# THE CAUCASUS

Presentation to THE DEFENCE COMMITTEE

Submitted by

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## 1. PREFACE

In a document marked 'Secret' prepared for the War Cabinet in November 1918, entitled **Memorandum On A Possible Territorial Policy In The Caucasus Regions** (Curzon Archive), section 7 reads as follows: 'It is undoubtedly a British interest that regions so near to those countries in the Middle East in which we have a direct stake should not be allowed to lapse into anarchy'. A month later the **Resolution On The Caucasus And Armenia** (GT 6512 -- Curzon Archive) begins with the statement: 'We desire to see strong independent states -- offshoots of the former Russian Empire -- in the Caucasus'. No doubt this last aspiration would accurately summarise current Western hopes for the Caucasus if just the words 'Soviet Union' were substituted for 'Russian Empire'. The question is: how to achieve these strong independent states? In 1918, exactly as in the post-Soviet period of the early 'nineties, thoughts turned to the advisability of offering recognition to the three Transcaucasian entities of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The world has now formally recognised, and established diplomatic relations with, precisely these three states, which, however, far from being pillars of stability, threaten to be sources of instability in an already troubled region for years to come:

(i) Armenia has been at war with neighbouring Azerbaijan since 1988 over the largely Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabagh, which was allotted to Azerbaijan by the then-leading Bolsheviks in Transcaucasia, the Georgians Iosep Dzhughashvili (aka Stalin) and Sergo Ordzhonik'idze, in 1921. This has resulted in land-locked Armenia being subjected to an effective blockade by Azerbaijan, whilst its supplies via the alternative route through Georgia have been intermittent both because of Georgia's own conflicts, which affect the rail-links (passing through Abkhazia and Mingrelia) from Russia, and by the Azerbaijani residents in south Georgia, who keep blowing up the pipeline which carries gas to Armenia from the North Caucasus -- the standard of living is appalling and the economy in ruins ; widescale outward migration is reported;

(ii) Azerbaijan has lost 20% of its territory to the superior fighting force of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabagh, whilst the leadership in Baku has changed hands a number of times from pro-Russian Mutalibov through pro-Turkish Elchibey to the present Haidar Aliev, former Party Boss in Baku and member of Brezhnev's Politburo;

(iii) Georgia, the least ethnically homogeneous of the three, has been riven asunder by a variety of ethnic and political squabbles, which have seen (a) the two regions of South Ossetia (in Soviet times a so-called autonomous region) and Abkhazia (in Soviet times a so-called autonomous republic) achieving *de facto* independence after bloody (but, in my opinion, totally avoidable) wars, (b) the western province of Mingrelia (from where the late president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, hailed) take up arms against the regime of Eduard Shevardnadze (former hardline Party Boss, member of the Soviet Politburo, notorious Brezhnev sycophant, and former Soviet Foreign Minister under Gorbache/v), and (c) the entire country fall into the clutches of armed bandits, mafiosi and drug-traffickers with the total collapse of the economy and the complete evaporation of even a semblance of law and order.

Britain in 1994 no longer has the same immediate concerns in Central and South Asia or the Near and Middle East that it had in 1918 because of which strong, stable states in Transcaucasia were deemed so crucial at the time. Thus, adherents of Alan Clark's politics of cynicism, so candidly revealed in interview after interview on tragic events in Iraq, East Timor and the former Yugoslavia and capable of encapsulation in the twin precepts of (i) 'Don't become involved unless British interests are directly threatened', and (ii) 'Sell arms to all and sundry, and to hell with the consequences for any non-Brit maimed or killed by British-made weaponry', need read no further. I wish only to address those who are affronted by the callousness of such an amoral philosophy and who share my belief that every government (and every individual) should strive to do everything possible to improve the lot of fellow human beings, regardless of whether such actions have any financial benefit to Britain.

The Caucasus stands at the interface of Europe and Asia, where the political ambitions of Russia, Turkey and Iran intersect just as much today as in the centuries of misery that their rivalries inflicted on the peoples of the Caucasus before Russia's brutal playing of the 'The Great Game' brought the area into her empire during the 19th century -- different regions succumbing at different times between 1801 and 1864. The Caucasus, as normally understood, is not confined to Transcaucasia, and, in the conviction that policy towards this (or any other) part of the world should be predicated on knowledge rather than ignorance, I wish to begin by presenting some basic information about the various people who live in the Caucasus, divided by linguistic group. This summary borrows from my contribution on the Caucasus to **The Times Guide To The Peoples Of Europe** (Times Books, 1994, 366-384).

## 2. The Peoples of the Caucasus

The Caucasus is home to: (a) the autochthonous peoples themselves, who collectively speak some 40 languages, divided into certainly three and possibly four language-families (namely: 1. Daghestanian, or North East Caucasian; 2. its clear relative North Central Caucasian; 3. North West Caucasian, all three families perhaps deriving from a single, very remote ancestor; 4. South Caucasian, or Kartvelian, which family has no demonstrable genetic links with any of the northern groups let alone any other language or language-family still spoken or extinct); (b) speakers of a number of Indo-European languages (namely: Ossetes/Ossetians, Tats, Talysh and Kurds, all four of whom speak languages related to Persian; Armenians; Greeks; Gypsies; and, of course, Russians and other Slavs including the Cossacks, who first appeared in the Caucasus area only in the second half of the 16th century); (c) a variety of Turkic-speaking peoples such as the Turks themselves, Turkmens, Karapapaks and the Azerbaijanis in Transcaucasia, plus the Karachays and Balkars in the NW Caucasus, and the Nogais and the Kumyks in the NE; north of Daghestan are the Mongol Kalmyks; (d) the Semitic peoples (a small Assyrian group in Georgia, and Jews, amongst whom the Mountain Jews of Daghestan speak Tat).

### South Caucasians

Of the four Kartvelian peoples the Georgians, Mingrelians and Svans live almost exclusively within the Republic of Georgia (Georgian *sakartvelo*, capital Tbilisi), whilst the fourth, the Laz, live mainly in their traditional homeland along part of Turkey's Black Sea coast, with only negligible numbers resident in Georgia. The final Soviet census (1989) gave a total population for Georgia of 5,400,841 of whom 3,787,393 were listed as 'Georgians' (≠ 70.1%). However, it has been the practice since around 1930 artificially to inflate the number of so-called 'Georgians' by officially classifying under this term all Mingrelians and Svans. Thus, not only have all censuses post-1926 been effectively vitiated but the true demographic picture for Georgia remains a mystery; equally uncertain is the state of first- and second-language knowledge among the Kartvelians -- there may be as many as one million ethnic Mingrelians, who traditionally live in Western Georgia's lowlands (capital Zugdidi) forming a buffer between the Abkhazians and the Georgians proper, though not all will necessarily speak Mingrelian. Nestling above Mingrelia in a mountain-fastness of unsurpassable beauty that is covered by a thick blanket of snow for over half the year lies Svanetia (capital Mest'ia), which prior to the calamitous winter of 1986-87 could boast a population of perhaps over 50,000, though later almost half of the residents of Upper Svanetia reportedly moved to the relative safety of lowland districts, where nationalists proposed they be resettled among some of the non-Kartvelian citizenry of Georgia so as to help spread knowlege of Georgian! Of the four sister-languages only Georgian has literary status. Under the Soviet system this meant that it was both written and taught -- indeed, as the chief language of a union-republic it could have served as the language of tuition from nursery through university for anyone educated at a Georgian-language school, as all Svans and most Georgians and Mingrelians were. Russian-language schools tended to be used by Georgia's non-Kartvelians, though the first few grades of schooling might have been in another of the USSR's literary languages, which explains why knowledge of Georgian among the republic's non-Kartvelians was never widespread. The clearly stated intention to make knowledge of Georgian universal in an independent Georgia coupled with the lack of concern in Tbilisi for the welfare of any of the republic's other languages helps to explain some of the difficulties that began to mar Georgia's moves towards independence as early as 1989.

Georgia's conversion as a state to Christianity by St. Nino is dated to the 330s, though missionaries had already converted some of the coastal Greek colonies in Abkhazia, Mingrelia and Lazica, which together roughly formed the land the ancients knew as Colchis. The invention of the unique and handsome script, of which three variants have been used down the centuries, is assumed to have occurred a few decades later in order to facilitate the dissemination of church-literature. A writing tradition of 15 centuries has provided Georgia with a wealth of literature, sadly little known outside Georgia itself, for all genres -- the study of Old Georgian is important for anyone concerned with the transmission of Biblical texts. The Georgian Church is an autocephalous branch of Eastern Orthodoxy, though during Georgia's subordination to Tsarist Russia its Church too became subject to the Russian branch of Orthodoxy. Some ethnic Georgians in those areas bordering Turkey converted to Islam at the height of Ottoman Turkish influence; today Muslim Georgians live primarily in the province of Ach'ara (Ajaria), whose capital is Batumi. Nationalists tend to regard adherence to any religion other than Georgian Orthodoxy as essentially counter to the spirit of being a Georgian. In November 1944 over 100,000 Muslims from the neighbouring border-region of Meskheti were deported to Central Asia. Their return has always been blocked by the Georgian authorities, and the ethnic status (islamicised Georgians vs ethnic Turks) of the majority is hotly debated.

Heavily influenced by Greeks, Romans, Persians and Arabs, who entered eastern Georgia in 655 and eventually established an emirate in Tbilisi that lasted until 1122, Kartvelian lands plus some neighbouring territory were unified in 975 under Bagrat III. The Seljuk Turks, recently arrived from their Turkestan homeland, attacked Georgia in 1065, and it fell to David IV, The Builder (1089-1125), to secure the frontiers, setting the seal for the Golden Age under Queen Tamar (1184-1213). Political power and cultural activity were soon extinguished with the appearance of the Mongols; many treasures, including manuscripts, were secreted in Svanetia. After this threat subsided, Georgia fragmented into small kingdoms and princedoms, which became prey to Ottoman Turks in the west from 1510 and to the Persians in the east. The Treaty of Giorgievsk (1783) with Russia led to the annexation by Russia of Eastern Georgia in 1801; Mingrelia followed in 1803 and the western kingdom of Imereti in 1804. Georgian language and culture were repressed for most of the century, and it was only the activity of such intellectuals as Prince (now Saint) Ilia Ch'avch'avadze (1837-1907) that bred a (renewed?) sense of national self-awareness. Independent under a Menshevik government (1918-1921), Georgia was forced into the Soviet Union by the decisions and actions of the Georgians Joseph Jughashvili (*aka* Stalin) and Sergo Orjonik'idze. Fiercely nationalistic, anti-Russian and adept at playing the system, the Kartvelians, though not immune to the Terror of the 1930s, lived extremely well by Soviet standards, and Georgian language, literature and arts flourished, the Rustaveli Theatre Company under Robert St'urua, the Sukhishvili-Ramishvili Dance Ensemble and the local film-industry gaining thoroughly deserved world-wide reputations. The waning of Soviet power was accompanied by a deplorable descent into chauvinism, which was calamitous in such a demographically heterogeneous republic (indeed shortly before his death Andrei Sakharov described Georgia as one of the USSR's 'little empires'), with significant minorities dotted around its borders.

North West Caucasians

This small group comprises Abkhaz-Abazinians, Circassians and Ubykhs, though no Ubykh has lived on native soil (centred around the Black Sea resort of Sochi) since 1864, and the language became extinct in October 1992 with the death of the last speaker, Tevfik Esencç, in Turkey. North West Caucasian territory once stretched from the banks of the Kuban (and possibly the Don) in the North West Caucasian plains across the mountains and along the coast of Abkhazia down to the frontier with Mingrelia -- toponyms hint at an even earlier presence further south in Georgia. The Russo-Caucasian war of the 19th century decimated these peoples, leaving merely a rump-population in the Caucasus and producing a tragic diaspora that remains almost totally unknown to the Western world.

Christianity, largely supplanted by Islam, never wholly displaced certain pagan beliefs, and a special affection for trees still survives. In the Caucasus itself neither Christianity nor Islam has today any significance. The traditional moral code of the mountaineer is strong among the North West Caucasians, Circassians being renowned for their honesty throughout the Near East -- in Jordan they form the king's ceremonial bodyguard. Respect for the elderly and closely-knit extended families are still the norm, marriage with anyone sharing the surname of either parent being forbidden.

In 1989 93,267 Abkhazians, famed for their longevity and love of yoghurt, lived in Georgia's Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (capital Sukhum, in Abkhaz *Aqw'a*), representing a mere 17.8% of Abkhazia's population. Across the Caucasus in Russia's Karachay-Cherkess Autonomous Region (capital Cherkessk) there were 27,475 Abazinians (6.5% of the population). There were some 125,000 Western Circassians (Adyghes), of whom 95,439 constituted 22% of the population in the Adyghe Autonomous Region (capital Maykop), most of the others living in the Krasnodar District, including 10,000 Shapsughs around Tuapse (Two Rivers in Circassian). East Circassians are divided between Karachay-Cherkessia, where they are termed Cherkess and numbered 40,230 (9.6% of the population) in 1989, and the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Republic (capital Nalchik), where they are termed Kabardians and numbered 363,351 (48.2% of the population). The North Caucasian administrative units were granted republican status by the post-Soviet Russian Federation. Circassian women have long had a reputation for great physical beauty and were prized in the Turkish harems. It is believed that over one million Circassians and maybe half a million Abkhazians live in Turkey and other areas of the Near East.

All three mutually unintelligible languages in the group are notorious for their fearsome phonetic and structural complexity. Apart from occasional word-lists going back to the 17th century, documents in these languages are no older than the mid 19th century, when first attempts were made to write Circassian and then Abkhaz. The early Soviets created four literary languages: Abkhaz (based on the Abzhwa dialect), Abaza (based on T'ap'anta), West Circassian (based on Temirgoi), and East Circassian (based on Kabardian). The first Soviet script for Abkhaz continued the Cyrillic-based version already employed, which yielded to a Latinate form in 1928 during the Soviet Latinisation-drive (the Georgian-Scot linguist Nikolai Marr having used his own horrible system in his 1926 dictionary). When most of the USSR's Young Written Languages shifted to Cyrillic scripts in 1936-38, Abkhaz significantly had to adopt a Georgian-based alphabet, which was abandoned after the death of Stalin in favour of today's Cyrillic-based variant. Abaza had a Latinate script created in 1932 but went over to a Cyrillic variant (different from Abkhaz!) in 1938. West Circassian used a form of Arabic script until replaced by a Latinate version in 1928, which yielded to today's Cyrillic-based orthography in 1938. Kabardian replaced Arabic with Latin in 1924, adopting a form of Cyrillic (different from West Circassian!) in 1936. None of the current scripts is user-friendly, and there is the possibility of a new reversion to Latin; ideally one universal alphabet should serve all branches of North West Caucasian.

[For details on the Abkhazians and their ongoing conflict with Georgia *vid.* fl3]

Christianity came to Circassia at the same time as Abkhazia, just as the Ottoman Turks eventually sought to convert both to Islam. Circassians had links with Byzantium and, from around 1175, trading and cultural ties with Italy. Circassia did not suffer as much as other Caucasian regions under the Mongols but was invaded by Tamerlane at the close of the 14th century, trade with Italy ceasing with the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. Population-movements following the waning of Mongol power brought Circassians further to the south-east, pushing the Ossetes eastwards in the process. The 13-14th centuries also probably saw the formation and settlement high in the Caucasus of the Karachay-Balkars, supposedly an admixture of Caucasian, Iranian Alan, and Turkic Kipchak stock. The Karachay-Balkars, though separated by Elbrus and divided into different administrative regions, share a common language, which was given a Cyrillic script in 1936 and is of the Kipchak Turkic variety, closely related to Kumyk and Nogai. The first contacts between Circassians and the Russians on their relentless advance southwards occurred in the 16th century when Cossack stations started to be planted as bulwarks against the mountaineers -- Ivan The Terrible married a Kabardian princess. Some date the start of the war against Circassia to Russian activity around Mozdok in 1763, but matters came to a head with the Treaty of Adrianople in 1829, when Turkey ceded 'her' Caucasian territories to Russia -- the Circassians never acknowledged Turkey's suzerainty and thus her right to hand their land to the Russians. The horrors of the war that then developed/intensified can be seen in the vivid and strangely moving contemporary descriptions of such British travellers as James Bell, Edmund Spencer and J. Longworth. Final defeat came in 1864, when perhaps half of the North West Caucasians (mainly Circassians, all the Ubykhs, and many Abkhazians, who were the only Transcaucasians to fight against Russian seizure of the Caucasus) preferred Ottoman exile to Russian domination, thousands perishing in the hasty, ill-organised exodus. Once fertile Circassian mountain-slopes turned barren in the hands of Slavs, ignorant of the techniques of cultivation. Remembrance of this shared tragedy conditioned the Circassian (and indeed pan-North Caucasian) support for the Abkhazians in the face of the renewed Georgian threat in 1989, when the Assembly (Confederation as of November 1991) of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus was formed. Volunteers from this semi-official organisation of sixteen peoples proved a crucial counterweight to the Georgian forces in the Abkhazian war of 1992-93. Both Circassians and Abkhazians hope for a large-scale return to the homeland from their diaspora-communities to help in both post-Soviet reconstruction and consolidation of their fragile cultures. The Confederation, which while incorporating some Muslim peoples should not be regarded as Muslim in orientation, has not been joined by the North Caucasian Turkic peoples, and the desire expressed by the Karachays and Balkars to re-establish states independent of their (East) Circassian neighbours, as a possible preliminary to unification, is yet another ominous sign for any future united and secular North Caucasus itself independent of Russia.

North Central Caucasians

This group comprises Chechens, Ingush and Bats. It is sometimes referred to as Nakh (or Veinakh), meaning 'people' (or 'our people'). The Chechens' self-designation is *Noxchuo*, that of the Ingush *Ghalghai*, that of the Bats *Bacav*, the better known designations for the first two deriving from Russian adaptations of names of two local villages (auls). Chechenia (capital Groznyj) and Ingushia (capital Nazran) together formed the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic before the break-up of the USSR, though they were separate in the early Soviet period. In 1989 the Soviet Chechen population was 958,309, whilst that of the Ingush was 237,577, of whom 734,501 Chechens and 163,711 Ingush lived in their autonomous republic, constituting 70.7% of its population -- Chechen villages are also to be found in Turkey and Jordan. No figures are available for the Bats, who reside in a single village, Zemo Alvani, in the Eastern Georgian province of K'akheti, where they all also speak Georgian; earlier they lived in the mountainous region of Tusheti, from which comes their Georgian designation of Ts'ova Tush. They number perhaps 5,000 and have been classified as 'Georgians' in recent censuses! Their language is unwritten, has been heavily influenced by Georgian and is destined for extinction, unless the Georgian authorities take steps to save it -- a fanciful scenario.

The various dialects of Chechen and Ingush are mutually intelligible, and yet both exist as separate literary languages. First attempts to write Chechen employed Arabic characters. In 1925 a Latinate script was introduced, replaced in 1938 by Cyrillic. A new Latinate version was introduced by the Dudaev regime in 1993. Ingush used Latin as a base for its script from as early as 1923, shifting to Cyrillic in 1938.

Fundamentally pagan, the Chechen-Ingush underwent some Christian influence from Georgia after the 10th century, but Chechenia gradually yielded to Islam (Sunnis of the Hanafi school), slowly introduced by Avars and Kumyks from the 16th century; it was only in the latter half of the 19th century that the Ingush were converted by Sufi Qadiri missionaries. The Sufi *tariqa*, a most conservative form of Islam, partly defines self-identity to the present day, and the organisation of the Sufi order coalesces well with the prevailing social structure, based on the all-pervading system of clans (*taipa*), which often cut across the Chechen vs Ingush divide. Khevsurian, Pshavian and Tush folklore in Georgia is replete with battles with the Kist's, as they term the Chechen-Ingush just over their border. Religious fervour combined with the mountaineers' love of liberty has defined relations with Russia (Tsarist, Soviet, post-Soviet) for over two centuries.

The great North Caucasian insurrection against Russian encroachment in 1783 was led by the Chechen Naqshbandi Sheikh Mansur. The Chechens were particularly fierce in their resistance during the long 19th century war, losing much of their forests to wilful Russian destruction in the process. Continuing resentment of foreign (now Soviet) control along with actual rebellions in the 1920s and 1930s resulted in their most recent tragedy. Falsely accused of collaboration with the Nazis, who were keen to gain control of the Groznyj (and Baku) oil-fields, the Karachays (Oct-Nov 1943), the Chechen-Ingush (Feb 1944) and the Balkars (March-April 1944) (plus the Koreans, Volga Germans, Kalmyks, Crimean Tatars and the Meskh(et)ians) were transported in their entirety to the wastes of Central Asia. It was as though these peoples had never existed, their territories disappearing from Soviet maps; most of Karachaia (not linked to Cherkessia at the time) and parts of both Kabardino-Balkaria and Chechen-Ingushia were bestowed by Stalin upon his native republic, Georgia, whilst the Ingush Prigorodnyj Raion went to North Ossetia. Teaching of their native languages during the Central Asian exile was prohibited. It was only in the late 1950s that these peoples (though not the Germans, Tatars or Meskh(et)ians) were allowed to return home by Krushche/v and their territories largely restored. Georgia, no longer with so eminent a Kremlin patron, gave up all territorial gains, though Karachaia was forced into union with the so-called Cherkess. North Ossetia, however, was allowed to retain control of its extra land, even though Ingush were permitted to resettle there. Many Chechens and Ingush are still to be found in Central Asia. Given this recent history, it is hardly surprising that the post-Soviet Dudaev regime took the earliest opportunity to declare independence from Moscow. The Ingush subsequently broke away from the Chechens, believing that Moscow would then view with greater favour their claims for return of their lost land -- it did not, and reunion with Chechenia is a distinct possibility; the ongoing dispute with North Ossetia has cost many lives since 1991 and is the greatest single internal problem for the North Caucasian Confederation, which counts both Ingush and Ossetes as members. The Chechens' territorial difficulty with Daghestan, another inheritance of the deportations, has been peacefully resolved. Relations between Chechenia and Georgia are complicated by the Chechens' unfailing support for Abkhazia and by the fact that Zviad Gamsakhurdia, ousted as president of Georgia in January 1992, took refuge in Groznyj as guest of President Dudaev.

