees already returned to the southernmost Gal province. This was said to be unacceptable to Tbilisi and the UNHCR, who refused to cooperate (the Quadripartite Commission has apparently not convened since 16th February 1995) - an orderly, but necessarily slow, return does not suit Tbilisi's purposes, for only by a mass-influx of people can the situation in Abkhazia be made sufficiently unstable to allow Tbilisi a pretext to send in troops for the fanciful purpose of 'establishing order' in Abkhazia.

With regard to the exiles the following points have to be taken into consideration: there are not as many exiles as is popularly believed currently in Georgia from Abkhazia. Even when applications are vetted according to the restricted numbers allowed by the Abkhazians, the individuals concerned have often not appeared at the appointed time to cross the Ingur into Gal, which raises questions about the validity of the applications and the actual desire of individuals to return anyway.

After the hatreds roused by the war and the fact that the more recent Kartvelian settlers in Abkhazia (i.e. those living north of the Gal region) were those who more willingly participated in the fighting, it cannot reasonably be expected that they will be accepted by neighbours whom they may have terrorised or whose houses they may have burned down there is no way their safety can be guaranteed (and they well know this), nor is it certain that there are homes left standing for them to occupy. When Abkhazians were driven into exile, Kartvelians looted or occupied or burned down their homes. When these Abkhazians returned, they either reoccupied their own homes, refitting them with furnishings left in abandoned Kartvelian homes (which may then have been burned), or moved into vacated Kartvelian houses. Most of these exiles from north of Gal have close relatives in Georgia and many will recall the villages from which they first moved into Abkhazia during the Beria period and will naturally feel safer in these regions of Georgia. Vastly greater numbers have left Georgia proper since the fall of the USSR in 1991 than have fled to it from Abkhazia (or South Ossetia) - the Covcas Bulletin of 20th September 1995 wrote: 'The Social Welfare Ministry of Georgia reported that one million out of the country's population of 5.5 million have emigrated since the country gained its independence in 1991', quoting, from the Georgian Iprinda news-agency, the official Archil Tsersavadze. This means that there is more room to accommodate these individuals in Georgia, where they should also be much safer, than in Abkhazia. It is here, then, that they should seek new homes, leaving Abkhazia slowly to rebuild its population from people who wish to live their NOT as agents for the nationalist politics of Tbilisi but as voluntary contributors to the future well-being of this North West Caucasian

homeland. It is well known in Tbilisi that there are more possibilities to house these individuals in Georgia itself, but the government prefers to use them purely as political pawns. A further reason why their welfare is not receiving the attention it deserves and why moves are not being made actively to find them accommodation may well have to do with the fact that they are largely Mingrelians, and Mingrelians are only valued as census-fodder (when they style themselves 'Georgians') but otherwise are not very highly regarded by their Georgian cousins.

Realistically, then, it is only to the Gal district, which was originally Abkhazian but where Abkhazians were early converted to become Mingrelian speaking (i.e. towards the end of the last century) that a programme of resettlement of refugees can be seriously contemplated. As a gesture of goodwill to the Mingrelian speakers of this region the Abkhazians instituted a new trilingual newspaper in the summer of 1995. Called 'Gal', it appears in Abkhaz, Russian and Mingrelian - this is the first time since the mid 1930s, when it was banned in Mingrelia itself, that Mingrelian has been used for the benefit of native speakers of the language (other publications of folk-material have been designed primarily for scholarly use alone). This attempt to do something to improve the self-pride of Mingrelians and make them aware of their distinct culture has been given no recognition in any Western comment that I have seen (and in Tbilisi it is regarded as a mere attempt to foster Mingrelian separatism).

3. Propaganda

One of the reasons that Abkhazia was always destined to become troublesome for the central Georgian authorities as the USSR started to disintegrate was that, as part of their descent into nationalist fervour, the unofficial leaders in Tbilisi (specifically the now dead Mingrelian trio of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Merab Kostava, and Gia Chanturia, Shevardnadze's most dangerous opponent of the day who was gunned down leaving his home in December 1994) whipped up the anti-Abkhazian feelings that had played such a part in the politics of Georgia since the days of Menshevik independence (1918-1921). A historian, D. Bakradze, had proposed the nonsensical idea back in the late 19th century that the present-day Abkhazians were relatively late interlopers on the 'Georgian' territory of Abkhazia, and this idea seems to have been quite independently promoted (unless, of course, he just failed to acknowledge his debt to Bakradze) by the self-taught literature-expert, Pavle Ingoroqva, in the late 1940s. When the motives for Ingoroqva's unpardonable behaviour were able to be properly and openly assessed after the deaths of Stalin and Beria in 1953, he justifiably became something of an academic outcast (till his death as a nonagenarian in the 1980s). However, these ideas were deliberately and enthusiastically resurrected in 1989, and calls were made for his academic rehabilitation for his 'contribution' to the history of Western Georgia. The most prominent academic in Tbilisi today, member of the former Soviet Academy and Hon. Member of the British and American Academies, Prof. Tamaz Gamqrelidze, published his own crude variation on this theme in 1991, arguing that the 'true' Abkhazians of history were a Georgian tribe eventually ousted by North West Caucasians who descended from the north and took over their name when they settled in their place. This was all part of a campaign to convince opinion both at home and abroad that the Abkhazians had no basic rights in what was hoped would soon become an independent Georgia. Naturally, the Abkhazians objected to this abuse of history and felt they were being subjected to similar threats to those of the Beria period - threats which were all too nastily effected with Shevardnadze's 1992 invasion. As late as May 1995 a Mingrelian member of the so-called Supreme Soviet of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (viz. the Kartvelian faction from the pre-war governing-body of Abkhazia), one Gia Gvazava, interviewed in Georgian on Radio Liberty, was actually repeating this dangerously provocative nonsense, making it clear that Kartvelians even today will not acknowledge historical reality. Incidentally, various street-names in Tbilisi were changed after independence to eradicate signs of Soviet heroes - Georgia's State Committee for Human Rights and Ethnic Relations happens to be located (at No. 7) on one of these renamed streets: it is called "Pavle Ingoroqva Street"...

From the start Kartvelians have refused to accept any responsibility for events in Abkhazia, laying the blame on the 'some third force' or the 'Kremlin's playing the Abkhazian card'. Take the statement of Prof. Zaza Gachechiladze to the National Defense University, Strategic Forum, Institute for National Strategic Studies, March 1995: 'The civil war in Georgia [he means the war in Abkhazia] was inspired, plotted, and provoked by forces from outside Georgia, particularly Russia'. Not only do they blame Russia for the problem in Abkhazia, they lay the blame for their defeat in the Abkhazian war on Russian assistance to the Abkhazians and specifically on their

participation in the fighting. As Dodge Billingsley perceptively wrote in his article 'Georgian-Abkhazian security issues' (Jane's Intelligence Review, February 1996):

'...empirical evidence suggests that Georgia is largely responsible for its own disintegration. [...] It is difficult to prove Georgian accusations of universal Russian support for Abkhazia. On many occasions, Russian actions benefitted Georgia more than Abkhazia...Georgian accusations of Russian intervention must be weighed against the need for assistance and a scapegoat in the face of an ill-planned military adventure with an ill-prepared military'.

Georgia is a member of the UN (and various other international bodies); indeed it was in celebration of its membership of the UN that the invasion of Abkhazia took place shortly after its admission in the summer of 1992. Georgia, therefore, has many opportunities to spread its anti-Abkhazian propaganda. It does not lose a single one. Take, for example, the letter of Georgia's permanent representative to the UN, Peter Chkheidze, of 15th February 1994: 'Fascist separatists, attempting to infringe upon the territorial integrity of Georgia, instigated an armed conflict which was sustained through substantial foreign support. [...] There is significant evidence that the preparation for an episode of ethnic cleansing in Abkhazia has been under way for many years'. This latter statement is probably true, but, like much else in Georgian propaganda, what they ascribe to their opponents is actually true of themselves (see, for example, Viktor Popkov's material in a document circulated in 1990 to all US senators on Kartvelian preparations for the disturbances in Abkhazia in July 1989, blamed by the Kartvelian propaganda-machine on the Abkhazians). In his address at Chatham House in London in February 1995 Shevardnadze himself compared the cases of Abkhazia and Chechnya as being parallel cases of 'aggressive separatism', which he urged should be put down 'no matter what the cost' wherever it occurs in the world. One can easily read this as a call for a warrant for genocide by the Moscow and Tbilisi authorities against their respective North Caucasian minorities - a warrant that the world has seemingly granted unequivocally to the former apparatchik-partners Yeltsin and Shevardnadze. Abkhazia and Chechnya should indeed be compared, but not in the terms of Shevardnadze's twisted logic - we see here blatant aggressive territorial integrationism on the part of worryingly defective leaders, whose careers and thinking were shaped by post-Stalinist communism. It should be condemned without reservation, but, far from being condemned, it has been encouraged.

As a final example of black Georgian propaganda we can cite the case of Svetlana Chervonnaya, a specialist from Moscow on Tatar affairs, who, for reasons best known to herself, chose to write a pro-Georgian, anti-Abkhazian book entitled, in the English version, 'Conflict in the Caucasus'. Let's pick out just one comment: on page 196 the author denies that the threat by the then-commander of the Kartvelian forces in Abkhazia, Gia Qarqarashvili, to wipe out all 97,000 Abkhazians was ever made, saying: "The outright exaggeration of Qarqarashvili's statement [...] is easily revealed if this text [from Nart, 2nd Sept 1992] is compared with what he actually said on TV.' Not only does anyone who has seen the TV-statement know that the threat was indeed made, but the Georgian newspaper '7 Days' printed it in Georgian translation of the Russian original in issue 31 (4-10th Sept 1992), and so the nature of Chervonnaya's deceit is plain for all to see, but how many of those receiving the no doubt free copy of this English version on their 'fact-finding' missions to Tbilisi will have this pointed out to them or take the trouble to check for themselves all the other 'facts' assembled here? As an excellent indication of the standard of scholarship in Georgia, it should be noted that Madame Chervonnaya was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Tbilisi University in April 1996...

4. Western bias towards Georgia (or, more accurately, Shevardnadze)

The Georgian invasion of Abkhazia and the subsequent occupation of half of its territory for 14 months, attended by all the usual horrors of ethnic conflict, passed totally without criticism in the West. As stated in the July 1994 UNPO report (its second on the Abkhazian-Georgian affair): 'There have been a series of enquiry teams from the UN and CSCE. They appear to have paid insufficient attention to the Abkhazian case' (see the text in Central Asian Survey 14.1, 1995, 127-154). We have also seen how charges of ethnic cleansing by the Abkhazians against the Kartvelians have been ritualistically made ever since the war ended with defeat for the aggressor, coupled with abuse of the Abkhazians and their leaders. Take, for example, the statement by a so-called American expert, Dr.

Charles Fairbanks, to a briefing of the CSCE in Washington, October 1993: 'Now we have the first case of ethnic cleansing in which a clear minority has cleansed the majority...It is my suspicion that the new republic of Abkhazia is going to be basically a criminal state'. One suggestion made by Fairbanks, that has not only been proposed in diplomatic and military quarters elsewhere but has actually been in part realised, was that Georgia's army should be given some professional training in the belief (of Fairbanks) that this 'will greatly reduce the level of human rights violation' - as a member of Fairbanks' audience pertinently observed: 'I think both the Germans and the Japanese were well ordered and had very good armies, and I think they committed a lot of atrocities'... My own comment to those on this side of the Atlantic who proposed offering training to Georgia was that this would only make them more effective repressors of minorities than they were before. The US Chief of Staff, who has now given some military training to Georgia, is John Shalikashvili, himself a 2nd generation American of Georgian parentage. As a further example, in a 55-page report from March 1995 by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki we read: 'Outlaw tactics by the Abkhaz, by contrast, particularly the violence following the fall of Sukhumi, proved singularly effective in driving out remaining Georgians, the strategic goal of the Abkhaz side'.

As an example of the lengths to which leading figures in Western politics will go to defend Shevardnadze's aggression, consider the case of Lord Geoffrey Howe. Howe's term of office as Margaret Thatcher's Foreign Secretary coincided with Shevardnadze's period as Soviet Foreign Minister, and so they came to know one another just as the USSR was heading for collapse: indeed, this cataclysmic event seems largely to have been mythologised, especially in Germany, as resulting directly from the cherubic smiles of Georgia's most prominent scion since Stalin.

When Shevardnadze finally made his first visit to London as Georgian Head of State in February 1995, Howe chaired the paper presented by Shevardnadze at Chatham House, mentioned earlier, and ended by heaping lavish praise on his Georgian guest for the quality of the talk. I was present in the auditorium and paid especially close attention to the comments about Abkhazia, noting inter alia that Pres. Ardzinba and the late Chechen leader, Pres. Dudaev, were unceremoniously dismissed as 'fascists'. However, it was the reference to separatism and Shevardnadze's urging of the need to extinguish it, which prompted me to write to Howe to ask if he actually agreed with his apparently close friend in this specific respect. The reply I received contained the following statement: 'My own judgement is that Shevardnadze and I would be equally reluctant to accept the view (which you attribute to him) that "separatism should be put down wherever it occurs, no matter what the cost"' (3rd April 1995). Let us, then, consider Shevardnadze's actual words as subsequently published here in the weekly journal *The New Statesman*, which shewed itself an unquestioning supporter of the Georgian cause in a number of issues from 1995: '[...] we will finally find the resolve to do what we have until now failed to do - to call separatism separatism, genocide genocide. We must stop this epidemic of disintegration whose consequences could eclipse all our current national horrors. We must resolve to take all prompt and necessary measures, regardless of cost and the criticisms levelled by those out for short-term gain' (26th May 1995). In other words, whilst in my letter to Howe I may not have given the precise wording of the original, I encapsulated exactly its sense. Howe, on the other hand, basically felt it his duty to protect his friend from himself by denying that he held the views that he clearly does hold. After pointing this out in my next letter, I received on 24th May a letter from Howe's personal assistant, saying: '[Lord Howe...] has concluded that there is little purpose in continuing this correspondence'. So much for informed debate...

Apart from total failure to condemn the initial Georgian invasion and resulting suffering among the non-Kartvelian residents of Abkhazia, no account has been paid to the constant flow of threats to use force in Abkhazia (in direct contravention of Clause 3 of the 4th April 1994 agreement) by both Shevardnadze and Tamaz Nadareishvili, leader of the exiled pro-Georgian faction in the pre-war Abkhazian Parliament and Deputy Prime Minister of Georgia since that exile, during the period of UN-sponsored peace-talks: after Russo-Georgian talks in January 1994, Shevardnadze threatened new bloodshed on 14th February; when the peace-keepers were first introduced, Shevardnadze promised the imminent return of the Abkhazian 'government in exile' with the help of these CIS troops; in August 1994 Nadareishvili branded Ardzinba a 'state criminal' and objected to Amb. Brunner meeting him; in February 1995 Shevardnadze justified his use of force at Chatham House, as we have seen; on 21st March 1995 Interfax reported Nadareishvili as threatening to act like Russia (sc. in Chechnia) in defence of territorial integrity and that the Georgian procurator would issue an arrest-warrant for Ardzinba; after Chernomyrdin's visit

to Tbilisi on 15th September 1995 Shevardnadze boasted that Russia would soon act decisively in defence of Georgia's territorial integrity. Whenever such threats are raised with the responsible minister at the British Foreign Office, some mitigating circumstance is always found, such as in a letter of 2nd November 1995 where Sir Nicholas Bonsor chose to stress that Shevardnadze had only mentioned the possible use of force if peaceful negotiations led nowhere - in any case, there was a feeling that this could also be excused as electoral rhetoric (in advance of the November 1995 elections, as a result of which Shevardnadze at last became president of Georgia), though one cannot help but recall that the introduction of nationalist fervour into Georgian politics by the informal leaders like Gamsakhurdia in the late Soviet years had been responsible for arousing minority-opposition to Georgian independence in the very first place.

The role of The Friends of Georgia (FOG) is difficult to pin down because, as explained in a letter from the then-minister at the FCO, Douglas Hogg, of 18th October 1994, FOG has no funding, no terms of reference and issues no reports. Working closely with the UN Secretariat they are, thus, seen to be a law entirely unto themselves. However, the first point about them having no budget would seem to be belied by an official document of UNOMIG from 1994, over-stamped "CODE RESTRICTED", where there is specific reference to a particular course of action being followed if the 'Friends...are willing to foot the bill'.

If FOG has access to funds, presumably they come from tax-payers in the countries concerned, who have a right to know that their money is being used in secret ways to buttress an aggressive regime.

5. Terrorism

The State Department's annual report on Georgia for 1994 included the following remarks: 'Abkhazian authorities called for ethnically cleansing Abkhazia of all Georgians by September 27 and were credibly reported to have tortured, raped, killed, expelled, and imprisoned hundreds of Georgians and other non-Abkhaz. [...] Over 1,000 Georgians are still reported missing [...]. Some are thought to have been executed, and rumors persist that the Abkhaz are holding others in secret forced labor camps within Abkhazia. [...] However, in Abkhazia and the cease-fire zone around Gali, Abkhaz committed egregious human rights abuses against the remaining Georgians despite the presence of Russian peacekeepers. [...] Confirmed evidence of human rights violations is difficult to obtain because of the lack of access to the region and the fear of reprisal among the victims. Abkhazian separatists reportedly executed as many as 800 Georgians and other non-Abkhaz who remained in the Gali region of Abkhazia. From January through April, the following executions reportedly took place: 32 in Ganatleba; 40 in Gudara; 11 in Muxuri; 14 in Muxurchi; 9 in Tsarchushi; 55 in Okumi; 16 in Pirveli Gali; and 17 in Nabakevi. The Abkhaz police reportedly shot some victims. They also allegedly tortured some victims before burning them to death. Rape, which often took place in front of the victims' family, was so common that there were no attempts to keep statistics. Many of those executed allegedly were the elderly and women. Abkhazian police officers on November 15 seized an elderly ethnic Mingrelian man in Kokhoria, attached wires to the man's legs, and doused him with diesel fuel. They then attached the wires to a battery and repeatedly shocked the man. The man's relatives found him alive but unconscious.'

Notice how often in these passages we meet words like 'allegedly' and 'reportedly'. Indeed, it is stated in one sentence that confirmation of atrocities is difficult because of lack of access to the region. This is quite simply absurd. There has been no problem for Western officials to visit Abkhazia, crossing from Russia over the Psou since the very start of the war. It was a deliberate policy on the part of the US Government that no official representative of theirs should actually enter Abkhazia for fear of this being interpreted as some sort of recognition of Abkhazia's de facto independence. Only in April 1996 did a group of diplomats journey from the US embassy in Tbilisi for a fact-finding mission to Abkhazia. One surreal upshot of this was the case reported to me in the summer of 1995 of an American citizen who visited Abkhazia and then entered Georgia from Turkey. The US diplomats plied him with questions about the 'lawlessness' on the streets of Sukhum, asking how he managed to survive there. He answered that he felt as secure by both day and night in Abkhazia as anywhere else he had travelled, suffering armed robbery, ironically enough, only when he arrived in the centre of Tbilisi... How is one properly to understand a situation until one sees it at first hand on the ground and talks to all parties to a dispute?

Of course, if one does not wish to gain these insights, essential to the formulation of appropriate and fair policy, it is hardly surprising if resulting decisions are deficient. But then the question has to be posed: to the extent that this deficiency is wilful, how far do those responsible for it share the guilt for the tragedies that have unfolded (are unfolding) as a consequence in Abkhazia, Chechnia, etc...?

Because of the mistaken Western belief that the ethnic cleansing of Kartvelians from Abkhazia had been a policy-goal from the start, there is a tendency to accept Georgian charges that all incidents of terrorism (mainly but not exclusively) in the Gal province are the fault of Abkhazians. If one takes the more accurate view that instability in Abkhazia has always been the very last thing that the pre-war 17% Abkhazian population of Abkhazia wanted and that instability there favours only the authorities in Tbilisi, allowing them to discredit the peace-keeping and UNOMIG forces as ineffective and to make the spurious claim in international fora that they, the Georgian authorities, must thus regain control 'to reestablish order', events are more easily interpreted in an entirely different light. In March and April of 1995 large-scale policing activities were undertaken in Gal by the Abkhazians after 27 incidents of violence had caused 18 Abkhazian deaths and 26 wounded (plus 17 civilian deaths and 6 wounded, as well as 2 Russian deaths and 1 wounded). The Georgian charges were the usual hysterical ones of yet more ethnic cleansing and genocide. Interestingly the Abkhazian Interior Minister, G. Agrba, was able to declare that this operation had been cleared with the CIS commander, Gen. Yakushev, and with the Georgian Deputy Interior Minister, D. Gulua. Indeed, Yakushev put out a statement on 20th March to the effect that the information being broadcast by the Georgian media was 'a figment of the imagination'. The second operation followed an attack on the reburial of Robert Anchabadze (an Abkhazian, despite his surname, and known to the present author) who had been unceremoniously taken from his Ochamchira home during the war and shot. At the reburial there were 3 fatalities and several wounded. As the UN Secretary General's report (S/1995/342 May) states: 'UNOMIG has received evidence that the ambush on the funeral procession mentioned above was committed by elements operating from the east bank of the Inguri river, with the participation of an individual who claimed to be in possession of a Georgian police identification card'...

Over the December/January period 1995-96 a further 10 murders were committed, as it transpired, by a band led by the Mingrelian Abesalom Arkvania. Included in the band were two Mingrelian brothers from the Abkhazian village of Reka and who were called Abshilava. They and other members of the band could speak Abkhaz and did so among themselves when carrying out their attacks to give the impression that the perpetrators were actually Abkhazians. They were all heavily armed. One hostage they took, Valeri Alania, managed to escape and reported to a group of peace-keepers he met his captors' boast that they had killed a Mr. Kvaratskhelia together with 8 members of the Sanaia family in Shesheleti on 5th January - the peace-keepers took no action...

The Deputy Premier of Abkhazia, the distinguished academic, Prof. Yuri Voronov, was assassinated in his Sukhum flat in September 1995.

6. Aid

The situation can be summed up by quoting from Boutros Ghali's report of January 1996 (S/1996/5):

'Emergency relief and humanitarian aid currently remain the principal focus of United Nations assistance and other donors' support to Georgia....The World Bank assists Georgia in restoring macroeconomic stability, improving living standards, strengthening public institutions in the financial sector and enhancing economic management. The International Monetary fund is proving technical assistance covering fiscal areas (tax and customs, treasury operations and fiscal management) and monetary fields (central banking) in support of the recently introduced national currency, the lari.'

To this one can add the Treaty of Partnership and Cooperation signed between the EU and Georgia in Luxembourg on 22nd April 1996.

Not one word about Abkhazia in all of this, and, of course, no assistance whatsoever has been sent to the Abkhazian authorities despite the fact that their province was the one deliberately targeted, ravaged and ruined by the Shevardnadze regime - a certain amount of humanitarian relief, particularly after the heavy floods in the late spring of 1995, received from Russia is the significant exception. Add to this the blockade instituted by Russia from the end of the war and subsequently tightened by the closure of the port of Sukhum (cutting the lifeline to Trebizond). At the same time the attitude of Western ministries and the UN is that responsibility for returning and then safeguarding tens of thousands of refugees to an area whose infrastructure has been shattered rests solely on the Abkhazian authorities - the non-refugee residents of Abkhazia evidently count for nought. No relief whatsoever for Abkhazia in terms of rebuilding, mine-clearance, medical (including psychological) aid, restocking looted cultural and educational facilities, etc... has even been considered, let alone offered. As Dodge Billingsley stated in an earlier quote, the (successive) Georgian authorities are responsible in the main for the misery that has befallen Georgia since the collapse of the USSR. Georgia should certainly not be left to sink, but it cannot be just to channel all aid solely to the central authority in a fragmented republic when that central authority has deliberately caused an utter catastrophe (and indeed periodically threatens to repeat the exercise) in an area it claims as its own but over which, thanks to its own political incompetence that manifestly continues to enjoy approval in the West, it has lost de facto control. If humanitarian aid means what it says, it should be sent wherever it is needed - that the West denies its resources to those who did all they could to avoid resorting to arms but who were left with no option other than to defend themselves against the miscalculations of their opponents' destructive leadership and who suffer the terrible consequences while at the same time doing all in its power to buttress those who caused this suffering is indefensible.

7. Conclusions

The source of the parallel disasters in Abkhazia and Chechnia goes back to the savagely flawed decision by the 'so-called' (to borrow an apt qualification from a Medicins Sans Frontieres activist in Chechnia) international community at the time of the disintegration of the USSR to recognise only the 15 constituent union-republics within their then-boundaries as independent states, thereby underwriting whatever actions those republican leaders should chose to take in defence of the equally dubious principle of territorial integrity. Shevardnadze may have had the qualities of ambition and deviousness that enabled him to be a typical regional Party Boss in the time of the Brezhnevite stagnation, qualities which earned for him the Georgian nickname of "Tetri Melia" (or White Fox) and general loathing amongst his fellow-Georgians for his pro-Moscow fawning, but his willingness to gamble on uniting a divided Kartvelian community (pro- versus anti-Gamsakhurdiaites) by embarking on his ill-considered war in Abkhazia reveals his true colours and basic shortcomings as a decision-maker rather than as the genial executant of the decisions of others. Just like his predecessor, Gamsakhurdia, he is prepared to sacrifice any minority on the altar of Georgian nationalism in the hope that this may secure his ever shaky position as head of state, as his continuing belligerent rhetoric makes manifest. Yeltsin is a vindictive boor with the macho-mentality of a typical Russian peasant. Just as the Abkhazians have been painted as 'muslim fanatics', 'communist agitators' against Georgian interests, and 'fascists' with the aim of undermining their cause in the eyes of gullible foreign observers, so the Chechens have been branded as a nation of 'brigands, criminals, and terrorists' in a campaign to give a semblance of justification to Yeltsin's onslaught, which in truth is an extreme expression of traditional Russian anti-Caucasian racism. Because the international community could not be bothered to take a mature and serious approach to the admittedly horrendous problems that the collapse of the USSR was always likely to throw up in terms of division and control of territory, it has not merely buttoned a collective lip over the clear abuse of state-power seen in both Abkhazia and Chechnia but has stood logic and what everyone thought were its fundamental principles of justice and fair-play on their head by both speaking and acting as if the aggressors were the victims. William Perry, US Secretary for Defence, has publicly endorsed Yeltsin's use of force (January 1996), and more recently President Clinton reached even greater heights of ludicrousness when in Moscow he compared the Chechen war to the American Civil War! Aggressive 'separatism' has been condemned on numerous occasions at the UN in reference to Abkhazia. And yet neither the Abkhazians nor the Chechens took up arms against anybody - what they did do, as would we all, was to defend themselves when attacked. Not only, then, have the aggressors not been verbally censured, they have been materially rewarded. IMF loans to Russia have more or less equalled the cost of the (still ongoing) genocide in Chechnia, and, most monstrously of all,

Russia has been cynically admitted to the Council of Europe, the one institution that was established precisely to uphold the very human rights which the Kremlin is daily flouting in the Northern Caucasus, a region it only acquired by force of imperial arms in the 1860s. Georgia has also been the recipient of IMF and EU beneficence, with its Treaty of Partnership and Cooperation of 22nd April 1996. Either the West and its institutions have principles and observe standards or they do not.

The Abkhazians have been prepared since 1989 for a confederal relationship with neighbouring Georgia. It was Shevardnadze's bloodlust which led to a hugely destructive war, which he deservedly lost. Despite their tremendous achievements in expelling the invader and now holding onto their territory for almost 3 years, the Abkhazians have never declared independence (to which many might argue they are fully entitled) but are still prepared to enter a confederation as equal partners with Georgia (as envisaged in the agreement of 4th April 1994).

Is it not reasonable to expect that, having caused so much suffering, Shevardnadze should settle for what he could have achieved without any loss of life at all had he accepted what was on the negotiating-table in July 1992? If he cannot see it himself, does not the international community have a duty to put pressure on him to recognise reality?

Defeat in war surely obliges the aggressor to make some sort of compromise, unless, of course, the achievement of Western democracy at the close of the 20th century is merely to buttress bullies who justify their actions by calling themselves 'democrats', claiming to have abandoned their old faith of 'communist atheism' and to have been reborn as champions of their new deity, 'The Market Economy'? After an almost century-long war in the North Caucasus in the 19th century and after 70 years of communism, which saw the entire Chechen race transported to Central Asia for 13 years (1944-57) and the wiping of their territory from maps of that period, do not ALL Caucasians have a right to try and achieve peace and prosperity in their protecting mountains for themselves, their languages and their cultures free from abuse of their history and threats to their very physical survival by neighbouring Slavs or chauvinistically inclined fellow-Caucasians?

When asked what the British Government's view was of the fact that Abkhazia throughout the 1920s was a union-republic (albeit with treaty-ties to Georgia), the minister of the day, D. Hogg, stated that HMG were not interested in the 'maneuverings' [sic] of the early Bolsheviks. By choosing to recognise only the 15 union-republics within their 1991 borders, the West celebrated its 'victory' in the Cold War by enshrining the (now international) boundaries which in essence were the creation of one Joseph Vissarionovich Dzhughashvili, aka Stalin, still the most prominent Georgian in history - some victory! 'Territorial integrity for ever and god help the minorities!' depressingly seems to be the best rallying-cry the West's collective wisdom can devise as panacea for the world's ethnic ills - what a noble vision for the third millennium...

APPENDIX I

Summary of important historical events upto the end of the 1992-93 war.

1810 Abkhazia (quite separately from any region belonging to Georgia) comes under the protection of Tsarist Russia, administering its own affairs until 1864

1864 Tsarist Russia finally crushes North Caucasian resistance, and the majority of the Abkhazians (along with related Circassians and ALL the Ubykhs) go into exile in Ottoman lands, leaving the NW Caucasus decimated of its native population

1866 Further expulsions of Abkhazians to Turkey occur after trouble connected with proposed land-reform in Abkhazia

1878 Following the Russo-Turkish war Abkhazians declared 'guilty nation' for supporting Turkey - restrictions on residence inside Abkhazia and further departures for Turkey

1886 Population of Abkhazia: Abkhazians 58,961, Mingrelians 3,474, Greeks 2,056 Armenians 1,337, Russians 972, Estonians 637, Georgians 515, Others 1,460

1918 Soviet commune existed for 40 days in Abkhazia until Georgian Mensheviks forcibly annexed it (see C.E. Bechhofer "In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus", London 1921, for contemporary Georgian nationalism)

1921 4th March Soviet power re-established. Abkhazian Soviet Republic recognised by Georgia's revolutionary committee on 21st May. Special 'contract of alliance' signed between Abkhazia and Georgia on 16th December

1922 13th December Abkhazia and Georgia together enter the Transcaucasian Federation

1925 Promulgation of the Abkhazian Constitution, sanctioning its republican status with treaty-ties to Georgia

1931 Stalin reduces the status of Abkhazia to that of an autonomous republic WITHIN Georgia in February

1937 Start of Beria's anti-Abkhazian drive, involving forced immigration of thousands of non-Abkhazians (especially Mingrelians), placing of the local administration in Kartvelian hands, changing the Abkhaz alphabet to a Georgian base, closure in 1944-45 of Abkhazian schools, replacing them with Georgian schools, banning the Abkhaz language; post-war plan to deport the entire Abkhazian nation, using Pavle Ingoroqva's "theory" of their supposed arrival in Abkhazia only in the 17th century as "justification".

1953 Deaths of Stalin and Beria mean reversal of the anti-Abkhazian drive; new script based on Cyrillic is devised, Abkhazian schools reopen, and administration put back in Abkhazian hands

1978 130 Abkhazian intellectuals write to Brezhnev to request permission for Abkhazia to secede from Georgia and join Russia because of ongoing Georgian pressure on Abkhazian rights. In compensation, the Abkhazian State University is opened (with Georgian, Russian and Abkhazian sectors) to cater for the needs of higher education in Western Georgia The 130 letter-writers lost their jobs

1989 As a result of the agitation of Kartvelian nationalists (Gamsakhurdia, Kostava, Chanturia), ethnic clashes takes place in Abkhazia over attempts to open an illegal branch of Tbilisi University in Abkhazia's capital, Sukhum, aimed at undermining the official university established in 1978

1990 As in other autonomous republics throughout the USSR, the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet declares sovereignty over its territory

1991 An absolute majority of the entire eligible electorate of Abkhazia vote in March to remain within Gorbachev's proposed restructured USSR rather than run the risk of joining a chauvinistically inclined Georgia in its bid for independence

1992 Following the abolition in Tbilisi of all Soviet legislation affecting Georgia and the reinstatement of Georgia's 1921 pre-Bolshevik Constitution, Abkhazia reinstates its 1925 Constitution as a temporary measure since no formal status was assigned to Abkhazia in the 1921 Georgian Constitution, whereas the 1925 Abkhazian Constitution allowed for a federative relationship between the two equal republics of Abkhazia and Georgia

1992 Shevardnadze, head of the State Council that had come to power in Tbilisi as a result of the illegal coup which ousted Pres. Gamsakhurdia in January 1992, launches the invasion of Abkhazia on 14 August, as negotiations on the nature of future federal ties between Abkhazia and Georgia were in progress - his excuse was that ministers kidnapped by Gamsakhurdia supporters were being held in Abkhazia, whereas they were actually in Mingrelia. Defence Minister, Kitovani, admitted a few days later that the real reason was to bring down the Abkhazian administration of Vladislav Ardzinba

1993 Allied troops of Abkhazians, other non-Kartvelian residents of Abkhazia, and North Caucasian volunteers expel Shevardnadze and his fighters, liberating Abkhazia on 30th September

APPENDIX 2 Short chronicle of events during the 1992-93 war

August 14 - The army of the State Council of Georgia entered the territory of Abkhazia. They moved through Gal, Ochamchira, Gulripsh and occupied the eastern corner of Sukhum.

August 18 - The Georgian invaders took control of Sukhum. They removed the State flag which stood atop Abkhazia's Government House. In the Ochamchira region, which was in the hand(s) of the enemy, partisan bands opposed him most actively. In the city of Grozny the parliament of the Congress of the mountain-peoples of the Caucasus adopted a resolution for the despatch to Abkhazia of groups of volunteer fighters.

August 19 - The Georgian invaders took control of the city of Gagra.

August 25 - The commander of the Georgian army, G. Qarqarashvili, issued the Abkhazians with an ultimatum for them to halt their unsuccessful war within 24 hours. 'Even if 100,000 out of the total number of Georgians perish, we shall wipe out the entire population of you Abkhazians, which is 97,000,' he said.

September 3 - In Moscow B. Yeltsin, E. Shevardnadze, V. Ardzinba had a meeting. They signed the summary document: there it is noted that the war should be halted from 12 o'clock on 5th September, the military forces facing one another will everywhere be pulled back, the Georgian fighters should choose some other place for relocation, the legally elected authorities of Abkhazia should be allowed to resume their work.

September 5 - When, having halted crossfire, they began mutual reconciliation, at 12.10 the Georgian artillery broke the peace and shelled the Abkhazians' strongholds in the village of Eshera. Right there at 22.30 the Georgian fighters made attacks.

September 9 - In the negotiations between the Abkhazians and the Georgians which took place in Sukhum they noted that crossfire should be halted from the 10th of the month, but the Georgian fighters took no notice of it... Even after that nothing came either of what they said to each other in order that crossfire be halted on the 15th and 17th of the month: the Georgian side continued to transgress its rules, just as it had habitually transgressed them.

October 1-6 - The operation was undertaken in Gagra and its environs to expel the enemy. On the 1st of the month at 17.00 hours the Abkhazian fighters went over to the attack; they took control of the village of Kolxida (Psaxara). After fierce battles that lasted some time our troops liberated Gagra. The Georgian airforce started to drop bombs on the town; there were many from the peaceable population who perished. At the meeting that took place in Sukhum E. Shevardnadze declared: 'Gagra always belonged to us and it must stay belonging to us - we shall soon get it back'. Abkhazian fighters, having liberated the hamlet of Leselidze (Gechripsh) from the enemy, set up the Abkhazian flag on the Abkhaz-Russian border. The military divisions of the State Council that had

withdrawn crossed the Psou and fled headlong to the Russian side. They surrendered their arms to the Russian border-guards.

October 23 - As a consequence of the deliberate action of the Georgian special services in Sukhum the state historical archive of Abkhazia and the archive of the Institute of Abkhazian language, history and literature were burned down.

December 14 - The Georgians brought down a Russian MI-8 helicopter in which were women and children from Tqwarchal - in all a group in excess of 60 persons - in the village of Lata. All aboard it, both big and small, perished.

Second Year of the War

July 27 - In Sochi the agreement for the ending of the war was signed.

August 9 - V. Ardzinba in the statement he sent to B. Yeltsin and Boutros Ghali drew their attention to how the Georgian side was treating with contempt the Sochi Agreement: they unceasingly shelled the Abkhazian military divisions and transgressed the timetable for the removal of the Georgian military forces from Abkhazia.

August 22 - According to the statement by the joint commission for exercising control, the Abkhazian side carried out the measures in accordance with the timetable for the pulling back of military forces facing one another, but the Georgian side did not fulfil its obligation.

August 24 - B. Yeltsin and V. Ardzinba met in Moscow. The Russian president was made to understand how the Georgian side treated with disdain the Sochi Agreement.

September 16-24 The final assault of the Abkhazian fighters' war. On 16th September they began attacks on the Eastern front. On 17th of the month Abkhazian fighters took control from top to bottom of the river Gumsta. On 20th of the month the Abkhazian fighters ordered the Georgians to lay down their weapons and to leave, departing by a safe corridor, but the Georgians did not answer. On 21-26th of the month crossfire continued on the main streets of Sukhum: on the Ochamchira front our warriors went successfully onto the attack.

Appendix 3 Translation of the Agreement signed in Moscow on 4th April 1994

"Declaration on measures for a political settlement of the Georgian/Abkhaz conflict"

1. The third round of negotiations on a comprehensive settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict took place from 22 to 25 February 1994 in Geneva, from 7 to 9 March 1994 in New York and from 29 to 31 March in Moscow under the aegis of the United Nations with the facilitation of the Russian Federation and with the participation of representatives of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

2. The negotiations were held in accordance with Security Council resolutions 849 (1993) of 9 July 1993, 854 (1993) of 6 August 1993, 858 (1993) of 24 August 1993, 876 (1993) of 19 October 1993, 881 (1993) of 4 November 1993, 892 (1993) of 22 December 1993, 896 (1994) of 31 January 1994, 901 (1994) of 4 March 1994 and 906 (1994) of 25 March 1994.

3. By signing this declaration, the parties hereby commit themselves to a strict formal cease-fire from this date and also reaffirm their commitment to the non-use of force or threat of the use of force against each other as expressed in the Communiqué of 13 January 1994.

4. The parties have agreed to and signed a quadripartite agreement, a copy of which is attached to the present Declaration, on the repatriation of refugees/displaced persons. The agreement provides for the return of refugees/displaced person in accordance with existing international practice, including the practice of UNHCR.

A special commission on refugees/displaced persons, which shall include representatives of the parties, UNHCR, the Russian Federation, and CSCE in an observer capacity, shall begin its work in Sochi in mid April 1994. The implementation of the agreement will begin upon the deployment of a peace-keeping force.

5. The parties reaffirm their request for the early deployment of a peace-keeping operation and for the participation of a Russian military contingent in the United Nations peace-keeping force, as stated in the Memorandum of Understanding of 1 December 1993 and the Communiqué of 13 January 1994. The plan for carrying out the peace-keeping operation will be agreed upon with the parties to the conflict.

The realization of the peace-keeping operation should also promote the safe return of refugees/displaced persons.

The parties again appeal to the United Nations Security Council to expand the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG).

6. Abkhazia shall have its own Constitution and legislation and appropriate state symbols, such as anthem, emblem and flag.

7. The parties held discussions on distribution of powers on the understanding that any agreement on this issue is part of a comprehensive settlement and will only be reached once a final solution to the conflict has been found.

At this stage, the parties have reached mutual understanding regarding powers for joint action in the following fields:

- a) Foreign policy and forging economic ties;**
- b) Border guard arrangements;**
- c) Customs;**
- d) Energy, transport and communication;**
- e) Ecology and elimination of the consequences of natural disasters;**
- f) Ensuring human and civic rights and freedoms and the rights of national minorities.**

8. The parties agree to continue energetic efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement. The parties will set up an appropriate committee, which will work on a standing basis, taking into account the decisions of the Security Council under the chairmanship of the United Nations, with participation of representatives of the CSCE and the Russian Federation and with the involvement of international experts. This body will meet alternatively in Moscow and Geneva. Its first meeting will be held in Geneva on 19 April 1994. A phased action programme will be worked out and proposals on the reestablishment of state- and legal relations will be elaborated.

9. The parties decided to take additional measures in connection with the search for missing persons and the reburial of the dead.

10. The parties, based on the fact that there is no statute of limitations applicable to war crimes, agreed to intensify efforts to investigate war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious criminal offences as defined by international and national law and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Inevitable punishment shall also be inflicted on persons who try or will try to undermine the peace process in Abkhaz by resorting to arms.

For the Georgian side: A. Kavsadze;

For the Abkhaz side: S. Dzhindzholia;

From the United Nations: E. Brunner;

From the Russian Federation: B. Pastukhov;

From the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe: A. Manno.

Moscow, 4 April 1994

Annex II: Quadripartite agreement on voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons signed on 4 April 1994

The Abkhaz and Georgian sides, hereinafter referred to as the Parties, the Russian Federation and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

Recalling Security Council resolutions 849 (1993) of 9 July 1993, 854 (1993) of 6 August 1993, 858 (1993) of 24 August 1993, 876 (1993) of 19 October 1993, 881 (1993) of 4 November 1993, 892 (1993) of 22 December 1993, 896 (1994) of 31 January 1994, 901 (1994) of 4 March 1994 and 906 (1994) of 25 March 1994,

Recognising that the right of all citizens to live in and to return to their country of origin is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

Noting conclusions 18 (XXXI) and 40 (XXXVI) of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which constitutes internationally agreed principles governing the repatriation of refugees,

Acting in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Parties on 1 December 1993 and especially paragraph 4, under which Parties expressed their willingness to create conditions for the voluntary, safe and dignified return of displaced persons to their permanent places of residence in all regions of Abkhazia,

Recalling that resolution 428 (V) of 14 December 1950, by which the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, ascribes to the High Commissioner the function of providing international protection to refugees and of seeking permanent resolutions for the problems of refugees, inter alia, by promoting and facilitating their voluntary repatriation,

Given the responsibility entrusted to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to act, under the Secretary-General's authority, as the international lead agency for the repatriation of displaced persons to Abkhazia,

Noting the desire of the Parties to cooperate with each other to achieve full observance of the principles and safeguards governing voluntary repatriation,

Considering the need, therefore, to establish a framework to define modalities of such cooperation for implementation of the repatriation,

Noting that the Parties agree that a repatriation operation to Abkhazia will imply, prior to its implementation, that the security and living conditions in the areas of return are guaranteed. HAVE AGREED ON THE FOLLOWING PROVISIONS:

1. The Parties agree to cooperate and to interact in planning and conducting the activities aimed to safeguard and guarantee the safe, secure and dignified return of people who have fled from areas of the conflict zone to the areas of their previous permanent residence.

2. For the purpose of the present agreement, the Parties will guarantee the safety of refugees and displaced persons in the course of the voluntary repatriation and rehabilitation operations to be organized. 3. In implementing this voluntary repatriation programme, the Parties undertake to respect the following principles:

(a) Displaced persons/refugees have the right to return voluntarily to their places of origin or residence irrespective of their ethnic, social or political affiliation under conditions of complete safety, freedom and dignity;
(b) The voluntary character of the repatriation shall be ascertained and respected through appropriate arrangements;

(c) Displaced persons/refugees shall have the right to return peacefully without risk of arrest, detention, imprisonment or legal criminal proceedings.

Such immunity shall not apply to persons where there are serious evidences that they have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity as defined in international instruments and international practice as well as serious non-political crimes committed in the context of the conflict. Such immunity shall also not apply to persons who have previously taken part in the hostilities and are currently serving in armed formations, preparing to fight in Abkhazia.

Persons falling into these categories should be informed through appropriate channels of the possible consequences they may face upon return;

(d) The Parties shall ensure that returnees, upon return, will enjoy freedom of movement and establishment including the right to return to the areas where they lived prior to leaving the conflict zone or to the area of their choice;

(e) The Parties shall ensure that refugees and displaced persons, upon return, will get their expired documents (propiska, passport) extended and validated for their previous place of residence or the elected place of return;

(f) The Parties shall ensure that repatriants, upon return, will be protected from harassment, including unauthorized charges or fees and threat to life or property;

(g) Returnees shall, upon return, get back movable and immovable properties they left behind and should be helped to do so, or to receive whenever possible an appropriate compensation for their lost properties if return of property appears not feasible.

The Commission mentioned in paragraph 5 below will establish a mechanism for such claims. Such compensation should be worked out in the framework of the reconstruction/rehabilitation programmes to be established with a financial assistance through the United Nations Voluntary Fund;

(h) Displaced persons/refugees who choose not to return to Abkhazia shall continue to be assisted and protected until acceptable alternative solutions are found for such cases;

(i) In accordance with the fundamental principle of preserving family unity, where it is not possible for families to repatriate as units, a mechanism shall be established for their reunification in Abkhazia. Measures shall also be taken for the identification and extra care/assistance for unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable persons during the repatriation process;

(j) The Parties agree that refugees and displaced persons will be guaranteed unimpeded access to all available information on the situation in the areas where repatriation will take place. Such an information should be provided in the framework of a campaign to be launched by the Commission as mentioned in paragraph 9 (b) below.

4. For the purpose of the implementation of voluntary return of displaced persons and refugees to Abkhazia, a quadripartite Commission is hereby established.

5. The principle tasks of the Commission shall be to formulate, discuss and approve plans to implement programmes for the safe, orderly and voluntary repatriation of the refugees and displaced persons to Abkhazia from Georgia, the Russian Federation and within Abkhazia and for their successful reintegration. Such plans should include registration, transport, basic material assistance for a period of up to six months and rehabilitation assistance.

In order to create the conditions for the return of refugees and displaced persons, the Commission will establish a working group of experts to undertake an assessment of the level of damage to the economic and social infrastructure in Abkhazia, the availability of housing and the extent of damage to houses in the areas of return as well as the projected needs in rehabilitation/reconstruction, with financial implications. This survey should be undertaken region by region according to the plan of return to be worked out and accepted by the Parties, bearing in mind that the Parties have agreed to start the repatriation operation with the Gal[i] region.

6. The Commission shall be composed of four members, one being designated by each of the Parties and two representing the Russian Federation and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

In addition, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) will designate a representative to attend the Commission's meetings in an observer capacity. If circumstances do not allow the designated CSCE representative to attend such meetings, the Commission will keep the CSCE mission in Georgia informed on a regular basis on the progress of the Commission's work.

7. Any member of the Commission may, when attending any meeting of the Commission, be accompanied by such advisers as the Party designating that member may deem necessary. Where a member of the Commission is unable to attend any meeting of the Commission, the Party concerned may designate a substitute.

8. The Commission shall meet as often as required, but no less frequently than once every month. Meetings of the Commission may be convened at the request of any of the members and shall be held on the territory of the Russian Federation, except as the members of the Commission may otherwise agree. The Parties agree to guarantee the personal security of the members of the Commission and personnel involved in the activities agreed.

The first meeting of the Commission shall be scheduled as soon as possible and no later than one week after the adoption by the Security Council of a resolution on a mechanism ensuring the security conditions in the areas of return.

9. During its first meeting, the Commission will set out the modalities of the assessment mentioned in paragraph 5 above and will establish a plan concerning:

(a) The areas where repatriation will be primarily conducted according to the level of guaranteed security and preparedness;

(b) The implementation of an information campaign among the displaced person/refugee population to encourage voluntary return;

(c) The registration process of persons expressing their willingness to return;

(d) The activities needed to safeguard the safety of returnees based on the principles set out in paragraph 3 (a) to (j) above;

(e) The needs for financial, transport and basic material assistance to displaced persons/refugees as well as projected needs for rehabilitation/reconstruction of the areas of return as mentioned in paragraph 5 above.

10. The Parties agree that representatives of refugees and displaced persons shall be provided with facilities to visit the areas of return and to see for themselves arrangements made for their return.

11. In the event of disagreement within the Commission regarding the application and interpretation of this Agreement, where such disagreement cannot amicably be settled among the members of the Commission, the Commission shall refer such disagreements to the Parties and to the Russian Federation and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

THE PARTIES, THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES FURTHER AGREE AS FOLLOWS:

(a) UNHCR shall have direct and unhindered access to all displaced persons/refugees from Abkhazia in order to undertake activities essential to the discharge of its mandate and operational monitoring responsibilities;

- (b) Travel shall be facilitated between and within all areas where refugees and displaced persons are located and areas of return for the personnel of the United Nations and other relevant international and non-governmental agencies cooperating with the United Nations in repatriation, reintegration and rehabilitation programmes. It shall include the free use of airspace and authorized airstrips and airports for relief flights and the exemption from taxes and duties of all goods imported for use in the voluntary repatriation programmes of displaced persons/refugees from Abkhazia and for the provision of relief integration and rehabilitation assistance to the Abkhazian region by the United Nations and cooperating agencies, as well as the expeditious clearance and handling of such goods;
- (c) The Russian Federation will guarantee unimpeded transit of humanitarian supplies through its territory for the purposes of the present Agreement;
- (d) UNHCR shall establish local offices, as deemed appropriate, at locations to be approved by the Parties concerned, to facilitate voluntary repatriation, reintegration and rehabilitation;
- (e) The security of the staff and property of the United Nations and the cooperating agencies shall be guaranteed;
- (f) The allocation and continued use by the Parties, the United Nations and the cooperating agencies of particularly designated radio frequencies for radio communications between their offices, vehicles, and staff, in areas where refugees and displaced persons are located and in areas of return, shall be provided.

This agreement shall enter into force with immediate effect and shall remain in force for the period required for the effective voluntary return of the displaced persons/refugees.

In witness whereof, the authorized representatives of the Abkhaz and Georgian sides, the Russian Federation and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, have signed the present agreement.

Done at Moscow, this fourth day of April 1994 in four originals, three in the Russian language, and one in the English language, the four texts being equally authentic but the English text being authoritative for interpretation purposes.

For the Abkhaz side: S. Dzhindzholia

For the Georgian side: A. Kavsadze

For the Russian Federation: B. Pastukhov

For the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: J. Amunategul

[N.B. how in (sect)5 Abkhazia and Georgia are clearly referred to as separate territorial entities - GH]

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Paul Henze (Rand Corporation) and Abkhazia: Some Observations by George Hewitt, FBA Professor of Caucasian Languages, London University

Paul Henze was a member of the small team sent in November 1992 to Abkhazia/Georgia by the London-based NGO International Alert to investigate the conflict that had already developed into full-scale war. My comments on the resulting report, largely written by Henze and which appeared in January 1993, are already available on this web-site -- as is my response to Henze's document presented (though not, as expected, in person) in February 1993 for the Caucasian section at the International Negotiating Network's discussion of the regional problems held at the Jimmy Carter Center (Atlanta). From 29 May to 1 June 1997 Henze paid his first visit to Abkhazia since that 1992 trip in the company of William Courtney, then US Ambassador to Georgia. His impressions were set down in what he styled an 'Abkhazia Diary -- 1997' and circulated towards the end of that year. A copy was despatched to Sukhum in December in the hope that a collective response could be prepared in case the Diary was ever officially published anywhere. That publication has now taken place, but sadly the hoped for response is not yet available from Abkhazia itself, still under CIS (viz. Russian) blockade.

In June 1997 a conference took place in Haarlem, organised by a Dutch-based organisation interested in the Caucasus and Central Asia with the name SOTA. The 'hot spots' of Abkhazia, Chechenia and Nagorno-Karabagh were discussed. Both Georgian and Abkhazian spokesmen (inter alios) attended, as I did myself. The conference-volume has just appeared under the title 'Caucasus: War and Peace' (edited by conference-organiser Mehmet Tutuncu). Not all papers given at the conference are included, and the volume contains some additions, including (for reasons best known to the editor) Henze's Diary. Below is a response elicited from an Abkhazian academic (Dr. Yura Anchabadze of the Russian Academy's Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology) who, working in Moscow, is more easily contactable than colleagues in Sukhum.

However, I should like to add a brief statement of my own by way of preface.

It is obvious not only from the above-mentioned International Alert report but from his other writings (e.g. on Russo-Chechen or Russo-Circassian relations) that Henze must see the Caucasus in very elementary and formulaic terms -- peoples who oppose Russia/the Kremlin deserve Western support, those whose attitudes are less clearly defined, possibly because they themselves are in conflict with those well known for their anti-Russian/anti-Kremlin

sentiments, do not. Manifestly it is just such prejudice that underpins Henze's anti-Abkhazianism. Not only has he not altered the views expressed in 1992, he evidently adheres to them fervently, stating categorically on p. 91 of the new volume: 'He [V. Khagba] had a Russian translation of our 1992 International Alert report on Georgia and Abkhazia with passages underlined and from time to time asked me questions aimed to determine whether I had changed my mind about recommendations we made then. I had not.' Perhaps Henze is unaware that International Alert's Secretary-General, Kumar Rupesinghe, apologised in my presence to the Abkhazian delegation visiting the Jimmy Carter Center in February 1993 that his NGO had published a report of such bias and poor quality, promising to make this apology public (though I am not aware that this undertaking was ever fulfilled) -- this should put Henze's maintenance of his 1992 opinions into context.

The Diary reads like a 1940s' B-movie script in which the 'goodies' are clean-shaven, neatly dressed individuals endowed with all the positive qualities one could imagine, whilst the 'baddies' are unshaven, dressed in black and painted in the worst possible light just in case the audience's intelligence cannot be trusted to work out for themselves on the basis of objective characterisation exactly who is who and what they espouse. A few illustrations will give a flavour of the whole:

GEORGIANS: A friendly Georgian lady welcomed us...and...set a good meal on the table for us.

It was a lively affair, Georgian-style.

The Russian blockade [sc. of Abkhazia] hurts far more than anything the Georgians have done here.

A newspaper in the Mingrelian dialect is being published in Abkhazia while use of the dialect, he said, is forbidden in Georgia [N.B. many Georgians mistakenly believe Mingrelian to be a Georgian dialect -- though it is a language related to Georgian, it is incomprehensible to Georgian speakers (and vice versa) -- and it suits the Georgian case that Mingrelians be deemed ethnically Georgian to have it treated as such -- BGH].

A rather good red [winde] served out of pitchers (was it Georgian?).

It was remarkable how the feel of the countryside changed after we crossed the bridge [sc. from Abkhazia into the Georgian province of Mingrelia] -- neater, more prosperous, with a feeling of life and activity as well as progress [hardly surprising in view of the fact that Abkhazia is under blockade and nothing has been done to rebuild its shattered infrastructure -- BGH].

All [Georgians] discussed Abkhazia calmly and rationally...There is, I believe, considerable flexibility in their concept of federalism as it applies to Abkhazia.

It is the Abkhaz leadership that fears discussions/negotiations, not the Georgians.

vs

ABKHAZIANS: At bottom they know that the Russians and the North Caucasians really won it [the war] for them.

The Abkhaz nomenklatura [Henze conveniently forgets Shevardnadze's often unsavoury apparatchik-career -- BGH].

I hoped I might have provoked them into thinking constructively. I was mistaken.

Ardzinba's position is no talks until Georgia first accepts Abkhaz independence [N.B. that the meeting between Ardzinba and Shevardnadze in Tbilisi on 14 Aug 1997 makes a nonsense of this assertion -- BGH].

He...started by reviewing the Abkhaz situation over the past ten years -- but it was the total party line.

Ardzinba invited us to come to dinner at his guesthouse, the Stalin Dacha...He is unlikely to be able to survive even a modest dose of democracy in Abkhazia.

The lady who had been in the afternoon meeting in his office, a very attractive slender Caucasian type, sat next to Ardzinba and kept looking at him admiringly while we ate and talked...She was not introduced as his wife.

I think enough has been quoted for readers to understand the essence of the Henze style (including even smutty innuendo). I will mention just one other of his apparently 'ex cathedra' pronouncements, namely: '...Abkhaz, a language which is much less developed than Georgian'. Coming from someone who is unable to recognise the language-status of Mingrelian, this insult to a language which linguists universally regard as one of the world's most demanding should be treated appropriately. For information on Abkhaz see B.G. Hewitt & Z.K. Khiba 'Abkhazian Newspaper Reader' (Dunwoody Press, Maryland), April 1998.

My own contribution to the Haarlem conference (and resulting volume) was a discussion of some of the historical/linguistic works produced in Tbilisi that have distorted Abkhazian history/ethnicity over the years. I closed with the remark: 'What we are dealing with here is simply pseudo-scholarship; its practitioners, who award higher prestige to chauvinism than scholarship, should be exposed and treated accordingly.' It is fitting that my article is placed immediately after Henze's Diary...

An Abkhazian's Response to Paul Henze's "Abkhazia Diary -- 1997"

by

Yura Anchabadze

The Georgian-Abkhazian conflict continues to exist on the periphery of society's attention in countries of the Western world. In any case, European countries and the USA are much better and more fully informed about inter-ethnic clashes taking place in the Balkans, in Ethiopia, in Rwanda and in other 'hot spots' on the planet than about the circumstances that have developed in the Caucasus, particularly in Abkhazia. Moreover, there is not a single conflict in the Caucasus with which as many myths and legends have become associated as that between Georgia and Abkhazia. They wander from one publication into another, distorting the truth and preventing observers from gaining an adequate appreciation of (a) the historical, political and ideological sources behind the Georgian-Abkhazian dispute, (b) the current situation, and (c) prospects for a settlement in the region.

Positively speaking, one can say that Henze's piece differs from a string of other materials on the said theme thanks principally to a more attentive and deeper analysis of the situation. For example, this author is clearly not a victim of one of the most widespread myths about the Abkhazians, namely that they are muslims, one and all. Corresponding to this myth, many have discussed the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict in terms of the primitive framework of a religious clash between muslims and christians. It is quite evident that Henze understands many other political points too.

At the same time, however, Henze is not free from some mythologised stereotypes, just as he is susceptible to a certain superficial, primitive and simplistic view on the background to the conflict and on the current state of affairs. This is the more regrettable since many of the 1992 judgments, expressed in the addendum ('Attachment: October 1992 Appraisal. An Informal Assessment of the Abkhaz Problem', pp.108-114), have remained unaltered and are essentially repeated in the 'Diary'. Among these, the causes of the Georgian-Abkhazian dispute are considerably deeper and more tragic than they appear to the author, and thus attempts to find a way to settle the problem peacefully demand a more thoughtful and considered approach to defining concrete mechanisms for its realisation.

It would be a gross error to suppose that the fundamental knot of the Georgian-Abkhazian antagonism was tied only within the last 10 years, as it might appear from Henze's materials. Of course, things became especially acute in the period preceding the collapse of the USSR and in the post-Soviet years, but one simply cannot understand the genesis of the conflict without a historical retrospective of Georgian-Abkhazian relations. Henze mentions some historical facts which are important from the point of view of the chronological and essential dynamics of the conflict, but the interpretations he gives them call for refutation.

In the view of Henze, 'The Abkhaz are far from being one of the most abused of the Caucasian peoples -- they were never deported' (p.109). It is perfectly true that during the Soviet period the Abkhazians were not deported. However, during the years of totalitarian dictatorship they were fated to live through not a few torments. Thus, the state-legal status of the republic was gradually lowered: Abkhazia, declared a Soviet Socialist Republic in March 1921, was compelled in December of the same year to contract a federative treaty with Georgia and then in 1931 to become a mere Autonomous Republic within the structure of Georgia. To appreciate

the essence of the conflict it is important to recognise that in parallel with this diminution in status there was an increase in the dependence of Sukhum on Tbilisi -- from the wide possibilities of self-governance, which was indeed feasible in the confines of the Soviet system, to complete political subordination to Georgian Communist Party rule.

It was precisely this lack of rights which enabled Tbilisi to unleash the harsh policy of georgianisation which was conducted in Abkhazia from the end of the 1930s upto the start of the 1950s. Its prime aim was the enforced assimilation of the Abkhazians, the elimination of Abkhazian ethnic culture, the dissolution of the Abkhazian ethnic group within a Kartvelian ethno-cultural environment. In particular, the Abkhazian language was prohibited from being taught in schools; Abkhaz writing, which at the time was based on the Roman script, was transferred to a graphical representation based on Georgian characters; original Abkhazian toponyms were transformed into Georgian ones; ethnic Abkhazians suffered discrimination and restriction of rights, which rendered a political or social career impossible for them. Conscious of the prevailing climate, a range of Kartvelian historians came out with theories of the ethnic equivalence of Abkhazians and Kartvelians.

A component of the policy of georgianisation was immigration. Tens of thousands of Kartvelians [primarily Mingrelians -- translator] were forcibly transported into Abkhazia from interior regions of Georgia. The natural consequence of this was that Kartvelians quickly achieved for themselves the position of being the numerically dominant group amongst the population of Abkhazia [see Daniel Muller 'Demography. Ethno-demographic history of Abkhazia, 1886 1989', chapter 15 of 'The Abkhazians -- A Handbook' (Curzon Press), edited by B.G. Hewitt, to appear 1998].

Henze considers that 'Abkhazia is in fact one of Georgia's most prosperous regions' (p. 109). Consequently it would seem that Henze considers the Abkhazians to have had no cause for separatist sentiments. In truth, the standard of living for the population of Abkhazia was as a whole satisfactorily high, which was facilitated by income from the tourist-industry as well as by high prices for the basic produce of the rural economy (citrus, tea, tobacco, grapes). However, economic demands were never promoted by the Abkhazian national movement, and so references to Abkhazia's economic prosperity shed no light on the essence of the conflict.

The basic cause that fed the conflict was concentrated in Abkhazia's ongoing lack of political rights. The totalitarian concentration of power at the top which characterised the governmental structure of the USSR had an effect at all levels, including the mutual relations between union-republics and autonomous republics. In this connection, the fundamental decisions affecting the crucial interests of Abkhazia were taken not in Sukhum but in Tbilisi. As a result, the Abkhazians were deprived of any possibility of influencing the situation in their own republic; at the same time the processes unfolding here had a distinct anti-Abkhazian character. And so, despite the fact that following the denunciation of Stalin the most repressive methods of georgianisation were suspended, the all-powerful position of Tbilisi gave it the possibility of continuing the process by other, 'softer' means. Thus, the policy approved by the authorities of settling in Abkhazia migrants from Georgia's inner regions allowed ethnic

Kartvelians to become the socially dominant group ahead of the other ethnic groups within the local population; in the Georgian press and Georgian 'scholarly' works the history of Abkhazia and of the Abkhazians was falsified, for it was treated as purely Georgian.

Several times -- in 1957, 1964, 1967, 1987, 1989 -- the discontent of the Abkhazians poured out into open statements, mass-meetings and rallies. This puts in context Henze's assertion that 'the Abkhaz secessionists are led by an old nomenklatura that enjoyed dominance in the area under the Bolsheviks and does not want to lose its Soviet-era privileges' (p. 109). On the contrary, the Abkhazian nomenklatura, which lived exceedingly well in Soviet Georgia, fought strongly together with the Georgian authorities AGAINST the Abkhazian national movement and, especially, against those Abkhazian intellectuals who formulated the demands of the movement.

Henze's representation of another aspect of the history of the Abkhazian national movement is also not entirely convincing. If demonstrations during the period 1950-1970 were conducted under banners proclaiming that Abkhazia should leave Georgia and join Russia, in the 1990s the Abkhazian movement rallied beneath an already different banner, namely the restoration of Abkhazia's status as a union-republic. It was escape not only from Georgian dictat that was seen in this but also from analogical impulses that might have followed from the direction of Moscow.

The crisis in the Soviet system, so clearly manifested at the end of the 1980s, was accompanied by a rise in separatism within the union-republics themselves. Especially strong were the separatist sentiments in Georgia, where ultra-nationalist forces headed by Zviad Gamsakhurdia directed the movement in favour of exiting the USSR. Gamsakhurdia and his followers envisaged independent Georgia as a unitary state, purged of all autonomous formations. Having become president, Gamsakhurdia gradually put his ideas into practice, liquidating in December 1990 the autonomy of South Ossetia. The president made no secret of his abkhazophobia, with the result that his threats to liquidate Abkhazia's autonomy were wholly real.

The attitudes of the Abkhazians to the prospect of the USSR's dissolution have to be seen in the context of relations with Georgia, which were ever deteriorating at that time. Henze is right when he states that the attitude of the Abkhazians to this prospect was negative. But the reason does not lie where Henze places it when he writes: 'A small group of former communist officials and politically inexperienced Abkhaz intellectuals who had monopolized all the benefits of the peculiar form of affirmative action the old Soviet Union arranged for especially favored minorities faced the demise of the Soviet system with fear of losing their privileges' (p.105), but rather in the fact that in this case Abkhazia would have been left facing one to one the totalitarian, anti-democratic, chauvinist regime which had become established in Georgia in the shape of Gamsakhurdia. Recently Eduard Shevardnadze has styled this period in Georgian history 'provincial fascism'. It is in no way surprising that the Abkhazians strove to distance themselves from such fascism.

In December 1991 the Soviet Union ceased to exist and mechanically fragmented along the borders fixed in Soviet times. The Abkhazians understood that in the new situation it was necessary to seek acceptable and concessionary forms to their relationship with independent Georgia. The fall of the Gamsakhurdia regime and the return to Tbilisi of Shevardnadze opened up definite prospects for this. However, as far as Abkhazia was concerned, the new Georgian leader continued the policy of his predecessor. A range of actions and legislative acts of the new government bore witness to the fact that in Tbilisi they were intent as before on ignoring the fact of the existence of an Abkhazian autonomy. Such statements from Shevardnadze as 'questions pertaining to Abkhazia will be decided in Tbilisi' adequately reflect the position of the new Georgian government.

Meanwhile in Sukhum the search went on for compromises and mutually acceptable solutions. One of these was the project for a federative treaty between Georgia and Abkhazia, which the Abkhazian side intended to propose to Tbilisi. On 14 August 1992 at a meeting of Abkhazia's Supreme Council this project was to have been discussed. However, Shevardnadze did not have the slightest wish to consider any variants whatsoever for federative relations with Abkhazia. At dawn on this very day Georgian troops entered the territory of the autonomous republic.