North East Caucasians

Daghestan (capital Makhachkala) is indeed a veritable 'Mountain of Tongues', as the Arabs styled it. Multi-lingualism is common throughout the Caucasus but can take formidable proportions in Daghestan, where it has been noted that denizens of the highest areas usually also speak the language of the group living beneath them, and so on down to the lowlands. The indigenous languages, some of which extend southwards beyond Daghestan itself, are given below, with 1989 census-data in brackets -- where no figures appear, this is because the speakers, who may number anything from a few hundred to a few thousand, classify themselves according to the ethnic group of one of their other languages (e.g. 'Avars' include all speakers of both the Andic and Tsezic languages). Soviet literary languages are asterisked:

Avaro-Ando-Tsezic Group, comprising:

Avaric

- *Avar (604,202)

Andic

- Andi
- Botlikh
- Godoberi
- Karata

Akhvakh
Bagvalal
Tindi
Chamalal

Tsezic
Tsez (Dido)
Khvarshi
Hinukh
Bezhta
Hunzib

Lako-Dargic Group, comprising:

Lakic
*Lak (118,386)

Dargic
*Dargwa (365,797)
Kubachi
Chirag

Lezgic Group, comprising:
*Lezgian (466,833)
*Tabasaran (98,448)
Rutul (20,672)
Tsakhur (20,055)
Agul (19,936)
Udi (8,849)
Archi
Budukh
Khinalug
Kryz

Some Avar, Lak and Dargwa materials were written in Arabic script from the 19th century, but generally the literary languages were given (Latinate) scripts only in 1928, shifting to Cyrillic in 1938. The Tabasaran script, however, was created in 1932. Attempts to provide Rutul, Tsakhur and Agul with alphabets failed, though there seems to be a renewed attempt to write these languages today. The Udi, whom some scholars view as the remnants of the 'lost' Caucasian Albanians, were even offered an alphabet in the 1930s, although the language is spoken in only three villages (two in Azerbaijan, one in Georgia)! Before the Soviet period Arabic, Avar and Azeri were common *linguae francae.* The early Soviets tried to wean locals away from Arabic with its religious connotations by supporting the Turkic Kumyk in the north and Azeri in the south, but from the 1930s Russian has been the main inter-communal language outside the mountain-settlements, where there is strong adherence to the native tongue(s).

Islam came to Daghestan with the Arabs in the 8-9th centuries, and Daghestan, where the indigenous peoples listed above are Sunnis of the Shafe'i school, was a recognised centre of Arabic learning with some 2,000 Quranic schools upto the Revolution -- the Udis are, however, Orthodox (Armenian in Azerbaijan, Georgian in Georgia). Religious sentiment remains strong today, though the degrees of attachment differ, strongest amongst the Avars and Laks, weakest amongst the Lezgic sub-groups in the south. As in neighbouring Chechenia, there is a harmonious coalescence between Islam and the traditional organisation of a society based on clan and village.

The most celebrated period in the history of Daghestan (especially the Avars) was their great resistance to the Russians during the 19th century Caucasian War, particularly under the charismatic if unbending leadership of their third Imam, the Avar Shamil (b.1797 Gimri-aul, d.1871 Medina), one of the most successful guerilla-leaders in history. Dargho and Vedeno were his main bases in Chechenia, though forced eventually to Ghunib in Avaria, where finally compelled to surrender on 25 Aug 1859, after which the Tsar's forces were able to concentrate their full attention on the West Caucasian front. Had Shamil been able to unite Daghestanian and Circassian resistance in the 1840s, the outcome of the Caucasian War might well have been different -- the Western powers were too concerned with the Balkans in the 1850s to bother about events in the Caucasus (just like today!) --, but Christian Ossetia and something less than total commitment to the cause on the part of the Kabardinians in the central Caucasus meant that East and West Caucasia had to fight an uncoordinated and thus less effective campaign. Losing his eldest son, Jemal-Ed-Din, as hostage to the Russians in 1839, Shamil secured his release only in 1855 after carrying off as counter-hostages two Georgian princesses with members of their household from the Ts'inandal estate of David Ch'avch'avadze in K'akheti. Their months of captivity in Shamil's mountain-serail have been described by the French governess, Ana Drancy, and one can do no better than read Lesley Blanch's *Sabres of Paradise* for a compelling account of the entire war in Shamil's Daghestan, from which a deeper understanding of the outlook and moral code of the mountaineers will be gained. Reared in the Tsar's court and unfamiliar with the languages and life-style of Daghestan, Jemal-Ed-Din was dead within the year... Daghestan's anti-Bolshevik uprising in 1920-21 was cruelly crushed.

For all its diversity there has been little sign of trouble in post-Soviet Daghestan. Accommodation has been found for those Avar-speakers 'persuaded' to vacate Eastern Georgia by Georgian nationalists. There are reports of some dissatisfaction with the ever growing religio-linguistic pre-eminence of the Avars, but the main potential problem concerns the Lezgians. Their homeland extends from Southern Daghestan into Northern Azerbaijan (where perhaps as many as 130,000 plus 45,000 Avars reside), crossing what is no longer a relatively meaningless Soviet administrative division but an internationally recognised border between the Russian

Federation and independent Azerbaijan. It remains to be seen what the outcome will be of the calls for a united Lezgistan by the movement *Sadwal* 'Unity', though a rival *Samur* party evidently advocates integration with Azerbaijan.

Ossetes

The Ossetes are descendants of the Alans, related to the Scythians and Sarmatians, who in antiquity extended over Russia's southern steppe. Ossetic belongs to the north-eastern branch of the Iranian languages; toponyms testify to its one-time greater range (e.g. *don* is Ossetic for 'water, river'). Most specialists accept that the pan-North Caucasian sagas of heroes known as the Narts are of Ossetian origin. In 1989 the 597,802 Ossetes were mainly concentrated in both the North Ossetian Autonomous Republic (capital Vladikavkaz, Russian for 'ruler of the Caucasus'; formerly Orjonikidze), where 334,737 constituted 53% of the population, and Georgia. 164,009 then lived in Georgia, 65,195 in the South Ossetian Autonomous Republic (capital Tskhinval), which is divided from North Ossetia by the main Caucasus chain and where they formed 66.2% of the population in 1989.

The two dialects in the north are (eastern) Iron and (western) Digor; that in the south is somewhat distinct and has been heavily influenced by Georgian, which testifies to a long period of symbiosis. The precise date when Ossetes settled the southern flanks of the Caucasus became a point of heated controversy as nationalist fervour fouled Georgia's road to independence. The most absurd suggestion advanced by some Georgians was that the bulk of the Ossetes simply followed the Bolsheviks into South Ossetia in 1921; some (non-Ossete) Iranologists have suggested dates from the 6th century B.C. to the lst century A.D.; even objective Georgian historians accept that significant numbers have been in the area since the 13th century -- Queen Tamar was herself half-Ossete. Abuse led to clashes, clashes to open war after Gamsakhurdia abolished South Ossetia's autonomous status following a declaration in Tskhinval of South Ossetia as an independent republic in December 1990. Thereafter it became the norm for Georgians publicly to refer to the region as *Shida Kartli* 'Inner Kartli', *Samachablo* 'Fiefdom of the Machabelis', or at best *so-called South Ossetia*. The bloody war that ensued caused tens of thousands of refugees on both sides and so destroyed any trust South Ossetes may have had in Tbilisi that over a year after the ceasefire negotiated in the summer of 1992 and policed by tri-partite Russian-Ossetian-Georgian patrols there has been no political settlement and Ossetian leaders still call for a total break with Georgia and union with North Ossetia.

Being the one firm centre of Christianity in the North Caucasus (Eastern Orthodoxy came in the 6th century from Byzantium, but in the 17-18th centuries Islam was introduced to the Digors from Kabarda) no doubt conditioned closer relations with Russia than exists for any other North Caucasians with the shared northern neighbour. Herein surely lies the explanation for why the Ingush Prigorodnyj Raion was left in Ossetian control even after the Ingush returned from Central Asian exile. Ossetian (and Cossack) loyalties will be put to the test if and when the North Caucasus as a whole seeks to follow Chechenia's lead in attempting to break away from Russia('s Federation).

Azerbaijanis

Of the 6,791,106 Azerbaijanis in the USSR in 1989 5,800,994 lived in the Republic of Azerbaijan (capital Baku), where they constituted 82.6% of the population. There are at least as many Azerbaijanis living over the border in the north-western region of Iran; this division of Azerbaijani territory between (Tsarist) Russia and Persia was formalised by the treaties of Gulistan (1813) and Turkmanchay (1828). The now independent, former Soviet Azerbaijan has expressed no wish to unify Azerbaijani lands. Initially in favour of joining the Commonwealth of Independent States, membership was never ratified by the Baku parliament, though under the restored former Party Boss, Haidar Aliev, Azerbaijan seems (September 1993) likely finally to join. Lying along the Caspian Sea Azerbaijan (along with Daghestan) has a keen interest in the future of the caviar-trade. Three quarters of Azerbaijanis are Shi'a Muslims, the remainder, predominantly in the north of the republic, are Sunni of the Hanafi school. Fertility-rates, though high, tended to be amongst the lowest among the USSR's Muslim republics. Azerbaijanis are also less russified than other (former Soviet) Turkic peoples. Little seems to remain of the old clan-system.

The Azeri language belongs to the south-western (Oghuz) branch of Turkic and is close to Turkish. It became a literary language in the 14th century and was written for centuries in the Arabic script. Widespread as a *lingua franca* in Daghestan even before Soviet times, Azeri was actively promoted in the early 1920s, but this policy went into reverse after 1928 when pan-Turkism became a new bogey for the Soviet leadership. Azeri is, however, still known in Daghestan, especially in the south. The script was latinised in 1929 and became Cyrillic-based in 1939. A Latin alphabet has now been reintroduced.

The ethnogenesis of the Azerbaijanis is thought to be a mixture of Caucasian Albanians with various Iranian and Turkic speaking tribes (Cimmerians, Scythians, Huns, Bulgars, Khazars, Oghuz, Pachaniks), the consolidation taking place in the 11-13th centuries with the admixture of the new wave of Seljuk Turks. The Red Army put an end to Azerbaijan's few post-Revolutionary years of independence on 28 April 1920. When the Soviet borders between the Transcaucasian republics were established, Azerbaijan was given two provinces which had Armenian majorities at the time: Nakhichevan (capital Nakhichevan), from which it is totally separated by Armenia, and Nagorno-Karabagh (in Armenian *Artsakh*, capital Stepanakert); the Zakatala region, where the Muslim Georgian Ingilos live, was also placed under Baku's control. In 1989 the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic had an Azerbaijani population of 281,807 against a mere 1,858 Armenians, whilst the Nagorno-Karabagh Autonomous District had 145,450 Armenians against 40,632 Azerbaijanis. The Armenians of Karabagh took advantage of *perestrojka* to express their dissatisfaction with Baku's restrictions on their culture and called for union with Armenia. This led to an all-out war, which is still ongoing. The subsequent massacres of Armenians in and around Baku led to virtually all Azerbaijan's Armenians (sc. outside Karabagh) fleeing to Armenia (in 1989 a total of 390,505 Armenians lived on Azerbaijani territory) and vice versa. For a time in 1989 Georgians were publishing criticisms of Baku's treatment of the Ingilos (e.g. restricting their language-rights, refusing expeditions

from Georgia permission to visit archåological sites in the region) as well as charging Georgia's Muslims (in essence its Azerbaijani minority, which numbered 307,556, concentrated in the southern districts of Marneuli and Dmanisi) with reproducing at such a rate as to place in jeopardy Georgians' majority-status in Georgia. Not surprisingly, clashes occurred in early July 1989 in southern Georgia, which reportedly involved fatalities. These problems, though, were quickly overtaken by Georgian-Abkhazian fighting. The present state of relations between Georgians and Georgian Azerbaijanis is uncertain -- this is the area where the oil-/gas-pipeline running through Georgia to Armenia is constantly being blown up, a fact which suggests that the Georgians are either unwilling or unable to police the area effectively. On the other hand, the logical alignment between the two oldest Christian states in the world, Armenia and Georgia, seems to be frustrated not just by long running rivalries over such trivial questions as to which of their scripts is the older but by *realpolitik:* (a) Azerbaijan has oil, Armenia has nothing; (b) support for Armenia over Karabagh would weaken Georgia's arguments for retaining control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. A similar dilemma undoubtedly faces Russia over Abkhazia -- open support for the considerable Russian minority there, who sympathise with the Abkhazians (being equally alarmed at Georgian chauvinism), would render Russian retention of its own numerous colonies less secure, whereas to abandon Abkhazia completely would surely lead to rebellion across the whole North Caucasus, a danger that remains very real. What relations independent Azerbaijan will establish with its Georgian, Daghestanian and Russian minorities remains a question for the future.

Armenians

Armenian, though long regarded as a sub-type of Iranian because of the large number of Iranian loan-words it contains, was finally demonstrated to represent an independent branch of the Indo-European language-family in the late 19th century. Christian (of the monophysite Orthodox variety) since 301, Armenians developed their unique, angular script later in the 4th century and have enjoyed a continuous literary tradition ever since. A small group of Armenians were islamicised; they are called Hemshinli. Hemshinli in south-west Georgia and Armenia were exiled to Central Asia along with the Meskh(et)ians in 1944, as were a number of other small Muslim groups from these areas.

The present Republic of Armenia (capital Erevan) is only a tiny fraction the size of the land once inhabited by Armenians, historical Greater Armenia, which incorporated a large swathe of present-day eastern Turkey. Part of this territory was the home of the ancient kingdom of Urartu. Around 600B.C. Urartu was invaded by certain Iranian tribes and a people from Anatolia called Hayasa -- the Armenians call themselves *Hayk* and their land *Hayastan.* Within one hundred years Persians and Greeks were referring to a people they styled *Armina* and *Armenioi* respectively. Armenia had relations with Rome and Byzantium, but the people who were to play the most fatal role in the history of the Armenian nation were the Turks, who first arrived in the region in the first half of the 11th century. Their assaults on Armenian towns led eventually after the battle of Manzikert in 1071 to a mass-migration from part of the homeland to the province of Cilicia, which was to become the most important Armenian centre in mediåval times. Some Armenians went north to settle in the Crimea, southern Russia, Romania and even Poland. Armenia did not escape the effect of the Mongols, and from the 16th century Karabagh under the Meliks became a stronghold of Armenian culture until the capture of eastern Armenia by Tsarist Russia early in the 19th century. The creation of the nationalist *Dashnaktsuthiun* (≠ Alliance) Party late in the century was unwelcome both in Russia and Turkey. In 1895 the Turkish ruler, Abdul Hamid, decided on action and a series of officially sanctioned massacres were committed, Turkish hatreds being fuelled by added resentment at the financial acumen of an at least in part long urbanised (and Christian!) Armenian community -- this is what caused Gladstone to talk of 'the unspeakable Turk'. Many deaths occurred in fighting between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the wake of the Russian Revolution of 1905. Then during the 1st World War the Young Turk nationalists saw their opportunity to finish the job Abdul Hamid had begun and embarked on what the Armenians refer to as 'The Genocide'. It is estimated that over one million Armenians perished; the Armenian population of Turkey was in essence liquidated and the diaspora-communities in Syria, France, England, America etc... created. Turkey has never officially acknowledged, let alone apologised for, these incidents. Many fled over the border into Russian Armenia, where further misery (e.g. lack of food, clothing and housing) awaited. Independent for three years after the Russian October Revolution, Armenia had high hopes of recovering some of the lost Turkish vilayets, bolstered by what proved to be grandiose but vain promises from such Western leaders as Lloyd George, Clemenceau and Woodrow Wilson. In 1920 the British abandoned even the Baku oilfields, and Armenia was doomed to become prey to the Red Army, which was victorious in late 1920. Armenia was conquered a second time after a rebellion while the Red Army was otherwise occupied in gobbling up Georgia, the Soviet Armenian Republic being declared on 2 April 1921. With the loss of Nakhichevan and Karabagh, Soviet Armenia was even smaller than the already reduced independent Armenia had been. Armenia also lost the dispute with Georgia over the provinces of Lori and Borchalo in Georgia's south-west.

Armenia is ethnically the most homogeneous republic in the Caucasus (and indeed among the former Soviet republics in general), even though it also has the highest proportion of its people (even excluding the Western diaspora) living outside the republic. In 1989 the Soviet Armenian population stood at 4,627,227. Of these 3,081,920 lived in Armenia itself, constituting 93.2% of the total population, a proportion which will now have increased, given the inflow from Azerbaijan and the outflow of the local Azerbaijanis. The lack of internal division has not, of course, meant that Armenia is flourishing after the collapse of the USSR. The earthquake of 1988 levelled whole towns (such as Leninakan), and the war with Azerbaijan, concerning which all Armenians are of one accord, has resulted in a total blockade of supplies from Azerbaijan. Turkey is the western neighbour. Georgia to the north should have been a secure source of supply, but the Georgian railway-network to Russia was frequently blocked from early 1992 by Gamsakhurdia-supporters in Mingrelia, the Mingrelian problem being subsequently compounded by the effect of the war in Abkhazia. This leaves only a road-link (the Georgian Military Highway) through Georgia to Russia, which is not open at the height of winter, plus Iran to the south.

Given this highly precarious situation, it is perhaps not surprising that everything possible is done to avoid open disputation with the Georgians, where in 1989 437,211 Armenians lived (11,000 fewer than in 1979), concentrated in the south-west of the republic, though of this total 76,541 lived in Abkhazia (3,000 more than in 1979!). The Armenians have had difficulties with Georgian chauvinism, regarding such questions as the ownership of churches in the south-west, the ethnicity of Gamsakhurdia's local prefects and the number of hours their children are allotted at school for learning Armenian. Little public fuss, however, is made of these difficulties. Significantly, though, inside Abkhazia the local Armenians largely support the Abkhazians -- when in 1989 the local Kartvelians refused to have anything more to do with the Abkhazian State University, where they and the Russians formed the two largest sectors, and set up the rival 'Branch of Tbilisi University', the Abkhazians immediately created an Armenian sector to replace the lost Georgian one! If Georgia fragments, as it is shewing every likelihood of doing following the Ossetian, Abkhazian and Mingrelian conflicts, it is highly probable that the Armenians in the south-west will strive to unite with Armenia, just as the neighbouring Azerbaijanis will strive to unite with Azerbaijan. If Georgia miraculously manages to survive its present crisis, Armenians will no doubt seek continuing friendly relations with their old northern rivals...

Tats

In 1989 the USSR had a Tat population of 30,817, largely split between Azerbaijan and Daghestan. Their language belongs to the Iranian family of Indo-European, and a Hebrew-influenced dialect of it is spoken by the Caucasus' Mountain Jews, of whom there were 19,516 in 1989. Only this latter variety has literary status, the Hebrew script having been utilised prior to the Revolution, Latin from 1929, and finally Cyrillic from 1939. Tats are mainly Shi'ite Muslims, though Monophysite Christians are also found amongst them. Tats also live in Iran. Culturally and in life-style they resemble the Azerbaijanis.

Talysh

Between the 1926 census and that of 1989 the Talysh were classified as 'Azerbaijanis'. In 1989 21,914 (almost all in Azerbaijan) declared themselves to be Talysh -- in 1926 there had been 77,000. This means either that there has been an intense process of assimilation at work or that for some reason members of the Talysh community may have been reticent about re-classifying themselves after 63 years of indoctrination to regard themselves as Azerbaijanis (cf. a parallel problem for the Mingrelians and Svans in Georgia); a recent article from Azerbaijan suggests that the Talysh community may actually number between 200,000 and 250,000. The language is another member of the Iranian family and enjoyed a 9-year period as a literary language when it was given a Latinate alphabet in 1930. They are Shi'ite Muslims and live in the southernmost part of Azerbaijan (and in northern Iran).

Kurds

In 1989 152,952 Kurds lived in the USSR, two-thirds in the Transcaucasus: 56,028 in Armenia (part of whom are Yezidis, so-called 'Devil-Worshippers'), 33,327 in Georgia, 12,221 in Azerbaijan. They are Sunni Muslims and speak an Iranian language.

Assyrians

The Assyrians are descendants of the Aramåans and speak a Semitic language, which for a time at least during the Soviet period was actually taught in some Georgian schools. The total Soviet population in 1989 was 26,289, of whom 6,183 lived in Armenia and 5,286 in Georgia. They are Christians (Jacobites, Nestorians, Catholics or Orthodox).

Two points at least should now be obvious: (i) the phenomenal complexity of the Caucasus, and (ii) that if ever there was a place which, because of its rich patchwork of peoples, languages and cultures all dotted around an imposing mountain-terrain, was not a candidate for the arbitrary drawing of frontiers on maps (thereafter to be regarded by the membership of the UN as virtually God-given and thus forever immutable) as part of the creation of (nation-)states, this place is surely the Caucasus. Since the Abkhazian conflict is potentially the most serious in the area, insofar as it involves Russian directly (in a way that Nagorno-Karabagh does not insofar as it does not itself abutt Russian territory) in the affairs of a now independent neighbouring state (Georgia), for the mooted 12,000 North Caucasian volunteers who came to the Abkhazians' assistance are citizens of Russia, and since it has lessons to teach for the resolution of ethnic problems both in the Caucasus and elsewhere in the world, a detailed discussion of the affair now follows -- it is based on my **Abkhazia: a problem of identity and ownership** (Central Asian Survey 12.3, 1993, 267-323). However, as flfl4-5 can be read independently, some readers may prefer to turn directly to these, later familiarising themselves, should they so wish, with the intricacies of the Abkhazian problem presented in fl3. fl4 is substantially the document I submitted to Lord Avebury for distribution among the Parliamentary Human Rights' Group as an update on the situation to 18 March 1994.

## 3. The Abkhazian-Georgian Conflict (to Jan 1994)

The 1989 Soviet census reveals the following demographic picture for Georgia and Abkhazia, compared with that obtaining in 1979 (source: *Zaria Vostoka* 'Dawn of the East' 23 March 1990):

**Population of Georgia (1979 & 1989)**

| | 1979 | 1989 | 1979 | 1989 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Whole Population | 4,993,182 | 5,400,841 | 100% | 100% |
| 'Georgians' | 3,433,011 | 3,787,393 | 68.8% | 70.1% |
| Armenians | 448,000 | 437,211 | 9.0% | 8.1% |
| Azerbaijanis | 255,678 | 307,556 | 5.1% | 5.7% |
| Ossetians | 160,497 | 164,055 | 3.2% | 3.0% |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Greeks | 95,105 | 100,324 | 1.9% | 1.8% |
| Abkhazians | 85,285 | 95,853 | 1.7% | 1.8% |
| Ukrainians | 45,036 | 52,443 | 0.9% | 1.0% |
| Kurds | 25,688 | 33,331 | 0.5% | 0.6% |
| Georgian Jews | 7,974 | 14,314 | 0.2% | 0.3% |
| Jews | 20.107 | 10,312 | 0.4% | 0.2% |
| Belorussians | 5,702 | 8,595 | 0.1% | 0.2% |
| Assyrians | 5,286 | 6,206 | 0.1% | 0.1% |
| Tatars | 5,098 | 4,099 | 0.1% | 0.1% |
| Others | 29,116 | 37,977 | 0.6% | 0.7% |

**Population of Abkhazia (1979 & 1989)**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Whole Population | 486,082 | 525,061 | 100% | 100% |
| Abkhazians | 83,097 | 93,267 | 17.1% | 17.8% |
| 'Georgians' | 213,322 | 239,872 | 43.9% | 45.7% |
| Armenians | 73,350 | 76,541 | 15.1% | 14.6% |
| Russians | 79,730 | 74,913 | 16.4% | 14.2% |
| Greeks | 13,642 | 14,664 | 2.8% | 2.8% |
| Ukrainians | 10.257 | 11,655 | 2.1% | 2.2% |
| Belorussians | 1.311 | 2,084 | 0.3% | 0.4% |
| Jews | 1,976 | 1,426 | 0.4% | 0.3% |
| Ossetians | 952 | 1,165 | 0.2% | 0.2% |
| Tatars | 1,485 | 1,099 | 0.3% | 0.2% |
| Others | 6,960 | 8,374 | 1.4% | 1.6% |

The basic historical facts are generally recognised by both sides, but the problems arise over their interpretation.

Historical Survey

For all their curiosity the Ancient Greeks were peculiarly uninterested in the diversity of languages attested among the many peoples with whom their travels brought them into contact, all of whom were classified as 'barbarians'. Specifically, they have left us no evidence of the languages spoken by those tribes their writers named as residing along the east coast of the Black Sea, which they loosely termed Colchis, described by the Mingrelian scholar Dzhanashia (1988.295) as 'more a geographical than political term, and even then with uncertain boundaries,' though for Strabo (1st century B.C.) it extended roughly from Pitsunda (northern Abkhazia) to Trebizond (Turkey).

In the general area of Abkhazia a fragment of Hekataios (c.500 B.C.) mentions the Həniokhoi 'Charioteers'[1]. Skylax of Karyanda (c.500 B.C.) also mentions Akhaioi 'Achaeans', placed by Melikishvili (1970.400) around Sochi, to their north and yet further north the Kerkétai '(?)Circassians/Cherkess', though Kuipers (1960.7) queries any link between these ancient and modern ethnonyms. Strabo places the Zugoi between the 'Charioteers' and the Achaeans, and these have been identified with the Circassians too[2]. The Apsilians (gens Absilae) are first mentioned by Pliny Secundus in the 1st century A.D., whilst Arrian a century later introduces the term Abasgoi 'Abazgians', whom he locates to the north of the Apsilians (Apsilai), whilst to their north he places the Sanigai 'in whose territory lies Sebastopolis' (Kechaghmadze 1961.43), which is conventionally identified as Abkhazia's modern capital Sukhum[3]. Thus the Apsilians are to be located around

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[1]The etymology of this word is clearly Greek, viz. he:nia 'reins' + okʰos 'bearer' from ekʰo: 'I have/hold'.

[2]cf. Georgian △ik-i Abkhaz a-zax°a.

[3]In Abkhaz Aq°'a -- see Hewitt (1992a). Moving along the coast from Trebizond Arrian mentions the following tribes: Trapezuntines, Colchians, Drils, Sánnoi/Tzánnoi '(?)Zans' (N.B. the Laz self-designation is ch'an-i, the Svan term for a Mingrelian is mɪ-zän, and the parent-language of Mingrelian and Laz is known as Zan), Macrones (N.B. the Mingrelian self-designation is ma-rg-al-i), 'Charioteers' [sic], Zydreitai, Laz, and then the Apsilians. Procopius of Caesarea (fl.c.550) mentions a

Ochamchira (Greek Guənós). In the 6th century Agathias introduces the Misimianoi, who are separated from the Apsilians by the fort at Tibélos (modern Tsebelda).

According to Arrian, the Apsilians and Abazgians were subjects of the Laz. At the start of the 6th century, with its southern border at the River Ghalidzga, Apsilia plus Abazgia, Misimiania and the southern part of the territory of the Sanigai were still dependants of the Laz Kingdom (Anchabadze 1959.6-7) or Lazika, better known in Georgian sources as the Kingdom of Egrisi, the older name of Mingrelia, which itself was in a state of formal vassalage to Byzantium. Christianity was introduced by Justinian (543-6). The mediaeval Georgian Chronicles (kartlis tskhovreba) already speak of the Abkhazians (apxaz-eb-i). With Byzantium's power on the wane in the late 8th century, Leon II, potentate of the Abkhazians, took his opportunity and 'seized (da-i-p'q'r-a) Abkhazia and Egrisi as far as the Likhi [Mountains] and took the title "King of the Abkhazians"' (Chronicles I p.251 of Qauchishvili's 1955 edition). The resulting Kingdom of Abkhazia, comprising the whole of today's Western Georgia, lasted for roughly 200 years until the accession of Bagrat III in 975 produced the first king of a united Georgia. From c.780 to 975 the term 'Abkhazia' was generally used to refer to the whole of Western Georgia. During the period while Georgia remained united (up to c.1245) this term became synonymous with sa-kart-v-el-o 'Georgia', after which time it resumed its original, restricted sense.

Central power in Georgia collapsed with the appearance of the Mongols in the 13th century, who caused the country to split into two kingdoms, which 'in their turn fragmented into smaller political units, constituting sovereign princedoms [Georgian samtavroebi]. At the close of the 13th century Georgia as a whole represented a conglomeration of such "princedoms"' (Anchabadze 1959.234). In the 14th century the Mingrelian prince Giorgi Dadiani acquired the southern half of Abkhazia, restricting the Abkhazian rulers, the Shervashidzes (in Abkhazian Chachba), to the north of their domains. Around this period a portion of the population crossed via the Klukhor Pass to become today's Abazinians in the North Caucasus (Georgian Encyclopædia vol.1 p.11). Eventually at the close of the 14th century the whole of Abkhazia became vassal of the princedom called Sabediano (essentially Mingrelia), even if 'Shervashidze did not obey all the Dadiani commandments'[4]. From the early 16th century Abkhazia begins to be mentioned as an independent entity; during this century the Ottoman Turks introduced Islam. The Italian missionary, Lamberti, who lived in Mingrelia from 1633 to 1653, puts its border with Abkhazia at the River Kodor (1938.5).

Taking advantage of a weakening Mingrelia in the 1680s, the Shervashidzes extended their southern border to the River Ingur and strengthened their hold over the territory by increasing the Abkhazian population there (Anchabadze 1959.297). In 1705 three Shervashidze brothers divided up the territory, one taking the north (from Gagra to the Kodor), the second the central Abȼwa region (from the Kodor to the Ghalidzga -- N.B. A-bȼ-wa means 'the-central-people'), and the third, Murzaq'an, the southern part (from the Ghalidzga to the Ingur), and so this province, which is slightly larger than the modern Gali District, became known as Samurzaqano (Georgian Encyclopædia vol.9 p.37).

In 1810 Abkhazia came under the protection of Tsarist Russia -- Eastern Georgia had been annexed in 1801, Mingrelia followed in 1803 and the western province of Imeretia in 1804. Both Abkhazia and Mingrelia continued

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tribe Broukʰoi to the north of the Abazgians who have been identified with the Ubykhs (cf. Dumézil 1965.15), whose self-designation is t°ɪx (though this has been challenged by Christol 1987.219). All references in the classical authors to tribes in the region have been gathered and translated into Russian by Gulia (1986.215-255).

[4]The chronicler is Egnatashvili. All references to Abkhazians and Abkhazia in mediæval Georgian sources have been gathered and put into Russian by G. Amichba either without Georgian original (1986) or including it (1988). See the latter (pp.112-3) for this quote.

to administer their own provinces until they were taken under full Russian control in 1864, when the war in the North Caucasus ended in Russia's favour, and 1857 respectively[5]. A number of administrative regions were established in 1810 and altered in various ways thereafter. From 1864 to the 1866 because of Abkhazian rebellion against land-reform Abkhazia was styled the Sukhum Military Department, consisting of the Bzyp, Sukhum, Ab¢wa Districts (Russian okrugi) plus the prefectorates (Russ. pristavstva) of Tsebelda and Samurzaqano, all under the control of the Governor-General of Kutaisi (capital of Imeretia in Western Georgia). In 1866 these prefectorates were abolished, and four new districts were created within the Sukhum Military Department. Another reform was introduced in 1868 when this Department was split into the regions of Pitsunda (from Gagra to the Kodor) and Ochamchira (from the Kodor to the Ingur). In 1883 the Military Department was downgraded and renamed a Military District, which from 1903 to 1906 was made directly subservient to the Russian authorities responsible for the Caucasus and based in Tbilisi. From 1904 to 1917 Gagra and its environs were re-assigned to the Sochi District of the Black Sea Province. During the first eight decades of the 19th century it is estimated (Dzidzaria 1982) that over 120,000 Abkhazians migrated or were expelled to the Ottoman Empire, especially in 1864 and 1877-8 in the wake of the Russo-Turkish war[6].

A Soviet commune was established in Abkhazia in 1918 but lasted for only 40 days, when the Mensheviks, who had come to power in Tbilisi, brought Abkhazia under their control. Soviet power was re-established on 4th March 1921, and the Abkhazian Soviet Socialist Republic was recognised by Georgia's revolutionary committee on 21st May. On 16th December a special 'contract of alliance' was signed between Abkhazia and Georgia. On 13th December 1922 Abkhazia (along with Georgia) entered the Transcaucasian Federation. In February 1931 Abkhazia lost its status of a treaty-republic *associated with* Georgia to become a mere autonomous republic *within* Georgia, the position it still officially holds.

The Argument

The Georgian position is quite simple, not to say simplistic, namely that any territory included within the current borders of (Soviet) Georgia is indisputably Georgian land, so that virtually all articles that have dealt with the problem of Abkhazia since the latest troubles erupted in 1989 have ritualistically described Abkhazia as either 'an indivisible part of Georgia'[7] or as 'Georgian territory from earliest times' [8]. The Abkhazian position is that, while (a) they have lived as neighbours to the Kartvelians

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[5]Samurzaqano was taken under Russian control in 1845 because of Abkhaz-Mingrelian quarrelling over rights to the area (Saxokia 1985.390).

[6]If one includes Abazinians and the whole Ubykh nation, the figure reaches 180,000 (Lakoba 1990.40, quoting Dzidzaria 1982). Numerous descendants of those who suffered this Maxadzhirstvo 'exile' live today all over what was then the Ottoman Empire, principally though in Turkey, where, apart from the Ubykhs, they have with a greater or less degree of success retained their language(s) and culture(s).

[7]Georgian sakartvelos ganuq'opeli nac'ili.

[8]Geo. jirjveli kartuli t'erit'oria. Indeed, there are indications that Georgia would like to extend its borders into Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia to incorporate those areas noted on Map 1 by dotted lines. This map was included in the publicity-material for the Rustaveli Symposium held in Finland (11-12 April 1991, Tarku) and was no doubt the one shown by Zviad Gamsakhurdia to a visiting foreign correspondent from Moscow in July 1989 (personal communication).

(specifically the Mingrelians and Svans) for millennia, (b) they have at times decided to join forces with their neighbours (specifically the Mingrelians) in the face of common external threats (e.g. Arabs, Turks, etc..), and (c) they share with the Kartvelians aspects of what might be called general Caucasian culture, nevertheless they remain a distinct North West Caucasian people, occupying the southern reaches of what was once (viz. up to 1864) a common N.W. Caucasian homeland, so that they resent recent Kartvelian encroachment on their land, which has been accompanied by repeated attempts to georgianise/kartvelianise them. They see today the main threat to the continuing viability of their language and culture as coming from Tbilisi (not Moscow), which leads them to conclude that their territorial independence has to be re-established either as a separate and full republic within what is now the CIS or as a constituent of some Mountain Caucasian Republic, where they would share their fate with other North Caucasian peoples[9]. Details of the argument are now examined.

(i) The Historical Settlement of Abkhazia

The Abkhazians, not unreasonably, see the classical ethnonym Apsilian as a Graeco-Roman attempt to render their self-designation aps-wa, whilst the classical Abazgians are conventionally viewed as the ancestors of today's Abazinians, whose self-designation is abaza and who lived somewhere in Abkhazia prior to their 14th century migration north-eastwards. The classical Sanigai are identified with the tribe/people called in Abkhazian a-saj (plural a-saj-k$^{w}$a), who once lived around the north of the territory. The Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi visited the region in the 1640s and has left us a sample of the language he ascribed to the 'Sadzian Abazas' (Puturidze 1971.107) -- it is clearly Ubykh (located around modern Sochi). As for the Misimians, they have been connected with the Abkhazian clan Marshania, whose ancestral fiefdom incorporated Tsebelda (cf. Anchabadze 1959.11-16; 1964.169-183). Stress is laid on the fact that it was only after the tragedy of the mass-migrations in the 19th century that non-Abkhazians began to settle in any significant numbers in Abkhazia, and even so Abkhazians remained in a majority until at the earliest (see section ii below) the 1926 census. As late as 1886 the breakdown of the permanent population was: Abkhazians 58,961, Mingrelians 3,474, Georgians 515, Russians 972, Armenians 1,337, Estonians 637, Greeks 2,056, Others 1,460[10]. Subsequent censuses (prior to 1979) present the following picture for the three largest ethnic groups:

**Demographic changes in Abkhazia (1897-1970)**

| | 1897 | 1926 | 1939 | 1959 | 1970 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Abkhazians | 58,697 | 55,918 | 56,147 | 61,197 | 77,276 |
| Kartvelians | 25,875 | 67,494 | 91,067 | 158,221 | 199,595 |
| Russians | 5,135 | 20,456 | 60,201 | 86,715 | 92,889 |

At least two strategies have been adopted by the Kartvelians when advancing arguments in support of their contention that the land belongs to them. The less objectionable accepts that, while Abkhazians may have age-old rights in Abkhazia, Kartvelians nevertheless not only possess the status of co-aboriginals but have always formed the majority-population, although this latter assertion is immediately faced with the problematic evidence contained in the population-figures just quoted. The wilder stance denies the Abkhazians any presence in Abkhazia until at most 500 years ago. Strategy-(a) would perhaps grudgingly allow the correlations Abazgians ? Abazinians, Apsilians ? Abkhazians but would follow Eusebius of Caesarea (c.260-340) in seeing an equation between the Sanigai and the Sannoi (Dzhanashia 1959.9-11), which latter people everyone accepts were Kartvelians, despite the

[9]Not necessarily Muslim peoples. It has been part of the Kartvelian campaign to try to tar the Abkhazians with the brush of Islamic fundamentalism, though, as the 'Father of Abkhaz Literature' D. Gulia wrote in his autobiography: 'We Abkhazians are equally cool to both Islam and Christianity.'

[10]The source is *Svod statisticheskix dannyx o naselenii Zakavkazskogo kraja, izvlechennyx iz posemejnyx spiskov 1886* , Tiflis 1893.

geographical distance separating these two tribes according to the classical authors, and then conclude that 'the coastal strip of Western Georgia was entirely inhabited by Georgian tribes' (Kechaghmadze 1961.12, quoted by Gunba 1989.6). As for the Misimians, classicist Simon Qauxchishvili had suggested as early as 1936 (p.174) that they were a Svan tribe -- the Svans' self-designation is mu-shwän. However, Qauxchishvili's over-enthusiasm for detecting Kartvelian roots is illustrated by his 1965 statement (p.28) that the Greek Hǝniokhoi was Kartvelian in its etymology (cf. Footnote 7)!

The notorious strategy-(b) was proposed in the late 1940s in the journal *mnatobi* 'Luminary' by Pavle Ingoroqva, who then repeated the argument as chapter 4 of his monumental *giorgi merchule* (1954). In short he tried to argue that the 'Abkhazians' referred to in mediæval Georgian sources had been a Kartvelian tribe who had no genetic affiliation to the Abkhazians of today. These last, he claimed, migrated from the North Caucasus only in the 17th century, displacing the Kartvelians resident there and adopting the ethnonym of the dislodged population. In partial support of this extraordinary theory he adduced the testimony of Evliya Çelebi to the effect that the Abkhazians of his day were speakers of Mingrelian[11]. Ingoroq'va's theory was favourably received in print by (amongst others) Qauxchishvili and phonetician Giorgi Axvlediani[12]. Though Ingoroqva was discredited when the anti-Abkhazian policy of 1933-53 was reversed, it is essential to mention this distortion of history here, because his ideas are being enthusiastically re-disseminated by certain individuals. In *lit'erat'uruli sakartvelo* 'Literary Georgia' (21 April 1989) critic Rostom Chxeidze published a lavish praise of Ingoroqva, urging his academic re-habilitation for his 'contribution to the study of the history of Western Georgia'. Gamsakhurdia himself in the unofficial *Letopis' 4* 'Chronicle 4' (1989), a pamphlet instructing the Mingrelians how to conduct anti-Abkhazian agitation, urged them to read Ingoroqva to learn how they are the true inheritors of the territory of Abkhazia. Again in the paper *kartuli pilmi* 'Georgian Film' (6 Sept 1989) Gamsakhurdia sought to lecture the late A. Sakharov on how the Abkhazians had come to Abkhazia only '2-3 centuries ago'! In a two-part article published over the New Year 1989-90 in the paper *saxalxo ganatleba* 'Popular Education' the Svan linguist, Aleksandre Oniani, strove to buttress the Ingoroqva hypothesis, even though his date for the Abkhazians' arrival on 'Georgian' soil was 400-500 years ago, presumably because he knew that Çelebi's text when correctly translated does not support a 17th century influx[13]. And finally historian Prof. Mariam Lortkipanidze in 'Literary Georgia' (16 Feb. 1990) dignifies Ingoroqva by describing him as the author of one of three 'scholarly' [sic!] theories on the ethno-genesis of the Abkhazians. Although Lortkipanidze makes it clear that she herself does not subscribe to the Ingoroqva view, she still states: 'It is precisely from the 17th century that there appear the first reports of the existence of a spoken language different from Georgian (Mingrelian) to the north of the R. Kodor.' Perhaps Lortkipanidze is ignorant of the existence of the travel-diary of one Johannes de Galonifontibus, who passed through the Caucasus in 1404 and wrote: 'Beyond these [Circassians] is Abkhazia, a small hilly country...They have their own language...To the east of them, in the direction of Georgia, lies the country called Mingrelia...They have their own language...Georgia is to the east of this country. Georgia is not an integral whole...They have their own language' (Tardy 1978). However that may be, Lortkipanidze most certainly was and is

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[11]Those Southern Abkhazians living alongside Mingrelians have tended to be bilingual in this language, and Çelebi's text actually supports an identical state of affairs for his day too, when he says that the Southern Abkhazians also spoke Mingrelian. Ingoroqva's mistranslation is ascribed by Anchabadze (1959.295) to Çelebi's Russian translator, F. Brun.

[12]A variant has now been proposed by Academician Tamaz Gamqrelidze in the journal *Macne* (2, 1991, pp. 7-16). For a detailed rebuttal see Hewitt (1992).

[13]For a full discussion with counter-arguments see Hewitt (1992&1993).

aware that the great Georgian queen Tamar (1184-1213) gave the nick-name 'Lasha' to her son Giorgi, which term the Georgian Chronicles interpret as 'enlightener of the world in the language of the Apsars.' In Abkhaz the word for 'bright' is a-la€a, which surely suggests that 'Apsar' is an attempted rendition of aps-wa[14].

(ii) Samurzaqano

Given what was said above about Abkhazia's historically fluctuating southern border, it might have been expected that a specific border-issue would have developed over the possession of Samurzaqano (largely today's Gali District). Perhaps because the question of Abkhazia is an all-or-nothing struggle, no particular arguments currently centre around this southern province, but this has not always been the case, and the one-time debate over the Abkhazian vs. Mingrelian occupation of Samurzaqano (and of Abkhazia in general) is a convenient bridge between the problems of history and georgianisation.

In 1877 the Georgian educationalist and writer, Iakob Gogebashvili, addressed a series of newspaper-articles (republished in volume I of his collected works in 1952, pp. 90-120) to the theme 'Who should be settled in Abkhazia?' The last wave of Abkhazian migration to Turkey had just occurred, and Gogebashvili was moved in view of the fact that 'Abkhazia will never again be able to see its own children' (p.90) to ask who should be sent in as 'colonisers'[15]. Because of the extent of malarial marshes (since drained) 'to which the Abkhazians had become acclimatised over many centuries in their own region' (p.92) Gogebashvili argued that the obvious colonisers should consist of Mingrelians, since the climate in their territory was most similar to that prevailing in Abkhazia. In addition they were the most adept of the Kartvelians at adapting to new conditions, there was a shortage of land in Mingrelia, already in Sukhum and Ochamchira they had gained control of commerce, and finally 'the Mingrelians by themselves would rush to Abkhazia, when in order to settle other nationalities there the use of artificial means is necessary' (p.98)[16]. Confirming this when writing in 1903 and referring to Abkhazia's central region, leading Mingrelian intellectual, Tedo Saxokia, speaks of an increase in local commercial activity 'especially after the Mingrelians began to flood into the district...following the [Russo-Turkish] war' (1985.401).

However, in the course of his discussion Gogebashvili appends a revealing comment to his mention of the residents of Samurzaqano: 'From a political viewpoint the Mingrelians are just as Russian as the Muscovites,

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[14]Qauxchishvili, however, on p.636 of volume II of his edition of these Chronicles (1959) glosses the term 'Apsars' as 'one of the Georgian tribes in Western Georgia.' It should perhaps be also noted that the street on which stands the Linguistics Institute of the Georgian Academy of Sciences has now been re-named "Ingoroqva Street" from its former designation as "Dzerzhinski Street".

[15]The 1952 editors felt it necessary to gloss this term on p.93 thus: 'Gogebashvili here and below uses the word "coloniser" not in its modern sense but to mean the persons settled there.' Obviously they sensed some discomfort over one of the leading Georgians of the 1870s describing Kartvelian settlers on territory that had been by 1952 long and strenuously argued to be Georgian soil as 'colonisers'!

[16]The 1952 editors note: 'Gogebashvili's ideas on the settlement of Abkhazia's empty territory by Georgians achieved their actual realisation under the conditions of Soviet power' (p.93). This unequivocally confirms the Abkhazian complaint, discussed below, about the manipulation of local demography in the 1930-40s.

and in this way they can exercise influence over those tribes with whom they happen to have a relationship. A striking proof of this is given by the fact...that, thanks to Mingrelian influence, the Samurzaqanoans -- **a branch of the Abkhazian race** -- who have permanent intercourse with the Mingrelians, have become entirely faithful subjects of Russia' (pp. 109-110, stress added). This observation is significant in view of the fact that in his well-known school text-book *bunebis k'ari* 'Nature's Door' Gogebashvili subsequently wrote that 'the Mingrelians and the Samurzaqanoans are one people'[17]!