Seeking to answer the question of the immediate causes of the Georgian-Abkhazian war, Henze meantime gives a palpably mythologised response, reducing this complex problem to the familiar mantra: 'Russian neo-imperialists and resentful communists saw a further incentive to punish him [Shevardnadze] for having deserted Gorbachev and contributed to the demise of the Soviet Union' (p. 106).

The fundamental cause of the conflict and war is to be located in the difference of approach on the part of Abkhazia and Georgia to the definition of their political relations in the post-Soviet period. If Abkhazia saw them in terms of the democratisation of the internal structure of Georgia, specifically its reformation along federative lines and a clear demarcation of powers between Sukhum and Tbilisi, Georgia, having entered the epoch of its existence as an independent state, took the fateful decision to preserve all the worst traditions of Soviet totalitarianism, suppressing any attempts by Abkhazia to attain greater independence in its internal self-government.

Starting in August 1992 not negotiations but war, Shevardnadze and his circle lost a historic chance to put an end to the difficult and negative legacy in Georgian-Abkhazian relations which was bequeathed to both people by Soviet totalitarianism. To do this now is considerably more difficult: the war has brought a heavy psychological trauma to both Kartvelians and Abkhazians, has strengthened the lack of trust and mutual phobia, and has created many new problems which now stand on the path to peaceful settlement, including the problem of the refugees.

In Sukhum the existence of this problem has never been denied. However, there is a strange look to Henze's call to the Abkhazian side 'to negotiate a genuine settlement accepting

inclusion with Georgia and accepting the return of a major portion of the former Georgian [sc. Kartvelian -- translator] population of the region' (p. 107). Such an agreement exists: an Agreement on the Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons was signed in Moscow on 4 April 1994; in its clauses are defined the times and mechanisms for the realisation of this process, and taken into consideration are both material factors (the necessity of providing aid to Abkhazia for restoring its ruined infrastructure, including the homes for returning refugees) and spiritual ones, designed to promote a painfree meeting between people who not so very long ago were divided by bloody hatred and enmity. Meanwhile, by now insisting in Tbilisi on some new mechanism for the return of the refugees they simply fail to understand that such a massive, swift, instantaneous return to a devastated, blockaded, starving Abkhazia could not end in anything but renewed bloodshed.

The other important problem for settlement is the question of the future political relations between Georgia and Abkhazia. Henze, as we have seen, calls upon the Abkhazian side 'to negotiate a genuine settlement accepting inclusion with Georgia'. However, Sukhum has already declared that it allows the possibility of coexistence with Georgia within the confines of some form of union-state and is ready to conduct negotiations on this matter. This is a real compromise in comparison with the original position of Abkhazia, which insisted on independence from Georgia. However, while proceeding towards compromise, the Abkhazians desire to have weighty guarantees for their security. They see these in equality of political status between Georgia and Abkhazia, who would share the future state as equal subjects. The constitution of this proposed state would exclude Abkhazia's previous vertical subordination to the Georgian government. But in this instance too Georgia is letting slip the chance of a historic reconciliation. Georgia's proposals to Abkhazia for future state-building do not go beyond autonomy, i.e. the self-same status Abkhazia already possessed during the Soviet years (sc. post-1931) and which palpably provided no guarantee at all against complications in mutual relations.

At the present moment the negotiations have reached deadlock. It is plain that Shevardnadze is in no position to come out with the sort of new, significant initiatives which might be a reciprocal compromise-step from the Georgian side. Regarding his recent statements about the need to introduce into Abkhazia a settlement representing 'a Bosnian variant', a new flashpoint of military confrontation, which will most assuredly quickly follow this, will finally put an end to any prospect for a peaceful settlement during the lifetime of the present generation of Kartvelians and Abkhazians -- surely something any sensible person would wish to avoid.

THE DYNAMICS AND CHALLENGES OF ETHNIC CLEANSING: THE GEORGIA- ABKHAZIA CASE

**By Catherine Dale,
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1. INTRODUCTION

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union the apparently ethnically-based conflict that raged in Abkhazia, a former Autonomous Republic of the former Soviet Republic of Georgia, displaced hundreds of thousands of people. While negotiators have sought a political solution without success, the displaced have grappled individually with the daily realities of living "temporarily", for over four years.

There is no doubt that internal displacement complicates the search for a lasting solution in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. This essay will address the question of how this happens and explore the nature of the displacement itself. The highly confused Georgian-Abkhaz war displaced people in several different ways, and its aftermath confronts them with different sets of challenges. The central sections of the paper examine the dynamics by which forced migration and prolonged displacement work to create mobilized populations. We will look at in what sense "ethnic cleansing" was the reason for migration, and in what ways it continues to play a role, as well as at how the material and psychological characteristics of the displaced population evolve in the context of prolonged displacement. Finally, we will consider what can be learnt from the challenges presented by the specific forms of wartime ethnic violence and the daily realities of postwar experience in the Georgian-Abkhaz case.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Demographics

The Abkhaz Autonomous Republic is named for the Abkhaz people, but the prewar population of Abkhazia was quite mixed. According to the 1989 Soviet census, ethnic Abkhaz were 17.8 per cent of the total population of 525,000 people, while Georgians were 45.7 per cent, Armenians 14.6 per cent, and Russians 14.3 per cent.¹ The picture is more complicated however, since these demographic proportions varied throughout the period of Soviet rule, as the Georgian and Russian populations increased proportionally at the expense of the Abkhaz.² Nevertheless, throughout the twentieth century the population has been multi-ethnic.

2.2 History

Throughout the period of Soviet power, this multi-ethnic population was the target of vacillating Soviet nationalities policies that assigned access to power and resources in accordance with official nationality.³ After enjoying in the 1920s the status of Union republic, attached by treaty to the Transcaucasian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic, Abkhazia was joined to Georgia in 1931.⁴ Beginning in the 1930s, Soviet Georgianization policies closed Abkhaz language schools, changed place names, and guaranteed Georgians key official positions.⁵ Following the Second World War, Lavrentii Beria orchestrated resettlement of Georgians into Abkhazia to work in agriculture and the expanding industry, changing the ethnic balance of the population.⁶ But in 1978, in response to protests, Soviet authorities instituted "Abkhazization" affirmative action policies that reinstated Abkhaz language instruction and assigned official positions to people of Abkhaz nationality.⁷ These policies, with the privileges they conferred or rescinded, were applied to each citizen according to his or her official nationality, a fixed designation inscribed into the passport of every citizen over 16 years of age. Thus, changing Soviet policies over time concretized the idea of nationality for all residents of Abkhazia as an issue associated with competition for advantage.

2.3 Population

In addition to official policies, patterns of daily life also worked to shape the ethnic consciousness of the prewar population. Almost all cities and regions were formally multinational. Residents still remaining in Tkvarcheli, for example, proclaim with pride that over fifty nationalities lived in that city of 22,000 people.⁸ Sukhum's role as the designated economic and political centre for all of Abkhazia guaranteed integration at the republican level. Enterprises and state farms needed support from Sukhum in order to function, and individuals made trips to Sukhum since it was by far the best place to find many goods and services. At the household level, mixed marriages, particularly Georgian-Abkhaz, were common, and in a culture that emphasized strong ties with extended family members, for many this meant frequent inter-ethnic interaction in their own homes.

Nevertheless, at the level of village life, there was a strong tendency toward nationally compact populations. In some cases this applied to whole villages. In Ochamchire district, for example, the villages Labra and Atara Armianskaia were primarily Armenian-populated, Mokva was primarily Russian, and Kochara was primarily Georgian.⁹ In other cases, for example the Georgian population of Dranda, members of one nationality lived compactly within a larger village or town.¹⁰ Furthermore, agricultural and economic organization especially in the countryside tended to coincide with village boundaries. Thus to the extent that nationalities lived compactly, they also tended to be organized economically by nationality. The 500 prewar households of the Armenian town of Shaumianovka, for example, constituted the work force for a tea and tobacco state farm.¹¹ And the neighbouring villages Tskenis-Tskali, with a largely Abkhaz population, and mostly Georgian Kochara, had shared a collective farm. But in late Soviet days they separated, forming two more or less mono-ethnic agricultural enterprises.¹²

Thus, Soviet authority institutionalized both macro integration through Sukhum's economic position, and micro differentiation through employment and residence patterns, creating a patchwork patterned prewar population. Personal level interaction modified this, but the zero sum game of the cultural politics of official nationalities policies worked to reify national difference.

2.4 War

Against this backdrop, the conflict began as a war of laws during the Soviet collapse, capped in July 1992 by a declaration of sovereignty by a partial Abkhaz Supreme Soviet, in turn quickly annulled by the Georgian Government.¹³ Some weeks later Georgian troops were ordered into Abkhazia, purportedly to secure transportation and communication lines. Whatever the intentions of the Georgian forces, on 14 August in Ochamchire district south of Sukhum, Georgian and Abkhaz troops exchanged fire. The same day, Georgian troops entered Sukhum, and Abkhaz leader Vladislav Ardyznba declared full mobilization. As Georgian troops occupied Sukhum, the Abkhaz Government fled north to Gudauta, its base for the rest of the war, and the Gumista river just north of Sukhum became the major front line. Just over one year later, Abkhaz forces took back Sukhum and pushed Georgian forces back across the Inguri river and out of Abkhazia, an effective Abkhaz victory.

Though the war had an identifiable front line and produced an eventual victor, the fighting was far from orderly. The very first days witnessed not a planned assault but rather random widespread violence in the city of Sukhum and to the south.¹⁴ In addition to the Gumista front line, the war was also fought in patches in Ochamchire, whose villages had high prewar concentrations of Abkhaz. Lines of battle formed between villages of predominantly Abkhaz or Armenian, and Georgian population. To the east, ethnic Swans defended the Kodori river valley against the Abkhaz, while Abkhaz and many others were effectively blockaded in the mountain city of Tkvarcheli.

The patchwork population and the scattered conduct of the fighting combined to produce a war that was effectively highly localized and highly personal.¹⁵ The story of one informant, a woman from Reka, is a representative illustration.¹⁶ Reka, a village of mixed but primarily Abkhaz population in Ochamchire district, is located a few kilometres up the road from the village Okhurei, which had a largely Swan and Mingrelian population. Throughout Soviet times, the two villages shared one citrus fruit collective farm, and most residents of the two villages worked there. Perhaps not surprisingly, there was a great deal of contact and intermarriage

between the two villages. This informant's father is Abkhaz, and her mother Mingrelian, so in keeping with accepted patrilinealism she considers herself Abkhaz. But she also considers herself to be from Okhurei, where her mother's family lived. Most members of her mother's family fought on the Georgian side during the war along the front line that ran between the villages. Those relatives are all now displaced and living in Tbilisi, while she stays in her husband's home in Reka, with portraits on the wall of her husband's Abkhaz brothers who were killed in the war. For this informant and many others, the war was not a political battle for sovereignty, but a highly personal, bloody contest among neighbours and family members.

2.5 Resolution?

To date, the conflict remains politically unsolved, despite intensified mediation efforts throughout the summer of 1997 by the UN, the Friends of Georgia, and the Russian Federation.¹⁷ The two key substantive issues at stake are the political status of Abkhazia with respect to Georgia, and the mechanism for repatriation of the displaced Georgians.¹⁸ In addition to the substance of these issues, and perhaps more critically, participants in negotiations also differ concerning who ought to mediate the talks and guarantee the eventual solution. The question is whether any formal, elite level agreement can ameliorate the havoc wreaked by localized warfare and prolonged displacement.

3. THE CONTOURS OF DISPLACEMENT

The conflict moved several different populations, in diverse ways. In most cases, the general contours of migration are far less contested than the numbers of people involved, and claims concerning the magnitude of displacement have become effective political weapons.

3.1 Georgians

Certainly the largest group affected by the war are ethnic Georgians, the vast majority of whom have left Abkhazia and have settled in other parts of Georgia.¹⁹ The Georgian Ministry for Refugees claimed in March 1997 that there were 268,072 displaced persons from Abkhazia in Georgia.²⁰ The Abkhaz argue in turn that there were 239,900 Georgians in Abkhazia in 1989, according to the Soviet census. They claim that some never left Abkhazia, many others have repatriated already, and still others fled to Russia not Georgia. There are thus at most 140-150,000 displaced people still waiting to be repatriated in Georgia.²¹ Since a number of Georgians did indeed stay behind, it is difficult to see how the Georgian Government can substantiate its figures. However, without passing judgement on this issue, it is possible to describe the contours of Georgian migration. From cities, the vast majority of the Georgian population has gone. In towns that had quite small Georgian populations, like Verkhniaia Eshera above Sukhum, and Labra below it, literally all the Georgians have left.²² In other places, when residents note that Georgians have remained, it often transpires that these "Georgians" are children of mixed marriages who self-identify as Abkhaz or some other nationality.²³

However, a number of Georgians never left Abkhazia, even during the fighting. Members of mixed marriages stayed, particularly if the husband was Abkhaz. Many older people stayed, particularly if they had no close relatives to help them flee or to take them into their homes in a safer place.²⁴ Neighbours, in Nizhnaia Eshera, Tkvarcheli, Ochamchire and Kutol among other places, emphasize that these Georgians can stay with impunity precisely because they did not fight on the Georgian side. In other cases, Georgians who were long-term residents of a village considered it home and quite naturally not only stayed during the war, but also helped the Abkhaz as they were able. One older Mingrelian couple in Nizhnaia Eshera, a town on the Abkhaz side of the Gumista front line, stayed during the war, and gave the Abkhaz soldiers shelter and food. He drank his homemade wine with Abkhaz soldiers through the war and now sometimes those soldiers help the elderly couple by bringing them materials they cannot get on their own.²⁵ In another instance, one of very few remaining young Georgian women in Tkvarcheli tells how she took care of Abkhaz soldiers during the war. These people refer to Abkhazia as "our republic".²⁶

Those who stayed are certainly not representative of the Georgian population as a whole. The conditions under which they stayed show one way in which Georgians and Abkhaz have continued to live together. But the ominous implication is that without the full loyalty they demonstrated during the war these Georgians would not be welcome.

3.2 Russians, Armenians, Greeks

Caught in the middle of the madness were members of other official nationalities. In the earliest days of the war, Greece arranged an orderly and thorough evacuation for Abkhazia's Greek population of about 15,000 people. Many of these long-term residents of Abkhazia have found it difficult to adjust and some have attempted to return home.

Abkhazia's Russian and Armenian populations, each about 75,000 strong, were not temporary visitors who could simply return "home" when the fighting began. Most Armenians could trace their Abkhaz roots to the beginning of the century, and many came as a direct result of persecution in 1915. By the start of the war, Armenians in Abkhazia were Soviet cultural constructs, speaking Russian and even Turkish, living in compact Armenian villages but in a multinational society, with few or no ties to Soviet Armenia. When the war began, Armenians found themselves directly in the line of fire, but "returning" to Armenia was a nonsensical option. Instead, the most natural option for many, especially women and children, was to flee to friends or distant relatives in Russia until the end of the war. In a frequent pattern, many young people stayed on in Russia, studying or earning money to send remittances back to Abkhazia.²⁷

Abkhaz Russians, despite cultural affinity with the Russian Federation, were also longtime residents. Like the Armenians, many Russians who had the necessary personal ties left their homes for Russia for the duration of the war, and many, particularly young people, have stayed on in Russia to work or study.²⁸ In this way, the war scattered members of some nationalities and in some cases removed them altogether.

3.3 Abkhaz

Unlike Georgians, Russians and Armenians, most Abkhaz did not leave the territory of Abkhazia. But Abkhaz experienced substantial internal displacement both during and after the war.²⁹ As sources on all sides report, in Sukhum the first days of the war were accompanied by looting and physical violence against the local population.³⁰ While Abkhaz authorities retreated to Gudauta, Abkhaz who were not engaged in fighting left Sukhum for Gagra or Gudauta to the north for the duration of the war. Similarly, Abkhaz residents of villages to the south found themselves in the middle of confused criss-crossing front lines. Some also fled north, while others sought safety to the east in Tkvarcheli. But as the war progressed, Georgians effected a blockade against that mountainous city, and local residents as well as the newly displaced sought in turn to flee from Tkvarcheli. Indeed, it was the downing by Georgian forces in December 1992 of a Russian Mi-8 helicopter evacuating women and children from that city that raised the level of general malevolence in the war and catalyzed more concerted Russian military intervention on the Abkhaz side.

After the war ended, many Abkhaz returned home, but many others entered a phase of more permanent dislocation, due to the destruction of both living space and economic infrastructure. Some Georgian authorities claim that all of post-war Abkhazia is simply depopulated. This is true in some places, for example in industrial Tkvarcheli, whose prewar population of 22,000 has been reduced to about 8,000 due to the complete collapse of industry and communication and transportation networks.³¹ But in other cases the claims are exaggerated, for example Georgian Presidential Adviser Irakli Machavariani's statement that the present population of Ochamchire district is only about 3,000 people, when more than twice that number live in Ochamchire city alone.³²

Instead, postwar Abkhaz migration is complicated and multidirectional. Where homes in villages have been destroyed, Abkhaz have migrated either into the cities, or into former Georgian houses and flats in other villages. Even in villages with limited destruction, many youths have left their family homes to seek an income of some

kind in Abkhaz cities or even in Russia, from where they send back remittances. Meanwhile, many other families have left economically devastated urban areas with no access to food-producing land, for the countryside. Thus many city dwellers have rapidly "ruralized". This pattern stands in sharp contrast, for example, to the displaced Azeris in Azerbaijan from Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding Armenian-occupied regions of Azerbaijan, two-thirds of whom were rural before displacement and two-thirds of whom now live in urban areas. On the other hand the pattern is similar to the choice faced by many Armenian refugees fleeing Azerbaijan. Given the devastation brought about by the earthquake in 1988 and the Soviet collapse, Armenia did not have the resources to resettle all of the hundreds of thousands of refugees in urban settings. Many faced a choice between accepting a new rural life and migrating further to some other country.

The key characteristic of most postwar Abkhaz migration is its partial and unfinished nature. Most of the pragmatic solutions Abkhaz have found in order to survive in the postwar setting involve subsistence agriculture, not sustainable incomes, and temporarily occupied housing, not reconstruction.

4. THE REASONS FOR DISPLACEMENT

Given the general contours of displacement during and after the war, we will now focus on seeking explanations for these patterns of migration. In particular we will consider to what extent people were displaced for "ethnic" reasons, and whether it is appropriate to use the term "ethnic cleansing" to describe the results.

One approach to this question would be to seek to determine whether there existed on either side at the highest levels a clearly formulated intention to eradicate an ethnic group. But such an intention might have existed without manifesting itself in any way during the war, while at the same time, even without a clear policy, wartime practices might be ethnically directed. In fact, the ways that people individually experienced the war, and their subjective understandings of what happened, far more directly determine future behaviour and thus the chances for a lasting settlement on the ground, than the existence or not of some official policy formulation. Therefore, the approach of this essay is to base the analysis on personal accounts of wartime experience by Georgian IDPs and current residents of Abkhazia. While over time personal understandings of what happened may be reworked and revised through ongoing conversations with others, these new collective understandings play a critical role in the search for a lasting settlement.

4.1 Abkhaz

Many accounts suggest that Abkhaz migration during the war was prompted by the threat of personal violence against the civilian Abkhaz population for reasons of ethnicity.³³ In Sukhum, certainly much thievery was perpetrated for its own sake, for economic gain. But residents relate that would-be perpetrators often first asked the nationality of the intended victim. Further, many accounts suggest that the best defence for Abkhaz was to seek shelter with Georgian friends. Georgian friends at first could turn away thieves by saying the Abkhaz in their flat were relatives, but several months into the war even this ploy ceased to work.³⁴

Among those who fled from their homes in Sukhum, many knew immediately, through friends and acquaintances, that Georgians had moved into their flats. A young woman now living in Adziubja relates that she previously lived in her own flat in Sukhum, but it was taken over during the war by Georgians, who apparently stole everything when they left, since nothing of any value remains.³⁵ While in fact it is not necessarily the Georgian occupants who later looted the flat, this story pattern in which Georgians are blamed, is quite widespread.

Among those who lived in the countryside, many understand that Georgians intentionally burned down Abkhaz homes during the war. An Abkhaz man in Adziubja relates that Georgians intentionally destroyed 32 of 35 Abkhaz homes in upper Adziubja, and also the local Abkhaz language school.³⁶ And a Mingrelian woman in the market in Ochamchire tells how Georgians burned down Abkhaz homes in her own village and others nearby, in Ochamchire district.³⁷

Theft and property destruction were not the only apparent threats. Both Natella Akaba's parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, and Otar Kakalia's former NGO, Askarial, have publicized information about many cases of physical threat, torture, and murder directed against ethnic Abkhaz civilians.³⁸ All of these practices, to the extent they occurred, certainly constitute ethnically directed violence, even if it was not centralized and coordinated, and the belief that such violence took place is widespread among Abkhaz. Much Abkhaz migration during the war can be attributed to fear of ethnic violence, and at least some postwar migration is attributable to intentional destruction of Abkhaz homes.

In addition, much of the Abkhaz leadership argues that anti-Abkhaz ethnic violence was intentional and planned. In evidence many point to the thorough destruction of the Abkhaz State Archives in the first days of the war, and the Abkhaz State Security Service produces what it claims is a Georgian military map left behind during the war, indicating plans for the complete annihilation of Abkhaz villages in Ochamchire district.³⁹ This official Abkhaz rhetoric of ethnic violence may serve to frame popular beliefs, but it is not the only source. Instead, local level experiences during the war also work directly to generate widespread popular understanding of wartime violence.

4.2 Georgians

In order to assess whether Georgian migration out of Abkhazia was ethnically driven it is necessary to consider two key parts to the claim of ethnic cleansing: that people were driven out by the threat of physical violence, and that Georgian homes and property were destroyed during and after the war to make return less likely.

Almost all displaced Georgians state clearly that they left because their lives were in danger precisely because they were Georgian. As evidence they recite stories of atrocities committed by Abkhaz forces against civilians during the war. Some of the stories are highly personal. For example a displaced Georgian in the market in Zugdidi, who is from Gal district, tells how Abkhaz forces killed her husband, and then killed her parents for good measure "just because they were Georgian".⁴⁰ Another woman now living in Zugdidi tells how Abkhaz forces came to their home in Pitsunda and gave them a choice: either take an Abkhaz surname and fight on the Abkhaz side, or leave your home now.⁴¹ An older Georgian returnee to Gal district tells how after the war he witnessed Abkhaz approach a Georgian peasant neighbour and ask his surname. Hearing it was Mingrelian they proceeded to burn him.⁴¹ The role a victim's surname plays in these stories gives the violence a distinctly ethnic character.

These personal experiences are very often augmented by stories of things that happened to other Georgians, stories of almost unspeakable horror. In a pattern that mirrors Liisa Malkki's findings from her work on Hutu refugees in Tanzania,⁴² certain particularly vivid stories are told by displaced people who did not know one another in Abkhazia. In a former tourist camp in Kutaisi, a large gathering of displaced people tell of the "common practice" called the "Italian necktie", in which the tongue is cut out of the throat and tied around the neck. A woman tells of a man being forced to rape his teenage daughter, and of Abkhaz soldiers having sex with dead bodies. A man tells how in Gudauta, Abkhaz killed small children and then cut off their heads to play football with them.⁴³ These themes are repeated in many separate accounts.

Other residents who have stayed in Abkhazia substantiate the basic claim that Georgians left in fear. Russians in Nizhnaia Eshera, for example, note that in their five-story building, in which the neighbours were all acquainted, all the Georgians are gone because Abkhaz came during the war and told them to leave.⁴⁴ In Shaumianovka, Armenians note they had good relations with their former Georgian neighbours. The Georgians lived along the road up from Dranda, the only way out of Shaumianovka, and they let their Armenian neighbours pass through freely during the war. But those Georgians left because they were afraid, even if only one of their distant relatives had fought during the war.⁴⁵

The question then arises of what should be concluded about the reasons for Georgian flight. In order to substantiate that Georgian mass migration was forced by ethnic violence, do we need to document that all displaced people were personally threatened at gunpoint, forced to hear of the horrors that would soon be practiced on their bodies, and given a choice whether to stay or not? Or, is it sufficient to ascertain that some

unquestionably ethnically directed atrocities did take place, that people had reasonable opportunities to hear the tellings and retellings of these events, and that they fled in fear on this basis?

Concerning the second element of Georgian forced migration, many or most displaced Georgians say that their homes have been destroyed, or are now occupied by others. This knowledge comes through friends or even distant acquaintances, whom they have asked to check on the fate of their homes. In the market in Zugdidi, five displaced people say their houses in Gal district were burned after the war had ended.⁴⁶ Armenians still living in Abkhazia note that Georgian homes in Dranda were intentionally attacked, and Abkhaz say the same thing about Georgian homes in Tamysh.⁴⁷ Even Abkhaz authorities in Ochamchire city note that in the first days after the Abkhaz took back Sukhum and then returned to Ochamchire, it was very difficult to control looting of the homes of people who had fled.⁴⁸ Looting may be an exercise primarily for economic gain, but when people of a given official nationality are disproportionately selected as victims, the crimes take on an ethnic character.

Georgian authorities at all levels, like Abkhaz officials, tend to draw together the various accounts of violence and label it "ethnic cleansing".⁵⁰ One head of administration from Gal district, in a conversation in Zugdidi, recited a list of murders and lootings directed against Georgians in Gal district since the war, and asked, "Is this not genocide?" The Vice Mayor of Zugdidi agrees, noting that 5,000 Georgian houses were burned intentionally by the Abkhaz.⁵¹ The Kutaisi representative of the Abkhaz Council of Ministers in exile, echoing the words of Tamaz Nadareishvili and Zurab Erkvania, states that what happened after the war in Abkhazia was "ethnic cleansing and genocide". And he adds the personal account of his brother, who after returning to his village Otobaia in lower Gal district was attacked by the Abkhaz police and left paralyzed as a result.⁵²

Even if it is accepted that application of the label "ethnic cleansing" to the violence enacted upon either the Abkhaz or the Georgians would require demonstrating the existence of a concerted policy on the part of the leadership, what happened in practice may be much more important than what may or may not have been intended by some political entrepreneurs. The de facto conduct of this highly local war was superlatively ethnic in character. The best evidence is less the absolute horror of some observers' accounts than the fact that ethnicity is the primary trait of each key player in each of the accounts. Whatever role ethnicity per se may have played in producing the conflict, it has become the primary category with which people on the ground narrate and comprehend the war's violence. In practical terms, much of the Abkhaz population, and most of the Georgian population, have been displaced; property throughout Abkhazia has been destroyed, narrowing significantly the options for reconstruction and return in the near future; and among all former residents of Abkhazia the belief prevails that the best term for characterizing what happened to them is "ethnic cleansing".

5. THE EFFECTS OF DISPLACEMENT

Flight itself, whatever terrors may have prompted it, is not the only important part of forced migration. Displacement is not only a process but a condition, in this case an ongoing one, and we must now consider what impact it has on the thousands of Georgians affected and what new patterns it creates.

5.1 Patterns of Settlement

As a result of the war most Georgians have left Abkhazia for other parts of Georgia. By remaining within the borders of the Georgian state, they are considered internally displaced persons (IDPs), a category typically problematic for international organizations more used to operating within the system of sovereign states recognized by the UN. But conversely, by staying within Georgia they remain visible, easy to identify and target as aid recipients.

As we have already indicated the IDP situation is analogous in Azerbaijan, where hundreds of thousands of IDPs from Nagorno-Karabakh and the Armenian-occupied regions of Azerbaijan around it have almost all relocated within Azerbaijan. In contrast, hundreds of Armenians fled Azerbaijan in the last years of Soviet rule, but rather than settle in Armenia most moved on, or never came to Armenia in the first place. Since those Armenians have

dispersed around the world, they are not visible and identifiable as a single refugee population or problem that demands attention.

The displaced in Georgia are compactly settled in several senses. Not only have they almost all stayed in Georgia, there are particularly large IDP populations in Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Zugdidi. In addition, within the districts where they have settled, they tend to live in clearly bounded spaces in close proximity to one another. This is particularly true for the 40-50 per cent of the IDP population living in collective centres, rather than in the private flats of friends or relatives.⁵³ Collective centres include empty administrative buildings, schools, kindergartens, hotels, and tourist camps, among other buildings. In Zugdidi, just across the border from Abkhazia and therefore the easiest safe place to reach, the proportion in such centres is higher, with about two-thirds of the displaced settled in collective centres.⁵⁴

Flight from Abkhazia was chaotic, and whole villages seldom made the journey and settled together. Instead, the IDP residents of most collective centres come from various districts of Abkhazia and were not acquainted before the war. Nevertheless, some patterns are clear. Zugdidi has a disproportionately large IDP population from the adjacent Gal district. And Kutaisi has a high concentration from Ochamchire district, primarily because transportation between the two places was made available during the war, and because the word went out among IDPs that Kutaisi, while farther away, had a lot of living space available.

Thus the patterns of settlement of IDPs throughout Georgia work to create a relatively bounded and identifiable population.

5.2 Patterns of Mobility

There are two exceptions to this pattern of compactness and stability. The first is the population of displaced ethnic Swans. Before the war, Swans lived in Abkhazia both in the mountains in the upper Kodori river valley, and in scattered usually compact populations in villages and in Sukhum. During the war virtually all Swans from the lowlands fled up to the Kodori valley, which Swans held throughout the war, and most continued on through a mountain pass into the rest of Georgia. Many of those Swan families from Abkhazia who stayed in the Kodori valley now spend part of their time in other parts of Georgia, since Kodori is effectively cut off from its former primary economic outlet in Sukhum, and since de facto isolation makes living conditions in the winter extraordinarily difficult.⁵⁵ Thus many Swans are effectively doubly displaced.

The second exception is the substantial return of Georgians to date to the Gal district in south Abkhazia, a definite and reverse population shift since the end of the war. Though all agree that some movement has taken place, the numbers involved have become a political issue. Abkhaz officials tend to stress the overwhelming magnitude of the return. Abkhaz Speaker of Parliament Sokrat Jinjolia and Head of the Presidential Commission for Refugees and Missing Persons Otar Kakalia argue that about 60,000 Georgians, from a prewar population of about 75,000, have returned and permanently resettled in Gal.⁵⁶ This claim is essentially a political move, suggesting that the Abkhaz have been tolerant in permitting a return. Georgians on the other hand play down the magnitude of return. Presidential Adviser Irakli Machavariani argues that about 35,000 Georgians have returned, and that only the elderly remain continuously in Gal while others cross the Inguri river from Zugdidi on a regular basis.⁵⁷ And Georgian regional authorities rate the return to Gal at only 25-30 per cent of the prewar population.⁵⁸ This too is a political move, intending to suggest that the injustice of displacement, for which the Abkhaz are responsible, continues, and that the problem is still so serious that only the Georgian Government can address it effectively.

Rather than joining the political debate concerning the number of Georgians repatriated, it would be more useful to consider the question of the nature of the "return". A first indication is the sharp difference in repatriation rate between lower Gal, just across the Inguri river from Zugdidi, and upper Gal, which is far less accessible.⁵⁹ People have returned to, and only to, places from which they could flee quickly should fighting begin again. Secondly, as the 31 July 1997 expiration date of the Russian peacekeepers' mandate approached, bringing with it fears of renewed violence, IDPs poured back across the Inguri into Zugdidi and the surrounding area. Thirdly, many Gal

residents who have returned note that their children remain behind in Zugdidi, "where it is safe". Also, as a young Georgian man on a brief visit home to his family in Gal noted, young men cannot stay for very long in Gal because they fear that they will be forcibly drafted by the Abkhaz army.⁶⁰ And finally, representatives of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia note that the Gal militia is untrained and undersupplied, and some of its members plunder villages in search of sustenance.⁶¹ There is no effective authority in Gal district but rather a total lack of contact between Georgian village heads of administration and the Abkhaz officials in Gal city; no monopoly on the legitimate use of violence but rather undisciplined, marauding Abkhaz militia members. The "return" to Gal is thus partial and highly contingent, and nominally repatriated Georgians live in a constant state of fear and readiness to decamp at the first sign of trouble. This condition resembles less a real return than an additional layer of displacement.

5.3 Patterns of Organization

For displaced Georgians partially resident in Kodori valley or Gal district, displacement is an ongoing condition of physical dislocation. But for the rest of the Georgian IDP population as well, displacement is not a contentless pause in the normal course of events, but rather years of daily life that create new patterns and perspectives. For the Georgian IDP population, three new sets of relationships have emerged: interaction between IDPs and local populations; interaction among IDPs themselves; and ties between IDPs and Georgian political structures. Together, the practices involved in these three sets of relationships work to construct a distinct Georgian IDP population.

Firstly, IDPs in many ways are separate from local populations. This is especially true for those who live in compact bounded spaces such as former tourist camps, sanatoria, or hotels. Furthermore, unemployment tends to be higher among IDPs than among locals, and poverty in some cases prevents school attendance when families cannot afford sufficient clothing and shoes for their children. When collective centres are located in or near cities, the IDP population becomes distinctly visible. The most vivid example is the towering Iveria hotel in the centre of Tbilisi, now home to hundreds of IDPs who stand in small groups in the square below, and whose laundry adorns the balconies on all floors. The hotel stood strikingly in the immediate backdrop during the 26 May 1997 unveiling in the square below of a dramatic new statue of Georgian historical hero David the Builder. IDPs are also visible economically, as many have set up impromptu fruit and vegetable markets throughout Tbilisi. The widespread perception among the local population is that they undersell market prices, and that many of their products are of substandard quality. Thus members of both local and displaced populations share the idea of fundamental IDP separateness.

Secondly, while most IDPs living now in any given collective centre did not know one another before the war, an array of daily practices during displacement have worked to create self-referential populations. In some cases, the need for housing itself has catalyzed organization. In Zugdidi for example, 16 previously unacquainted IDP families were living in a government administrative building, but local officials who needed to work in that space evicted them. The IDPs organized and staged a protest, which drew the attention of the authorities and humanitarian organizations, which in turn financed and constructed shelters nearby for the families.⁶²

Even without such drama, daily practices draw IDPs together. Daily life is simply very difficult. Few IDPs have found work, and the wholly insufficient government IDP pension is only 8.5 lari, less than 7 dollars, per month. Those who do work are often engaged in small-scale trade, for example selling cheap Russian cigarettes in the market in Zugdidi, whose profits are meagre and undependable.⁶³ Very few IDPs are dying of hunger, but almost all struggle to find enough food to feed and clothe their families, and they face the psychological strain of not knowing how or when things will improve.

In most collective centres, resources are limited, so residents meet daily at the central water pump in former camps, or in the only kitchen on the floor in hotels. Further, IDPs in settings not designed for permanent residence have organized and assigned daily tasks to make life more manageable. In a former tourist camp near Kutaisi for example, IDPs have their own schedule for garbage collection and clean-up of common areas.⁶⁴ In many cases,

separate schools have been established for IDP children, complete with IDP teachers, for example the First Secondary School in Zugdidi, with 400 children, and the Sixth Secondary School in Kutaisi. This arrangement works to limit contact between displaced and local children, to keep them separate. What is more, in some cases this is done intentionally. As the Kutaisi representative of the Abkhaz Council of Ministers in exile states, "We cannot allow the younger generation to blend in. We have to prepare them to return to Abkhazia. Otherwise, it would be a national tragedy."⁶⁵

Locked into constant interaction with one another, IDPs tell and retell one another stories of their wartime experiences. One result is the move from individual experiences of violence in which they, the victims, happened to be Georgian, to a sea of stories of ethnic violence in which all the victims are Georgian and all the perpetrators Abkhaz. Here, prolonged displacement works to create a compelling and widely shared narrative of ethnic cleansing.

Another result is the clarification of a shared Mingrelian identity.⁶⁶ Most of the displaced are in fact Mingrelian, with ancestors originally from Samegrelo in western Georgia. Mingrelians as an official nationality category were deleted from the Soviet census after 1926, but nevertheless they speak their own language or dialect. Furthermore, the first post-Soviet Georgian president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, was Mingrelian, and in the civil war that accompanied his ouster by the junta that later included Eduard Shevardnadze, Mingrelians tended to support Gamsakhurdia. Many Mingrelians remain highly skeptical of Shevardnadze's rule, and the difficult conditions of displacement and the Georgian Government's failure to resolve the conflict and effect a return, make Shevardnadze an easy target and catalyze the notion of Mingrelian separateness.⁶⁷ In both narratives, of ethnic violence and Mingrelian identity, the identity of those responsible is closely tied rhetorically with the deprivations of the concrete conditions of displacement. The challenges and mortifications of daily life during prolonged displacement are thus constant reminders of the experience of forced displacement and the Abkhaz responsible for it and the IDPs' own shared and renewed Mingrelian ethnic identity.

Thirdly, new ties join the fragments of the IDP population to an official political structure. The Abkhaz Government in Exile removed to Tbilisi at the end of the war and has continued to function. Chair of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia in Exile Tamaz Nadareishvili provides a list of the varied activities and functions of this structure: planes between Tbilisi and Moscow, boats on the Black Sea, two state and five private institutes with 12,000 tuition-paying students, theatres, cultural events and a children's symphony orchestra, TV and radio services, thirteen journals and newspapers, three factories in Kutaisi and Tbilisi, small enterprises throughout Georgia, thirteen schools, seven hospitals, tax inspection, customs, and all former ministries.⁶⁸

Local IDPs are connected to this structure through a functioning hierarchy. As IDPs in Zugdidi, Anaklia, and Kutaisi state, in each collective centre IDPs elect their own representatives.⁶⁹ These representatives are often new to political life, and are experiencing the devastations of displacement without benefit of particular privilege. The representatives travel regularly to major urban centres to meet with one another, with local authorities with responsibility for IDP issues, and with representatives of both the Georgian Ministry for Refugees and the Abkhaz Government in Exile structure. In Kutaisi for example these weekly meetings take place on Mondays at 4pm. Furthermore, in separate accounts local IDPs elected in collective centres easily name the officials to whom they take questions and problems. In the isolated Kodori valley, local Swans note that the Chair of the Georgian Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, Zurab Erkvania, comes frequently to Kodori by helicopter, and the local police force, consisting in part of Swan IDPs from Abkhazia, was trained and organized in Tbilisi before being sent back to serve in Kodori.⁷⁰ In Zugdidi, in addition to weekly meetings of IDP leaders from around Zugdidi, every Monday at noon the Georgian heads of administration from almost all the villages in Gal district gather in Zugdidi and meet with both local authorities and representatives of the Government in Exile structure.

Organizationally, Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and Zugdidi have become focal points for molding politically organized IDP populations linked to the Government in Exile. These relations are furthered by the roles these cities play as new economic centres for the displaced. Swans from Kodori, who formerly relied on resources in Sukhum, now utilize

the Government in Exile structure and transportation to carry out business in Kutaisi or Zugdidi.⁷¹ Both IDPs in Zugdidi and those who have gone back to Gal district trade almost exclusively in the markets in Zugdidi.⁷² These political and economic patterns further solidify the boundaries of the IDPs as a group, and the linkages with Georgian authorities work to politicize and geographically reorient the population.

Thus, not just the physical moment of dislocation four years ago, but also the daily social, economic and political practices of the displaced work to structure a bounded, visible and mobilized population, for whom temporariness is a permanent condition.

6. RETURN?

In the absence of a political resolution, the majority of displaced Georgians have not returned home, and those who have gone back to Gal region live in constant fear. It is now necessary to look at the concrete issues that make return problematic and to consider whether the spontaneous but precarious return to Gal that has already taken place can serve as a model for return to other parts of Abkhazia, or whether Gal is indeed a completely separate issue.

6.1 Gal as Example?

Return to Gal district is de facto a fundamentally separate issue, since unlike the rest of Abkhazia, the prewar population was to 94 per cent Georgian,⁷³ and since Gal's physical juxtaposition with Zugdidi district makes temporary and contingent return an option. By 1997, political elites recognized the specificity of Gal, and "return to Gal" became a separate issue in elite political discourse. Conflictologists have furthered this tendency by unpacking the problem of return into its constituent geographical parts. Indeed, with its virtually mono-ethnic population, Gal district neatly avoids the most difficult issue of return: how can former combatants live together again as neighbours?

But almost all compact IDP populations include representatives from various parts of Abkhazia, and those from places outside Gal district also believe fully that they have a right to return. In fact, most IDPs seem to consider that all of the displaced have experienced similar hardships, and that all should be repatriated. The sharp distinction between Gal residents and others that appears in high level political rhetoric is markedly absent from their conversation. The risk is that the issue of returning home, a fundamental human right, in negotiations may become confused with what is convenient or expedient.

6.2 Physical Obstacles

Several concrete difficulties face IDPs who would choose to repatriate. Firstly, fighting on the ground and aerial attacks during the war demolished both housing and public buildings such as schools and administrative buildings. In addition, infrastructure including roads and communication lines was damaged or destroyed. Furthermore, in the four postwar years of economic isolation financial resources have been wholly insufficient to maintain the structures left in place after the fighting. Abkhaz authorities emphasize these points, stressing their financial inability to accommodate a mass repatriation. But Georgian IDPs throughout Georgia argue that the only important issue is repatriation, "let us go back and we will take care of everything". Physical structures can indeed be rebuilt, particularly by communities willing to organize and help one another. The experiences of organized collective life during displacement might well make this easier.

Secondly, a number of places in Abkhazia are still mined. The Mayor of Sukhum argues for example that Georgians mined the land around Sukhum when they held the city, and both Georgians and Abkhaz laid mines in Ochamchire district. Furthermore, the story continues, many mines along the Gumista river just north of Sukhum have washed away from their original places, so that no one knows where they are; and the fighting in Ochamchire was so confused that perhaps no reliable source remains concerning where all the mines are located. Therefore, a rapid mass return would certainly risk casualties.⁷⁴ In fact, most roads are now free from mines, as are homes, buildings

and land that people have inhabited during the past four years. Destroyed buildings and abandoned fields, however, are quite likely still to be mined. The risk here is real, but for over a year Abkhaz and Georgian officials have participated in negotiations with a demining organization, Halo Trust, and demining is a plausible option.

Thirdly, and by far most problematically, many former Georgian houses and flats have been occupied by others. In the last confused days of the war as Georgians fled, it was a common practice for Abkhaz occupying a Georgian home in or near Sukhum to spray paint "occupied" on the front gate, so that others would not try also to move into the house or plunder it. Some of these Abkhaz migrated because their own homes had been destroyed, while others found life in their former homes economically untenable. In a building near a grain processing factory in Nizhnaia Eshera, longtime Abkhaz residents note that most of the prewar residents were Georgians, who all left after the war. Now, almost all of the flats have been occupied by Abkhaz families whose homes on the north side of the Gumista river, directly along the front lines, were destroyed during the war.⁷⁵ Along the main street in Dranda, a new arrival says that most of the former Georgian homes in Dranda have been occupied by Abkhaz, particularly those fleeing economic devastation in Tkvarcheli.⁷⁶

Abkhaz voice a wide array of attitudes toward the de facto occupation. Many express deep regret at the action, though after their homes and all their possessions were destroyed, they felt they had no other choice if they wanted to keep their families alive. Others note aggressively that "of course" they took the homes, because they were available. In this vein, when asked about a potential Georgian return, one woman noted, "yes, but since we have occupied their flats they would have nowhere to live".⁷⁷

In principle, none of these three issues should present an insurmountable problem. Infrastructure can be rebuilt, land can be demined, and sufficient housing can be found or built. But a number of individual cases of house or flat occupation promise to require caution, and it is not clear who will be capable of adjudicating these issues wisely.

6.3 Security Guarantees

By far the most problematic aspect of repatriation is the question of "security". Political elites on both sides, IDPs, and local residents of Abkhazia all agree that a guarantee of security is essential, but there is far less agreement concerning who ought to provide that security; for whom security is necessary, that is to say, who is in danger; and what exceptions there might be to a universal guarantee of security.

As an extension of the rhetoric concerning who holds legitimate political authority in Abkhazia, Georgian and Abkhaz elites each consider that they are capable of providing security unilaterally. Erkvania states for example, that the Abkhaz Government in Exile can guarantee the physical security of all returnees, and that no outside help would be needed.⁷⁸ The Deputy Minister for Refugees in Zugdidi notes that the logistics of returning the refugees are not a problem, since all the necessary information is contained in their database. The crucial issue is security, and the only guarantee is Georgian authority, Georgian administration, and a Georgian army.⁷⁹ The Georgian heads of administration from Gal district agree they could keep order if given the chance.⁸⁰

Abkhaz officials argue instead that they should provide the needed security guarantee for all. Abkhaz Speaker of Parliament Sokrat Jinjolia notes first that in fact no one is harming the Georgians who have returned to Gal district, and he adds that if Abkhaz were allowed to take weapons into the Security Zone they could keep order without problem.⁸¹

Not only do Georgian and Abkhaz officials disagree irreconcilably about who ought to provide security, both would restrict the category of those entitled to security in the first place. In Tbilisi, Nadareishvili states clearly that it is not possible to live together again with "bandits, those responsible for ethnic cleansing and genocide" and in fact any who killed Georgians. This includes everyone in government, and also anyone who fought against Georgian territorial integrity.⁸²

The problem appears in a different and more troubling form at the grassroots level. The horror stories recalled both by current residents of Abkhazia, and by IDPs in Georgia, make it seem wholly impossible that these people could ever again live together. As one Swan IDP in Kodori valley relates, during the war Abkhaz killed his 95-year-old mother by taking off first her arms, then her legs. "We will go back," he says, "but there is no way we will live peacefully with the Abkhaz"⁸³

In Sukhum, Jinjolia wonders in turn how Abkhaz will react when they see the return to Sukhum of Georgians who killed their relatives during the war, and moreover, when they see those Georgians receive humanitarian assistance from international organizations to rebuild their homes and their lives.⁸⁵

In towns and villages the idea of a filter has a further component. Numerous Abkhaz and Georgian informants state clearly that they know precisely what each of their former friends and neighbours did during the war. Abkhaz say it is this dynamic that guarantees the security of those Georgians who have stayed in Abkhazia. Their Abkhaz neighbours know they and their relatives did not fight, and that in many cases they even supported the Abkhaz side. But this intimate knowledge has a more insidious dimension, since sins and crimes have also been duly recorded. As one Georgian IDP from Pitsunda notes: "We know exactly who among our neighbours did what, so it will be easy to judge."⁹²

For those on either side who are perceived to be free of guilt, this intimate knowledge is a strong guarantee of security. Indeed, most people on both sides of the conflict seem to view "security" in terms of such highly localized control. But even on its own terms this approach is not foolproof. One's security rests in the hands of one's close neighbours, but what if they disagree? And how are village residents in another district, or city dwellers, to know one's wartime record? More importantly, is this the sort of "justice" most likely to facilitate a lasting settlement? Does it properly protect human rights?

The question of security is thus both yet another elite political weapon, and a very personal, localized issue. In the elite political game, the security question is almost farcical since Georgian and Abkhaz perspectives are completely irreconcilable. At the village level, the question of security is perceived through a filter of personal wartime experiences of violence. Here there is some limited common ground, for those non-controversial citizens who managed to offend no one throughout the war, but the presence of all others is perceived as antithetical to, and irreconcilable with, the idea of "security". Clearly, in order for Georgians and Abkhaz to live together again in a mixed society, security guarantees will have to come at least in part from someone other than the two former combatants. But even this leaves the strong possibility of widespread but locally-prompted vigilante justice on both sides, quite possibly a result intrinsic to highly localized warfare in general.

7. RESOLUTION

A just and lasting return of the IDPs depends in part on the political resolution of the conflict. The question then is not only how close the parties are to an agreement after four years of negotiations, but also to what extent a political agreement can provide a lasting solution.

In June 1997, in the midst of Russian-mediated talks in Moscow, Machavariani argued that negotiations were at a standstill, that no new ideas were being put forward and that there was no evident progress.⁹⁹

Quite recently, however, the negotiation climate has changed considerably, due in part to the stepped-up attentions of the international community, particularly of the Friends of Georgia. In conversations in June both Abkhaz Foreign Minister Shamba and Speaker of Parliament Jinjolia advocated not only a "common" (obshchee) state, but also a "single" or "united" (edinoe) one, precisely the terminology that Georgian officials have long used⁹⁹

The problem is that a solution on paper that assigns some political status to Abkhazia and describes the process by which IDPs will repatriate, is many times removed from the daily lives of the people involved. It cannot

immediately eradicate memories of ethnic violence. Nor can it do away with patterns of economic life or administrative allegiance that have crystallized during years of displacement.

8. INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION

In the case of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, international organizations face the immediate humanitarian concerns of displacement, and the human rights issue of repatriation of the displaced. But in addition to these relatively clear-cut issues, organizations face two more complicated challenges: firstly, the evolving non-neutral character of displacement; and secondly, the role their own interventions play in shaping the political context.

8.1 The Challenge of Displacement

Analysis of the Georgian case shows that prolonged displacement works to create a "permanently temporary population" of IDPs. A bounded group is shaped through daily practices that create a social and economic community, organizational structures that politicize IDP groups by linking them to a larger political framework, and constant retellings of wartime experience in the context of the hardships of displacement, which work to make concrete daily realities vivid reminders of experienced violence.

What practical consequences does such population-construction have, and what significance does this have for international organizations? The gradual coalescence of a self-conscious IDP population on the ground may have no direct bearing on whether or not an accord is signed. But political rule requires consent and a guarantee of security for all, both of which depend on citizens' ability to live together. Displacement works to make an integrated society seem both impossible and undesirable. Thus, the chances of achieving a stable, viable, and lasting postwar order decrease dramatically as mobilized populations are constructed.

When international organizations enter the picture, they face a bitter dilemma between the desire to return the displaced immediately, which may be problematic politically or may produce violence at the local level, and the desire to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to IDPs while they are still displaced. The critical lesson from the Georgian case is that displacement itself is not neutral. It is not merely uncomfortable and undesirable, it also works actively to construct new realities, which in turn constrain the options for lasting, if not formal juridical, solutions. In this context, any humanitarian assistance that works to bound communities, by providing housing, for example, or schools for IDPs, or income generation projects that do not reach outside the IDP population, also contribute toward isolating a population and providing a closed forum in which individual wartime accounts easily merge to form shared narratives of ethnic violence.

Should organizations simply refuse to intervene? Or alternatively, should they insist on immediate repatriation whatever its consequences? Neither of these options is desirable. Constructive steps in the interim might include income generation projects that are both transferable after repatriation, and explicitly include members of the local population as partners or buyers; psychological rehabilitation, especially for children for whom war and its consequences have been the only reality, to reframe and provide an outlet for experienced and remembered violence; in short, measures that work in both the material and ideational realms to create open-ended, not bounded, possibilities. The primary lesson of this first challenge is thus that displacement in itself is not neutral, that the decision to implement stopgap measures while waiting for repatriation is also a proactive decision to allow and even facilitate the construction of a new, mobilized population.

8.2 The Challenge of Intervention

The interventions of international organizations become part of the causal chain not only at the local level, among IDPs, but also at the elite political level. In the Georgian case, in which IDP repatriation has been a central issue for political resolution since the beginning, the work of international organizations is read, interpreted and used by political elites on both sides, whatever the organizations' stated intentions.

The Georgian Ministry for Refugees states that it has documented every IDP case in Georgia, and the results, which include the name of every IDP with place of origin and place of current residence, can be found in its huge database. Organizations have at times drawn on this information to plan projects. Unfortunately, however, Georgian authorities have tended to exaggerate the extent of the displacement problem, in order to emphasize both the magnitude of the Abkhaz officials' ongoing violation of the human rights of the displaced, and the need in light of the enormity of the problem for concerted and possibly forceful Georgian intervention. When international organizations draw on these sources, Georgian officials cast this as affirmation that the figures are correct, and further, that the corresponding political claims made on the basis of these numbers are justified. Furthermore, Georgian officials argue, the failure of international organizations to date to repatriate the displaced is not a reflection of moderation in the face of political difficulties, but rather a deliberate unwillingness to recognize a clear case of ethnic cleansing. Thus, non-action by international organizations is not neutral, but subject to free interpretation.

Abkhaz officials on the other hand, have long claimed that international organizations, particularly UNHCR, have as their sole purpose to return all of the displaced to Abkhazia, with no concern for the social, economic or political consequences. Human rights activist Natella Akaba notes, "everyone knows the UN has a specific agenda", and Foreign Minister Shamba warns that UNHCR has the "wrong approach", because allowing a mass return would "bring about another war".⁹⁹

The on-going Regional Conference on migration processes in the CIS, a joint dialogue among international organizations, governments and NGOs begun in May 1996, has stressed the de-coupling of humanitarian and political issues and the need to assert that humanitarian concerns are issues in their own right. The goal is to depoliticize humanitarian intervention. The problem in the Georgian case is not simply the failure of authorities on both sides to understand, but rather their wilful manipulation of international intervention to serve political ends.

It is not easy for international organizations to avoid becoming rhetorical pawns in the political contest, but at the same time to incorporate into concrete programs and statements of intention a real concern for the scars people have from ethnic violence, scars that are made more permanent by the daily practices of postwar life on both sides of the front lines. Even when such a concern is demonstrated, it is uncertain whether it is conceivable that Georgian and Abkhaz authorities would take notice. Several steps might help address this second challenge. Transparency should not only be practised, but propagated in talks with officials and in contact with the media. Frequent contact with local populations can help clarify what organizations are trying to do, especially since information travels quickly through local channels.

The most stubborn challenge, however, remains: how to acknowledge that brutal ethnically-directed violence took place, while claiming the right to address practical humanitarian concerns rather than pass ultimate judgement.

9. CONCLUSION

What lessons does the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict teach? Firstly, prolonged displacement itself is not neutral. Daily practices over time have worked to create a "permanently temporary", bounded, self-conscious IDP population. Secondly, wartime violence may be "ethnic" in different ways. In this case, many specific violent acts during the war were directed at victims of a certain official nationality. But after the war, and perhaps more importantly, popular understandings of violence have been both made more concrete through association with daily hardships, and generalized through shared retellings. The result is a widespread and materially grounded popular understanding among Georgian IDPs that what happened to them during the war was ethnic cleansing. The implications for a return are not encouraging, since it is clear an agreement on paper cannot provide an immediate solution. But local level research that explores how self-conscious displaced populations are constructed, and how ethnicity and violence become incorporated into identity, may indicate what governments, international organizations, and local citizens need to do to find real, lasting solutions.

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78. Zurab Erkvania, Chair of the Georgian Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia. Personal interview, Tbilisi, 19 June 1997
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81. But Abkhaz Foreign Minister Sergei Shamba is more skeptical that this would work. Noting that any Georgians returning to Gal district will naturally feel uncomfortable, he asks, "Can we really establish a personal guard around each person?"
83. Machavariani states that the current Abkhaz authorities in Gal are particularly guilty of bloody violence against the local population, and therefore they have no chance to survive once the conflict is settled.
85. In Sukhum, President Ardynba states that repatriation of civilians is fine, but anyone who fought in the war would be excluded. Clearly, authorities are not prepared to offer general amnesty. But once we allow that some people but not others should be permitted to live in postwar Abkhazia, what standard should be used to make this decision? And who should be the judge?
87. In fact, while virtually all Georgian IDPs say they want to return, and without delay, many Abkhaz claim confidently that after everything that has happened, most Georgians will not even want to return, since they know they will be in danger. Most Abkhaz, however, echo the elites' idea of a filter, applying it to the popular level, stating that Georgians may return as long as neither they, nor any of their relatives, fought against Abkhazia during the war.
89. And Georgian IDPs stress that Abkhaz perpetrators of violence must be judged and punished.
91. And Armenians in Nizhnaia Eshera say with assurance: "We all know what everybody else did during the war. If Georgians fought, they will be afraid to return."

92. This description is accurate for most of the last four years. While the terminology and some of the content of the definitions of Abkhazia's proposed status, put forward by Georgian and Abkhaz officials, changed over time, the ideas remained mutually exclusive. Abkhazia moved from demanding independence to advocating a "federative union", a common entity with one representative at the UN, in which nevertheless Abkhazia and Georgia would have strictly equal status and horizontal links. Georgia eventually offered Abkhazia "the widest possible autonomy" under Georgian jurisdiction, in effect anything except horizontal connections and parity. But these proposals are by definition irreconcilable, and particularly since the content of the arrangements was not sufficiently specified, no agreement was reached.

94. Furthermore, talks and plans put forward in summer 1997 addressed issues more concretely than have proposals in the past. Most importantly, specific mechanisms for repatriation are on the table, and both sides approach de facto repatriation in Gal with pragmatism, if also with trepidation.

95. UNHCR's stated purpose is to provide assistance for IDPs who have repatriated spontaneously to Gal district. Abkhaz officials read this as an intention to repatriate without regard for the consequences. Further, they inflame the accusation by stressing that UNHCR's repatriation would surely include former military opponents, those guilty of atrocities, and that therefore, by rhetorical extension, UNHCR is very nearly guilty of ignoring a clear-cut case of ethnically directed violence and instigating renewed warfare.

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Resolution of the People's Assembly Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia

15 October 1997

On condemnation of genocide, ethnic cleansing and other crimes committed by the military-political authorities of Georgia against the population of Abkhazia during the Georgian-Abkhazian war of 1992-1993.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, fearing the break-up of the Georgian "empire", the Georgian leadership decided to keep Abkhazia, South Ossetia and other non-Georgian regions within Georgia by means of force. Beginning from late 80-s, counting on the assistance of thousands of Georgians of Abkhazia, who found themselves here as a result of demographic expansion, the Georgian authorities launched an anti-Abkhazian campaign. Following the government's directives, scholars, intellectuals, informal organizations, clergy and Georgian mass media were accusing the "newcomers" on the Georgian land, Abkhazians, in all failures of the Georgian nation, particularly, in "blocking" their way towards national independence. In reality, the misanthropic ideology of aggressive Georgian nationalism was aimed at stirring up inter-ethnic animosity in Abkhazia, intimidating the Abkhazians and representatives of other nationalities living in Abkhazia, at abolishing the statehood of Abkhazia and the creation on the territory of the Georgian SSR of a unitary mono-ethnic independent Georgian state. The opponents of the cherished goal were

threatened with physical annihilation or eviction from Abkhazia.

Bloody events in Abkhazia in July 1989, inspired by the Georgian authorities, became a dress rehearsal for a planned large-scale inter-ethnic and inter-state armed confrontation.

In the years that followed, at the bidding of the Tbilisi emissaries, the Georgian ultranationalists started the division of institutions, enterprises, arts associations and other unions and even sport teams according to the ethnicity, and the citizens of non-Georgian nationality were dismissed from their jobs. Later the Ministry of Interior, the Procurator's Office, the Supreme Council and the Government of Abkhazia became also divided along the ethnic lines. Simultaneously to this, illegal Georgian armed formations were created, which were engaged in blackmailing and looting of peaceful civilians, in terror and subversive activities on the territory of Abkhazia.

The artificially created complex social-political and criminal situation forced thousands of Russians, Armenians, Greeks, Estonians and representatives of other nationalities to leave the Republic. Simultaneously, ethnic Georgians from Georgia were moving to Abkhazia and were getting permanent residence.

The leadership of Abkhazia repeatedly appealed to the Georgian authorities demanding to halt these explosive processes, but all in vain.

In the course of ever growing Georgian-Abkhazian opposition, which was taking place against the background of the collapse of the USSR and, accordingly, the Georgian SSR, the state-legal relations between Georgia and Abkhazia were disrupted. On 25 August 1990 the Supreme Council of Abkhazia, fearing the encroachment upon Abkhazia's statehood, and realising the right of the Abkhazian nation to self-determination, adopted the "Declaration on the State Sovereignty of Abkhazia" and the Resolution "On Legal Guarantees for the Protection of the Statehood of Abkhazia". On 21 February 1992 the Military Council of Georgia reinstated the Constitution of 1921 in which the state status of Abkhazia was not determined, and somewhat later, on 23 July 1992, the Supreme Council of Abkhazia restored the 1925 Constitution of Abkhazia, according to which Abkhazia was a sovereign state.

On 14 August 1992 the Republic of Georgia launched an armed attack against Abkhazia aiming at abolishment of the statehood of Abkhazia and at depriving of its people of their political independence. The Georgian occupational forces, among whom were thousands of criminals deliberately released from their prisons, perpetrated war crimes: they destroyed towns and other settlements, destroyed items of great cultural value for the nation, including the Central State Archives of Abkhazia and the unique Abkhazological Research Institute, treated prisoners of war and the wounded with cruelty, killed and raped peaceful civilians, looted and seized public and private property. The Georgian military-political authorities were guided by the principle "Abkhazia without the Abkhazians", which was officially confirmed on 25 August 1992 by G. Karkarashvili, the Commander-in-Chief of the occupational troops in his televised address. The Georgian population of Abkhazia, especially the inhabitants of the settlements created during the Stalin period, took a most active part in mass killings of Abkhazians, including children, women and elderly.

As a result of the ethnic cleansing, practically no Abkhazian population was left on the occupied part of Abkhazia, including the towns of Ochamchyra, Sukhum and Gagra. For example, according to the data of the Procurator's Office of Abkhazia, out of 7 thousand of Abkhazians residing in the city of Ochamchyra,

over 400 were forced to be registered as Georgians, hundreds of Abkhazians were killed, and the rest had to flee in order to save their lives.

The Georgian occupants transferred the main focus of their operations onto the territory of Eastern Abkhazia. Following the directives of the Georgian leadership, they surrounded and isolated from the outside world all Abkhazian settlements in this area, including the town of Tkvarchali. Using modern weaponry, including the weapons of mass destruction, such as artillery systems "Grad", "Uragan", cluster shells and other kinds of weapons banned by the Geneva Convention of 1949, the aggressor was deliberately and systematically destroying the Abkhazian population of Abzhywa Abkhazia, which made up nearly a half of the entire Abkhazian nation. In the course of military operations a number of Abkhazian settlements were razed to the ground. It is noteworthy that among the documents of the headquarters of the 24th brigade of the Georgian military forces, captured by the Abkhazian fighters, a plan was found of launching on 26 December 1992 of a massive nuclear attack directed at 34 objects, including the settlements in Eastern Abkhazia.

Trying to escape genocide, the Abkhazians and representatives of other nationalities from Sukhum, Gagra and other areas of the Republic were thronging into Bzyp Abkhazia, which, encircled by the enemy and isolated from the outer world, was engaged in unequal struggle. Thus, in the end of the XXth century, before the eyes of the civilized world, the Georgian nationalists were carrying out a deliberate extermination of the Abkhazian nation, which, according to the Convention of the UN General Assembly of 9 December 1948, can be qualified as genocide.

The Procurator's Office of the Republic of Abkhazia, conducting criminal investigation of numerous crimes committed by the Georgian occupational forces in Abkhazia, instituted more than three thousand criminal cases. Thousands of Armenians, Greeks, Russians, Ukrainians, Jews, Estonians, Turks and others were forced to leave Abkhazia. For example, during only one day, on 15 August 1993, 1200 ethnic Greeks were expelled from the city of Sukhum. As a rule, the authorities discontinued the residence permits of the citizens who had to leave the occupied territory, and they had to produce written obligations stating that they would not return back to Abkhazia. The houses and apartments of the deported citizens of Abkhazia were given over exclusively to ethnic Georgians, to those who were fighting in Abkhazia, or to those hastily brought in from Georgia.

The Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia, at the very outset of the war, qualified in its special Resolutions of 15.09.1992 the actions of the Georgian military-political authorities against Abkhazia and its people as an aggression and genocide. The leadership of Abkhazia, public and political organizations, scientific institutions and individual citizens of Abkhazia have been repeatedly appealing to the world community with the request to stop the genocide, ethnic cleansing and other crimes being committed in Abkhazia by the Georgian authorities. However, no adequate practical measures were taken by the world community in order to save the Abkhazians and all multi-ethnic population of Abkhazia.

The people of Abkhazia, at the cost of incredible efforts and a considerable number of lives have heroically defended the liberty and independence of their motherland. A great assistance in this holy struggle was provided by the volunteers from the North Caucasus, the South of Russia and by the representatives of the Abkhazo-Adyghean Diaspora, by the people of good will. The majority of the Georgian population of the Republic, who played here the role of the "fifth column", had left Abkhazia together with the retreating Georgian troops.

Since the end of active military activity, the Georgian authorities have been trying to conceal from the world community their crimes committed in Abkhazia. Moreover, they are trying to groundlessly accuse the Abkhazian side in "aggressive separatism" and "genocide" of the Georgians, thus creating a false public opinion concerning the lawfulness and necessity of solving the problem by means of force.

Regrettably, referring to one-sided information provided by Georgia, and with silent approval of international and regional organizations, the Russian Federation, in its capacity of facilitator of negotiations, is carrying out an economic and informational blockade of Abkhazia, thus aggravating the hardships and living standards of the multi-ethnic population of Abkhazia, which suffered during the war.

Giving the political and legal assessment to the events of 1992-1993 in Abkhazia, the People's Assembly of the Republic of Abkhazia resolves:

1. Considering the Resolution of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia of 15 September 1992 "On the Armed Aggression of the Troops of the State Council of Georgia Against Abkhazia" and basing upon the principles of international law, to regard the introduction in August 1992 into the territory of Abkhazia of Georgian armed forces as an act of aggression aimed at abolishing the Abkhazian statehood, at depriving of its people of their political will and at restoring on its territory of a colonial regime.
2. To consider the Georgian-Abkhazian war of 1992-1993 as a military-political conflict of the international, inter-state character, the conflicting sides of which were the two states: the Republic of Georgia and the Republic of Abkhazia, and that the armed forces of the national-liberation movement of the Republic of Abkhazia and of the former metropolis, the Republic of Georgia, had the status of the warring sides.
3. To acknowledge that the military forces of the Republic of Georgia, in violation of rules of conducting military operations as stipulated by international laws, have committed crimes against peace, gross military crimes on the territory of Abkhazia.
4. Taking into consideration the Resolution of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia of 15 September 1992 "On the Genocide of the Abkhazian People", on the basis of the Convention of the UN General Assembly of 9 December 1948, the People's Assembly of the Republic of Abkhazia confirms and condemns the genocide and ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the military-political leadership of Georgia against the Abkhazian people with the aim of its complete annihilation as a distinct nation.
5. To ask the Procurator-General of the Republic of Abkhazia to accelerate the process of bringing to court and issuing arrest warrants for the organizers, the immediate executors and participants of the genocide, ethnic cleansing and other crimes committed against the Abkhazians and representatives of other peoples of Abkhazia.
6. To ask the Human Rights Commission of the People's Assembly of the Republic of Abkhazia and the Procurator's Office of the Republic of Abkhazia to accelerate the work on elucidating and condemnation of the facts of genocide, ethnic cleansing and other crimes perpetrated by the Georgian regime in Abkhazia.
7. To recommend to the President and the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Abkhazia to consider the deliberate acts of genocide perpetrated in the past by the Georgian authorities against the Abkhazian nation and the encroachment upon the statehood of Abkhazia, when

formulating and implementing the foreign policy, in particular, the basic principles of the relationship between Georgia and Abkhazia.