In 1899 a debate took place over the ethnic status of the Samurzaqanoans in the pages of the *Chernomorskij Vestnik* 'Black Sea Herald' (Batumi) between the Kartvelians K. Machavariani and, it is believed, T. Saxokia, who employed the pseudonym 'Samurzaqan', the latter arguing for their Mingrelian ethnicity, the former that they were Abkhazians. On the 8 May the following conversation between Machavariani and the Samurzaqanoan peasant Uru Gua was reported: '[UG] Why are you putting these questions to me? [KM] Some people maintain that the Samurzaqanoans are Mingrelians, that they spoke and speak Mingrelian, and that the whole of Samurzaqano formed part of the princedom of Mingrelia. [UG] What's that you say? I'll tell you this. I well recall my father and grandfather. They never spoke Mingrelian. Everyone conversed in Abkhaz. Take the communities of Bedia, Chxortoli, Okumi, Gali, Tsarche -- everywhere you'll hear Abkhaz amongst adults. If in Saberio, Otobaia, Dixazurgi they speak Mingrelian, this is thanks to the residents of these villages having close contacts with the Mingrelians. Don't our names, surnames, manners, customs and even our superstitions prove we are Abkhazians and not Mingrelians? In the [18]50s you'd almost never hear Mingrelian anywhere in Samurzaqano[18]. Up to then a Mingrelian was a curiosity. May I ask you who you are? (KM) A Georgian. (UG) Where did you learn Mingrelian and Abkhaz? (KM) I was born in Mingrelia but grew up in Samurzaqano and Abkhazia.'

In 1913 Machavariani put the number of Abkhazians in Samurzaqano at 33,639. And the charge is made by Abkhazians today that by fiat of the Menshevik authorities in 1919 30,000 or so Samurzaqanoan Abkhazians were arbitrarily re-classified as 'Georgian', a practice they claim that was continued for the census of 1926. For this reason, they say, the accuracy of this census in Abkhazia must remain open to severe doubt. And indeed a glance at the figures for the Abkhazian vs. Kartvelian population of Abkhazia and their relative balances between 1897 and 1926 does suggest that

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[17]It is not known when or why Gogebashvili changed his mind. The 1868 edition of this work does not contain the relevant section, but it is included in the 7th edition of 1892, which is the earliest version at my disposal, and I thank Michael Daly of the Bodleian Library (who died after the first variant of this paper was completed) for making it accessible to me.

[18]Bell's observation in 1840 (p.53) that Abkhaz was spoken down to the Mingrelian frontier (at the Ingur) would seem to support this, though G. Rosen, writing *Ueber das Mingrelische, Suanische und Abchasische* in 1844, challenges it by stating that the linguistic frontier between Abkhaz and Mingrelian was the 'Erti-c'q'ali'(p.431), somewhat to the north. Bell includes in his Appendix XIV the Abkhaz word agrua 'slave'. This is clearly the same as today's ethnonym a-gır-wa 'Mingrelian' and tends to support the often-heard boast that the first Mingrelians brought in to Abkhazia were unskilled peasants to do the manual work disdained by the Abkhazians. Saxokia (1985.399) talks of the Abkhazians having been spoiled by nature and possessed of such a dislike of physical labour that they have to summon a carpenter from elsewhere just to fit a plank of wood!

something odd was happening. Lezhava (1989. 13 ff.) speaks of 'natural assimilation'. Whatever the truth may be, all agree that today the Gali District has to all intents and purposes been fully mingrelianised.

In a pamphlet published by the Rustaveli Society in 1990 entitled *Georgia -- A Little Empire?* (designed to answer this charge made by A. Sakharov in his article in *Ogonyok,* July 1989) I. Antelava not only queries the ethnicity of those residing between Sukhum[sic!] and the Ingur but asks how the Abkhazian leaders can lay claim to Sukhum itself 'the majority-population of which always was and remains Georgian' (p.25) -- in the associated footnote he observes that in 1886 Sukhum had only 3 Abkhazian residents! This is a good illustration of the misuse to which statistics lend themselves, for there was a simple explanation of this 'fact'. It is stated by Saxokia (1985.381): 'The former indigenous Abkhazians were deprived of the right to take up residence near the town of Sukhum (for a distance of 20 kilometres), on the grounds they were untrustworthy elements' (sc. for their pro-Turkish sympathies). Needless to say, Antelava did not deign to impart this additional piece of information to his readers!

(iii) Georgianisation

The **Abkhazian Letter** [AL] is an 87-page document signed by 60 leading Abkhazians and completed on 17 June 1988 for transmission to Gorbachev. The hope was that the Abkhazians too could take advantage of *Perestrojka* and finally resolve the problems of Abkhazia that were ascribed to their having been dominated by Tbilisi for so long. The **Letter** defends the historical distinctness (i.e. non-Kartvelian status) of the Abkhazians and presents a list of the grievances held against the Kartvelians. It dates the start of georgianisation to the first influx of Kartvelians in the latter half of the last century (p.36). In a sense this is beyond dispute, but it is not necessary to impute any hostile intent at this stage -- after all, why should someone not have the benefit of land where, as one Abkhazian once put it, 'all you have to do is throw seeds out of your window, and Nature does the rest to bestow a vegetable-plot upon you'?! But the situation had certainly altered by the time of the acquisition of power in Tbilisi by the Mensheviks is 1918, who 'used fire and sword in their passage through South Ossetia, bent on the cause of the violent georgianisation of these peoples...Zhordania took the route of aggression, deciding to employ all force to capture the whole Sochi District as far as Tuapse...lands which had no links with Georgia proper' (AL p.6). Furthermore, 'ignoring the specifics of Abkhazia, where the majority-population spoke Russian, the Mensheviks in pursuance of realising a programme for the «nationalisation» of the region forced upon schools «the obligatory teaching of the Georgian (State) language»' (Lakoba 1990.78, quoting from the paper *Nashe Slovo* 'Our Word' of 20 Nov. 1919).

To jump for a moment to modern times, the draft of a **State Programme for the Georgian Language**, which appeared in the autumn of 1988 and which was promulgated into law in August 1989, with its clauses about the obligatory teaching of Georgian in all schools within the republic and tests in Georgian language and literature as pre-requisites for entry into higher education re-kindled the old worries of 1918-21 (and not only among Georgia's Abkhazian minority) about being saddled with a language they regard as totally unnecessary. It may seem odd that Georgian was not always an obligatory subject in the republic's schools[19], but, to concentrate on Abkhazia, the reason for this is clear -- although Kartvelians constituted before the war around 45% of the population, these are almost wholly Mingrelians, who tend to speak amongst themselves in Mingrelian, even if they also know Georgian from their schooling. And so, Georgian is actually very sparsely heard in Abkhazia. Abkhazians are either bilingual in Abkhaz and Russian or tri-lingual in these two tongues plus Mingrelian; not unnaturally, then, they regarded the imposition of yet another language, which, while Russian still remained the main *lingua franca*, would benefit them not one iota, as a threat to the numerically least strong of their languages, namely Abkhaz. Were Georgia, including Abkhazia, to have broken all ties with the Russian-speaking world, then a natural process of evolution would eventually have replaced Russian with Georgian amongst Georgia's minorities. But to have tried to force Georgian on unwilling recipients in the conditions prevailing in 1988-9 was to invite trouble and lend credence

[19]Language-planning in Georgia is discussed in Hewitt (1989).

to the widespread belief that an independent Georgia would see the completion of the georgianisation-strategy of 1918-1921 (and 1933-1953).

'The establishment of Soviet power on 4 March 1921 was received by the peoples of Abkhazia as liberation from occupation by the Georgian Democratic Republic and the repressive regime of the ruling Menshevik Party' (ibid. 79). But the undermining of the subsequently declared Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia (31 March 1921) by its demotion first to a 'Treaty Republic' (16 Dec. 1921) and finally to an autonomous republic within Georgia (Feb. 1931) is credited to Stalin, who held responsibility for the nationalities at the time (AL p.10), to Stalin's fellow-countryman and chief-lieutenant in the Caucasus as secretary of the Caucasian Bureau, Sergo Ordzhonikidze (AL p.11), and in general to the manœuvrings of the authorities in Tbilisi in alliance with Stalin at The Centre.

Mingrelian Lavrenti Beria was appointed head of the Georgian Party in 1931 and chairman of the Transcaucasian Party Committee in 1932. From 1933 he instituted an anti-Abkhazian policy that was maintained and strengthened till the deaths of both himself and Stalin in 1953. Quite independently of 'The Terror', which affected all Soviet republics (including Georgia's Kartvelian residents) in 1936-38, Abkhazia experienced a forced importation of various nationalities, especially Mingrelians and Georgians from such western provinces as Mingrelia, Racha and Lechkhumi-- Abkhazians recall truck-loads of these, often unwilling, immigrants being dumped with nowhere to live and thus having to be given temporary refuge by the locals themselves. The effect of this was to reduce the Abkhazian percentage of the population to below 20%. In 1938, when Cyrillic was being introduced as base for the writing-systems of all the 'Young Written Languages' (such as, indeed, Abkhaz) that had been awarded the status of 'literary languages' early in the Soviet period as part of the drive to eradicate illiteracy[20], Abkhaz (along with Ossetic in Georgia's autonomous region of South Ossetia) was forced to adopt the Georgian script (until 1953). From the mid-40s, under Kandid Charkviani's stewardship of the Georgian Party with Akaki Mgeladze in control in Sukhum, teaching in and of Abkhaz was abolished, and Abkhaz-language schools were turned into Georgian-language schools. At this time the publishing of materials in Abkhaz was stopped. The belief is widespread that there was a plan to transport the Abkhazians in their entirety to Central Asia, and that the theory of Ingoroqva, discussed above, was made-to-order as a kind of 'scholarly justification' for their removal from territory to which, it would have been said (much as it is being said even now in certain quarters!), they have no justifiable claim. One Abkhazian, prominent in the 40s, is reported to have revealed prior to his death that the authorities had wished to avoid the upheaval that had accompanied the transportation eastwards during the war-years of all the other peoples whose cases are now so well-documented and that they were convinced anyway that, after both Beria's artificial merging of Kartvelian elements with the native residents, who were now swamped in their own republic, as well as Charkviani-Mgeladze's closure of the schools and local publishing, enough had probably been done to effect the georgianisation (?mingrelianisation) within a couple of generations of all remaining Abkhazians.

Information for the period 1953-1979 is most readily accessible in the study made by American sovietologist Darrell Slider (1985). He shows that, although the extremes of the discriminatory policy towards the Abkhazians, their language and culture were halted and to a degree reversed by the re-opening of schools, re-entry of Abkhazians into local politics and the re-emergence of radio-broadcasting and publishing in Abkhaz, all was not well *in comparison with the other regions of Soviet Georgia* in the spheres of access to higher education, backwardness in industrialisation, and

[20]The absence of any development of a literary Abkhaz language during the Abkhazian Kingdom and its reliance on (first Greek and then) Georgian as state- and church-language is used by the Kartvelians as a further argument that, historically, Abkhazia must have seen itself as an ordinary part of Georgia. Examples of the use of Latin in mediæval European liturgy or of Greek, Aramaic etc.. as state-languages in non-Greek or non-Aramaic countries are ignored.

deprivation to the tune of 40% by the Tbilisi authorities in terms of the local budget as measured on a *per capita* basis. Matters came to head in 1977-8[21] in connection with the Union-wide deliberations over the shape of the new Brezhnevite constitutions. Just as the Kartvelians took the opportunity to demonstrate in Tbilisi in defence of the rights of the Georgian language in the republican constitution, so 130 prominent Abkhazians had despatched a letter to the Kremlin listing their continued complaints against what they saw as the ongoing georgianisation of their country. They even sought secession from Georgia and union with the Russian Federation, an extremely bold step at the time. Public disturbances took place in 1978, and troops had to be sent in, as then reported in the Western media[22]. In response a commission arrived from Moscow, and a variety of measures was recommended as a way of ameliorating the situation. In Slider's words: 'In essence, the Georgian leadership was forced to admit that many of the complaints made by Abkhaz nationalists were legitimate.' The changes included an increase in the general budget, the upgrading of Sukhum's Pedagogical Institute into a university (only the second in Georgia), reservation of places at Tbilisi University for students from Abkhazia[23], introduction of Abkhazian TV-broadcasts, increase in publishing, and development of local enterprises. However, Moscow refused to countenance any secession from Georgia or to allow the withdrawal of constitutional recognition of the Georgian language in Abkhazia.

And yet the changes of 1978-9 brought no long-lasting, fundamental improvement. The final 8 pages of the **Abkhazian Letter** addressed the problems of 1988. In essence the charge was that Abkhazia's autonomy was a total fiction; whilst Abkhazians may have held figure-head positions in government, all crucial decisions were taken in Tbilisi by, and for the advantage of, Kartvelians. Kartvelian hold on power took a more covert and subtle form than in the past, but in the critical question of land-tenure, policy in 1988 was a simple continuation of what the Mensheviks had begun and what Beria and his successors later re-activated. The suggested solution was a radical shift of status, namely the re-creation of the original Abkhazian SSR, so that Abkhazia could henceforth meaningfully control its own destiny.

It is unclear when knowledge of the **Abkhazian Letter** first filtered through to the general public in central Georgia, but, when its aspirations received emphatic endorsement at a huge public meeting on 18 March 1989 in the village of Lykhny in the form of the **Lykhny Declaration**, signed by 37,000 locals (Kartvelians as well as other non-Abkhazians significantly among them), this immediately became headline-news in Tbilisi. The consequences were dire. An intense anti-Abkhazian campaign was started by leaders of the various (then) unofficial parties[24], amongst virtually all of whom it became common practice to refer to the Abkhazians as 'Apswas', thereby implying that the 'true' Abkhazians were in fact some other people; indeed, the then-leader of the Rustaveli Society, Akaki Bakradze, is reported to have told a meeting of Mingrelians in Sukhum that they were the

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[21]In fact there had been protests also in 1957 and 1967.

[22]The Kartvelian samizdat-reports about Abkhazians attacking Kartvelians, taken at their face-value by Slider, should be treated with caution in view of the role played by their author, Boris Kakubava, in various anti-Abkhazian gatherings organised in Abkhazia by such dangerous demagogues as the late Merab Kostava in early 1989, for example on 1 April in Lykhny. It is true, however, that road-signs in Georgian were defaced.

[23]It is unclear whether this was for the exclusive benefit of ethnic Abkhazians.

[24]The dissidents Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Merab Kostava had for some years already been producing underground-documents complaining about what they regarded as the repression of the Georgian language and the Kartvelian population in Abkhazia.

descendants of the original Abkhazian residents of the Black Sea littoral! A whole series of distasteful articles denigrating both Abkhazian history as well as individuals was run by the Georgian press in all of its outlets, which suggests that the campaign must have had the approval of the republican authorities, as the Party's grip on power had not at that stage been shattered. Students and staff in the Georgian sector of the Abkhaz State University were 'encouraged' to agitate for protection against the encroachment of Russian in the University (a charge the Abkhazians say is completely bogus). This demand was seized upon, and the Georgian Ministry of Higher Education announced that it was opening a branch of Tbilisi University in Sukhum to be based on the Georgian sector of the existing university. Recognising the threat to the continuing viability of their own higher educational establishment, the Abkhazians strenuously but legally campaigned against it. They succeeded in having an official commission appointed in Moscow, which backed them by condemning Tbilisi's action as illegal. Nevertheless, plans to hold entrance-exams went ahead, and the result was the series of ethnic clashes in Sukhum on 15 July and in Ochamchira on 16 July 1989. The still unpublished personal investigation into these events, carried out on the spot as they were unfolding, by Russian journalist, Viktor Popkov, clearly reveals that the premeditation behind these clashes lay on the Kartvelian side[25].

Under the guidance of Ardzınba and **Aydgilara** 'Unity', the National Forum of Abkhazia, whose first chairman was writer Aleksei Gogua and which was then headed by archaeologist Sergei Shamba, the Abkhazians continued to pursue their cause with moderation and dignity. In an interview with two Kartvelian journalists, published in 'Literary Georgia' (21 June 1991), Shamba observed: 'This year it is possible that they [the new government in Tbilisi] will be sending us Prefects, which again contravenes our constitution...But of late, when the signing of the new Union-treaty has come on the agenda and a real danger has been created of Abkhazia departing from Georgia, one regularly hears entreaties for us not to sign and that we should settle our differences. Right now, look, a delegation has come and is telling us to have no fears because we shall have real autonomy. But this is just an extension of the old dialogue. What is autonomy?...The right to autonomy is already enshrined in the constitutions of both Abkhazia and Georgia. We are no longer satisfied with this.' It is unlikely that a single Abkhazian in Abkhazia would object to a word of this, for the events leading up to, during, and following the clashes of 1989 produced a unique and impressive solidarity amongst the entire nation from its humblest to its most eminent representative -- there was and is, however, a regrettable if understandable tiny band of exceptions amongst certain Abkhazians who have made careers for themselves in Tbilisi!

The 3-part attempted rebuttal of the **Abkhazian Letter** by a group of academics published in 'Dawn of the East' (28, 29, 30 July 1989) was unfortunately not available to me during the composition of the first version of this paper in June 1991. But also produced in specific response to the **Letter** is the 119-page *simartle apxazetze* 'Truth about Abkhazia' [26], which was rushed out by literary critic Roman Miminoshvili and writer Guram Pandzhikidze in 1990 [Pandzhikidze became chairman of the Georgian Writers' Union in the wake of the overthrow of Gamsakhurdia]. In style and content it can all too sadly serve as a typical example of Kartvelian works of the genre, with its admixture of arrogance, irony, aprioristic argumentation, avoidance of the issues, and the inevitable downright abuse[27]. Many of the

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[25]Popkov's work takes the form of a book on the ethnic problems facing the USSR, one section of which deals with Abkhazia. These two chapters were translated into English and distributed to every American senator by an activist in the USA in 1990.

[26]Also available in a Russian version. An Abkhazian reply to this was published in numbers 6 and 7 of *Edinenie* 'Unity' (Sukhum, Dec. 1990) by Vitalij Sharia and Guram Gumba.

[27]Donald Rayfield (1992) has compared the language employed in the modern Georgian press in reference to

Kartvelian lines of defence/attack already outlined are repeated in this pamphlet; some of the others will now be presented.

Complaints about attempts to georgianise Abkhazia are dismissed on the grounds that, since Abkhazia is an integral part of Georgia, talk of georgianising Georgia is a contradiction in terms. Equally the use of force during the Menshevik period cannot be held against the Georgians, who were merely defending their own territory from Bolsheviks and/or White Russians under Denikin. However, on p.47 the authors do try to distance the Mensheviks from responsibility, pointing out: 'The fact should be noted that the Bolshevik revolt in the spring of 1918 was put down not by «Menshevik Georgia» but by the Transcaucasian Sejm [Parliament].' With regrettable self-contradiction just six pages later they do, nevertheless, let slip that: 'The Menshevik Government of the Georgian Democratic Republic...was putting down Bolshevik demonstrations.' To 'prove' that pro-Kartvelian sentiment was not foreign to the Abkhazians as recently as the early years of this century, they quote from Menteshashvili & Surguladze (1989) to the effect that an Abkhazian delegation visited the Tsarist Transcaucasian Viceroy in Tbilisi in 1916 to urge that Abkhazia not be assigned to the (Russian) Black Sea District, and that, if it could not become an administrative district in its own right, it should be part of the (West Georgian) Kutaisi District. Allusion is also made to a number of speeches delivered throughout the 20s by Nestor Lakoba[28], head of the Abkhazian Bolsheviks (until murdered by Beria in 1936), wherein he states that the proclamation of a full Abkhazian Soviet Republic in 1921 was a temporary necessity, because of the ill-feeling created amongst the Abkhazians by the actions of the Mensheviks[29]; any attempt immediately to subordinate Abkhazia to Georgia would have been unacceptable, even though Lakoba (and colleagues) seemingly felt that this was the only practical solution. Thus, Abkhazia's downgrading to an autonomous republic in 1931 cannot, they argue, be blamed on the dirty deeds of Stalin, Ordzhonikidze and the Kartvelians in general. If such were the views of Abkhazian representatives in 1916 and throughout the 20s, who, they ask, has engineered this ethnic division in the 80s? The answer, of course, is not necessarily the one that is rhetorically implied!

Any people will choose its allies according to the circumstances prevailing at the time[30]. In 1916 the choice was association with fellow Caucasians vs. linkage with a part of the Empire once inhabited by close relatives but now inhabited, and ruled, by the very Russians whose actions had denuded both that area as well as much of Abkhazia itself of its indigenous population. S. Shamba made the point thus in his interview of 21 June 1991: 'If 100 years ago we were warring against the Russians, and Georgia supported us, today somehow the position is reversed. Vested interests define everything, and we would be idiots if we allowed ourselves to be governed not by interests but by such emotions as the supposed thought that the Kartvelians are our brothers, whereas 100 years ago it was the Russians who were fighting us...' Much the same point was made in her letter to *Index on Censorship*[31] by Zaira Khiba when she remarked: 'Only when Georgia acquires worthy leaders who are reasonable in word *and* deed will there be harmony with the ethnic minorities,' for in that case '...the country could

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Abkhazia with that used for ritual denunciations in the Georgian press at the time of The Purges (1936-38).

[28]The source is *N.A. Lakoba: Stat'i i rechi* 'N.A. Lakoba: Articles and Speeches' (1987 Sukhum: Alashara).

[29]By not challenging this motive, the authors implicitly acknowledge that the Mensheviks were guilty of excesses in Abkhazia!

[30]Just as in the late 18th century Georgia itself sought the protection of Holy Russia, which in turn led to its (i.e. East Georgia's) incorporation into the Empire in 1801.

[31]'An Abkhazian's Response' (sc. to letters from two Georgians attacking an earlier, anonymous article on the Abkhaz-Kartvelian dispute in the same journal of January 1990) pp. 30-1 of the May 1990 issue.

now have been proceeding towards peaceful independence with the full support of all those living within its current boundaries.' As regards Lakoba, the sheer idealism that fired the early supporters of the Revolution before it was perverted by Stalin and his cronies should not be overlooked. It is quite likely, however naive we may judge it with the benefit of hindsight, that Lakoba firmly believed that, with the dawning of a new age, any existing local enmities would disappear as workers came together in a new spirit of co-operation. If such was the case, why should not Caucasian Abkhazia work closely with (even within) Caucasian Georgia? Lakoba, like most others, had no inkling that Stalin would become the bloodthirsty tyrant, now universally recognised, as of circa 1930. So possible innocence on the part of Lakoba (and colleagues) in no wise rules out possible skulduggery on the part of Stalin and (certain of) his fellow-countrymen in this matter also.