8. To suggest to the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Abkhazia that it demands from the Government of Georgia the compensation to the Republic of Abkhazia of the material and moral damage inflicted during the Georgian-Abkhazian military-political and ideological confrontation.
9. To pass over to the UN Security Council, OSCE, Heads of States and Parliaments of the CIS, for their information and appropriate response, the materials presented by the Procurator's Office of the Republic of Abkhazia on the facts of genocide, ethnic cleansing and other crimes violating international laws, which have been committed in Abkhazia by the Georgian aggressors. To publish these materials in the press and disseminate them in the United Nations Organization.
10. To request the UN Security Council:
 - a. to acknowledge the acts committed by the Georgian occupational regime against the people of Abkhazia in 1992-1993 as genocide and crime against humanity;
 - b. to set up an International Military Tribunal for bringing to justice criminals, their collaborators and inciters, who committed especially grave crimes against the Abkhazians and representatives of other peoples residing in Abkhazia
 - c. to set up a competent international Commission for an appropriate response concerning the establishment of facts of attempts by the Georgian authorities to use nuclear weapons in Abkhazia.
11. To ask the UN Security Council, OSCE, CIS to exert political, diplomatic, economic and other forms of pressure on the Georgian authorities in order to:
 - a. compensate the material and moral damage inflicted on Abkhazia during the Georgian-Abkhazian war and the following period;
 - b. eradicate the aggressive nationalism in Georgia, including colonial stereotypes which continually create an explosive situation in Georgia and in the whole of the Caucasus.

Sokrat DJINDJOLIA
SPEAKER OF THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY
PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ABKHAZIA
City of SUKHUM
15 October 1997 No. 363-c-XIII

Resolution of the People's Assembly Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia

15 October 1997

On denunciation of genocide and other repressive measures taken by the authorities of the Georgian Democratic Republic and the Soviet Georgia against the Abkhazian people and other peoples living in Abkhazia and on the ways of overcoming of their consequences

At the end of the XIX century, after the deportation of the overwhelming majority of the Abkhazo-Adyghean, Vainakh and other peoples, during the process of incorporation of Caucasian lands which were cleansed from their indigenous population, an idea was born among the nationalist circles of Georgian intelligentsia, nobility and bourgeoisie of creating a small Georgian empire. However, the military, political, ethno-demographic and other circumstances of that time in the region did not allow them to realize this idea throughout the whole Caucasus. In the years that followed the Georgian nationalists directed their efforts on theoretical substantiation of colonial claims of Georgia and of its special rights on Abkhazia, which, in practice, meant the incorporation of Abkhazian lands into the newly created Georgian state.

Despite the fact that the authorities, social and political formations, and the whole generations of Georgian politicians were changing, the intentions of the latter of incorporation of Abkhazia were never put aside, but, on the contrary, became even stronger. Two ways were chosen for complete absorption of Abkhazia into Georgia: the first, a peaceful way: the mechanical growth of the Georgian population in Abkhazia and artificial assimilation of Abkhazians, and the second, military way, produced by aggressive nationalism: the occupation of the country, the extermination of the indigenous people.

The main obstacle for the Georgian colonizers towards achieving their aims were those Abkhazians who remained on their Homeland after the deportation, so all the efforts were directed against them.

Measures on assimilation of the Abkhazians, manifested in mass resettlement of ethnic Georgians into Abkhazia, distortion of the history of the nation, etc. were undertaken already under Tsarism. With the collapse of the Russian Empire and the creation of the Georgian Democratic Republic (1918-1921) a new wave of calamities befell the Abkhazian nation. The military-political leadership of Georgia committed an act of aggression against Abkhazia and, having occupied its territory, under the pretense of fighting against Bolshevism, began premeditated extermination of the Abkhazian population, expelling from Abkhazia of the Armenians, Greeks, representatives of other nationalities, and resettling their houses with new colonists from Western Georgia; only Georgian schools were opened, and Georgian was made the language of practically all administration.

The revival in March 1921 of the Abkhazian statehood in the form of the SSR of Abkhazia created conditions for physical preservation and social, economic and cultural development of the Abkhazian people and of all the multi-ethnic population of the Republic. However, later the same year, Stalin forced Abkhazia to sign a "special union treaty" with Georgia, and ten years later, on 19 February 1931, Abkhazia was transformed into an Autonomous Republic and incorporated into the Georgian SSR. The reduction of the status of Abkhazia to that of an Autonomy caused an all-nation meeting of the Abkhazian people (on 18-26 February 1931) which lasted for several days and which expressed its distrust in the Soviet power.

Starting from mid-1930-s, the Georgian authorities, with active support of Moscow, subjected to repressions the political leadership of Abkhazia, national intelligentsia, progressive peasantry and the Abkhazian nation as a whole. This was followed by the conversion of the Abkhazian alphabet into the Georgian script, the artificial inclusion of Georgian words into the Abkhazian vocabulary, the closure of Abkhazian schools, the halting of the radio broadcasting in the Abkhazian language, the changing of geographical names, impudent distortion of the history of the Abkhazian nation, etc. Soon afterwards practically all administration was made to be conducted in the Georgian language. The Abkhazians were forced to change their names and ethnicity. Parallel to this a large-scale campaign on resettlement of ethnic Georgians from Georgia into Abkhazia was carried out. To this aim a powerful construction firm "Abkhazpereselenstroj" was formed, as

well as a special administrative staff within both Georgian and Abkhazian Governments. The resettlement was not voluntary, and sometimes even forceful. In violation to the existing laws, pieces of land were taken away from Abkhazian villages in order to resettle them with the Georgian peasants who, against their own will, had been brought here from different parts of Georgia.

The geography and structuring of special Georgian kolkhoz settlements in the areas with predominantly Abkhazian population (Ochamchyra, Gudauta and Gagra districts), in particular, their high density and mono-ethnic character, as well as their location in relation to each other and within the Abkhazian villages or along the highways, etc., had, during peaceful time, an ethno-erosive function, and in the case of the Abkhazian resistance to Georgian assimilatory policy, could acquire a military-strategic function. All this, according to contemporary international law, can be qualified as genocide.

In order to increase the relative share of Georgians in the population total of Abkhazia, the leadership of Georgia gave the houses and apartments of the evicted Greeks, Turks, Laz, and others over to the Georgians brought here from Georgia. The unbearable conditions created by the Georgian aggressive nationalism in Abkhazia forced representatives of other nationalities, alongside with the Abkhazians, to leave the Republic. For instance, in 1949-1953 over 1500 Armenian families alone left Abkhazia.

As a result of genocide and various repressive measures undertaken in the middle of the XX century the Abkhazian ethnographic group of Samurzakanians was almost completely "georgianized", which made up over 40 000, while the total number of Abkhazians from 1886 (59,0 thousand) to 1959 (61,2 thousand), i.e. during more than 70 years, practically did not increase. At the same time, during the same period, due to migration and assimilation of the Abkhazians, the Georgian population increased from 4 thousand up to 158 thousand.

A complete ethnic and cultural disappearance of the Abkhazians from the ethnographic map of the world became a real danger. Only the change of the Stalinist totalitarian regime saved the Abkhazian nation. But Abkhazia still remained within Georgia, and the Georgian leadership still continued, in a more covert manner, by opening of new industrial enterprises, various educational institutions and many other establishments, the policy of mechanical increase of the Georgian population in Abkhazia and the pressure on the national culture of the indigenous people. That is why the whole following period of continued incorporation of Abkhazia into Georgia was marked by the struggle of the Abkhazian people for its liberation from the Tbilisi regime, which was expressed in anti-Georgian demonstrations in 1956, 1964, 1967, 1978 and 1989. With the collapse of the USSR the Georgian-Abkhazian opposition resulted in the military aggression of Georgia against Abkhazia, in the Georgian-Abkhazian war of 1992-1993.

Giving the political and legal assessment of the aforementioned facts and events in Abkhazia which occurred under the regime of the Georgian Democratic Republic and Soviet Georgia, the People's Assembly of the Republic of Abkhazia resolves:

1. To acknowledge:
 - a. the invasion in 1918-1921 of the troops of the Georgian Democratic Republic on the territory of Abkhazia as acts of aggression and occupation;
 - b. the physical extermination of Abkhazians, the artificial change of the demographic situation in Abkhazia, the forceful imposition of the Georgian language in Abkhazia, carried out in 1918-1921 by the military-political regime of the Georgian Democratic Republic as acts of genocide;

2. To acknowledge the incorporation of SSR Abkhazia into SSR Georgia as an Autonomy as a premeditated and illegal political act directed against the Abkhazian nation and its statehood.
3. To acknowledge as acts of genocide of the Abkhazian people the most grave crimes against humanity as committed in the 30-s and 40-s by the authorities of the Georgian SSR in Abkhazia, such as the extermination of the political leadership of Abkhazia, of the national intelligentsia, of the progressive peasantry, the changing of the Abkhazian alphabet into the Georgian script, the closure of the Abkhazian schools, the halting of the radio broadcasting in the Abkhazian language, the renaming of geographical places, the falsification of the history, the artificial change of the demographic situation in Abkhazia.
4. To acknowledge the Abkhazian people as a previously repressed nation and the Greeks, Turks, Laz and representatives of other nationalities deported in the 40-s, as previously repressed ethnic groups of Abkhazia.
5. To acknowledge the popular mass rallies in Abkhazia in 1931, 1956, 1964, 1967, 1978 and 1989 as manifestations of national-liberation movement of the Abkhazian people directed against the colonial regime of the Soviet Georgia.
6. Taking into account the historical experience, to consider that the sovereign, democratic, lawful state of Abkhazia is the main guarantor of physical and ethnic preservation, of further social, economic and cultural revival of the Abkhazian people, of the protection of rights and freedoms of all the nationalities living in Abkhazia.
7. Considering the current complex demographic situation in Abkhazia, which is the heritage of the historical past, to recommend to the President and the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Abkhazia to determine a long term demographic policy of the state, to adopt a state programme for the demographic development of Abkhazia.
8. To entrust the Committee on Legislation, Committee on Science, Education and Culture and the Commission on the Problems of the Traditional Culture "Apsuara" of the People's Assembly of the Republic of Abkhazia with the elaboration of the draft laws and resolutions, which would facilitate the improvement in the demographic situation in Abkhazia, the preservation and development of the Abkhaz language, culture and traditions.
9. To recommend to the Committee on Science, Education and Culture of the People's Assembly of the Republic of Abkhazia to accelerate the elaboration of the draft laws concerning the full-scale restoration of historical names of settlements and other places of the Republic of Abkhazia.
10. To recommend to the Institute for Humanitarian Studies after the name of D. Gulia of the Academy of Sciences of Abkhazia and to the Abkhazian State University to accelerate the scientific research concerning the important issues of history, language and culture of the Abkhazian nation, their publication and popularization. To recommend to the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Abkhazia to allot for this aim additional financing.
11. To entrust the Committee on Legislation and the Commission on Human Rights of the People's Assembly of the Republic of Abkhazia with the elaboration of the draft laws on rehabilitation of the previously repressed ethnic groups in Abkhazia (Greeks, Laz, Turks, etc.)

Sokrat DJINDJOLIA
Speaker of the People's Assembly
Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia
City of Sukhum

15 October 1997
No. 364-c-XIII

Resolution of the People's Assembly Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia

15 October 1997

On the act of deportation of the Abkhazians (Abaza) in the XIX century

The colonial policy of the Russian Empire during the Russian-Caucasian war (1817-1864), and the periods that followed, inflicted irreparable damage on the Abkhazian (Abaza) nation and its genetic fund. For participation in the struggle for the freedom and independence of their country a part of this people was physically exterminated, and 80% of the survivors were expelled to the Ottoman Empire.

As a result of the war, of the repeated punitive measures and of the eviction of the Abkhazians (Abaza) from their historical Homeland, the North-Western and Central Abkhazia were completely devastated, and the ethnographic groups and territorial communities of the Sadz, Ahchypsaa, Aibga, Tsvydjy, Pshwy, Gumaa, Tsabalaa, Dalaa, and others, alongside with the closely related to Abkhazians (Abaza) Ubykhs, who used to inhabit the territory between the rivers Khosta and Shakhe, and the majority of the Abazinians (Abaza), who lived in the North Caucasus, have completely disappeared. The Bzypians, Abzhywans and Samyrzakanians remained in Abkhazia only as separate ethnic enclaves, which is true also for those Tapantas and Ashkharywans who remained in the North Caucasus. Over 300 000 Abkhazians (Abaza), deported in the XIX century, are, according to the current international laws, considered to be refugees.

The deported population experienced innumerable calamities and endured great sufferings, tens of thousands of them became victims of hunger, cold and epidemics. Quite groundlessly, the Tsarist Russia accused the deported Abkhazians in "treason". They were denied the right to return to their Motherland. Thousands of Abkhazians who, despite incredible difficulties, managed to return from Turkey to Abkhazia's shores, were sent back by the local administration. Those Abkhazians who remained in Abkhazia were announced the "guilty" and "temporary" population of the country. They were deprived of the right to settle in Central and coastal parts of Abkhazia and were threatened to be expelled in their entirety even for a slightest anti-governmental protest. In 1907 the Russian authorities removed from the Abkhazians the insulting for their national dignity label of "guilty", and the status of a "temporary" population, but neither Tsarism, nor the Menshevik regime of the Georgian Democratic Republic (1918-1921), nor the authorities of the Soviet Georgia or the Government of the Soviet Union solved the problem of repatriation of Abkhazians, and numerous individual and collective appeals of the representatives of the Abkhaz (Abaza) Diaspora to the governments of the aforementioned states with a request to consider the issue of their return to their historical Homeland, as a rule, were left without any response. At the same time, both the Georgian authorities and their patrons in the Kremlin were conducting purposeful complex measures on a mass resettlement of ethnic Georgians from Georgia into Abkhazia and on assimilation of those Abkhazians who remained on their historical Homeland.

Today more than four thousand people from the Abkhazian Diaspora are waiting for an appropriate decision of the Government of the Republic of Abkhazia to their request to repatriate to their historical Homeland that would enable them to preserve their language, national culture, traditions and their national identity as a whole.

Giving the historical, political and legal assessment of the fatal for the Abkhazian (Abaza) people events that occurred in the XIX century, the People's Assembly of the Republic of Abkhazia resolves:

1. To acknowledge the mass extermination and the eviction in the XIX century of the Abkhazians (Abaza) to the Ottoman Empire as genocide: the gravest crime against humanity.
2. In accordance with the Convention of the UN General Assembly of 28 July 1951 to acknowledge the deported in the XIX century Abkhazians (Abaza) as refugees.
3. To acknowledge the inalienable right of the descendants of the deported in the XIX century Abkhazians (Abaza) on voluntary and unimpeded repatriation to their historical Homeland.
4. To appeal to the UN, OSCE, CIS and other international and regional organizations, to the Russian Federation as the legal successor of the Russian Empire and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics with a request to render necessary political, financial and humanitarian assistance to the process of voluntary and unimpeded repatriation and integration of the descendants of the deported in the XIX century Abkhazians (Abaza).
5. To entrust the Committee on Legislation and the Commission on Inter-parliamentary Connections and Connections with the Compatriots of the People's Assembly of the Republic of Abkhazia with the elaboration of the draft laws on a planned repatriation of the Abkhazians (Abaza).
6. To recommend to the President and Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic Abkhazia to take into account, while determining and implementing the main directions of internal and foreign policy of the country, an importance for the state of the repatriation of the descendants of the Abkhazian refugees of the XIX century; to adopt a complex programme on repatriation and absorption of the Abkhazians (Abaza) living abroad.
7. To appeal to all republican and local governmental administrative bodies, political parties, public organizations, economical and commercial structures with a request to provide with necessary political, moral, psychological and financial assistance to the process of repatriation of the Abkhazians (Abaza).
8. To publish this Resolution in the press and broadcast it on radio and television.

Sokrat DJINDJOLIA
Speaker of the People's Assembly
Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia
City of Sukhum
15 October 1997
362-c-XIII

**Resolution of the People's Assembly
Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia**

20 October 1997

On condemnation of facts of high treason and collaboration with the occupational authorities during the Georgian-Abkhazian war of 1992-1993.

The war imposed by the Georgian Government upon the sovereign state of Abkhazia came as a severe ordeal for the people of Abkhazia, especially for the Abkhazians, i.e. for those who bear historical responsibility for the fate of this country. In the face of the danger real patriots of Abkhazia stood next to the Abkhazians in defense of their Motherland. The war did not, and could not, bring the desired victory to Georgia, since it was the war aimed at annihilation of the century-old statehood of Abkhazia and of the nation whose name this ancient country bears.

In this unequal struggle the Abkhazians were supported by their kin people from the North Caucasus, the South of Russia, by representatives of many countries abroad, by the Abkhazian Diaspora from Turkey, Syria, Jordan and a number of West European countries and the United States.

Certain citizens of Abkhazia, however, failed to join their people at that crucial moment. These people proved to be indifferent to their nation's historical, spiritual and moral values and its political interests. At the time when the whole people of Abkhazia stood up in defense of their Motherland, some of those immoral people fled the Republic and took the position of outside observers. Some of those who by various reasons remained on the territory of Abkhazia occupied by the enemy, readily agreed to work in the occupational government's bodies, and a part of them, seeking closer collaboration and trying to win more confidence from the occupational regime, even voluntarily changed their nationality. L.M. Marshania was appointed the Vice-Premier of the puppet government, S.K. Ketsba became the Minister of Culture, A.Z. Kobakhia became the Minister of Forestry and R.R. Eshba became the Minister of Industry. Among the civilian population there were individuals who did not believe in the possibility of the Abkhazian victory over the enemy that had overwhelming preponderance, and who, together with the State Council's thugs, marauded and perpetrated crimes and atrocities against the civilians on the basis of their ethnicity.

The initiators, leaders and members of the so-called "Committee of the Salvation of Abkhazia" deserve special condemnation, as in the first days of the war they called the policy pursued by the legal leadership of Abkhazia adventurous. It is no secret that this notorious committee was not a neutral charitable organization, that it was set up at the initiative of Tbilisi. It was aimed at serving as an accomplice in ideological disarmament of the Abkhazian people, in neglecting their historical and ethnic identity. The participants and leaders of the Committee were L.M. Marshania, R.R. Eshba, A.M. Hashba, V.Z. Agrba, V.I. Akhuba, A.Z. Kobakhia, K.L. Anua, A.M. Kvitsinia, S.P. Ketsba, D.I. Mikeladze, V.I. Kodinets, S.A. Saakian, G.G. Gabunia, L.K. Sharangia, Sh.M. Misabishvili, and others. The Georgian faction of the then Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia was one of the first to betray the interests of the Abkhazians and of the whole people of Abkhazia. Hoping to realize their chauvinistic intentions in regards to the Abkhazians and their historical Homeland, they, by their actions, provoked the war against Abkhazia. The Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Abkhazia has instituted a number of criminal proceedings against those who, during the Georgian-Abkhazian war, actively collaborated with the occupational regime on the part of the territory of Abkhazia that was temporarily occupied by the Georgian invaders.

The civilian consciousness of the elected representatives of the people demands the condemnation of those who put their personal interests above the interests of their own people, who committed high treason and

joined those who infringed on the rights and freedoms of the Abkhazians and of the whole people of Abkhazia.

Being aware of its responsibility for the fate of the people of Abkhazia and realizing its Constitutional responsibilities, the People's Assembly of the Republic of Abkhazia resolves:

1. To note that during the war of 1992-1993 between Georgia and Abkhazia there took place facts of high treason and collaboration with the occupational regime.
2. To ask the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Abkhazia to accelerate the process of instituting criminal proceedings against those individuals who collaborated with the occupational authorities during the Georgian-Abkhazian war of 1992-1993.
3. To recommend to the President of the Republic of Abkhazia, the Cabinet of Ministers, Heads of administrations, Heads of Departments and State Institutions to take into account the present Resolution of the People's Assembly while considering the personnel issues.
4. To make the present Resolution public through mass media.

Sokrat DJINDJOLIA
Speaker of the People's Assembly
Parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia
City of Sukhum
20 October 1997
No. 365-c-XIII

Acts of Terror Committed in Abkhazia by Georgian Bandit Groups

1994

5 February: the Georgian military opened mortar fire on border regions of the Republic of Abkhazia at the river Ingur.

On the same day a Georgian diversionary group launched a raid on the village Guda(v)a in the Gal District; 2 Abkhazian military personnel were wounded; 2 Georgian diversionaries were taken into custody.

7 February: a Georgian diversionary group tried to blow up a road bridge in the Gal District.

7 February: positions of the armed forces of the Republic of Abkhazia in the village of Tageloni in the Gal District came under fire from the territory of the Republic of Georgia.

8 February: 2 buses with passengers from the armed forces of the Republic of Abkhazia were blown up by a Georgian diversionary group in the Gal District. Four military personnel were killed, 7 wounded.

End of February: in the village Naa 4 people were killed and 14 homes burned down as the result of a terrorist act. Documents belonging to employees of the Interior Ministry of Georgia were found there.

11 March: in the inhabited area of Otobaja in the Gal District an ambulance was blown up by a mine. Two nurses were killed, 3 wounded.

24 March: in the K'odor valley there was an attempt to break into the village of Lat'a by a reconnaissance diversionary group numbering upto 100 of the armed forces of Georgia.

Night 27-28 March: the Abkhazian side of the bank of the R. Ingur came under fire from Georgian armed formations across the river.

7 April: Georgian armed formations conducted uninterrupted artillery and mortar fire on the village of Lat'a in the K'odor valley. One soldier of the Abkhazian armed forces was killed, 6 wounded.

7 April: UNOMIG military observers came under fire in the village of Lat'a. One observer was wounded.

24 April: 25 soldiers of the armed forces of the Republic of Georgia crossed the frontier of the Republic of Abkhazia over the R. Ingur in the region of the village of Saberio.

24 May: in the K'odor valley the inhabited area of Lat'a came under massive artillery fire. Four soldiers of the armed forces of the Republic of Abkhazia were wounded.

3 June: the positions of the armed forces of the Republic of Abkhazia were fired on in the K'odor valley.

4 June: the positions of the armed forces of the Republic of Abkhazia were fired on in the K'odor valley.

5 June: the positions of the armed forces of the Republic of Abkhazia were fired on in the K'odor valley.

8 June: in the inhabited area of Otobaja in the Gal District a vehicle of the armed forces of the Republic of Abkhazia was hit by a grenade launched from Georgian territory; 1 person was wounded.

8 June: the positions of the armed forces of the Republic of Abkhazia were fired on the K'odor valley; 1 person was wounded.

10 June: in the K'odor valley there was massive artillery fire on the village of Lat'a. Four soldiers of the Republic of Abkhazia were wounded.

11 June: shooting in the K'odor valley.

11 June: several homes in the village of Gumurishi in the Gal District were burned down by a Georgian diversionary group; 1 peaceful citizen was killed, 1 woman wounded.

12 June: near the village of Primorskoe in the Gal District a high voltage pylon was blown up by a Georgian diversionary group.

29 June: shooting by Georgian bandit groups in the K'odor valley.

28 August: in the Security Zone of the Russian Federation's peace keeping forces a vehicle came under fire near the village of Sida. In it were personnel of the local administration. As a result 4 persons were killed.

10 September: on the road from the village of Rechkhi towards the village Saberio in the Gal District a vehicle with personnel of the Interior Ministry of the Republic of Abkhazia came under fire from an ambush. As a result Lieut. P. Lobzhanian was wounded.

12 September: in the village of Nabakevi in the Gal District a BAZ-2109 vehicle with officers of the Russian Federation's peace-keeping forces was fired upon from an ambush. Two officers (Kakalich & Bulatov) were killed, Sen. Lieut. Chugaev was wounded.

12 September: in the village of Nabakevi in the Gal District living quarters where a group of militia were billeted came under fire from grenade launchers and automatic weapons, resulting in 4 serving personnel (Kokoskeria, Bzhanian, Kove, Aiba) receiving wounds.

27 September: in the village of Mukhuri in the Gal District a WAZ vehicle on its way to Gal for a meeting of heads of the administration was fired on by a Georgian bandit group. Eight were killed (Latsuzhbaja, Todua, Kozmava, Gurgulia, Shamatava, Basaria, Bumikaria, Kazmava), 2 (Sh. Shamatava, N. Shamaava) were wounded.

28 September: in the village of Nabakevi in the Gal District a BAZ-2106 vehicle carrying personnel of the Interior Ministry of the Republic of Abkhazia came under fire. Four (R. Kchach, Aiba, Khalvash, Chenchia) were killed.

17 October: in the village of Ganaxleba in the Gal District an M-21 Volga car with peaceful citizens on their way to a meeting with relatives was fired on from an ambush, resulting in the deaths of V. Arshba and Sh. Dzhindzholia, peaceful residents of the town T'qw'archal.

25 October: a raid took place by a Georgian bandit group, launched on Post No. 5 of the Defence Ministry of the Republic of Abkhazia in the village of Shesheleti. One military officer in the Defence Ministry of the Republic of Abkhazia, Ovsep Savisian, was killed, 2 (Bigvava & Martirasian) were wounded. One (Sikharulia) was killed on the side of the attackers -- he was dressed in camouflage gear.

25 October: 7 homes in the village of Repi were burned down.

31 October: during a patrol by personnel of the Interior Ministry of the Republic of Abkhazia a Georgian diversionary group of 12-15 persons was discovered near the village of Nabakevi in the Gal District. The group opened fire, as a result of which one Abkhazian soldier was wounded.

7 November: military personnel T. Terzian & A. Kokosian were killed in an ambush during patrol in the village of Saberio. The body of the latter was taken to the territory of Georgia and a registered weapon stolen.

19 November: in the border strip in the village of Otobaja in the Gal District a military contingent clashed with a bandit group. As a result of crossfire the group withdrew; there were no deaths or injuries.

1995

Night 31 December-1 January: a diversionary act took place in the village of Primorskoe in the Gal District -- a high-voltage supply line was blown up.

10 January: a military agent of the Interior Ministry of the Republic of Abkhazia and 4 peaceful citizens were taken hostage by a Georgian diversionary group in the Gal District.

27 January: an attack on personnel of the Interior Ministry of the Republic of Abkhazia took place in the village of Tageloni in the Gal District as they were on patrol duty. One (R. Gulia) was killed, 3 wounded.

6 February: a Ural vehicle of the CIS peace-keeping forces was shot at in the village of Otobaja. A rank-&-file soldier, A. Romanov, was killed. Later the same day in the village of Nabakevi personnel of the Interior Ministry of the Republic of Abkhazia, Tskua & Juris, were wounded by Georgian terrorists.

8 February: a terrorist act was committed between the villages of Nabakevi and Tageloni as a result of which 2 soldiers were killed and 6 received wounds.

22 February: in the village of Chuburkhindzhi V. Chkadua and G. Kiria, citizens of the Gal District, were abducted and taken into Georgia by Georgian terrorists.

8 March: Akaba Chakaberia, resident of Chuburkhindzhi, was abducted along with her child.

12 March: in the village of Nabakevi an official vehicle of the Gal Regional Dept of the Interior Ministry was shot at. Two personnel of the Interior Ministry of the Republic of Abkhazia, R. Otyrba & Cherkezia, were killed, 2 seriously wounded.

13 March: the Kobalia family (husband Tamaz, wife Daredzhan Kobalia-Kakava) were taken hostage by a Georgian terrorist group in the village of Chuburkhindzhi.

18 March: in the village of Chuburkhindzhi in the Gal District a peaceful citizen of this village, E. Gurtskaja, was taken hostage by a Georgian terrorist group lead by V. Ubiria.

19 March: the Gvaramia family (father Vazha, son Lasha) were taken hostage by a Georgian terrorist group in the village of Tageloni.

19 March: another peaceful citizen, Kh. Lagvilava, of the village Tageloni was taken hostage by a Georgian terrorist group, and 2 other peaceful citizens of this village, V. Kuchuberia & V. Torua, were wounded.

20 March: peaceful citizen of the village Chuburkhindzhi, Zh. Chkadua, was taken hostage by a Georgian terrorist group.

1 April: during a reburial in the cemetery in the town of Gal a diversionary group under the command of a certain Dato Shengelia killed the head of the Gulripsh Regional Dept of the Interior Ministry, Col. E. Tkebuchava, the head of the protection unit of the Ingur power station, O. Narmania, citizen of the town of Ochamchira, A. Suleiman-ogli, director of the Mziuri collective, S. Arshba, and head of the military inspectorate of the Gal Regional Dept of the Interior Ministry, Kubucheria.

The following received serious wounds: U. Arshba, head of the SB(?) of the Gal District, Neli Pachulia, director of the Ochamchira Dept of Education [and widow of the man being reburied; he had been taken from his home in Ochamchira and summarily shot by Georgian troops during their occupation of southern Abkhazia], Maj. S. Sabekia, head of the Gal Regional Dept of the Interior Ministry, V. Tania and S. Delba, citizens of the town of Ochamchira. Deputy director of the Gulripsh Regional Dept of the Interior Ministry, D. Shakaja, and citizen Kalaidzhan of the village of Pshap were taken hostage. Both hostages were then conducted to the Georgian Interior Ministry in Tbilisi.

29 May: Sergeant E. Shervashidze of the Gal militia was abducted by Georgian terrorists.

13 June: Mziuri Antia and her 8-year-old daughter were taken hostage by a Georgian terrorist group under V. Ubiria.

19 June: in the village of Okhurei 8 peaceful residents, among whom were 3 women and one minor, were captured by Georgian terrorists under the command of V. K. Lemondzhava:

- ✦ 1. Nanuli K. Nachkebia (61)
- ✦ 2. Zaira Dzhindzholia (62)
- ✦ 3. N. Miloria
- ✦ 4. Bondo Robonaja
- ✦ 5. K. Pachulia (70)
- ✦ 6. Daur Kvitsinia (15)
- ✦ 7. Guliko Dzhokhaja
- ✦ 8. Arvelod Nachkebia (68)

19 June: a Moskvich car belonging to Astamur Dzhindzholia came under fire in the village of Okhurei from a Georgian terrorist group.

20 June: peaceful resident, Sh. Dzhigania, of the village Okhurei was killed in the village of Mukhuri by the Georgian terrorist group commanded by V. Lemondzhava.

25 December: a terrorist act was committed in the village of Kokhora in the T'qw'archal District by a Georgian diversionary-terrorist group. A Kamaz truck was blown up by an antitank mine. The driver died of his wounds; 3 passengers were taken to hospital in a serious condition.

1996

1 January: 5 homes of peaceful citizens were burned down by a Georgian terrorist group in the village of Sida.

5 January: a Georgian diversionary group headed by [Abesalom Arkvania*](#) killed with automatic weapons in the village of Shesheleti in the Ochamchira District the Sanaja family and 2 of their neighbours -- in all 8 persons.

4 February: in the village of Guda(v)a in the Ochamchira District a Georgian diversionary group of 4 mounted from an ambush an attack with grenade launchers and automatic fire on a vehicle with a contingent of military personnel of the armed forces of the Republic of Abkhazia (Kheldar Dzhindzholia, Georgi Zarakua, Aleksandr Dzhindzholia, Milver Gogia, Vakhtang Zarakua) on their way to the village of Primorskoe in the Ochamchira District to carry out their duties. Three of the diversionaries were killed; one of the killed was identified as former resident of the village of Guda(v)a, Robert Gamisonia.

4 February: Georgian terrorists in the village of Saberio in the Gal District of Abkhazia opened fire in the Security Zone on a vehicle with military personnel of the peace-keeping forces. As a result of the shooting Russian militia woman and health inspector Kuzina together with ensign Leont'ev were wounded.

5 February: in the Security Zone of the CIS peace-keeping forces Georgian terrorists opened fire on a patrol vehicle of Russian peace keepers. As a result the officer leading the patrol was wounded.

5 February: in the Gal District of Abkhazia 3 peaceful citizens were taken hostage by a Georgian terrorist group and transported to Georgian territory.

7 February: in the village of Repi in the Gal District 2 military personnel (Inapshba & Mikheev) of the armed forces of the Republic of Abkhazia were captured in the Zone of Restricted Weaponry, and also a resident of the village Repi, Revaz Sordia, was wounded as the military personnel were taking water in his yard.

8 February: in the village of Achigvara in the Ochamchira District of Abkhazia a 13-man diversionary group headed by Tsaava and Abesalom Arkvania burned down in the Zone of Restricted Weaponry 5 homes of peaceful residents: Givi Bacheshvili, Omar Chkhvirtia, Mamaptia Kvachakhia, Valiko Kvachakhia, Nodar Kvachakhia. The tea plantation was also torched.

5 March: in the inhabited area of Primorskoe in the Gal District of Abkhazia during the checking of posts of the armed forces of the Republic of Abkhazia in the Security Zone a WAZ vehicle was blown up on an antitank mine. Three officers of the armed forces of the Republic of Abkhazia, amongst whom was Lieut-Col. Anua, commander of the eastern group of the army, received wounds, and one died.

9 March: in the residential quarter of Pervoe Gal in the Gal District of Abkhazia a UNOMIG vehicle was blown up by antitank mine in the Security Zone. As a result Lieut-Col. Muhamed Hussein (Bangladesh) of the military observers was killed, and 2 were wounded.

10 March: in the residential quarter of Tsarcha in the T'qw'archal District of Abkhazia a vehicle was blown up by antitank mine in the Security Zone. Inside were 2 peaceful residents called Khodzhava of the village Bedia, who perished on the spot.

Night 1-2 November: diversionary groups blew up the local printing office and opened fire on the peace-keeping forces of the Russian Federation and of the Defence Ministry of the Republic of Abkhazia by the 2nd and 3rd stations of the Ingur Hydroelectric Station.

Night 2-3 November: during the course of about an hour groups of diversionaries, having surrounded the town of Gal, fired on it for 15 minutes. A large number of residential buildings were damaged, the main water supply system was blown up along with the electricity station.

On the same night they also opened fire on posts of the peace-keeping forces of the Russian Federation and of the Defence Ministry of the Republic of Abkhazia.

3 November: a GAZ-24 vehicle was blown up by a remote-controlled antitank mine laid by diversionaries. Two passengers were killed, 2 seriously wounded.

22 November: at 10.30 in the immediate vicinity of the Gal Administration building a mine was set off by a timing device. The building suffered serious damage. There were no injuries.

The same day at 12.00 in the village of Otobaja an armoured troop carrier of the peace-keeping forces of the Russian Federation was blown up by an anti-tank mine laid by diversionaries. As a result a military person of the peace-keeping forces were seriously injured (with a broken back).

During the first 10 months of 1996 on the territory of the Gal and part of the Oчамchira Districts 22 terrorist acts were perpetrated by diversionaries. As a result 38 persons lost their lives, 22 suffered injury, and 11 private homes were torched.

***In a communique from the Abkhazian Press Centre in Moscow shortly thereafter the following information was given: "A group headed by Mingrelian Abesalom Arkvania, a known terrorist, entered the Security Zone from Zugdidi armed with automatic weapons, 2 grenade launchers, and handheld rocket launchers of the Mukha type. On 9 January this group stopped a passing vehicle on the approach to the R. Okumi between the villages of Achigvara and Tsarcha, taking 4 passengers hostage. These managed to escape, and one of them, Valeri Alania, reported what had happened to the head of administration in the Gal District. He said that 2 brothers named Abshilava, formerly residents of the village of Reka in the Oчамchira District, were members of the group. Though Mingrelians, they spoke fluent Abkhaz, as did the other three (unnamed) who came originally from Tsarcha in the Gal District. Alania said the head of the bandits, Arkvania, admitted this group had murdered a certain Kvaratskhelia and 8 members of the Sanaja family on 5 January. Alania said that, after escaping from the bandits, he encountered a group of peace-keepers to whom he gave information about the location of the bandits, but they took no action. The bandits are thought to be hiding within the Security Zone, and it is feared that, because they use the Abkhaz language among themselves, they could well create the impression among the Kartvelian population of Abkhazia that citizens of Abkhazian nationality are involved in these acts of banditry and terrorism",**

This is, of course, just the impression the terrorists wish to produce: attacks on the largely Mingrelian population of the Gal District are designed to 1. destabilise the situation, 2. make it seem that the Abkhazians, under whose control the Gal District lies, are responsible for anti-Mingrelian activity, 3. create a bogus justification for Georgia to re-establish control over the region. These tactics have been rather successful, at least on the international front where, for example, the closing statement of the plenary meeting of The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Lisbon at the beginning of December 1996 included a specific condemnation of the Abkhazians for committing human rights abuses against the 'Georgian' (sc. Kartvelian) population of Abkhazia, having been convinced by Georgian propagandist claims that the bulk of the pre-war quarter of a million Kartvelian (largely Mingrelian)

population of Abkhazia was subjected after the Abkhazian victory in September 1993 and has been subjected ever since to ethnic cleansing. On the other hand, the actual aggressor in this conflict, Eduard Shevardnadze, who engineered the invasion of Abkhazia on 14 August 1992 has not only totally escaped international censure but is optimistic that his republic will shortly be admitted to membership of The Council of Europe, supposedly bastion of post-World War II human rights, to which Russia gained admission earlier this year despite the carnage it was even then conducting in Chechnia. So easily are words (such as 'ethnic cleansing/genocide') stripped of meaning and western ideals (such as The Council of Europe's obligation to protect human rights) perverted...

Terrorist acts in Abkhazia 1999-2000

1999

4 Jan 1999: On the approach-road to the village of Chuburkhindzhi (Gal District) Gudul Ionovich Gamsakhurdia (b. 1920), while travelling on horseback, was blown up on an anti-tank mine laid by a Georgian terrorist group. He died at the scene of the explosion.

10 Jan 1999: At roughly 22.20 an unknown person using an grenade launcher RPG-26 fired through a window of the D. Gulia Research Institute of the Republic of Abkhazia's Academy of Sciences, which stands on Victory Street in Sukhum. The building received material damage.

25 Jan 1999: At 8.30 a.m. in the village of Otobaia in the Gal District employees of the village's commandant's office were shot at. As a result R. L. Shamba and A. R. Chukbar were killed on the spot. S. O. Otyrba, O. V. Lazaria and B. N. Bargandzhia received wounds of varying degrees of severity and were taken to the Central Republican Hospital in Sukhum.

7 Feb 1999: During the night in the building of Armenian Middle School No. 9 an unknown explosive device went off beneath the stomatological office. As a result the stomatological office was destroyed and material damage sustained by the school-building.

8 Feb 1999: At 4.00 a.m. in Sukhum unknown persons using an RPG-26 "OSA" and grenade-launcher GP-25 fired on an empty building beside the Republic of Abkhazia's Ministry of the Interior, bringing down the roof.

12 Feb 1999: At 10.00 a.m. in the village of Bargebi (Gal District) civilians were fired upon by a Georgian terrorist group. As a result O. I. Kvarchia, B. Sh. Shinkuba and N. D. Tsobekhia died on the spot.

14 Feb 1999: At 13.35 in the village of Otobaia 2 (Gal District) a terrorist group used automatic weapons to fire on civilians. As a result Z. P. Cholokua, O. K. Kvarchia, R. G. Inapshba and G. V. Kutarba died on the spot.

14 Feb 1999: At 18.00 in the village of Dikhazurga (Gal District) terrorist group set off a mine on the approach-road. As a result local resident P. M. Beraia perished; her husband, I. Kh. Beraia was taken with serious physical injuries to the Central Republican Hospital in Zugdidi (Mingrelia).

5-6 March 1999: During the night in the village of Lekukhona (Gal District) a Georgian terrorist group consisting of 15-18 persons abducted director of the Lekukhona Middle School, Valeri Budeevich Dzhakhaia (b. 1949).

9 March 1999: At midday in the village of Dikhazurga (Gal District) a Georgian group consisting of 12 persons in military uniform detained residents of the village Chiburkhindzhi Migran Isaevich Antia (b. 1952), Konstantin Malakievich Akubardia (b. 1934) and Gal resident Mirbej Vladimirovich Dzhobaia while travelling in a GAZ-24 vehicle. Then they robbed them of 2,000 rubles and 137 lari, releasing them at midnight.

12 March 1999: In the village Chiburkhindzhi (Gal District) on the road leading from the Ingur post to the town of Gal a terrorist group opened fire with automatic weapons on a Mercedes (registration-number M-2552-AI) under the control of Slavik Vladimirovich Vardania, Deputy-Head of the Gal District's Administration. As a result Murman Bondoevich Koberidze (b. 1964), resident of Gal (7, Lenin St.) and a passenger in the car, received gunshot-wounds to the left leg and was taken to the Central Republican Hospital in Gal.

14 March 1999: At 20.45 an unknown person placed an explosive device under the rails between the sleepers by the platform of the station at Psou. As a result of the explosion a cross-section of rail measuring 20x5 cm. was torn out.

19 March 1999: At 14.25 in the village of Dikhazurga (Gal District) peace-keeping forces of the Russian Federation uncovered and defused a anti-aircraft missile, packed with 30 kilograms of plastic explosive.

21 March 1999: At about 16.40 in the village of Chiburkhindzhi (Gal District) a Mon-100 mine was discovered beside the main road and defused by sappers of the peace-keeping forces of the Russian Federation.

24 March 1999: In the village of Nabakevi (Gal District) a Georgian terrorist group opened fire on a patrol of the Republic of Abkhazia's Ministry of the Interior. As a result of the gunfire senior sergeant of Abkhazian S. Z. Akirtava perished and N. A. Ketia was gravely injured.

30 March 1999: At around 21.00 in the village of Dikhazurga (Gal District) resident of the village R. I. Beraia was caught in an explosion on an antipersonnel mine laid by a Georgian terrorist group. He was taken with serious physical injuries to the Central Republican Hospital in Zugdidi (Mingrelia).

2 April 1999: At 16.30 in the village of Gal a Georgian sabotage-terrorist group activated a remote control explosive device opposite the Gal District's administrative building. As a result R. L. Bebia, I. N. Khagush and O. L. Botsiev, members of the commission for returning the refugees received injuries of varying degrees of intensity.

9 April 1999: At 8.30 a.m. in the village of Chiburkhindzhi (Gal District) a Georgian terrorist group opened fire on a vehicle VAZ-2107 (registration: S-663-MTs-RBG) killing I. K. Pachulia and V. I. Murza-Oghli.

23 April 1999: At 18.30 in the village of Repi (Gal District) a Georgian terrorist group opened fire on a vehicle UAZ-469, causing injury to R. P. Asabua and I. Dzhobava.

11 May 1999: At 9.00 a.m. in the village of Saberio (Gal District) a Georgian terrorist group opened fire with automatic weapons on military observers from the Republic of Abkhazia's Ministry of Defense. As a result A. D. Uratadze and R. V. Pilia received injuries.

16 May 1999: There was an explosion of an indeterminate explosive device near the Republic of Abkhazia's Culture Ministry resulting in the building sustaining material damage.

22 May 1999: At 21.00 in the village of Chiburkhindzhi (Gal District) a Georgian terrorist group opened fire on a vehicle VAZ-2106 (Ja-63-13-AI) causing injury to Z. M. Kishmaria and O. Pilia.

1 June 1999: At roughly 13.30 in the village of Saberio (Gal District) a Georgian terrorist group opened fire on a vehicle UAZ-469 in the service of the defense of the supreme organs of power. As a result O. A. Gogia and D. L. Sangulia perished, and S. V. Injazov was injured.

23 June 1999: At 12.30 in the village of Tsarcha a passenger-bus IAZ-672 without state number-plates travelling from Gal to the village of Chkhortol was blown up on an anti-tank mine laid by a Georgian terrorist group. As a result Dzhaniko Atovich Zarakua (b. 1959), a resident of the village of Chkhortol, and Zoia Cherkezia (patronymic to be established; b. 1964), resident of the village of Tsarcha, died on the spot. Terrible physical injuries were received by: Nukri Gudaevich Chelidze (b. 1957); Bela Grigor'evna Malania (b. 1962); Badri Nukrevich Chelidze (b. 1982) -- all residents of the village of Shashikvara; and Natia Nugzarovna Sharia (b. 1988), resident of the village of Bargebi. The above-named persons were admitted to the Central Republican Hospital in Zugdidi (Mingrelia). Ronald Telovich Cherkezia (b. 1963), resident of the village of Chkhortol, Volodja Ivanovich Kvarandzhia (b. 1942), resident of the village of Chkhortol, the driver of the bus, Mamriko Sandrovich Tarba (b. 1956), resident of the village of Chkhortol, Shota Tengizovich Cherkezia, resident of the village of Chkhortol, Shaliko Jakovlevich Cholaria (b. 1937), resident of the village of Agwbedia, Nonna Shavlovna Berzenia (b. 1976), resident of the village of Reka, were taken to the Central Republican Hospital in Sukhum.

24 June 1999: At about 12.05 while travelling from the village of Chkhortol to the village of Okum (Tkvarchal District) an automobile ZIL-131 without state number-plates was blown up at the moment of passing across the R. Tsarcha on an anti-tank mine laid by a Georgian terrorist group. It was under the control of driver Givi Gozoevich Zarakua (b. 1949). He and passengers Rostavan Korsantievich Gamsonia (b. 1969), Gamaz Al'movich Gamsonia (b. 1981) and Besik Al'movich Gamsonia (b. 1978), all residents of the village of Chkhortol, were taken with injuries of differing degrees of severity to the Central Republican Hospital of the Tkvarchal District.

12 July 1999: At 7.10 a.m. an indeterminate explosive device went off at the Gal District's administrative building causing insignificant material damage to the building. There were no injuries.

11 July 1999: In the village of Pokvesh (Ochamchira District) a vehicle VAZ-2121 was shot at on the approach-road by a Georgian terrorist group using automatic weapons. As a result of the gunfire Demur Kurantenovich Pachulia (b. 1946), resident of the village of Pokvesh (Ochamchira District), and Sharvan Tatikoevich Gvaramia (b. 1945), resident of the same village, died on the spot. Shakro Kurakovich Chitanava (b. 1945), resident of the village of Pokvesh, received serious physical injuries. Afterwards the guilty parties took hostage a cyclist, Jadamur Zakovich Kobakhia (b. 1973), and disappeared in the direction

of the village of Reka (Ochamchira District). The procuracy of the Ochamchira District is carrying out the investigation.

13 July 1999: At about 1.00 a.m. in the village of Gal 1 (Tkvarchal District) above the outflow of the hydro-electric dam as they were fulfilling their service-duties the following fell into an ambush of a terrorist group that had infiltrated from the territory of Georgia: Sen. Lieutenant of the Militia Raul Budzhuevich Papava (b. 1952), resident of Tkvarchal (33, Lakoba St., Flat 15), and employee of the damn, Valeri Leontevich Berulava (b. 1949), resident of Tkvarchal (2, Gorky St., Flat 7). As a result of cross-fire they received gunshot-wounds and died on the spot. Measures are being taken to uncover the crime, the investigation being conducted by the procuracy.

1 Aug 1999: In the village of Lekukhona (Gal District) the following employees of the commandant's office of the village of Rechkhi were killed: Dzhumber Veler'janovich Zhordania (b. 1968), resident of the village of Akvaska (Tkvarchal District), and Gennadij Georgievich Chachba (b. 1970), resident of the village Bedia 1 (Tkvarchal District).

5 Aug 1999: At 14.00 in a quarter of the village of Saberio at about 800 meters from the peace-keeping forces' post 205 Sgt. Lorentso Leonidovich Cherkezia (b. 1979), resident of the village of Agwbedia, was killed by an automatic weapon of 7.62 mm calibre fired by a Georgian terrorist group. He was serving in the military detachment 237/988 of the Defence Ministry of the Republic of Abkhazia.

27 Aug 1999: At 23.00 in the village of Tsarcha a Georgian terrorist group infiltrated from the territory of Georgia stopped a blue-coloured car M-412 under the control of Archil Chichikoevich Asabua, resident of the town of Sukhum. Force was applied and Asabua was transported by car to the village of Okum, where he was killed, by placing a grenade F-1 beneath the car's front wheels, the terrorist group escaped.

29 Aug 1999: A car was discovered in the village of Okum, and, while it was being towed away, an explosion occurred. As a result Vjacheslav Indikoevich Cherkezia (b. 1951), resident of the village of Tsarcha, was killed on the spot. Anzor Afrikanovich Asabua (b. 1963), resident of the village of Kwitol, and residents of the town of Sukhum Raul Nurievich Bakhtadze (b. 1963) and Omar Nurievich Bakhtadze (b. 1973) received physical injuries.

1 Sept 1999: At 7.00 a.m. in the village of Tagiloni a Georgian terrorist group shot at a Zhiguli car travelling from the base at the post at "Fati" under the control of Nodar Valer'janovich Tsanba (b. 1954), resident of the town of Sukhum, customs' officer at the customs' post "Tagiloni". As a result Tsanba died of his wounds at the spot. The passengers seated in the car, Arkadij Jasonovich Karkhalava (b. 1963), Beslan Lushevich Koghonia (b. 1964), and Raul Akakievich Chagava were admitted with physical injuries to the Central Republican Hospital in Sukhum.

14 Aug 1999: A Georgian terrorist group engaged in cross-fire with the guards of the administration of the village of Shesheleti. As a result of the terrorist act the house-museum of N. I. Vekua was burned down.

14 Sept 1999: At 14.00 while moving employees of the Republic of Abkhazia's Interior Ministry to the post "Nabakevi" on the Tagiloni-Nabakevi road, repair-works were being carried out by workers of the Gal rural authorities together with peace-keeping forces of the Russian Federation. During the course of these a mine laid earlier by a Georgian terrorist group went off. As a result of the explosion the following received physical

injuries: Colonel of the Militia of the Republic of Abkhazia's Interior Ministry Daur Varlamovich Shlarba, Andrej Petrovich Tolstykh, on military service with the Russian Federation's peace-keeping forces, and Junior Sgt. Vladimir Sergeevich Smetanin.

27 Sept 1999: At about 10.30 a.m. in the village of Tagiloni (Gal District) Vitalij Shalvovich Khintuba (b. 1955), resident of the town of Tkvarchal and employee of the customs' post, was killed by automatic fire. Travelling to the scene of the incident, an operational group of the Gal regional division of the Interior Ministry was also shot at. As a result employee of this organisation, Dmitrij Rudikovich Gollandzia (b. 1968), was wounded.

19 Oct 1999: At 14.00 in the village of Tagiloni fire was opened from an ambush by a Georgian terrorist group on a car VAZ-2106 (registration-number O-20-05-AI) under the control of Omar Dzadzua. As a result passenger Zaza Bidzinovich Kvarchakhia (b. 1961), Guntr Mkhazovich Kiria (b. 1940) and Zuri Kishmaria were wounded.

1 Nov 1999: In the village of Upper Eshera (Sukhum District) a terrorist act was perpetrated on a section of the road at 8.45 a.m. when an explosive device was detonated as the Vice-Premier of the Republic of Abkhazia, K. K. Ozgan, was travelling in a service-vehicle on his way to Sukhum. There were no injuries.

11 Nov 1999: In the town of Ochamchira an explosive device went off beneath the stairs leading to the 2nd floor of the town's administrative building. The building sustained material damage.

24 Nov 1999: At 10.00 a.m. in the village of Nabakevi of the Gal Region between posts 202 and 209 a "Ural" vehicle belonging to the Russian Federation's peace-keeping forces was blown up on a MON-100 mine, laid by a Georgian terrorist group, and then shot at with automatic weapons. There were no injuries.

25 Nov 1999: At 14.40 in the village of Nabakevi while moving a relief of the Republic of Abkhazia's Interior Ministry a UAZ-452 vehicle and a KAVZ bus were shot at by a Georgian terrorist group using grenade launchers RPG-7 and RPG-25. There were no victims.

1 Dec 1999: In the village of Achigvara a VAZ-2105 (registration-number O-31-47-AI) under the control of Khivdara Ivanovich Dzhindzholia (b. 1928), Lieut.-Colonel of the Republic of Abkhazia's Defence Ministry, resident of the town of Tkvarchal, was blown up on a mine. As a result of the explosion Kh. I. Dzhindzholia and his passengers Aleksandr Khivdarovich Dzhindzholia (b. 1950), Georgij Bagratovich Kikoria (b. 1948), Rezo Damantovich Abshilava (b. 1963) and Dzhubabaev died on the spot.

10 Dec 1999: At 21.30 a blasting cartridge equivalent to 200 grams of explosive was tossed into the basement-entrance of 19, Gogol Street, belonging to V. K. Dzhenia-Abaza. The building received minor damage.

12 Dec 1999: At 10.12 an indeterminate explosive device went off in the 1st entrance to 9, Chachba Street. As a result the building sustained minor damage.

20 Dec 1999: At about 15.00 in the village of Chuburkhindzhi (Gal District) a group of 8 persons took hostage Raul Shotovich Keburia (b. 1958), resident of the village of Tkhina (Ochamchira District), and a woman with a child. They were taken to the territory of the Republic of Georgia.

20 Dec 1999: At 16.45 an explosive device was laid beneath the staircase of a structure adjacent to the building of the Ochamchira regional organisation of the Interior Ministry. As a result of the explosion the building sustained minor material damage.

29 Dec 1999: At 19.04 in Sukhum an indeterminate explosive device of 100 grams equivalent explosive power went off near 39, Victory Street. There were no injuries.

2000

2000 1 Jan 2000: At about 14.30 on the highway in the village of Achigvara (Ochamchira District) an Ikarus bus belonging to the Gal bus-depot was blown up on a mine laid by a Georgian terrorist group. The bus was seriously damaged, but there were no casualties.

16 Jan 2000: On the highway in the village of Chuburkhindzhi (Gal District) a vehicle VAZ-21011 (registration: RA-00-22) was shot at by a Georgian terrorist group with automatic weapons. As a result of the gunfire physical injuries of varying degrees of severity were received by privates of the Republic of Abkhazia's Ministry of Defence: Z. A. Chikvatia and O. S. Buava, whilst Z. G. Shonia died on the spot of injuries received.

24 Jan 2000: At 16.30 in the village of Khumushkur (Gal District) a UAZ-469 vehicle (registration: A-0982-AI) was shot at near post 103 of the Russian Federation's peace-keeping forces by a Georgian terrorist group. As a result Z. A. Gvaramia, employee of the Gal District's administration, received bullet-wounds.

25 Jan 2000: At about 11.00 a.m. in the village of Dikhazurga (Gal District) a VAZ-2121 Niva car was shot at by a Georgian terrorist group. As a result privates of the Republic of Abkhazia's Ministry of Defence Lieut. E. M. Bigvava and soldier A. S. Bigvava perished.

25 Jan 2000: At approximately 17.00 near the central bridge over the R. Ingur a Georgian terrorist group captured and conveyed onto the territory of Georgia R. L. Tsvejba, R. R. Dbar, G. B. Ashkhatsava, G. Kakubava and G. Vanacha; as a consequence R. L. Tsvejba, R. R. Dbar and G. Kakubava were murdered.

1 March 2000: At about 18.30 in the village of Chuburkhindzhi (Gal District) a GAZ-2402 vehicle (registration: 0-49-49) was shot at with automatic weapons by a Georgian terrorist group. As a result of the gunfire the driver, Murman Anesovich Buava, received gunshot wounds.

6 April 2000: At 18.10 in the village of Chuburkhindzhi (Gal District) a VAZ-21011 vehicle under the control of Givi Grigor'evich Smyr (b. 1976), ensign of the frontier-service, was shot at with automatic weapons by a Georgian terrorist group. As a result the driver G. G. Smyr, and passenger Aris Amotovich Uzljan (b. 1981), also doing military service in the frontier-service, received grave physical injuries, whilst passenger Guliver Khutaevich Dzandzava (b. 1952) died on the spot.

14 April 2000: At 14.00 in the village Tagiloni 3 (in the village of Chuburkhindzhi, Gal District) a Georgian terrorist group shot with automatic weapons at a UAZ-452 vehicle and KAVZ bus belonging to the Gal regional section of the Interior Ministry. Inside were operatives of the Republic of Abkhazia's Interior Ministry, and as a result the following were killed: Lieutenant L. V. Tsarmania, Sergeant T. G. Elerdzhia, Sergeant G. G. Chitaia, private E. G. Dzhdanov, private K. V. Rodonaia, Sergeant A. V. Brjukhovetskij and

private N. K. Silojan, whilst injuries of varying degrees of severity were taken by: Sergeant I. A. Ladaria, private G. g. Datseljan and private A. G. Delianildi.

24 April 2000: At 11.30 a.m. in the village of Repi (Gal District) citizen Z. S. Margania, while working in his own garden-plot, was blown up on an anti-personnel mine laid by a Georgian terrorist group.

26 April 2000: AT 16.00 near the village of Saberio (Gal District) a UAZ-469 vehicle belonging to the Gal OSGB (Unit of State Security Service), was shot at by a Georgian terrorist group using automatic weapons. As a result privates of the State Border Guards A. V. Chichba, I. Z. Khagba and citizen I. Kvachakhia perished on the spot. Militiaman V. A. Zelenskij received gunshot-wounds.

30 April 2000: At 23.00 in the village of Primorsk (Gal District) post 5 of the Republic of Abkhazia's Defence Ministry came under automatic weapons' fire. As a result privates Kh. V. Shlarba and D. I. Kuprava, doing service for the Republic of Abkhazia's Ministry of Defence, died on the spot of injuries received, whilst R. Z. Kharchilava received injuries of varying degrees of intensity.

Headquarters of the Republic of Abkhazia's Interior Ministry

TESTIMONIES

From the testimony of Khartchilava E.P., born in 1960, inhabitant of Tkuarchal, Kutaise St. 37

My mother Shurdulava K.A. lives in the village of Kindgi. She is 78. In September 1992 she was at home. Eight Georgian guardsmen surrounded her house one day and tried to get into it through the window. My mother-in-law opened the door and let them in. They searched the house, took everything they liked in it, killed a bull and took a goat for their chief. Then they started torturing the old woman: they beat her, hit her with a gun, fired near her and made her run to and fro. She was saved by a mirage: she crawled to the forest. The Abkhaz guerillas took her to Tkuarchal. The Georgian guardsmen burnt down her house and took away the cattle. They killed her nephew and threw him in the forest. The neighbors found the dead body only in 28 days and buried it.

My father-in-law was in Sukhum at the time. On his way home from Sukhum his neighbor and he were taken prisoners. They tortured them brutally. The guardsmen tried to violate her. When my father-in-law stood up for her they threatened to kill him. By happy chance they were saved by one of the guardsmen

From the testimony of Kakalia-Dzhindzhilia L.E., born in 1951, inhabitant of the village of Merkula, Ochamchira Region, 2 children

I was at home when the war broke on August 18 about 300 guardsmen, six tanks and armored carriers entered our village. They fired at the plant, the houses and at people with tanks. They tortured people, plundered their houses, took money and gold from them. They came up to my house as well. They broke into the house and took a lot of things. They were interested in my husband and wanted to see him. I was so frightened that I said he was dead. They started beating me. On hearing my voice our neighbor Arziani Givi and his wife came to my rescue and I was saved. I was hiding at their place for a long time. When leaving the village the Georgian marauders looted every house, took away all the cars in the village and all the tea from the factory. After some time I took my child and left for Tkuarchal. The helicopter evacuating us from Tkuarchal was landed in Sukhum airport for inspections. The guardsmen demanded our documents (passports). Seeing my name we were ordered to leave the plane. Down on the land they were interested on our relationships with Viktor Kakalia (the colonel). They seated my son into a car and required information on how many Chechens there were in the village of Merkula and Tkuarchal, where the head-quarters was and the positions of Abkhaz forces. When he refused to give the information they

started beating him, with guns. They tried to get the same information from me threatening to violate me. Five guardsmen were beating me in turn, they kicked out two of my teeth. An elderly person stood up for me. Then they turned to the pilot and started threatening to do away with him for having taken us on board. When the passengers tried to protest us a guardsman hit a Russian woman. I have not still overcome the fright I had. I've become awfully nervous, I began to lose my hair and memory. In a word my health has been rather ruined after all the physical abuse I suffered, and I need medical treatment.

From testimony of Malania V.M., born in 1958, inhabitant of Sukhum, Argun St. 17/36

After the war broke I moved to my sister Malania Larisa's flat in the old district. Through the windows I saw the Georgian guardsmen looting nearby houses and flats and taking cars from garages. I also saw them making Shamatava Givi, Dziadzolia Zaur carry sacks full of sand and dig up trenches. Then they beat them cruelly, when the two men lost consciousness the guardsmen left them downstairs at the doorway quite naked. My sister had to open the door to two guardsmen late at night. Finding out we were Abkhaz they ordered us to dress to be taken to the commandant's office. After we refused to follow them at such a late hour they said they had an order to shoot down all the Abkhaz people from that day on. We tried to look indifferent to what we heard and preferred to be killed in the flat. After that they demanded gold and money from us. When they got everything we had they ordered us to make the beds, and intended to violate us. My sister tore herself away and rushing to the balcony tried to jump over it. The guardsmen stopped her. One of them plugged in an iron. We got awfully frightened. They took us to the kitchen and locked us. Then they somehow went down to the sixth floor on a rope over the balcony plundered a flat there and in hour unlocked the kitchen door. On leaving us they said they'd come the next day. In the morning we managed to leave the flat and fly to Gudauta.

From the testimony of Ankvab A.M., born in 1927, inhabitant of Sukhum, Gastello St. 21, a university teacher

On September 15, 1992 I was standing in a queue for bread. An acquaintance of mine, Dzodzua Abesalom by name, came up to me. (He is an engineer) and using abusive language he cried out: "Abkhaz people are strangers on this land, building up to its statehood is out of the question. Why didn't you sign the appeal on cease-fire? The policy of Ardzinba and people like him is a vain dream. You're all building castles in the air". Now he is in Tbilisi. The same conversation took place between me and my neighbor Esebua Merab. An unexpected thing happened to him. One day the Georgian guardsmen came and took away his car. A few days later the car was returned but he was beaten cruelly - all his upper teeth were pulled away, the gold crowns and his gold ring were taken away as well. According to Tuzhba V., his wife Shura, their son Temur, the guardsmen came to them (Nineshvili str., 3) on February 3, 1993. They plundered their house and wanted to take away their car which had been taken to pieces. They ordered the owner of the car to assemble it so that they could take it at 3 a.m. the next day. By the time the car was ready to be used, an other group of marauders came and drove it away. The first group of marauders did not believe the owner's story and said they would burn down the house if he did not give them the car the next day. They took the son, Temur, to the cemetery and said they'd kill and bury him there. In two hours they brought the young man beaten, blood-stained, ready to drop. They beat the master of the house mercilessly and demanded money again

Testimony of Bebia M., born in 1953, inhabitant of Sukhum, Esherskaya St. 36/45

Being ill I stayed in bed when the Georgian guardsmen broke into my flat. They examined my passport and finding out I was Abkhaz, ordered me to get dressed and follow them to the staff which was in School No. 7. There were three guardsmen there. They showered me with abusive language and threatened to beat with guns. I was so weak that I fainted. I was brought to my senses and sent home. I moved to my sister's flat and stayed with her till March. On March 21, 1993 I came back to the flat. Very soon they made us all vacate the hotel, plundered, all the flats and let some Georgians into my flat to live in it.

From the testimony of Amichba-Dzopua A.Sh., born in 1969, inhabitant of Sukhum, Leselidze St. 24

On February 13, 1993, 65 year old Amichba Sh., his 56 year old wife Amichba A, the 86 year old grandmother Kapba B. and their 79 year old neighbor Margania M. were killed in their own house in Ochamchira at night (address: Kogonia str)

From the testimony of Chachba B., born in 1961, inhabitant of Sukhum, Gogolia St. 43/8

When the war broke I was at my flat in Gulripshi. When the guardsmen first came to my flat they had a list of Abkhaz people. Under pretence of looking for Chechens they turned everything upside down in the flat and left. The next time they came and took away several things. The third time they looted the flat and took everything up to underwear. Then they beat me brutally: they hit me with guns, in the jaw, in the face, broke my clavicle, and kicked out two teeth. They were beating me for a long time. Then nine other Abkhaz people, Getta Mirod and his wife, Svetlana, Khashig M., and his 16 year old son, Lakoba K. and his wife Nelli among them and me were taken to the staff. As we found out later we all were presented to them as snipers, so we were all tortured. Two days later we were released. The guardsmen took away the key to my flat and now it is occupied by them. At the present I am getting medical treatment.

From the testimony of Kutelia M., born in 1922, inhabitant of Sukhum, Kechnaya St. 9

I do not remember the date exactly when the Georgian guardsmen came to my Megrelian neighbor's house. They tied his wife, undressed him and burnt him all over his naked body with an iron. When we came to visit him the next day we saw his face and other parts of his body dreadfully burnt. On the third day he died. The guardsmen tortured him demanding money.

From the testimony of Berulava U., born in 1947, inhabitant of the village Beskalh, Ochamchira Region

In August 1992 four Georgian guardsmen came to our neighbor Khibba Ch., a veteran of war (born in 1921). They spoke Georgian to them, but since he did not know the language he answered them in Russian. The guardsmen started humiliating him and threatened to shoot him down. When Chichiko asked the why they were doing that to him, they answered "Simply because you are Abkhaz". He said "I fought in the World War II". They said "Who asked you to fight? At that moment a bus full of people stopped at his gate at whose sight the guardsmen left hurriedly.

From the testimony of Taiba Z., born in 1928, inhabitant of Sukhum, Ordzonikidze St. .94/29)

I live in a block of flats on the 5th floor together with my nephew Adzhir-ogly Kashid, a boy of 8. Three guardsmen came and looted my flat in September. I begged them to leave the child's clothes, instead of that, one of the guardsmen hit me heavily on the face and I lost my consciousness. Three of my teeth were gone, my nose was bleeding and my nephew began crying shivering with fear. The guardsmen took absolutely all the things and left. I saw with my own eyes how in March the guardsmen came and took away our neighbor, Plevako Ana. They took her to the country house where her husband, a retired colonel, was staying. They made her call him at the gate. When he came out of the house the guardsmen fired at her back. Falling down she died at once. Her husband was also wounded, he also fell on the ground. Thinking that they'd shot them both down, the guardsmen went away.

From the testimony of Dzhikirba K., born in 1939, inhabitant of Sukhum, Kirova St. 17

The Georgian guardsmen came to our flat several times. First there came about 30 of them all armed and took my husband Dzhikirba Ladiko and my nephew Inapsha I. to the staff. Having brutally beaten them there they released them both. The second time they came they demanded the key to my Mengrelian neighbors flat (Ratia Suram). They plundered it. late in January they came the third time. Saying: "The Abkhaz are killing the Georgians in Gagra and you are sitting here and having coffee with your neighbors" they started beating me and showering me with insulting language. I lost my consciousness. By the time I came to myself, the guardsmen had looted in the flat and gone. They came to my house early in February to turn me out of the flat and occupy it. On February 11, I came to Gudauta.

From the testimony to Logovilava N., born in 1940, inhabitant of the village Adzinbia, Ochamchira Region

Abkhaz fighters came to us from time to time. My husband gave them some food, fruits and did what he could for them. Our neighbors Dopna Sandro and his daughter Dopna Juliet reported to the Georgian guardsmen on my husband and the guerillas. On October 21, 1992 they came and shot down my 53 year old husband Lagvilava Anatoly. Not long before that the Georgian guardsmen set an ambush for the Abkhaz fighters on their way to the position and shot them down. These were Chasba S., Gvindzhia M., Dopua D., and Mishelia V. Only one of them managed to crawl to the forest and get to a group of partisans, though his leg was broken. The guardsmen stole our cattle, 40 baskets of maize and plundered the house. They burnt down the houses of our neighbors Bzkania, Chauba and Adleiba... I was an eye-witness of an air-bombardment of the village Adziabzha. They fired at the village with howitzer and used Grad installations. After my husband was killed, I took my two grandchildren and my daughter-in-law and got to Tkuarchal. We were evacuated to Gudauta by air.

From the testimony of Galina V., mission "Omega"

On March 2, 1993 there was an agreement on prisoner exchange: the Georgian side was to give out Abkhaz prisoners and the Abkhaz side was to give 6 dead bodies of Georgian soldiers in return. Just before the exchange the Georgian shot down all of them: Adleiba Tamaz, Zarandia, Zhukov S., Kurskaya I., Adleiba R., Akaba I., and Taranba O. One of them was not identified. All the bodies were disfigured. Kurskaya U., a med assistant was wounded when they took her prisoner. They cut out her breasts, her sexual organs and cut her throat.

From the testimony of Zarandia A., born in 1950, inhabitant of Ochamchira

On August 28, 1992, my brother-in-law Tarba Beslam and his neighbor, a Megrelian by nationality went to Mokva, Ochamchira region. That day the Georgian soldiers were stopped by Georgian guardsmen. Finding out that Beslam was Abkhaz by nationality they brutally killed him: they wounded him in the leg, knocked his eyes out, fired in the stomach and ear twice. The Mengrelian was fired in the leg just for accompanying an Abkhaz.

From the testimony of Pachalia T., born in 1945, inhabitant of Sukhum, Ordzhonikidze St. 102/45

On October 5, 1992, three guardsmen broke into my house and plundered it. Before leaving they beat me cruelly. They hit me on the head and all over the body with guns. I began bleeding in the nose and fainted.

From the testimony of Inapha V., born in 1940, inhabitant of Sukhum, Eehba St. 173/58

The guardsmen came to my flat several times. Every time they came, our neighbors saved us from being killed. The first time they came there was no electricity in the house and I could not find my passport. Saying they would kill me if I was identified as an Abkhaz they left. The other group of guardsmen came to loot the flat and took all my documents as well. There came the third group and the fourth and so on. When leaving, the last group warned

my wife: "If you don't explain to us where you got the certificate signed by Khaindrava you'll never see your husband". They meant the document I had instead of my passport which I had been deprived of before. They beat us both cruelly, cut us all over the body and left. Being afraid, we could not consult the doctors. On April 17, 1993 we got to Gechriph as a result of exchange.

From the testimony of Taiba-Akirtadze S., born in 1960, inhabitant of the village of Mokva, Och. Region

On August 22, 1992 an inhabitant of the village Mokva (born in 1960) was stopped by the guardsmen and demanded his car. When Beslan refused, they fired at him point-blank: Beslan was married and he had two children. On August 28 at about 2 p.m. Georgian guardsmen surrounded the village. Hearing that, Arshba Z. began looking for his children. When the soldiers saw him they shot him down. The dead body remained on the ground for some time. Every guardsmen passing by shot it just for fun.

From the testimony of Bargandzhia Z., born in 1953, inhabitant of Sukhum, Argun St. 20

After the intrusion of the troops of State Council of Georgia into territory of Abkhazia on August 14, 1992 leaving my wife and two children I left Sukhum for Gudauta. In a few days it became impossible to get in touch with my family. Taking advantage of his knowledge of both languages - Georgian and Mengrelian, my father Bargandzhia Shota, and inhabitant of the village of Tanish, Ochamchira region, managed to get to Sukhum through all the Georgian posts. On August 26, 1992 he was stopped by the guardsmen near the railway station in Sukhum. They beat him dreadfully and let him go. My wife treated his wounds. The next day on his way back home my father was taken prisoner. They tortured a 68 year old man for four days. Later on, early in September, he was found in Ochamchira mortuary. The circumstances under which he was killed are still unknown. On September 17, 1992 Georgian guardsmen came to our house. While they were looting my wife managed to take the children and hide. She didn't even have enough time to take the children's clothes.

From the testimony of Zhiba S., born in 1959, living temporarily at the address: Gudauta, Gobechia St. 8

I took part in hostilities in the village Tsagurovka of Sukhum region. I was taken prisoner where they tortured me. They left a scar on my cheek to remind me of those atrocities. I was kept in Sukhum prison for a long time. They often took me out into the yard, dramatized an execution, ordered me to spend to stand at the wall and fired all around me and beat me brutally. They fed me only once in 24 hours - they gave some soup and a piece of bread. I will recognize them when meeting. Once a chief warder came with a gun and ordered me to go out. He told me he was taking me out for execution. But instead he brought me to a room where a woman journalist from the TV company was waiting. When asked about my nationality, I said I was Abkhaz. She argued with irritation and said she was Abkhaz and I was "apsua" (like they have been calling us, Abkhaz people, for the last few years). She wanted me to say Ardzinba had forced me to take up arms but I said it was my own land, Abkhazian land and I defended it on my own free land. The woman hit me on the back with a truncheon, then a militiaman joined her. I lost my consciousness. After an injection, I came to my senses. They went on questioning me. They wanted to find out where exactly our staff was located in Eshera. The journalist got angry and irritated and used abusive language. I was released as a result of prisoner exchange on October 29, 1992.

From the testimony of Bigvava A., born in 1931, inhabitant of Sukhum, Zarechnaya St. 2

When the guardsmen came my husband was at home. They said: "We know your son is fighting against us. If you don't give us money we'll kill you". When they found out we had no money to give, they started beating him brutally, they cut off his ear. My husband could hardly walk after that. The second time they came, they took him away. On their way they caught another Abkhaz. I don't know his name. While the soldiers were shooting him

down, my husband managed to escape having crawled to the lake. Several days later they helped him to arrive in Gudauta. Now he is in Kharkov and is being treated.

From the testimony of Tido U., born in 1918, inhabitant of Sukhum, Akirtava St. 21, Apt. 31

On November 17, 1992, two guardsmen banged on the door with butts of guns. They cried: "Open the door to the military police officers. We'll count up till three and fire". Using abusive language, they asked us why we were in good terms with the Abkhaz people. They searched the flat, broke the window glass of a cupboard and turned everything upside down. They drew up a statement that they had found no gun in the flat and made us sign. We refused as the document was written in Georgian. "May be you are making us sign our sentence to death?" we asked. The policeman burst out laughing and said, "Do you, poor thing, suppose I would waste paper on your sentence to death?" After they left us they started banging at our Armenian neighbor Ann's door.

From the testimony of Chkonias S., born in 1935, inhabitant of Sukhum, Mataradze St. 46

On November 03, 1992, 30 Georgian guardsmen surrounded our house. They took me and my brother prisoners and beat us cruelly. They fired at our house, broke the window, tore away the doors and took the bike from my child's grave in the yard...They put me and my brother into a car and drove to Tonish. All the way there and in the village Tsagera they went on torturing us. They broke my two ribs and hurt my head so badly that it bloodied. Soon my hat became full of blood. They had to take me to the hospital. There I was forced to give false evidence to the doctors about the wound on my head. After they put in the stitches we were taken to the police station. I survived thanks to an Abkhazian policeman, Bobua by name, who brought me food every other day. I stayed there for 18 days. On the day of the arrest I had 30 thousand roubles and 5 gold rings which they took away. I was released as a result of prisoner exchange.

From the testimony of Dzindzholia N., born in 1959, inhabitant of Tkuarchal, Lakoba St. 18/27

In the middle of September 1992 ten Georgian guardsmen came to my brother's place in Ochamchira and took him away. Three hours later they came again and demanded money and gold from my mother who is 70. They took all the money and jewelry and promising to return her son back left her. As we found out later on they were keeping him in the luggage compartment of their car while they were searching the house. They did not bring him home as they had promised. He was forced to run to and fro, tortured him in every possible way. He was tied to a car and dragged along the streets for every Abkhaz person to see what was awaiting for him in case...A Russia woman found my brother Raul at the sea-shore unconscious. They brought him to a hospital in Ochamchira where he was given first aid. Then a doctor, Dzindzholia by name hid him. Some time later Raul passed a note to my mother. She succeeded in removing him to my uncle's place - Zhilina Shamuglia. Frequent visitors aroused the neighbors' suspicion and my uncle's wife had to take him away from Ochamchira from where she managed to send him to Moscow. Now he is in the hospital and must be operated on

From the testimony of Kvarchia I., born in 1957, inhabitant of Sukhum, Gamistinskaya St. 45

After the war broke I moved to my neighbor Pachulia Daredzan's place. On August 24, 1992 four guardsmen came to her Abkhaz neighbor Kvitsinia by name. They turned everything upside down in the house. After that they visited us. They made us all - Daredzian, her four children (aged from 11 to 16), her mother and me stand in the corner and required information on our husbands from us. Having scattered everything on the floor, they took the money, gold and jewelry and left us.

From the testimony of Utchava A., born in 1944, inhabitant of the village of Kutol, Ochamchira Region

After I buried my son Roman who had been brutally tortured and killed, my younger son and I joined the guerillas. The Georgian guardsmen destroyed the house and the orchard with tanks. In October 1992 the so-called Georgian formation "Mkhedrioni" entered the village Kindgi. They came to Tuzkka Zhora's place who was seriously ill and stayed in bed. There were his wife, his daughter-in-law Tuzhba (25 years old), his grandchildren aged 3 and 4 years. The guardsmen lined them up in front of the sick man's bed and tormented them cutting them all over with knives. In the end they killed him and all the rest with knives, poured petrol inside and outside the house and burnt it. The Abkhaz partisans, who came to help managed to take the five dead bodies out of the house before it was burnt down to the ground. In October 1992 the guardsmen caught my nephew Igor Koitsinia and three more young men in the village of Atara-Abkhazskaya. They ordered Igor to get into the tank. When he refused they put a barbed wire around his neck, tied him to the tank and dragged him along the road for about a kilometer. They stopped this atrocity after the wire had cut his throat. Igor was 20. Utchava Inri, my elder brother, lived in Ochamchira. He had a house of his own and three cars. By their order he gave them two of his cars. When they demanded the third car, he refused to give in, they fired at his leg and broke it to pieces. Then he was put in the street and run over at the broken leg by a car being asked: "Do you want to live?" Thinking he was dead the guardsman left him. Now he is in a hospital in Moscow.

From the testimony of Tsikutania M., born in 1956, inhabitant of Sukhum, Esenia St. 34

I was at home when the war broke. I heard shots from everywhere, the planes bombing the town. After the negotiation between the two sides, the Abkhaz fighters moved off as far as Gumistra river. The third day we heard a column of endless tanks moving along Bzibzkaya highway and Eshba street towards Gumistra river. Tanks and armed people were placed at the big crossings of the town. The citizens hurried to the pier from where the Red Cross could evacuate them by boat or by ship. It was rather dangerous as the guardsmen fired at. When the tanks moved along Bzibskaya highway the soldiers on them fired at houses. People in horror hid in houses and cellars. This is the way they occupied the town. The building of the Abkhaz Television company became another source of disinformation of the population of Georgian-held territory of Abkhazia. My neighbor and I made up our minds to go to Ochamchira region on the seventh day. It was impossible to get there by bus because of the examination of passports. It was decided we would walk. So, early in the morning after the curfew we started. Going through the town we saw looted shops, some of them burnt down, "Belaya Rosa" for instance, met marauders with sacks of stolen clothes on the back. Here and there we saw snipers on the roofs. I met my neighbors who told me my house had been plundered and burnt down. All my notes for radio broadcasting, videos and manuscripts I had been working at during 13 years of my work in TV company were gone. I also learned that my neighbor Shamba Slava who made an effort not to let the marauders in had been shot down.

From the testimony of Z. Kh. Nachkebia, born in 1939, inhabitant of Sukhum, Bzibskooye shosse 232/37

On November 2, 1992, at about 12 p.m. three Georgian soldiers broke into my daughter's house. My daughter, Jopua Madina lives in Macharka, Gulripsh region. The guardsmen demanded money and gold...The neighbors, who heard the noise, tried to help my daughter. The guardsmen hit one of them on the head with the gun and then they left. The same day, at 6 p.m. they came again. This time there were 5 of them. One of the guardsmen was drunk. They ordered everybody not to move and made my son-in-law (Ruslan Jopua, 28 years old) stand at the wall. One of the guardsmen pressed his gun to his jaw and said that he had come to kill. My two year old granddaughter was in her bed. The guardsmen came up to her and put his knife to her neck. The child said to herself: "Don't cry, Lada, this man is good, he won't kill you" Ruslan's mother was pleading: "Please, don't kill my son. I won't live if he dies". The soldiers responded: "You may hang yourself, we'll kill your son in any case. The woman ran out of the house. Later she was found dead in the basement. She hanged herself.

From the testimony of Mzia K. Gindia-Daraselia, born in 1964, from the village of Pakuash, Ochamchira region

On October 11, 1992 the Georgian guardsmen entered our village. Lyudmila Gvinjia-Delba was crossing the street when the guardsmen stopped her. I saw a group of women marching in front of the tanks. I also saw children sitting on top of the first tank. The soldiers made Lyudmila join the women. They were using civilians as a shield. They released the people after they had reached the outskirts of the village.

From the testimony of Z.V. Turava, born in 1926, from the village of Tskhinskar, Ochamchira region

In our village they first killed Apta Ashba (55 years old). He was on his way home, when the Georgian guardsmen stopped him and took him to Tsagera. They killed him and threw his body in the vicinity. In the night time the villagers secretly took the body to Tskhintskar. Ashba's head was deeply cut with an axe, there were bullet-holes in his face. Georgi Sharko (38 years old) was also taken in the street. They first cut off his fingers, broke his arms and then cut off his head.

From the testimony of V.K. Dopua, born in 1938, from the village of Adzyubzha, Ochamchira region

On October 6th, local marauders together with the Georgian guardsmen came to our village. They captured every person they found in houses, among them: Amiran Dopua, his wife - Tatjana Nevinchannaya, their children Fatima Dopua (18 years old), Saida (16), Luiza (10), Garri (13), Shukri (15), Arkadi (4). The guardsmen seated the children on top of the tank while the grown ups were ordered to march in front of it. They moved in the direction of Dranda. Then they tied Julietta Jopua to the tank and dragged her along the street. The civilians were used as a human shield against guerillas. The same happened in the village of Kutol, where the Georgians captured 6 members of the family of N. Gvinjia, including 3 children aged from 5 to 10. The soldiers kept them in front of the bridge over the Tamish River, that had been blown up by guerillas earlier.

From the testimony of Zh. A. Ardzinba from the village of Tamsh, Ochamchira region

The Georgian guardsmen accused my neighbor Leonid Ivanenko of having hid his-in-law's car. They took him to the storehouse where agricultural chemicals were kept, showed him the body of a man and said, "We'll do the same to you". It was impossible to identify the body of Bzania J., who was recognized only by his clothes. When the guardsmen did not hear from Leonid what they were demanding, they dragged his 18 year old daughter Alla into one of the houses in the outskirts of the village. There were 18 of them there. They were keeping her for 3 days. At the end the girl went mad. The Georgians did the same to Alla's mother, Tamara Ivanenko.

From the testimony of L.A. Kvitsinia, born in 1911 and her daughter S.T. Kvitsinia, born in 1938, from the village of Atara, Ochamchira region

On March 24, 1992 the Georgian guardsmen invaded our village on tanks. We hid in the trenches and saw the Georgians burning down the houses of our relatives and neighbors, among them those belonging to Yura, Shaliko, David, Daur, Boria, Vitya, Levard, Rezo Kvitsinia, Lavrentyi Lataria. Other houses were burnt down later in December. On that at 9 a.m. the Georgian guardsmen started firing at our village. My daughter and I ran to the trenches and stood there knee-deep in water till 12 p.m. of the following day. We saw the Georgians enter our house. One of them shouted from the yard. 'Come here, there is a car here'

From the testimony of Marina Gvinjia from the village of Kindgi, Ochamchira region

On October 18, 1992, our family was staying at home: my father N.M. Gvinjia, brother Tamaz Gvinjia, my mother A. Gvinjia, sister-in-law I. Yu. Kakubava, grandmother L. Gvinjia, sister I.N. Gvinjia, children Gia, Denis, Murman, Alisa. Two children from our neighborhood (aged 5-4), our neighbor Z. Kiut, the wife of Valeryi Katsia were also in

our house. The shooting started. We saw that our house was surrounded by some 30-35 Georgian soldiers. They ordered us to gather in the yard under a tree and started to search the house. They took our gold and other belongings and began shooting over our heads. Then they started beating my mother. His son Denis was pleading, 'Please, don't hit my daddy! (Now when the child sees guns he starts running fever). I heard one of the soldiers shout, 'Stop, surrender!' He was addressing my cousin Z. Gvimjia. After a short pause I heard again the same command. My cousin did not stop and they killed him. The Georgians ordered me to bring a string and tie the hands of my relatives. They ordered me to stand at the head of the chain and then lead us through the village. After a while they freed me, but my relatives had to go to the main road. When they reached the highway, the Georgians started to hit them and shoot at them. They killed Z. Kiut. My father's ribs were broken, his head and fingers were also injured. They cut his face and ears. Later my father was exchanged. When he was brought home he did not recognize anybody. Even now he does not remember things. The Georgians were beating my father during interrogations. They burnt his face with cigarette stubs and hit him on the head. The soldiers also beat my sister and seriously injured her head. Then they raped her. My father was a witness to all this.

From the testimony of Fyodor Tarba, born in 1945, from the Gulripsh village, 10 Botanicheskaya St. Apt. 10

The Georgian guardsmen arrested me twice. First they came to my house on 12 September 1992. Six armed guardsmen put me into a car and took me in the direction of Bagmarani. It was 11 p.m. They demanded 150 thousand roubles from me and threatened to kill me if I did not raise the sum. On December 24, 1992 they arrested me the second time. Armed people, obviously svans (one of the Georgian tribes) wanted to take my wife and one of the neighbors with me. I begged them to leave my wife at home. Finally, my neighbor and I were brought to the holiday house in Varcha, where Doduani's battalion was quartered. They locked us in a small room (1,5m./2m.) where there were 7 other people:

1. Katsia Levarsa, a pensioner.
2. Katsia Satbey and his wife, pensioners
3. Gochua Andrey, 55 years old
4. Kvarchia Vadim, 18 years old
5. An Armenian, whose name I do not know. He is an economist from the village of Atara-Armyanskaya
6. A Russian by the name Nikolai, I do not know his family name. He was killed on January 20, 1992 and buried in the sand by the sea.

Among those who were interrogating us was someone nicknamed Ali-Baba. He was beating us, calling names, threatening to kill us in the name of "liberated Georgia". He did not allow us to switch on the light or to open the window...After 44 days I was exchanged for the prisoner of war.

From the testimony of Igor Lakerbaya, Abkhazian, born in 1933, from Ochamchira, Kogonia St. 2

The troops of the State Council of Georgia started to commit atrocities since the moment they were brought in to Abkhazia. They burnt down the houses, looted the stores and mugged the civilians, mainly of the Abkhazian background. At the beginning they burnt down the houses of R. Byuk-ogly, V. Kansuzyan, N. Adleiba, R. Tarba. They robbed Dima Agrba, Valerity Butba, Chiri Agrba, Appolon Agrba, Bochu Parkaya, Tyri Kvekveskiri, Boris Zhiba, Ivan Kakaliya, Shavlva Tvanba, Rostambey Kvadzba and many others. About 1000 houses were destroyed in the village of Merkula, Beslachuba, Tshenskar, Tamsh, Kindyg, Adzyubzha, Atara Abkhazskaya, the Armenian villages: Labra, Aracich, Atara Armyanskaya, Arasadzikh. Secondary schools in Adzhampazra, Arasadzikh and Gup were either destroyed or burnt down...I know that the Georgian guardsmen killed Grisha Marganiya, Zurab Turnanba, Sokrat Adleiba, Viktor Marokhia, a father and son by name of Gvaramiya, their neighbors, Turks by nationality, Gena Samushia and his wife, who was first raped and the soldiers cut off her leg. They burnt down their bodies in their houses. The guardsmen brutally murdered head of Tkuarchal police Ruslan Ashuba, who was

tortured, cut with the knives and then thrown into a gutter. The Georgian guardsmen arrested Bondo Khondzia, Director of the Tamish sovkhos, while he was at Ashuba's funeral. They tortured him for five days and then demanded a ransom amounting to 2 million roubles. They also robbed and beat up Director of the "Ertsakhu" restaurant Mushni Argun. They took his car and about 200,000 roubles.

From the testimony of Irina Skripnistaya, Russian, born in 1947, from Sukhum, Akirtava St. 21, Apt.31

The Georgian soldiers were searching my house. One of them was sitting on the table and playing with the gun. He said, "We have to exterminate the Armenians. They let us down in Gagra". When the guardsmen go robbing they first start shooting to intimidate the civilians and prevent them from going out. On the 14th of August when the troops were brought in and the tanks entered the town, the Georgian guardsmen were distributing guns to the Georgian inhabitants of Ladaria street. People were coming up to the lorries and taking as many guns as they wanted. Nobody was registering the distribution of weapons. In October they cut off the phone lines of Russian-speaking civilians. As it turned out, that was the order of the city's Commandant.

From the testimony of Lia Agumava, Abkhazian, born in 1944, from Sukhum, Lakoba St. 3, Apt. 19

On August 29, my son Murman Kvitsinia (born in 1964) was taken prisoner together with twelve other Abkhazian soldiers. All of them severely beaten before they were brought to prison. 40 Georgian guardsmen formed a live passage and hit with their guns the Abkhazians who were forced through that passage. Then they made the prisoners go down on their knees. They made them sit down and stand up by order. My son fainted. They dragged him into the cell. His head was seriously injured...The Georgian guardsmen kept asking the prisoners, "In what republic do you live?' The answer was "In the Republic of Abkhazia'. The Chief of the prison G. Khorguani, who happened to be our neighbor saved my son from being shot. My son's back was severely cut with a razor. The guardsman who was torturing him Karkarashvili's brother.

From the testimony of Svetlana Chkoniya, Abkhazian, born in 1946, from Sukhum, Mataradze St. 46

My nephew Aslan Chkoniya was working in the field when the Georgian troops attacked his village (Atara-Abkhazskaya). Aslan rushed to help his wife and baby. The guardsmen had already robbed his house and were leaving. Aslan's wife begged them not to take her husband. The guardsmen threatened to smash the baby against the wall if she did not stop crying. Together with Aslan they captured Kotick Jiut, who was going home after the funeral of a 37 year old Valeriy Shurdulava. Shurdulava had been killed a month earlier. His parents could not find the body. They identified him only by his shoes. The body was eaten by pigs. The guardsmen took both A. Chkoniya and K. Jiut through the village. On the way they also captured Aslan's father, Rauf Chkoniya (55 year old). Rauf was able to escape. His son and K. Jiut were killed. According to Chkoniya Rauf, the guardsmen said that they would not kill them if they were not in the list of those who had been sentenced to death.

From the testimony of Kakalia Z.N., born in 1946, inhabitant of Ochamchira

On February 3, 1992, two Georgian guardsmen came to Chama Tarba and her daughter's house. Her 65 year old mother was taken to the next room and after that they started beating her. Kaya, a woman of 45. They hit her on the head and on her face with butts of the guns and hands. They were beating her till she started bleeding from the nose and there appeared black circles around the eyes. They both were ordered to leave the house the next. So they did.

On March 30, 1993 the Georgian guardsmen dug out the dead body of Volodia Bigvava. They said they needed the corpse for exchange.

On February 13, 1993 at night the occupants came to Shaliko Amichba's house, who lives in Ochamchira, Kogonia str. They started torturing him. There were four persons in the house at the moment: a 65 year old master of the house, his wife Alexandria, who is 56, his mother-in-law Vardisha - 85 years of age, and their neighbor Margania Maro - 75 years old. The husband of the latter had been killed by the troops of the Georgian State Council. All of them were shot down. Later Georgians moved into the empty house.

From the testimony of Zarandia A.M., born in 1950

The corps of Tsurtsunia Sh.S (1931) was brought on December 11. The body was disfigured - he had been disemboweled with a knife and thrown over the bridge. After that the corpse of Anchabadze R.S. was found. His body was also disfigured.

From the testimony of Adleiba K.M., born in 1962, inhabitant of Sukhum, Argun St. 16, Apt. 301

I know from Amra Shakaya that on August 28, 1992 a bus with 10 Georgian guardsmen in it drove up to the block I live in. Our neighbors were standing at the house. They all were made to squat. Two guardsmen took Amra Shakaya to the 8th floor where her husband was. Then they both, the husband and the wife were taken downstairs and forced to get into the bus. All other neighbors were also made to do the same. They all were taken to the village Eshera where journalists and TV reporters were waiting for them at the bridge. There, in front of the camera, they were made to give false evidence on how the inhabitants of Sukhum lived peacefully, that the guardsmen did not trouble them or victimize. Those who refused to face the camera and speak were beaten heavily.

From the testimony of Tania A.V., born in 1935, inhabitant of Sukhum, Mayakivskaya St. 5, Apt. 22

On August 26, 1992 my wife took my child and left for Gudauta. I stayed at home. On August 20, 1992 at about 4 a.m. (I was not at home at the moment) the Georgian guardsmen broke into the flat and plundered it. They came again about 10 days later. They pretended to be looking for guns and said that I was hiding landing troops in the flat. While searching they out aside on a counter-pane the most valuable things they found. They took four parcels of them. At 3 a.m. the guardsmen visited me once again. This time they wanted me to give them the names and addresses of the most well-off Abkhaz people. I refused to give them the names and they took me away. There were six of them all dressed in black. They brought me to a cafe near Tbilisi hotel. There was a group of about 30 soldiers. There, all drunk, their guns scattered on the ground. I was ordered to stand at the wall and raise my hands. Then they started to insult me using abusive language. This humiliation was going on for about an hour. By this time my neighbor Llasha Fenlukidze having found out that the guardsmen had taken me away came after me. He quarreled with the soldiers and took me back home. After that I made up my mind to leave the town with the help of Russian frontier units located in Mayak region, near school No. 12, but the Georgians caught me and kept me inside the school for six days. One of my acquaintances set me free and took me home. In October after they had burnt down the State Archives of Abkhazia, The Abkhazian Institute of History, Language, and Literature, the Deputy Director of the Abkhazian Drama Theatre passed me a word to try to save the remaining property of the theatre after it had been plundered. While I was inside of the theatre three guardsmen came and found out that I was one of the leading actors of the theatre. They started humiliating me having tied me to a car. They made me run after from the theatre along the sea-shore and back. It went on for 30 minutes. Then they demanded my passport. When I handed it to them they tore out the two pages, filled in Abkhaz and Russian, saying: "We all live in Georgia". I was taken to the police station where they kept me for 29 days. During all the time they tortured me and showered abuse on me. They all were from the so-called "svan" group. On December 2, 1992 I got to Gudauta as a result of prisoner exchange.

From the testimony of Bechvaya A. Sh., born in 1963

She is an eye-witness of atrocious murder. In December the Georgian guardsmen made a 60 year old Miro Ftsintskvadze dig a grave for himself. Then they strangled him, cut off his throat and buried him.

From the testimony of Dopua Sh. K., born in 1932

He is an eye-witness of the murder of the following by soldiers:

- 1. Dopua Dzambul - 19 years old**
- 2. Gvindzia Murab - 22 years old**
- 3. Mishelia Vladimir - 30 years old**
- 4. Khashba Vladislav - 30 years old**
- 5. Lagvilava Viktor - 25 years old**
- 6. Lagvilava Atatoli - 40 years old**

They were all inhabitants of the village of Adzinba and shot down in the middle of November, 1992.

From the testimony of Chakvetadze S., born in 1943

On January 23, 1993, the Georgian guardsmen broke into Turava's house. His wife Turava Zanna and his sister Turava I. were brutally beaten and shot down. His daughter, Turava D. was raped, fired at her temple and back and killed. Then they burnt down the house together with the corpses.

From the testimony of Kitia G.L., born in 1936, inhabitant of Sukhum, Eshba St. 175 Apt. 55

From the beginning of the aggression my wife, our 16 year old son and me remained on the territory occupied by the Georgian troops. Our house is located opposite the Republican Hospital in Sukhum. Seeing the situation I sent my son to Ezevsk together with the neighboring children. We saw all the terrifying things done by the soldiers of the State Council. They broke into the houses and flats of Abkhaz and Armenian people in groups, plundered them, taking away everything they saw and taunted them. In a word we had an impression that they had to loot and torture the civilians. On September 18, 1992 at about 11 a.m., five armed soldiers knocked at our door. I opened the door. They demanded guns and searched the flat to see if any Abkhaz fighter was hidden there. They couldn't find anyone except us. They searched the flat, chose whatever they liked in it and started torturing us. One of the guardsmen took a kitchen knife and inflicted wounds on my neck. Then they hit me in the stomach with guns, on the left shoulder and on the back. I fainted. When I came to my senses, I heard my wife's shouts. She was screaming to kill her but not rape. I also started begging them not to torture her, be men and kill me instead, they hit me on the chest. Once again, I lost my consciousness. When I came to my senses I found nobody in the room. I got up and started looking for my wife. Not finding her at home I decided they had taken her with them. I don't remember how much time passed after all that. Then my neighbor Kvachakhia Levan told me that my wife was in the hospital and there was some hope for her to live on. In the morning people from the Procurator's Office and from the police came to my flat, made pictures and a careful inspection of everything. After that they took me to the police station. There they questioned me and made me sign different documents. Then they took me to the hospital and examined me. They asked me to give my consent on the dissection of my wife's body, but I did not allow it. With the help of Mengrelian relations I managed to bring the body of my wife to Gudauta where I'm staying now together with my son.

From the testimony of Papaskir T.E., born in 1941, inhabitant of Tskhitskar

Beginning from August 17, 1992 we heard exchanges of fire in the village. My daughter, my daughter-in-law with her five children and me left immediately for the village Chlow. My husband stayed to look after the house. On November 2, I was at home. The Georgian guardsmen entered the village in the tanks. All the valuable things were taken from the house, the rest was broken. My husband was in the street near the house. When they saw him they fired at him point-blank. Hearing the shots I took my son and rushed towards the forest. By the time we took the body of my husband home, the house had already been burnt. They shot 17 turkeys and took away 8 cows. We kept the body on the concrete in the yard and in the evening we buried it. On November 23, my son was wounded in the war.

From the testimony of Iasuria Z.A., born in 1956, inhabitant of Ochamchira, Baratash St. 31

The Georgian guardsmen came to us in August and demanded money and our car. I hid myself. The neighbors said that there was nobody in the house. Then they went to our neighbor Kvadzba by name. Our Mengrelian neighbors made us leave the house since my husband was fighting. For two months I stayed in the occupied town of Ochamchira with my three children. During the daytime I hid at my Abkhaz neighbors and spent nights with my relatives. There is a bread-baking plant near my house. They did not allow Abkhaz people to buy bread there. The Georgian guardsmen pushed them away from the plant with guns and sometimes they fired into the air. We would stay over the night in the yard to buy bread on the morning. On October 7, when it became too dangerous to stay in the town any longer I took my children and started towards Tkuarchal. Together with my 3 children and a bag with food I walked about 30 km along the road and got Tkuarchal which is under the control of Abkhaz guerillas. As my neighbor Kortava Sveta says, first the Georgian guardsmen lived in my house. Then they plundered it and blew it up when leaving in December 1992. I will be very grateful to the God if I do not go mad and survive.

From the testimony of Kvarchia E.V., born in 1970, inhabitant of Tkuarchal, K. Marx St. 22

In the middle of February my husband Dzindzolia M. was on board a Russian helicopter making a humanitarian flight from Tkuarchal to Sochi. (He was wounded in the left hand). They landed in Sukhum for a special inspection by the Georgian side. The guardsmen entered the helicopter and inspected the passengers. One of the guardsmen was from Tkuarchal and he immediately recognized Murman. His name was Dzabua and his nick-name was "Mukha". He said that Murman was one of the first in Tkuarchal to use a gun against Georgians. Telling the passengers they would only talk to him and bring him back, they took him away. Then they put him down on the ground, pressed his both legs (so that he could not move) and started beating him in the stomach. They hit him all over the body. There are still red spots on his toe-nails.

From the testimony of Dzindzolia D.B., born in 1973, inhabitant of Atara-Abkhazskaya, Ochamchira region

In February 1992 I was transferred from the town of Tuapse to Abkhazia to serve in the Army in Okhurei Garrison as a driver of an armored carrier-117. Together with another soldier Tsvinaria A., we stood guard duty over the post of auto inspection in Okhurei of Gali region. At about 9:30 we heard about 6-7 anti-aircraft machine gun shots mixed with gun shots from the Georgian territory. As our armored carrier-117 was behind the post in about 20 meters from it we decided to drive to the post having fired into the air three times. But by the time we approached the post, the Georgian troops with heavy artillery had already arrived there. The attempt to stop the fighting strength was useless. Since the forces were unequal and the post itself had already been surrounded by them. Thus, we were forced to give in without resistance. 23 Abkhaz guardsmen were taken prisoners together with the commander Bganba Zh. and were sent to the Department of Internal Affairs of Gali region. But on August 19, breaking the bars of the prison we managed to escape, but couldn't go far as we were arrested the same day at 5 p.m. by Achigvara militiamen together with the soldiers and local civilians. The arrested fighters were beaten with the guns, sticks, fists and rubber truncheon. They also punched us. The next day we were taken to Kutaisi by a helicopter. On the way there they exerted moral influence on us maintaining that the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia, Vladislav Ardzinba had committed suicide and that the fate of the Abkhaz nation had been

sealed. In Kutaisi prison the soldiers on duty constantly beat us with things at hand. They gave us only 100 gr. of bread a day and never took us out for a walk. I was twice made to give evidence on how I had escaped from prison and under what circumstances I had been taken prisoner in Gali region and in Kutaisi. The names of the people who beat and questioned us are unknown to me but I can easily recognize them when meeting. I was set free on October 8, 1992 as a result of prisoner exchange. On October 10, 1992 I was put into the hospital in Duripsh for a medical treatment. I still feel weak and exhausted

From the testimony of Kachibaya Oleg Sh., born in 1968, inhabitant of Gup, Ochamchira region

Early in June 1992 I joined the Abkhaz internal forces and was serving in the Garrison in Okhurei. Our commander was captain Bganba. We were located in about 400-500 meters from the post of car inspection. On August 14 we were in the barracks. At about 9.30 we heard gunshots from the direction of the post where about 10 of our soldiers were on guard duty. Sangulia R., Ashuba M., Kove R. and me got into a car and started towards the post to see what was going on there. We found out that the troops of the Georgian State Council had invaded into the territory of Abkhazia. The moment we arrived at the post the guardsmen disarmed us and took us prisoners. 27 fighters all in all were taken prisoners on the very first day in Okhurei post (Abkhaz guardsmen and their commander Bganba and four civilians). The Head of the Administration of Ochamchira region Igor Gurgulia was taken hostage together with us. We were all brought to the Department of Internal Affairs of Gali region. On August 18 at about 4 a.m. we all except Gurgulia managed to escape from the prison, but the same day at about 5 p.m. we were caught again by militiamen of Gali with the help of local civilians near the tea factory. The moment they caught us they started beating us mercilessly with butts, truncheons, sticks and with whatever they got at hand and punched us. Everybody without exception was against us, we felt hatred in their eyes. They assured us that the Georgian guardsmen would capture Abkhazia in a day and would abolish the Autonomous Republic. Personally I was subject to physical violence: they beat me with the guns in the temple, in the stomach and they seared cigarettes on the body. The most active among them was the militiamen from Gali Department of Internal Affairs who I can easily recognize when meeting. On August 19, they took us to Kutaisi by a helicopter. All the way there the guardsmen went on beating us brutally. They fed us only once in twenty-four hours in Kutaisi prison. The shortage of air and food made the young men exhausted and weak. They never took us for a walk during the 38 days they kept us there. I was set free as a result of prisoner exchange on October 10, 1992. They put me in the hospital in Duripsh to get medical treatment.

From the testimony of Kockveskiri E.G., born in 1973, inhabitant of Tkuarchal, Archba St. 83

In July 1992 the situation in Abkhazia changed for the worse and the internal forces of the Republic were sent to guard the agricultural units and the road from the river Psow to the river Inguri. With this purpose a sub-unit of 30 men under the command of captain Bganba was sent to the village Okhurei (Ochamchira region). On August 14, 1992, i.e. on the day of the invasion of the troops of the State Council of Georgia into the territory of Abkhazia nine soldiers were on guard duty. Having occupied the center of the town of Gali the troops unexpectedly came up to Okhurei post with heavy military equipment. It was at about 9:30. Headed by motor transport column they were moving cargo vehicles with cannon machine-guns, mortar, numerous tanks and armored carriers. Not far from the post the guardsmen armed with guns and grenades had been located there in advance. The Georgian troops made precautionary shots from anti-aircraft guns and ordered all the soldiers on the post to lay down their arms. Since it was useless to show resistance to such heavy equipment and manpower we all - 9 guardsmen and 14 soldiers from the sub-unit who came from the barracks had to give in. We were brought to the Department of the Internal Affairs of Gali region. On August 19, 1992 at 4 a.m. we managed to escape. The same at about 5 p.m. we were caught by the militiamen of Gali region with the help of local civilians nearby a tea plantation in Achigvara. Being caught I was mercilessly beaten by the militiamen and civilians with butts, rubber, truncheon, sticks and whatever they had at hand. And they also punched me. Everyone without exception showed hatred to us and to all Abkhaz people. In Achigvara personally I was beaten with a butt of a pistol in the head, on the face, they seared cigarettes on my body, they used abusive language. Then they fired shots around me and tortured me by putting the guns at my cars and shooting. As a result of it I became almost deaf. No doubt I can recognize them when meeting. On August 18, 1992 we were taken to Kutaisi by helicopter. On the way there inside the

helicopter the Georgian guardsmen kept beating us brutally. The same happened in Kutaisi prison. They fed us only once in 24 hours. Because of the shortage of food and air we all became exhausted. During the 38 days we were kept in prison they never took us out for a walk. As a result of prisoner exchange we were set free on October 08, 1992. On October 10, we were put in hospital in Duripsh, Gudauta region.

From the testimony of Klokova Irina Alexandrovna, born in 1960, Russian, inhabitant of Sukhum, Cachkhalia St. 12

My 12 year-old son has fallen ill for the third time since the beginning of the war. Even now his body is covered with blisters and rash, his lips look as if weather-beaten. Here, in Gechripsh, the doctors diagnosed: a nerve disease as a result of malnutrition, lack of sleep and being in the cold. This disease is a result of the war. My son used to get up at 4-5 o'clock in the morning and go to the bakery. It was the only way to buy some bread in Sukhum. He was beaten twice by the Georgian guardsmen. They shouted at him: "Get out of here!" There is no bread for you". And he saw them taking bread by sacks. We, Russians, were not treated like human beings.

Signed 24.04.93

From the testimony of Karchaa Paola Tavievna, born in 1945, Russian, inhabitant of Sukhum, Tbilisi Ave. 665, Apt. 31

On August 14, 1992 at 14.00 my husband Ivan Georgievich Karchaa was taken hostage by the Georgian guardsmen to be exchanged for our son Renat Ivanovich Karchaa - deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Abkhazia. It happened on Tbilisi Ave. on his way home when he found out the town. He was taken hostage by the denunciation of Alexander Berulava. The Georgians suggested that my husband should appear on television to denounce the Abkhazian Parliament and, in particular, his son Renat Karchaa who more than once over TV and in Parliament came out against the former Minister of Internal Affairs of Abkhazia Lominadze, deputy Minister Lominashvili and Akhalya. My husband refused to do that and together with other hostages, he was transferred to the Dranda prison. I knew nothing about my husband and son. The neighbors told me that they had seen our broken car near the Red Bridge. Thinking that my husband had been killed I started looking for my son. I was stopped by the guardsmen at the post on Tbilisi Ave. They demanded my documents. As I had no documents about me they began hitting me on the stomach and kidneys. The women around began to shout and they pulled me aside. Georgian tanks entered the town. Our neighbor Pataraya made a list of Abkhazian families to be destroyed. It was dangerous for me stay at home. I went to the KGB. I lost my temper and shouted that I would commit suicide and it would be known in Moscow and other parts of the world. In an hour my husband was released. The chief of the KGB Loseliani warned us that he couldn't guarantee our safety that was why we had to hide our friends. We were looking for the opportunity to leave Sukhum. In two weeks we managed to leave Sukhum for Sochi on a barge. Our neighbor who left Sukhum later told me that my son's and my apartments were robbed and burnt down. (Signed)

From the testimony of Taknedjan-Pashyan Veronik Antonovna, born in 1964, Armenian, inhabitant of the village of Labra, Ochamchira region

On January 24, 1993 three Georgian guardsmen burst into my parent's house. They demanded money. They didn't have anything. The guardsmen began to humiliate my 58 year old father and 56 year old mother. My paralyzed father was in his bed. The guardsmen hit my mother on her hands and broke them. Then they cut her belly and she died in a terrible pain. My father asked the guardsmen to shoot him and so they did. (Signed) Sochi, 16.05.93

From the testimony of Urumyan Kirkor Gabrielovna, born in 1961, Armenian

At the end of August, 1992 four Georgian guardsmen came to my house. They wanted to take away my car. I refused to give it to them. The guardsmen began hitting me first with the butts of their guns, then with the hands and feet. They hit me on the head, kidneys and feet. I couldn't move for 3 days after that. In 3-4 days other guardsmen came to my place. They demanded that I should join the Georgian guards. I refused and they brutally beat me. In December 1993 my friend Levon Danelyan and me were going home by bus. The bus was stopped by the Georgian guardsmen. They dragged us out of the bus and started beating us only because we were speaking the Armenian language. On March 8, 1993, I fled to Russia. (Signed) 17.05.93

From the testimony of Saakyan Natela Efremovna, born in 1941, Armenian, inhabitant of the village of Labra, Ochamchira region

At the beginning of October, eight Georgian guardsmen came to my house. They immediately saw our car in the yard and made me bring the key from the car. "If you don't bring the key we will burn down your house", they said. They fired at the house, burnt down the shed and the things I had hidden there. In November the Georgian guardsmen came to my house again. They took my husband together with our neighbors to the Georgian headquarters. In 24 hours my husband returned home. He was all in bruises. They beat him on the head and back, broke several ribs. I had to treat him for a week. I also had to treat my neighbors as they were also beaten by the Georgian guardsmen who demanded money and gold from all of us. After that we had to hide in the house of our son-in-law Gevorkyan Edik Sergeevich. In a week our house was burnt down by the Georgian guardsmen. Three days later they burnt down the house of our son-in-law. Finally we had to run away to Russia. (Signed) Sochi, 19.05.93

From the testimony of Karnedzyan Satenik Irvantovna, born in 1952, Armenian, inhabitant of the village of Merkheul, Sukhum region

The events I want to tell you happened on March 27, 1993. On that day, four Georgian guardsmen burst into our house. They demanded the key and a passport to the car. They saw my golden teeth and wanted to pull them out. But at that moment they heard shooting and left. Later they returned and said: "If you don't give us gold and money we'll take away your 11 year old son". They wanted to rape my 14 year old daughter, but she managed to escape. They fired after her. The same day the Georgian guardsmen brutally beat my godfather Torosyan Kazmik Arshakovich and his brother Torosyan Migran. Pushing them on by the guns the guardsmen led them 1 km through the village. The guardsmen made them count till 59 by turns. The one who counted 59 was supposed to be killed. It was the elder brother Migran Torosyan. The guardsmen shot him at once. Then they threw the emaciated Kazmik Torosyan into the car-trunk, covered him with the stolen tyre-covers and hens. Kazmik lost consciousness and the guardsmen thought that he was dead. They threw him into a kitchen-garden. Later he was taken to the hospital where he regained consciousness. Now he is hiding somewhere from the guardsmen who promised to find and kill him. On April 19 six Georgian guardsmen came to our street. All the Armenians from our street gathered at Zabik Vartanyan's house. The guardsmen divided into 2 groups. One group burst into Rafik Ovakilyan's house and shot him at once. He was 60. The other group rushed into the house where we all were sitting. They demanded money, gold and beat us all. They hit women with their boots on their bellies. I have bruises even now. They took one of the women - Dijuleta Torosyan - to a separate room, undressed her, beat her on the stomach, kidneys, broke her arms, hit on the fingers of the hands. She shouted, begged for help, but we could do nothing. Then they left saying that they would shoot down all the Armenians. (Signed) 17.05.93

From the testimony of Melkonyan Rafik Grigorievich, born in 1941, Armenian, inhabitant of the village of Labra, Ochamchira region

On December 7, 1992, five Georgian guardsmen came to our house. They wanted us to give them some place to sleep. On the next day they robbed us, then fired at our house and the neighboring ones, broke the fences by tanks. The same night the Georgian guardsmen burst into the house of Ashot Teknedjan who was bedridden. His wife - Varesin Teknedjan took care of him. The guardsmen demanded gold, money and valuables. The Teknedjans

had nothing to give them. The guardsmen killed them both, then pulled out their golden teeth. After that the guardsmen were amusing themselves by making the women undress and dance Armenian dances. The Georgian guardsmen pulled out golden teeth not only from the dead. (Signed) Sochi 15.05.93

From the testimony of Ovedyan Ashot Setragovich, born in 1929, Armenian, inhabitant of the village of Labra, Ochamchira region

In November 1992 the Georgian guardsmen came to our village. At that moment we were at our neighbor's house. His name is Sumbat Keshishyan. The guardsmen burst into the house, demanded money and gold. We didn't have any. They searched the house. Then they took all of us to the Georgian headquarters. There were eight of us: Kesheshyan Arshaus Arutinovna, Grigoryan Andronik Arutinovich, Kesheshyan Sumbat Ambartsumovich, Danilyan Khachik Barumovich, Saakyan Levon Agaserovich, Keisyan Suren Avetisovich, Avijigyan Georgi Samvelovich and me. They brought us to a technical station and began to humiliate and torture us. They beat us on the heads, faces, feet, kidneys. They fired guns to frighten us, then they tied us to each other and kept us for several hours. When they released us I ran away to the forest where I lived till December 6. On December 7 I came to my brother-in-law's house. His name is Litsiklyan Armenak. The Georgian guardsmen came there too and surrounded the house. There were three women in the house: Kitsiklyan Siran Arutiunovna, Keshebyan Arshlius Arutiunovna, Kesheshyan-Bolonko Anaida Sergeevna. The guardsmen burst into the house shouting: "Give us gold otherwise we'll kill you all". I said that we had no gold. They drove all the women out of the house into the yard and began to beat them. They put me by the wall and began shooting around me. Then one of the guardsmen hit me heavily on the back of my head. I fell down and lost consciousness. When I came to my senses the guardsmen had already left. In the middle of December I together with y family and 34 Armenians fled to Russia. (Signed) 16.05.93 Sochi

From the testimony of Nersesyanyan Nerses Andronikovich, born in 1946, Armenian, inhabitant of Sukhum, Kazbegu St. 78

On August 25, 1992 I was at home alone. At about 6 p.m. my wife's brother - Akaba Georgievich came to me. In several minutes the Georgian guardsmen drove up to my house. One of them introduced himself as a chief of the security service (I don't remember his family name). He demanded that I should tell him where the Chechens were hiding. When I said that there had never been any Chechens in my house and there were none of them there at that moment, they began to search the house. As soon as they entered the house they started taking away everything of value: a TV-set, a vase, clothes. They demanded money, then made me bring the bags and put my new clothes into it: underwear, shirts, even the shaving things. They were very pleased when they saw our passports. "How nice, an Abkhazian and an Armenian! You should be arrested at once", they shouted. They took us into the street shooting around our feet and in the air. Then they drove us to the house of the composers where their headquarters were located. They began to interrogate us. They punched me on the face, hit Akaba Georgi on the head with the butt of the gun. One man in a uniform declared: "We've spoiled these Abkhazians too much since 1953 (the year of Stalin's death). They must be all destroyed". They also expressed indignation saying that the Armenians betrayed the Georgians and supported Abkhazians. The guardsmen said that if we didn't pay 6 mln. roubles, they would shoot us down. "We have a special ditch here where we throw off the corpses", said one of the guardsmen. We spent the whole night in the locked room. In the morning they interrogated us again and beat us. They wanted money. I said that I had already given all the money I had and I would never be able to collect 6 mln. roubles. I think they finally understood it and released us. As soon as I returned home another group of the guardsmen came. I told them that I had already gone through the "filter" (it is a special term widespread among the Georgian guardsmen). They started abusing the Armenians and Abkhazians. Then the guardsmen began asking my Georgian neighbors how I behaved. If I was against the Georgians and defended Abkhazians. My neighbors said that I wasn't interested in politics at all and I was on good terms with everybody. After that the guardsmen rummaged all around the house and took everything they saw. When they were leaving they warned me that they would be back shortly. As I had neither documents nor money it was difficult for me to leave Sukhum, but in the long run I managed to escape. My Georgian neighbors advised me not to come back. (Signed) Sochi

From the testimony of Saakyan Andrei Oganosovich, Armenian, inhabitant of the village of Labra, Ochamchira region

There were about 900 houses and about 5000 residents in our village. Our village doesn't exist any more. It has been totally destroyed by the Georgian artillery. All the residents were ousted from their houses because they were suspected of having contacts with Abkhazian guerillas. They robbed all of us: took away money, gold, video, TV-sets, etc. The Svans living in the neighboring Georgian villages used trucks to take away our belongings, including furniture. They broke the fences, pulled out with the roots mandarin trees and other plants. The village people have suffered great material loss. Who will compensate for it? Today we are refugees without means for living. (Signed) 25.04.93

From the testimony of Nadezhda Livshits, Russian, inhabitant of Sukhum

On January 22, 1993 I was leaving Sukhum by a Russian military boat No. 040. The boat was carrying the families of the Russian military men and Russian inhabitants of Sukhum. There was a Jew, Minna Abramov (60 years old) among us. Like everybody else, he paid 6,000 roubles to the Georgian guardsmen who blocked the moor. Half an hour before the boat was to leave, 6 guardsmen came to Minna's cabin and announced that he was arrested. Minna refused to leave the boat. The guardsmen started to hit him with their gun butts. Minna's head was mortally injured. When he fell on the floor, the guardsmen started searching his clothes. They took his belt and left. We tried to get a doctor but it was too late. The guardsmen came back to take away the body. Tens of people witnessed all this. (Signed) 24.04.93

From the testimony of Andrey Saryan, Armenian, inhabitant of Sukhum, 2 Nazadze St.

On 22 March, 1993, the Georgian policemen came to my neighbor Georgi Martikyan and took him to the Commandant's Office. His family could not get any information about him for days. Only thanks to Andrey's brother, who is Archbishop of one of the Armenian Churches and who had to appeal to Shevardnadze, Andrey's body was returned to the family. There were marks of torture on the body, one ear was cut off, the bones were broken. 25.04.93 (Signed)

From the testimony of Lyudmila Shilova, born in 1951, disabled, Russian, inhabitant of Tamsh

In February, 1993 the Georgian guardsmen shot my neighbor Ozhodzhi Bzhania. He was shot in the head. The guardsmen did not allow the family to bury Ozhodzi. The neighbors and the family had to steal the body. On 19 February the guardsmen took my step-father to their headquarters. We have not seen him since. 7 guardsmen raped my neighbor Alla Ivanenko. They brutally beat Alla's grandmother. The old woman died shortly after that. The neighbors buried her not far away from the house. After the funeral the guardsmen dug out the body to pull out the golden teeth. The neighbors had to re-bury her. 05.05.93 (Signed)

From the testimony of Anna Zantarina, born in 1928, Russian, inhabitant of Tamsh

The guardsmen subjected the family of Kaliko Chloaria to horrible tortures. They put Kaliko on his knees before the fire-place and tried to put his head into it. The Georgians brutally beat Astamur Chanba. They also hit his 75 year old wife's head against the wall. They burnt down my house and destroyed the orchard. My husband, a daughter and me were severely beaten. We fled to Tkuarchal. 05.05.93 (Signed)

From the testimony of Nadezhda Tumanova, born in 1951, Russian, inhabitant of Sukhum, 1 Karl Marx St.

At the end of October 20 Georgian guardsmen came to my house. My relative Disua Hashig and her son Dima were staying with me. The soldiers immediately arrested Dima and took him to the Commandant's office. Dusia and me followed them to the headquarters. One of the guardsmen came up to me and said: "Be a good girl and I'll help you!". He and his friends forced me into the car and drove to the city outskirts. They raped me and then brought me back to the headquarters. I saw Dima who was severely beaten. 8 policemen were torturing him. With great difficulty we managed to take him home. Later he was exchanged and sent to a hospital in Russia. He has been under treatment for 4 months. One day, when I was walking home along the Tarkhishvily street, I saw that one of the houses was surrounded by policemen who did not let anybody near it. I heard horrified shrieks coming from the house. Somebody told me that the Georgians had captured Abkhazian women and now were raping them. I felt sick and fainted. 06.05.93 (Signed)

From the testimony of Raisa Kvekveskiri, born in 1941, Russian, inhabitant of Ochamchira, 190 Sukhumskoye shosse

On 25 October the Georgian soldiers set several houses on fire. On 27 October they broke into my house. They took all my things but could not take the furniture, so they broke it. In Zurab Turnanba's house they beat a 25 year old Eldar Lomia and his parents (62 year old Tsutsu Lomia and 65 year old Tsakva Lomia) only because they said they were Abkhazians. In Zurab's papers they found his son's picture with an inscription on it: "The People's Forum of Abkhazia". The guardsmen took away Zurab. Some time later one of them came back with Zurab's ear in his hand and said: "This is what is going to happen to you". Later were learned that the Georgians took Zurab to the beach. They pulled out his eye and badly stabbed his body. Then they threw him into the sea. Zurab's daughter Irma and her neighbors found the body and brought it to the house. Zurab's brother Rudik lived not very far. He wanted to go to his brother's but the guardsmen, who were drinking at his table, stopped him. One of them was boasting, that it was him who had killed Zurab. (Signed)

From the testimony of Bella Davidova, Armenian, inhabitant of Sukhum, 124 Prospekt Mira, Apt.76

On 13 September, 1992 at about 2 p.m. my brother-in-law I. Ketsba, my acquaintance E. Ermian and me witnessed a horrible scene in front of the Abkhazian Drama Theatre. The Georgian guardsmen, who were obviously drunk drove up to the building of the Theatre by tanks. They fired their guns at the building and then broke into the theatre. They dragged out Abkhazian national costumes, put them on and started imitating Abkhazian songs and dances. One of the passers-by lost control and shouted to stop it. In response the Georgian guardsmen shooting and threatened to kill her. The orgy went on for an hour. (Signed) 23.03.93 Gudauta

From the testimony of Zinaida Klokova, born in 1936, Russian, inhabitant of Sukhum, 12 Chachkalia St.

My son-in-law Vitaly Karatsupa was killed on 17 March. He served as a cook in the Abkhazian Army. For 7 months I lived in an occupied town. We did not get any money. It was extremely difficult for non-Georgians to buy food. One day when I was standing in a queue to buy some bread, one of the Georgian guardsmen came out of the store and said: "It is Eltsin's business to feed you". At a milk store I saw the guardsmen kill a woman only because she asked him to pay for the food he was taking. My acquaintance Larisa (I don't remember her last name worked in a drug-store No. 4. The guardsmen killed her husband, raped her and her 16 year old daughter. My neighbor Lidia Demirchan was packing her things to leave the town. 6 guardsmen came to her place and demanded money and golden things from her. She tried to escape and was shot in the head. The guardsmen told us: "If you want to live in Georgia you must have Georgian citizenship and speak Georgian". It is very hard to be a Russian in Sukhum today. They give pensions only to the Georgians. Many Russians have died in the past 7 months. They were buried near their houses. It is next to impossible for the Russians to leave Sukhum because they have no money.

(Signed) 24.04.93 Gechripsh

From the testimony of Anaida Topolian, born in 1959, Armenian, inhabitant of Sukhum, 11 Mayakovsky pereulok

In October 1992 five Georgian guardsmen broke into our house. They wanted 5,000 roubles gold and weapons. They started beating my husband Valery Topolian. They threw him on the floor and pointed a gun at him. One of them said: "There is only one bullet in the gun. If you are lucky, you will be alive". They were torturing him for several hours. One of the neighbors called the police. When the policemen learned that our last name is 'Topolian' (Vice-Chairman of the Abkhazian Parliament is also Topolian, they wanted to kill him but changed their mind and took him to the headquarters. He was released a day later. In two days the guardsmen came again. 15 of them entered the house, about 20 surrounded the street. My husband and me were hiding in some other place. The guardsmen broke into the house of my neighbors, Rosa Avetisian and Zaitar Gambarian and demanded that they would show them where we were hiding. The woman said they did not know where we were. Their house was immediately set on fire. The same night my husband fled to Russia. (Signed) 17.05.93 Sochi

From the testimony of Goar Galustian, born in 1951, Armenian, inhabitant of the village of Labra

On 12 January, 1993, the Georgian guardsmen broke into Rafik Teknejan's house. They made him lie on the floor and took his wife to the second floor. There they tore away her clothes and started to demand money and gold from her. Then the guardsmen took Rafia and his brother Suren out into the yard and made them dig their own graves. Rafik's wife brought two golden rings. The guardsmen said that they could only save one life. She brought another two and the hostages were freed. Two days later the same guardsmen came to Levon Gevorkian and killed him in the bathroom. (Signed) 17.05.93 Sochi

THE OCCUPATION OF ABKHAZIA AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

NATELLA AKABA

There is every evidence to maintain that ethnic cleansing was being carried out on the territory of Abkhazia occupied by the Georgian troops, i.e. the town of Sukhum, Gulriphsh and Ochamchira regions.

1) Abkhaz and Armenian villages - Tamish, Ardzinba, Beslkhuba, Markula, Labra, Atara-Armianskaya and others have been destroyed. The inhabitants of these villages had to seek refuge in more remote villages or in the blockaded mountain miners' town of Tkuarchal.

2) Thousands of Abkhaz, Russians, Armenians, Greeks, Turks and people of other nationalities have been taken hostage and put to prison without any official charges. Some of them were shot down, others were exchanged or released under the pressure of public opinion.

3) From the first days of aggression the miners' town Tkuarchal situated high in the mountains has been blockaded by the Georgian troops. The Georgian authorities cut off the electricity there. The residents of the town, especially children have been suffering from food and medical shortages. The Georgian side is preventing the delivery of food by air. There are thousands of exhausted people and many cases of starvation have been registered there.

4) There are a lot of documented evidence of atrocities committed by Georgian troops against the hostages. The Abkhaz fighters who were taken prisoners since the beginning of the war have been put to even more cruel torture by the Georgian military leadership, which is a gross violation of the Geneva Convention. Thus,

on January 9-10, 1993, 12 Abkhaz and Russian fighters had been executed by their Georgian captors just before a prisoner exchange. The experts confirmed that they all had been brutally tortured.

5) On December 14, 1992 the Georgian militarists committed another crime: a helicopter evacuating refugees from Tkuarchal was shot down in the Georgian-controlled zone. 36 children, 32 women, among them 8 pregnant, were burnt alive. Officials in Tbilisi did not even find it necessary to express their condolence on the occasion.

6) From the first days of occupation the Georgian authorities have been encouraging their soldiers to large-scale gangsterism and looting of Abkhaz, Armenians, Greeks, Russians, Turks and (other) residents of other nationalities on the territory under their control. Not a single fact of marauding, extortion or encroachment on the property and pride of civilians has been denounced by them, no criminals have been punished. Thousands of people are deprived of their property and dwellings.

All the above mentioned facts and many others give rise to maintain that gross and systematic violations of the fundamental human rights against mankind, against the property of civilians occurred in Georgia and the occupied territory of Abkhazia.

The Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict: In Search of Ways out

Viacheslav A. Chirikba

"The principle of the free self-determination of nations [is one] upon which all the modern world insists (...) It is the principle of justice to all peoples and

nationalities, and their right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one another, whether they be strong or weak".

Woodrow Wilson

The collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War and the appearance on the map of Europe of dozens of new states marked a transition in world history: from a bipolar world, dominated by two superpowers, to a completely new situation characterized by a substantial increase in the importance of internal and regional issues, including regional conflicts. In Western Europe, the fast-growing integration of national structures into a pan-European megastructure is leading to the erosion of classical notions of the state, including such sacred cows as state borders and state sovereignty.

But old notions, which reflect the preceding Cold War era or even more archaic periods of history, still dominate major international organizations, the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe included. Arguably, any true reform of the United Nations, now much spoken about, should not be confined to fighting its bureaucracy and ineffectiveness, but - even more importantly - should get this major international organization to face the burning regional issues that are now to the fore in the making of the world's history. The UN should defend not only the interests of recognized governments, but also those of the peoples ruled, and sometimes oppressed, by these governments - it should become more an organization for peoples than for nations. Ethnic minorities should have their own place in UN structures, so that their voices are heard when important decisions or resolutions that directly affect their interests

are being adopted. It is only because of the UN and OSCE's insensitivity to the plight of ethnic minorities that many of these see no other way out than to resort to violence in order to assert their rights and defend their interests.

It could be argued that a more principled approach by the United Nations to the conflict situations emerging in different parts of the world could, in many cases, help to overcome any deepening of these crises. Taking Georgia and Abkhazia as an example, one can ask whether it was normal that a country like the newly born Republic of Georgia should have been admitted to the UN in conditions of unresolved ethnic conflicts and civil war, simply because an allegedly pro-democracy leader came to rule the country after the democratically elected president had been deposed by a military coup. Was it normal that when in August 1992 this same leader, a short time after Georgia was granted UN membership, started a major military campaign against the small Abkhazian republic that was seeking more autonomy; when there were numerous reports of bloodshed and abuses of basic human rights; when, in a televised address, the commander of the Georgian forces in Abkhazia explicitly threatened the entire Abkhazian population with genocide;(1) when the monuments to Abkhazian culture were being desecrated and the National Archives and scientific establishments of Abkhazia were being burnt to ashes; when there were numerous appeals to the United Nations by the Abkhaz authorities and different international organizations and NGOs to intervene and help to stop violence - that, despite all this, there was no response whatsoever from the United Nations? But when Georgia began to lose ground in Abkhazia and, sensing imminent defeat, appealed to the United Nations to help preserve its "territorial integrity", it immediately got a positive reaction. Is it normal that the United Nations resolutions should invariably use pejorative language towards Abkhazians and their elected authorities and, paradoxically, should treat Abkhazia as a culprit and the Tbilisi government, which started and waged the war, as a victim? And such an attitude is characteristic not only of UN. In one of its resolutions, the

European Parliament called the Abkhazian Government a "bandit-terrorist movement".(2) This and many other instances clearly demonstrate the exclusively pro-government - whatever the government - attitude of major international structures, and their utter insensitivity to the voices of anyone other than recognized governments. It is this (in my view) outdated approach that needs to be reformed.

Self-determination

All the UN Security Council resolutions on Georgia/Abkhazia - notorious for their one-sided pro-Georgian stance and harsh language towards Abkhazia - while ritualistically repeating the demand for respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Georgia, leave out one very important element. Not a single word in these resolutions addresses the concerns of the Abkhazian side of the conflict or the legitimate and inalienable right of the Abkhazian people to self-determination.

The right to self-determination remains a burning issue for the international community, and one which the United Nations and OSCE are failing - or rather, are unwilling - to address properly. Though this principle is enshrined in the United Nations Charter (in Article 1), priority is in fact given to the concurring principle of territorial integrity and the inviolability of state borders. The history of the last decade, with the sudden and unexpected disintegration of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, as well as the separation of Eritrea from Ethiopia, has showed that today this principle has only relative validity, and should be applied more to forced changes of the borders of one state by another

state or states than to the emergence of two or more new states from an older one.

A number of important points emerge from this. First, whatever the apocalyptic predictions may be, the separation of part of a state does not necessarily lead to the annihilation of that state. It should be noted that despite the de facto separation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, populated by distinctly non-Georgian and independently minded nations, Georgia managed to acquire its much-needed internal coherence and enjoy the first years of a dynamic and relatively peaceful development. Secondly, it is sometimes more expedient to release part of a country and let it form an autonomy (as in the case of Gagauzia in Moldova), or even a separate state, than to engage in a bloody, costly and inhuman war trying to hold on at any cost to the independence-seeking territory, which is usually populated by a non-related people. Some analysts rightly call this latter phenomenon "aggressive integrationalism", a description that fully applies to such a state as Georgia and to some other multi-ethnic states which, in the course of their history, incorporated or annexed territories and their indigenous populations. As noted by Gidon Gotlieb in his book *Nation Against State*, "The denial of statehood to the peoples who have engaged in a long and painful struggle or who continue to resist alien rule is increasingly difficult to justify even as the imperative of limiting the number of new states is becoming more pressing".(3)

While informally discussing these problems with high-ranking UN officials, the Abkhazian delegation in Geneva was reminded that much bloodshed in world history had been caused by the striving for self-determination. At least two contrary arguments can be put forward against this claim, typical of the current UN attitude towards the issue of self-determination.