The rather important period 1933-1953 is, as usual, skirted over[32], and Beria is named just once in the whole booklet: 'They [the Abkhazians] will say that in the years 1937-1959 Beria and his heirs settled up to 100,000 people in Abkhazia' (p.64). The authors then try to argue that Abkhazia's cosmopolitan structure is the result of Tsarist measures or the importation of outside labour by the Abkhazian authorities themselves. True, there is acknowledgement that 'at a certain period Abkhaz schools were closed' (p.75), which is admitted to be 'an unforgivable crime' (ibid.). On the very next page, however, they proceed to make the quite extraordinary assertion: 'The only «crime» which can be imputed to the Georgian people is that, starting from the 19th century, at the wish of those who inspired the Georgian national-liberation movement...there began and continues to this day, unfortunately without any result, not the georgianisation of the Abkhazians but rather our defending them from being Russified and our preservation of them as Abkhazians'! A similar boast was made by linguist Nani Chanishvili in the middle of 1990 during a Voice of America radio-link between Tbilisi and some kartvelologists in America[33].

The Abkhazians stand accused of being an ungrateful and hugely privileged minority. What other people of less than 100,000 has its own (a) university, (b) TV-channel and (c) so many of its own citizens in prominent positions when it constitutes only 18% of its province's population? Kartvelians making these debating-points never inform their audience that the Abkhaz sector of the Abkhaz State University was always the smallest of the three (viz. Abkhaz, Russian, Georgian), as, despite its name, the university was always designed to cater for the needs of the whole of Western Georgia. When TV-broadcasting in Abkhaz began, there were only two half-hour programmes per week; in 1989 these had been increased to three hour-long programmes, and such broadcasts later no longer masked Georgian transmissions from Tbilisi, about which local Kartvelians were formerly right to feel aggrieved. Allusion has already been made to Abkhazian over-representation in Party-posts. Interestingly, though, over-representation was not foreign to Kartvelians either -- John Russell[34] compares the figures whereby Kartvelians in 1991 formed 1.4% of the USSR population, whereas they filled 3.2% of places at the Congress of People's Deputies and 3.7% in the Supreme Soviet.

Two individuals were singled out for personal abuse -- V. Ardzınba for being an 'extremist' and the aged ethnographer Shalva Inal-Ipa[35], who is depicted as a charlatan masquerading as an academic, a charge regularly heard in attempted belittling of Abkhazian scholars[36]. A passage from Inal-

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[32]When pressed to account for what happened in Abkhazia at this time, the usual response is that everything was done on orders from the Kremlin. But who was then dictating Kremlin policy?!

[33]The dialogue was reprinted in 'Popular Education' (5 July 1990, 14-16).

[34]'The Georgians' A Minority Rights Group Soviet Update (1991).

[35]His only son was killed in the final days' fighting to free Sukhum in 1993.

[36]The Abkhazians are not alone in finding the sense of national superiority amongst the Kartvelians

Ipa's 1976 book is cited: 'I recorded in June 1952 in the village of Eshera these words of a 70 year-old...The whole Caucasian coast of the Black Sea used to be called Kalxa. The population of Kalxa spoke Abkhaz. Its frontiers stretched far from south to north, and it was ruled by Abkhazian kings, who had a strong army and 350 forts' (p.202). This is adduced as the sort of evidence Abkhazians are said to rely on to prove their historical rights over the land. It is a pity that the authors' eyes did not pass over to the top of the following page, where they would have read this; 'In a word, if in new and old statements of this kind we find a definite exaggeration of the role of the Abkhazian element, **it is equally mistaken**, it seems to me, completely to ignore it in the ethno-cultural history of the enigma that is Colchis' (stress added)[37].

On p.108 Miminoshvili and Pandzhikidze write: 'Unfortunately, in order to attain this goal, they, as we became convinced above, frequently resort to such base tricks as are unworthy of scholars, members of the intelligentsia and even ordinary human beings -- provocation, slander, lies, bribery, demagoguery, the politics of shamelessly picking excessive quarrels and who knows what else?' Perhaps enough has now been said for readers to decide for themselves to whom the 'they' in this quote properly refers. Readers may also like to muse over why the Kartvelians feel it necessary to resort to such tactics as their first line of defence...

No chances for Abkhazian compromise

It must by now be patently obvious how intricately interwoven the territorial issue is with the difficulties characterising Abkhaz-Kartvelian inter-ethnic relations in general. The Abkhazians see the struggle as one for the survival of their culture and language, or, in a word, preservation of their separate identity. The Kartvelians, if nothing else, desperately do not want to lose a piece of land that could provide an independent Georgia with much needed foreign currency from the tourist-trade, given the rich potential of such exotic resorts as Gagra, Pitsunda and Sukhum itself.

Was there any chance of the Abkhazians throwing in their lot with Kartvelian demands for an independent Georgia? It must be quite clear from the above that this was surely inconceivable. Those who, in spite of all that has been said above concerning past events, urged such a course on the Abkhazian leadership in 1991 have to consider the difficulty presented by the tenure at the time of the Georgian presidency by Gamsakhurdia. It is true that in an interview with Anatol Lieven of 'The Times', published in 'The Georgian Messenger 4' (Jan. 1991), when asked about his attitude to Abkhazia's autonomous status, he replied: 'The Abkhaz deserve autonomy, but not in this exaggerated form.' But the Abkhazians were well aware that in December 1990 within less than a week of assuring the South Ossetians that their autonomy was safe in his hands he actually abolished the South Ossetian Autonomous Region. And mention of reducing Abkhazian autonomy raises the spectre of the realisation of a proposal from the already mentioned 'Chronicle 4' of early 1989[38], which was supported by, among

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objectionable (not to say threatening), even if casual visitors regularly regard what they see as mere 'Latin-type bravado' as welcome relief after the drabness of central Russia. Reporting the results of a survey conducted in late 1989 Mickiewicz (1990.146) gave the following interesting percentages of those responding 'yes' to the question 'Should someone who takes the position that nationalities are advocating ethnic superiority be allowed to appear on television?': Central Asians 13%, Ukrainians 20%, Belorussians 20%, Russians 21%, Balts 25%, 'Georgians' 52%!

[37]This accusation flows indisputably from the pen of Pandzhikidze, for he included it in his article *aucilebelia ch'eshmarit'ebam gaimarjos* 'It is essential that truth triumph' in 'Literary Georgia' of 26 May 1989.

[38]This is the same document in which the period 1936-1954 is presented as an exemplar of how to deal with Abkhazian

others, Gamsakhurdia's Georgian Helsinki Group, whereby all the regions of Abkhazia where there is a Kartvelian majority (namely Gali, Gulripsh, Gagra, Sukhum, and part of Ochamchira) should come under the direct control of Tbilisi, leaving Gudauta and the remaining portion of Ochamchira to be downgraded to national Abkhazian 'regions' (Russ. okrugi). Exactly the same proposal was made by Antelava (1990, p.27). And so it had to be taken seriously -- and it was rejected.

In addition to the above, certain of the opposition-parties within Georgia who were members of the alternative parliament, the National Congress, such as the National Democratic Party of Gia Chanturia, began to circulate documents in the West complaining about Gamsakhurdia's incipient dictatorship, characterised by imprisonment of political opponents, closure of papers that did not support the president, denial to the opposition of any access to surviving outlets in the media, creation of the cult of personality -- or, in the laconic description of Chanturia's wife, Irina Sarishvili, speaking on a BBC World Service report on Georgia by Robert Parsons in May 1991, 'Neo-Bolshevism'. If compromise with such an individual and in such a repressive atmosphere was unthinkable, would continued association with Georgia under some new regime have been more feasible? No matter how different purely intra-Kartvelian politics might or might not be under the guidance of some of the parties from the National Congress, could one detect any hint of a more positive attitude to the minorities from those who were voted into the Congress in the unofficial elections that preceded the official election of Gamsakhurdia's Round Table block? Sarishvili in the interview just mentioned blamed Gamsakhurdia alone for raising fears among the South Ossetians. But if one looks back to 1989, when the then unofficial parties all enjoyed the same access to the media and freedom to circulate their universally unimpressive political ideas, there was nothing to choose between them in their statements about (specifically) the Abkhazians. All shared the view that the ethnic disturbances had been artificially fomented by the Kremlin -- in fact, this has continued to be the unanimous conviction amongst the Kartvelians. In his article *Budem lechit bolezni* 'We shall be treating our diseases'[39] Chanturia wrote: 'It was in the 18th century that the forebears of today's «Abkhazians» -- Adyge [Circassian] tribes -- came down into the territory of Abkhazia' (p.56), or 'The Apswa speak a language of Adyghean provenance, which serves as one more proof of the fact that this people do not belong to the indigenous population of the Black Sea Coast' (p.57). In other words, shades of Ingoroqva precede the final call to fraternal solidarity in the fight for independence. Similar statements from other leaders of the opposition could easily be produced. And so, while some in the West might at the time have seen the hope for a future democratic Georgia in the National Congress or some of its individual members, the Abkhazians did not necessarily detect any substantive difference between the relevant parties as far as their own problems were concerned, especially in the climate of suspicion and, sadly, hatred that has been produced not by statements emanating from Moscow but by those from Tbilisi over the last few years.

What of the future for Abkhazia outside Georgia? Since its first meeting in Abkhazia in August 1989 Abkhazians have taken an active part in the Assembly of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus; the first issue of its paper *Kavkaz* appeared on 1 October 1990. It is probably true to say that all the myriad peoples of the North Caucasus side with the Abkhazians in their striving for a secure future, and it should not be forgotten that a caucus of North Caucasians could produce a strong pressure-group within Yeltsin's Russian Federation. But whether it is as a separate republic or as part of some reconstituted Mountain Caucasian Republic that the Abkhazians eventually seek to enter the CIS, there was always going to remain one large

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'separatists' and prevent their imposition of force on other races living in the area. Commenting on Ardzınba's complaint about this insulting remark in his Moscow speech of 1989, Miminoshvili and Pandzhikidze claimed not to know which unofficial organisation was responsible for this statement (p.97).

[39]Published in *Strana i Mir* 'Country and World' (5.1989.56-60).

thorn in their side -- the 45.7% Kartvelian (essentially Mingrelian) proportion of the population.

It is true that in the all-Union referendum of 17 March 1991, boycotted by Kartvelians throughout Georgia in general, 52.3% of Abkhazia's electorate did vote, with 98.6% of these saying 'yes' to remaining within a union of sovereign republics[40]. Regardless of how the dominating presence of Kartvelians in Abkhazia was achieved, if almost half of the population cleaves to fellow-Kartvelian rule from Tbilisi, could there be any future for such a deeply divided republic, when democratically elected representation from below would become the norm rather than arbitrary appointment from the top, as in previous decades?

Contrary to the claims of the Kartvelian nationalists, there have been no calls among Abkhazians for the expulsion from (as opposed to the halting of the continued flow into) Abkhazia of Kartvelians. However, if an offer had come from Tbilisi whereby they would have given Abkhazia free rein to go its own way as long as the Gali District were surrendered, the Abkhazian leadership might have accepted this, since in terms of ethnicity the battle for Samurzaqano is recognised to be already lost. Agreement might then have followed on arrangements for helping any other Mingrelians north of the Ghalidzga to resettle in Georgia proper. This would have created more space for the return to their ancestral lands of any so minded Abkhazian descendants of those who suffered the 19th century diaspora[41]. But, as noted above, such an offer was never likely to materialise, for the issue has been all or nothing. Was there, then, any way in which the Kartvelians in Abkhazia might have been convinced that they would be given a better deal inside an Abkhazian Republic than by an independent Georgia in which personal rivalries and internecine conflicts could confidently have been predicted to continue unabated? In the clashes of 1989 it was a miraculous relief that the Kartvelian residents of Abkhazia did not, by and large, allow themselves to be roused to arms in the way that characterised their brethren in Georgia proper. And those rare Mingrelian voices that have been heard calling for recognition of their non-Georgian identity have come from Mingrelians inside Abkhazia[42]. Since the Georgians and leading Mingrelians, such as Gamsakhurdia himself[43], have always fiercely denied the need for any special provision to be made for ensuring the future of this language[44], what

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[40]Newspaper *Abxazija* (26 March 1991).

[41]There are similar aspirations to encourage a 'return home'-movement among the Circassians.

[42]One can mention at least three from 1989-90: T. Bokuchava-Gagulia ('Literary Georgia' 28 April 1989), Vano Dgebuadze ('Bzyp' 16 Sept 1989), and Nugzar Dzhodzhua ('Bzyp' 4 July 1989 and 'Unity' July 1990). The onslaught they suffered as a consequence saw the first lambasted for being no real 'Georgian' (which, of course, she is not!) if she cannot speak Georgian ('Literary Georgia' 19 May 1989); the second was alleged to have falsified his war-record (ibid. 3 Nov. 1989), whilst the last lost his job, and his mother was forced to disown him in the press. [The attentions he received from the local KGB in their attempts to "dissuade" him from standing in the elections to the Abkhazian Congress of Deputies in the autumn of 1991 deserve to be made known to Western observers of events in Abkhazia].

[43]See his article entitled 'The Question of Mingrelia' ('Literary Georgia' 3 Nov. 1989).

[44]The same applies to Svan. The whole issue of preserving endangered languages in the Caucasus is discussed in Hewitt (Forthcoming a); the original talk on which this article was based dealt with both Abkhaz and Mingrelian,

would have been the reaction of Abkhazia's Mingrelians if they had been offered, in addition to continuing education in Georgian (should they truly have desired this), the chance of having a literary language designed for them, along with all that this would entail (e.g. some level of tuition of and in Mingrelian, publishing, radio- and TV-broadcasting)? Abkhazians have never regarded the Mingrelians as Georgians, and so why should they not have given substance to their beliefs? No-one should seek artificially to divide peoples who otherwise have no problem living together, but the Abkhazians clearly did and do have a problem about living with the Georgians. In the words of Donald Rayfield[45], one consequence of the pan-Georgianism that has existed since around 1930 'has been to change the self-awareness of many Mingrelians who were living in mixed Abkhaz-Mingrelian settlements and impose on them the Georgian-Abkhaz split.' If the vested interests of the Abkhazians would be served by reversing this manufactured self-interest, one way of attaining this goal could be attitudinally to divorce their Mingrelians from the bulk of the Kartvelians (Mingrelians as well as Georgians proper) across the Ingur, for as long as (Abkhazia's) Mingrelians see themselves as 'Georgians', they will never happily leave Georgia to join the Russian Federation or a Slavic dominated CIS. Granting official recognition to Mingrelian identity would after all probably prove to be in the best long-term interests of the Mingrelians themselves -- Tbilisi has never shown any concern for the preservation of the Mingrelian (and Svan) languages. The BBC's Summary of World Broadcasts in April 1994 actually reports the Georgian government complaining that the Abkhazians have finally started offering schooling to those Mingrelians who want it!

The conflict escalates

In mid-August 1991 there was scheduled to take place the signing of Gorbachev's new Union Treaty, which was to ratify the agreement for a new association between most of the peoples who had formerly made up the USSR, though Gamsakhurdia maintained throughout the discussion-period that Georgia would not be signing any document that preserved his republic's subservient status vis-a-vis Moscow. The intention was that in the first round the agreement would be signed by the various republican authorities and that some weeks later the various autonomies could add their signatures, thereby gaining equal status with the former republics; Ardzınba expected to be signing some time in September and thus to be achieving for Abkhazia the desire explained above for the restitution of Abkhazia's full republican status outside Georgia. Gamsakhurdia's government of course kept up its pressure against «Abkhazian separatism»

However, after the failure of the coup the serious internal dissension that had already appeared within the Gamsakhurdia regime began to widen even more. Unable to resolve their differences with Gamsakhurdia by constitutional means, Tengiz Sigua, recently resigned from the premiership, together with Defence Minister, Tengiz Kitovani, sided with oppositionists, and at the beginning of September the first clashes took place on the streets of Tbilisi.

While the Kartvelians were otherwise preoccupied, the Abkhazians pursued discussions with their fellow-North Caucasians. In November the IIIrd Session of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus took place in Sukhum. On 2nd November participants ratified a document entitled 'Treaty for a Confederative Union of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus' (see Appendix 2), the first Article of which proclaims the new Confederation to be «the legitimate successor of the independent North Caucasian Republic ('Mountain Republic'), created on 11th May 1918». The full list of participating peoples reads: Abazinians, Abkhazians, Avars, Adyghes, Darginians, Kabardians, Laks, North Ossetians, South Ossetians, Cherkess, Chechens, Auxov-Chechens, and the Shapsughs.

Intra-Kartvelian politics descended into open warfare in the very centre of Tbilisi over the Christmas and New Year period 1991-92. Gamsakhurdia's regime collapsed, with Gamsakhurdia fleeing ultimately to Grozny in Chechenia as guest of President Djokhar Dudayev. The Military

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whereas the publlished version will deal with Abkhaz alone.

[45]In his seminar-paper 'Georgia Today', delivered on 8 March 1990 at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies.

Council that took over power when Gamsakhurdia fled soon arranged for the return to his homeland of ex-Soviet Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, who had been Georgia's Communist Party Secretary from 1972 up until his elevation by Gorbachev onto the international stage in 1985. He was quickly made head of a State Council, which ran Georgia until the elections on 11 October 1992. Though this interim State Council had no constitutional legitimacy, having seized power in a bloody coup that toppled a democratically elected president, Western countries, which had previously hesitated to recognise Georgia under the unpredictable Gamsakhurdia, immediately began (with Great Britain taking an unwholesome lead) not only to recognise Georgia but to establish diplomatic relations with it. Just one of the regrettable consequences of this rash decision, based on nothing more than a shallow desire to do a quick favour for someone who was perceived to be a 'friend of the West', was that the position of Abkhazia became fixed in international law as an integral part of Georgia; thus, yet another sacrifice on the depressing altar known as the territorial integrity of states was in line for the sacrificial dagger...

The Abkhazian parliament continued trying to function as the legislative assembly of a *de facto* independent republic with the right to choose its own local allies. It consisted of 28 Abkhazians, 26 Kartvelians, plus 11 representatives of the other local nationalities; this constitutional arrangement, known as consociationalism, with its requirement of a two-thirds' majority on all votes of significance, is designed to preserve a *status quo* and was introduced during the Gamsakhurdia regime after Tbilisi had rejected the Abkhazians' request for a bi-cameral parliament. Pro-Abkhazian and pro-Tbilisi cliques developed, and during one of the frequent absences of the latter, a resolution was carried on 23 July 1992 temporarily re-instating Abkhazia's constitution of 1925, in which its status as a full republic with treaty-ties to Georgia was enshrined. This was deemed necessary as the Tbilisi authorities had already annulled all legislation introduced since Soviet power came to Georgia in 1921, which meant that Abkhazia was left with no formal status whatsoever, and the return to the constitution of the 'twenties was meant only to be a temporary measure until a new constitutional arrangement could be made. A draft of a federal treaty between Sukhum and Tbilisi had already been prepared and published by the Abkhazians in June of that year (see Appendix 1); negotiations on this were taking place in Sukhum between Abkhazian and Georgian officials on 13 August. Early the next day Georgian troops crossed into Abkhazia, thereby initiating the war which continued until 30 September 1993.

The Tbilisi regime had been faced with massive unrest in Gamsakhurdia's native province of Mingrelia ever since his overthrow, and the behaviour of the so-called *Mkhedrioni* 'Knights', an ill-disciplined militia set up and led by Dzhaba Ioseliani, who at the time was Shevardnadze's deputy in the State Council, towards the citizenry of Mingrelia could not have been better orchestrated had it actually been the intention of Tbilisi to cause Mingrelia to secede from Georgia. Shevardnadze had been in the thick of a hostile welcome in Mingrelia when the news came of the Abkhazian parliament's decision of 23 July. He returned to Tbilisi at once. By the middle of August two Georgian ministers (A. Kavsadze and R. Gventsadze) had been kidnapped by Zviadists, and this provided Shevardnadze with what he saw as an ideal pretext to attack Abkhazia, for it was alleged that the ministers were being detained on Abkhazian soil with Abkhazian approval -- a specious charge, but naively accepted by Western commentators ignorant of the fact that Gamsakhurdia was just as much an anathema to the Abkhazians as Shevardnadze, and that Abkhazians wanted nothing to do with internal Kartvelian affairs. Personally I am convinced that the attack on Abkhazia was quite cynically planned by Shevardnadze, who, certain that his Western friends would not raise even a squeak of protest (as indeed they did not), no doubt hoped firstly that it would unite both his and Gamsakhurdia's supporters around the 'patriotic' campaign to preserve Georgia's territorial integrity in the face of its greatest threat and secondly that it would lead to a Kartvelian victory in a matter of days.

If my assessment of events in August 1992 is correct, then Shevardnadze was proved wrong on both counts. Though his rag-bag of an army quickly established control over Sukhum and the coastal road south to Mingrelia, forcing the Abkhazian government into exile in Gudauta, Zviadists did not give up their opposition to the State Council, and the Abkhazians were able to hold out for a sufficient length of time to allow volunteers to come to their aid from the North Caucasian members of the Confederation of

Mountain Peoples (particularly Circassians and Chechens[46]), despite Russian attempts to stop them crossing into Abkhazia, a move which raises questions about the extent to which Yeltsin knew of, and indeed supported, the Georgians' resort to arms in advance.

Within a day or so of the invasion Georgian Defence Minister, Kitovani, publicly acknowledged that the troops had gone in to stop Abkhazian 'separatism' and declared that his men would need at least three days to 'satisfy themselves' [sc. in terms of their quest for spoils of war]. Non-Kartvelian residents (Abkhazians, Armenians, Russians, Greeks, Jews) of those areas of Abkhazia in the invaders' hands were subjected to a campaign of robbery, rape, torture and slaughter; siege was laid to the mining-town of Tqvarchal, inland from Ochamchira, and this was not broken until over 400 days later. Almost 100 pages of details of these abuses of human rights were submitted to Amnesty International in the summer of 1993 -- upto the autumn of 1993 details of not a single case of abuse by the Abkhazian side against Kartvelians had been lodged with either Amnesty or the British government...

Towards the end of August the young man who had been put in charge of the Georgian troops operative in Abkhazia, 26 year-old Gia Qarqarashvili, while being interviewed in Russian for a TV-broadcast issued a chilling threat, namely that he would sacrifice 100,000 Georgians to wipe out all 93,000 Abkhazians inside Abkhazia, so long as Georgia's borders remained inviolate...