First, the overwhelming majority of the present UN member states came into existence precisely through asserting their right to self-determination, often by way of military struggle, the best-known example being the United States of America. In more recent times, the fifteen newly recognized states of the former Soviet Union and the former union republics of Yugoslavia, as well as Slovakia and Eritrea, emerged as independent states and were recognized by the international community through realizing their right to self-determination, by separating from other states and by changing internationally recognized borders. Incidentally, most of these examples show that, as such, the realization of the right to self-determination does not necessarily lead to violence and bloodshed, and that the "divorce" can be arranged in a peaceful and civilized manner.

Second, in justifying military action by the need to preserve a country's territorial integrity, aggressive integrationalism can lead to no less violence and bloodshed than is usually ascribed to the striving for self-determination. Examples of this abound, but the closest to my theme are the bloody wars waged by Georgia against South Ossetia and Abkhazia and by Russia against Chechnya.

In discussing the different forms of self-determination, I would like to put special emphasis on the cases where the competing principles of territorial integrity and the right to self-determination can - though this may sound paradoxical - coexist peacefully. This can happen when a distinct territory is content to limit its claims to internal self-determination, which means the creation of a smaller state that maintains its internal sovereignty, or internal independence, without breaking away from the bigger state within whose borders it is confined. And this is exactly the case of Abkhazia and Georgia. One could discuss at length how to name such a complex state: a confederation, a loose federation, or associated territories. Whatever the name, what is really important here is that peace is being preserved between the different ethnic components of a bigger state, that the borders are

not violated, and the population of all parts of the formerly unitary state can fully enjoy the privilege of peace.

Similar federalization processes are taking place in our day in parallel with the more visible integration of Europe. We see the federalization of Belgium and the creation of separate Flemish and Wallonian parliaments, we observe the process of the devolution of power in Great Britain and the setting up of Scottish and Welsh parliaments, as well as the campaign for federalization in Italy. Contrary to fears that such measures might undermine a country's stability, one can argue that the reverse may be true: they can actually lead to a strengthening of the country in question, as they allow it to avert the danger of a destructive explosion caused by the long-suppressed dissatisfaction of ethnic minorities or distinct territories.

Devolution of central power, shared responsibility, shared sovereignty, internal self-determination, internal sovereignty, internal self-government by smaller nations within bigger states - all these issues, when properly addressed, present a promising perspective for many countries that have, for decades, been vainly fighting the spectre of "separatism" at a cost of huge financial, military and human resources. Such solutions can, arguably, serve not as a destabilizing, but, on the contrary, as a stabilizing factor for the state in question, as they allow it to achieve a vitally important internal coherence between its ethnically heterogeneous components.

The Validity of Abkhazian Claims to Statehood

Before describing the situation with the Georgian-Abkhazian peace process, I would like to say a few words about Abkhazians and their country simply in order to make it clear that the Abkhazian people have legitimate grounds for their claims to statehood and sovereignty. Abkhazians speak a language unrelated to Georgian. They have their own distinct culture and history. Abkhazians have never been, have never regarded themselves, and have never been regarded by Georgians or, for that matter, by any other people, as part of the Georgian nation. Apart from short intervals, they have always enjoyed independent statehood or very high levels of political autonomy.

The Abkhazians living in Abkhazia are predominantly (Orthodox) Christians (some 60%) or Sunni Moslem (some 40%).(4) The majority of Moslem Abkhazians were deported by the Russian Tsarist administration to the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the 19th century as a punishment for their fierce resistance to the Russian occupation and colonization of Abkhazia.(5) This explains, on the one hand, the existence of quite a sizeable Abkhazian diaspora in Turkey and some Middle Eastern countries(6) and, on the other, the fact that Abkhazians now represent only a minority in their own homeland.(7)

Contrary to the claim that Abkhazia has always been a part of Georgia, the real historical situation was quite different, because from the 13th century until 1918 Georgia as a single state simply did not exist. In the 8th century, Abkhazians created the Abkhazian Kingdom, which united in the 10th century with several Georgian kingdoms to form a united Abkhazian-Georgian Kingdom. In the 13th century this united kingdom was destroyed by the Mongol invasion, and from that time up until 1810 Abkhazia was always an independent principality, while Georgia disintegrated into a number of different principalities and "kingdoms", which in the 19th century were incorporated, one after another, into the Russian Empire. In 1810 the Abkhazian Principality, independently of Georgian lands,

joined Russia. Even within Russia, the Abkhazian Principality under the Princes Chachba managed to maintain its political autonomy until 1864, at a time when all Georgian lands were reduced to mere provinces of the Russian Empire.

One often hears that autonomous status was granted to Abkhazia by the Bolsheviks, ostensibly in a plot to undermine Georgia's sovereignty. Again, the real situation was quite different. After the Russian Revolution of 1917, Abkhazia remained independent from Georgia. On 8 November 1917 the Congress of the Abkhazian People formed the Abkhazian parliament (the "Abkhazian People's Council"), which adopted a "Declaration" and "Constitution". On 11 May 1918, the Batum Peace Conference proclaimed the Mountainous Republic, which included the whole of the North Caucasus and Abkhazia. That same year, Abkhazia was occupied by the troops of neighbouring Georgia, who declared Abkhazia a part of Georgia and imprisoned members of the Abkhazian parliament, leading to protests from the command of the allied (British) forces in Transcaucasia and the Russian White Army. In 1921, Abkhazia and Georgia became Sovietized. On 31 March 1921, an independent Soviet Republic of Abkhazia was proclaimed. On 21 May 1921, the Georgian Bolshevik government officially recognized the independence of Abkhazia. But the same year, under pressure from Stalin and other influential Georgian Bolsheviks, Abkhazia was forced to conclude a union (i.e., confederative) treaty with Georgia. Abkhazia still remained a full union republic until 1931, when its status was downgraded, under Stalin's orders, from that of Union Republic to that of an Autonomous Republic within Georgia. This act of incorporation of Abkhazia into Georgia was conducted without the approval and against the will of the Abkhazian people and caused mass protests in Abkhazia. Thus the creation of the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic within Georgia was not the result of the granting by the Bolsheviks of autonomous status to one of the republic's minorities, as it is often alleged, but was rather the forced convergence of two neighbouring states by the incorporation of one of them, Abkhazia, into the other, Georgia.

Another typical misunderstanding is that, by adopting certain constitutional acts in 1990-1992, the Abkhazian Republic proclaimed its independence from Georgia. In fact, Abkhazia has never officially declared its separation from Georgia. All acts undertaken by Abkhazia, beginning in 1990, were designed to protect its autonomous political status, deemed necessary in view of the numerous statements made by leading Georgian politicians that they doubted the legal character of Georgia's autonomies and even threatened to abolish all of them and transform Georgia into a unitary state.

The Act of State Sovereignty, adopted by the Abkhazian Parliament in 1990, was to protect the Republic's federal status from being ignored or eliminated by the Tbilisi government. Abkhazia adopted this act following analogous acts adopted by all the other former autonomous republics of the Soviet Union, and in none of these other cases did this mean the separation of their territory from that of the metropolis.

By reverting in 1992 to the Constitution of Abkhazian Republic of 1925, in which relations between Abkhazia and Georgia were based on a special Treaty of Union, Abkhazia was attempting to overcome a constitutional vacuum in its relations with Georgia after the abolition by the Georgian Military Council of all constitutional acts adopted in Georgia during Soviet times, and after its return to the Constitution of the Georgian Democratic Republic of 1921, in which the autonomous status of Abkhazia was not defined. By adopting its new constitution in 1994, Abkhazia broke off its last remaining ties with the old Communist regime, and declared Abkhazia a sovereign democratic state. This constitution did not specify the form its relations with Georgia should take, as these were to be defined through political talks with Georgia. Nor were the status of Abkhazia or its relations with Georgia specified in the new Georgian constitution.

The Georgian War Against Abkhazia (1992-1993)

In 1991 the Soviet Union disintegrated. In May 1991, the one who became the first president of an independent Georgia was the ardent nationalist Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who actually pursued the policy of "Georgia for the Georgians". A year later, Gamsakhurdia was deposed as a result of a coup d'état organized by warlords and ex-criminals Tengiz Kitovani and Jaba Ioseliani. The former Communist boss of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, who was perceived in the West as a "democratic" politician during his service as the USSR's Foreign Minister, was invited to rule the country, although his alleged democratic credentials did not convince the Georgians or former autonomies within Georgia, who knew Shevardnadze all too well as a staunch Brezhnevite - one who, for more than 10 years, had ruled Georgia with an iron fist. As the new Georgian leadership declared all laws adopted during Soviet times null and void, the leadership of the former Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, in order to save Abkhazia's political autonomy from being overridden, proposed a draft treaty whereby Georgia would become a federative state of which Abkhazia would be a constituent republic. The Georgian answer to this initiative was to launch a major military attack on Abkhazia on 14 August 1992. The Georgian leaders announced that there would be no autonomies in the new Georgia. To that country's great humiliation, the war was lost by the undisciplined and poorly trained Georgian army. Most of Abkhazia's non-Kartvelian minorities (Armenians, Russians, Ukrainians, Greeks, Turks, etc.) allied themselves with the Abkhazians in their struggle against the aggressors. In addition, related peoples from the North Caucasian republics, notably Chechens, Circassians and Abazas, came to Abkhazia and fought alongside the Abkhazian forces. The war ended in late September 1993 with the decisive victory of the Abkhazian army and its North Caucasian allies.

The much speculated-about Russian military assistance to the Abkhazians should not be overestimated, as it is in practically all Georgian and many Western publications. First, there was of course no direct involvement by Russian troops in any Abkhazian operations (apart from the participation of Russian and Cossack volunteers; Georgia, in turn, was assisted by fighters from Western Ukraine). Despite allegations, nobody has yet produced any compelling evidence to prove such involvement. For example, the UNPO human rights mission that visited Tbilisi at the end of 1993 could not obtain from the Georgian side any reliable evidence to support such charges.(8) One could perhaps claim that the bombardment of Georgian positions at the Gumsta front by Russian military planes could serve as proof. But the Russians themselves made no great secret of such raids, and explained that they were provoked by the Georgian artillery shelling of the Russian military laboratory in Eshera which caused numerous casualties, including deaths, among the Russian personnel. Arguably, all warfare is a profitable business, and the war in Chechnya showed that, paradoxically, some Russian elements sold weapons to the Chechen side in order to make a profit. In the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict too, all weapons on both sides were, after all, of Russian origin.

The difference was that while Georgia was getting huge amounts of weaponry and ammunition from the former Soviet Army free (in accordance with the CIS Tashkent Agreement, and via many other, non-official, channels), Abkhazia had to buy weapons from elements of the Russian army stationed in Abkhazia and beyond. The Russian military had no scruples about selling arms to any side, although, admittedly, in general their personal sympathies lay more with the Abkhazians, who were fewer in number and therefore much more vulnerable. The selling of arms to them was regarded as a fair business, to counterbalance their numerical weakness. Besides, many weapons were coming to Abkhazia from or via North Caucasian sources and, probably, also via the diaspora.

One of the unexpected consequences of the Abkhazian victory became the mass exodus of ethnic Georgians (or rather Kartvelians, i.e., Georgians, Megrelians and Svans) from Abkhazia. During the Georgian occupation of parts of Abkhazia, many local Georgians collaborated with the troops sent by Tbilisi and, together with these troops, were responsible for acts of murder and other atrocities, as well as looting, perpetrated against their Abkhazian, Armenian and Russian neighbours. After the Abkhazian victory, fearing reprisals, the panic-stricken Kartvelian population of the republic fled en masse.

The Georgian side accuses Abkhazia of the ethnic cleansing of the Georgian population of the republic. In response to these accusations the Abkhazian side has stated that the Georgian population of the territory of Abkhazia south of Sukhum fled to Georgia and elsewhere before the arrival of Abkhazian troops, and that it was not the policy or intention of the Abkhazian government to expel Georgians or any other ethnic group from Abkhazia.

After the Abkhazian capital Sukhum was retaken by the Abkhazian troops, as a result of fierce fighting, there were in fact no other major battles between the Abkhazian and Georgian forces because the latter, demoralized by their defeat in Sukhum and by the dynamic Abkhazian army advance, rushed in panic (often leaving their heavy weaponry behind) towards the Georgian border, or to the Svanetian mountains, in exactly the same way as had already happened earlier in Gagra. This disorderly retreat caused, in turn, great panic amongst the local Georgian civilians, who followed the fleeing Georgian soldiers en masse, with the result that when the victorious Abkhazians entered the previously occupied territory of their republic to the south of Sukhum, all they encountered in villages and towns were mostly deserted Georgian houses. The statement by the Supreme Council of Abkhazia, issued on 11 October 1993, read:

The local Georgian population, which in the course of a year-long war either witnessed or participated in the brutal outrages of the Georgian soldiers against civilian Abkhazians, Armenians, Russians and Greeks (mainly old people, women and children) (...) preferred to leave Abkhazia for fear of acts of revenge.

A UN fact-finding mission was sent to Abkhazia by the Secretary-General in October 1993 to investigate human rights violations, especially the reports of ethnic cleansing. The mission was sent at the insistence of the Georgian side, and as a precondition to Georgian participation in talks in Geneva. Though in its report the mission stressed that it was not in a position to ascertain whether it had been a policy actively pursued by the authorities of either side, at any time, to clear the areas under their control of either the Abkhazian or the Georgian population, at the same time it clearly stated that most Georgians living in the region between the Gumsta and Ingur rivers had tried to flee before the arrival of the Abkhazian forces.(9) Incidentally, some more objective Georgian authors also prefer not to exploit the controversial term "ethnic cleansing", speaking instead in terms of the flight of the Georgians from Abkhazia.(10) However, official Tbilisi, which is trying to score points in its propaganda war against the Abkhazian Republic, continues its accusation of "the ethnic cleansing and genocide of the Georgian population of Abkhazia", while at the same time disclaiming all responsibility for unleashing the war in Abkhazia in August 1992 or for the establishment of the regime of terror on the occupied territory of Abkhazia.

Peace Process

The negotiations process between Georgia and Abkhazia, which started in December 1993 in Geneva under UN auspices and with mediation by the Russian Federation, initially produced promising documents, one of the most important of which was the "Declaration on measures for a political settlement of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict", signed on 4 April 1994 in Moscow. The declaration emphasized the wish of the parties to reinstate their state-legal relations and outlined the contours of a future common state. According to this declaration, the Abkhazian Republic is to have its own constitution, parliament and government, and appropriate state symbols. The document delimits the spheres of separate and shared Georgian/Abkhazian competence. Abkhazia is to delegate some of its state responsibilities - such as foreign policy and foreign economic ties, border guard arrangements, customs, energy, transport and communications, ecology, civil and human rights and the rights of ethnic minorities - to the common (federal) organs of power. All other responsibilities will remain the unique prerogative of the Abkhazian State. The declaration was signed by the parties to the conflict and the representatives of Russia, the UN and the OSCE in the presence of the Russian Foreign Minister, the UN Secretary-General and many Western ambassadors.

The relative stabilization of the situation in Abkhazia and the deployment of CIS peacekeeping troops and UN military observers on the border between Abkhazia and Georgia along the Ingur river allowed some 70,000 Georgian (mainly Megrelian) refugees to return to their homes in the Gal region of Abkhazia. These people, however, are suffering because of the destroyed economic infrastructure and large numbers of landmines, some of which are still being deployed by subversive Georgian groups.

But the political process of the peaceful reintegration of Georgia and Abkhazia, as envisaged by the Declaration of 4 April 1994, was given no follow-up, and the

situation took a turn for the worse. What happened was that Georgia, after having recuperated from the blow inflicted by military defeat, began revisiting the essential provisions of the Declaration of 4 April and trying to solve the problem of Abkhazia by separate military agreements with Russia and increased political pressure on Abkhazia. During the visit by the Russian Prime Minister, Chernomyrdin, to Tbilisi in 1995, it was agreed that Russia would help to restore Georgia's rule over Abkhazia in return for five Russian military bases in Georgia for a period of 25 years. These arrangements provoked a strong protest from Abkhazia. Instead of trying to resolve its differences with Abkhazia by means of mutual accommodation, Georgia, starting from the false premises that military intimidation and an economic blockade could force Abkhazia to give up its claim to sovereignty, preferred to reappear, as in the 19th century, as a major military ally and foothold for Russia in Transcaucasia. The UN is supporting the tough stance newly adopted by Georgia, blaming Abkhazia, as usual, for the breakdown in negotiations. Russian support has brought new optimism to Georgia that the Abkhazian problem can be solved by combined Russo-Georgian military action in Abkhazia. The spectre of a new war has begun to loom over the region.(11)

The political rapprochement between Georgia and Russia has resulted in a wholesale Russian blockade of Abkhazia aimed at the strangulation of Abkhazia's civilian population. Since 1995, Russia has established a naval and land blockade of Abkhazia, closed its borders with Abkhazia and refused to recognize Abkhazian passports or to allow Abkhazian citizens to travel abroad. Since April 1997, Russia has cut off all telephone lines connecting Abkhazia with the outside world, thereby establishing an information blockade of the small republic. All this raises serious doubts regarding Russia's capacity to act as a mediator, as such a position requires neutrality and a balanced approach to both sides in the conflict.

The result of separate Georgian-Russian arrangements undermining Abkhazia is that the peace talks are nearly at a standstill, and the prospects of a peaceful settlement are as remote as they were at the beginning of talks in Geneva three years ago.

Possible Ways Out

Despite such negative developments, I believe that the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict is one of the most manageable among the conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union, and that there are still grounds for optimism, provided both sides can overcome sensitive psychological barriers and demonstrate enough political will to compromise. The recent history of Georgian-Abkhazian relations has shown that both parties to the conflict have insufficient strength to achieve the political goals they are pursuing: Georgia to overrun Abkhazia militarily and abolish its political autonomy, Abkhazia to gain international recognition as an independent state. This leaves the parties with room to compromise.

There are at least two crucially important positions that could lead to swift progress in the Georgian-Abkhazian peace process. First, unlike the South Ossetian autonomy, Georgia has never officially abolished the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic, still regarding it as an Autonomous State. Second, unlike Chechnya in Russia, or Karabakh in Azerbaijan, Abkhazia has never officially declared its independence from Georgia. This means that both Georgia and Abkhazia still recognise, de jure and de facto, the existence of an Abkhazian State. These crucially important positions can offer quite promising prospects for an early settlement of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict. The major issue now is how exactly to accommodate the Abkhazian Republic's sovereign status, in a future state shared with Georgia, with Georgian claims to sovereignty over the whole of its territory.

The obvious diplomatic impasse in which Georgian-Abkhazian relations now find themselves could be neutralized in what I described above as internal self-determination. According to this formula, the Abkhazian Republic would remain within the internationally recognized borders of Georgia and would enjoy broad political autonomy, preserving its own constitution, parliament, government and state symbols, as well as its national army, while delegating some other important state functions, such as border control, customs, transport and communications, foreign policy, etc., to the common federative bodies: the federal parliament and government. Outside the competence of the federal institutions, both Georgia and Abkhazia would enjoy full sovereignty over their own internal affairs on the territory under the control of their own elected government bodies.

Such a structure will only be stable and capable of bringing about lasting peace if all parts of the federation are satisfied with their level of sovereignty. This makes it necessary to create a constitutional arrangement in which Georgia, Abkhazia, Ajaria and South Ossetia enjoy equal political rights and are equally subordinated to the common federal legislative and executive structures. Within such a structure, each of the constituent republics should have a right of veto on decisions taken by the federal bodies that directly affect their vital interests. If the parties agree to make such arrangements, this will enhance their interest in common economic activity and cooperation, and will inevitably, within an estimated period of five years, lead to closer reintegration.

There are signs that at least some international structures are ready to support such a solution to the problem. Thus, recently, in its Resolution of 22 April 1997, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe stressed the importance of extensive autonomy status for Abkhazia as one of the basic elements of a political settlement.⁽¹²⁾ Any other arrangement, based on the principle of the subordination of one people to another, on the inequality of the subjects of a

federation or on old Soviet-style super-centralized rule from Tbilisi, can a priori be regarded as futile and incapable of bringing lasting peace to this part of the former Soviet Empire.

International efforts can be instrumental in persuading the parties to reach a mutually accepted constitutional arrangement concerning the status of Abkhazia. Such concerted efforts were quite effective in achieving peace in Bosnia, and are now indispensable in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Unfortunately, in the case of Georgia and Abkhazia all pressure, including military intimidation and an inhuman economic blockade, is being put on Abkhazia. This is the wrong path to follow, as it was the UN, OSCE and individual governments' encouragement of Georgia in its uncompromising stance on political negotiations with Abkhazia that effectively brought the whole peace process to a halt.

This one-sided and mistaken approach should be radically changed. It is very important not to lose momentum and to try to revitalize the peace process now, before the current favourable situation changes and we become witnesses to another escalation of hostilities. It could be that either Georgia will start a new war against Abkhazia, or that Abkhazia, being convinced that it is futile to expect any equitable arrangement with Georgia, will declare its complete independence. These are real possibilities, which could substantially complicate the situation and diminish the chances of a comprehensive settlement.

Though the participation of Russia as facilitator is crucial for the conclusion of any lasting agreement between Georgia and Abkhazia, there is nothing to say that the group around the negotiation table should not include a new member, representing a country with no direct political or economic interests in Georgia or

Abkhazia. New initiatives, fresh ideas and probably fresh personalities are needed to push the stalemated peace process forward and to achieve, as speedily as possible, political arrangements that would preclude the possibility of the oppression of the smaller nation by the bigger one, allow thousands of refugees to return to their homes in safe and dignified conditions, and lay the basis for stability and progress in this part of Europe.

1: The Commander-in-Chief of the Georgian forces in Abkhazia, Colonel Giorgi Karkarashvili, in an address to the population of Abkhazia broadcast on Sukhum television on 25 August 1992, warned that "Even if the total number of Georgians - 100,000 - are killed, then from your [Abkhazian] side all 97,000 will be killed", and he advised the Abkhazian leader V. Ardzinba "not to act in such a way that the Abkhazian nation is left without descendants" (cf. G. Amkuab, T. Illarionova, *Abxazija: Xronika neobjavljenoj vojny. Chast' I. 14 avgusta - 14 sentiabria 1992 goda. Moskva, 1992, p. 128*). 97,000 was the approximate number of the entire Abkhazian population of Abkhazia. Soon after this event Karkarashvili was promoted by Shevardnadze to the rank of general, and later replaced Kitovani as Georgian Minister of Defence. In an interview given in the occupied city of Sukhum, another high-ranking Georgian official, the Minister of State for Abkhazia, Goga Khaindrava, told the correspondent from *Le Monde Diplomatique* (published in April 1993) that "there are only 80,000 Abkhazians, which means that we can easily and completely destroy the genetic stock of their nation by killing 15,000 of their youth. And we are perfectly capable of doing this."

2: "Abkhazi [sic!] terrorist-separatist movement", in point B of the "Resolution on the situation in Georgia" (B3-1452, 1474, 1490, 1505 and 1516/93, November 1993).

3: G.Gotlieb, *Nation Against State. A New Approach to Ethnic Conflicts and the Decline of Sovereignty*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993, pp. 19-20.

4: No precise figures exist on the relative proportions of Christians, Moslems or atheists among Abkhazians living in Abkhazia. One may suppose that the proportion of Christians among the religious Abkhazians must reach 60%. My personal observations indicate that the number of believers among Abkhazian intellectuals has increased since the war of 1992-1993. All Abkhazian Moslems belong to the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam, while Christians are Russian or (more rarely) Eastern Orthodox. The role of the Abkhazian language in church ceremonies has increased in recent times. The major Christian texts have been translated into Abkhazian since the middle of the 19th century. There is no antagonism whatsoever between Christian and Moslem Abkhazians and mixed marriages are very common. Abkhazia has never known any form of religious fanaticism, Abkhazians are very tolerant of other faiths, and, in all fairness, tend to be quite indifferent to matters of religion. Christian Abkhazians in general are not diligent churchgoers, and until recently those who regard themselves as Moslems have not had a single mosque to attend in Abkhazia. As rightly observed by many authors, the plain truth is that neither Christianity nor Islam forms more than a surface laid over the old Abkhazian paganism. Diaspora Abkhazians, on the contrary, are Moslems in the true sense of the word, although they are not renowned for any fanaticism either.

5: The pre-emigration figure for Abkhazians was between 130,000 and 150,000, and for Abkhazo-Abazas about 180,000 (cf. V.A. Chirikba, *Common West Caucasian. The Reconstruction of its Phonological System and Parts of its Lexicon and Morphology*. Leiden: CNWS Publications, 1996, pp. 1-3). In 1897 the first official all-Russia census established the presence in Abkhazia of 58,697 Abkhazians, which comprised 55.3% of Abkhazia's 106,000 population; the

figures for other ethnic groups in Abkhazia were: 25,875 Georgians (24.4%; these were mainly Megrelians), 6,552 Armenians (6.1%), 5,135 Russians (5.6%) and 5,393 Greeks (5.0%) (cf. S.Z. Lakoba (ed.), *Istorija Abkhazii. Uchebnoe posobie*, Gudauta: Alashara, 1993, p. 347).

6: The exact number of Abkhazians in Turkey is not known, as the official Turkish data on minorities are notoriously unreliable. Some specialists speak of more than 100,000 Abkhazians (G.A. Dzidzariya, *Makhadzhirstvo i problemy istorii Abkhazii XIX stoletija*. Sukhumi: Alashara, 1982, p. 493), while other authors estimate their numbers in Turkey (together with that of the closely related Abazas) at half a million (cf. I. Marykhuba, *Abkhazija v sovetskiju epokhu. Abkhazskie pis'ma (1947-1989)*, Sbornik dokumentov. Tom 1. Akua (Sukhum), 1994; P. Overeem, "Report of a UNPO coordinated human rights mission to Abkhazia and Georgia", in: *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1995, p. 18). According to the results of my own field research in Turkey, there are no fewer than 250 Abkhaz-Abaza villages in that country (V.A. Chirikba, "Distribution of Abkhaz dialects in Turkey", in: *Proceedings of the Conference dedicated to the memory of Tefvik Esenç*, Istanbul, forthcoming). In addition, a large number of Abkhazians are now living in cities and towns, the most numerous communities being in Istanbul, Ankara, Duzce, Inegol, Bilecik, Eskishehir, Samsun and Sinop. As well as in Turkey, there are also some 5,000 Abkhazians in Syria (information from Syrian Abkhazians); still smaller Abkhazian communities are to be found in some other Middle Eastern countries. Abkhazian colonies (made up mainly of Turkish Abkhazians) exist also in many Western European countries, such as Germany (some 3,000), the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Britain, Switzerland and Austria. A small Abkhazian community in New Jersey, USA, is mostly made up of immigrants from Syria.

7: Apart from the forced emigration to Turkey, another factor responsible for the sharp decrease in the relative number of Abkhazians in Abkhazia was the (often forced) resettlement from Georgia to Abkhazia of tens of thousands of Georgians. This resettlement policy, aimed at shifting the demographic balance in Abkhazia

in favour of ethnic Georgians, was successfully carried out by the Communist authorities of Georgia up to 1992, but this policy was practised on its largest scale in the 1930s and 1940s, under the rule of Stalin and Beria.

8: P. Overeem, op.cit., p. 138.

9: UN Document S/26795.

10: R. Gachechiladze, *The New Georgia. Space, Society, Politics*, London: UCL Press, 1995, pp. 43, 178. According to the Georgian State Committee for Refugees and Displaced Persons, some 160,000 refugees from Abkhazia have been officially registered and accommodated in 63 districts of Georgia, cf. "The Georgian Chronicle", February-March 1994, as cited in A. Zverev, *Ethnic Conflicts in the Caucasus*. In: Bruno Coppieters (ed.). *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, Brussels: VUB University Press, 1996, pp. 13-71.

11: The dangerously increased tension was due to certain declarations made by Georgian leaders and to the actions carried out by the Russian military in Abkhazia. Thus, in an interview published in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (29 June 1994), the Georgian leader Shevardnadze announced that the so-called "Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia", based in Tbilisi, would soon move to the Gal region. In its statement of 29 June, the Abkhazian Supreme Council characterized Shevardnadze's declaration as "provocative", and expressed deep concern about the actions of the peacekeeping force which, by permitting the uncontrolled mass return of refugees, had caused the destabilization of the situation in the region. On two occasions, around 15 May and 15 July 1995, tension in Abkhazia rose considerably owing to the statements issued by Georgian officials in Tbilisi, who called for the mass repatriation to Abkhazia of Georgian refugees. The statements made in early July by the Russian

Commander of the CIS peacekeeping force, endorsing such an uncontrolled mass repatriation and promising the repatriates the protection of his forces, sparked sharp criticism from Abkhazia's officials, who declared that this could result in renewed hostilities. In the end, the much-heralded mass return of refugees was halted. In September 1995 a high-ranking Russian delegation headed by Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin visited Tbilisi. On 15 September the sides concluded a number of agreements, among them one on Russian military bases in Georgia, including the base in Gudauta, and they declared their support for the principle of territorial integrity and the inviolability of existing borders, condemning "aggressive separatism and terrorism in any form" (cf. S/1995/937). The Russian-Georgian deal on military bases and the unexpected announcement that military exercises would be carried out on 30 September 1995 by the CIS peacekeeping troops, obviously designed to exert pressure on Abkhazia, prompted the Abkhazian forces to go into a state of heightened alert. It was planned to carry out the exercises in the Gal region of Abkhazia, in parallel with the introduction there of a CIS battalion consisting mainly of ethnic Georgians. Following the arrival of this battalion, it was planned that Georgian police troops would enter the region. These plans coincided with Shevardnadze's statement that the problem of the Gal region would be solved in the next few days, and that Georgian sovereignty over this region of Abkhazia would be restored (cf. the statement by the Abkhazian Parliament on 4 October 1995).

On 20 March 1996 tension between the Abkhazian authorities and the Russian border troops in Abkhazia again rose sharply. A Russian military ship, N 040, entered Sukhum Bay without permission from the Abkhazian authorities and, having arrested the Ukrainian trading ship "Vega", forced it to proceed to the nearby Russian port of Sochi. This incident, which happened during Shevardnadze's visit to Moscow, was supposedly meant as a pro-Georgian gesture. During Shevardnadze's visit Russia gave in to the Georgian demand that all foreign ships bound for Abkhazia - even those with humanitarian cargoes - would have to pass through customs in the Georgian port of Poti. In addition, it was decided that the Russians would forbid the boarding of any passengers or loading of any cargo in the port of Sukhum, which was tantamount to an almost total naval blockade of Abkhazia. In its statement of 21 March 1996, the

Abkhazian Government protested against these measures, regarding them as having been taken unilaterally in the interests of Georgia and interfering in the internal affairs of Abkhazia. On 2 July 1996 an Abkhazian police post on the Gal canal was fired at with rocket-propelled grenades and small arms. At the end of September 1996, Georgia carried out military exercises in the vicinity of the conflict zone, contravening the cease-fire agreement of 14 May 1994. These and some other incidents seriously aggravated the situation and led many to think there was a real possibility of renewed hostilities.

12: Resolution 233 (97), cf. [www.coe.fr/cp/97/233a\(97\).htm](http://www.coe.fr/cp/97/233a(97).htm).

ABKHAZIAN WISEMAN FROM VERNON

A Newspaper Article Written by Dr. Viacheslav Chirikba

April 9, 2001

We are approaching the house of Murat Yagan which is situated on a hill overlooking the Canadian town of Vernon. At the threshold of his home we are met by Gregor who is a student of the local college and a member of the Kebzeh community. He is addressing me with words in the Abkhazian language, "Bziala waabeyt!" meaning "Welcome!" I enter a spacious home which is full of guests who have come especially to meet me.

All of the guests are members of the Kebzeh community which was established in 1975 by Canadians and Americans with the goal of studying Ahmsta Kebzeh - the original philosophical teaching presented by Murat Yagan. I met Pamela Rose, Sharron Allen, Greg Kemp, Joan McIntyre, Ralph Maddess, the Leader of the community, Lisa Talesnik, who is the Kebzeh representative in Israel, and also with other members of the community. Right away they fell on me with many questions about Abkhazia: is the blockade still in force; are we under the threat of a new war; what is the economic situation there; is it possible to come to visit Abkhazia? The conversation continues for a long time. Finally, far into midnight, the people are ceremoniously saying goodbye and going home, leaving me alone with this remarkable family of Murat Yagan.

Who is Murat Yagan and what is the teaching of Ahmsta Kebzeh about? Why is he, an Abkhazian from the Turkish diaspora, living here in Canada, far from both Abkhazia and Turkey? All these questions interested me very much, that is why, with great pleasure, I accepted the invitation from the Kebzeh community to come to Vernon and be a guest in the house of Murat Yagan.

Many things here reminded me of the Caucasus, of Abkhazia: the view of the snow-covered mountains around Vernon (by the way, this place is a well-known mountain resort), the warmth and hospitality of people who live here, a close spiritual connection of the Kebzeh community with Abkhazia, and the frequent use of Abkhazian terminology, like Kebzeh, Aleishwe, and Amarja. But the greatest surprise for me was the evening at the Villa, when suddenly I heard the sound of Circassian melody and saw members of the Kebzeh community, moving gracefully in smooth Circassian dance. All of those Canadians and Americans were dancing so artfully that it could bring envy to many native Circassians. I should admit that I was envying them! I had a full sense of being at home, in Abkhazia, and not far away in Canada, close to the Pacific Ocean and by the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

Of all my impressions, the chief, the strongest, was from my communication with Murat Yagan. This charismatic man with a neat grey beard and piercing black eyes looks like an Abkhazian Elder-Nart, and like a Biblical prophet at the same time. He is stern but elegant in his dress, well-composed, unhurried in movements and deliberate in speech. A high forehead completes this noble look, and his eyes emanate wisdom and nobility of spirit. His quiet gaze suddenly sparkles with fire when the talk turns to Abkhazia, to the Caucasus. And his movements become Eagle-like when Murat, with youthful energy, jumps into a fiery Circassian dance together with his graceful wife Maisie.

Murat is 86 years old and his wife Maisie Gogua-pha, who is a native of an Abkhazian village near the Turkish town of Duzce, is 75 years of age. Despite her age, Maisie keeps a girlish gracefulness and marks of incredible beauty. Energetic and emotional, being like a nurturing mother to all members of the Kebzeh community, she reminds me of Satanay Guasha, the wise and beautiful mother of one hundred Narts.

Murat Yagan was born on December 16, 1915. His ancestors came out of the region of Ashkhara in the North Caucasus which Murat holds as a part of the historical greater Abkhazia. This is how Murat describes it in his famous autobiography *I Come From Behind Kaf Mountain*: "My family left the Caucasus because they were stupid like the rest of the Abkhazians... My grandfather, Sat, brought 15,000 people to Turkey... Sat had three younger brothers, Gut, Tat and Asher... Tat went to Egypt and settled in Cairo where he became known as Mithad Pasha. He had a wonderful son named Adley Pasha Yagan who received an excellent education and who became Prime Minister of Egypt in 1920 and again in 1926. When King Farouk was forced to abdicate, Adley Pasha's statue in the yard of the museum was left alone.... There is still Shar-i-Adley (Adley street) in Cairo."

Murat's father's name in Abkhazian was Met and his clan Yagan is known to be a branch of the princely Maan family. Though Met occupied a ceremonial position within the court of the last Ottoman Sultan, he took the side of the Young Turks' movement under the leadership of Kemal Ataturk. After the proclamation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Murat's father became a Deputy to the first Turkish Parliament from the province of Rumeli, though in 1926 he had to resign as a protest against the government's policy of ignoring the cultural rights of ethnic minorities, in particular, the Caucasian minorities. He died in 1927 as a result of a mysterious attempt on his life. Although the government circles were suspected of being involved in organizing this attempt, the President Kemal Ataturk came to the funeral to pay homage to his former comrade. The mother of Met came out of the family of the famous Ubykh chieftain Haji-Berzek Kiarantukh. As is well known, this uncompromising Ubykh leader refused to accept the occupation of Ubykhia by the Russians and had led all of his people in the emigration to Turkey. Murat takes in his hands the portrait of Haji-Berzek, which he keeps in his study, gazes at it intently and then says with a heavy heart: "He destroyed his people."

When a teenager, a great role in Murat's physical and spiritual education was played by Abkhazian and Adyghe Elders who raised him in the spirit of the ancient Abkhazo-Adyghean knightly tradition. While he was a young man, Murat became an active participant in the North Caucasian cultural diaspora. His mentor and teacher was the famous poet and historian of the Abkhazian diaspora in Turkey, Omar Beygua, to whom Murat pays his deepest homage. Murat knew closely another Abkhazian educator, Mustafa Butba, the author of the Abkhazian alphabet published in Istanbul at the beginning of the last century. Murat was also acquainted with the famous French specialist in the Caucasus, George Dumézil, who was Murat's guest for three months and whom Murat accompanied to the Abkhazian, Ubykh and Adyghe villages in Anatolia.

Murat himself started to write quite early, when he was still a teenager. Unfortunately, almost nothing is left of this period of writing. With bitterness, Murat told me about his notebooks with early poems which he had left in Istanbul at his mother's house and which were lost after her death. Only one poem dedicated to Abkhazia, which Murat wrote in his native language at the age of 14, remains in his memory.

Murat received excellent education at the colleges of Turkey and Paris. However, not science but sport (especially horse riding) became his true passion. He was a part of the Turkish National League and successfully participated in the horse sportive competitions in the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936, as well as in other international competitions. But the greatest success was waiting for him in Vienna in 1937, when he became a world champion in high-jumping, coming ahead of Italian Castiliani. Though his performance brought him many medals and rewards, what bothered him was that in official reports he was called a Turkish horseman, whereas he regarded himself as an Abkhazian.

The Caucasus and Abkhazia always held a special place in his heart. "My heart was always there," Murat tells me. "All my life, I wanted one day to come back to Abkhazia. Nowhere, no matter where I lived, did I feel being truly at home." He made several attempts to visit the Caucasus, hoping to have the opportunity to return for good to his home country. In the 1950s, in the time of Khrushchev, foreign tourists were allowed for the first time to visit the Soviet Union. Winged by hope, Murat applied for a visa at the Soviet consulate in Turkey. In answer to his request he was allowed to visit any region of the Soviet Union except the Caucasus. So this trip did not happen. Life in Turkey did not satisfy Murat, and in 1963, at the age of 48, together with his wife Maisie and four children, Murat moved to Canada. He chose to settle in the town of Vernon in British Columbia, which reminded him, with its mountainous landscape, of his native Caucasus. Until retiring on pension, Murat lived by building houses. With pride he showed me some really beautiful houses which he had built with his own hands.

In the book *I Come From Behind Kaf Mountain*, which played and continues to play, an important role in the popularization of the teaching of Ahmsta Kebzeh, Murat describes his long life, full of dramatic events and conflicts. He tells about his meetings with interesting people: politicians (including Ataturk) and activists of the North Caucasian diaspora, sheikhs and businessmen. He tells us also about his first love trepidations. An important place in the book is devoted to his strenuous spiritual seeking, which brought him into the mystical Sufi orders and then into the camp of followers of the teaching of Christ. The most important result of his spiritual seeking was his realization of the great value of that spiritual heritage which was created and brought down through millennia by the peoples of the Abkhazo-Circassian cultural tradition and which was inculcated in him by his stern Abkhazian and Adyghe teachers when he was still a green youngster. His coming back to the philosophical roots of the Abkhazo-Adyghean cultural and esthetic tradition, which had been partially preserved in the form of paganism and in particular, a sophisticated etiquette of "Apsuara-Adyghagha", and which up to recent times was still kept alive amongst the mountaineers of the Western

Caucasus, brought Murat to the formulation, or codification of this unique relic of a spiritual heritage. The result of long searching and happy revelations became the teaching of Ahmsta Kebzeh in the form developed by Murat Yagan.

The tradition of Ahmsta Kebzeh is an organic synthesis of elements of mystical Sufism and Christianity with the basis of this teaching – the ancient Abkhazo-Circassian system of ideas and concepts about the essence of the human existence, the place of a human being in the society and in the natural environment, about the relationship between the mystical and the reality, the spirit and the will. Both moral and mystical components play important role in the teaching of Ahmsta Kebzeh.

The teaching of Kebzeh contains three hierarchical levels - Aleishwe, Kebzeh and Ahmsta Kebzeh. The first level, Aleishwe, is the level of etiquette, regulating the social behaviour of human beings in the society, in every day life, in welcoming guests, in ceremonies related to weddings and funeral rituals, in visiting relatives, friends and so on. The second level, Kebzeh, regulates knowledge which is necessary in connection with Administration and Management. The third, the highest level - Ahmsta Kebzeh, is reached by way of a series of prolonged physical and intellectual exercises directed towards the maximum development of the human nervous system, which serves as the most perfect home for Mind. Reaching the level of Ahmsta Kebzeh depends on education, willpower, and perseverance, as well as on the natural capacity to develop in oneself the necessary qualities. The term Ahmsta, although it is translated as "aristocratic", in this particular teaching, it is void of social meaning. It is used to describe the physical and spiritual levels inherent in the intellectual, ethical elite, which can be reached as a result of a specific education and a combination of physical and mental exercises. This meaning of the term Ahmsta is reflected, for example, in the Abkhazian term "ahmistashwara", which designates the knightly etiquette and psychological code which was inherent in the traditional communities of the mountaineers of the North-Western Caucasus - Abkhazians, Abazas, Adyghes and Ubykhs, whom Murat defines by a common term "Circassians".

As Murat writes in his Introduction to Ahmsta Kebzeh, he is often asked the question - is Ahmsta Kebzeh a religion? The answer to this question is: No, Ahmsta Kebzeh is not a religion and does not interfere with any existing religion, although religions could be made out of it. It is an Applied Science; it is the art of living as a human being fully exercising human faculties as applied to life. Kebzeh could also be called a mystical science. According to the teaching of Kebzeh, a human being is not a body which has a Spirit, but rather a Spirit which has a body serving as a vehicle, much as horse is used as a vehicle for its rider. The stronger and more perfect the physical body is from birth and from physical exercises, the more perfect it becomes as an instrument for carrying the Spirit. This is why physical and breathing exercises, as well as diet, are an organic part of Kebzeh. Not accidentally, Murat often calls this teaching "Caucasian Yoga".

Beginning in 1975, Murat started to transmit his teaching to a group of students, whose circle gradually increased. In 1992, they organized a Foundation, the goal of which is the preservation of this oral tradition of Kebzeh in the way it is presented by Murat, its popularization and its publication. At the Kebzeh office in Vernon there are thousands of taped conversations with Murat on many aspects of the teaching of Kebzeh. The Kebzeh students work very strenuously on transcribing, editing and publishing these transcripts. Yearly seminars, classes, and training in the form of conversations and discussions dedicated to different aspects of the teaching always attract many students. In the United States and Canada, the number of students of Kebzeh is over two hundred people, and they have small groups in Europe and Israel too. Incidentally, some of the members of Kebzeh came out of followers of the teaching of the famous Russian mystical philosopher

George Gurdjieff, who had a great influence on many Western intellectuals. Murat thinks that the teaching of Gurdjieff is close to his own philosophical concepts, although he also points out the significant differences between them.

The Kebzeh Foundation founded its own publishing house (Kebzeh Publications) which issued five books by Murat: *I Come From Behind Kaf Mountain* (went through two Canadian publications with a third being prepared in London); *The Teachings of Kebzeh*; *The Abkhazian Book of Longevity and Well-Being*, as well as Murat's translation into English of the poetic creations of two great mediaeval Sufi poets, Gaibi (*Gaibi - The Gathering*) and Yunus Emre (*I Wrapped Myself in Flesh and Bones I Appeared as Yunus*). Also published were Murat's brochures *An Introduction to Ahmsta Kebzeh - The Ancient Spiritual Teaching of Caucasus Mountains*, *How To Create a Kebzeh Community*, and *Morning Exercises - The System of Moving and Breathing Exercises*. The Foundation issues a newsletter called *The Kebzeh Review*. Other works by Murat are also published such as *Transformation and the Seven Ways of Knowledge and Psyche*, *Love and Will*. Now Murat is working on his biggest work, *The Book of Ahmsta Kebzeh*, in which the teaching is expressed in its fullest and most complete form.

Murat's books can be found in the largest bookstores in Canada, United States and Europe. The magazine *Book World of British Columbia* lists his work *I Come From Behind Kaf Mountain* among the most important two hundred books of the 20th century published in British Columbia. The popular Canadian singer Loreena McKennitt in her album *A Book of Secrets*, calls one of her songs *Night Ride Across the Caucasus*, which she wrote from her impression of the book *I Come From Behind Kaf Mountain*. In her annotation to this song, the singer noted the similar roles which horse riding plays in spiritual edification in both the Celtic and Abkhazian traditions.

Murat lives with the cares and problems of Abkhazia; he is interested in everything connected with his homeland. During the recent war in Abkhazia, Murat and members of his community wrote numerous letters of protest to the United Nations and to the American, Canadian and European governments. Soon after the war ended, Murat and Maisie managed to visit Abkhazia. Murat admitted to me that what he saw there overcame his highest expectations despite all the destruction inflicted by the war - so beautiful was even the post-war Abkhazia, the land which he holds as his only Motherland. On Murat's table he has a picture of President Ardzinba with whom he met in Abkhazia and in New York. In his study there hangs an Abkhazian flag and the bookshelves contain many books on Abkhazia and the Caucasus. Murat was very excited to hear my story about the preservation in Abkhazia of the traditional religion, of the great homage people still pay to the shrine of Dydrypsh-Nykha, and of the fact that the custodian of this shrine was present, together with Christian and Muslim religious leaders, at the inauguration of Abkhazia's President. Murat is eager to visit Dydrypsh-Nykha and meet with its custodian, as well as with the Head of the Christian community in Abkhazia.

The same kind of attitude towards Abkhazia and her problems is shared by other members of the Kebzeh community. Many of them dream about going to Abkhazia and meeting her people. One of the most active members of the community, Pamela Rose, told me about the campaign in support of Abkhazia she and other co-members carried out during the Georgian-Abkhazian war. Joan McIntyre organized my lecture about Abkhazia in a regional university in Kelowna where she is teaching Literature. After my lecture, one of the professors came to me and wished Abkhazia success in gaining international recognition. I remember also my conversation with a young member of the Kebzeh community, Gregor, the one who welcomed me in the Abkhazian language. Murat's children have grown up and moved to different places. He and Maisie

call Gregor, who lives with them, grandson. Gregor calls Maisie 'Sandu', which means 'Grandma' in the Abkhazian language. Gregor told me about his plan, on finishing college and receiving his Manager's diploma, to go to Abkhazia and help local youth in organizing small businesses. He dances Circassian and Abkhazian dances beautifully and dreams of learning the Abkhazian language. For that purpose he wants to live in an Abkhazian village, in order not only to master the language, but also to learn the traditional Abkhazian etiquette "Apsuara", which forms an important part in the teaching of Ahmsta Kebzeh.

At the present time, the Kebzeh community, after a long period of recording the teaching of Kebzeh and accomplishing a number of organizational measures (buying a building, organizing seminars, establishing a publishing house), is now going through a kind of a second birth, getting out into the outer world. The situation became even more dynamic with the arrival to the organisation of Marz Attar, a businessman from the American State of West Virginia, who heads the Kebzeh US Foundation. The energetic and charming Sharron Allen, Murat's Personal Assistant, also brought about a new dynamic. Under Murat's initiative and with the support of the Kebzeh community, a new organization was officially registered in Washington DC, called 'Society of Friends of Abkhazia' (S.O.F.A.). They have already created an Internet site and plan to open an office in Washington. This organization is planning some humanitarian, cultural and economic projects in Abkhazia. Thus, at the present moment, the issue of creating a contemporary telecommunications network in Abkhazia, including the access to Internet, is being worked out.

A new activity started last autumn when Murat and a few activists of the community spent more than a month in the hospitable household of the American center of Kebzeh, situated in the mountains close to Washington, with Abkhazian, Circassian and American flags flying. I was also fortunate to be a guest in this center, led by Marz Attar, and to spend happy hours of communication with Murat, Maisie, Marz, his wife Carrie, Sharron and other members of the community. During this visit, my lecture about the situation in Abkhazia was organized at the Georgetown University in Washington. I also gave newspapers, television and radio interviews. I had a chance to meet with some congressmen, university rectors and workers at the Library of Congress, with leaders of different international organizations working on the Caucasus, with representatives of the North Caucasus Diaspora in Washington, and with businessman Krim Natirbov and his respected father, who is a retired member of the US State Department and a native of Adyghea. Other memorable meetings were with officials from the US State Department's Caucasus and Georgia Desks, and with the Director of the "Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty", a well-known Sovietologist and former high-ranking State Department official, Paul Goble. During our conversation with him, he expressed the opinion that not far in the future, they will host the official Ambassador of Abkhazia in America. I also had many other interesting meetings, all of whom were perfectly organized by the friends from the Kebzeh community, and especially with the dynamic cooperation of Marz Attar and Sharron Allen.

For a very long time Murat's works were not known to the Abkhazian reader, although some information about him can be found in the book by Professor Inal-IPA Diaspora Abkhazians. The importance of Murat's work and personality is still to be discovered and understood by his countrymen. It is necessary to translate Murat's books into the Russian and Abkhazian languages so that we can introduce our society to this remarkable man, one of the most original thinkers coming from the land of the Caucasus, who in his 86th year is full of energy and intense intellectual creative activity, and whose main dream in life is to live to see the day when his native Abkhazia will become a truly independent and free country.

The time of saying goodbye to the members of the Kebzeh community who had become such close friends, and to the Elders Murat and Maisie, is approaching. I ask Murat if he has a message, something which he

wants to say to the people of Abkhazia. This question excited Murat. He said, "I have so much to say, but if I start to speak, I will have to cry!" Tears appeared in his eyes, he lowered his white head and became silent. Then he continued, "I will say to you something which I never tire of saying: "Antswa Hapsuara iumyrdzyn!" ("May God Preserve Our Tradition of Apsuara!").

Viacheslav (Slava) Chirikba is a Doctor of Linguistics, Leiden University, Holland

An Abkhaz Perspective

Liana Kvarchelia

The negotiations between Georgia and Abkhazia that have been under way since 1993 have failed to resolve the differences between them and left relations frozen in a condition of 'neither war nor peace'. Indeed, Abkhazia and Georgia now seem further away from political agreement than in April 1994 when the Declaration on Measures for a Political Settlement of the Georgian – Abkhaz Conflict and its appendix the Quadripartite Agreement were signed.

Negotiations have been primarily about the settlement of state and legal relations between Abkhazia and Georgia and the return of Georgian refugees to Abkhazia. On the first issue, the principles underlying the positions are diametrically opposed. Georgians consider Abkhazia to be an inalienable part of Georgia with at most the status of an autonomous republic. From the Georgian perspective any other arrangement might lead to further disintegration of the Georgian state, which is already troubled by its lack of control over Adjara and Javakheti, not to mention South Ossetia. The Abkhaz argue that, as Abkhazia was forcibly incorporated into Georgia by Stalin's regime in 1931, the collapse of the USSR and the subsequent unilateral annulment by Georgia of legal measures joining the two countries in one republic merely confirmed Abkhazia's legal and moral right to independence. Furthermore, Abkhaz claim that the war unleashed by Georgia in 1992 has resulted in de facto independence. From the outset of the conflict the Georgian side pronounced the inviolability of the territorial integrity of the former Soviet Republic of Georgia and the inadmissibility of any internal reorganization of Georgia on federal principles. The Abkhaz representatives did not set out their position so unequivocally. The lack of clarity over whether Abkhazia has been seeking independence or confederal relations with Georgia is a consequence of constant pressure, including the threat of force, exerted throughout the negotiation process by the West and Russia. The majority of UN Security Council Resolutions have been openly pro-Georgian. This reflects the bias inherent in the negotiation process conducted under the auspices of the UN to which Georgia belongs and Abkhazia does not. In December 1994 Russia introduced restrictions at the Russian–Abkhaz border under the pretext of its military action in Chechnya and in January 1996 implemented the CIS decision to introduce economic sanctions against Abkhazia at Georgian insistence. Pressure on Abkhazia increased further with the creation of the Group of Friends of Georgia, comprising the USA, the UK, Germany, France and Russia. The ambassadors of the 'Friends' have actively joined the negotiation

process, especially since 1997. As a result they are now better informed about Abkhazia and its demands, but this has not in itself contributed to any significant change in the substance of the negotiations.

Seeking compromise

Forced to consider compromise formulations accommodating both Abkhazia's sovereignty and the international community's demand for the observance of territorial integrity, Abkhazia has looked for a model within the framework of one entity. However, Abkhazia has insisted that negotiations be about the reconstruction of state and legal relations between the two republics rather than the political status of Abkhazia within Georgia. The Abkhaz argue that this compromise was accepted by Georgia, initially in a draft proposal prepared by UN Special Envoy Eduard Brunner in Geneva in April 1994 (although Georgia did not sign this) and then in the joint Declaration on Measures for a Political Settlement which Georgia did sign. The compromise was confirmed by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali who stated in his report of 3 May 1994 that 'efforts are being made to find a solution within which Abkhazia would be a subject with sovereign rights within the framework of a union State to be established as a result of negotiations'. The joint Declaration stated that the parties had reached a 'mutual understanding regarding powers for joint action' in the fields of foreign policy and foreign economic ties, border guard and customs arrangements, transport and communications, ecology, energy and insuring human and civic rights. From the Abkhaz perspective this model of relations, based on mutually delegated competencies and the equal rights of subjects within the union state, could have served as the basis for a treaty. That it did not was underlined in July 1997 when a draft protocol detailing the procedures regulating legal relations between the parties was prepared through Russian mediation. The Georgians refused to sign at the last minute. They considered themselves to be the central authority of the union state with authority to delegate responsibilities to Abkhazia, while in the Declaration and in the Abkhaz view, authority within the union state should be derived from two equal subjects leading to the mutual delegation of competencies to the union state. Georgia has since advocated a federal model that differs little from the pre-war period.

This climate is not conducive to constructive negotiations and inevitably the parties have adopted different strategies. Georgia constantly attempts to use its fluctuating relationship with Russia to exert pressure on Abkhazia to become more accommodating. For example, a precondition for the continued presence of Russian military bases in Georgia is the reintegration of Abkhazia into Georgia. Furthermore, Georgia plays Russia against the West by advocating the replacement of the CISPKF with an international force, while also advocating that the CISPKF mandate be widened to include police functions to secure the mass return of refugees. The prospective oil pipeline from Baku, the undesirable precedent which secession in Abkhazia would set for the Russian Federation, and the insistence on the

return of the refugees before the issue of political status can be addressed are other levers used by Georgia.

Abkhazia has much less room for manoeuvre. The Abkhaz are accused by Georgia and the West of a pro-Russian orientation, but their increasing reliance on Russia is a direct consequence of the Georgian-instigated, Russian-imposed blockade. However, despite the isolation it causes, the incomplete nature of the blockade means that Russia is the only realistic route for external travel and the best option for trade, regardless of whether or not this is a preference. The Abkhaz do not want this isolation, but neither do they want to be integrated into the international community through Tbilisi.

The Abkhaz have few illusions about Russia whose strategic interests in the region militate against recognizing Abkhaz independence, which would mean the loss of Georgia and the creation of a precedent for its own federal subjects, above all with regard to Chechnya. However, recognition of Abkhaz sovereignty within the framework of Georgia provides Russia with a lever to influence both republics. Transferring the initiative exclusively to Georgia – in other words, to the West – is not in Russia's interests either. The status quo is therefore convenient. Furthermore, any decisive Russian moves against Abkhazia could destabilize the situation in the North Caucasus thereby renewing the threat to the territorial integrity of Russia itself.

Negotiations going nowhere

For the last five years Georgian – Abkhaz negotiations have reflected the struggle between Russia and the West for spheres of influence over the perimeter of the Eurasian corridor. Declarations by both mediators that the conflicting parties should engage in direct dialogue and that only the parties themselves can decide the shape of their relations can hardly be taken at face value given the geopolitical context.

Nevertheless, there have been negotiations and increased direct contact between the parties, particularly at a high level, as well as between representatives of civil society. But while direct contact, including between the presidents and their envoys, has improved dialogue within limited confines it has not led to meaningful progress. Meetings also arise out of the practicalities of living in a conflict zone and the need to address issues concerning cross-border trade or security and the exchange of hostages. These contacts occur mostly in the Gal region between the Gal population and people from neighbouring villages, and between heads of village and town administrations, on either side of the Ingur River.

More structured meetings, often characterized by the involvement of NGOs seeking dialogue as an alternative to war, have been held under the banner of long-term confidence building. The UN has also tried to engage the two communities in confidence building, especially in meetings held in Athens in October 1998 and Istanbul in June 1999 but no NGO

representatives with experience in civic peace initiatives were invited. The meetings did not result in any reconciliatory moves and were in fact a pretext to bring the chief negotiators together in an informal environment. Abkhaz society believes that this absence of progress reflects the lack of confidence in the UN caused by the perceived bias it shows to Georgia, a member state. UN-supported confidence building is more likely to succeed through the implementation of agreements that have already been signed, particularly under the UN's aegis, rather than through such meetings.

Deadlock between the parties over issues of status and return in the first years of negotiations challenged the mediators to look for agreement in other spheres. The creation in November 1997 of a Co-ordination Council within the framework of the Geneva Process, and a UN Needs Assessment Mission to Abkhazia in February 1998 to evaluate the economic situation, created the temporary illusion of a breakthrough. However, Georgian reluctance to have the mission report acted upon revealed yet another impasse. It became clear that the international community regards economic and even humanitarian aid to Abkhazia as directly dependent on progress towards a political settlement within the framework of a Georgian state. But the use of economic development by Georgia and the Western negotiators as an inducement to Abkhazia to integrate into the Georgian economy would be a compromise too far for Abkhazia. Russia's continuing policy of sanctions against Abkhazia serves only to highlight the lack of alternatives.

Not expecting Abkhazia to compromise in exchange for economic assistance, from early 1998 President Shevardnadze began to refer to the 'Bosnian model' of settlement and demanded a change in the nature of the peacekeeping operation, arguing that peace through coercion could achieve the conditions for the safe return of Georgian refugees to Abkhazia. However, peace based on such coercion would not be sustainable.

The refugee dilemma

Analysis of the roles of the UN and OSCE and the nature of UN Security Council Resolutions reveals a markedly tougher stance with regard to Abkhazia than to other conflict and refugee situations in the Caucasus. For example, the Security Council expressed at most serious concern about the demographic changes in Nagorno-Karabakh, while demanding of Abkhazia the return of refugees with no prior conditions and before the differences which had provoked the conflict were resolved. The Security Council stressed the unacceptability of linking the process of the return of refugees to a political settlement, whereas they have not exerted similar pressure on the Armenians over Karabakh.

For the Georgian leadership the return of the refugees is above all a political question. A long-term policy of Georgianization resulted in Georgians constituting the largest ethnic group of Abkhazia's pre-war multinational population. With the departure from the Georgian – occupied territories of the Greek and Jewish populations during the war and the economic

migration of some Russians, Armenians and Abkhaz, mainly to Russia and Armenia, the mass return of Georgian refugees alone would create a demographic situation clearly favouring Georgia. After its recent defeat in the war Tbilisi has no confidence in its ability to resolve the 'Abkhaz problem' on its own and is trying to use the Georgian population from Abkhazia, under the cover of international organizations, as an instrument for forcing a resolution of the conflict in its favour. This strategy lies behind the revived proposal to expand the Security Zone beyond the Gal region and give the peacekeeping forces police functions. Many in Abkhazia believe this would simply create a larger area of instability and further embroil the peacekeepers in conflict since it is in the Security Zone that the Georgian guerrillas are most active. In Abkhazia the Georgian refugees are generally distrusted. Those who fought with or supported the Georgian forces are often regarded as traitors. In these circumstances Abkhaz society could only countenance the return of Georgians who did not fight on the Georgian side once Abkhazia receives recognition as an independent state. Given the history of Georgian–Abkhaz relations only international recognition would convince Abkhaz society that the return of the refugees would not represent a threat to its security. What is more, the Abkhaz believe that descendants of Abkhaz refugees from the nineteenth century Caucasian War now living mostly in Turkey, should be allowed an equal right to return, whereas Russian sanctions ban the entry into Abkhazia of foreign citizens.

While the humanitarian plight of the refugees is a factor that looms over the negotiation process, those who claim to represent them play a negative role. The Georgian government does not formally support the 'government-in-exile' (the ethnic Georgian former members of the government and parliament of Abkhazia, now mainly based in Tbilisi and Zugdidi and linked to guerrilla groups sent into Abkhazia). Nevertheless, there is constant reference to them as an alternative if Abkhazia does not agree to the compromises Georgia wants. The Abkhaz refuse to negotiate with representatives of the 'government-in-exile', because this would narrow the subject of negotiations to relations between two communities from Abkhazia, instead of between Georgia and Abkhazia.

In October 1998 leaders of the 'government-in-exile' founded the Party for the Liberation of Abkhazia which adopted a resolution stating that the return of Georgian refugees would be possible only after Georgian jurisdiction has been established over the whole territory of Abkhazia. Inflammatory language and the threat of mobilizing refugees for future campaigns in Abkhazia has done nothing to promote reconciliation, rather it has inclined Abkhaz to be increasingly negative about return. However, the refugee leaders' only option is to return to Abkhazia victorious. The Abkhaz will not allow them back with other refugees because they consider them to be responsible for the war of 1992–93 and the following terrorist activities. In this context the Abkhaz are unlikely to let them be a party to the negotiations. Nevertheless, when a political solution is achieved it is with refugees that Abkhaz society will have to rebuild relations, however antagonistic they currently are.

The return of refugees to the Gal region of Abkhazia, which before the war was populated predominantly by Mingrelians who did not on the whole participate in military action on the Georgian side in 1992–93, has been regarded in Abkhazia as a less painful option. By the beginning of 1998, international organizations estimated that more than sixty thousand people had returned to the region. However, in 1998 alone thirteen civilians, thirty-six Abkhaz militiamen and eight peacekeepers died at the hands of terrorists. In May 1998 the situation changed drastically with the sharp rise in terrorist activity by Georgian paramilitary units. This led to clashes with the Abkhaz militia and an unsuccessful attempt by Georgia to seize the Gal region, as a result of which some thirty thousands residents were again displaced. Having experienced another defeat the government in Tbilisi, which had until then distanced itself from the ‘partisans’, practically admitted its responsibility for the events by signing an agreement on a ceasefire and separation of forces. The Gagra Protocol of 26 May 1998 obliges Georgia ‘to take effective measures to halt the penetration into Abkhazia of terrorist and sabotage groups, armed bands and individuals’, but no criminal case has yet been instituted in Georgia in connection with terrorist activity. On the contrary, Zurab Samushia, the commander of the White Legion terrorist unit gives press conferences in Tbilisi and terrorists continue to penetrate the Gal region and occasionally beyond.

Georgia’s bad faith frequently goes unchallenged by the international community, repeating a familiar pattern in which the Abkhaz are censured for their activities but abuses committed by the Georgians go largely unmarked. The August 1992 invasion of Abkhazia is ignored and no condemnation is levelled at Georgia for the mass human rights violations and killings during the war, while Abkhazia is accused of ethnic cleansing. In January 1999 on the eve of the UN Security Council session the Abkhaz president called on Tbilisi and international organizations to support Abkhazia’s unilateral decision to allow the return of refugees to districts which previously had compact Georgian populations – namely the Gal region. However, the Georgian government, despite its own previous demands for the return of the Georgian population to Abkhazia prior to a political solution, now linked the safe return of the refugees to a political settlement, understanding by this the establishment of Georgian jurisdiction over Abkhazia. The Security Council responded to the Abkhaz initiative on 29 January 1999 by referring to the Lisbon resolution of the OSCE, which interpreted the mass exodus of the Georgian population during the liberation of Abkhazia from Georgian armed forces in September 1993 as ethnic cleansing.

Abkhaz society will not be ignored

The Security Council is not the only source of pressure on the Abkhaz leadership. If agreements are signed limiting the de facto independence of Abkhazia, its leaders will have to answer to their own people. President Ardzinba has already been publicly attacked for his visit to Tbilisi in August 1997 and there has been fierce criticism of the draft agreements on the creation of a common state with Georgia. Nevertheless, in general there is a passive

attitude to the negotiation process in Abkhazia, partly explained by the grind of daily survival and partly by the fact that most people do not believe the president was sincere in his intention to unite with Georgia. Experience, however, shows that society is instantly mobilized by the slightest deterioration in the situation as in 1994 when a Russian general in charge of peacekeeping operations attempted to open the Abkhaz–Georgian border to the mass return of refugees.

Abkhaz society is consolidated around the idea that the Abkhaz nation, like any other, including the Georgian, has the right to freedom and independence. The Abkhaz cannot understand why the desire of other nations for independence is so problematic for Georgian society. The answer may be found in the evolution of Georgian mass consciousness which has for decades been influenced by descriptions of Georgians as hospitable ‘landlords’ who have given shelter to ‘members of other nationalities’.

The past decade has stirred the historical memory of the Abkhaz who for over a century have regarded Georgia as a source of aggression. The attempt to resolve the ‘Abkhaz question’ once and for all by force removed all trust in Georgia. While revanchist policy is frequently aired in the Georgian media, calls by Georgian intellectuals to reject the policy of sanctions receive no positive response from the government, still less the public. In the absence of a conciliatory tone or any sense of culpability for instigating the war, many Abkhaz believe that Georgia, whose democratic credentials have yet to be proven, is an unattractive partner with which to build a common state.

It is difficult to gauge the viability of a settlement that forces the Abkhaz to adopt the Georgian idea of coexistence. The history of relations with Georgia suggests that only statehood, underpinned by international guarantees, will achieve conditions of security and the preservation not only of the identity of the Abkhaz nation but of its physical survival. Being within Georgia, as the recent war has shown, does not provide such guarantees. Georgia also needs to decide whether territorial integrity in the traditional sense is more important than stability and a flourishing economy.