When it became clear that there would be no easy Georgian victory, peace-talks were arranged in Moscow by Yeltsin. As part of the 3 September accords, the Georgian troops were to withdraw and the legitimate authorities were to be allowed to return to Sukhum to resume the proper governance of Abkhazia. The troops were not withdrawn, nor were the authorities permitted to return from Gudauta. As a consequence of these transgressions of the Moscow agreement, the Georgians holding Gagra were attacked and ejected not only from this important town but from all the territory between it and the border with Russia to the north. Georgian propaganda immediately sprang into action and announced that the peaceful Kartvelian residents of Gagra had been herded into the local stadium and massacred. When the first mission of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples' Organisation (UNPO, based in The Hague) visited Abkhazia in November 1992, they investigated this claim and found no evidence to support it (vid. UNPO's Report in *Central Asian Survey,* 12.3.1993, pp.325-345). Needless to say, Shevardnadze's Western friends, from the UN down, universally castigated the Abkhazians for breaking the Moscow agreement -- a UN mission that visited the area shortly before UNPO actually spoke in the annex to its report (ll November, No. S/24794) of the 'risk' of the Abkhazians capturing Sukhum (a peculiar interpretation of what in fact would have been merely the Abkhazians re-establishing control over their own capital), adding the absurd prediction that this 'could trigger major military action, which could engulf the area in a major conflict that could involve neighbouring countries'.

A Russian helicopter on a humanitarian mission to evacuate non-combatants from Tqvarchal was deliberately blasted from the skies by Ioseliani's men in December with the loss of over 50 women and children who were on board. As far as I know, not one word of protest was raised in the West about this act, 'justified' by Shevardnadze on the grounds that weapons *might* have been on board. Apart from purely human suffering, all the cultural monuments of the Abkhazians were deliberately targetted and destroyed, such as the University, Museum, Public Library, State Archive, and the Research Institute (along with its collection of research-materials and scholarly books).

Most of 1993 saw a military stand-off, with the two forces facing each other over the River Gumista, to the north of Sukhum. The April edition of *Le Monde Diplomatique* published an article on the war which included a worrying quote from Giorgi Khaindrava, Minister for Abkhazia in Tbilisi, for it demonstrated that the threat from Qarqarashvili (who had resigned as military commander in Abkhazia after the loss of Gagra on the pretext of having suffered a nervous breakdown, only to emerge a few weeks later as new Minister of Defence in place of Kitovani) of the previous August had been no accidental slip of the tongue. He clinically observed that all the Georgians

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[46]In an interview with Interfax at the end of April 1994 Abkhazia's Defence Minister S. Sosnaliev claimed that 12,000 North Caucasisn volunteers had participated in the fighting.

needed to do to wipe out the Abkhazians was to kill their genetic pool of 15,000 young men, stressing 'we are perfectly capable of this'...

The Abkhazians continued to consolidate their strength and positions over the early summer as Shevardnadze's troubles continued unabated in Mingrelia, and towards the end of July it looked as though just one more push was needed for them to re-take their capital. However, hoping to avoid further needless casualties and as the result of strong pressure from Moscow, they agreed in Sochi to a new Russian mediated agreement, which came into effect on 28 July 1993. The UN, in another display of the seriousness it attaches to conflict-prevention and the safeguarding of minority rights, despatched a mere handful of the observers that had been promised to monitor this ceasefire. As with the Moscow agreement of 3 September 1992, the understanding called for the withdrawal of Georgian troops and weaponry *within 10-15 days* and subsequent restitution of the legitimate government of Abkhazia. However, *six weeks* later on 9 September Pres. Ardzınba wrote as follows to UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali: 'Despite repeated changes in the schedule, the Georgian side has not withdrawn its armed forces and weaponry from Abkhazia up till now. Moreover, the actions undertaken by the Georgian side show that the latter is transferring the weaponry that was not duly registered and withdrawn to local military formations, presenting the fact as the capture of the weaponry by ex-president Gamsakhurdia's supporters. The Georgian party is blocking the reinstatement of the legitimate bodies of power in Sukhum'. A similar statement warning of the dangers of the Georgian non-compliance was issued in Gudauta on 11 September. On the following day the Executive Committee of the Congress of Kabardian People issued a statement in Nalchik calling on Georgia to fulfil the conditions of the Sochi agreement and urged the North Caucasian volunteers to be ready to return to Abkhazia if Georgia continued to fail to comply with its undertakings. On 16 September those who had been penned up in Tqvarchal for over 400 days (latterly despite the Sochi agreement) decided to make a move to break the siege. When news of the fighting reached the Abkhazians on the heights above Sukhum, they managed to retrieve the weaponry they had handed over to neutral forces, and wide-scale fighting resumed.

It was stated time and again by the largely pro-Georgian Western media that the Georgians had withdrawn the bulk of their weaponry and that the Abkhazians treacherously took advantage of this military weakness to launch their final push for Sukhum. None of those who unthinkingly adopted this stance have attempted to explain why in that case it should have taken no fewer than 14 days of sustained and intensive hostilities before Sukhum finally fell and the bulk of the invaders were expelled from Abkhazian territory...

As soon as the fighting restarted, Shevardnadze decided on yet another of his splendidly theatrical gestures -- only a few days earlier in a rage he had walked out of the Tbilisi parliament saying that he had resigned over failing to get his way in connection with events in Mingrelia, only to return to office later in the day -- and took off for Sukhum declaring to the world that he would fight with his bare hands alongside his defenceless troops and share their fate to the bitter end. His pointless gesture failed again to achieve its no doubt intended goal, for no Western forces came to his side's assistance. During the course of the final bloody battle Russian Defence Minister, Pavel Grachev, offered to send substantial Russian troops to police both the northern and southern borders of Abkhazia. The Abkhazians accepted this, but it was rejected by the hold up Shevardnadze on the grounds that this would be further Russian occupation of his country. Twenty four hours later he had changed his mind, but Grachev's patience had worn thin, and he responded to Shevardnadze's telegram with the (undeniably correct) statement that the Abkhazian affair was entirely the fault of the Georgians, and that it was too late for the intervention of his men. It was clear that it would be just a matter of days before Sukhum fell to the Abkhazian alliance, and on 20 September the Abkhazians offered a ceasefire and safe-conduct out of Abkhazia for the Georgian forces. The offer was rejected, leading to further unnecessary bloodshed. The Abkhazians prepared a leaflet for general distribution throughout Abkhazia reminding the population of their moral duty not to harm troops laying down their weapons and not to seek retribution for the sufferings of the previous 14 months.

The presence of Shevardnadze in the thick of the fighting attracted the attention of the world's media, who, as had become their custom, largely reported events as refracted through the muddy filter of Georgian propaganda -- the BBC World Service seemed particularly incapable of distinguishing fact from fiction, with the result that virtually all of the BBC's reports from

the region (which meant Tbilisi and not Abkhazia) proved to be far removed from reality. On Tuesday 27 September the Foreign Ministry of Abkhazia issued a statement to the effect that Shevardnadze would be permitted to leave Abkhazia by the Commandment of the Armed Forces of Abkhazia. This fax was immediately forwarded upon receipt in England to the BBC World Service, whose *Newshour* programme nevertheless preferred to broadcast the much more sensational, though factually groundless, report from Alexis Rowell in Tbilisi [sic] that the threat to the life of Shevardnadze, who by this time was in hiding somewhere to the south of Sukhum, could be all too easily imagined... There can be no argument about this, as I was the one who forwarded the Abkhazian fax to Bush House and complained later the same day about their total neglect of it.

The world's press were quick to comment on the recapture of Abkhazia by the Abkhazian alliance, airily ascribing it to an assumed involvement of rogue Russian troops on the Abkhazian side. Whilst it cannot be denied that some individual Russian soldiers based in Abkhazia may have taken the opportunity to get their own back on the Georgians, whose anti-Russian sentiments were hardly a well-kept secret across the former Soviet Union, the Western media (as well as Foreign Ministries) totally underestimated from the start the extent to which the principled Abkhazian stance was supported not only by North Caucasian volunteers but also by most of the non-Kartvelian peoples of Abkhazia itself, who together made up the majority of Abkhazia's population, for all without exception were targets of rabid Georgian chauvinism. It was really only as late as 13 November 1993 with the publication in The Times Saturday Magazine of an article by Anatol Lieven (*Cavalier Attitudes*) that a more soberingly accurate assessment of Georgian attitudes appeared in the British press.

With the expulsion of most of the Georgian troops from the south of the territory on 30 September, many Kartvelians decided that it might be prudent not to be around when the victorious forces appeared in their villages, and many thousands upped and fled either towards Mingrelia or, more perilously, up the Kodor valley towards the already snow-covered mountains of Svanetia. Wildly exaggerated reports even suggested that as many as 200,000 might have left -- before the war the total number of Kartvelians in Abkhazia had been (only) 240,000. While it sadly has to be accepted that there were individual cases of vengeance-taking -- the blood-feud has never really died out in the Caucasus -- it is impossible to believe the charges from Tbilisi and its core of docile Western journalists, virtually all of whom had totally ignored all the cases of Georgian abuses committed during their 14 month occupation, that Abkhazians and their allies were actively pursuing a policy of ethnic cleansing. The preliminary findings of UNPO's second mission to Abkhazia (30 November - 10 December 1993) released in Moscow on 10 December confirmed that there was no evidence supporting the Georgian accusations of an Abkhazian genocide of Kartvelians.

In a by now typical knee-jerk reaction, the UN Security Council in Resolution 876 of 19 October condemned the Abkhazians for breaking the ceasefire and for alleged violations of international humanitarian law. The European Parliament on 22 November made its own unimpressive contribution by expressing its concern at Abkhazian aggression towards the Georgian [sic] city of Sukhum and by denouncing the Abkhazians, in the English version at least of the resolution, as a 'terrorist[!]-separatist movement'. Nevertheless, UN Ambassador Brunner brought the two sides (plus the Russians) together in Geneva at the end of November. Both sides agreed to solve their difficulties by peaceful means. This series of UN sponsored talks to find a final political solution continues in Geneva on 11 January 1994.

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## 4. Post-war Developments in, and Lessons from, Abkhazia

*'When she [England] proclaims herself the lover of peace at the expense of honour, when she asserts herself the friend of the powerful and the ally of the aggressor, she ceases to have a situation among mankind, not because her fleets are disarmed, but because her character has sunk'* (1853)
DAVID URQUHART
First Briton to visit and champion the cause of Circassia
(North West Caucasus)

Upto 18th March 1994 three rounds of UN-sponsored peace-talks between Abkhazian and Georgian negotiators (plus Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Pastukhov, as facilitator) had taken place in Geneva under the chairmanship of Boutros-Ghali's personal representative, Ambassador Edouard Brunner (30 Nov-1 Dec 1993, 11-13 Jan 1994, 22-24 Feb 1994). The first two rounds led to joint-communiques, wherein the parties agreed on such points as to refrain from further use of force, to exchange prisoners, to seek international support for keeping the peace and for aiding the return of refugees; the second communique specifically states under Clause 2: "Within five days after deployment in the zone of conflict, in accordance with a decision of the UN Security Council, of an additional number of international observers and following the arrival of peacekeeping forces the Parties shall carry out the withdrawal of all armed units, with their weapons and military equipment, from the Inguri River and other possible lines of active confrontation in the conflict zone to a distance to be determined by the officers commanding the peacekeeping forces and UNOMIG, with the agreement of the Parties. Simultaneously, international observers and peacekeeping forces will enter the areas thus formed." The political status of Abkhazia was not discussed during the first two rounds.

Following the second round of talks the Abkhazian delegation came to London and had a series of meetings with diplomats, journalists and NGOs at which they made it abundantly clear that the Abkhazians' own preferred option for the future status of their republic was total independence. However, they stressed that the ultimate decision would be taken by a referendum of all the population of Abkhazia to be carried out after the return of all refugees, which they thought could not be accomplished before the end of 1994. The Abkhazians, together with the other non-Kartvelian citizens of Abkhazia, it will be recalled, made up some 55% of the population of Abkhazia prior to the war, and the Abkhazians are as confident today as before the start of the war on 14 August 1992 that an absolute majority supports their attempt to free Abkhazia from the control of Tbilisi -- this is objectively confirmed by the report *The War in Abkhazia -- Its Consequences For The Greek Community* by Vlasis Agtzidis (Jan 1994), which states on page 1: "Although the Abkhazians constitute only 17% of the population of Abkhazia, they have on their side the majority of the total population." If, as the Abkhazians confidently expect, the vote goes against Abkhazia remaining a purely fictional autonomy within Georgia, it will then be expected that the international community will react in accordance with the statement of Russian Deputy Foreign Minister B.N. Pastukhov: "This [sc. Georgia's recognition by the UN, CSCE etc.. as an independent state

with inviolable frontiers] does not exclude the possibility of the secession of Abkhazia from membership of the Georgian state. However, this must come about on the basis of the freely expressed opinion of the majority of the population of Abkhazia in full accordance with international law" (p.53 *The White Book of Abkhazia*, quoting from *The Bulletin of the 10th Meeting of the Council of Nationalities of the 6th Session of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation, 30 April 1993*).

However, wording in Security Council Document SC/5780 of 31 Jan 1994 seems to suggest that the 'Great Powers' have arbitrarily decided already that a freely conducted plebiscite may only determine Abkhazia's future within Georgia's present boundaries. The relevant paragraph reads: "With the support of the Russian Federation and the CSCE, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy has unequivocally stated that international recognition would not be given to any entity that attempted to change international boundaries by force. However, a freely negotiated settlement, based on autonomy and approved in an internationally observed referendum taking place after the return of the previous multi-ethnic population, would command full international support." Does the UN have the right to pre-determine the decisions to be taken in a freely conducted referendum?

The problem of the refugees has led to one of the stalemates in the negotiations. In line with its distinctly pro-Georgian bias from the very beginning, the UN seems to have accepted without question the claims of the Georgian propagandists that a policy of 'ethnic cleansing' was unleashed against the Kartvelian population after the Abkhazian victory at the end of September 1993, allegedly leading to the emigration from Abkhazia of the entire Kartvelian population. Whilst it cannot be denied that large numbers did indeed flee, some quite recklessly over the already snow-covered mountains leading to Svanetia, this was largely not as a result of any deliberate policy to eject them but arose from fear of what might happen when Abkhazian forces arrived after an atrocity-ridden 14-month occupation by Shevardnadze's so-called 'troops' (for an account of these atrocities see Yuri Voronov *The War in Abkhazia (The Shevardnadze Regime in Contravention of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)*; *The White Book of Abkhazia;* and the Greek report already mentioned). The second mission to Abkhazia by The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples' Organisation (The Hague) in November 1993 could find no evidence of any ethnic cleansing perpetrated by regular Abkhazian troops. Having demonstrated its gullibility in swallowing whole the propaganda about the deliberate expulsion of Kartvelians, the UN speaks in the document already mentioned of there being 250,000 refugees (by implication from Abkhazia) inside Georgia (plus 50,000 in other countries). Now, given that the only ethnic group in Abkhazia that would have dared to uproot itself in favour of seeking refuge on Georgian soil (where fighting was raging between government-supporting militias and largely Mingrelian Zviadists) would be the Kartvelians, we have to ask how there can possibly be 250,000 such refugees in Georgia when the pre-war Kartvelian population of Abkhazia was only 239,872 (1989 census). Even if every last Kartvelian abandoned Abkhazia, there still could not be as many as 250,000 inside Georgia. The figure is a manifest exaggeration. The Abkhazians stated in London in January that they accept that no more than 100,000 Kartvelians fled to Georgia. There can, thus, be no question of 250,000 persons being allowed to cross from Georgia into the Republic of Abkhazia. In addition, they refuse to allow back anyone who was guilty of committing atrocities during the war or who currently serves in Georgia's so-called 'army'. The UN, siding yet again with Shevardnadze, inisisted on an unconditional blanket-return. The Georgian representative to the UN, P. Chkheidze, has argued that any other course would destabilise the area. One should, however, rather ask how stable the internal situation in Abkhazia would be, if known guilty individuals or serving military personnel re-appeared in the ethnically mixed villages that have been established since Beria began in the 1930s the forced importation of Mingrelians and others principally into the southern part of Abkhazia.

Sir David Hannay, British Ambassador to the UN, disingenuously states in the latest UN document: "Their [sc. the 250,000 refugees'] safe return would be a vital ingredient in restoring peace and stability in Georgia. The Abkhaz side should facilitate the return of the refugees and participate actively in arrangements to ensure the security of the refugees on their return." This comes from the representative of a government that knows full well that the Abkhazians are in no position whatsoever to spend their time ensuring any such thing, for their prime concern must be to preserve the safety of their own and other ethnic groups who were subjected to the horrors of the invasion of their homeland in August 1992 that ultimately created the mess in which the Kartvelian refugees now find themselves. The whole economy and infrastructure of Abkhazia has been destroyed and has to be rebuilt. As Abkhazian Plenipotentiary to Europe, Slava Chirikba, writes in a recent letter to Amnesty International: "Not a penny of the international humanitarian help, which is being provided to Georgia, reaches Abkhazia." And in a recent letter (10 Jan 1994) from Baroness Chalker to Lord Avebury of the Parliamentary Human Rights' Group in response to a request for information on the size and nature of any British and UN aid to Abkhazia and Georgia she declared: 'UNHCR judge the humanitarian situation in Abkhazia to be no worse than in Georgia. The Abkhazians have recently brought in a harvest'[47].

The Security Council in paragraph 12 of Take 2 of the above UN document "condemns any attempt to change the demographic composition of Abkhazia...including by re-populating it with persons not previously resident there." Presumably this statement is again made in response to Georgian claims that housing has been awarded to some of those who supported the Abkhazian side during the war from the North Caucasus and Turkey. Does the Security Council not recognise the dangers of the Georgians doing exactly what it is here condemning by

[47]It should be stressed that neither wheat nor barley grows in Abkhazia -- the only corn which grows here is maize, which of course does not produce flour for bread.

arguing that an exaggerated number be allowed to cross the River Ingur as refugees, when there could not possibly be 250,000 Kartvelians from Abkhazia currently on Georgian soil? Did the Security Council shew any unease about Georgian attempts to re-house in Sukhum residents of Georgia (proper) in houses abandoned by fleeing Abkhazians, Russians, Armenians and Greeks during the 14-month Georgian occupation? Many of those shewn fleeing on overcrowded planes by prize-winning (and pro-Georgian) ITN reports from the final days before the fall of Sukhum will have been just such 'new' residents of Abkhazia. And is the Security Council at all exercised by the fact that it was precisely demographic manipulation of Abkhazia by Stalin and Beria in the 1930s that led to the present preponderance of Kartvelians in Abkhazia in the first place[48]? The Greek report mentioned above alludes to a further fact, namely that it was Mingrelians who occupied Greek houses when the local Greek population was deported to Central Asia in the 1940s, houses that the Mingrelians never returned to their rightful owners after repatriation of the Greeks in the 1950s.

The UK itself provides an excellent example of how those merely suspected of terrorism can be confined to one part of the Kingdom with its exclusion-orders from the mainland employed against IRA activists in Northern Ireland. It is, thus, utter hypocrisy for Sir David Hannay to be arguing in the Security Council that the Abkhazians (victorious after all in a war they did not want and which was imposed on them by the very man the UN and Western governments are now so keen to support) should yield to unreasonable demands that would be anathema to any government.

The second and more important difficulty remains the future status of Abkhazia. After two days of negotiations in Geneva's third round of talks the two parties were apparently ready to sign a joint-communque -- N.B. the UN had stipulated that progress was necessary if the mandate of the UN observers was to be extended beyond the first days of March. Suddenly a phone-call from New York insisted on the insertion of an extra clause (Clause 6) stipulating that "the Sides solemnly respect the territorial integrity of Georgia". The new clause and other suggestions were quite unacceptable to the Abkhazians, who simply refused even to discuss them.

Although not participating in the actual negotiations, there were present in Geneva diplomatic representatives of the main states that have formed a worryingly biased association styled **The Friends of Georgia** (FOG), namely the USA (in the person of John M. Joyce, Minister-Counsellor of the State Dept.), France (in the person of Bernard Fassier, Ambassador to Georgia), Germany and the UK. Abkhazian negotiators report constant interference of a wholly negative kind from this grouping (with the backing of the Briton Derek Boothby, who sadly had been required by Boutros-Ghali at the last minute to take the place of his superior, Marrack Goulding).

The representative of the UNHCR, Dutchman Mr. van Ween(?), entirely accepted the Abkhazian points about war-criminals not being given free access to Abkhazia as refugees and the need to have a methodical and planned return of *bona fide* refugees. FOG endeavoured to pressure Mr. van Ween to side on both these points with the Georgian demands. Russian representative at the talks, Boris Pastukhov, openly declared the activity of FOG destructive and at one stage exchanged heated words with Joyce, accusing him of interference and intolerable pressure. Even Ambassador Brunner, whose patient role in the series of negotiations has been entirely praiseworthy, accepted that there was no point even trying to persuade the Abkhazians to reach a compromise on the content of the phone-call from New York. No communique was signed in Geneva, thanks to FOG[49], and the delegations were summoned to the UN's New York HQ on 7th March.

7th March was the day Shevardnadze had his meeting in Washington with Pres. Clinton. He subsequently gave an address to the Security Council on 9th March in which he spoke of the need to remove power from the hands of the current government of Abkhazia, whom he customarily and deprecatingly calls 'the

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[48]In the late 1940s P'avle Ingoroq'va, as detailed in section 3, published as a sort of (pseudo-)scholarly "justification" for a planned deportation of the entire Abkhazian nation a preposterous theory that claimed that the Abkhazians only arrived in Abkhazia in the 17th century; certain so-called scholars started to promote this theory again in the late 1980s. Not unnaturally the Abkhazians countered with statements (of the obvious) and proofs that they are the autochthonous inhabitants of the region, which is beyond dispute anyway in reputable scholarly circles. As an example of the twisted "logic" employed by Kartvelians in their anti-Abkhazian outpourings consider the following from a paper circulated at the UN on 26 Jan 1994 by Georgia's permanent representative, P. Chkheidze: "There is significant evidence that the preparation for an episode of ethnic cleansing in Abkhazia has been underway for many years. The Abkhaz mass media, scientific journals, etc... have consistently blamed Georgians for an alleged artificial reduction of the indigenous Abkhaz population. It became starkly obvious that the Georgian population was destined for elimination." By simply defending in academic argument your historical right to your homeland you become thereby the planner of ethnic cleansing... The more unsettling question is why the Ingoroqva hypothesis was so vigorously revived in the late 1980s in the first place, just at the moment when the unofficial leaders were lofting banners that read "Georgia for the Georgians!", and when Georgian 'scholars' were publishing articles attacking the high birthrate among Georgia's muslim (sc. Azerbaijani) population or writing that Georgia could tolerate only 5% of "guests"?...

[49]Contrast this fact with Shevardnadze's interpretation in a piece circulated by P. Chkheidze in New York on 26 Jan: "It is with profound gratitude that I commend their [UN, Russia, CSCE, FOG] efforts in Geneva to make a peaceful resolution possible. It is a pity that the Gudauta Group's response to these monumental efforts has been to initiate a new wave of genocide against Georgians in Abkhazia."

Gudauta Group' after the town in northern Abkhazia where the legitimate authorities of Abkhazia were forced to take refuge after the Georgian invasion of Sukhum, their capital. The very next day the Georgian Parliament voted to annul the Supreme Council of Abkhazia and spoke of the possibility of instituting criminal proceedings against the Abkhazian leadership. Taken together with the build-up of arms on the Georgian side of its border with Abkhazia and the fact that 1,500 saboteurs were sent into Abkhazia by the Georgians as part of the first 23,000 returnee refugees, it would seem that Shevardnadze is preparing the ground for his second military adventure into Abkhazia -- after all, no Western leader bothered to condemn him for undertaking the first, which cost at least 2,000 Abkhazian and 11,000 Kartvelian lives...

Pressure continued to be placed on the Abkhazians in New York, with the result that no new agreement was reached with the Georgians, whose delegation has been led from the start by Dzhaba Ioseliani[50]. His marauding militia goes under the name of the *Mkhedrioni* 'Knights', and he is widely seen as the real strong man of Georgia, given the military men/weaponry and mafia-style corruption that he oversees in Georgia. Pres. Ardzinba did, however, have valuable discussions with a number of individual diplomats.

One further point of disagreement concerns the placement of any UN peace-keeping forces that may be sent to Abkhazia. The Georgians (and, it goes without saying, FOG) want them spread throughout Abkhazia; the Abkhazians insists that they must be positioned according to the already signed agreement quoted above between the opposing sides (viz. essentially along the R. Ingur). A Reuter's report issued on 18 March quotes US Secretary of State Warren Christopher actually agreeing with this point of view: "I think the [proposed Georgia] mission would be to maintain a separation between the parties, between the Abkhazians and the Georgians. There's a fairly natural line of separation there, I understand, and the main mission would be to try to keep the peace in Abkhazia but can probably do that most effectively through some sort of barrier there to prevent troops flowing back and forth between Abkhazia and Georgia." Such elementary common sense sadly has thus far not been in evidence in the Security Council's deliberations on this matter: in his latest report(S/1994/312), also dated 18 March, Boutros-Ghali states in paragraph 10: "Nor has it yet been possible to identify any measures that might create a more propitious climate for efforts to resolve issues that at present seem intractable. The level of tension in the area remains high, and there is an increasing risk of return of war." Surely the logical way of decreasing tension and lessening the risk of war is to interpose neutral peace-keepers between the two parties divided across a natural barrier, namely the R. Ingur, at once before the conflict is re-ignited?

Territorial Integrity

The UN arbitrarily and somewhat high-handedly determined a couple of years ago that the only changes to post-1945 state-boundaries that it was prepared to countenance concerned the dissolution into their constituent republics of both Yugoslavia and the USSR (sc. other than changes mutually agreed by both/all parties, as in the case of Czechoslovakia). This meant, for example, that hitherto purely administrative Soviet borders suddenly in 1991/92 acquired the status of international frontiers -- no thought was evidently given in the West to the justification of these frontiers. If the world-powers through the UN had taken their responsibilities to prevent conflict seriously at that time, they would have put meaningful pressure on dangerously nationalist governments in some of these new states in order to ensure proper treatment of minorities and avoid the threatening ethnic conflicts. No attempt was made to do this in the case of Georgia -- on the contrary, a blind eye was deliberately turned to the internal situation within Georgia as soon as Eduard Shevardnadze returned there in March 1992. It was this self-same Shevardnadze who unleashed the Abkhazian war in a vain attempt to rally behind him the supporters of the then still legitimate president of Georgia, (the now late) Zviad Gamsakhurdia, in the western province of Mingrelia against 'the common enemy', the Abkhazians. Since it was Western short-sightedness that placed Abkhazia within the internationally agreed borders of Georgia, and since it was the West which refused to condemn Shevardnadze's military escapade in Abkhazia[51], it is surely time that the West grasped the nettle and acknowledged that the sterile principle of territorial integrity cannot be the be-all-and-end-all of international relations to which all other considerations must be subordinated, and that, if all refugees (apart from war-criminals) can be repatriated and a free plebiscite conducted, any majority-vote for independence from Georgia and its burdgeoning nationalism will be accepted by the international community (sc. regardless of the view in Tbilisi), just as happened in the case of Eritrea. By constantly placing its authority at the service of buttressing a notoriously wily and unprincipled politician -- Shevardnadze's Georgian sobriquet is *tetri melia* 'White Fox' -- Western diplomacy is simply bringing itself into disrepute[52].

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[50]A copy of this ex-criminal's sentence to 25 years' imprisonment in 1956 for armed robbery is now available in the West.

[51]If anything, it is the Abkhazians who are censured for allegedly causing the invasion of their own homeland, whereas they did and are doing all in their power to act constitutionally to achieve a new *modus vivendi* with their neighbour to the advantage of all the ethnic groups who dwell in the Republic of Abkhazia, a fact for which they have earned nothing but neglect and contempt from the high-minded Western powers.

[52]This will perhaps surprise no-one after the tragic farce of Bosnia. Putting aside the generally accepted fact that it was Germany's lunatic insistence on the precipitate recognition of Croatia that sparked off the whole thing, the difference is that, if in Bosnia it was the Europeans (and primarily the British) who carry the main responsibility for the debacle by refusing to countenance and sanction appropriate action at the right time, the whole world (notably America and Germany) sides with the bully over Abkhazia.

Cronyism as Determiner of Western Foreign Policy

Whilst 'territorial integrity' may be the currently supreme sacred cow for international diplomacy, the main reason why (for example) Azerbaijan has escaped serious censure over Nagorno Karabagh is surely the presence in Baku of oil. Equally the fundamental reason why Georgia avoids condemnation over Abkhazia manifestly resides in the personage of Shevardnadze as head of state, fancifully viewed according to conventional 'wisdom' as a democrat and thus a possible stabilising force in a turbulent region. This conventional 'wisdom' is in reality nothing but a frightening product of ignorance and naivety[53]. The ignorance concerns the essential nature of Georgia, its culture, its politics and its leader. The country is an inherently unstable patchwork of peoples, of whom the Georgians (in the true sense of the term) constitute around a mere 55% of the population (the remaining 16% of Kartvelians being made up of Mingrelians and Svans). Their sense of their own self-importance (so attractive as Mediterranean-style bravado to casual Western visitors) is deemed offensive by non-Kartvelians both within Georgia and elsewhere in the Caucasus. When this sense of ethnic superiority combines with the politics of nationalism, the resulting heady mixture can spell disaster, and that is precisely what has happened since 1988/89 -- bloody wars in both South Ossetia and Abkhazia have rendered both provinces *de facto* independent of Tbilisi; the Armenian flag reportedly flies in the Armenian populated area of Georgia (sc. south-west of Tbilisi towards the frontier with Armenia); clashes between Georgians and Azerbaijanis in the Azerbaijani area of Georgia (sc. south of Tbilisi) have caused Baku to make representations to Tbilisi; the Muslim Georgian province of Ajaria on the Turkish border, whilst claiming no political independence, is reported to be financially totally outside the control of Georgia's central government; Gamsakhurdia was responsible for the expulsion from eastern Georgia of a number of Daghestani (? North East Caucasian) residents, with the result that Georgia is viewed with hostility throughout the whole North Caucasus, where the North Ossetians as well as the Circassian and Abazinian cousins of the Abkhazians reside. Shevardnadze was loathed as an unpatriotic and extreme pro-Russian (and pro-Brezhnev) Party Boss from 1972 to 1985. His claims to being a liberal democrat fool no-one in Georgia and the Caucasus, where he is seen as a typical communist opportunist --his overwhelming vote in the elections of October 1992 (itself, of course, so reminiscent of the results of communist 'elections') can easily be explained by the fact that he was the only candidate and presented as the 'last' hope for a country already sliding into chaos. His and/or Georgian hegemony in the Caucasus will simply not be tolerated by other Caucasians, and his country's subsequent nose-dive into corruption, narcotics and total anarchy following his return belie any claim he may make (or his Western friends may make for him) to be able to (?re-)establish any local order -- his government of former apparatchiks cannot even control the streets of the capital Tbilisi, and this despite their well-honed repressive tactics against oppositionists in general and opposition-papers in particular[54].

We come now to the naivety. The West, especially the CIA (as acknowledged publicly by Shevardnadze himself), has given and is giving Shevardnadze strong backing -- we alluded above to the creation of The Friends of Georgia, and Pres. Jimmy Carter has (most ill-advisedly in view of his commitment to human rights elsewhere in the world) consented to be honorary chairman of an American-based initiative called **Support Democracy**[55] **in Georgia**, which includes such notables as James Baker[56], George Schulz, Zbigniew Brzhezhinski *et al*. What could possibly be the aim of such backing? In a revealing article on the nature of life today inside Georgia Misha Glenny[57] reports a conversation with a mysterious American in Tbilisi: 'Georgia is moving further up the agenda

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[53]There is not a single Georgian specialist (i.e. reader of Georgian) in the British Foreign Office or State Department (or, I suspect, in any other Western Foreign Ministry) who can truly say he has a deep understanding of Georgian culture and attitudes. And so, on what basis of knowledge and fact is Western policy being made?

[54]See, for example, the report by Alexander Kokeev of the Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konflikt-Forschung entitled **Der Kampf um das Goldene Vlies** (Frankfurt, 1993), pages 31-32, where reference is also made to a press-handout of 28 May 1993 from the Internationale Gesellschaft fuer Menschenrechte (IGFM).

[55]If one were truly interested in supporting democracy in Georgia, one would hardly look to those long corrupted by their active role in the very building of communism. On a wider scale in the Caucasus the West would be well advised to ally itself with those honestly labouring to build new co-operative structures on real democratic principles, as, for example, the Confederation of Peoples of the Caucasus, formerly the Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus, led by Prof. Yuri Shanibov, a Circassian from Nalchik.

[56]A documentary film by freelance film-maker Chris Wenner that is highly critical of Shevardnadze and (possibly for this reason) remains unshewn in the UK includes footage of James Baker addressing a crowd in Tbilisi in 1992. He was there to give personal support to his close friend Shevardnadze, and so strong is the bond between the two that Baker was manifestly unconcerned at the shots that could plainly be heard emanating from a counter, pro-Gamsakhurdia demonstration but a short distance away as Shevardnadze's men openly fired on the unarmed crowd. What does this tell us about James Baker's commitment to democracy and its concomitant tolerance of pluralism?... He appeared again in Tbilisi on 19 March in a further attempt to boost Shevardnadze's popularity, stressing his 'democratic' credentials. But no amount of Texan rhetoric or CIA backing can create popularity for a foreign leader whose people know him better and judge him accordingly.

[57]**The Bear in the Caucasus** in the March 1994 issue of Harper's Magazine, pp. 45-53. The article begins with a grizzly description of the summary execution by Mkhedrioni thugs of 9 supposed looters attended by none other than Eduard Shevardnadze. 'According to a recent emergency-decree issued by Georgia's leader, former Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze, looters could be executed on the spot. Nine bullets for nine criminals:

of American-Russian relations...I think people in Washington are getting a little concerned at the activity of the bear down here' (p.52). So here we have it -- if Russia is suspected of manoeuvring to re-assert control over, or just influence in, Georgia, America and those tied to her coat-tails have to act to thwart this[58]. Should this be judged to entail the knee-jerk bolstering of an unsavoury regime (and the CIA is no stranger to this sort of operation, after all), so be it, whilst the rights and interests of anyone else in the area (such as Georgia's various minorities) must be simply sacrificed to this 'greater good'. Blind allegiance to individual flawed leaders has led to failure with costs many times in the past and will do so again, unless the lessons of experience are finally learned.

There is, however, a slight flaw in the logic. If the almost total exclusion of Russia from Georgian affairs was what America and the West wanted, they would have been better able to help achieve this goal by backing Zviad Gamsakhurdia, but his maniacal and nationalist demagoguery was (rightly) too much for them to stomach. Yet instead of taking an active interest in seeking contacts with truly forward-thinking individuals and groups, the West collectively just sat back and let the tide of nationalism swell. But as soon as the master-fixer returned to his home-republic in March 1992, the West could hardly contain its collective ecstasy and rushed to admit his country, in which nothing of substance was altering (save for the worse), to all the best clubs, such as the UN, the IMF and World Bank -- The Council of Europe has mercifully not yet compromised its standards with regard to Georgia's request for membership, though NATO has now welcomed Georgia into its Partnership for Peace initiative. However, as we have already seen, Shevardnadze was reviled for his pro-Russian inclinations during his period as Party Boss in Georgia, and it has always been my personal view that his surprise-resignation as Soviet Foreign Minister in 1990 had nothing whatsoever to do with fears of either a coup or opposition from the Soviet military establishment, as everyone has accepted with predictable gullibility, but had everything to do with his aim of one day returning to lead Georgia -- he knew that Russia would never allow another Georgian to take over the reins of state after their experiences with Stalin, and thus his career, if it was to progress beyond the rank of foreign minister, would probably have to end where it began, down in the Caucasus. The way the situation was developing in his home-republic, it was likely that there would be a further crackdown in Tbilisi, and after the killings on 9th April 1989, when Soviet troops responded to a request by Shevardnadze's successor as Party Boss in Tbilisi, Dzhumber Patiashvili, and brutally broke up a demonstration that had paralysed the city for three days, Shevardnadze could not be seen to be linked to any such repeat occurrence -- many Georgians believe(d) him of being involved in the first. Had he truly wanted to help his 'friend' Gorbachev fight those he claimed threatened *perestrojka*, leaving his comrade in the lurch in such a public way was hardly the best way of achieving this -- unless, of course, we are to assume that is simply to help the captain that rats desert sinking ships. Whether Shevardnadze actually masterminded the illegal coup in Tbilisi that led to his return there is open to debate, but, as has been said, he would not be the consummate politician he is, if he had not kept in close touch with the ring-leaders. As someone whose fate had always been dependent on goodwill in the Kremlin, it was likely that he would not follow the isolationist-policy of his ousted predecessor as regards Georgia's northern neighbour. And despite adopting something of his predecessor's nationalist mantle (especially over Abkhazia), he was in no hurry to see the departure of the Russian troops stationed on Georgian soil -- he needed them as a counterbalance to the increasingly unbridled behaviour of Tengiz Kitovani, who controlled the National Guard, and Dzhaba Ioseliani, who controlled (and still controls) the Mkhedrioni. After the return of Abkhazia to Abkhazian control and the start of Gamsakhurdia's march eastward from his home-base in Mingrelia in the autumn of 1993, Shevardnadze finally acted to save his skin by joining the CIS in the face of widespread and virulent opposition that continues to this day and now talks about the necessity of Russian troops preserving order not only in the provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia but everywhere throughout Georgia, just as it was Russian 'humanitarian' assistance that brought about the prompt collapse of Gamsakhurdia's threat. Further Russian support came with Yeltsin's visit to Tbilisi to sign a new Russo-Georgian treaty in January, hailed somewhat pompously by Shevardnadze as the most significant event in Georgia's history for 200 years -- did he have in mind the 1783 Treaty of Giorgievsk that first brought Georgia into alliance with Russia and which is reviled today for that very reason by virtually every Georgian? By its mishandling of the situation the West seems to have brought about exactly what the CIA says it fears, namely the greater involvement of the Russian Bear in the White Fox's lair. Reports suggest that popular

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quick, simple and nasty. Surrounded by his bodyguards, shivering in the cold, Shevardnadze himself watched as the men were shot.' Just one of the ironies in this vignette resides in the fact, well-known to readers of reports from Georgia in 1993 by Suzanne Goldenberg of The Guardian or Anatol Lieven of The Times, that the Mkhedrioni are perhaps the grandest thieves of them all. Shevardnadze's own predilection for the executioner's bullet is nothing new to seasoned Georgia-watchers who will recall his total lack of compunction when, determinedly currying favour with the Kremlin, he had a group of prankster-hijackers executed in 1984 following a badly mishandled incident in Tbilisi in November 1983; it was only in 1989 that the relatives were officially informed that the executions had taken place 5 years earlier... See two letters in the spring 1992 edition of the Paris-based Georgian-language journal *Gushagi* 'Sentinel' by Vazha Iverieli, professor of endocrinology and father of two of the executed, and Elisabed Chikhladze, daughter of (according to her) a totally innocent though dissident priest later implicated in the ruse and shot.

[58]Could this be why Minister/Counsellor John M. Joyce reportedly resorted to such hyperbole as telling the Abkhazian delegation at the 3rd round of Geneva talks that the future of Russo-US relations, and even of world-peace [sic], was in the hands of tiny Abkhazia? And is it embarrassment at their government's simplistic approach to the making of foreign policy that causes Ambassador Ray Seitz and Caucasus-observer Geoff Chapman at the American Embassy in London to fail not merely to answer specific questions addressed to them about American policy towards Georgia but even to acknowledge receipt of the letters?

opinion throughout Russia backs the Abkhazian position -- Russians after all know the Georgians a good deal better than the mass of Western diplomats and politicians, whose attitude is conditioned by superficial knowledge of just one Georgian. Whatever game Yeltsin's government is playing in Georgia, there is no way that his treaty with Shevardnadze is going to be ratified by the Russian Parliament, but there are rumours that more military equipment even so is being made available to Tbilisi in accordance with the terms of the treaty. Yeltsin's position appears to be growing daily weaker, and, given the widespread hostility in Russia to his policy of support for his former fellow Brezhnevite sycophant (but nowadays fellow 'democrat') in Tbilisi, he may have to reconsider Moscow's role in Georgia. Perhaps, though, and this is the frightening thought, it is not Yeltsin's backing for the bullies in Tbilisi that upsets the CIA, but the fact that those who sought and are still seeking constitutionally to create an equitable multi-ethnic Abkhazia are the ones who have won the popular approval of the mass of Russians. The West managed to connive in the disintegration of the only ethnically harmonious former Yugoslav republic by failing to stand up to the nationalist bullies in Belgrade and Zagreb; the same mistake has been and is still being made in the case of Abkhazia. The West seems to regard minorities as expendable nuisances[59] -- if this is so, the multitude of minorities that constitute the population of the Caucasus had better take note. Alternatively, the West could wake up to the reality of the situation and conclude that its own interests will best be served in the long run not by buttressing bullies but by putting pressure on them[60] to respect rather than trample on minority rights.

Shevardnadze, as is his wont, continues to tailor his statements to his audience of the hour. This is well illustrated in a long article on Shevardnadze's January visit to Paris by Andrei Krikov in the Paris-based Russian-language weekly *Russkaja Mysl'* 'Russian Thought' (No.4014, 27 Jan - 2 Feb 1994, pp. 1&5), entitled *Shevardnadze demonstrates his "high artistry" in Paris.* At home and in Moscow he praises the actions of Russia as a stabilising force for Georgia and actively presses for ever greater Russian invovlement in Georgia; in France and the West in general he fans suspicions of Russian intentions for the Caucasus and seeks Western assistance to counterbalance Russia's might. In Washington Shevardnadze and Clinton issue a joint-statement expressing alarm at the rise of nationalism in Russia, when in reality Georgia itself was perhaps the very first of the Soviet republics to travel down this dangerous road, thereby setting a model for others to follow, and Shevardnadze's behaviour towards Abkhazia was nothing other than an extension of Gamsakhurdia's abstract chauvinist rhetoric and concrete war-mongering in South Ossetia. Shevardnadze has most recently suggested that it is CIS forces that he wants to see deployed in Abkhazia -- this statement was made following the CIS summit in mid-April, at which time he also threatened to resort again to military means to get his way in Abkhazia, thereby going against all of his commitments in the Geneva negotiations.

By so intimately associating itself and its interests with one man (? Shevardnadze), or one ethnic group (? the Georgians), within the Caucasus, the West is succeeding only in alienating all the other ethnic groups who live there. If the West is truly interested in democracy, it would be well advised to ask if it is really backing a force for democracy in its present Georgian champion. If Western diplomats in Tbilisi cannot see what is happening before their very eyes, they are incompetent and should be replaced. If they are reporting accurately and their reports are being dismissed by their political masters for 'higher' considerations, then one can only wonder what these considerations might be, given all that we have said about the current Georgian leader and the situation in Georgia. If despite all counter-evidence the only thing that appeals to Western policy-makers is the fact that Shevardnadze's smile replaced the scowl of his predecessor Andrei Gromyko at a time when internal contradictions within the USSR finally gave the West its 'victory' in the Cold War, and if cronyism has become the main determiner of inter-state relations, then those who looked to the West as a model for the building of a civil society during the long years of communist repression may be forgiven if they are forced to conclude that really all the West offers them is a new set of base principles and practices in exchange for the ones they already know only too well. David Urquhart's observation at the start of these pages is sadly as valid today as it was when he penned the passage over a century ago.

## Postscript

Over the Easter weekend events took a rather suprising turn. Boutros-Ghali spent a number of days in Moscow. The Paris-based *Russkaja Mysl'* of 7-13th April reported that Sheverdnadze annulled his Parliament's resolution to disband Abkhazia's Supreme Council. On Easter Monday (4th April) in the presence of Boutros-Ghali, Ambassador Brunner and other dignitaries attended the signing in Moscow of two agreements between the parties to the conflict -- Kavsadze, not Ioseliani, signed for the Georgians. Significantly both documents were in essence identical to those that had been ready for signing in Geneva prior to the above-mentioned interference by the Friends of Georgia -- there was no mention of the recognition of Georgia's territorial integrity, and there is to be no return from Georgian soil of those who (i) took up arms during the conflict, (ii) are now members of the Georgian military, (iii) committed crimes or human rights' abuses during the war. A commission is to be established to oversee the return of refugees, and a peacekeeping force is to be put in place, though its placement

[59]Though with Douglas Hurd now describing the Britons as a minority within the EU, the UK's attitude at least may be due for a change.

[60]Reports suggest that the latest seemingly positive developments in Bosnia and Croatia are supposed to have been conditioned by just such pressure on Zagreb.

has yet to be determined. Would it be correct to conclude from this that the prognosis might at long last be for an all-round improvement in conditions following the lifting of FOG in the region?

## 5. Future Policy in the Region

Had the British Prime Minister of the day, Lord Palmerston, taken the advice of David Urquhart in the 1830s and committed Britain to a principled stand in defence of the right of the Caucasian mountaineers to preserve their way of life in peace and freedom, the North Caucasians might never have been forced into the Russian Empire with the concomitant loss of most of the North West Caucasian population in the diaspora. Cut off from easy access to its Transcaucasian territories, Russia's grip there too might have weakened. Had that happened, perhaps the entire area would have been spared the horrors of Bolshevism, and maybe the Georgian Dzhughashvili would never have had the opportunity to introduce Stalinism to the world... But in the event British policy was made on the basis of Palmerston's ignorance rather than on the urgings of those like Urquart who knew the situation on the ground.