Whatever form relations between Georgia and Abkhazia take, it will be possible to speak of genuine peace and security in the region only if the principle of equal rights lies at the foundation of these relations. Whether this principle is achieved through the signing of a treaty on peace and good-neighbourliness by two independent states, or within the framework of a Georgian–Abkhaz confederation, or through the creation of supranational, Caucasus-wide structures depends on how far the interests of realpolitik are aimed at achieving an enduring resolution.

Vision from Abkhazia

by Liana Kvarchelia
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After some time as a visiting scholar in the United States, I have become even more convinced that many misperceptions and misinterpretations about the conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia that may exist in the West are to a significant extent due to one-sided information about the situation. Without evaluating the positions of both parties it is highly problematic to understand the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict and look for ways of resolving it.

As the reader may know, on August 14, 1992, the government and the people of Abkhazia, as well as thousands of holiday-makers from outside Abkhazia, were taken by surprise when Georgian troops entered Abkhazian territory and launched a land and air attack on the south-eastern part of Abkhazia and its capital city. Fierce fighting continued for fourteen months.

This September marked the third anniversary since the end of the war, in which Abkhazia finally succeeded in regaining control over its entire territory. However, while Abkhazia in September was celebrating the end of the bloody war and her military victory, Georgia was observing a Day of Remembrance and Hope: In particular, a hope to bring Abkhazia back into Georgia, even if the price would be Georgia's loss of its own independence.

The question is frequently asked, what the Georgian-Abkhazian and the Georgian-Ossetian conflicts are about. This is an important question, and it deserves to be answered, or at least a serious attempt should be made. Without going into the historical background of the Georgian-Abkhazian relationship it is not possible to identify the roots of the current conflict. It would be simplistic and inaccurate to say that the conflict between Abkhazia and Georgia is one between a center and an ambitious group of separatists over political sovereignty in one of Georgia's provinces, or that it is only a manipulation by a third party, the most frequent versions coming from the Georgian side.

The Abkhazian-Georgian conflict is clearly ethno-political, and the main issues of controversy are the following: The Georgian side claims authority over the territory incorporated into Georgia by Stalin's decree in 1931. The Abkhazians, characterized by distinctly different ethnicity from that of the Georgians and a long history of their own state with defined geographic boundaries, make their own claim to Abkhazian territory and statehood for its multi-ethnic citizenry. The recent outbreak of hostilities was preceded by years of tensions over political issues, which started to develop along ethnic lines, as issues of ethnic identity and the origin of Abkhazians as an ethnic group became subject to Georgian manipulation toward the achievement of political goals. The situation became further complicated by the involvement of other non-Georgian groups of the Abkhazian population, overwhelmingly on the Abkhazian side, particularly since the beginning of the war in 1992.

Without going into too much historical detail, there are some important issues that need to be mentioned. Situated on the Black Sea Coast, fertile and picturesque, Abkhazia -- an important Transcaucasian crossroads -- historically has always been a dainty dish to tempt conquerors. Abkhazian statehood has existed for more than 1200 years, and Abkhazians have had to defend themselves against invaders on more than one occasion.

For centuries Georgians and Abkhazians, peoples with very different ethnic origins and languages, lived in neighbouring territories. There were periods in their history when Abkhazia, as a separate principality, was under Georgian or Ottoman vassalage. There was also a period when Western and some Eastern areas of Georgia were part of the Abkhazian Kingdom.

However, the nineteenth century Russian conquest of the Caucasus brought both countries under the rule of the Russian Empire. Thousands of Abkhazians, along with a number of other peoples of the North Caucasus who, like Abkhazians, resisted Russian domination far longer than Georgians, were forced to seek refuge in Turkey. Today their descendants (the Mokhajirs) are scattered all over the world. In Turkey alone the number of ethnic Abkhazians exceeds 400,000 people. Their lands and homes in Abkhazia were taken over by competing Georgians, Armenians, and Russians. In 1887 a famous Georgian public figure, Jacob Gogebashvili, wrote in one of his articles that Abkhazia would never have her sons back, and therefore it was time to think who would best fit the climatic conditions of Abkhazia. In Gogebashvili's opinion Mingrelians, a west Georgian tribe, were most suitable and should be the first candidates to colonize Abkhazia.

With the end of the nineteenth century began the resettlement policy in Abkhazia that continued throughout the period of Soviet power. According to the government census, Abkhazia's Georgian population in 1886 was 6.0%; by 1897 it had climbed to 24.4%. By 1926, Georgians in Abkhazia had reached 31.8%.

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, Abkhazia joined the Republic of Mountain Peoples, thus becoming part of a union of North Caucasian republics. Soon after, it was temporarily annexed by the Georgian Democratic Republic. When Bolsheviks came to power in Georgia in 1921, however, Abkhazia was proclaimed a sovereign republic.

Abkhazia joined the U.S.S.R. as a full Union Socialist Republic and remained a full Union Republic until 1931, having a special, treaty-based relationship with Georgia. Under Stalin's 1931 dictate, and over Abkhazia's strong protests, Abkhazia was demoted to the status of Autonomous Republic and brought within the Georgian Union Republic. This fact alone, sixty years later, is what Georgians used to declare Abkhazia an inseparable part of Georgia.

Stalin's change of Abkhazia's status and the period that followed it stand out in the historic memory of Abkhazians as the policy of "georgianization" and persecution. At that time Abkhazian schools were closed and replaced by Georgian ones. Abkhazians were not allowed to study in the Abkhazian language. Similarly, Georgian geographic names were introduced instead of Abkhazian ones. The Stalin era was also a period when a new "theory" was invented by Georgian historians, suggesting that Abkhazians were "new-comers" on Georgian land. On the whole, in Abkhazian perception, this period is characterized as one of the most serious attempts to eliminate the identity of the Abkhazian people.

The years from 1937 to 1953 introduced further drastic change to the demographic situation of Abkhazia. A special office was set up by Stalin's henchman, Lavrentiy Beria, to resettle large new numbers of Georgians in Abkhazia. As a cumulative result, by 1959 the number of Georgians in Abkhazia had already increased to 39.1% of the total population. In later years, under the pretext of requiring manpower and intellectuals for industries and educational institutions, more Georgians were brought to Abkhazia, to constitute 45% of the total population by the year 1989.

In the decades that followed Stalin's death, Abkhazian schools were re-opened and the Abkhaz language was again used in publishing and broadcasting, but the policy of "georgianization" continued in a more covert manner. Abkhazians repeatedly responded with mass protests, that occurred almost every decade.

Georgian politicians often argue that Abkhazia had a more privileged position within Georgia than did, for instance, any autonomous republic within the Russian SSR. To substantiate the idea, they claim that Abkhazians, whose number by 1978 had been reduced to 17% of the population, had a disproportionately large share of government posts. They however overlook the fact that all top officials in Abkhazia were appointed by Tbilisi, and only after at least three years "good service" in the capital of Georgia. The Tbilisi authorities also made sure that the most important posts, for instance, Communist Party First Secretary, were given to "loyal" Abkhazians. Such instrumental positions as Minister of Finance, of Interior, and KGB Chief traditionally were taken by Georgians, imported most often from Tbilisi.

In the years of perestroika and glasnost, Georgian nationalism reached its extreme form. The notion that Georgians were the "hosts" and other ethnic groups the "guests" -- often deemed "ungrateful," (because in this view they were held to have no rights at all of self-determination, even in their own historic territories) was propagated through mainstream Georgian media and academic publications. One of the central Georgian newspapers, for example, went so far as to publish an article suggesting that Georgia could tolerate not more than 5% of "guests" on its land. Some "intellectuals" demanded that restrictions be put on ethnic non-Georgian families to have no more than two children, because the birth rate among Georgians allegedly was comparatively the lowest at that time. The slogan "Abkhazia is Georgia" was surpassed in popularity only by the slogan "Georgia for Georgians." Frequently at mass rallies, fighters for Georgia's own independence from the Soviet Union, at the same time demanded that Georgia abolish even Abkhazian and South Ossetian autonomous status..

Zviad Gamsakhurdia, soon to become President of Georgia after her unilateral withdrawal from the U.S.S.R., went so far as to disseminate, in an address to the west Georgians, a plan which in essence was for Abkhazians either to be assimilated, or to be ousted from their land. Gamsakhurdia's ideas in regard to Abkhazia found little criticism, if any, in the Georgian community. On the contrary, the image of "the enemy," Abkhazian or Ossetian, served as a strong uniting factor for Georgian society, which was torn by internal political struggle. The clashes in 1989, following the self-separation of the Georgian section from the Abkhazian University as a whole, brought the antagonism between Abkhazians and Georgians to a new level.

This assertive Georgian nationalism was echoed by national movements in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which in the face of the growing Georgian aggressiveness felt extremely insecure. Abkhazian people repeatedly demanded restoration of full Union status for Abkhazia, or even to join the Russian Federation. The war in South Ossetia, started by President Gamsakhurdia, as well as tensions in the Armenian and Azeri districts of Georgia, the unsuccessful bid by Meskhetian Turks (deported from Georgia in 1944) to return to their former places of residence, and the forced migration of several thousands of Lezgins from Georgia, further aggravated the situation in the region. However, to avoid new confrontation with Abkhazia when the South Ossetian conflict was at its peak, Gamsakhurdia proposed a Parliament in Abkhazia that would grant 28 seats to Abkhazians as against 26 Georgian seats. This new Abkhazian Parliament was virtually split into Georgian and non-Georgian factions. The Georgian Parliamentary minority sabotaged the resolutions and acts passed by the Parliament of Abkhazia, while the rest of the Parliament adopted resolutions that would safeguard Abkhazia's sovereignty.

The unilateral abrogation by the Georgian Parliament in Tbilisi of all legal instruments, including the Union treaty of 1922, and their restoration of the Georgian Constitution of 1921, during which time Abkhazia briefly had been annexed by Georgia, put the Abkhazian Parliament into a position of having to reinstate temporarily the Abkhazian Constitution of 1925 when Abkhazia, as a separate Union Republic in the U.S.S.R., had a treaty-based relationship with Georgia. The Georgian faction in the Abkhazian Parliament, which by that time already had its internal differences over the Tbilisi coup ousting President Gamsakhurdia, was however unanimous in boycotting the resolution reinstating Abkhazia's 1925 Constitution. During discussions over the right of peoples, including Abkhazians, to self-determination as a basic human right, a Georgian M.P. stated publicly that the rights of Georgians should take priority over the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The breakup of the Soviet Union triggered further tensions in the newly emerged states. Hasty recognition of the privileged fifteen new states by the world community, on a selective basis, disregarded the fact that many of these states were composed in turn of other distinct entities, e.g., Autonomous Republics, Regions, etc. Their status, as well as that of the former Union Republics, had been arbitrarily established or changed by Stalin. At the time Georgia became a member of the United Nations, state power in the country was in the hands of the Council which had seized it in a bloody coup overthrowing President Gamsakhurdia. Only fourteen days after Georgia's formal recognition by the U.N., Georgian troops attacked Abkhazia. New elections in Georgia were held amidst the war in Abkhazia. Neither South Ossetia nor Abkhazia, except for the Georgian-controlled districts where non-Georgians were forced to vote, participated in the elections. Some areas in Mingrelia, a Gamsakhurdia stronghold, did not take part in the voting, either.

Economically weak, poly-ethnic in composition, fueled by ambitions of building a unitary Georgian state, unwilling to accept ideas of federalism despite declarations of adherence to democratic principles, Georgia posed a perfect example of what Andrey Sakharov called a "mini-empire." While paying tribute in general to Sakharov as human rights advocate and public figure, Georgians never forgave him for tagging Georgia with the mini-empire label. The right of the Georgian people to self-determination, finally realized through the collapse of the Soviet Union, was viewed by most Georgians as only an ethnic Georgian prerogative, throughout all the entities within former Soviet Georgian boundaries.

Abkhazians, who held their own freedom and heritage sacred, just as the Georgians held theirs, were extremely concerned by the developments in Tbilisi. Fearing a serious threat to their identity and Abkhazia's statehood, they proposed to the Georgians to discuss a possible federative treaty to fill the "legal vacuum" that existed between the two entities after abrogation by Georgia of all Soviet agreements and acts. The proposal was rejected by Tbilisi, mainly on the grounds that Georgian society was not ready to accept any ideas of a federation. On August 14, 1992, on the very day when the Abkhazian Parliament assembled to discuss a draft treaty, Georgian armed forces attacked Abkhazia. The Abkhazian Parliament building was one of the main targets.

Fierce fighting continued until September 30, 1993, when the Georgian troops finally were ousted from the territory of Abkhazia. In the face of the advancing Abkhazian forces, large numbers of local Georgians, many of whom had taken up arms or otherwise supported the Tbilisi side, fled Abkhazia, fearing reprisals for killings and atrocities which had been perpetrated in large numbers against Abkhazians, local Armenians, Russians, and Greeks. A U.N. fact finding mission then finally visited Georgia at the request of the Georgians, who were now blaming Abkhazians for alleged ethnic cleansing. The mission established that

both sides, initially the Georgian and later the Abkhazian, were involved in human rights abuses and atrocities.

Throughout the three years of negotiations following their defeat in Abkhazia, Georgia's leadership has been trying (not without some success) to get the world community to pressure Abkhazia to accept a political settlement on Georgia's terms. But Abkhazia's reluctant consent to form a union with Georgia, within Georgia's internationally recognized boundaries, still has not satisfied Georgia's ambitions. By playing a balancing act between Russia and the West, Shevardnadze has got both, for the present, to take a hard line against Abkhazia. He is likely to play it for all that he can.

From the very beginning of the conflict, the Western official position on Abkhazia has been an unambiguous double standard. At the time when the unexpected attack by Georgian State Council troops was launched on Abkhazian towns, villages, and Parliament, Western governments, blind and deaf to numerous pleas and appeals by Abkhazians, declared that the conflict was an internal affair of Georgia, and that the Georgian government (i.e., the Provisional State Council which recently had overthrown the elected President) was only legitimately restoring law and order to safeguard the railway lines in Abkhazia. Ironically, this and other official pretexts for the introduction of Georgian troops were later refuted by Eduard Shevardnadze himself, in one of his television interviews. He put the blame for unleashing the war on his warlords Kitovani and Ioseliani. The same blind eyes and deaf ears by Western officials were until recently turned toward the Russian crusade against Chechnya. In the case of Chechnya, at least human rights were made an issue, but even that happened only after numerous exposures and pleas by Russia's human rights advocates, and through considerable efforts by the Russian and international media.

During the first months of the Georgian military occupation of Abkhazia, serious human rights violations were perpetrated on an ethnic basis: Hundreds of Abkhazians and those who fell under suspicion for being pro-Abkhazian were tortured and executed. Practically the whole Abkhazian population and large numbers of other non-Georgians were expelled from the occupied territories. The Abkhazian State Archives and the Institute of History, Language, and Literature, with irreplaceable documents and manuscripts, were intentionally burnt to ashes, a fact which Abkhazians see as an evil symbol of Georgia's desire to eliminate the very identity of the Abkhazian people. The Abkhazian government at that time unsuccessfully tried to bring the attention of the world community to the fact that the Abkhaz people were put on the verge of annihilation by Georgia's aggression. The public threat of the Georgian Commander-in-Chief Karkarashvili, on television, to eliminate the entire Abkhaz nation, if it took that to win the conflict, even if it also took the sacrifice of 100,000 Georgians, did not evoke the slightest criticism within Georgia, nor by any government or intergovernmental organization. Not long after, Eduard Shevardnadze promoted Karkarashvili to the post of Defense Minister and gave him the rank of general. Only Amnesty International and the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (of which Abkhazia is a member) published any material during the war documenting Abkhazian claims of ethnic persecution by Georgian forces. At that time, also, only U.N.P.O. and a few western scholars and parliamentarians were trying desperately to raise awareness in the west about the nationalistic character and aims of Georgia's armed attack.

It was not until Abkhazian forces retook the northwestern part of Abkhazia, up to the Russian border, that the West made up its mind that it was time to take a more active stand in the conflict, and probably to try to intercept Russia's initiative and broker a peace agreement that would unconditionally consolidate Georgia's territorial integrity. The overall military victory of Abkhazian forces in late September 1993 pushed the U.N. to take more resolute steps not to allow Russia to have control over the situation.

Russia, in its turn, used the situation to make Georgia pliable in the securing of Russia's interests in the region. Obviously, it was not in the interests of Russia to have an independent Abkhazia as a precedent for its own subjects. Equally, it was not in Russia's interest to have on her southern borders a strong, independent, disloyal Georgia with South Ossetia and Abkhazia back in its control, and to be left without instruments to exert pressure. The expulsion of Shevardnadze's Provisional Council forces from Abkhazia left them in a vulnerable position. Pro-Gamsakhurdian nationalist troops in western Georgia made use of the situation to push Shevardnadze's forces increasingly further back toward Tbilisi. To secure Russian help in suppressing the opposition forces, Shevardnadze was forced to bring Georgia into the CIS. Today, Russia and Georgia continue to haggle over whether Russia will have military bases in Georgia, with Abkhazia again being a pawn.

It can hardly be questioned that Russia's moves are dictated by a desire to preserve its influence and presence in the regions of her strategic interests. However, to say that the tensions between Abkhazia and Georgia are a result only of Russia's manipulations would be to admit to only half the truth. To manipulate a situation, it is necessary to have something to manipulate. In this regard, Georgia's ultra-nationalism and push for hegemony, with the responsive self-determination movement in Abkhazia, made the perfect trump card.

Russia's role in the conflict has been singled out as an issue by many analysts and the media, particularly in regard to the degree of her military involvement. Georgia was the first to insist that Abkhazians owe their victory entirely to Russia's direct military support. It is not easy for Georgia to acknowledge its military defeat in Abkhazia, just as it was not easy for Russia to acknowledge its defeat in Chechnya. One thing is clear, however: Both Georgians and Abkhazians (and the Chechens, for that matter) got their armaments from the same source. In one of his regular radio addresses President Shevardnadze claimed that thousands of Russian citizens took part in the war on the Abkhaz side, and it was their assistance that "enabled full occupation of that part of Georgia." However, the bulk of Abkhazian forces consisted of Abkhazians, local non-Georgians, and even Georgians, the rest being volunteers from North Caucasian republics and Cossacks. North Caucasians are ethnically related to Abkhazians, and they were strongly supporting Abkhazia since the tensions and clashes in 1989. The Cossacks in their turn were concerned with the fate of the Russians, who made up 15% of the pre-war population in Abkhazia. However, it suffices to look through the list of casualties, to be able to judge who was actually resisting the Georgian assault.

The Western media and public have paid tribute to the Chechens, whose spirit has not been crushed by the Russian army, something Abkhazians have been denied by the West. Serious Western concerns have been expressed over Russia's behaviour in Chechnya. Yet Abkhazians heard almost not a word of sympathy in the west when they were forced to fight for their very survival, evidently because they had the "wrong" oppressor. Unlike Russia, whose power Western security analysts want to limit, Georgia has been seen as needing to be strengthened, to help provide those limits.

The most recent developments in Chechnya have added a new dimension to the Georgian-Abkhazian peace process. Georgia is now trying to avoid, whenever possible, any comparison between Chechnya and Abkhazia, which is quite understandable. The Georgian President was one of the first to give public support to President Yeltsin at the time Yeltsin gave authority to Russia's attack on Chechnya, in December 1994. Shevardnadze then called for joint efforts in suppressing all manifestations of "aggressive separatism," at any cost. Later, after the signing of the Khasavjurt peace accords, he stated that the Abkhazian and Chechen conflicts differed, and therefore ways for their settlement should be different. Despite many

similarities, however, there is indeed one important difference between the two situations: The Chechens had Russia fighting against them, while Abkhazians had to confront Mr. Shevardnadze, with his worldwide image as champion of democracy and peace, and his position as leader of an "underdog" nation whose security goals, in theory if not so far performance, have appeared to correspond with those of the West.

Quite apparently, the recent agreements between Russia and Chechnya have put Georgia in an uncomfortable position, since now Chechnya could create a precedent unattractive to Georgia for Abkhazia and South Ossetia. However, it is also possible, depending on the outcome of the political struggle within the Kremlin, that Abkhazia might become, or on the other hand be forced to become, a precedent for Chechnya.

So far, Russia's economic and political sanctions against Abkhazia, including the closing of the Russian-Abkhazian border and cutting off communication lines with Abkhazia, along with considerable pressure from the "Friends of Georgia" (a group of leading Western countries), have forced the Abkhazian side, after three years of de facto (and very arguably de jure) independence, to agree to some concessions to Georgia. Abkhazians are willing to sign an agreement whereby Georgia and Abkhazia would unite in a federative union. Still, Abkhazia demands that the relationship between the two entities must be on an equal footing, in accordance with the documents signed by the parties in 1994, under the aegis of the United Nations, Russia, and the CSCE (now OSCE). According to the framework provided by these documents, Abkhazia is prepared to negotiate specific delegations of her state authority to a common body of jurisdiction. Again according to this framework, however, Abkhazia insists that the political status of Abkhazia will not be the subject of negotiations. Only the people of Abkhazia have the right to determine their own future. In the Abkhazian view, negotiations with Georgia appropriately should be focused on re-establishing relations between the two republics.

Georgia, in its turn, is insisting on such an arrangement that would enable her to reassert her role as a center in relation to its province, to which Georgia is prepared to delegate certain responsibilities. However, Georgia's promises to grant Abkhazia the broadest autonomous rights are not believable to Abkhazians, after what they have experienced. They can no longer accept such an arrangement, as it does not guarantee security of their statehood. Because Abkhazia experienced during the armed conflict, from an international system not recognizing her statehood, total lack of interference with Georgian, "nation-state" aggression which Abkhazians credibly perceived as attempted genocide, Abkhazia now sees preservation of its statehood as essential to securing not only her self-determination, but her very survival. Georgia, for her part, is not capable of forcing her will on Abkhazia without outside help. Therefore, there has been much maneuvering by Georgia to get third parties to do the job.

One of the instruments to put pressure on the Abkhazian side has been the issue of Georgian refugees. Apparently to effect their prompt return en masse, the Georgian side has insisted that the Russian peacekeepers must be entrusted with police functions. However, that would mean Russian forces would be directly involved in armed confrontation, since the return of refugees before an acceptable political settlement would inevitably trigger new clashes.

For those who are familiar with United Nations documents, it is easy to differentiate the more balanced reports on the situation by the U.N. Secretary General, based on the materials of the Observer mission and his Special Envoy, from resolutions by the Security Council. One of the recent Security Council resolutions strongly supported the Georgian demand to bring back the Georgian refugees to Abkhazia and insisted it

was inadmissible to link the refugee problem to the issue of Abkhazia's "political status," i.e., to the problem which actually constitutes the core of the conflict. In several interviews Mr. Shevardnadze has practically acknowledged that sending troops to Abkhazia was a grave mistake, for which Kitovani and Ioseliani were responsible. Georgian refugees from Abkhazia are paying a heavy price for that mistake. The mistake would be repeated if they were induced to return to Abkhazia prior to a true political settlement. Around fifty to sixty thousand of them have spontaneously returned to the Gal region of Abkhazia, which has been predominantly ethnic Mingrelian in settlement. Return to other areas, with more mixed population, would only increase the confrontation. The non-Georgians would see them as Georgia's "fifth column," manipulated by Tbilisi as before. What is more, three-quarters of the Georgian refugees do not even want to return to Abkhazia, according to a survey by the Norwegian Refugee Council, as long as Abkhazia is not under Georgian jurisdiction.

Georgian leaders more than once announced a move for a policy change. Along with threats to suspend the Russian peace-keepers' mandate, warnings have been given of the possibility of reviewing Georgia's military agreements with Russia, and even seceding from the CIS, if Russia does not help to settle the conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia on Georgia's terms. The above declarations were followed by statements that the fate of Russian military bases in Georgia will depend on the way the Abkhazian conflict is resolved. Not able to rely on Western assistance, however, which though not entirely token has failed to provide security guarantees for Georgia so far, Shevardnadze recognizes Russia's geopolitical role as chief broker in the region. Apparently he is actually offering up Georgia's independence to Russia, in practical terms, in exchange for the return of her former autonomous regions. Mr. Shevardnadze's prophetic words, that for Georgia the sun rises in the North, might after all come true.

Trying to "restore" Georgia's territorial integrity, however, by permitting Russian military bases in Georgia in exchange for Russian coercion of Abkhazia back into Georgia's control, would not solve Georgia's problems in the long run, if at all. Russia is aware of the fact that Georgia's loyalty would be only temporary, and would have predictable limits. On the other hand, continuing coercive action against Abkhazia will undermine any attempts for reconciliation. Abkhazia and South Ossetia at this point have little or no grounds to believe that Georgia is building a democratic state, and that they should seek the accommodation of their rights within it. Further attempts by Georgia at coercion, direct or indirect, will increase Abkhazian and South Ossetian conviction on that point. They are likely to resist any kind of association with Georgia, without genuine guarantees for their own security. In the end, any attempt to force Abkhazia into a relationship with Georgia characterized by a power balance at all resembling the pre-conflict relationship, would not be viable. In essence it would amount to forcing a restoration of the Soviet legacy, and with it the restoration of an international security "bomb," ready to explode again, any time in the future.

As for the Western position, it seems that the oil pipeline interests on the one hand, and considerations concerning NATO enlargement on the other, contribute to the ambivalence as to the possible Western role in post-Soviet space. In the case of Georgia, another factor is the West's particular support for Eduard Shevardnadze, who has been seen by Western policy analysts as a key person in ending the cold war and a sophisticated player on the world scene. However, continued western support for Georgia's unwillingness to meet Abkhazia's main security concerns, would naturally tend to drive Abkhazia away from Georgia, toward a Russian alliance instead.

It seems, then, that the degree of Georgia's independence is likely to depend on the degree of Abkhazia's sovereignty. Any specific or wider solution to these problems sanctioned by the international community will

contribute to the longterm security and peace, only if it takes into account the particular reasons and claims for self-determination and statehood of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Chechnya, and Nagorno-Karabagh, especially in light of the post-Soviet legacy of armed conflict "explosions" they already have experienced.

It is illuminating to look at some of the sociological research in Abkhazia and Georgia. Results of the surveys conducted in Abkhazia in 1994 by a non-governmental organization called "Civic Initiative" showed that 45.5% of 10,026 respondents (67.3% of Abkhazian respondents, 21.3% of Russians, 35.9% of Armenians, 13.5 % of Georgians, (In the survey, local Georgians who never left Abkhazia and those who became refugees and later returned to Abkhazia's Gal region were studied as separate groups) 21.0% of Georgian returnees to the Gal region, 75% of experts) wanted Abkhazia to be an independent state. Another 45.5% favoured uniting with the Russian Federation (27% of Abkhazians, 68.7% of Russians, 58.1% of Armenians, 29.7% of Georgians, 9.0% of Georgian returnees in Gal, 15.0% of experts). The survey was conducted before the introduction of Russian Federal troops into Chechnya. Therefore, one would expect that the attitude of the population towards actual union with Russia could have considerably changed. Russia's sanctions against Abkhazia which followed the beginning of the Chechen war are another factor that could account for a possible change of attitude. The idea of a Union State with Georgia on an equal basis found support with 6.7% of all respondents (3.8% of Abkhazians, 8.6% of Russians, 4.3% of Armenians, 37.8% of Georgians, 32.0% of returnees to Gal, 10% of experts). Abkhazia as part of Georgia found support with 0.6% of the respondents (the only significant numbers being 8.1% of Georgians and 36.0% of Georgian returnees to Gal, with 0% of Abkhazians).

The survey among the Georgian refugees conducted by the Norwegian Refugee Council (mentioned above) shows that 74% of respondents consider bringing Abkhazia back under Georgia's jurisdiction as the main precondition for their return to Abkhazia. Two simple, but important points stand out from this fact: First, they do not think that Abkhazia is currently under Georgia's jurisdiction; and second, they do not consider themselves or want to be citizens of Abkhazia.

Another survey carried out by the Moscow Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology established that 44.2% of Georgian and 32% of non-Georgian respondents in Tbilisi would like to see Abkhazia as a constituent part of Georgia without right to secession, while 28.8% of Georgians and 39.5% of non-Georgians there found it hard to answer the question on the status of Abkhazia. _

42% of ethnic Georgians responded that Abkhazia and South Ossetia belong to Georgia, but that keeping them by force is not worth the sacrifice. 44% said that it is worth the sacrifice. Only 6.7% of ethnic Georgians supported the idea of allowing Abkhazia to be even a free economic zone.

From these surveys, it is evident that in the aftermath of the bloodshed, Georgians and Abkhazians are divided to the point of total mistrust for each other. These feelings are further stirred up by propaganda. Georgians view Abkhazians as "secessionists" and "aggressive separatists" (the term introduced by Mr Shevardnadze into the political vocabulary), while Abkhazians see Georgians as aggressive nationalists, an imperial force that has ungrounded claims for their land, as the party that holds the blame for unleashing the bloody war, and as the party that now is behind economic and political sanctions against Abkhazia.

There could be more chance for reconciliation of the two nations when political reconciliation takes place. In this regard the world community can and must play a constructive role. Characterizing peoples in negative terms as "secessionists" and "separatists"-- who with no meaningful international protections are forced to

defend themselves against state-organized, nationalist, armed violence -- and at the same time trying to coerce them into submission, will hardly persuade these peoples to give up their aspirations and rights. It will be necessary to recognize that the current international framework is not, in many cases, equipped to deal with the new realities. Nevertheless, even within the existing system it is possible, with a will, to find ways of accommodating the two apparently rival principles of self-determination and territorial integrity. If all parties can see, in mutually agreed, specific provisions, sufficient guarantees for their safety and rights, alternatives to total independence can be something like a confederation, or a union state with each entity having equal rights and access to international organizations, or other possible agreed arrangements that will provide satisfactory structural safeguards.

The two main current tendencies in world organization -- self-determination movements to establish new states and an integration process among older states (which process has problems of its own) -- need not in the long run contradict each other. The new states-to-be are seeking independence, not because they want to isolate themselves from the rest of the world, but because they want to be integrated into the world community directly and equally. They have suffered too much from entities that not only misrepresent, but use their memberships in international institutions to intentionally suppress, the legitimate needs and demands of entities within their boundaries..

Till the end of the nineteenth century, the Russian Black Sea coast used to be populated by Ubykhs, a tribe closely related to Abkhazians. As a result of Russia's conquest of the Caucasus, the Ubykhs were forced to flee to Turkey. Eventually they were assimilated into general Cherkess and Turkish cultures. In 1994, the last speaker of the Ubykh language died in Istanbul. With him died a unique culture and language.

The fate of the Ubykhs is of legendary importance in the Caucasus. What has become of them, and of many other peoples, moves us to look for the answer to the question, whether the world community should try to build real security by looking into the sources of self-determination movements in each particular case, and by working out mechanisms to accommodate the rights of peoples to decide their destinies, or will continue to attempt coercive measures, sacrificing the rights of entire nations, in most cases to protect vested interests under the banner of regional, or even global security.

Notes

1. Resolutions of the 6-th Congress of the Soviet of the SSR Abkhazia and the 6-th Georgian Congress of Soviets , February 1931.
2. J. Gogebashvili, "Kem Zaselit' Abkhaziyu?", Tiflisskiy Vestnik, September-November 1877.
3. Census data cited from T. Achukba, *Ethnic Revolution in Abkhazia*. Sukhum 1996.
4. I. Marykhba, "Abkhazskiy Pis'ma" (1941-1989), *Sbornik Dokumentov*, vol.1, 1994.
5. R. Mishveladze, *Akhalgazrda Kommunisti*, 29 July 1989.
6. *Abkhazskoe Pis'mo*, 18 March 1989, Lykhny, cited from I. Marykhba.
7. J. Gamakharia, *Sovetskaya Abkhazia*, June 1990.
8. On 31 July 1992 Georgia became a full member of the UN.
9. A. Sakharov, *Ogonek*, no.31 1989.
10. UN Document S/26795, 17 November 1993.
11. "Zerkala Separatizma", interview with E. Shevardnadze, *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, April 1995.

12. Report of an Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization Mission to Abkhazia, Georgia and the Northern Caucasus. November 1992, the Hague, Netherlands.
- Amnesty International. Georgia. Alleged Human Rights Violations During the Conflict in Abkhazia, July, 1993.
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13. See testimonies of eye-witnesses in "Belaya Kniga Abkhazii", Yu. Voronov, pp.203-204.
14. Statement by G. Karkarashvili on the Sukhum TV, 24 August 1992.
15. B. G. Hewitt. Abkhazia: a problem of identity and ownership. Central Asian Survey, 1993.
16. E. Shevardnadze, interview to the Georgian Radio, cited from BGI, September 1996.
17. Throughout the fighting lists of casualties were open to the public at the Press Service of the Parliament of Abkhazia.
18. Interview with E. Shevardnadze by Martin Schepp, "Stern", 12 April 1995.
19. R. Stancliffe, J. Kharashvili. "A Survey on the Living Conditions and Future Options of Displaced People in Georgia", Norwegian Refugee Council, Tbilisi, 1995.
20. Throughout September- October 1996 repeated statements were made by Georgian officials concerning Russia's military basis and possible suspension of Georgia's CIS membership. Interfax. Monitor, Jamestown Foundation. Reuters. September-October 1996.
21. L. Tania. State Structure of Abkhazia: Negotiation Process and Attitudes of the Population. Sukhum, 1995.
22. Cited from L. Tania, State Structure of Abkhazia...

The roots of the conflict

Bruno Coppieters

Bruno Coppieters is Associate Professor at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and has facilitated a number of academic dialogue initiatives with individuals from Georgia and Abkhazia.

Before the war of 1992–93 Abkhazia had a population of half a million. Squeezed between the Black Sea and the Caucasus mountains it had been known as the Soviet Riviera in the 1970s and 1980s, when millions of tourists came every year to enjoy its beaches and subtropical climate. Its agriculture supplied Soviet markets with tobacco, precious woods and citrus fruits. At the end of the 1980s, however, this peaceful area became a violent zone of conflict in the Soviet Union and Abkhazia became a symbol for the failure of Soviet policies to accommodate competing ethnic claims. What went wrong with Soviet policy and why did Abkhazia in particular become the scene of a bloody war that cost several thousand lives?

Soviet nationalities policy granted political status to the major nationalities which composed the Soviet state and ranked them in a hierarchical federal system. Their place in the hierarchy depended on a number of factors such as population size, geographical location and political leverage with the Communist Party elite. In the Soviet ethnofederal construction, the union republics had the highest status, followed by the autonomous republics with the autonomous regions in the third rank. The political status of all units could change over time

according to circumstances and the political considerations of the Moscow party leadership. Each national group which had received the right to constitute one of these units was recognized as its 'titular nation'. The Abkhaz were thus the titular nation of the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia and the Georgians the titular nation of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia. In the Soviet view, this type of system could not be called ethnocratic, despite the political privileges given to the titular nations, because the Communist Party and its internationalist ideology claimed to preserve the rights of all minorities and all citizens, independent of their nationality. The centralist exercise of political power was seen as the most effective means of avoiding discrimination in a federal state. With the disintegration of the Communist Party at the end of the 1980s, this institutional guarantee for minorities disappeared.

With the democratization of the Soviet system and the collapse of centralized power, the legitimacy of the federal order and hierarchical relations between union republics, autonomous republics and autonomous regions became one of the main subjects of dispute. Some national movements in autonomous republics and regions refused to be considered part of a union republic. In most of the Russian Federation, these conflicts were settled by mutual agreement, but in the North and South Caucasus the crisis of legitimacy led to political tension and in some cases to violent clashes between the capitals of the union republics and their subordinate units. In Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the legitimacy of the Soviet federal hierarchy was challenged by all sides. The political leadership of the autonomous region of South Ossetia strove to upgrade the status of the region through reunification with the North Ossetian Autonomous Republic (which lay within the Russian Federation). In a counter move Tbilisi abolished South Ossetia's autonomous status in 1990. Georgian nationalists considered such autonomy as a Soviet instrument to divide and rule its dependencies in the South Caucasus. Furthermore the Georgians did not regard the Ossetians as indigenous.

In the Georgian view, the Abkhaz were different. They had the right to preserve their political status as an indigenous people, provided that the rights of the Georgian population in Abkhazia were significantly extended. Georgians made up some forty-five per cent of the population and were challenging the political privileges of the Abkhaz titular nation, which comprised only eighteen per cent. The political leadership in Tbilisi did not see any reason why the Soviet hierarchical system should not be preserved and even enforced after the achievement of independence. The politically privileged position of the Abkhaz minority was unacceptable to them. The leaders of the Abkhaz national movement refused to acknowledge the authority of the Georgian political leadership in Tbilisi and before the dissolution of the USSR had already striven to upgrade Abkhazia's status from autonomous republic to union republic. After its dissolution they demanded equal status with Georgia in a loose federative framework. This form of withdrawal from the authority of the Georgian state would, in the view of the Georgians and of Abkhaz radicals, have paved the way for full secession and the establishment of an independent Abkhaz state. The conflict over political

status reached its climax with the war of 1992–93 when Georgian troops, consisting mainly of paramilitaries, intervened in the political conflict between the two main nationalities of Abkhazia. They were driven out by Abkhaz troops supported by nationalist movements from the North Caucasus and by the Russian military. As a consequence of this victory the Abkhaz authorities attempted to consolidate their position by changing the demographic situation. The majority of the Georgian inhabitants of Abkhazia fled to Georgia and these internally displaced persons (IDPs) were not allowed to return. To date no solution has been found to the political and humanitarian dilemmas at the heart of the conflict. Russian troops were deployed on the ceasefire line between the parties in 1993, formally becoming the CISPKF in 1994. The United Nations has sent military observers to the conflict zone and is mediating between the two sides, with Russia acting as facilitator, but negotiations on political status have not led to significant results. Since 1997 the negotiation process has concentrated on economic and humanitarian co-operation, also without substantial progress. Indeed, in May 1998 violence erupted in the Gali region of southern Abkhazia again, causing a major setback in relations. Over the previous three years the spontaneous return of IDPs to the Gali region had, in the Abkhaz view, provided cover for Georgian guerrillas. Clashes between them and Abkhaz militia led to a resumption of hostilities, resulting in a new wave of IDPs fleeing the region. In order to avoid the accusation of ethnic cleansing, the Abkhaz authorities began to organize the return of Georgian IDPs to the Gali region from March 1999 but refused any direct Georgian involvement in securing their safety. The Georgian government considers bilateral agreements giving security guarantees for the returning IDPs to be vital. The Abkhaz government, however, sees the lifting of the CIS- imposed blockade as a necessary first step in a process of normalization.

There is no commonly accepted analysis for the Georgian–Abkhaz conflict among either those who are politically involved or among outside observers. Different explanations are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but each explanation has specific political implications which determine the type of resolution that is most appropriate.

Understanding nationhood

The conflict may be seen primarily as a consequence of conflicting views and of existing fears with regard to the preservation of language, culture and national identity. The Georgians feared the Russification of Abkhazia by cultural means and the loss of the 'historical' Georgian character of this region. They criticized the close links between the Abkhaz leadership and Moscow. The Abkhaz feared that the Georgianization of Abkhazia, which in their view was far advanced under the Soviet regime, would be completed through the integration of Abkhazia into a Georgian framework. They were concerned that a rise in the number of Georgians through further 'colonization' would lead to the exclusion of the Abkhaz from political power in their own homeland and limit their rights. In the view of both

parties, political sovereignty – which meant in practice full control of the state apparatus of Abkhazia – was the sole instrument to counter that fear of extinction. Concepts such as shared sovereignty had no practical meaning for politicians whose experience was restricted to Soviet practice. The Leninist regime had never recognized any form of division of powers as legitimate. A federal division of political power into various levels of authority with separate jurisdictions was unknown in the Soviet Union.

Those citing fear of cultural extinction as the cause of the conflict emphasize the ethnic and cultural understanding of nationhood by political elites. The Georgian and Abkhaz concept of the nation is based on language, religion and common descent and emerged as a consequence of the modernization of the region at the end of the nineteenth century. The debates between historians and linguists from both communities on national descent were linked to territorial claims on Abkhazia. Some Georgian historians claimed that the Abkhaz had settled in the area only a few centuries ago. From the Abkhaz perspective, Georgians had settled in Abkhazia as a result of Tsarist and Soviet colonization policies. According to this type of explanation, the national projects which both communities developed included claims of an exclusive right to sovereignty over Abkhaz territory. The root of the conflict is seen in the ethnic nature of Georgian and Abkhaz nationalism, which was bound to have explosive results as the communist regime weakened. Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika did indeed lead to a radical redistribution of power between the national elites. The leaderships of Georgia and Abkhazia proved incapable of reaching agreement in renegotiating their political relations after the disappearance of an overarching Soviet framework, which left the use of force an increasingly likely possibility.

This focus on ethnic nationalism calls for a solution based on the creation of a more civic type of national consciousness with individuals voluntarily associating themselves in a state, and with common values and democratic institutions as binding forces. The democratization of political institutions and the creation of a civil society are seen as part of an overall strategy to create new links between individuals which are not based on ethnicity. Scholars of nationalism would, however, stress that idioms of nationhood found in Georgia and Abkhazia have characteristics which tend to persist throughout the whole process of nation building and which change only very slowly. But it is also true that a peace settlement and the creation of a new institutional framework in Georgia and Abkhazia may have a positive influence on the political practices and

attitudes of the elites. Their search for legitimacy will require a more pluralistic, assimilationist and inclusive understanding of nationhood as opposed to the previous exclusive idiom. The Georgian authorities have already had to respond to the universalistic legal obligations imposed by organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Council of Europe. Although not recognized by these organizations, the Abkhaz government is unwilling to be seen as a pariah in terms of the observance of human rights standards. It also has to find legitimacy among the Armenian, Russian and Greek communities in Abkhazia and integrate the returning Georgian IDPs. A peace settlement may further encourage a gradual transformation of the state and nation-building process on a civic rather than an ethnic basis.

Geopolitical factors

The lack of legitimacy of the new states that emerged on the post-Soviet scene and the eruption of violent conflicts between national communities may be understood as a consequence of geopolitical factors which are not ideological. According to such a perspective, the conflict between Georgians and Abkhaz was generated first by the Soviet and then by the Russian authorities in a desperate attempt to retain their hegemony on their southern borders. The key to the solution of the conflict is therefore to be found in Moscow. This explanation is based on the presupposition of a continuity in imperial domination of the periphery by the centre from Tsarist through to the Soviet and Russian political eras. The conflict between the Georgians and Abkhaz, which is so detrimental to the interests of both communities, should be seen as a consequence of a deliberate divide and rule policy designed in Moscow. In 1992–93 pro-Abkhaz forces in Russia would have supported the Abkhaz secessionists in order to take revenge on the Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze who, as Soviet foreign minister, had, in their view, sold out all Soviet interests to the West. This Russian imperial policy secured Georgia's entry into the CIS after its military defeat in September 1993 as well as the stationing of Russian bases on Georgian territory. Russia might, according to this type of explanation, have used the conflict to influence the negotiations between Western oil companies and governments on the routing of oil pipelines from the Caspian region to the world market. One of these routes – the so-called western route – passes through Georgia to the Black Sea port of Poti. A destabilization of the western route would have made the northern route, which passes

through the North Caucasus in the Russian Federation to Novorossiisk, more attractive. Moreover, an agreement between Georgia and Abkhazia would strengthen the position of nationalistic anti-Russian forces in the Caucasus region and facilitate Georgia's integration into Western political and military structures, which is not in Moscow's interest. NATO's increasing presence in the region through programmes such as Partnership for Peace should not be underestimated in an assessment of Russia's policies. Russia's divide and rule policy would on the other hand gain nothing by allowing Abkhazia to be independent, as this would strengthen instability and separatism in the North Caucasus.

Georgian public discussion focuses almost exclusively on the Russian factor. For Tbilisi, this is useful in mobilizing support among Western powers, which are receptive to the argument that Russia retains imperial ambitions that ought to be counterbalanced with more support to the countries along Russia's southern belt. This approach implies a harmony of interests between the Georgian and Abkhaz communities that would have continued but for outside manipulation, a view that is obviously problematic. The contrast between the harmonious relations that are supposed to have existed in the past and the violent character of the war focuses exclusively on external factors of conflict. To say that the key to the solution of the conflict is to be found in Moscow distracts attention from a serious discussion of the difficulties in overcoming the antagonistic relations that both communities have been building over a long period. It also impedes a fruitful discussion of the federalization of Georgia. Many believe that granting any form of self-government to Georgia's numerous minorities would give Russia an instrument with which to exploit ethnic divisions in the country. The critique of an exclusively external approach to the conflict does not invalidate the geopolitical explanation. The poor record of Russian mediation in the conflict is partly due to the fact that Russia has particular interests to defend in the region. Russia's past as a colonial power makes it poorly suited for the role of peacemaker. Both parties to the conflict depend on Moscow, but at the same time have a deep distrust towards its policies and intentions. The Georgians blame Moscow for the failure of the negotiations, while the Abkhaz blame Moscow for the economic blockade.

Any perspective of a political settlement to the conflict based on federal principles has to take into account the geopolitical context. No federal system may be considered stable if outside powers constantly intervene. Some authors therefore plead for a policy of neutrality for Georgia and Abkhazia. Only by refusing to be part of a 'great game' between external powers would both communities be able to reach a stable federal arrangement in which they would not constantly seek external support.

Another option would be the constitution of a larger framework of political integration for the Caucasian countries which would include Russia and which would receive support from the West including the USA. Both options presuppose that a policy based on the balance of

power between stronger states would destabilize any political arrangement between less powerful states such as Georgia and Abkhazia.

Legitimate rule

Just and legitimate rule are crucial concepts for explaining a political conflict and for its resolution. In the case of the Georgian–Abkhaz conflict, historians have extensively researched the historic grievances of both communities. The French historian Papin described in 1824 the ‘state of perpetual hostility’ in which the Abkhaz were living ‘with their neighbours the Russians from Doudjouk-Kal and the Mingrelians’. Events such as the Caucasian war, which ended in 1864, the deportation of a large part of the Abkhaz population by the Tsarist regime in the wake of the failed uprisings of 1866 and 1877, the Georgian colonization of the country and the establishment of Soviet rule, are grievances still held by Abkhaz today. The subjugation of the Abkhaz by stronger powers such as Russia, Georgia or the Soviet regime failed to secure their loyalty even though it was usually enshrined in some kind of treaty. The demise of the Soviet Empire could be seen, according to this type of explanation, as having created a window of opportunity for the Abkhaz leadership.

At the end of 1991 Georgia was plunged into a civil war in which President Zviad Gamsakhurdia was ousted by his former supporters and later replaced by Eduard Shevardnadze, the former Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs. In Abkhazia the majority of the Georgian population had supported Gamsakhurdia, and was, moreover, involved in a severe conflict with the Abkhaz representatives. None of these competing authorities was strong enough to impose its will on the territories of Georgia or Abkhazia. No arrangement could be found which could be considered legitimate. An attempt to overcome the destabilizing consequences of rule by the largest ethnic group was sought in a system of ethnic quotas for the elections to the Abkhaz Supreme Soviet, implemented in 1991 under Gamsakhurdia but considered ‘racist’ and a form of ‘apartheid’ by his successor Shevardnadze. As a consequence, the power relations between the various political actors in Georgia and Abkhazia had to be measured by other than democratic and peaceful means. The war should be seen as a result of the failure of the previous agreements and institutions to gain acceptance.

Explaining the roots of the conflict in terms of legitimacy calls for the creation of a federative system – a ‘common state’ as it has been called in the negotiations – which would be based on the principles of equality, liberty and self-government for all major national communities. The legitimacy of such a federative arrangement would depend on the ability of both parties to make compromises that are acceptable to public opinion. Institutionalization on its own, however legally sophisticated, could not survive without popular support.

The negotiations on political status may be combined with the other two conflict resolution strategies – the development of a more civic approach to state and nation building and a neutral foreign policy. The creation of a pluralistic and democratic ethnofederal system, accommodating the claims of all national communities, could prevent the destructive consequences of ethnic nationalism. The parties to the Georgian–Abkhaz conflict have presently failed, however, to change the logic of confrontation. It may be years before all those who consider Abkhazia to be their homeland are able to accept the simple truth that dialogue and accommodation may be more rewarding than the present stalemate

Doctor Mehmed Bülent Uludagi
Ankara, Newspaper "Cumhuriyet"

February 8, 2000

On 11 July 1999, a Turkish newspaper "Cumhuriyet" published quasi-scientific article written by certain Nur Dolye on the issue of Abkhazia. The article is nothing else but provocative pasquinade replete with hatred of Georgia and its people.

A meeting between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides, which was mediated and fully supported by the Foreign Minister of Turkey-Mr. Ismail Cem took place 7-9 July 1999 and aimed at finding peaceful solutions to the conflict. After such an important meeting, publication of this kind of article is particularly lamentable. The author puts blame squarely on the Georgian people and Government. When He speaks about history in the region, he fails to mention about the sufferings of the Georgian people, inflicted by the Soviet regime and points out troubles befell only on ethnic Abkhazians as a result of Muslims forced exile (Muhajir) to Turkey. Such approach is scientifically absolutely groundless.

First of all, it should be noted that the destructive forces outside Georgia have artificially created the problem in Abkhazia (Georgia). This policy seeks to prevent Georgia from becoming fully-fledged democracy, its integration into the international community and Georgia's participation in the pipeline project- nicknamed "the project of the century". Nevertheless, the project implementation has gone so far, nothing is likely to stop it.

As far as Mohajirstvo is concerned, this tragedy, occurred in the 1860s, had its negative effect not only on the ethnic Abkhazs, but on the whole Islamic population of the mountainous Caucasus, as well as on the Georgian Muslims, who, by the way, outnumbered Abkhaz Muslim exiles two times. Therefore, the occupant Russian Empire, and not the occupied Georgia, should be held responsible for the tragedy.

According to the Article, after the Soviatisation of Abkhazia occurred, the latter joined the Soviet Union and enjoyed the same status as Georgia did, but in 1930, Stalin annulled the hitherto existing status of Abkhazia and subordinated it to Georgia. Understandably enough, Georgian origin of Stalin may misled the reader and incline them to believe the aforementioned allegations. It is True, the Abkhaz people had suffered a great deal under the Stalin regime, however, it should not be forgotten that other regions of Stalin's and Beria's homeland suffered as well, especially it is true when it comes to Georgian creative and scientific elite.

In July 1918, the Georgian Government and the Abkhazia Authorities signed a Treaty, which granted Abkhazia a wide autonomy and endorsed it as an integral part of Georgia. From 1918-1921, while the Democratic rule in Georgia, its external borders were internationally recognized and respected. Abkhazia was integral part of Georgia and like some other regions, had been granted the status of "Soviet Socialist" republic. The similar status has been granted to Stavropol, Tuapse, Ural and other regions.

The author discovers very interesting "fact". He claims that the President of Georgia, Mr. Shevardnadze, was captured by Abkhaz military commanders and later on set free upon the request of Mr. Ardzinba(?!). It is rather bizarre, is not it, that the world community failed to notice the President's imprisonment and that the very person, who brought disaster to 250 000 people, demonstrated unimaginable "humanity" and released President Shevardnadze?!

The vast majority of the populations of Abkhazia are Christians. However, some newspapers, published in our country, regard the 1992-93 Georgian-Abkhaz conflict as an "Islam Jihad" (war for Islamic purity).

The article vividly fails to show concern what should be done by the conflicting sides to find peaceful means to the solution of the conflict.

Despite the extremely provocative and absolutely groundless information, there does not exist any serious problem in the relationships between the Georgian and Abkhaz people. The best proof of the aforementioned is the fact that after the policy of ethnic cleansing and exodus of thousands of Georgians from Abkhazia, many Abkhazs continue living peacefully in different regions of Georgia. That is a fact of life without any shadow of hypocrisy.

The Georgian and Abkhaz people want to restore their friendship and the Turkish Mass media is well positioned to play essential role in the process, including "Cumhuriyet".

Abkhazia - Problems and the Paths to their Resolution

By Konstantin Ozgan

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia, 1998

From the realm of legend:

Almighty God, having created the world and human-kind, deemed it necessary to apportion to each nation its own corner of the earth. Every living creature has its own weakness, and God too was no exception. In dividing up the earth, God fell in love with one spot and determined to keep it for himself. On the day of distribution of the plots the Abkhazian messenger arrived late. When God was informed that an Abkhazian had come for his portion of earth, he shrugged his shoulders and said: "Too late, it's all been distributed!". But God was interested in what could have been more important for the Abkhazian than this to cause him to be late. The Abkhazian replied that he had had guests and couldn't leave them. God too is most hospitable and invited the Abkhazian into his presence, saying to him: "To love and receive guests is a noble and holy thing. Hospitable people are noble people. I fell in love with this place here and decided to keep it for myself, but I bestow it on you Abkhazians. Live on it in health and preserve it". This land on which the Abkhazians have lived since the creation of the world is called Apsny, which when translated means 'Land of the Abkhazians [Mortals]' .

It is rare to meet anyone acquainted with Abkhazia who is unfamiliar with this ancient legend. On one occasion one of the leaders of Georgia was relating this interesting fable, naturally ascribing it all to his own country. A Turkish general who happened to be present remarked: "The legend you are relating does not concern beautiful Georgia but belongs to the Abkhazians. Don't rob them of this as well!".

From the realm of history:

The territory that today bears the name of Abkhazia (Apsny in Abkhaz) stretches along the western Black Sea littoral of the Caucasus. At the time of the Georgian invasion the population of Abkhazia stood at 550,000. Together with the Abkhazians there lived on this land Russians, Armenians, Kartvelians (comprising Mingrelians, Svans, Georgians and Laz), Ukrainians, Turks, Greeks, Germans, Estonians, Bulgarians, and even black people. Multilingualism was a permanent feature of Abkhazia, but its inhabitants always considered this land to be Abkhazian and the Abkhazians to be its autochthonous denizens, and in past times of crisis for the Abkhazians they all amicably united to defend it.

'Venerable yet forever youthful Abkhazia' is what travellers, sailors, writers, and historians who visited here in the past used to call it. This charming phrase then came to be adopted in modern times.

From the most ancient of times, beginning with the Greek and Roman historians, the territory of Abkhazia was settled by the Abkhazian tribes of Apsilians, Abazgians, Sanigs and Missimians. Their unification in the 8th century formed a unified Abkhazian Princedom, which a little later in the century was transformed into the powerful Abkhazian Kingdom.

Through the centuries Abkhazia and Georgia, Abkhazians and Kartvelians, who are quite unrelated peoples, occupied neighbouring territories, and each of them had their own state. Abkhazian statehood lasted for

twelve centuries. There were periods in the histories of Abkhazia and Georgia when both peoples lived in a single state, but even then Abkhazia was not in a position of dependency vis-a-vis Georgia. On the contrary, Abkhazian kings united within the confines of their state (the Abkhazian Kingdom) a significant part of western and central Transcaucasia, crowned by the creation of a new state 'The Kingdom of the Abkhazians and the Kartvelians'. In the 13th century, after the disintegration of this kingdom, the Abkhazian principedom together with, and on the same level as, other political groupings in the Caucasus was a distinct entity in world-history for 600 years. In the middle of the 16th century Abkhazia found itself at the mercy of the Ottoman Empire, but even then Abkhazia did not lose its independence. The country was ruled by rulers of Abkhazian origin, who conducted independent policies. It was as just such an independent principedom that Abkhazia in 1810 entered the constituency of the Russian Empire, still retaining its autonomy until 1864.

Following the collapse of the Russian Empire, Abkhazia became a constituent-part of the Independent Mountain Republic of the Caucasus, in which were united peoples closely related to the Abkhazians -- Abazinians, Shapsughes, Kabardians, Chechens, Adyghes, etc... However, in 1918-1921 Abkhazia fell under the occupation of the military forces of the Georgian Democratic (Menshevik) Republic. Under the command of Gen. Mazniashvili (Mazniev), the military swept through Abkhazia with fire and sword. The Abkhazian People's Council, the highest organ of power, was liquidated, and a Georgian nationalist dictatorship was established in the country.

With the victory of Soviet power in Abkhazia in March 1921, this anti-democratic Georgian regime was swept away, the occupiers were driven out, and an independent Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia was proclaimed. In 1922 Abkhazia on the same level as, and together with, Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia, and Georgia also put its signature to the historical document that created the USSR.

Could Stalin, though, let an Independent Abkhazia appear alongside Georgia on the map of the Caucasus and deprive his homeland of such a heavenly quarter?! To start with, on 16 December 1921 Stalin compelled Abkhazia to conclude a federative-union treaty with Georgia. But this was a mere tactic in a long-term game. In 1931 he turned the union-republic of Abkhazia with treaty-ties to Georgia into a mere autonomy, inflicting upon it a crushing blow, for its legal status as an 'autonomous republic' forced Abkhazia to become part of the structure of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. It is said in the Caucasus that, had it not been for the long reign of Stalin, Abkhazia would today have been an independent republic. As it is, this period saw the start of the latest tragic page in the history of Abkhazia. If the first act of the tragedy was the annulment of the country's independence, this was followed by the murder of the national leader of Abkhazia, Nestor Lakoba. This in turn was followed by mass-repressions. During 1936-37 the national intelligentsia of Abkhazia and its leading personnel were annihilated to a man. Out of 2,186 repressed individuals 794 persons were shot. All, from Lakoba down, were later rehabilitated, but the bloody deed was done. The repressions were succeeded by the closure of Abkhazian schools, the shift of the Abkhazian alphabet to a Georgian base, the renaming of local toponyms from Abkhazian into Georgian forms -- in a word, there began a large-scale colonisation of the country with the aim of finally assimilating it. The realisation of this was entrusted to cadres of Kartvelian nationality at all levels of society. The deaths of Stalin and his Mingrelian lieutenant, Lavrenti Beria, in 1953 saw an end to the most blatant forms of anti-Abkhazianism. But, despite the reversal of the previous measures (such as the re-opening of Abkhazian schools, the creation of a new Cyrillic-based alphabet, and a certain over-representation of Abkhazian nationals in some, basically sinecure political posts in the autonomous republic), Abkhazia's economic standing remained poor in comparison with the rest of Georgia, and a general contempt in Georgia proper for every Abkhazian concern continued to reveal itself, with the result that periodic demonstrations called for

the removal of Tbilisi's control over Abkhazia's affairs. Matters came to a head during the last years of perestroika. Responding to Gorbachev's request that national grievances be aired, the unofficial leaders in Tbilisi went all out for Georgian independence, tragically miscalculating that playing the nationalist card would pay dividends in their struggle -- the Abkhazians were naturally one of the prime targets of the hysteria whipped up by all-pervasive and mendacious propaganda. Across the entire Georgian media an ideological preparation, a conditioning of the population got underway. The history, culture and language of the Abkhazian nation began to be treated in a totally new way. Historians, philologists, linguists and simple journalists, including people without even the most elementary idea of Abkhazia's history, utilised all the means of mass-information to raise questions about the history, national affiliation, indigenous status, and distinctiveness of the Abkhazian nation. Some scholars with solid degrees to their names went so far as to suggest: "The Abkhazians are not those people who today live in Abkhazia and claim aboriginal status in this land -- the true Abkhazians are the Kartvelians who live there. Those who speak in the Apswa tongue have not long come down from the mountains and taken over our Georgian lands". As was only to be expected, ordinary folk took up the refrain of these pseudo-scholarly, false ideas. Zviad Gamsakhurdia himself, leader of the Georgian nationalist movement, specially came to Abkhazia to participate in one such meeting designed to brainwash the population of Abkhazia; he was accompanied by the chief ideologue of the movement, his fellow-Mingrelian Merab Kostava. As a result of all this, Abkhazia's Kartvelian population took advantage of its numerical superiority to heat up the situation. In places of work, in scholarly and artistic establishments non-Kartvelians began to be expelled. Where this did not succeed, groups of exclusively Kartvelian nationality began to be formed. The State University, the Writers' Union, sporting teams, and work-collectives split along these lines. The leadership of the nationalist movement encouraged and supported such subversive activity among the Kartvelian nationalists of Abkhazia, whilst the official Communist leadership in Tbilisi gave silent approval. Destructive forces were unleashed -- one even saw youngsters on the streets carrying banners saying 'Abkhazians go home!'.

In such an atmosphere of intolerance and tension, the Abkhazian people together with representatives of the other nationalities (Kartvelians included) who considered Abkhazia their homeland gathered for a general meeting on the historic and hallowed square in the village of Lykhny, called Lykhnashta. This took place on 18 March 1989 and was attended by the whole of Abkhazia's leadership. The resulting Declaration unanimously called for the urgent need to reassess the status of Abkhazia and demanded of the Union's central government protection for the people and land from the misfortune that was threatening. It appears that this innocent action, which was supported by the signatures of all the deputies of Abkhazian nationality to Parliament, being the right of a people to express its own will, was used by the Georgian government against Abkhazia -- charged with nationalism, all the leaders of Abkhazia were relieved of their duties.

The flames of ethnic hatred continued to be fanned through the spring of 1989 by Georgia's unofficial opposition. The excuse for anti-Abkhazian agitation was the attempt by the Georgian sector of the Abkhazian State University to break away and establish in Sukhum (Aqw'a) a branch of Tbilisi State University. Judged illegal by the central authorities in Moscow (who alone had the right to sanction higher educational establishments throughout the Union), this 'branch' was due to hold entrance-exams on 16 July. The previous night fighting broke out in both Sukhum and Ochamchira. There is evidence that this was carefully planned by certain Kartvelian leaders (see Popkov 1997), and, although a number of deaths occurred in both centres of conflict, full-scale hostilities were averted by the timely arrival of Soviet Interior Ministry troops -- no such protection for Abkhazia's minorities was forthcoming when war broke out on 14 August 1992 in a now independent Georgia...

On 5 August 1990 the Parliament of Abkhazia passed the Declaration 'On the State Sovereignty of Abkhazia'. The Georgian Parliament accused Abkhazia of illegality in passing such a Declaration, condemned the act and abrogated it. Georgia itself was striving for freedom and independence, but it denied to others this same right with all the might at its disposal.

During the years 1990-92 the Georgian Parliament unilaterally ratified a series of documents according to which the structures of Georgia created over the period from 25 February 1921 (i.e. the Soviet period) were deemed illegal. All state-legal acts passed by these structures of power were declared to possess no juridical force. Then Georgia went back to the Constitution of the Georgian Democratic Republic of 1921, in which no Abkhazian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic is stipulated as a subject of state-legal relations; no documents linked any Abkhazian ASSR with the formation of the new GDR state. The replacement of Georgia's 1978 Constitution by that of 1921 took place in February 1992 following the bloody coup that had ousted the legally elected president of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia. From January to March power in Georgia was in the hands of the Military Council, which then transformed itself into the State Council (March-October). An inadmissible legal vacuum had developed in the mutual relations between Abkhazia and Georgia. To avoid the threatened liquidation of Abkhazia's republican status, Abkhazia on 23 July 1992 abrogated its own 1978 Constitution and returned to the one of 1925, in which it co-exists with Georgia on the basis of treaty-relations.

In the early '90s the system of state-power changed entirely in Georgia. During Gamsakhurdia's time, supposedly for the battle against the Soviet Union but in fact for one against 'small peoples', armed formations were set up, composed in large measure from ultra-patriot/fanatics and criminals. Upon coming to power in 1992, Shevardnadze turned these formations into his own bulwark of support and employed them for ethnic cleansing in South Ossetia (winter-summer 1992) and the suppression of political opposition. After the expulsion of Gamsakhurdia, political terror and the chaos of criminality held sway over the greater part of the territory of Georgia (excluding Abkhazia and Ajaria). Official propaganda in Tbilisi grossly overstated the level of disagreement in the ruling structures and within the State Council itself. This subsequently gave Shevardnadze the possibility (helped by the backing of the West) to declare that his field-commanders bore the guilt for the wars in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Tension between the Kartvelian and Abkhazian populations living in the republic continued to mount. With the backing of Tbilisi, military formations made up of Kartvelians started to be formed inside Abkhazia. Some activists among the Kartvelian community of Abkhazia with the covert approval of Tbilisi began agitating for the annulment of Abkhazia's autonomy. The Supreme Council of Abkhazia in its appeal to Georgia's State Council on 12 August 1992 underlined its desire to preserve links with Georgia and its firm commitment to the establishment of these on the basis of new and civilised foundations conforming to international norms and with equal rights for both parties. Georgia's State Council looked upon Abkhazia's return to its 1925 Constitution and this appeal as an attempt to leave the composition of Georgia, and this accusation was made by its wide-ranging propaganda-machine. Within two days a column of upto 100 tanks, strengthened by the airforce and an infantry-contingent of cut-throats armed with automatic weapons, invaded Abkhazia, sweeping away and destroying everything in their path.

Intending to occupy Abkhazia, the Georgian government conjectured that a complete victory and total suppression of the independence of the Abkhazians were impossible, as they took into account (i) the high level of national self-awareness among the Abkhazian nation, (ii) the anti-Georgian sentiment amongst the Russian, Armenian, Greek and Turkish populations of Abkhazia, and (iii) the awfully low level of fighting-

ability of the Kartvelian armed formations. It was furthermore well-known in Tbilisi what sympathies for Abkhazia existed in the North Caucasus, in southern Russia and amongst our diaspora-communities in Turkey and Syria. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the minimum programme incorporated the following goals: dispersal of the Abkhazian Parliament, destruction of the local legal organs of power and creation of the conditions for the expulsion from Abkhazia of the greater part of the non-Kartvelian population. In the case of victory, the expulsion of the Russian-speaking and the major part (or all) of the Abkhazian population would have guaranteed the Kartvelians ethnic superiority in Abkhazia. But even should the occupation fail, ethnic cleansing and the expulsion of part of the population would render impossible the resurrection of an independent Abkhazian state in conformity with existing international norms, which is to say by means of a referendum. Knowing that the majority of the population of Abkhazia could declare for withdrawal from Georgia, Tbilisi made up its mind to prevent forever the possibility of holding such a referendum (which has in fact now been achieved).

The course and results of the war:

The invasion of Abkhazia took place a mere four days after Georgia's admittance to the United Nations. By way of an excuse for this military action, wholly inaccurate information was spread about an unstable situation within Abkhazia involving explosions on the railway-line (which links Georgia to Russia), the robbing of passengers, the taking of hostages, etc... With the advantage of surprise and superiority of weaponry, the Georgian military seized a large portion of the territory of the republic during the first few days of the war, which was to last for 13 months. Across the whole zone of occupation and in certain strategic regions where a non-Kartvelian population predominated the State Council's military forces deployed a policy of mass-genocide from the very first days of the invasion. On the Abkhazian side alone 5,000 people (from a pre-war population of less than 100,000) lost their lives, to say nothing of those wounded, tortured, maimed, raped, robbed or who lost their homes to wanton shelling and arson. Cultural monuments, educational establishments (such as the Research Institute), hospitals and holy places were deliberately torched and razed to the ground; surrounded by armed men to prevent any possible saving of the archival materials, the Abkhazian State Historical Archive was gutted. More than once the leader of Georgia, Shevardnadze, stated that the military had entered not another country but its own -- normal people do not burst into their own home with tanks; they do not slaughter kinfolk in their quarters; they do not violate their own houses and pillage their own flats. Smug with his initial success, Georgian Defence Minister of the day, Tengiz Kitovani, declared: "If I hadn't decided to let the members of the National Guard plunder and ravage the inhabitants of Sukhum, there would have been no stopping them!".

Georgian armed forces conducted bombardments and artillery-shelling of residential areas with non-Kartvelian occupants; punishment-squads were entrusted with effecting the annihilation of peaceful citizens. Numerous cases of special savagery directed against prisoners-of-war, hostages and even just the peaceful population are documented; additionally there were large-scale massacres, resort to torture, and the use of chemical weapons -- in a word, the occupying forces exceeded all previous examples of the transgression of the basic rules of warfare . By this means the government of Georgia strove if not to wipe out the Abkhazians, at least to ignite ethnic hostility within Abkhazia and to draw the local Kartvelian populace into military activity. Essentially they succeeded in this. A significant proportion of the Kartvelians resident in Abkhazia participated in the war against the Abkhazians; some of them took part even in effecting genocide. As a result, ethnic hatred within the republic rose alarmingly. After the forces of the Abkhazian resistance backed by the local Russian-speaking population and by volunteers from the North Caucasus, southern Russia and the Near East drove out the Georgian military from western (October 1992) and eastern

(September 1993) Abkhazia, a large part of the Kartvelian population followed the fleeing army into exile – there was no policy of ethnic cleansing deliberately to expel these people, as Georgian propaganda and lazy reporting by journalists unfamiliar with the area and its peoples have maintained.

The process of peaceful settlement:

After the end of the war the process of peaceful settlement began despite revanchist slogans and aspirations propagandised officially in Tbilisi to parallel the peace-talks. Between the Georgian and Abkhazian sides, under the auspices of the UN, and with the facilitation of the Russian Federation, there have been signed: the 'Memorandum of Understanding' securing a ceasefire (Geneva, December 1993), the 'Communique on the Second Round of Talks' (Geneva, January 1994), etc... A key-document in the course of settling the dispute was signed in Moscow in the presence of the then UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Foreign and Deputy Foreign Ministers of Russia, Andrei Kozyrev and Boris Pastukhov, and a number of Western ambassadors, namely the 'Declaration on Measures for a Political Settlement of the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict' of 4 April 1994. In conformity with this Declaration, the Sides rejected the use of force or threats against one another and promised to settle the conflict exclusively by peaceful means; provision was made for the introduction of peace-keeping forces, a presence of UN military observers, and the gradual return of refugees. On the basis of this document was worked out the 'Agreement for a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces' of 14 May 1994. In June-July 1994, with the approval of the UN, CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States] peace-keeping forces consisting of Russian units were introduced into the security-zone, entry into which was forbidden to the opposing forces.

Since the summer of 1994 to the present time the Declaration of 4 April and the Agreement of 14 May have on the whole been observed by both sides. However, revanchist plans of the Georgian government have hindered the fulfilment of all the provisions of these documents. Georgia has consistently attempted to make use of Russian military forces for a forced return to Abkhazia of the Kartvelian refugees – such attempts took place in September 1994, and in July and September 1995. It is precisely this end which is served by the infiltration into the Gal District of Abkhazia, which borders Georgia, of Georgian subversive groups to destabilise the situation there. Tbilisi intended thereby to create the semblance of instability across the whole of Abkhazia and to secure the agreement of the international community for an extension of the control-zone of the peace-keeping forces to the whole of Abkhazia. Georgia managed to secure the establishment of a land- (from December 1994) and sea- (from October 1995) blockade of Abkhazia by the forces of Russia's border-troops, which is a transgression of clause 3 of the Declaration of 4 April and a departure from the principle of the non-use of compulsion or political pressure . The blockade was officially sanctioned at the summit-meeting of the CIS heads of state in Moscow in January 1996. One of the consequences has been the inability of Abkhazian representatives to travel abroad in order to counter continuing Georgian propaganda by presenting an accurate account of the Abkhazian case at international fora, such as the Aarhus conference, out of which arose the present volume, for my predecessor, Leonid Lakerbai, was invited but was prevented from leaving Russia to attend. However, in the electronic age the free flow of information cannot be so easily impeded, and various sites for Abkhazia are now available on the Internet .

The position of the Sides and the question of the refugees:

During the course of the attempt to settle the conflict peacefully contradictions, unresolved even at the present moment, have existed between the Sides.

1. Restitution of mutual state-legal relations

The break in mutual state-legal relations between Abkhazia and Georgia caused by Georgia's abolition in 1990-92 of the acts and treaties regulating relations between them found its reflection in the fundamental document known as the Declaration of 4 April 1994. The Georgian Side in the talks with Abkhazia has offered and offers still essentially one and the same scheme for mutual relations, namely the status of an autonomous republic within the composition of a single and indivisible Georgia. The variations on this theme do not suit the Abkhazian Side, which knows full well what autonomy within Georgia means -- we have experienced it and are not prepared to undergo it again. The 1,200-year history of Abkhazian statehood and Abkhazia's forced inclusion within Georgia by Stalin in 1931 give Abkhazia a perfect right to regard itself as a subject of international law. Ours is the just argument about the right of a nation to free self-determination, which is considered at the UN to be a decisive guarantee of the observation of human rights, but it is opposed by the principle of the unacceptability of the transgression of the territorial integrity of a state. In this case it begins to look to us as though interested 'organisations' and certain states wish this latter principle to apply in full measure only in connection with Abkhazia as a mark of gratitude to Shevardnadze for the part he is perceived to have played in the dissolution of the USSR and for other services he is thought to have rendered the West. As for (i) the departure from the USSR of the three Baltic republics and of Georgia itself prior to its formal dissolution, (ii) the splitting up of the USSR and the formation of new independent states on the world's political map, (iii) the unification of two Germanies into a single state, (iv) the division of Czechoslovakia into two independent states and (v) the break up of Yugoslavia, did all these happen without infringing the principle of territorial integrity prior to the fixing of territories and frontiers?! Let me repeat, Abkhazia was never an indivisible part of Georgia, as Georgians never tire of claiming, and never entered into its composition -- until the fateful year of 1931, the tragic fruits of which Abkhazia is picking to the present day. The Abkhazian Side has offered Georgia a number of variations on the theme of inter-state relations: federative union, or a federative state built on the foundation of equal subjecthood for the sides and equal rights for the peoples. However, these proposals are rejected by the Georgian Side.

One could also adduce numerous examples which testify to the fact that the actions of the Georgian Side are in any case directed not towards a constructive resolution of the problems between us, nor to any mutual coming together, but to the absolute contrary. Whilst the government and diplomats of both sides sit around the negotiating table seeking ways out of the situation that has developed, Kartvelian bandit-formations commit systematic terrorist acts on the territory of Abkhazia: sabotage, murder of military personnel, abduction of peaceful citizens, explosions, arson and destruction of objects of economic importance. No such acts are committed by Abkhazians on Georgian territory, and, if one considers the nature of the weaponry available to these terrorists, there can be no doubt that they are supported by the government of the state from whose land they infiltrate Abkhazia. Since the end of the war over 100 terrorist acts have been committed in Abkhazia, and at the present time ten citizens of Abkhazia abducted from its territory are languishing in Georgian gaols. As recently as 8 December 1996 a vehicle belonging to the Abkhazian Defence Ministry was fired upon; three servicemen were killed and two seriously wounded. Only Tbilisi could have organised the despicable murder of Prof. Yuri Voronov, member of Parliament and Deputy Premier of Abkhazia, in his flat on 11 September 1995. The Georgian Side has publicly declared that it was not involved in this crime, but, when those suspected of guilt were casually granted asylum in Tbilisi, they were welcomed like long-awaited guests. Every demand of the Abkhazian Side that they be extradited is dismissed with silence by Tbilisi.

Rather than concentrate on settling our pressing problems, Kartvelian politicians are engaged in demanding of the International Court and various international bodies such as the European Parliament that they institute proceedings against the Abkhazian leadership for (they allege) starting the war, committing war-crimes, etc... It is, of course, the political leaders of Georgia who should be brought to book for instigating the war in Abkhazia along with their field-commanders such as Gia Qarqarashvili, who threatened to wipe the entire Abkhazian nation off the face of the earth. That, and that alone, would be a real victory for truth and justice!

Liquidation of the Abkhazian race failed, as did another adventure designed in Tbilisi. Official circles in Abkhazia have at their disposal a map drawn up in Tbilisi on which Abkhazia is divided into two parts: a Georgian sector running from the R. Ingur to the R. Gumista (just to the north of Sukhum) which was to be settled exclusively by Kartvelians, and a second sector from the Gumista upto the border with the Russian Federation at the R. Psou which was destined to hold the remaining non-Kartvelian population. This map, which reeks of Tbilisi's exaggerated notions about the structure of a new Abkhazia, did not fall into our hands haphazardly from some mysterious source -- it came from the UN! And even today in Tbilisi there are those who nurture such an insane notion about the ethnic division of the Republic of Abkhazia. Such circumstances plainly provide no suitable climate for the trust needed if a just, equitable and viable settlement to our problems is going to be reached. The international community has sadly exhibited no awareness of the duplicity with which Abkhazia has been faced in its dealings with the authorities in Tbilisi over the decades and thus completely fails to appreciate why we Abkhazians and Abkhazia's other non-Kartvelian minorities with our unenviable experience in dealing with our neighbours do not share the West's captivation with the superficial bonhomie they discovered in Tbilisi as recently as 1992.

2. The question of the refugees

The Abkhazian Side recognises the necessity of the return of refugees to Abkhazia, which was expressed in the signing by the Abkhazian Side of the 'Quadripartite Agreement on the Refugees' of 4 April 1994, which, while regulating the return of refugees to the republic, also makes clear that by no means every refugee who so wishes has the right to return to live in the republic. The moral right to return to cosmopolitan Abkhazia is denied to anyone involved in wartime shooting, killing, rape, arson, or the taking up of arms against the Abkhazian people. Not every Kartvelian abandoned Abkhazia, and those determined to continue the fight will not be allowed to return here. The Georgian Side expresses (or feigns) anxiety exclusively for the return of Kartvelian refugees and insists on their mass-transfer into Abkhazia, which, as explained, is not in accord with the Agreement of 4 April 1994. Nor is there even a basic agreement on the number of Kartvelian refugees involved: the Georgian Side has been striving to convince the international community that over 300,000 should be repatriated when at no time did more than 240,000 Kartvelians reside in Abkhazia. The fact that the Georgian position is again blindly supported by the international community, as may be seen in various remarks on the problem of Abkhazia made by the UN Security Council, the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, clearly reveals the naivety on the part of the said international community in accepting at face-value the truth of the Kartvelian figures (constantly increased in public statements since the 200,000 spoken of at the end of the war) and its total lack of understanding of both the internal difficulties facing Abkhazia in its state of post-war desolation, aggravated by the ongoing blockade, and the renewed dangers of physical extermination that such an uncontrolled return of Kartvelians would mean for the Abkhazian and other minority communities, especially in the conditions of mutual ethnic

hatred resulting from the war, as this article has tried to demonstrate. The total number of Kartvelians currently living in Abkhazia is as high as 100,000, which includes upto 60,000 refugees who have already returned.

Not without justification is the suspicion growing that the Georgian Side is not really interested in a positive outcome to the refugee-problem. The reaction of the Georgian Side to our proposal to begin joint-registration of returnees gives us substantive grounds to make this statement. Since our initiative has found no support, we have started our own registration-programme. Georgia manifestly understands that it will be deprived of many privileges (sc. in terms of international aid) if it accepts the fact that refugees are returning -- after all, this is the weightiest argument it has been able to deploy at all levels in its manipulation and exploitation of Western sympathies.

Concluding remarks:

Despite the conditions of political pressure imposed upon us from all quarters and despite economic deprivation, the Abkhazian people together with the whole population of the country is optimistically following the course of the negotiations, believing in our future as firmly fixed in article 1 of our Constitution, ratified on 24 November 1994: **THE REPUBLIC OF ABKHAZIA (APSNY) SHALL BE A SOVEREIGN DEMOCRATIC STATE BASED ON LAW HISTORICALLY ESTABLISHED BY THE RIGHT OF A NATION TO FREE SELF-DETERMINATION.** The optimism and belief of the nation in its future was underlined by the elections to the Parliament of Abkhazia, held on 23 November 1996, which received approval and high praise from the international observers (who included US ex-senator John Nimrod and chairman of the British Parliamentary Human Rights Group, Lord Eric Avebury). Brutal deprivations cannot crush a nation's moral spirit -- they rather strengthen its belief in the correctness of its sacred struggle for freedom and independence.

The Abkhazian side is seriously committed to a constructive extension of the talks. We are convinced of the successful settlement of the conflict through only political means conditional upon the observance of both the interests of the negotiating sides and the principles of equal rights and equal subjecthood, and given the will of the sides to preserve the results already achieved in the course of lengthy negotiations, taking into account the universally recognised right of nations to self-determination.

Georgia, like any other country, has the undeniable right to independent existence. But equally undeniable is the fact that Georgia does not have the right to deprive Abkhazia of the self-same right to independence.

The role of the UN

S. Neil MacFarlane

S. Neil MacFarlane is Lester B. Pearson Professor of International Relations at the University of Oxford, Professorial Fellow at St Anne's College and Director of Oxford's Centre for International Studies. In 1997, with colleagues at Brown University, he completed a monograph on humanitarian action in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that followed a companion study on Georgia's civil conflicts published in 1996.

The UN has been involved in the conflict in Abkhazia since Georgian forces stormed the Abkhaz parliament in Sukhumi in August 1992, triggering a war that remains unresolved today. In 1993, the UN and the CSCE agreed that the international lead on the conflict in Abkhazia should be taken by the UN, while that in South Ossetia should go to the CSCE.

In the same year the UN, faced with urgent requests from the government of Georgia to deploy a peacekeeping force to Abkhazia, decided to establish an observer mission for Georgia (UNOMIG) to monitor implementation of the July ceasefire agreement between the two sides which had been mediated and guaranteed by the Russian Federation. The decision to send an observer force rather than a fully fledged peacekeeping force reflected the desire of the Russian Federation to take the lead in the management of conflict in the 'former Soviet space', and the unwillingness of the other permanent members of the Security Council to challenge Russian prerogatives. There was also a general concern that the peacekeeping apparatus of the UN was overloaded, and disagreement among the parties as to what the mandate of a more substantial force would be. The UN Secretary-General also designated Swiss diplomat Eduard Brunner as Special Envoy for the conflict. He served until 1997 when Liviu Bota, a Romanian diplomat, was appointed Special Representative (SRSG) for the Abkhaz conflict. Both were responsible for the mediation of a process of negotiation leading to a political settlement of the conflict. Bota has had a more or less permanent presence in the conflict zone, whereas Brunner was only delegated to visit intermittently. Russia's special status in this process was recognized in its designation as 'facilitator' of the talks. In the early years of negotiation matters were not helped by the passive attitude taken by the Special Envoy to mediation of the conflict. The UN's failure to take a more engaged approach was one factor among several contributing to the obvious lack of movement towards a political settlement in 1994–96. The fact that the more proactive approach adopted by Liviu Bota has also not produced a settlement would suggest, however, that the extent of UN activism is not the determining factor in conflict resolution. While the first personnel of UNOMIG were being deployed, the ceasefire collapsed and hostilities resumed. The UN Security Council condemned the renewal of conflict and associated displacement of population and demanded that the parties cease fighting. They also decided to extend the mandate of UNOMIG pending clarification of the situation.

Humanitarian intervention

The rapid exodus of displaced persons from Abkhazia, many of whom fled via mountain passes into Svanetia in winter conditions and with no shelter, created a humanitarian emergency, occasioning a second UN response, this time by specialized agencies including UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF. These agencies and their partner NGOs moved quickly to stabilize the situation of the internally displaced. They also assisted in addressing the humanitarian consequences of Georgia's economic collapse, the product of the country's

multiple wars and the collapse of the Soviet command economy. Over the period 1994–97, UNHCR mounted three consolidated interagency appeals for the Caucasus, with approximately \$87 million going to UN agency and NGO activities in Georgia. In the first years of UN involvement in the humanitarian response to the emergency in Georgia, the statist nature of the organization revealed itself in the exclusion of areas under Abkhaz control from needs assessment and delivery of services by the UN. This omission may have impeded the negotiation of a settlement by enhancing the Abkhaz sense of isolation and creating an appearance of UN bias in favour of Georgia's central government. In consequence, the ground was left to NGOs such as the ICRC and Médecins Sans Frontières.

UNHCR took a prominent role in early efforts to secure a return of the displaced to Abkhazia. This role was most obvious in the negotiations in 1994 which led to agreement on the deployment of a CIS peacekeeping force to be interposed in a security zone between the two parties and the associated agreement on return of displaced persons. The CISPKEF was deployed in mid-1994 and secured the line of contact, but the agreement on return failed miserably with only 311 families out of the estimated 240,000 affected people actually being approved for return. This was largely due to the provision within the agreement that the Abkhaz side had the right for security reasons to vet those returning. The 1994 agreement on return also failed to address the security needs of Georgians returning to Abkhaz-controlled areas. In this respect it was probably a good thing that so few did return. More broadly, UNHCR's involvement in the process of negotiation raised important questions about whether its status as an advocate for the welfare and rights of IDPs and refugees had been jeopardized by its diplomatic role.

The failure of the 1994 agreement on return did much to poison the atmosphere in talks on a resolution of the conflict. From the Georgian perspective, the Abkhaz behaviour reflected bad faith in the effort to resolve a humanitarian issue that was creating a substantial burden on government resources and contributing to the propensity for instability in Samegrelo. To judge from subsequent events, however, there is some validity in Abkhaz concerns about the security consequences of indiscriminate return.

Working with peacekeepers

The deployment of CISPKEF resulted in a change in the circumstances of UNOMIG. The observer mission was expanded from 40 to 136 (in early 1999 it stood at 102 from 20 countries), given the task of observing the activities of CISPKEF in the security zone and monitoring compliance with provisions for a weapons exclusion zone on both sides of the security zone. The mandates of both CISPKEF and UNOMIG included provision for the promotion of conditions conducive to the return of the displaced population. The mandates of both forces have been renewed at six-month intervals since the beginning of their co-operative deployment in 1994. The six-month renewal process has the advantage of bringing

the Georgian issue back to the Security Council on a regular basis. On the other hand, reopening the issue invites regular posturing and mutual recrimination by the parties. This does little to further the peace process. Moreover, the CIS has repeatedly failed to renew the mandate of its force in a timely manner, raising doubts about the legal status of the force during periods when the mandate has lapsed and increasing uncertainty and tension on the ground.

It is worth stressing that the interaction between the UN and the CIS in peacekeeping in Georgia is an important example of the sharing of security tasks between the UN and regional organizations. The collaboration has not been easy, although it has improved with time. Russian soldiers deployed to the security zone in the early days were ill suited to peacekeeping, were perceived by both Georgians and UN personnel as lacking impartiality and frequently engaged in harassment of the local population. UN and Russian norms regarding rules of engagement differed markedly. UN personnel were troubled by the corruption evident in some Russian units. Initially, UN observers had difficulty in securing full access to, and freedom of movement in, their areas of operation.

These problems have not disappeared. Accusations by Georgians that CISP KF has been complicit in Abkhaz sweeps through the Gali region, or by Abkhaz that it has failed to prevent the penetration of guerrillas, continue. However, those familiar with the operation generally accept that the Russian performance has improved, in part because the presence of UN personnel and the reasonably close contact between the forces has served as a transmission belt for international peacekeeping norms. On the other hand, the neutrality of the force continues to be questioned by many Georgians, despite the presence of UNOMIG.

Addressing instability

The organized return of the displaced failed in 1994, resulting in a gradual process of spontaneous return in 1995–97. This occasioned substantial and repeated violations of the human rights of the civilian population in the Gali region. Initially, neither CISP KF nor UNOMIG made any serious effort to prevent these incidents, arguing that the protection of human rights lay outside their mandates. This damaged the credibility and impartiality of both.

After serious human rights violations in 1995, CISP KF and UNOMIG took a more proactive approach to the protection of the returning population, despite the fact that their mandates did not entirely provide for this. Other attempts to address this issue have included the establishment of a joint UN/OSCE Human Rights Office in Sukhumi in 1996 (although it only really became active in 1999) and increased discussion since Spring 1999 about the establishment of a joint investigation unit to explore violations of agreements as well as some cases of criminal activity in the security zone. This has yet to be agreed upon.

The number of returnees to Gali grew gradually through 1996 and into 1997. These returnees were accompanied by guerrilla groups who attacked both CISPKE and Abkhaz personnel. By the spring of 1998 the security situation deteriorated to the point that CISPKE ceased patrolling in the security zone while UNOMIG closed its team bases and concentrated its personnel in Gali and Zugdidi. The Abkhaz de facto authorities then renewed their attacks of the returning Georgian population in May 1998, leading to further mass displacement. This renewed violence might have been prevented or moderated had CISPKE and the UN taken a more proactive stance at this time. The impunity with which the operation was conducted reflects the erosion of the credibility of both the CISPKE and UNOMIG.

Instability also spilled over into Georgian-controlled areas. The UNOMIG sector headquarters in Zugdidi were invaded in February 1998 and several members of the force were kidnapped. This was linked to efforts earlier in the year to assassinate President Shevardnadze and coincided with a number of serious terrorist attacks on government targets in Zugdidi, signalling a general decline in the situation. In July, a UN employee who had previously worked in Sukhumi was murdered in Tbilisi. The problem was not limited to Georgian-held territory. In the summer NGO personnel involved in the demining programme were attacked in Abkhazia. In the autumn, UNOMIG headquarters in Sukhumi was targeted in a series of grenade incidents and three members of the force were wounded during an assault on a UNOMIG vehicle. This series of events led one important contributor to UNOMIG (the United States) to withdraw its personnel and to ban travel by its citizens to Abkhazia.

The diplomatic front

Ironically, perhaps, the same period was marked by a quickening of the long-stalled peace process, the result of a more proactive role taken by the newly arrived SRSG, Liviu Bota, who initiated the Geneva Process, an intensive series of meetings, among the parties and other interested states and organizations. UN activities were paralleled by a more active Russian diplomacy towards the conflict. The formation of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia and their formal association with the peace talks diluted the dominance of Russia in the process of mediation, as did the participation of OSCE representatives. In August 1997 President Shevardnadze met with the Abkhaz leader Vladislav Ardzinba in Tbilisi for bilateral talks under the patronage of Russian Foreign Minister Evgenii Primakov. By the end of 1997 the Geneva Process had produced agreement to a programme of action on the peace process and the establishment of working groups to address three clusters of issues: non-resumption of hostilities, the return of refugees and IDPs, and economic and social issues. At this time, it was also agreed to establish a Co-ordinating Council for the peace process that would institutionalize the role of the group of friends. Bilateral contacts extended into 1998 with UN facilitation and UNOMIG logistical support, and despite the events in Gali in May. Subsequently, the SRSG organized two further meetings between the parties (in Athens and Istanbul) to push the process forward.

By the autumn of 1998 the two sides had prepared a draft agreement on repatriation of refugees after reiterating their commitment to a non-resumption of hostilities, but Shevardnadze and Ardzinba failed to meet and sign it. The issue of partial return remains unresolved with the two sides still quarrelling over such issues as whether women and children should be allowed to return first, with men of military age being subject to Abkhaz screening, and whether returnees would be obliged to take Abkhaz citizenship. Although UN agencies have assisted returnees since 1995, they have always been ambivalent about spontaneous return without a political settlement, not least as a result of well-founded fears for the security of returnees. The events of May 1998 have deepened this scepticism.

The acceleration on the diplomatic side was accompanied by serious exploration of the possibility of using economic assistance as a means of facilitating a diplomatic resolution of the conflict. In this context UNDP, drawing upon its success with similar activities in South Ossetia, mounted a needs assessment mission to Abkhazia in February 1998. A number of donors, including the USA and the EU, committed several million dollars to reconstruction and other assistance programming in anticipation of agreement between the parties on an approach to the reconstruction of Abkhazia.

Like many others this initiative failed, largely because the developmental objectives of the two parties remained far apart and because they could not agree on implementation. The Georgian side perceived such assistance to be a means of tying Abkhazia in practical terms back into an integrated Georgian economy. The Abkhaz side perceived reconstruction assistance as a way of rendering Abkhazia itself more viable.

The effectiveness of the UN

The collapse of UNDP's effort to use economic assistance to push the peace process forward is only one manifestation of the broader fact that there has been little progress towards a political settlement of the Abkhaz conflict. This dismal conclusion is the result of several factors.

It reflects issues and processes over which the UN has little control. Ultimately, the conflict is not yet ripe for resolution: the two sides remain unwilling to accept compromises on the key issue of status. Although the Abkhaz have retreated from the objective of full independence, the two sides remain divided on whether status should be confederal or meaningfully federal, on whether the relationship between Sukhumi and Tbilisi should be horizontal or vertical. Lack of progress on the matter of status prevents movement on other issues such as the return of IDPs and refugees and economic and social questions.

An additional problem is engagement in the conflict by external powers and notably Russia. The Russian Federation played a substantial role in the active phases of the conflict,

apparently seeing it as a means of bringing Georgia back into the fold. A complete resolution of the conflict, particularly if this occurred in a negotiating process controlled not by Russia but by the UN would result in a further decline in Russian influence over Georgian politics and policy. There is little doubt that the existence of parallel UN and Russian tracks in the negotiations has impeded the effort to reach a compromise. The existence of a parallel channel has made it easier for the parties to resist concessions. However, given the other obstacles to successful negotiations it is unlikely that this has been a significant determining factor.

The failure of the UN in Abkhazia also reflects problems internal to the organization, most notably generating consensus at the level of the Security Council. The issue here is that the fundamental interests of the permanent members differ substantially one from another. The Western powers seek conflict resolution, the consolidation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the states of the region, and the integration of their economies into a global economy dominated by the West. UN involvement is seen as an instrument in the pursuit of these objectives. Russia, on the other hand, has for much of the post-Soviet period sought to maintain or to re-establish its influence over the Caucasus region and the dependence of the smaller states on Russia. It has claimed special rights and responsibilities in the region on the basis of its preponderance of power and its historical role there. Russia's control over the northern Caucasus is vulnerable to instability in the Caucasus itself, giving the Russians a more direct security interest in the affairs of Georgia and Azerbaijan. The completion of the Baku–Supsa oil pipeline and the consequent end to the Russian monopoly on oil export from the Caspian basin gives Russia yet another incentive to sustain its influence in Abkhazia. For Russia, a robust UN role might well be a threat to its regional agenda.

This said, it is not clear that UN effectiveness would be dramatically enhanced were Russia to change its policy. The other permanent members of the Security Council have remained unenthusiastic about a more direct UN peacekeeping role, despite Georgia's apparent desire to replace CISPKF with a genuinely multilateral force. This reflects the general crisis in UN peacekeeping in the post-Somalia, post-Bosnia context. Experiences in these cases and elsewhere suggest that the UN has neither the resources nor the will for robust and effective peace operations in civil wars. In the meantime, the disaster for US forces in the Somali conflict has removed any enthusiasm the Americans have for substantial participation in potentially dangerous UN operations. Nor have any viable regional peacekeeping alternatives appeared on the horizon. Notably, although NATO's operations in Kosovo have encouraged speculation about the possibility of similar operations in the Caucasus, there is very little likelihood that NATO would oblige.

Although the UN has not delivered peace (and it is not clear whether it could have done so given the attitudes of the two parties and the limited capacities of the UN itself) it has made a positive contribution to the management of the conflict and ceasefire. The presence of

UNOMIG personnel in the field enhances transparency and limits the capacity of CISPKF to pursue a unilateral agenda in the conflict zone. It has probably had some effect in improving the security of civilians in zones patrolled by the mission, but has not curtailed the persistent, if low, level of violence and criminality in the region. UNOMIG has been of great use in facilitating humanitarian assistance in the Gali region and elsewhere in Abkhazia by providing a modicum of security of movement in often quite dangerous circumstances. More generally, the UN and other international agencies were instrumental in preventing what otherwise might have been a complete meltdown of Georgia and total collapse of order within its borders.

The presence of the UN in the early days also reduced the sense of isolation and desperation on the Georgian side. Although the lack of involvement by UN humanitarian agencies on the Abkhaz side in the first years of the conflict may have had the opposite effect in Abkhazia, since 1996 the specialized agencies have made a conscious effort to pursue proportionality in its delivery of assistance to both sides.

INITIAL REPORT ON THE LANDMINE SITUATION IN ABKHAZIA

Centre for Humanitarian Programmes Sukhum, Abkhazia

September 1998

The Centre for Humanitarian Programmes has been actively involved in ICBL since the Oslo Conference in September 1997. The CHP has been offering all the appropriate data on the situation with the landmines in Abkhazia at every meeting/conference with ICBL. The sources of our data have been the MFA of the Republic of Abkhazia, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Defence, the HALO Trust, UN military observers (UNOMIG), Collective CIS Peace-Keeping Forces HQ, ICRC, MSF, National and other media as well as other contacts. Despite its very limited financial resources the CHP is willing to carry on its contribution to the Global Mine Action effort of many other organisations.

Landmines in Abkhazia can be divided in two groups: first, the landmines that have been left from the war with Georgia (1992-93); second, is the landmines that have been, and still are planted by terrorist groups in the security zone of PK and some other areas of Abkhazia. According to the Abkhazian authorities, the number of landmines on the territory of the republic is 30-35 000 in about 500 areas. Only a couple of fields are marked by the HALO Trust. Often civilians live next to these fields. Most common victims are teenagers that are playing dangerous games. As a minimum 2,000 ga of the cultivated land are mined. About 600 of them are tea plantations. In the Ochamchira region up to 30% of livestock are killed by landmines. Private houses, schools, hospitals, administrative buildings and gardens are also mined.

From the end of the war (1992-93) until the present, terrorist groups that act against the civil population, peacekeeping forces, UNOMIG and militia groups have regularly planted landmines. In its report the UN Security Council, dated 29 July 1998, condemns the acts of violence against UNOMIG personnel, the renewed laying of mines in the Gali region, and also the attacks by armed groups operating in the Gali region from the Georgian side of the Inguri River, against the CIS peacekeeping forces and demands that the parties, in particular the Georgian authorities, take determined measures to put a stop to such acts which subvert the peace process. Since the beginning of the CIS PKF peacekeeping mission in 1994, 62 of the peacekeepers have been killed and 106 have been injured, mainly as a result of landmines that were planted by terrorist groups. In the summer of 1998 there were 11 terrorist acts on the territory of Abkhazia, during which 25 people were killed. 14 of them were Abkhaz militiamen, 5 were members of peacekeeping forces, and 6 were civilians. Moreover, 35 people were wounded; 20 were Abkhaz militiamen, 6 were part of the peacekeeping forces, and 9 were civilians.

There are about 480 amputees in Abkhazia; 375 of them use the ICRC orthopaedic workshop for free prostheses, despite complaints that have been made about the quality of these prostheses. Unfortunately no psychosocial rehabilitation programmes for mine victims are provided, neither by the state nor NGOs. International organisations often place conditions for sponsorship of such programmes that are not acceptable to the local population. At the moment, Abkhazia has no resources to deal with the landmine problem. The HALO Trust and peacekeepers in the security zone do demining. The lack of precise information about landmine fields, special equipment and qualified personnel, as well as Abkhazia's subtropical climate, makes demining difficult. According to the HALO Trust's prognosis, the territory of the republic would be demined in 5-7 years, with the necessary financial and technical support.

The national media regularly informs the local population on the danger of landmines, but these measures are not enough for raising awareness. The ICRC has distributed some brochures to the refugees in the Zugdidi region of Georgia, yet not to the actual population of mine affected regions in Abkhazia. The CHP, together with the "Scouts of Abkhazia," are planning to develop mine awareness programmes, and seek assistance in doing so.

In February of 1998 a World Bank assessment mission visited Abkhazia. The following projects related to the landmines issue:

1. Survey and marking of the minefields that would allow to return 1,500 ga of cultivated land to the population and would decrease the number of accidents, at least by half;
2. Increase of productivity of the HALO Trust;
3. Mine awareness programmes.

4. Unfortunately, all of these projects were contingent upon solving certain political issues, and thus, no progress has been made yet.

Today the republic of Abkhazia is facing an economical and political blockade imposed by the CIS, which is slowing down the development of civil society institutions, as well as any other progress. There is no access to the Internet. The lack of resources does not allow the mass media to cover important developments around the world, including the activities of the ICBL. During the last 5 years, Abkhazia has been living under a constant threat of war. Under these conditions the government of Abkhazia can only support the international efforts to ban landmines in principle. As long as there is a threat of war, the government refuses to give up the use of landmines. The landmine problem can only be solved when peace in the Caucasus is achieved and stabilised. The reintegration of the republic of Abkhazia into the world community would facilitate this process. Some progress has been made in the political dialogue between the governments of Georgia and Abkhazia. The co-operation of Abkhazian and Georgian NGOs within the ICBL hopefully will play a positive role in building trust between the two conflicting parties and help to take real steps toward achieving peace in the region, and contributing to the Landmine Monitor initiative.

Vladimir Kakalia
Programme director of the
Centre for Humanitarian programmes

ABKHAZIA: ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION AND PERSPECTIVES

Viacheslav CHIRIKBA

The collapse of the Communist regime, and of the huge state with which this regime was associated, put all the peoples of the former Soviet Union before difficult choices, connected with re-establishing or re-creating their identities, and with working out viable political and economic regimes fit for new realities. Georgia and Abkhazia, too, were confronted with all these challenging dilemmas. But unlike many other regions of the former Soviet Union, the economic collapse caused by the break-up of a highly centralised economic mechanism was accompanied there by a cruel war. Two Caucasian peoples, who for millennia had enjoyed good neighbourly relations and close co-operation, took the path of war in order to resolve their political differences. I will not dwell here upon the history of this bitter conflict, but will speak rather in terms of its political and economic repercussions for Abkhazia, as well as perspectives for Abkhazia's economic development after a peace settlement is achieved.

Abkhazia is a small mountainous country. Its territory is 8,7 thousand sq. km, somewhat smaller than Cyprus. Only coastal areas and foothills, characterised by a mild subtropical climate, are populated and cultivated. The rest of the country consists of high mountains and deep ravines.

According to the last Soviet census of 1989, the population of Abkhazia was somewhat more than 524 thousand. The main population groups were the Georgians (242,3 thousand, 45.7%), Abkhazians (93,3 thousand, 17.8%), Armenians (76,5 thousand, 14.6%), Russians (74,4 thousand, 14.3%) and Greeks (14,7 thousand, 2.8%).

During the Soviet times, Abkhazia was one of the most prosperous regions of the former Soviet Union. The national economy was based on agriculture, light industry, mining, electric power production, and tourism. The main agricultural products were citrus fruits, tea, tobacco, oil-bearing plants, olives, figs, nuts, laurel leaf, wine and other beverages, honey, and cheese. Forestry and fishery were also of importance. In the Soviet times, Abkhazia met up to 20% of the USSR's demand for tea. Abkhazian peasants produced more than 120,000 tons of citrus fruits (mostly mandarins), 110,000 tons of tea leaves, up to 14,000 tons of aromatic tobacco, some 14,000 tons of grapes. For the most part, these products were exported. Light industry manufactured copy machines, gas-bags, radios and telephones, mixed feed for cattle, chemical products, textiles, and shoes. There were coal mining and house-building plants besides. Abkhazia's economy was oriented mainly towards the huge Soviet market, its economical cooperation with Georgia being prominent only in the energy and transport sectors.

The subtropical nature of Abkhazia, the high snow-covered mountains and the warm Black Sea used to attract hundreds of thousands of tourists every year. Hotels and sanatoriums could accommodate up to 25,000 visitors at once. The private sector was also oriented toward providing accommodation for tourists. The famous high-elevation lake Ritsa was visited by 10,000 tourists daily. The cave at New Athos, one of the deepest in the world, was seen by 3,000 people a day. The Sukhum monkey depository was visited by 5,000 tourists a day.

Today, the country produces a grim picture. The lush nature cannot conceal burned and destroyed houses, schools and kindergartens, looted factories, blown-up bridges, roads and tunnels. The majority of the enterprises are at a standstill now. Many plants are destroyed. For the rest, there are no supplies of raw materials, and no cash to pay the workers' salaries. During the war, Abkhazia was mercilessly looted. Planes, locomotives, train coaches, trucks, buses, personal cars, ships, computers, industrial and scientific equipment, and other items with resale value, were taken from territories under Georgian military control in Abkhazia and transported to Georgia.

In the agricultural sector, many plantations and farms have been destroyed by the war, and their restoration and re-cultivation will need no fewer than 6-7 years of work and appropriate levels of investment. Moreover, the plantations in southern Abkhazia are heavily mined. Mines are being laid even now by Georgian subversive groups, rendering their exploitation a deadly business.

The overall damage inflicted to the economy of Abkhazia by the war amounts, by Abkhazian estimates, to more than US\$100bln in current prices. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1994 was US\$60.3mln, which, compared with 692.5mln in 1988, makes up only 14% of the pre-war level. Exports of citrus fruits, tea, and tobacco have plummeted to less than 19% of their 1989 levels. Industrial production has declined by 93.2%, gross agricultural production by 75.3%, and per capita income by 90%.

Material destruction can be repaired or replaced, but the human losses are irreparable. The wartime human losses of the Abkhazian side are estimated at 5,000, the majority of them between 18 and 40 years of age. Apart from those who perished, 1256 young people became disabled. More than 6,000 children became orphans, and most of them suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders. All these people, the invalids and the disabled, the children and the elderly, badly need qualified medical care and psychological rehabilitation, food and medicines, prostheses and wheelchairs. All of these are in very short supply. Despite urgent needs, most of the international humanitarian and financial aid destined for the post-Soviet states, in particular, for Georgia, do not reach the civilian population of Abkhazia.

The Blockade

The dire situation of the war-ruined economy has been further exacerbated by a Russian-Georgian blockade. In 1995, the leadership of the CIS countries, under the insistence of Georgia, sanctioned a wholesale economic, trade, educational, cultural, and informational blockade of Abkhazia. Losses caused by the economic blockade in basic branches of Abkhazia's economy from the time of its introduction until now amount to US\$500mln, roughly equaling the pre-war GDP of Abkhazia.

Since 1995, the citizens of Abkhazia have been subjected to severe restrictions on travel outside Abkhazia. This contravenes the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights in obvious ways, for its paragraph 12(2) states: "Everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own." Ironically, at the end of the 20th century, the people of Abkhazia have effectively found themselves behind a new Iron Curtain, created by the leader who is internationally credited with helping dismantle the old one.

It is noteworthy that the economic embargo and travel restrictions were imposed without the approval or formal endorsement of the UN Security Council. The recent United Nations Needs Assessment Mission to Abkhazia (February 1998) negatively assessed the blockade. As noted by the Mission, the embargo restrictions "tend to solidify political positions without encouraging political compromise or facilitating economic integration." The Mission suggested that these restrictions be eased in the interest of promoting reconciliation and of creating a better negotiating climate.

Indeed, having brought additional economic deprivations to the multi-ethnic population of Abkhazia, the Georgian-Russian blockade failed to reach its strategic political goals. Instead of destabilising the regime, it is, on the contrary, strengthening it, uniting the people around the leadership in the face of military threat and harsh economic embargo. It is not the leadership, but the multi-ethnic civilian population of Abkhazia, the refugees included, who are the direct victims of this continued policy of intimidation and confrontation.

Current Political Position of Abkhazia

As a result of the Georgian military defeat and the subsequent secession of Abkhazia, the latter has established itself, and has functioned for more than 5 years now, as a de facto independent state. Though the international community still regards Abkhazia as a part of Georgia, Abkhazia is sovereign and is not controlled by Georgia or any other foreign power. It has its own Constitution, adopted in 1994, its own army, and its own foreign policy. Abkhazia concluded agreements with federated republics of the Russian Federation (with the Republic of Tatarstan, the Republic of Bashkortostan, the Kabarda-Balkar Republic, and the Republic of Adyghea), with the Transdnestr Republic and Gagauzia within the Republic of Moldova, which can be regarded as international agreements.

As described by the UN Needs Assessment Mission to Abkhazia (March 1998), "The de facto authorities in Abkhazia refer to these [political] structures in terms of an independent state; thus, Abkhazia is headed by a president and a prime minister who is responsible for the overall conduct of government business. The government is divided into ministries, each headed by a minister. A parliament exists and consists of members who were elected in November 1996 for five-year terms. In an effort to decentralize, the government has scheduled local elections for March 1998, and it is expected that these will lead to the establishment of village-level councils, each with one representative at the rayon level" (pp. 7-8).

Abkhazia has been engaged in peace negotiations with Georgia since 1993. However, the current state of affairs in the relations between Georgia and Abkhazia inspires little optimism. The gulf between the peoples created by the war and the atrocities is very difficult to overcome, and there is no trust between the respective political elites either. On the one hand, we have the de facto independent Abkhazian state, the self-sustained Abkhazian economy which runs even in the harsh conditions of the Russo-Georgian blockade, considerable stability in the Abkhazian government, the Abkhazian army which is capable to effectively defend the republic's territory and borders and, above all, the Abkhazian public's non-acceptance of any close reintegration with Georgia. On the other hand, though Georgia receives a considerable amount of political support from international organisations and individual states vis-a-vis its dispute with Abkhazia, the current state of the Georgian economy and of its military force, as well as

the absence of an external military power willing to send its soldiers to fight (and to die) for Georgian goals in Abkhazia, will not allow Georgia in the foreseeable future to forcefully, or in any other way, return Abkhazia to its control. The majority of the Abkhazians perceive reunification with Georgia as a deadly threat to their small nation's survival. They have no other real incentives to reunite with a menacing Georgia than harsh Russian pressure and intimidation. The current "no war, no peace" situation can therefore be sustained for an indefinitely long period of time, to the great detriment to the population of both states, as well as to regional stability and economic development.

Under such circumstances, the role of non-partisan international mediators and guarantors is expected to be of utmost importance. However, both Georgian and Abkhazian sides often accuse Russia in assisting the other party, while it is obvious that Russia regards this conflict, and, consequently, its mediation in it, through the prism of its own political interests in the area. The other mediators (both the UN and OSCE, as well as the so called "Friends of Georgia" diplomatic group) have so far demonstrated even less impartiality, strongly advocating, as is firmly believed by the Abkhazian side, the interests of the Georgian side only.

Negotiations on two major issues - the political status of Abkhazia and the refugees issue - are effectively deadlocked, as the positions of the sides still remain far from each other. The propaganda war is at its height. In such a context, the importance of economic co-operation between Georgia and Abkhazia, conducive for the creation of atmosphere of rapprochement, cannot be overestimated. The activity of the Coordinating Council, created by the sides during talks in Geneva in November 1997, and supervising three Abkhazian-Georgian working groups (on security issues, economic issues and refugees issues), has been positively assessed by the leadership of both Georgia and Abkhazia. Another field of cooperation is the joint exploitation of the Ingur Hydroelectric power station, which has facilities situated on both sides of the Georgian-Abkhazian border.

Current Economic Situation

Despite all odds, the life does not stand still in Abkhazia. The five years which have passed since the end of the war proved that Abkhazia has enough potential and the will to survive. Even during the Soviet times, under most unfavourable conditions, its population never lacked a spirit of enterprise and ability for economic activity even. During the post-war years the economic growth in Abkhazia was 15-20% per year. As described by the UN Needs Assessment Mission to Abkhazia, "There are signs of an incipient economic turnaround. The informal sector in Abkhazia has shown healthy growth. The area of cultivated land in 1997 was substantially larger than in earlier years, the rural incomes appear to have held up fairly well".

A first round of privatisation is being completed, as a result of which a large number of state-run trading and public service enterprises and collective and state-run farms will be transformed into joint-stock companies, small private enterprises, and firms. During the second round, the share of state sector will be put at 45-50% of all enterprises.

Currently, Abkhazia's major trade partners are Turkey and Russia. About 62% of imports come from Turkey, 45% of Abkhazian exports are destined for Turkey, and 54% for Russia.

Perspectives for economic development

Once the the conflict with Georgia is settled, perspectives for economic development of Abkhazia are rather promising. Abkhazia occupies a strategically important position as a land bridge linking Russia and Europe with Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as with Turkey and the countries of the Middle East. Automobile and railway lines going through Abkhazia can serve as crucially important transit routes for the movement of people and goods. Abkhazia has two large modern airports of international importance (in Sukhum and Gudauta). Its three seaports in Sukhum, Ochamchyra and Pitsunda, are conveniently situated in the proximity of railway and road lines, and can be used both as passenger and cargo ports.

The geographic position of Abkhazia allows it to serve as an important transit route for the transportation of oil, gas, and many items of trade for the Black Sea countries, Europe, Mediterranean and Indo-China directions. One prospective project is the building of a Transcaucasian highway pass road, which would connect Abkhazia with the republics of the Northern Caucasus and will provide the access to the sea for the North Caucasian republics. This highway would give Turkey and other countries of the Middle East a convenient, short way towards the North Caucasus and Russia. Other projects, such as East-West Transport Corridor and the Silk Road, can also involve Abkhazia as their important element.

Another global project of prime economic significance is the building of the Novorossiysk-Abkhazia-Poti-Ceyhan (in Turkey) oil and gas pipelines. The transformation of the former Russian military base in Ochamchyra into a major oil terminal can be regarded as a project of prime economical importance. The Ochamchyra bay is deep and capable of serving large oil tankers. The weather conditions throughout the year are better there than those of Novorossiysk. This project, which can have importance for both Georgia and Abkhazia, as well as for Turkey and Russia, is being currently discussed by the Georgian, Russian and Abkhazian sides.

Abkhazia is self-sustained in coal, has reasonable deposits of high quality oil and gas, and considerable reserves of timber. The most important mineral export items of Abkhazia are

mineral water, coking coal, marble, limestone, granites, cement, copper, lead, zinc, arsenic, gold, silver, and barite.

The combination of a mountainous and a subtropical coastal climates, and the abundance of sunny days even in winter, can serve as an attraction for tourists from all over the world. Abkhazia has trained personnel and many hotels, which will, of course, need modernization. The entire tourist infrastructure can be restored in a relatively short time, and Abkhazia is even now ready to accommodate over 1 million tourists per year.

The economic policy of Abkhazia gives priority to the development of the agricultural, fuel and energy, and tourist sectors, the development of transport infrastructure, and state support for small business. In accordance with these directions, economic reform is likewise given a major priority, and will include the restructuring of the economic mechanism, based on the implementation of the principles of marketing, competitiveness, the development of small businesses, and the activation of external economical relations. The legislative basis for the governing of the economy of Abkhazia in the conditions of a free economic zone is being finished. This will also mean the creation of favourable legal conditions for foreign investments. The result of these reforms will be the integration of Abkhazia's economy into the world economic mechanism.

One might conclude that Abkhazia, either recognised as an independent state, or becoming a member-state within the common Georgian-Abkhazian State, will represent an economically viable system. Even now, in the conditions of blockade and intimidation, Abkhazia has resources and capabilities to sustain itself as a sovereign polity. Under normal conditions, with borders open for free movement of people, goods and capital, Abkhazia can successfully heal the damage inflicted by the war and will re-establish itself as one of the most prosperous parts of the former Soviet Union. Given its natural wealth, important strategic position, and active and enterprising population, one can positively assess the perspectives for dynamic economic development. The numerous Abkhazian diaspora communities all over the world will undoubtedly also contribute to the economic recovery and prosperity of Abkhazia.

EXPERT CONCLUSION

On The State-Legal Relations Existing between Georgia and Abkhazia at the Present Time*

We shall examine the condition of state-legal relations between Georgia and Abkhazia from the point of view of the law of Georgia currently in force.

According to the 1995 Constitution of Georgia, Abkhazia is a territorial unit of Georgia (Article 3, clause 4) with indeterminate status (Article 3, clause 2), for the status of Abkhazia will be defined after 'the complete restoration of Georgia's jurisdiction over the country's entire territory' (Article 3, clause 2). In this regard it is necessary to recall that the afore-mentioned Constitution of Georgia was ratified when Abkhazia was already, de facto, no longer part of Georgia and when the overwhelming majority of the citizens of Abkhazia (with the exception, possibly, of part of the refugees who found themselves on the territory of Georgia) took no part at all, either directly or through their representatives, either in the preliminary working out or in the final ratification of the Constitution of Georgia. International practice knows of certain instances of attempts to decide within a constitution the fate of peoples who take no part in the process of approving such a constitution. However, as a rule, such attempts end without result. For example, in the 1958 Constitution of France there is contained a section dedicated to a Community which France hoped to create under her own aegis out of her former colonies as they attained independence. But the young independent states reacted with utter coolness to this unilateral initiative of France, and the proposals of the relevant chapter of the French Constitution remained ineffective until they were abrogated in 1995.

At the same time the Constitution of Georgia speaks of 'the restoration of jurisdiction over the country's entire territory' when it was not in 1995 at the moment when the afore-mentioned Constitution was ratified that Georgia came into being as a state -- Georgia's statehood is numbered in centuries, and over this period the territory of Georgia has changed more than once: at certain periods Georgia extended from the Black to the Caspian Sea; at other times Georgia shrank to a tiny portion of the modern Georgian state; at others she split into separate state-formations, unifying again at others. The Georgian Constitution was ratified in the process of the development of legislative acts that existed prior to its coming into force, acts which confirmed certain principles that found their reflection also in the Constitution itself. The move towards restoring the independence of Georgia was begun in 1989 and received its further development in the creation and realisation of the modern independent Georgian state. By resolutions of the Supreme Soviet of the Georgian SSR of 18 November 1989, 9 March and 20 June 1990, all state-structures existing in Georgia from 25 February 1921 were declared illegal and void. In particular, in Resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the Georgian SSR of 20 June 1990 'On the introduction of a supplement to the resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the Georgian SSR of 9 March 1990 on guarantees to defend the state-sovereignty of Georgia' the following is stated: 'Noting that the authority established in Georgia as a result of intervention and occupation (from the start an unelected authority -- revolutionary committees and then Soviets, restricted and formed on narrow-class principles) did not express the genuine, free will of the Georgian people, the Supreme Soviet of the Georgian SSR declares illegal and void all acts that abolished the political and other institutions of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, substituting for them political and judicial institutions that relied on a foreign power'.

As is plain from the adduced citation, not only the Revolutionary Committees but also the later Soviets that replaced them (i.e. the organs of power for Georgia that existed throughout the entire Soviet period -- viz. 1921-1991) are deemed in the said act to be political institutions that relied on a foreign power and for this reason as not expressing the genuine will of the people. In the light of this, the modern Georgian state sees itself to be the legitimate heir of the Democratic Republic of Georgia that existed in the years 1918-1921 and not of the Georgian SSR. Just such a legitimate legacy is even more clearly affirmed in the Appeal to the Peoples of the World of 9 April 1991, published under the signature of the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Georgia, Z. Gamsakhurdia, in which it is indicated that 'on 31 March 1991 a universal referendum took place in the Republic of Georgia in which the population unanimously supported the restoration of the state-independence of Georgia on the basis of "The Act on the Independence of Georgia" of 26 May 1918.' The self-same approach is confirmed also in the Resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the Georgian SSR of 20 June 1990 'On the creation of a legal mechanism for the restoration of the state-independence of Georgia', in which (paragraph 2) it is noted that the Georgian people realised its right to self-determination 'by the formation on 26 May 1918 of the Democratic Republic of Georgia'.

The 1995 Constitution of Georgia continued and developed the posture of the legislative acts already referred to. Clause 1, in particular, bears witness to this, for it is proclaimed therein that 'Georgia is an independent, unitary and indivisible state, which is confirmed by the referendum held on 31 March 1991...and by the Act on the restoration of the state-independence of Georgia of 9 April 1991'. And if any allusion to the 1978 Constitution of the Georgian SSR (albeit, for example, a reference that the Constitution of the Georgian SSR had ceased to be valid) is absent from the text of the 1995 Constitution of Georgia, it is directly stated in the Preamble with reference to the 1921 Constitution: 'The citizens of Georgia,...resting upon their multi-centennial traditions of national statehood and the fundamental principles of the 1921 Constitution of Georgia, proclaim the present Constitution'. It is precisely such references in the acts of Georgia that lay the foundation of the modern Georgian state to law and order and the principles of the construction of the Georgian Democratic Republic which presuppose a consideration of the legislative acts of 1918-1921 not as acts with mere historico-legal significance but as documents which possess principal importance for defining the modern bases of Georgia's statehood.

We note that at the moment of ratification of the said Act on the independence of Georgia of 26 May 1918 Abkhazia was not part of Georgia but was occupied by Georgia's armed forces only later, at the end of June 1918. Moreover, already in February 1918 an agreement was concluded between the authorities of Georgia, then preparing themselves for a proclamation of state-independence, and the authorities of Abkhazia. In this agreement the existence of a unitary and indivisible Abkhazia within frontiers stretching from the River Ingur to the River Mzymta was recognised. On 9 April 1991 the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Georgia ratified

the Act on the restoration of Georgia's state-independence. On that very day the Law of the Republic of Georgia 'On the validity of the Constitution and legislation of the Republic of Georgia' was passed. In this the Constitution of the Georgian SSR was not even mentioned, and there was talk of accelerating work on a new constitution 'on the basis of the stance of the Constitution of the Georgian Democratic Republic adopted on 21 February 1918'. However, the 1921 Constitution did not stipulate the existence of Abkhazia qua subject within the makeup of Georgia. In reality, Georgian armed forces were on the territory of Abkhazia from June 1918 to February 1921, providing security for the politics of an occupying regime, but Abkhazia was not deemed a subject of any legal relations within the makeup of Georgia. All mutual relations between Georgia and Abkhazia as subjects of some legal relations (we shall examine separately the nature of these) were constructed precisely in the period that followed February 1921 up to 1990 (i.e. in that period which the supreme organs of state-power in Georgia themselves declared in 1989-1991 to be a period of illegitimate governance, repudiating all acts ratified during that time).

Thus, from the point of view of Georgian legislation adopted in 1989-1991 and developed in later acts, Abkhazia cannot be deemed a subject of defined legal relations within the makeup of Georgia, and so state-legal relations between Abkhazia and Georgia have ceased. Thus, of and in itself the ratification by Georgia in 1995 of the Constitution, in which there is a continuation of the legal formation of the development of the statehood based on the legal acts of 1989-1991, cannot alter the character of the mutual relations between Abkhazia and Georgia engendered by the afore-mentioned acts of 1989-1991. And, in general, the unilateral adoption by any state of a constitution that takes a stance on the incorporation into the makeup of the said state of any territory without taking into account the opinion of the population of this territory, which possesses its own organs of authority, cannot have any juridical consequences.

In just this way the conclusion by third states of treaties with a state that deems some territory to be its own without taking into account the opinion of the population of this territory, including treaties in which the pretence to the said territory stands in no doubt, in no way signifies that the population of this territory has no right to effect its own entitlement to self-determination and secede from the makeup of the said state. Thus, international agreements concluded, for example, with Great Britain and France prior to the disintegration of their colonial empires in no way hindered the appearance of new independent states in place of their colonies, just as the international treaties themselves (provided they did not concern the colonies exclusively) did not automatically cease operating after the liquidation of the British and French colonial states, although it is plain to all that the territory under the control of the British and French governments was reduced, and these governments cannot take responsibility for the fulfilment of these treaties on the territory of their former colonies. The impossibility to decide the fate of the population of any territory without taking account of the opinion of the population itself, expressed by the elected representatives of this population, found its reflection also in the very

fact that a Russian military contingent finds itself with a peace-keeping mission in Abkhazia by trilateral decision of the governments of Russian, Georgia and Abkhazia.

In order to substantiate its justification to regard Abkhazia as a part of the territory of the Georgian state, the Georgian side points to the Russian-Georgian treaty of 7 May 1920 which recognised the frontier between the RSFSR [Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic] and Democratic Georgia [as running] along the River Psou. However, this treaty merely recognised the fact that the territory beyond the River Psou was under the control of Georgian military forces, nothing being said about the fate of Abkhazia. In fact, the said Treaty recognised the situation with which the Denikin government agreed in 1918. At that time A.I. Denikin declared that the Sukhum Okrug (as the territory of Abkhazia was known upto the 1917 Revolution) should be neutral and the Georgian military withdrawn beyond the River Ingur .

In order better to appreciate why in 1917-1918 Georgia and Abkhazia were engaged in separate, mutually independent processes of state-building, we shall devote a little attention to the position of Abkhazia and of Georgia in the composition of the Russian Empire up to the 1917 Revolution.

In 1810 Abkhazia entered the makeup of the Russian Empire directly in the capacity of a state-formation with no relations to any Georgian state, and Abkhazia preserved a certain autonomy within the composition of Russia right up to 1864. After the October Revolution of 1917, to be precise in November of 1917, an assembly of the Abkhazian people took place at which important documents were ratified -- the Declaration of the Assembly of the Abkhazian People and the Constitution of the People's Soviet. In the Declaration of the People's Soviet of Abkhazia it is stated that 'one of the subsequent main tasks of the Abkhazian People's Soviet is to work on the self-determination of the Abkhazian people... The Abkhazian people enters into the Union of the United Mountaineers of the North Caucasus, Daghestan and Abkhazia'. In this way, Abkhazia voluntarily and independently entered into the makeup of the Mountain Republic proclaimed on 11 May 1918 and constituting Abkhazia, Adyghea, Kabarda, Chechenia, Ossetia, Daghestan etc...; with this entity Georgia had no relations. Thereafter was formed the South-Eastern Union of Cossack militias, mountaineers of the Caucasus and the free peoples of the Steppe composed of the Don, Kuban, Tersk, Astrakhan and Ural Cossack militias, the mountaineers of the North Caucasus, Daghestan, Abkhazia, the Zakatala Okrug and the free Steppe peoples of the Astrakhan and Stavropol Gubernias. The united government of the South-Eastern Union proclaimed the following: 'Recognising a democratic federative republic to be the best form of state-building for Russia, the South-Eastern Union in its own practical actions will adhere to the code of behaviour that characterises supporters of a federative form of government. Guaranteeing to its own members full independence in their internal life, the Union is committed to assist them by all joint-means in the preparation of their internal construction as independent states of a future Russian Democratic Federative Republic'. Thus, even within the

confines of the South-Eastern Union Abkhazia was preserved as an integral and independent formation.

The Georgian Democratic Republic was formed on 26 May 1918, but Abkhazia, as is evident from what has been adduced above, was not at that time a part of it. In June 1918 Georgian military forces entered Abkhazia on the pretence of fighting the Bolsheviks. Furthermore, almost straight after the liquidation of the Georgian Democratic Republic, to be precise on 31 March 1918, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia was proclaimed. Only on 16 December 1921 (and that under pressure from I.V. Stalin, who then headed the Organising Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks) and was considered in the Central Committee to be one of the main specialists on problems of the Caucasus, and G.K. Ordzhonikidze, who in February 1920 was named as chairman of the Bureau for restoring power in the Caucasus and from 1921 to 1926 was secretary of the Caucasian Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks) and then secretary of the Transcaucasian regional committee of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (B)) did Abkhazia enter federative treaty-relations with Georgia, having concluded a Union Treaty.

The appellation fixed for Abkhazia shortly after this of an autonomous Soviet socialist republic did not automatically alter the federative (or, to use the terminology of the Georgian-Abkhazian Treaty of 16 December 1921, union) relations between Abkhazia and Georgia. The recognition for autonomous republics of equal subjecthood in federative relations at the time received a certain extension in the state-building of the Soviet republics. Thus, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic incorporated autonomous republics -- Bashkiria was formed as an autonomous republic within the Russian Federation on the basis of a Treaty in 1919 between the federal (or, as was then said, central) organs of state power and the organs of power in Bashkiria. The character of the treaty inter-state relations between Georgia and Abkhazia found reflection both in the Constitution of Abkhazia (1925) and in that of Georgia (1927). However, in 1931 the status of Abkhazia was lowered: she became an autonomous republic within Georgia without any reference to the treaty character of Georgian-Abkhazian relations; moreover, it is perfectly clear that the decision on this question (as with all similar decisions of state-significance in those times) was taken in Moscow by 'fiat' of I.V. Stalin and with the active participation of L.P. Beria, who at the beginning of 1931 became chairman of the Transcaucasian and Georgian state political directorates and in November 1931 First Secretary of the Central Committee's Communist (B) Party of Georgia and Second Secretary of the Transcaucasian regional committee of the All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks). It is true, even an autonomous republic was recognised as a state-formation according to the constitutional legislation of the USSR and the union-republics. To the extent, in this regard, that Georgia (as is evident from the 1989-1991 legislative acts cited above) places in doubt the validity of all decisions respecting herself during the period of the USSR's existence, it is

perfectly logical for the question to remain open as to the legitimacy of Georgia's territorial extent under Soviet power, including the legitimacy of Abkhazia's entry into the makeup of Georgia.

International law recognises the conversion of administrative frontiers into state-frontiers with the splitting off in some well-defined shape of a solitary portion of a state existing within certain borders and the transformation of this portion into a new independent state. However, world-practice knows of sufficiently many cases when the drawing of new borders has accompanied the transformation of some portion of a state into an independent state. Thus, in the case of Ireland both prior to its conquest by England and as part of the British Empire the territory of the whole island was understood. But with the assignment to Ireland of the status of a dominion (officially styled the Free Irish State) in 1920-1922 and then with the proclamation of an independent Irish Republic in 1937 the northern part of Ireland stayed within the makeup of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918-1920 was accompanied by the formation of a series of independent states. In particular, Czechoslovakia came into being. By the way, a Czech entity existed as an independent state prior to entry into the composition of the state of the Habsburgs, whilst within the Empire it had, as it were, administrative borders. Slovakia, on the other hand, was administratively part of Hungary prior to the formation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and within the Empire it was also deemed to be a part of Hungary. At the same time, Transylvania, which was traditionally part of Hungary, was handed over by peace-treaty to Rumania. From examples closer in time to our own day one can adduce the Dayton Accords, which provided for the creation on the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina of a Serb Republic and (Croatian-Muslim) Federation (Appendix 2 to the General Framework Agreement on Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the corresponding map). Additionally, in practice new, hitherto non-existent borders were drawn between them. World-practice knows of instances of division into several independent states with the separation of some part of a state that prior to the split constituted a single administrative territorial unit.

Thus, the Indian Empire was under the sway of the British crown from 1877 to 1947, and then with the proclamation of independence three states were formed in its place: Burma, the Indian Union and Pakistan (later the state of Bangladesh split away from Pakistan). There are no grounds to suppose that international law guarantees the preservation of the unitary states that came into being out of the former Soviet republics when the Soviet Union collapsed regardless of the will of the peoples residing in these former Soviet republics. The existence of Abkhazia's settled borders permits one to suppose that she could form an independent state in just these frontiers. As a rule, the right of a people to self-determination in the form of the acquisition of state-independence is more easily realised and more speedily takes shape if that people within the limits of a certain territory that enters into the composition of another state are already in possession of self-governance and have formed effectively operating institutions of power. As

has already been said, independent institutions of power in Abkhazia began to take shape as early as December 1917 (to say nothing of the hithertofore multi-centennial history of Abkhazian statehood). And even after Abkhazia became an autonomous republic within Soviet Georgia, which itself was part of the Soviet Union, according in particular to the Soviet Union's Constitutions of 1936 and 1977 and the 1937 and 1978 Constitutions of the Georgian SSR, the Abkhazian ASSR, like other autonomous republics, had the full range of attributes of statehood: her own Constitution, legislation, symbols, etc...

The presumption that the states formed as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union will keep the frontiers established at the moment of this collapse cannot alter the internationally recognised right of peoples to self-determination. Article 2 clause 1 of the Charter of the United Nations refers to the necessity of respecting the principle of equal rights and the self-determination of peoples. Since the ratification of the UN Charter the principle of self-determination of peoples has more than once been reinforced in UN documents, starting with Resolution 545 (VI) of the General Assembly. In their number one can name the 1960 Declaration on the awarding of independence to colonial countries and peoples, the 1966 International pacts on human rights, and the 1975 Declaration of principles of the Final Act of the CSCE, where special emphasis is laid upon the right of peoples to take charge of their own destiny. The principle of self-determination of peoples is laid bare with particular clarity and comprehensiveness in the 1970 UN Declaration on the principles of international law: 'Creation of a sovereign and independent state, free association with an independent state or union with it, or the establishment of any other political status freely defined by a people are manifestations of the realisation by this people of the right to self-determination'.

In this Declaration it is also pointed out that each state is obliged to refrain from all use of force which might prevent peoples from effecting their right to self-determination. An important element of the principle under review is the right of peoples to solicit and receive support in conformity with the aims and principles of the UN Charter, should they be deprived of the right to self-determination by means of the deployment of force. We also draw attention to the following provision of the said Declaration: 'Nothing in the paragraphs cited above should be interpreted as sanctioning or encouraging any acts which might lead to the dismemberment or to a partial or the complete infringement of the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent states acting in observance of the principle of equality of rights and the self-determination of peoples...'. In other words, in the citation adduced above what is being stated is that sides signing the Declaration come out against the taking of any actions (on some groundless and far-fetched pretext of allegedly helping to realise a right to self-determination) which infringe the territorial integrity and political unity of states seen to be 'ACTING IN OBSERVANCE OF THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY OF RIGHTS AND THE SELF-DETERMINATION OF PEOPLES' on the part of other states or international organisations.

This provision is thereby directed at preventing the demagogic use of rallying-cries to self-determination for any hostile acts aimed at a state on the territory of which reside two or more peoples who are realising of their own free will their right to self-determination by the very act of living harmoniously together. It is precisely towards this same end that are directed the provisions of a range of international acts ratified within the framework of the CIS, including the 1991 Agreement on the creation of the CIS, in which the sides stressed 'the inviolability of existing borders within the framework of the Commonwealth' (clause 5).