Presented with a unique opportunity to do something positive both for this region and other Soviet territories in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet system in 1991, Western foreign ministers lacked the knowledge on which to formulate appropriate action. Their totally inadequate response was to recognise (some sooner, some later) as independent states only the 15 former constituent union-republics of the former USSR with their existing borders and then to insist that territorial integrity had to be observed by all who had grievances with this or that local government in this or that state. In all honesty who can believe that only the 14 non-Russian republics deserve(d) to be classified as Muscovite colonies? Whom are our politicians and diplomats deceiving by pretending that none of the peoples across the vast tracts that make up the Russian Federation regard themselves as Russian colonies or that all are thoroughly satisfied with having been consigned to permanent domination by whoever controls Moscow (€democratic‹ Yeltsin or €fascist‹ Zhirinovsky or others)? By continuing to turn our backs on the rights of peoples in preferences to the perceived necessity of preserving states, however artificial these constructs may be, we are only storing up trouble for the future.

The Abkhazians have given the world a vivid demonstration that small peoples will not just lie down and let the oppressor trample them under foot when faced with possible extinction, however inconvenient this may be for the world-community to accept. Threatened with the final loss of the territory that every objective observer acknowledges to be theirs at the very moment when they should have been able to celebrate the removal of the dead hand of Soviet communism, they and their all too often forgotten allies made a stand against their particular aggressor and, despite all the odds, they won. If the world's leading powers really want to reconcile their insistence on territorial integrity with what they claim are their concerns for the welfare of minorities, then they have to put meaningful pressure on governments in those states where territorial integrity is threatened by ethnic unrest. Perhaps not in every case, but probably in most, ethnic tension is caused by the actions of the local majority towards the local minority/minorities. This was certainly the case with the crazed nationalistic rhetoric that sprang up in Tbilisi in the late 1980s and created so much resentment especially among the South Ossetians and the Abkhazians. And this is why I said earlier that the resulting wars in these regions could have been avoided -- if wiser councils were unable to prevail through the actions of local political forces, then pressure should have been put upon the relevant authorities by those in a position to do so, namely the Western governments and institutions whose financial clout is so important to new states struggling to find their feet. If it is argued that nothing could have been done with regard to brewing hostilities in both Nagorno-Karabagh and Georgia while Moscow was still in nominal control of these regions, this has not applied since 1991. But it seems to be deemed more important to win oil-contracts with Baku than to put pressure on Azerbaijan to sort out the problem of Nagorno-Karabagh, and certainly in Georgia since March 1992 no demonstrable pressure has been put on €the West's friend‹ to encourage him to settle ethnic conflicts peacefully -- quite the reverse. Virtually all of Shevardnadze's activities have not merely been tolerated, one could argue that they have been positively encouraged. Politicians and diplomats who prefer to squat on the moral low ground are fond of preaching that outsiders should never get involved in civil wars and in this way seemingly salve their consciences for sitting back while the bloodshed rages. But these individuals quite fail to appreciate that their ill-considered decisions often do involve them directly: if the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict is a civil war, it is so only because of the international community's uninformed decision to place Abkhazia within the internationally recognised borders of Georgia. Subsequently the totally unworthy decision to recognise Georgia in the wake of an illegal coup and six months before the elections that could have given a fig-leaf of legitimacy to the new authorities coupled with Georgia's membership of the UN during this interregnum presented the unsavoury regime in Tbilisi with a virtual *carte blanche* to do as it wished vis-a'-vis the problem brewing in Abkhazia[61]. Thereafter it was only the official Georgian authorities who had the right to have their voice heard in Western foreign ministries and at the UN. Thus does the West stack the cards and connive in actions it superficially condemns.

There simply has to be an acceptance that all of the peoples in a region have a right for their voices to be heard. In the Caucasus, furthermore, the resolution of some at least of the many problems may well entail changes to borders that should not have been set so rashly in international law by precipitate decisions taken in 1991-92. It is, of course, not only in the Caucasus that minorities have grievances -- Tibetans, Kurds, East Timorese, Catholics in Northern Ireland, etc... -- and, if the concept €world-community‹ is to have any real meaning, some

[61]Similarly in Bosnia the arms-embargo, so popular with HMG, really only affected the Muslims.

mechanism must be put in place whereby that community can 'interfere' in individual states' internal affairs for the specific purpose of safeguarding minorities before local disputes explode into senseless slaughter.

But we are primarily concerned with the Caucasus, and I mention first Nagorno-Karabagh. This province should never have been split off from Armenia, and until this fact is openly admitted, there will be no solution. Reunion with Armenia would, for the foreseeable future, mean too much loss of face for Azerbaijan. And so, some sort of international protectorate would most probably have to be offered, no doubt with financial sweeteners to persuade Baku to accept not only that this is the one way to stop the seemingly endless spiral of madness but that re-establishment of peace is ultimately in the interests of Azerbaijan itself.

Whereas the Abkhazians were willing to institute a new era in their post-Soviet relations with Tbilisi on a federative basis in 1992[62], too much blood has surely been spilled for even this to be considered a viable possibility now -- even without South Ossetia and Abkhazia I suspect that Georgia will only be able to survive if it transforms itself from the present pretence of being a unitary state into some sort of looser (con)federation. To prevent even more bloodshed properly supervised UN-forces must be introduced now along the Ingur to prevent any further resorting to arms by the Georgian side, to supervise a controlled return of the refugees and to oversee the preparation for the desired referendum -- if the West really believes in democracy, it has now an excellent opportunity to create the appropriate conditions for a democratic choice to be made.

Russia, naturally, has its own interests in the region, but it must not follow from this that the feelings of the indigenous inhabitants have to be ignored. Since 1989 the North Caucasian peoples (including the Abkhazians) have been taking steps to coo/perate, first through the Assembly of North Caucasian Mountain Peoples, which became a Confederation in 1992, eventually dropping the word 'Mountain' from its title. The constitution of this organisation, as accepted in November 1991 is given as Appendix 2 to this presentation. Quite exceptionally it displays a serious attempt for peoples actually to come together and work harmoniously for their own mutual benefit, and this at a time when everywhere else both in the Transcaucasus and other parts of the former USSR ethnic tensions have been forcing neighbours into armed conflict with one another. The North Caucasians, as must be obvious from even a superficial acquaintance with the facts given in fl2, have suffered dreadfully under both Imperial and Soviet Russia, and they realise that now is the time for them to make a stand in defence of their natural and historical rights to self-determination, for, if they do not succeed now, that chance may never return. If it does prove possible for greater coo/peration with Russia through NATO's Partnership for Peace and similar initiatives in the future, there may be an opportunity here for the West to encourage Moscow to take a more generous view of North Caucasian aspirations for greater control over their own affairs -- already after a long stand-off following Chechenia's unilateral declaration of independence there are reports that Moscow may indeed be willing to come to some sort of mutually advantageous agreement with Pres. Dudaev in Grozny. This, if true, is a most welcome development. At the same time the North Caucasians undoubtedly realise that they cannot exist without some sort of close relationship with Russia, and so Moscow would assuredly not be completely excluded from the area and thus would not entirely lose influence in a region it sees as important to Russia's security. But it will be beneficial for all (indigenous North Caucasians, local Russians, and even Russia itself) if everyone's concerns are accommodated and not just those of Moscow. If it is only Moscow's concerns to which the West is going to attach any importance, the North Caucasus could become as troublesome for Moscow as Abkhazia has been for Georgia. If, on the other hand, the West demonstrates that it is prepared to stand up for the rights of the North Caucasian minorities in determined dialogue with Moscow, this will create a favourable view of the West in the area. Should the West ignore the grievances of these peoples, as it has appeared to be willing to do so far, then one can perhaps envisage closer ties being sought with others who might like to revive their historical involvement in what remains a part of Europe, such as Iran and Turkey. Is this what the West wants to see? Would this lead to the stability the West evidently craves?

With the West and its institutions standing up for the rights of the weak, even the local €mini-empires‹ may at last be constrained to see that it is to their own long-term advantage as well to restrain their excesses, accept the realities of the situation, even if this means some loss of territory they (notionally) hold at present, and help build the peaceful, stable and thus prosperous Caucasus -- the tourist-potential is tremendous -- that we should all be striving to create on this alluring outpost of our continent.

My one global recommendation for concrete action relating to the Caucasus is, thus, that Britain take the initiative in convening the first of what should in all probability be a series of international conferences on 'The Peoples and Problems of the Caucasus' at either the European or UN level where all local peoples and interested parties will have the opportunity to make known their aspirations both to their hosts (who are in manifest need of this intelligence) and to one another. This will start the education-process for the Western political and diplomatic communities, so that future policies will be predicated on fact and understanding rather than on the present wishful fantasies. The Caucasians themselves will feel that they and their legitimate worries are no longer being neglected, and with an international forum where these worres may be articulated, debated and, ideally, resolved, they should be less inclined to resort to the kalashnikov. Commitment, imagination and, yes, cash (to reconstruct communities already devastated by war, to build viable post-Soviet economies, to instruct in the ways of creating non-communist state-structures, to facilitate a return of North Caucasian diaspora-communities, etc...) will be absolutely essential, but the effort and outlay could well be a small price to pay -- we see before our eyes every night on the television-screen a vivid picture in the Balkans of what collective vacillation, lack of vision and appeasement of bullies can produce and may yet produce in the Caucasus...

Appendix 1

[62]The text of the draft-treaty they offered the Georgians is given as Appendix 1 below.

T.M. SHAMBA, DOCTOR OF LAW*

# TREATY

on the Principles for Mutual Relations between the Republic of Abkhazia
and the Republic of Georgia
(Proposal for the Project)

In accordance with the Declaration of the State Sovereignty of Georgia and the State Sovereignty of Abkhazia, until the adoption of new Constitutions, the official delegations of both republics, hereafter referred as *The Sides*, have as a result of talks agreed to the following:

1. The Sides declare their wish to:
strengthen the mutual respect and friendship of the Georgian and Abkhazian peoples;
develop the socio-economic and cultural ties;
expand coo/peration into all spheres of life on equal and mutually beneficial conditions;
strictly observe human rights and liberties, including the rights of national minorities;
probihit hostility and international discord, use of force or threat to use force;
refrain from interference in the internal affairs of each other;
respect territorial integrity;
cater for the satisfaction of national, cultural, spiritual, linguistic and other requirements of all the peoples living on the territory of Georgia and Abkhazia.

2. The Sides recognise Georgia and Abkhazia as sovereign states and full and equal participants of international and foreign economic relations, as well as agreements with other republics and regions of the Russian Federation and the other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The Sides will independently conclude treaties and agreements with other countries which should not cause damage or be directed against the other Side.

3. The Republic of Abkhazia of its own free will unites with the Republic of Georgia and possesses all legislative, executive and judicial power on its own territory apart from those plenary powers which are assigned by the Constitutions of Georgia and Abkhazia to the jurisdiction of the Republic of Georgia.

In the Constitutions are listed those plenary powers which are effected jointly by the organs of state-power of Georgia and Abkhazia.

4. The territory and status of the two sovereign states cannot be changed without their consent, expressed by their supreme organs of government or by a plebiscite (referendum).

5. The land, its mineral wealth, waters, flora and fauna are the property of the peoples living on the territory of Abkhazia.

Questions concerning the possession, use and exploitation of the natural resources are regulated by the laws of Georgia and Abkhazia and also are settled on the basis of bilateral agreements.

6. The governmental bodies of the Republic of Abkhazia will take part in the realisation of the plenary powers of the Republic of Georgia and have their own representation in its organs of power.

7. On questions of joint-authority the organs of governmental power will issue the Fundamentals (general principles) of the legislative system in accordance with which the organs of power of Abkhazia will independently effect legal regulation.

Projects for the Fundamentals of the legislative system will be sent to Abkhazia, and her suggestions will be taken into account when they are revised.

8. The Constitution and laws of Abkhazia will enjoy supremacy on the territory of the Republic of Abkhazia.

The laws of Georgia in matters which are under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Georgia are mandatory on the territory of Abkhazia, provided they do not contradict the Constitution and laws of Abkhazia.

The Fundamentals for the legislative system of Georgia, issued on questions of joint-management, will come into power on the territory of Abkhazia after their approval by the supreme organs of state-power of the Republic of Abkhazia.

9. The Republic of Georgia recognises the citizenship of the Republic of Abkhazia.

The Sides guarantee to their citizens equal rights, liberties and responsibilities, declared by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reflected in international-judicial acts and in the Constitutions of Georgia and Abkhazia.

Discrimination on the basis of national identity, religion or any other difference is prohibited.

Each Side shall protect the rights of its citizens irrespective of the place of their residence or sojourn, providing them with comprehensive help and support. In this the Sides shall coo/perate with each other.

Matters concerning the acquisition or loss of citizenship of one of the Sides by persons living on the territory of the other Side are regulated by the laws of citizenship of Georgia and Abkhazia.

10. The Sides confirm the agreement reached previously concerning the creation on the territory of Abkhazia of the unified multi-national Abkhazian Guard, subordinated to the Supreme Council of Abkhazia and, at times of general threat to or attack upon them, to the Ministry of Defence of Georgia.

The Sides commit themselves not to create any military formations on nationality lines and directed against the other Side.

11. In case of disputes the Sides commit themselves conscientiously and in the spirit of coo/peration to make every effort to settle them in the shortest possible time on the basis of legislation actually in force or, in the absence of such legislation, on the basis of the principles and norms of international law.

The procedure for the settlement of disputes shall be determined by the Sides arising out of the prevailing circumstances.

12. The Abkhazian Side declares its readiness to participate in the drawing up of a new Constitution for the Republic of Georgia and the constitutional laws resulting therefrom.

The Georgian Side regards this declaration with understanding and considers the participation of the representatives of the Republic of Abkhazia as well as the representatives of the other nations and peoples residing on the territory of Georgia essential in the drawing up of the new Constitution and constitutional laws of the Republic of Georgia.

13. The Sides have agreed to have permanent plenipotentiary representations -- the Republic of Georgia in the city of Sukhum, the Republic of Abkhazia in the city of Tbilisi.

14. The Sides do not exclude the possibility of additional inter-parliamentary, inter-governmental or other treaties and agreements concerning specific questions of coo/peration and mutual relations between the Sides.

15. The present Treaty comes into effect from the moment of signing and remains in force upto the formation of new supreme organs of state-power and governance in the Republic of Georgia, after which the process of negotiation shall be continued.

* The original Russian text may be consulted on page 2 of the newspaper **Abxazija** (23) for the week 29 June - 4 July 1992.

Appendix 2

**TREATY**
**ON THE CONFEDERATIVE UNION OF THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLES OF THE CAUCASUS***

We, plenipotentiary represenatives of the Abazinian, Abkhazian, Avar, Adyghe, Auxov-Chechen, Dargwa, Kabardian, Lak, Ossetian (of North and South Ossetia), Cherkess, Chechen, Shapsugh peoples, sensing our ethno-cultural kinship and the common character of our ecological surroundings and historical fate, which have found their confirmation at every heroic and tragic stage in the history of our common struggle for self-preservation:

taking into account the inalienable right of each nation to self-determination;

aspiring on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of other generally recognised international-legal acts to create all conditions for satisfying the interests of each nationality, to guarantee equal rights for all peoples, ethnic groups and each person;

convinced that unity and collaboration between our fraternal peoples, for the separation of whom were directed the politics of both the tsarist autocracy and the totalitarian regime of the former Soviet Union, will facilitate the self-preservation and survival of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus;

recognising as unacceptable any infringement of the interests of individuals by race, religion or other factor and as contrary to natural law any attempts to achieve one's own freedom at the expense of the oppression of others;

considering it our sacred duty by every means to facilitate the return to the Homeland of our fellow-nationals, [a]whose ancestors were[o] forced into exile during the period of the Russo-Caucasian war;

firmly determined to oppose any action designed to inflame inter-ethnic enmity, and ready with united forces to face up to any aggression;

entrusting to democratic methods, in particular to people-diplomacy, which has a multi-century tradition and which has not lost its power in the Caucasus today, an exceptional role in settling vexed questions and disputes in inter-ethnic relations;

inspired by the prospect of shewing to the whole world through the example of the multi-ethnic Caucasus, a region unique on the ethno-cultural plane, our sincere striving for the establishment of brotherly relations between peoples on the basis of the principle of equality of rights and close collaboration in the settling of socio-economic and cultural problems,

have decided to conclude the following

TREATY

ARTICLE 1

The IIIrd Congress of the peoples of the Caucasus, in continuation of the work begun by the Ist Congress of the united mountain-peoples of the Caucasus (1 May 1917, Vladikavkaz), announces the start of the process of restoring the sovereign statehood of the mountain-peoples of the Caucasus and declares the Confederation of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus (CMPC) to be the legitimate heir of the independent North Caucasian Republic (€The Mountain Republic‹), formed on 11 May 1918.

ARTICLE 2

The subjects of the Treaty are the mountain-peoples of the Caucasus existing as the historically independent ethnic communities who have expressed in their national congresses (conferences) and their executive committees their desire to enter the Confederation and whose plenipotentiary delegates drew up and recognised the present Treaty.

ARTICLE 3

The Treaty partners declare that they will act in the spirit of fraternity, friendship and coo/peration with the aims of further developing and strengthening political, socio-economic and cultural ties between the mountain-peoples of the Caucasus, following the principles of respect for state-sovereignty, coo/peration, mutual help and non-interference in the internal affairs of the republics which they represent.

ARTICLE 4

The Treaty partners recognise the need for (i) the coo/rdination of forces for mutually agreed management of socio-political processes in the republics and national-territorial formations of the region, (ii) the formation of a highly developed and optionally functioning inter-republican socio-economic complex, (iii) the creation of conditions for the transition to a market-economy, (iv) the effective and rational use of natural resources and their conservation, (v) the development and strengthening of the artificially interrupted ties between our peoples, (vi) the raising of the standard of living of the population of the republics and of the region in general, and with this aim they go with proposals for the concluding of bilateral and multi-lateral treaties on coo/peration and mutual assistance to the highest leading organs of the republics and national territorial formations.

ARTICLE 5

The subjects of the Confederation have equal rights within the limits of the association irrespective of the number of their peoples. They can differ according to the size and structure of the powers delegated by them to the Confederation.

ARTICLE 6

The formation of confederative organs is produced by national congresses (conferences) to the Congress of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus by means of delegating their plenipotentiary representatives. The Congress itself forms and confirms the confederative organs according to this very principle on a basis of parity. However, it is proposed that with the appearance of necessary conditions the Caucasian Confederation will pass over to the conducting of direct elections of delegates to the Congress of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus.

ARTICLE 7

The President, Presidential Council, Chairman of the Court of Arbitration, the Caucasian Parliament (Caucasian Assembly), the Chairman of the Committee of Caucasian Associations and the Coo/rdinator for the business of the CMPC chosen by the supreme organ of the CMPC will with unconditional priority for the legislative and executive organs of the republics fulfil their plenary powers by discussion, decision and control for the realisation of each and every problem and question touching upon the interests of the peoples united in the Confederation.

ARTICLE 8

The organs of the CMPC are built according to the principle of the division of powers between the legislative, the executive and the judiciary, and they function in accordance with the €Statute concerning the leading organs of the CMPC‹, ratified at the IIIrd Congress of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus, and with regard to the laws of the republics of the region.

ARTICLE 9

The Caucasian Parliament (Caucasian Assembly) is elected directly by the plenipotentiary representatives chosen at the congresses of the participating peoples of the CMPC and is not dependent on national parliamentary institutions but at the same time effects a direct link with them through persons who are simultaneously deputies of the Caucasian and national parliaments.

ARTICLE 10

The Committee of Caucasian Associations -- the executive organ of the Confederation -- consists of leading employees of the ministries, departments and public organisations of the republics heading the various specialist associations.

ARTICLE 11

The Committee of Caucasian Associations in the person of the President, his First Deputy, the Chairman of the various specialist associations and the Coo/rdinator for the business of the CMPC on the basis of treaties in a variety of directions will draw up a general plan for the socio-economic and cultural coo/peration of the republics, and after agreement in the institutions of the Caucasian Parliament and Presidential Council they will distribute it to the national parliaments and governments of the republics.

ARTICLE 12

Particularly acute and complex vexed questions within and between the subjects of the Confederation and also between them and the Confederation will with agreement of the parties be examined in the Confederation's Court of Arbitration. Decisions of the Court convey a recommendatory character and are effected through the influence of the authority of the general opinion of the united peoples.

ARTICLE 13

With the aim of resolving inter-ethnic conflicts and of guaranteeing stability in the region, the IIIrd Congress of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus charges the Caucasian Parliament with drawing up a special Statute on the status and functions of established forces for regional security.

ARTICLE 14

The subjects of the Confederation have the right to unite among themselves and with other subjects in any associations if their goals are not directed against the interests of the Confederation they have created.

ARTICLE 15

The Treaty is open for new subjects to join. An act of union with it will be effected by a special Agreement, confirmed by the Parliament of the Confederation or by the next Congress of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus.

ARTICLE 16

Withdrawal from the Confederation is achieved by decision of a national congress (conference) of the subjects of the Treaty and will be considered by the Parliament of the CMPC.

ARTICLE 17

The Statutes of the present Confederative Treaty can be abolished, altered or supplemented at the request of the subjects by decision of the Parliament of the Confederation with subsequent confirmation by the Congress of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus.

ARTICLE 18

The participants to the Confederative Treaty commit themselves to observe its conditions and to bear responsibility before their own peoples and the commonwealth of Caucasian peoples as a whole for their actions according to the commitments they have taken upon themselves.

ARTICLE 19

The parties to the Treaty have chosen as place of residence for the leading organs (headquarters) of the CMPC the city of Sukhum, capital of the Abkhaz Republic.

ARTICLE 20

The Treaty comes into effect from the moment of its recognition (i.e. from 2 November 1991). It is subject to ratification in the national congresses (conferences) or parliaments of the peoples who have created the CMPC. Documents of ratification will be deposited with the Presidential Council of the CMPC.

The Confederative Treaty of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus was

drawn up and recognised unanimously at the IIIrd Congress of the
Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus in Sukhum on 2 November 1991

* The Russian text of this Treaty may be consulted on page 2 of the newspaper **Edinenie** 'Unity' (11 (020), November 1991). This constitution may be compared with the Russian text of the Charter for the Assembly of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus, which it replaced and which was published in the newspaper **Edinenie** (1, 25 October 1989, page 6).

The leading officers at the time of the formation of the Confederation were: Yuri Mukamedovich (Musa) Shanibov (President of the CMPC), Jusup Soslambekov (Speaker of the Caucasian Parliament), Den'ga Khalidov (Deputy-Speaker of the Caucasian Parliament), Konstantin Ozgan (Chairman of the Committee of Caucasian Associations), Zurab Achba (Chairman of the Confederation Court of Arbitration), Gennadij Alamia (Coo/rdinator for the Business of the CMPC, Vice-President of the CMPC).