For its part, Abkhazia has been recognised as a state-formation (albeit within another state) for almost the entire span of the XXth century -- in total the history of Abkhazian statehood is numbered in several centuries. As such, Abkhazia possessed all the attributes of state-authority. Apart from this, the Abkhazians are a distinct people with their own millennia-old culture of indigenous Caucasian origin, speaking a language that does not form any common group with the Georgian language. Moreover, there are no grounds for claiming that the Abkhazian state infringes or seeks to infringe the rights of the representatives of other nationalities. Abkhazia has more than once declared recognition of the principles of international law. This is witnessed by the legal acts adopted in Abkhazia and Abkhazia's initiatives in relation to the return of the refugees of "Georgian" [most are actually Mingrelian -- translator] nationality to the Gal Region of Abkhazia.

The Georgian side has more than once declared that the right of peoples to self-determination does not necessarily mean separation. In practice, the right of peoples to self-determination under appropriate conditions can manifest itself in the union of two or more states, in the joining of one state to another, in the transformation of a unitary state into a federative one, or in the creation of an autonomy on the territory of some state. But the right of peoples to self-determination is not limited by this and can also be manifested in the splitting off of a people (especially one already organised into a state-formation) from the constituency of some state and the formation of an independent state. Thus, just over the last few decades, the world-community has recognised as independent states those that came into being as a result of the collapse of the USSR, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and it has recognised Eritrea, which split off from Ethiopia, and others. Moreover, Georgia itself justified its own striving to leave the makeup of the USSR precisely by references to the right of each nation to self-determination. The already mentioned Resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the Georgian SSR of 20 June 1990 'On the creation of a legal mechanism to restore Georgia's state-independence' begins thus: 'Guided by the imperatives of the Georgian people's national sovereignty, by the inviolability of the right of each nation to self-determination, recognised and guaranteed by the fundamental principles of modern international law, by other norms, including the Charter of the United Nations' Organisation, by international pacts on human rights, and also by the final and summative acts of the Helsinki and Vienna fora...'. By the same token, Abkhazia is guided by the self-same imperatives, rights and principles.

It, thus, seems that the multi-ethnic people of Abkhazia, just like the Georgian people and, of course, any people in general, do themselves have the right to decide their own destiny, including the question of whether to continue their existence in the form of a state-organisation, independently defining the character of their mutual relations with neighbouring states.

A.S. AVTONOMOV

Head of the Sector of Legal Problems of Federalism, Regionalism and Integration

The Institute of State and Law

Russian Academy of Sciences

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*Translator's footnote:

For a contemporary statement by an Abkhazian representative on Georgia's attempt to take over Abkhazia by force see Lieut. Khasaia's 'Memorandum concerning the Abkhasian question' included in Anita L.P. Burdett (ed.) 'Caucasian Boundaries 1802-1946: Documents' (Archive Editions, 1996, pp. 528-537). A pertinent assessment of the Menshevik government of the so-called Georgian Democratic Republic of 1918-1921 through the eyes of a foreigner was given by English traveller Carl Eric Roberts (who wrote under the pseudonym Bechhofer), namely: 'The free and independent Social-Democratic government of Georgia will ever remain in my memory as a classical example of an imperialistic minor nationality both in relation to its seizure of territory to within its own borders and in relation to the bureaucratic tyranny inside the state. Its chauvinism exceeds the highest limits' (In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus, 1919-1920, London 1921). The Burdett volume also contains (630-631) a 2-page secret British War Office document of February 1919 discussing Denikin's contention that Georgia's claims to even the territory around Sochi were entirely groundless; the unnamed author concurs in this view and begins his closing statement with the comment: 'I have nothing good to say of the Georgian Govt. as my written report will show...'.

George HEWITT, FBA,
Professor of Caucasian Languages.

AN ABKHAZIA PHOTOGRAPH

**No war;
No peace;
But extreme tension.**

(ABKHAZIA REPORT OF THE CAUCASUS FOUNDATION. OCTOBER 2001)

by Fehim Tastekin

Although Abkhazia was the only one to declare its independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union and had unilaterally put on its agenda a federation agreement with Georgia, it unexpectedly found itself under attack by the Georgian army. In this respect, the date of Georgian incursion, August 14, 1992, not only brought great social and economic upheaval, but it also exhausted all possibilities of coming together again with Georgia.

Possessing a federal structure in the Soviet Union together with the autonomous republics of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Adjara, Georgia chose a unitary state structure when it became independent. In doing this it showed no regard for an autonomous republic structure like Abkhazia's. Opposing this, the Abkhazia Parliament declared Abkhazia's sovereignty, and while it was preparing for discussions on the federation alternative, the Abkhaz people were at least not as far from such an alternative as they are today.

In fact, on the Abkhazia side a rough draft of a federation agreement had been prepared that is almost equivalent to the idea of "Abkhazia being given broad authority within Georgia," which is frequently brought up by Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze. After the movement begun in 1992 and 1993 to fully annex Abkhazia to Georgia soil had cost thousands of lives, the Abkhaz side abandoned its pre-war position and chose as its indisputable goal the "fully independent state" alternative.

TO AVOID ANOTHER ABKHAZIA GEORGIA WAR

An armed terrorist group of 500 men were stationed in Georgia for the last 3-4 months and started aggression against Abkhazia since 2 October 2001. Georgia have denied the presence of this armed group but the responsibility of controlling this group is still with Georgia. The Abkhazian side believes that the said group is supported by the Georgian intelligence.

This armed group have stepped into the Kodor region of Abkhazia and have attacked to some villages and have downed a helicopter of United Nations Observers on 09 October 2001. The next provocation have been the bombardment of Kodor region by SU-25 aircraft. Georgia claimed them as Russian aircraft. Tiflis and Sohum took war positions and Russia fortified its borders.

Abkhazia is now surrounded by Georgian and Russian armies. Common sense is expected from Georgia. Any Georgian adventure will provoke all of the North Caucasus. Abkhazians have not forgotten the Georgian invasion in 1992 when everything seemed peaceful and there were plenty of federation talk. Abkhazian Parliament were reviewing the proposals of federal structures with Tiflis. There the unexpected Georgian invasion came.

There is confidence crisis between the sides. International community must take necessary steps to prevent the start of a new conflict.

HISTORY OF EXILE

The Abkhazia Kingdom, which expanded by including Western Georgia in the 10th and 11th centuries, was founded in the year 730. Later facing Arab, Persian and Byzantine incursions, Abkhazia along with other Northern Caucasian regions became a stage for seizure by the giants as an area where the Ottomans and Russia wanted to make their influence felt. Passing to the control of the Ottomans in 1555 and the Russians in 1810, Abkhazia succeeded in continuing its political existence in spite of everything.

Passing under Russian protection in 1810 under its own desire, Abkhazia entered a new period in 1864 when the autonomous administration system was eliminated, and in the 1870's it experienced an ethnic disaster. When the wars in Caucasia ended to the disadvantage of the Caucasian people, Russia's influence in the area increased. Close to 300,000 people, equivalent to more than half of the Abkhaz population, left their country and settled in Ottoman lands. With the abandonment of Abkhazia by its native people, groups such as Russian, Armenian, Greek, Bulgarian, German, Estonian and especially Georgians and Megreles were settled there. According to a census in 1886, the percentage of Abkhaz people was 85.7 and the Georgians comprised 6%. In the 1897 census the Abkhaz population was seen to be 55.3% and the Georgians rose to 24.4%. The population balance continued to change in the following years to the disadvantage of the Abkhaz people.

Due to opportunity presented by the political vacuum and chaos of the first years following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and with the collapse of the Northern Caucasia Republic in which Abkhazia was included, it became a part of the USSR and in 1921 Abkhazia became the Abkhazia Soviet Socialist Republic.

The essential blow to Abkhazia was made by Stalin who was a Georgian. In 1931 Abkhazia was reduced from the status of a "republic" in the USSR to an "autonomous republic" tied to Georgia. Abkhazia was not only bound to Georgia, but by means of migration policies Abkhaz people were reduced to a minority position in their own country. Sending a large part of its population to the diaspora after the 1864 exile, Abkhazia was not able to prevent its population percentage falling from 55% in the 1900's to 18% in the 1970's. In the 1937-1953 period, tens of thousands of Georgians were settled in Abkhazia from Georgia's internal regions. Georgia's population rose from 30% in 1939 to 39.1% in 1959. Without giving up anything from their steady migration policy, the Georgians' presence in Abkhazia rose to 41% in 1970, 43% in 1979 and 49% in 1989.

THE TIFLIS TRAP

While after Stalin's death in 1953 there was a sign of new hope for returning to their homelands on the part of Chechens, the Ingush and Karachais who had been exiled to Central Asia and Siberia, the Abkhaz regained some of the freedoms they had lost. However, this did not occur suddenly, but rather as the end of a process. Georgia's efforts to squeeze Abkhazia in a constitutional trap boomeranged and a new legal order was necessitated by events that had occurred. Of course, the Abkhaz, who had entered a tough war with the Russians in the 19th century, again leaned towards Moscow as a result of Georgia's oppressive policies. With the support of many Abkhaz intellectuals, meetings were held in 1957, 1964, 1967 and 1978 to remove Abkhazia from Georgia.

Abkhazian and Georgian constitutions were reshaped on the model of the new USSR constitution that was produced after events in 1978. The new constitution went one step further than the old one regarding political rights.

INDEPENDENCE, BUT HOW?

While relations between Abkhazia and Georgia were extremely tense under the Soviet umbrella, they became explosive after 1990. After Zviad Gamsahurdiya, nationalist wing leader, came to power in October, 1990, events in Georgia fanned polarization. On March 18, 1989, at the end of a meeting attended by Abkhazia, the USSR was asked to give back the status of republic to Abkhazia, which it had lost at one time. In July, 1989, a Georgia-Abkhazia conflict resulted in 19 deaths. While these conflicts made Tiflis-Sohum relations tenser, they inflamed nationalistic behavior in Georgia.

On August 25, 1990, a declaration of sovereignty was made that determined Abkhazia's destiny. The declaration accepted by the Abkhazia High Soviet proclaimed Abkhazia to be "a sovereign, socialist state fully sovereign over its own soil except for legal areas turned over to the USSR or the Georgia Soviet Socialist Republic."

Just as the glasnost process beginning during the Gorbachov period raised Abkhazia's desire for independence, the inevitable period of separation from the Soviets began in Georgia. In the Glasnost process Georgia began canceling all legal texts written since 1921. Invalidating the 1978 constitution in February, 1992, Georgia decided to return to the 1921 constitution before the Soviets. Abolishing the 1978 constitution and returning to the one of 1921, Georgia made the last document dealing with relations with Abkhazia invalid. The constitutional articles that tied Abkhazia to Georgia during the time of the USSR were considered to be invalid by Tiflis, but, with a contradictory attitude, she showed that she favored Abkhazia land to be a part of Georgia. In response, the Abkhazia side called Tiflis to determine the basis upon which Georgian-Abkhazian relations were to continue, but when there was no answer, Abkhazia abolished the 1978 constitution on July 23, 1992.

UNEXPECTED WAR

In Russia, the election of Eduard Shevardnadze's government was perceived as a new hope and beginning. In March 1992, the optimism faded as Shevardnadze's attitude that "the Abkhazian conflict would be solved in Tbilisi" became clear in Tbilisi. The Georgian leader would not admit the fact that an Abkhazian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic existed. The appeals for dialogue were left unanswered during this period as well.

Abkhazia decided to form a work group in order to prepare a draft for a pact as well as to follow its 1925 Constitution until a new one could be prepared. A proposed pact between The Abkhazian Republic and The Georgian Republic, prepared by Taras Shamba was also published in three newspapers to open the proposal to the public opinion. According to this pact the republics would form "federative relations" as a "unified state." The third and the most remarkable section of the pact read, "The Abkhazian Republic voluntarily joins with The Georgian Republic, and keeps its rights to legislation, government and judgment in its borders other than those relinquished by the Georgian and The Abkhazian constitutions."

The proposal was in the Abkhazian High Soviet's agenda. Even the Abkhazian Parliament had scheduled to discuss it on 14th of August 1992 but the same day, an unexpected event turned everything upside-down: The Georgian Army crossed the Abkhazian border. Abkhazia considered the actions between 1992 and 1993 as war between the two states Georgia and Abkhazia.

It was predicted that Abkhazia would join Georgia very soon. Nobody could foresee the North Caucasian volunteer army that would join the war. The Georgian invasion happened very fast and by the end of the first day, the government buildings, broadcast centers and the most important roads were occupied but the Abkhazian side regained its power with Adighe, Abkhazian, Chechen, Armenian and even Russian voluntary forces starting from the first day of the invasion.

TRYING TO END THE WAR

Abkhazia lost five thousand people in this unexpected war. There were also thousands more wounded and permanently disabled. It is estimated that this almost two year war caused 10 billion dollars of damage.

When the war started to get out of Georgia's control, it was arranged so that Russia would start pressuring Sohum. On the 27th of July, 1993 a truce was signed by both sides in Sochi. According to the truce the Georgian forces and all the voluntaries would leave Abkhazian territory, and the Abkhazian government would resume its power. It was soon obvious that the truce had no practical meaning as both sides absolutely had no trust for each other.

In September 3rd, 1993 Boris Yeltsin, Eduard Shevardnadze and Vladislav Ardzynba convened once more. The exhausting meeting ended with the signing of a final declaration. According to this declaration, a cease-fire was to be arranged, the Georgian forces were to retreat, the exchange of prisoners of war and the return of refugees would be ensured, the powers of the Abkhazian government would be returned throughout the republic. Unfortunately neither the Georgian forces retreated nor the rest of the declaration was carried out. The war continued intensely.

While Georgia and Russia were dealing with their own constitutional problems the war resumed in September 16th, 1993. Abkhazians regained the lost territories one by one until in September 30th they reached the Georgian border before the war along the Inghur River. The war ended in September 30th as the Abkhazian forces got Gagra, Sohum, Ochamchira and Gal regions back.

The meetings for an acceptable solution between Georgia and Abkhazia could only start after two months. The first round took place in Geneva in December 1st, 1993. The meetings ended with the signing of "Memorandum of Understanding," which portrayed an optimistic picture. Both sides would not threaten or revert back to the use of force until a diplomatic agreement could be reached.

UNENDING PEACE TRAFFIC

From 1993 to present there have been more than 350 stops made in the traffic of UN and OSCE meetings and around 400 documents have been signed. After the Geneva meetings of December 1993, 11-13 January 1994, and 22-25 February 1994 and the New York meeting of 7-9 March, there was an end to the consensus of opinion that the dispute between the two parties could be settled through meetings. In the 29-31 March 1994 Moscow meetings, procedures for the return of refugees from Abkhazia were discussed.

In the 4 April 1994 Moscow meeting, under the supervision of the UN General Secretary's special representative on the problem of Georgian-Abkhazian relations, E. Brunner, the Russian representative B. Postukhov and OSCE representative V. Manno, the two sides adopted the path of a political solution. The issue of the return of refugees was under the authority of the UN Refugee High Commission. A declaration was announced regarding measures for a political solution to the Georgia-Abkhazia dispute. At this stage the two parties reached an agreement on common action in the fields of foreign political and foreign economic relations, border services, customs services, energy, transportation, communication, ecology, dealing with the outcome of natural disasters, human freedoms and the rights of national minorities, as well. In Moscow in 1994 meetings were held that recommended the withdrawal of forces from the borders, a continuation of the ceasefire and the creation of a tampon region. On August 14, 1994, the Shevardnadze-Ardzinba meeting took place and resulted in a decision to continue talks. In the August 31st 1994 Geneva meeting it was recommended that Georgian soldiers evacuate Kodor. In addition, an agreement was made for those who left Abkhazia, with the exception of those who participated in the war and criminals, to return to the Gal region. On September 16th, 1994, leaders of the two countries met in Novy Afon, and renewed the effectiveness of former decisions, emphasizing the invigorization of the Trans-Caucasian Railroad. In the meeting held in Sohum on September 17th a decision was made to halt

return migration operations until the Georgians left Kodor.

In the meeting held in Sochi between Shevardnadze and Ardzinba on September 19, 1994, Yeltsin was also present.

Recommending a federation to Georgia in 1997, Abkhazia took back its offer when it failed to receive either a positive or negative answer as in 1992.

On May 26, 1998, a new war rehearsal was made. When, according to the Abkhaz side, Tiflis supported armed Georgian groups attempted to invade the Gal region, conflict broke out and after five years Abkhazia and Georgia were once again on the threshold of war. This attack was a blow to floundering Georgian-Abkhazian talks, but with UN, OSCE and Russian mediation, both sides came together in Athens on October 16-18, 1998, in Istanbul on June 7-9, 1999, and at Yalta on March 15-16, 2001. Issues that were decided upon but not put into operation were discussed again and confirmed.

In a referendum held on October 3, 1999, Abkhazia voted for independence.

THE EMBARGO THAT SENTENCED ABKHAZÍA TO DEATH

Georgia could not manage to subject Abkhazia to herself within the expected limit of short period and the diplomacy policy in 1994 failed. However, Georgia managed to get the CIS to accept the decision of embargo with the help of the initiatives through diplomacy. The aim was to isolate Abkhazia and push them to the point defined by Tbilis, Although the embargo is still in practice, it did not do as much harm to Abkhazia as they had expected. Abkhazia came to a situation which disabled its exports and importing their needs was subjected to severe conditions as well. Abkhazia cannot even take the products such as citrus fruit to the nearest seaport Sochi. While being unable to take its natural resources and products to the international markets, Abkhazia can hardly import even the medicine it is in need of. Obstacles on Communication and Travel

In this era of communication, Abkhazia is sentenced also to communication breakdown. In the country where all the communications network rely on the infrastructure provided by Georgia and respectively Moscow, it is very difficult to contact through the phone, send mails or telegrams, there are only a few international lines available. It is impossible for Abkhazia to reach the world when it is banned by either Tbilis, land transfer is under military supervision and also the seaports on the Black Sea coast are under control. The embargo on transportation on Abkhazia does not allow for even standard travel on top of what is lived as a serious crisis economically. The documents issued by Abkhazia, de facto an independent state, are not accepted as valid by other countries thus it is impossible to talk about freedom to travel. Abkhazia cannot send its citizens abroad with either a document or Id or a passport. When wanted, even the prime minister of the country can be denied to visit another country through procedures. Food Aid that is assumed to be extravagant

Abkhazia could not benefit from the help provided by other countries as food aid either. Aid sent by international humanitarian organisations such as medicine, food and other economic support couldn't get further than Georgia and got stuck there. Tbilis assumed an obstructive role in passing the aid to the needy.

The Diplomacy Draw

What is more unjust is that while Georgia has full acceptance as a state by other countries Abkhazia does not have the tools and means to support its own right in international arenas. This diminishes the chances for Abkhazian theses to be discussed. It goes without saying that Abkhazia does not have the chance for self-defence. The opportunities Georgia has in the international fields work counter to the Abkhazian diplomacy. This is more evident in the process of the emigrants' return. It has been impossible for Abkhazia to explain to the world that 70,000 emigrants have returned to Abkhazia and settled there.

REFUGEE PROBLEM

One of the most heated debates in the area has been carried on the issues of number of refugees and the conditions for return. Abkhazia claims that 70,000 of those 220,000 who had left the country were accepted back within agreements. Peace Corps Commandership also confirms the numbers. Georgian government claim that the number of refugees is 320,000 although the whole Georgian population according to 1989 Census in Abkhazia according to the Abkhazian officials was 239,000, which shows the exaggeration in numbers.

The Abkhazian side maintain that in accordance with the agreement done in Tbilis in 1994 the Georgians are supposed to return

in smaller groups rather as a whole. Ignoring this Tbilis poses problems on the way to solutions. At the same time uses the situation against Sohum on the international platforms. Another alleged scenario is that: Georgia exaggerates the number intentionally so as to get more aid from UN Refugees High Comissary Sohum claims that there are about 40,000 Georgians in Abkhazia who have not left their home which is disregarded by Tbilis.

Beside about 2,000 Svans now live in the Kodor valley which is not controlled by Abkhazia, and that 20- 30,000 thousand Georgians are now settled in Russia and lie there and these are not taken into consideration.

The agreement signed by Georia, Abkhazia, Russian Federation and the UN representatives in 1994 concernig the return of the refugees suggested that "Dislocated people are entitled to return to their land without any threat of arrest, custody, imprisonment or punitive act, in peace. The immunity does not encompass those who : commit crimes against humanity or military crimes, commit serious crime, have been involved in battle before and there is evidence of their being in armed formations against Abkhazia for war. However, the articles of the agreement are not in practice and the problem itself remains as a field of speculation and debate. Tbilis wants the refugees to return all at once quickly to the places they had left while Abkhazia insists that the conditions of teh agreement are followed. Sohum is especially not turning a blind eye to the ones who had fought in arms against Abkhazia.

Georgia's aim is to restore the demographic majority situation of the Georgian population in the area. However, Abkhazia claims that "the refugee problem is part of a whole picture and must be considered together with a general permanent political solution." In Shevardnadze's view, the "main problem" is the return of the refugees and the rest will come later after this issue is taken care of.

AN ABKHAZIA PHOTOGRAPH: NO WAR, NO PEACE, BUT EXTREME TENSION.
ABKHAZIA REPORT OF THE CAUCASUS FOUNDATION. OCTOBER 2001
by Fehim Tastekin
fehimtastekin@kafkas.org.tr

Viacheslav A. Chirikba has been the representative of the Republic of Abkhazia to Western Europe since 1993. He completed his doctoral dissertation in 1986 at the Moscow Institute of Linguistics, USSR Academy of Sciences. From 1991 to 1996, Dr. Chirikba was a professor and research fellow at Leiden University, The Netherlands, where he authored a Doctoral dissertation on the History of West Caucasian Languages. In 1993-1994, he was a member of the Abkhaz delegation at the Georgian-Abkhaz peace negotiations in Geneva, and since 1993, he has been the Permanent Representative of Abkhazia to UNPO, The Hague. Dr. Chirikba is the author of numerous articles on the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict and has organized and participated in several conferences on the subject worldwide.

Dr. Chirikba: Georgians are no enemy but friends in eternity

Friendship message to Georgians

27.11.2001

Dr. Vyacheslav Chirikba, special representative of the Republic of Abkhazia for Europe, stated that Georgians are no enemy but can be friends in eternity. We are neighbours and nations can coexist in peace, the problem is with the current Georgian administration.

Dr. Chirikba was the conference speaker at an occasion organized by Kafkas Vakfi 'The Caucasus Foundation' of Istanbul on 22 November. The conference named 'European perspective of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict' stressed the importance of friendship between the peoples of North Caucasus and crystallized that mischief sowers won't be successful at

Caucasus.

Dr. Chirikba stated that he is commissioned by the Abkhazian President Ardzinba, for UN Geneva talks in December 1993 and continues the mission of Abkhazia to the States and their agencies at Europe. British and Dutch governments are informed of the developments. 'As plenipotentiary of Abkhazia, I have contact with every interested country,' stated Dr.Chirikba.

"Defacto independent and democratic"

'Abkhazia is a North Caucasian nation and is the only one who declared its defacto independence and have talks with Georgia, Russia and USA as an independent state.' 'Have talks with Georgia with UN mediation.' The Abkhazian side and the Georgian side participate as co-equal parties in the context of negotiations. The United Nations plays a dual role in the post-conflict situation: political peace process and the observer mission, which is tasked to monitor and verify compliance with the Moscow Agreement as well as observe the operations of the CIS peacekeeping force. The UN's engagement also covers the safe, secure and dignified return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their places of previous permanent residence in Abkhazia.

"Associate membership" with Russia

Mr. Anri Jergenia, The Abkhazian Premier on 14 October 2001, proposed 'associate membership' with Russia: Mr. Jergenia clarified that the intention is not to enter the Russian Federation as a federative subject; instead the new relationship with Russia would rather amount to a confederative model. Mr. Jergenia also indicated that such an arrangement would not be in contradiction with the Abkhazian Constitution, because its independence will remain intact and possibly become a member of the United Nations Organization and other international organizations.

"Prospects for settlement"

Prospects for settlement based upon the most recent events in the upper Kodor valley: The Abkhazian leadership makes it very clear that it is premature to talk about any political dialogue, as long as troops of the Georgian Ministry of Defence are stationed, in violation of the 1994 Moscow Agreement, in the upper Kodor valley in Abkhazia.

***Dr. Vyacheslav Chirikba, teaches at University of Leiden, The Netherlands and lives in The Netherlands since year 1990. Is founder of IDICA Foundation at The Hague The Netherlands. IDICA-International Documentation and Information Centre for Abkhazia, aims the restoration of the cultural heritage of the Abkhazian people.**

Meeting of working group III of the coordination council of the Georgian and Abkhaz sides

The fourth meeting of Working Group III on Social and Economic Issues, of the Coordination Council of the Georgian and Abkhaz Parties, was held on Monday 8 April in Sukhumi. The Working Group III meeting was chaired by Mr. Lance Clark, UNDP Resident Representative, and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. The Georgian delegation was led by Mr. M. Kakabadze, and the Abkhaz delegation by Mr. B. Kubrava. The meeting was convened at UNOMIG headquarters.

The meeting was held in a very positive and constructive atmosphere. Four agenda items were first discussed in plenary session, and then in more detail by experts in each area. By the conclusion of the meeting, the two sides and the Chair agreed and signed the attached protocols on the following four agenda items:

- a. Medical aid to incurable cancer patients**
- b. Radioactive waste on the territory of Sukhumi Physical-Technical Institute (SPTI) and other organizations**
- c. Education issues**
- d. Telecommunications works**

During the course of the day, the Abkhaz authorities, as a goodwill gesture, released the four Georgian citizens (Mr. David Chichinadze, Mr. Komari Chichinadze, Mr. Kochia Akhalaia, and Mr. Koba Mania) who were detained in October 2001 near the cease-fire-line. The four persons were handed over to the United Nations Human Rights Office and returned with the Georgian delegation.

PROTOCOL 1

Resolution of the Third Working Group Regarding the Provision of Medical Aid to Incurable Cancer Patients

Approves the intention of the Parties related to the supply of anaesthetic (narcotic) materials to incurable cancer patients. Approves the elaboration of appropriate normative acts that

involve strict control of materials, and the provision of information to relevant authorities of the Parties through the Georgian-Abkhazian Coordination Commission.

On behalf of the Georgian side

M. Kakabadze

On behalf of the Abkhazian side

B. Kubrava

On behalf of the UN

L. Clark

PROTOCOL 2

Resolution of Working Group III Regarding Radioactive Waste on the Territory of Sukhumi Physical-Technical Institute (SPTI) and Other Organizations

Having reviewed the proposals of both parties, the Working Group III has agreed to conduct the following activities:

1. SPTI will specify the roster of radioactive sources and waste.

2. The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Georgia will:

a. transfer to SPTI modern radiometric and dosimetric equipment for conducting independent works with radioisotope sources, as well as the facilities for personal security;

b. provide assistance in ensuring secure preservation of radioactive substances on the territory of SPTI, and the construction of a technological site on the territory of the institute for the preparation of radioactive substances for transportation;

- c. take the radioactive substances out from the territory of Abkhazia, after the storage area for these radioactive substances is arranged;**
- d. consider the issue of inviting a specialized organization for removing two gamma-equipment with cobalt 60 (from 800 curie to 8000 curie) situated in SPTI and the Institute of Experimental Pathology and Therapy.**
- e. provide the Abkhazian State Center for Environmental Monitoring with mobile facilities for monitoring radiation on the territory of Abkhazia;**
- f. solicit the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency regarding the provision of technical and financial assistance for conducting the mentioned activities.**

On behalf of the Georgian side

M. Kakabadze

On behalf of the Abkhazian side

B. Kubrava

On behalf of the UN

L. Clark

PROTOCOL 3

Resolution on Education Issues

The Georgian side has submitted its proposals to the Abkhazian side for further consideration. The next meeting of Ministers of Education is scheduled for 22 April 2002 in the UN Sokhumi office, where the programme and methods of support of Gali region schools will be reviewed. Discussion of other issues is planned at following meetings.

The Working Group gives its highest assessment to the work already performed by UNHCR regarding reconstruction of schools in the Gali district. and supports its future plans for completion of these works (including possible repair of schools currently being used by CIS Peace-Keeping Forces). The Working Group also supports the school rehabilitation plans of UNHCR for other regions of Abkhazia.

On behalf of the Georgian side

M. Kakabadze

On behalf of the Abkhazian side

B. Kubrava

On behalf of the UN

L. Clark

PROTOCOL 4

Resolution on the Results of Telecommunications Works

The Working Group gives its high assessment regarding the work undertaken by UNDP [with funding from the German Government] with regard to rehabilitation of the system of telecommunications, and requests the Embassy of Germany in Georgia to provide funding for the next installment of these works.

On behalf of the Georgian side

M. Kakabadze

On behalf of the Abkhazian side

B. Kubrava

On behalf of the UN

L. Clark

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia

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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1462 (2003) of 30 January 2003, by which the Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) until 31 July 2003. It provides an update of the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, since my report of 9 April 2003.

2. My Special Representative for Georgia, Heidi Tagliavini, continued to head UNOMIG. Major General Kazi Ashfaq Ahmed (Bangladesh) continued to serve as the Chief Military Observer. The strength of UNOMIG as at 1 July 2003 was 117 military observers (see annex I).

II. Political process

3. My Special Representative, with the support of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General, continued efforts to build upon the positive momentum begun at the United Nations-chaired brainstorming session of the Group of Friends held in Geneva in February (see para. 3) with the ultimate aim of engaging the Georgian and Abkhaz sides in meaningful negotiations on a comprehensive political settlement on the basis of the paper on the distribution of competences and its transmittal letter (see para. 3). In this context, the follow-up of the agreements reached at Sochi (Russian Federation) by Presidents Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation and Edoard Shevardnadze of Georgia in March 2003 (see para. 5) constituted a positive contribution to the implementation of the Geneva recommendations. My Special Representative met with representatives of the Group of Friends in New York in May. She had consultations with President Putin's Special Representative for the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, First Deputy Foreign Minister Valery Loshchinin, in Tbilisi in April and in Moscow in June and in July and, likewise, with the United States Department of State Special Negotiator for Eurasian

Conflicts, Rudolf Perina, in New York in May. Senior representatives of the Group of Friends have agreed to meet again, under the chairmanship of the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, in Geneva in July. The Georgian and Abkhaz sides accepted invitations to participate in part of this meeting.

4. At the Geneva brainstorming session, three sets of issues were identified as key in advancing the peace process: economic cooperation, the return of internally displaced persons and refugees and political and security matters. Work on the substance of two of those sets of issues — economic cooperation and refugee return — was actively pursued by the Russian Federation and Georgia within the framework of the agreements reached by the two presidents in Sochi. During the period under review, three bilateral working groups were established, dealing with the rehabilitation of the Inguri hydroelectric power station, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons and the reopening of the railway between Sochi and Tbilisi. Upon request, UNOMIG took part in the meetings of the latter two groups to provide expertise. Representatives of the Tbilisi office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were also present during the deliberations on the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. The Abkhaz side participated in the consultations on energy issues and was briefed about the outcome of the other working groups. The Georgian side continued to stress the need to proceed in parallel on railway restoration and refugee return. Moreover, the Georgian side highlighted that the activities of all three bilateral working groups and their outcomes would best be discussed within the framework of the recommendations that resulted from the Geneva brainstorming session.

5. While the parties moved ahead on economic cooperation and refugee return, little notable progress was made on political and security matters, including the future status of Abkhazia within the State of Georgia, and the question of security guarantees. My Special Representative maintained regular contact with the two sides to explore the possibility of launching consultations on those topics (see para. 4). The Abkhaz side, however, continued to express reservations about the inclusion of the political aspects in any negotiations, based on its unilateral “declaration of independence” of 1999 (see para. 7). It also persisted in its refusal to receive the paper on the distribution of competences and its transmittal letter on the same grounds. In April and May, Mr. Loshchinin, President Putin’s Special Representative for the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, and Sir Brian Fall, the Special Representative for Georgia of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, separately visited Tbilisi and Sukhumi and found that the Abkhaz position remained unchanged. However, after consultation with the Russian Federation in its capacity as facilitator, my Special Representative explored Abkhaz readiness to participate, with the Georgian side and representatives of the Group of Friends, in a meeting on security guarantees within the framework of the Geneva recommendations. This meeting was convened on 15 July, and participants exchanged views on the issue and discussed procedural questions.

6. The United Nations-led Coordinating Council remained suspended, mainly because since January 2001 the Abkhaz side had refused to participate. During the reporting period, however, the Abkhaz side expressed its willingness to resume participation. My Special

Representative is consulting with both sides to identify an opportune time to resume the Council's work.

7. The efforts of UNOMIG took place against the background of internal developments affecting both the Abkhaz and Georgian sides. On 7 April, the Abkhaz de facto government, headed by Gennadi Gagulia, resigned, and on 22 April Raul Khadzhimba, the former de facto Minister of Defence, was appointed to succeed him. The Georgian side continued to be sharply critical of the ongoing campaign by the Abkhaz to acquire Russian citizenship, the functioning of the Sochi-Sukhumi railway and the flow of private, mainly Russian, investment to the area. The Abkhaz side, for its part, was deeply disturbed by statements of some Georgian politicians indicating that they had not completely ruled out a military option for resolving the conflict.

III. Operational activities

8. Daily UNOMIG ground patrols in the Gali and Zugdidi sectors continued throughout the period under review. In the Kodori Valley, four fortnightly joint patrols with Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peacekeeping force were conducted; those patrols had to be suspended, however, when four UNOMIG personnel were taken hostage on 5 June (see below). The Mission's activities in the Kodori Valley will not resume until a full review of its security procedures for the area has been completed. Likewise, operational helicopter patrols remain suspended as a result of long-standing concerns about security; administrative flights have continued along specially designated air corridors over the Black Sea.

Kodori Valley

9. The most serious incident occurred on 5 June when two UNOMIG military observers, one UNOMIG medic and their Georgian interpreter were taken hostage by an unidentified armed group on the third day of a routine patrol of the Georgian-controlled upper Kodori Valley. The four military personnel from the CIS peacekeeping force participating in the patrol were disarmed and immediately set free. My Special Representative and the Chief Military Observer worked closely with the Georgian leadership, which has ultimate responsibility for the safety of UNOMIG personnel, to secure the safe release of the detainees. All four hostages were released unharmed on 11 June following negotiations between the Georgian authorities and the hostage takers. The Georgian authorities have confirmed that, in line with United Nations policy, no ransom was paid and force was not used. Notwithstanding Georgian commitments to prosecute those responsible for the hostage incident, UNOMIG patrols in the area will remain on hold pending a full review of the Mission's operational procedures in the Kodori Valley and the introduction of more robust security measures. Given the urgency of resuming UNOMIG patrols to the Kodori Valley, those security measures will be introduced at the earliest opportunity.

10. With the exception of the hostage incident, the situation in the Kodori Valley was relatively calm. The joint UNOMIG-CIS patrols conducted prior to 5 June reported no change in the presence of armed personnel in the area. The dispute between the two sides over the legality

of such a presence in the upper part of the Valley continues. In the Abkhaz view, the armed personnel are troops and, as such, their presence in the Valley constitutes a violation of the 1994 Moscow Agreement (annex I). For Georgia, they are border guards and local reservists, which are not prohibited by the Agreement.

Gali and Zugdidi sectors

11. UNOMIG patrols reported the security environment in the Gali Sector as being generally calm but unstable, with some periods of heightened tension, often caused by criminal activity. During a routine exercise by Abkhaz anti-aircraft units in an area overlapping the Gali restricted-weapon zone, UNOMIG observed three armoured transport vehicles suspected of being used to carry weapon systems in violation of the Moscow Agreement. UNOMIG raised the issue with the de facto Abkhaz authorities.

12. Local law enforcement officials struggled to address the high level of criminal activity in the Gali sector. Six murders, seven shootings, one kidnapping, twentytwo robberies and one landmine explosion were reported. Major incidents included the following: on 1 April, shots were fired at the car of the Director of the Inguri power station, who managed to escape unharmed; on 16 April, unknown perpetrators hijacked a HALO Trust vehicle near Sukhumi at gunpoint and stole employees' salaries; in the lower Gali region, close to the ceasefire line, an Abkhaz customs officer was ambushed and killed on 4 May; on 14 May, Abkhaz militia shot and killed one of two individuals who tried to flee after being arrested for illegal possession of a hand grenade; a resident of a village in the lower Gali region was shot dead the next day after purportedly trying to escape the custody of a police unit from Sukhumi; on 7 June, four members of the Abkhaz security services were wounded during an ambush; during an attempted robbery of a house in a village near Gali city on 22 June, armed men killed the sister of the Abkhaz Minister of Information in exile and wounded two others; and on 25 June, a Georgian and an Abkhaz were killed during a shooting on the Inguri bridge.

13. Against this backdrop, Abkhaz law enforcement agencies conducted four stop-and-search operations in the upper and lower Gali regions. The most intensive operation was launched with support from the de facto Ministry of Interior between 23 and 29 May, principally to address reports about the presence of illegal armed groups on the eve of Georgia's Independence Day, 26 May. The augmentation of UNOMIG patrols during the period helped to limit the impact of the search operations on the local population.

14. Fewer incidents were reported in the Zugdidi sector, which was assessed as calm by UNOMIG observers. Three murders, two shootings, one explosion, three abductions, and six robberies were recorded. Zugdidi police reported the capture of members of two organized criminal gangs and the seizure of weapons and ammunition. UNOMIG observers were granted access to the Torsa camp, allegedly a training facility for an anti-terrorist police force, run by the Abkhaz security services in exile. Currently, UNOMIG patrols are regularly visiting the camp.

15. Frequent demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience posed a challenge for local law enforcement in the Zugdidi sector and hindered the implementation of the Mission's mandated tasks. Local residents held a range of protests on political issues and against the poor provision of essential services. On 1 June, internally displaced persons blocked the bridge over the Inguri River, the only official crossing point over the ceasefire line, to protest the reported extension of the mandate of the CIS peacekeeping force; the protest ended after discussions with Georgian officials. Another blockade was staged on 5 June. Local residents also blocked the exit road of the UNOMIG logistics headquarters in Zugdidi demanding that UNOMIG repair roads. The matter was resolved with the intervention of the local administration.

16. The quadripartite joint fact-finding group, which brings together the two sides as well as representatives of the CIS peacekeeping force and UNOMIG, continued to investigate incidents of violence. All parties regularly attended scheduled weekly meetings and responded promptly to incidents. Seven cases are currently under joint investigation. IV. Cooperation with the collective peacekeeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States

17. UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force have continued to work together closely, particularly during joint patrols to the Kodori Valley, in the joint factfinding group and at the weekly quadripartite meetings. Regular staff meetings at the working level complement the frequent exchanges between the Chief Military Observer and the Commander of the CIS peacekeeping force.

18. Georgian and Russian authorities are currently working to formalize the understanding on the presence of the CIS peacekeeping force reached between the Presidents of the two countries at Sochi (see para. 20).

V. Policing issues

19. In an effort to improve law and order in the Gali sector, and in doing so to address one of the impediments to voluntary return, my Special Representative has initiated discussions with the two sides on the recommendations of the 2002 security assessment mission (see para. 16). The central aim of those recommendations is to build the capacity of local law enforcement by coordinating and facilitating assistance with respect to training and equipment; the provision of advice to and monitoring of local law enforcement agencies; and the facilitation of cooperation across the ceasefire line. UNOMIG has obtained the agreement of the two sides with the recommendation that a small civilian police component of 20 officers be added to the Mission to strengthen its own capacity to implement its mandate and to assist in carrying out the tasks listed above.

VI. Humanitarian situation and human rights

20. International humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) continued to provide food and medical assistance to those most in need. UNHCR continued to

provide health care and other social assistance to more than 270 vulnerable and elderly persons in Sukhumi. The European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) visited Georgia in May 2003 to monitor projects implemented with ECHO funding on both sides of the ceasefire line and to identify needs possibly to be covered under the 2003 budget. In 2002, ECHO had allocated €1.3 million to support the most vulnerable in a programme implemented by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Spanish NGO Acción Contra el Hambre (ACH). ICRC has signed a memorandum of understanding with the de facto Abkhaz health authorities on the continuation of food aid throughout the region in 2003 for nearly 20,000 of the most destitute and vulnerable residents. With ECHO and Swiss funding, two NGOs — ACH and Première Urgence — continued their projects for vulnerable people in Abkhazia, Georgia, aimed respectively at improving food security and rehabilitating individual houses and some collective accommodations.

21. Efforts were also focused on the restoration of infrastructure and basic services. UNHCR, in cooperation with local authorities and beneficiary communities, continued to focus on the school rehabilitation of communal educational infrastructures. In addition to the 73 schools rehabilitated in 2001-2002, UNHCR is in the process of assisting in the rehabilitation of 10 more school buildings in Abkhazia, Georgia, including 6 in the Gali district. UNOMIG completed 8 of 20 ongoing quick-impact projects designed to improve conditions for displaced persons and also continued to repair roads and bridges to improve access for its observer patrols. The HALO Trust continued to perform mine clearance and mine-awareness training. The United Nations Development Fund for Women completed four public diplomacy meetings in Gali designed to provide a networking forum for women, and is conducting two training projects through local NGOs to strengthen the role of women in management and business.

22. Criminal activity remains a significant concern for the provision of humanitarian assistance, as exemplified by the hijacking and robbery of the HALO Trust (see para. 12 above).

23. The human rights situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, during the past three months remained precarious. The Abkhaz law enforcement agencies are too weak to adequately protect local residents from the high level of criminal activity. The United Nations Human Rights Office has increased its activities in Abkhazia, Georgia, implementing several projects on education and the media, to raise awareness of international human rights standards. It was noted with concern that children in the Gali district still did not have access to education in their mother tongue. Additional efforts to promote respect for human rights will be needed in view of the expected return of internally displaced persons and refugees in the process of implementing the Geneva recommendations and the Sochi agreements.

VII. Financial implications

24. The final implications of increasing the civilian police capacity of UNOMIG (see paras. 19 and 30) through the addition of 20 police advisers with training, management and monitoring functions would amount to approximately \$1,775,000.

25. The estimate covers a period of 11 months, beginning 1 August 2003, and also provides for 2 international and 11 national staff, as well as logistical support. A breakdown of the estimated costs by category of expenditure is provided in annex II.

26. By its resolution of 18 June 2003, the General Assembly appropriated an amount of \$30,709,000 for the maintenance of UNOMIG for the period from 1 July 2003 to 30 June 2004. The above estimate would be in addition to that amount.

27. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNOMIG and to add a civilian police capacity, I would then seek the additional resources required from the General Assembly.

VIII. Observations

28. The United Nations-led peace process received a welcome boost following the Geneva brainstorming session and the Sochi summit. The United Nations strongly supports these activities, which are aimed at enhancing cooperation between the two sides on matters of mutual concern and advancing, ultimately, towards a comprehensive political settlement. The important role of the Group of Friends in moving the peace process forward is particularly appreciated.

29. At the same time, it is regrettable that the core political issue — the future status of Abkhazia within the State of Georgia — still has not been addressed, despite the renewed opportunity to do so within the framework of the recommendations made by the Group of Friends in February. The paper on competences and its transmittal letter provide sufficient scope for addressing the justified concerns of the Abkhaz people in a satisfactory manner on the basis of international legitimacy. Both sides, in particular the Abkhaz side, need to muster the political will necessary to address the political aspects of the conflict. Only then can a sustainable and comprehensive settlement be found.

30. The recent initiative by Georgia and the Russian Federation to start a dialogue on the process of refugee return, on the basis of the 1994 quadripartite agreement on voluntary return (annex II), among others, is particularly encouraging. UNOMIG and UNHCR remain committed to helping refugees and internally displaced persons exercise their right to return to their places of former residence safely and with dignity. The recommendations of the joint assessment mission to the Gali district of November 2002 have set out an overall framework, but require further implementation by the two sides. The recommendations formulated by the security assessment mission of October to December 2002 include advice, in particular, on how to improve the security situation in the Gali district. In accordance with those recommendations, I recommend that a civilian police component of 20 officers be added to UNOMIG to strengthen its capacity to carry out its mandate and, in particular, to contribute to the creation of conditions conducive to the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

31. I strongly condemn the hostage-taking incident of 5 June 2003, which is the sixth such incident since the establishment of the Mission in 1993. None of the perpetrators of criminal acts against UNOMIG personnel, or those responsible for the shooting down of a UNOMIG helicopter in 2001, have ever been identified or brought to justice. This impunity needs to end. I remind both sides of their responsibility to ensure safety and security for UNOMIG personnel at all times. The CIS peacekeeping force plays an important role in the Mission's security; it is therefore to be hoped that an agreement on the extension of its mandate can be reached soon.

32. I continue to believe that UNOMIG plays an essential role in stabilizing the situation in the conflict zone and in providing a framework within which the sides can advance towards a comprehensive settlement. I therefore recommend a further extension of the mandate of UNOMIG for six months, until 31 January 2004.

33. In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation for Ms. Tagliavini, my Special Representative, Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, her Deputy, and Major General Ashfaq, the Chief Military Observer, for the dynamic leadership that they provide for UNOMIG. I also commend the men and women of UNOMIG for their dedication and courage in carrying out their duties under difficult and often dangerous circumstances.

Annex I

Countries providing military observers (as at 1 July 2003)

Country	Military observers
Albania	3
Austria	2
Bangladesh ^a	9
Czech Republic	6
Denmark	5
Egypt	3
France	3
Germany	11
Greece	5
Hungary	7
Indonesia	4
Jordan	7
Pakistan	9
Poland	4
Republic of Korea	7
Russian Federation	3
Sweden	3

Switzerland	4
Turkey	5
Ukraine	5
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	7
United States of America	2
Uruguay	3
Total	117

^a Including the Chief Military Observer.

Annex II

Cost estimates for the deployment of 20 civilian police personnel in the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia for an 11-month period beginning 1 August 2003

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Category estimates	Cost
Military and police personnel	
Military observers	-
Military contingents	-
Civilian police	565
Formed police units	-
Civilian personnel	
International staff	268
National staff	148
United Nations Volunteers	-
Operational costs	
General temporary assistance	-
Government-provided personnel	-
Civilian electoral observers	-
Consultants	-
Official travel	30
Facilities and infrastructure	154
Ground transportation	387
Air transportation	-
Naval transportation	-
Communications	70
Information technology	85
Medical	11
Special equipment	-

Miscellaneous supplies, services and equipment	57
Quick-impact projects	-
Gross requirements	1 775
Staff assessment income	67
Net requirements	1 708
Voluntary contributions in kind (budgeted)	-
Total resource requirements	1 708



The Abkhazian language and its place in the Caucasian family of languages

Dr. Philol. Khibla Amichba

"Our language is also our history.

There is more living illustration

of the peoples, than bones, weapons

and graves – it's their languages."

Jacob Grimm

The territory of Abkhazia was populated from ancient times, and the richest archaeological excavations illustrate this. From antique times the different information on the history of Kolhida, especially about Abkhazia, was compiled from original sources of Ancient Greece (Aristotel, Strabon, Timosphen, Klaudi Ptolemei and others) and Rome (Dion Kassy, Appian, Phlavy Arrian, Plyni Secund etc.).

By the Middle Age History of Abkhazia the valuable information is contained in the works of Italian travelers and missionaries (Arkangelo Lamberty, Juseppe Judichi (XYIIc.), Dortelli D'Askoli, Barbaro (Venetian diplomat (XYc), George Interiano(XYIc), Tsampy, Raspony (XYIIc.)and others); Arabian and Persian travelers (Masudi (Xc.), Ibn-Haucal(Xc.), Abulfeda (XIYc.) and others).

From ancient times, side by side with legends about Prometheus, who was chained to the mountains and the golden fleece, which was connected with the Caucasus, there were a lot of legends about an unusual polylingual of its inhabitants. About many tribes of the Caucasus is said by "Father of History" Herodotus. The Rome historian Pliny Secund left his information, according to which the Romans managed with the help of 130 interpreters in Dioskuria, that later was renamed in Sebastopolis /the modern Sukhum, the capital of Abkhazia/. Masudi, the author of X-th century, wrote: "There are about 72 tribes in these mountains, and each tribe has its own Tsar, its own language, which is quite different from all the others.,. Only Allah can count different peoples living in the Caucasus. The mountain Caucasus is a mountain of languages. "2

Nowadays, you will be quite right, if you call the Caucasus by the name "A mountain of languages" , in spite of the fact that both its languages and its speakers suffered greatly.

Today more than 50 languages are spoken in the Caucasus. Among them there are Indo-European (Russian, Ukrainian, Armenian, Ossetic), Turkic languages (Azerbaijani, Kumyk, Karachaevo-Balkarian), Semitic (Isorian) a.o.

The majority of the Caucasian languages are autochthonal /about 40/. They are divided into 4 groups: Abkhazo-Adygian, Nakh, Daghestan and Kartvelian.

Abkhazo-Adygian group in its turn is divided into two groups: Abkhazo-Abazian (Abkhazian and Abazian languages) and Adygian (Adygean, Kabardinian-Cherkessian languages). The intermediate position between them is occupied by the Ubykh language, which has already disappeared even in Turkey. All these languages, except Ubykh, are represented in the Caucasus.

Abkhazians are the autochthonal population of the Caucasus, whose ancestors lived on the territory of Abkhazia from the ancient times. The documents of archeological excavations testify diversified economy and versatile spiritual life of ancient abkhazian tribes- Apsils, Abasgoos, Sanygoos, Misimians and others. The name of the Apsils tribe has been preserved to this day in the self-name of the Abkhazian people - Aps-ua, and the Abkhazian's name for their country - Apsny. The names "Abkhaz", "Abaza", "Apsua" are the modifications of the same ethnonyms, which go back to one root (ps, bz). The terms "Abkhaz", "Mother-land", "Ancestor", "Soul" have the same root "ps", in the Abkhazian language the word "Mother-country" /apsadgyl/ means "the Land of soul", and the language of the Abkhazians /aps-shva/ - "the Song of Soul",

The Abkhazian language - is the native language of Abkhazians, which live in Republic of Abkhazia and it is also spoken in many countries of the world /Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Germany, USA and others/ by the descendants of makhadgers, which were exiled by force from Abkhazia in 19 century.

Nowadays Abkhazian language is represented in Republic of Abkhazia by two dialects: they are - Abzuyian and Bzypian. The Abzuyian dialect is the basis of literary language.

Abkhazian language has developed for thousands years. By the beginning of XX century it reached the highest level of its development. Some scientists think that this fact is connected with the writing language, which Abkhazians had long ago. Academician Klimov says: "If it is possible to prove, that Maikop inscription, dated by 12-13 centuries is interpreted in Abkhazian language as Turchaninov supposes, then we shall be faced to the most ancient written monument- on the territory of the USSR". As a fact, the epithet name Lasha /I q of XIII c./, which can be translated from Abkhazian as "Enlightener", may be considered as the first proved written word.³

The scientist and the teacher Machavariani wrote about the Abkhazian language: "The Abkhazian language is very flexible and sonorous; it gives not only the solemn tones, but it caresses an ear with the tenderest expressions. Both terrible sounds of the nature and the melody of the quiet wind puff, the streamlet purl, sorrow and joy, anger and kindness,- are fully expressed in this language".⁴

The Abkhazians were always very careful with their language, with their folklore monuments. For its development the young written Abkhazian language had a well-made "oral literary language", the example of which is the heroic epos of "Nartaa", the true stories, legends, heroic and everyday songs.

Together with other Caucasian languages, the Abkhazian language is referred to a number of well-investigated languages. From ancient times a lot of famous scientist-travellers from different countries visited Caucasus and paid a great attention to this language.

The first notes of real linguistic material in the Abkhazian and Abaza languages were made by the famous Turkish traveller Evlia Cheleby (1641). He made his notes in Arabian alphabet, "The Abaza language is very unusual and splendid", - he wrote. A little later I.A. Gueldenstaedt represented a very considerable material in Abkhazian language and made the first genetic classification of Caucasian languages. G. Rosen was the first, who paid attention to the scientific study of the Abkhazian language.

The first full description of Abkhazian grammar belongs to the famous Russian Caucasian investigator Uslar /1862/. Uslar's work was translated into German by Shiefner. Many works on structure and separate questions of the Abkhazian language belong to Marr, Charaya, Dirr, Genko, Deeters, Dumezil, Schmidt, Bowda, Dzanashia a.o. At present time the study of the Abkhazian language is very intensive held in scientific centres of Europe and USA. The scientist-linguists from Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Makhachkala, Nalchik, Maikop, Cherkessk, Sukhum and others investigate it.

The large work on the investigation of the Abkhazian language was made by Academician Marr. His works "About language and history of Abkhazians" /1938/ and "Abkhazo-Russian dictionary" /1926/ didn't lose their value. Marr appreciated the significance of the Abkhazian language for linguistic theory very highly:

"The Abkhazian language linguistically is on one of the highest rungs of human speech and among languages akin to it, occupies that same rung as English does among European languages. The Abkhazian language is more changeable new type. Dialectological wealth of Abkhazian speech, which was without writing till XIX century, is very valuable for the science with its material lighting many facts of the cultural history in the Ancient-East world".⁵

The Abkhazian alphabet was worked out by Uslar in 1862 on the basis of Russian graph. After that the Abkhazian literary language began forming. The graph of Abkhazian writing was changed many times. In 1926 an analytical

alphabet of Marr appeared. In 1928 - there was an alphabet on Latin graphical basis, in 1938 - on the Georgian basis and since 1954 - on the Russian one.

The working Abkhazian alphabet contains 40 signs, which can give 62 phonemes as well as in combinations and by themselves.

The Abkhazo-Adygian languages have the richest consonant systems in the world in spite of the fact, that they are very poor with the vocal ones. In the Abkhazian, Abazian and Ubykh languages there are only two vowel phonemes: (a) and (?) which can form other vowels (e), (o), (i),(u) as a result of assimilation and combining with half-vowels, which haven't phoneme meaning in vocabulary.

Consonant system of the Ubykh language is characterized by 80 phonemes, the Abkhazian literary language by 55 ones (the Bzyp dialect - by 67 ones). The peculiarity of the Abkhazo-Adygian languages is the presence of the whistling and hissing spirants and affricates. There are palatalized and unpalatalized, labialized and unlabialized consonants. In the Abkhazian language the roots usually contain one syllable (ab - a father, a-tsla - a tree a.o.).

The stress in the Abkhazian language is dynamic, intensive, but not fixed (a'la - an eye, al'a - a dog, a'cva - a dream, acv'? - a skin a.o.). Assimilation, reduction and combining are widespread in phonetic process.

The morphological type of the Abkhaz is characterized as agglutinative (with polysynthetism). The simple system of the names and complex system of verbs are very typical for morphology in this language. The Abkhazian language differs from the other Caucasian languages by the absence of declination, that is compensated by the verb structure. The number, locative particles are the same for both a name and a verb. The nouns are divided into two classes: a class of a person and a class of a thing. Common nouns have definite and indefinite, possessive categories, number and other grammar classes.

Adjectives don't differ from the nouns morphologically. Qualitative adjectives are put after the nouns (auau' bzia - a nice man). Relative adjectives stand before the definite word (alasa kasy- a wollen shawl). Comparative degree is expressed by the description (eiha ibziou - better). Numerals are characterized by the expression of ? person category or a thing category /adzy-one(a person class),aky-one(a thing class)/. There are 3 personal pronouns. The categories of a woman and a man are marked in the 2 and 3 person singular, and in the 3 person singular the category of a man is combined with a category of a thing. Personal pronouns have full and short forms /sara - sa - I/.

Pronoun-possessive prefixes are used in the function of possessive pronouns (s-napy - my hand).

Verb in the Abkhazian language is characterized by a complex system of conjugation and word-building. There are some peculiarities which depend on static and dynamic, transitivity and intransitivity of a verb. Transitivity and intransitivity of a verb is defined by a place of person class showing in the verb itself /for example a verb of labile construction: transitive verb "isdzakh'ueit" - "I am sewing smth", intransitive verb "sdzakhueit" "I sew".

The dynamic verbs have all the forms of tenses and moods. Negative affix is 'm' /sykam - "I am not here"/.

There is also a personal - class inclination, it means that the verbs are inclined by persons and by grammatical categories of a person and a thing.

There are some moods in the Abkhazian language: indicative, imperative, conditional, subjunctive, finite and infinitive forms.

The system of preverbs is very complex. There are preverbs only of direction /"aa" - to the speaker, "na" - from the speaker/ and the preverbs-bases, which are from the roots -a'-tza-la-ra -to go under smth, a-kha-la-'ra- to go upstairs/, a very rich system of preverbs in verbs is compensating by a weak development of postpositions.

Morphologically the verb can express the categories of causative, reciprocity, possibility a.o. There are no voices in the Abkhazian language. The position of transitivity of the verb to the voice is neutral.

Different tense forms in Infinitive with relational prefixes (i) and (z), which mean a subject and an object in dependence from

the verb and person, expressed in it, are used as preverbs.

Adverbial modifiers are morphologically expressed in a verb by means of verbal particles /s - the adverbial modifier of reason, sh - the adverbial modifier of manner, akh' - the adverbial modifier of place, an -the adverbial modifier of time/.

The qualitative adverbs are the verbal adverbs with suffixes /ny - ipshdza-ny – beautifully/. Some particular adverbs are represented without any special affixes.

In the Abkhazian language the postpositions and preverbs are used instead of prepositions in verbs. There are no conjunctions (relative pronouns "what", "who" "which", "when"), because the subordinate clause is absent in the Abkhazian language. The function of conjunctions are expressed with verbal particles.

There is a number of interjections in Abkhaz. They are: address /ua/, the interjection of blame /nykh-nykh/, motive /hai,amarja/, pity /gusha/.

The main member of the sentence is a verb. Besides a verb-predicate, there are also a noun and an object /direct and indirect/. There are not complex sentences in the Abkhazian language. Function of the subordinate sentences make verbal adverbs, participial and other infinitive constructions.

Vocabulary of the Abkhazian language mainly forms age-old root of the word and its derivatives. Nowadays about 400 words expose, they are rising to the old language condition /which ???? the natural phenomena, names of elements of wild flora and fauna, terms of relationship, numerals of the first ten and so on/.

Apparent specific character of vocabulary, which differs the Abkhazian from all the other Abkhazo-Adygian language, makes a rich stratum of navigation terms and it testifies the close contact of the Abkhazians to a sea /ag'ba - a ship, ashkhua - a boat, a-pra -a sail, azhvua - an oar /.

Onomatopoeia is one of the considerable way of word-building and is highly developed in the Abkhazian language.

Vocabulary is mainly increased by means of word-building and borrowings. Besides of many new Russisms, the most considerable stratum of borrowings make up the Turkisms. In the Abkhazian language they all came out from Turkish and then with its help Ara-bisms and persisms appeared too.

Intra-group lexical borrowings are related to the times of hegemony of Adyg feudal lords in the North-West Caucasus /adygisms are in Ubykh and Abkhazo-Abazian dialects /in the Abkhazian language "adagua - the Kabardian "dagu"- "deaf", Abkh. "apasa"- Kabardian "pas"- "early"/.

There are some difficulties to expose such borrowings because they are not clearly detached from their promordial common Vocabulary.

Side by side with above-named borrowings, the Indo-Europeisms are represented, they are especially close by their onomatopoeia to their old Indian correspondences: in Abkhaz "akata" - "net" -Old.-Ind. katah - "net", in Adygean "as'a", Kabardian "az'a"- "he- goat", Abkh.-'adzar"- kids - Indian "ajah" - "he-goat".

In common, a definite cultural tradition, of Romap-names is observed in Kolhida and in Abkhazia independently from times and ways of its penetration. So in II century one ruler's name was Julian, in the YIIc. - the region Lazica was ruled by Sergiy, in the VIII -Absyi ruler Marin was known.

The similar tradition of Abkhazo-Italian cultural and historical mutual relations was renewed in the Middle Age Period, when the Italian, trading stations were existed, on the East Shore of the Black Sea.

The question is, that in XIY-XY c. Genoese trading stations were in the following places: in Gagra /Gacary/, near the village Ala-khadzy /Santa-Sofia/, in Pitzunda /Pezonda/, in the region of Gudauta /Cavo di Buxo/, in Novy Aphon /Nicoffa/, in Sukhum /Sevastopoli/ and by the river Ingur /Sant-Angelo/. The most important Genoese settlement in Abkhazia was Sebastop1 /Sukhum/, which was protector's residence of all trading stations on the Black Sea Shore of the Caucasus.

All this testifies, that the versatile relations were never broken between Eastern Black Sea Shore and the Mediterranean, in particular, the Apennines. The historical phenomena always found its reflexion here, and first of all, in the language. The Abkhazian language preserved its wonderful archaic system and sounding and represents itself like an inexhaustible well of information of the Abkhazian ancient history.

At the same time, it is enriching and widening, and it reflexes the present day of the Abkhazians, being a state language of the Republic Abkhazia and a native language of the Abkhazians abroad.

The Abkhazian language is the language of Republican newspapers and magazines. Numerous belles-lettres, social and political, teaching and methodical literature for different educational institutions are published. Radio and local television programmes are conducted in Abkhaz. The State Theatre, Philharmonic Society and other hearths of national culture perform original and translated plays in the Abkhazian language. Schools, High educational institutions, radio, television, theatre, belles-lettres help widespreading of the Abkhazian literary language.

Many large epic works, novels and stories are created in the Abkhazian language. They are characterized, by an usual expressi-veness. The main works of the Abkhazian writers, short stories by Lakrba, novels by Gulia and Shinkuba are translated into many foreign languages.

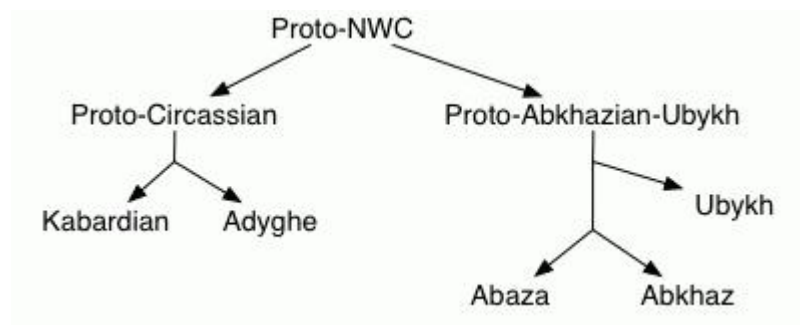
Besides the Abkhazians, many other nationalities are represented on the territory of Abkhazia: they are—the Russians, the Ukrainians, the Byelorussians, the Greeks, the Turks, the Tatars, the Armenians, the Jews and the others. They all

love and respect the Abkhazian language. Many of them know it perfectly; their children learn it at school, special teaching and methodical literature is created for them.

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Northwest Caucasian Languages

The Northwest Caucasian languages comprise five languages: [Abkhaz](#), [Abaza](#), [Adyghe](#), [Kabardian](#), and the extinct language [Ubykh](#). Within the language family Abkhaz and Abaza form the Abkhaz-Abazin subgroup, Adyghe and Kabardian constitute the Circassian subgroup. Ubykh is in various aspects specific and stands apart from these two subgroups.

The Northwest Caucasian Languages are spoken by more than 1.000.000 people. The vast majority of the speakers live in south-western Russia, Georgia, and Turkey.

After the October revolution the Northwest Caucasian languages in the Soviet Union became written languages. First a Latin alphabet was used. In the late 30's of the 20th century Abaza, Adyghe, and Kabardian adopted the Cyrillic script. The Abkhaz language however was written with Georgian Mkhedruli at that time. About 20 years later - in the 50's - Abkhaz, too began to employ a Cyrillic based writing system. Ubykh has never been a written language.

Kabardian and Adyghe have a very long oral literary tradition, an example of which are the well known '[Nart' sagas](#).

All Northwest Caucasian languages share a special 'hunter language', that preserves an archaic word stock and ancient religious ideas of the Northwest Caucasian tribes. This language was commonly in use until quite recently and might be still in use in some remote areas.

The sound system is characterised by a rich consonantism. The basic set-up of the system is the phonological opposition between voiced vs. voiceless aspirate vs. voiceless ejective obstruents. The widespread use of secondary articulatory features multiplies the number of consonant phonemes. Ubykh - the language with the most abundant consonantism - has more than 80 consonant phonemes. Abkhaz and Abaza have around 60 or more, Adyghe and Kabardian have 50 or less consonant phonemes. In contrast, the vowel inventory is very poor. All Northwest Caucasian languages distinguish only two vowel phonemes: an open and a closed vowel. By means of allophonic variation there are yet numerous phonetic realisations of these two phonemes, a fact that is reflected by the alphabets.

Some scholars even tried to prove that the Circassian languages don't have phonemic vowels. More recent analyses, however, have shown that there are at least two vowel phonemes.

The Circassian languages and Ubykh have two cases: The ergative case is used with the subject of transitive ('agentive') verbs. The absolutive case is used with subjects of intransitive ('factitive') verbs and with objects of transitive ('agentive') verbs.

Abkhaz and Abaza have virtually no case system, only an 'adverbial case' is formally marked.

The Northeast Caucasian verb is polysynthetic and has an intricate morphology. The verb is the absolute centre of the sentence and mirrors the syntactic structure of the sentence by means of incorporation. The conjugation is characterised by a split into transitive ('agentive') and intransitive ('factitive') verbs. The grammatical categories person, number, tense, mood, version, potentiality, comitativity, sociativity, reciprocity, and inferentiality are expressed on the verb. Agreement is marked by crossreferencing pronominal affixes. The verb can agree with subject, direct object, and indirect object at the same time.

The Northeast Caucasian languages are ergative languages. Intransitive subjects and direct objects are marked in the same way. Transitive subjects, however, are treated differently. The Circassian languages and Ubykh pattern ergatively both in case marking and in the order of the agreement affixes on the verb. Abkhaz and Abaza - due to the lack of morphological cases - exhibit the ergative pattern only by means of agreement affixes.

Word-order is predominantly SOV, the possessor precedes the possessed, the adjective usually follows the

head noun, relative sentences precede the head and the language has postpositions rather than prepositions. Possession is marked by prefixed pronouns on the possessed noun. The prefix pronouns agree with the possessor in person.

Source: [LLOW Languages Of The World](#)

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