

"With Objectivity, Not Indifference"

CONFLICTS & NEGOTIATIONS

**Published by the International Center on
Conflict and Negotiation**



ICCN

Issue No. 3 (20), 1998

***This Publication is supported by
the John D. and Catherine T.
MacArthur Foundation.***

Conflicts & Negotiations are distributed free of charge with priority made for the subscribers. Subscription to C&N is possible through contacting the editors at the addresses below.

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Tragedy in Gali

Chronicle of Events (Mày, 1998)

- On the night of May 20, military clashes between the Abkhaz militiamen and Georgian armed forces took place in the security zone of the Gali region.
- The armed conflict ended in the destruction of the Georgian villages of Sida, Repo-Ztseri, and Khumushkuri.
- According to information received, the Georgian side reported one dead and five wounded; the Abkhaz claimed over thirty killed and numerous fighters wounded.
- On May 20, Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze received the UN Secretary General's special representative, Liviu Bota. Hoping to avoid further complications, the Georgian side, in the framework of the Geneva process, requested to meet in a special session, conducted under the aegis of the UN Coordination Council for the resolution of the Abkhaz conflict. Bota said that he intends to call a special meeting of the Coordination Council of the Geneva talks on the conflict's turn of events.
- Fred Ekhard, head of the Secretary General's press service said that the Security Council would consider measures to increase the security of the UN Observers' Mission personnel in Georgia.
- On May 20, Vazha Lortkipanidze, then Georgian Ambassador Extraordinaire and Plenipotentiary to the Russian Federation, addressed a letter to Bota that dealt with the Abkhaz breach of the cease-fire agreement by venturing to bring their armed groups into the security zone, where they committed punitive actions.
- At the meeting of the National Security Council held on May 21, President Shevardnadze said that the government will use every possible diplomatic, as well as other, means to prevent armed clashes in the region.
- On May 21, Vladislav Ardzinba expressed a wish to meet with the President of Georgia in the nearest future.
- On May 22, President Shevardnadze made a statement welcoming the initiative and declaring that he is ready for dialogue.
- The meeting of the Coordination Council was

held on May 22, under the aegis of the UNO in Tbilisi at the insistence of the Abkhaz and Georgian sides. The Georgian party was led by Lortkipanidze, head of the Coordination Council. The Abkhaz delegation was led by Tamaz Ketsba, the Abkhaz head of the Council. The session was conducted with the participation of representatives of the Russian Federation as an assisting party, as well as the representatives of OSCE and countries considered to be among the Group of Friends of the UN Secretary General, who took part as observers.

To put an end to the armed conflict, the Georgian side made an urgent request that the Abkhaz armed formations withdraw immediately from the Gali region. Likewise, the Abkhaz demanded cessation of terrorist acts and sabotage, as well as the withdrawal of Georgian armed organizations that had penetrated the region.

The Coordination Council charged the special envoy of the UN Secretary-General with the task of carrying out consultations with a view towards implementing the resolution adopted at the Council's special session held on January 22, 1998. The Resolution deals with the mechanism of investigation and prevention of the facts, representing a breach of the Moscow agreement on cease-fire and separation of forces. The Coordination Council approved a Protocol on the urgency of terminating armed confrontation in the conflict zone.

- On May 22-23, the Abkhaz side made an attempt to bring new detachments of armed forces into the villages of Primorskoye, Sida, and Zemo Bargebi.
- By May 23, hostilities in the Gali region had ceased. By President Shevardnadze's decision, the plenipotentiary representative on the resolution of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict left for Sukhumi to participate in the talks held on May 24.
- On May 24, the Abkhaz launched an artillery attack on the villages of Khumushkuri and Kvemo Bargebi, opening fire on the villages' civilian in-

habitants and burning their homes.

- The same day, the National Security Council appealed to General Korobko, Commander-in-Chief of the Russian peacekeeping forces, to make urgent arrangements to carry out the order of Russian Defense Minister, Marshal Sergeev, to avert escalation of violence.
- On May 25, at the headquarters of the Europarliament in Brussels, the EP group for relations with the Transcaucasian states held a meeting. Ambassador of Georgia Zurab Abashidze informed the meeting's participants about the Gali events.
- On May 26, a Protocol on cease-fire, separation of armed forces, and guaranteeing the ban against violent actions was signed in Sukhumi by Georgian Foreign Minister T. Menagarishvili and his Abkhaz equivalent S. Shamba. To monitor the implementation of mutual commitments, it is agreed that special groups will be established made up of members from both sides, the UN Mission of Military Observers, and CIS peacekeeping forces that will take up their duties, outlined by the agreement, immediately following the cease-fire. Lortkipanidze met with Ardzinba. They concluded an agreement theoretically on cessation of hostilities, withdrawal of armed formations under proper joint and international control, and the peaceful return of those people who were forced to abandon

their homes during the recent activities.

- On May 27, the Georgian parliament addressed an appeal to the UNO, OSCE, and the international community to consider the question of substituting international peacekeeping forces for the Russian peacekeepers.
- At the May 28 meeting of the Permanent Council of the EP, both sides were called up to settle all outstanding disputes by peaceful means, to refrain from violence, and to make every effort to improve the security system.
- On May 29, President Shevardnadze spoke by phone with Ardzinba. They agreed to give special consideration to implementing the clauses of the protocol signed in Georgia on the withdrawal of all armed forces from the conflict zone.

Ardzinba expressed his readiness to receive the refugees of the Gali region in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

- Following the Gali events that took place from May 20-28, 30,000 Georgian inhabitants of the region crossed the Inguri bridge, making their way to Zugdidi in search of refuge.

Compiled by Tina Gogueliani

Exclusive Interview with H.E. Felix Stanevsky, Ambassador of Russian Federation to Georgia regarding the May events in Gali

Question: Mr. Stanevsky, what is your assessment of the May events in Gali?

Answer: I shall refer to the June 10 report of the UN Secretary General concerning the situation in Abkhazia (Georgia). The report says that after May the situation in Gali worsened considerably. Tensions increased, the population had a common feeling that the resumption of hostilities was inevitable. "A one-day *demarch*, undertaken by the Abkhaz government in exile, was especially provocative and caused an aggravation in tension, particularly as the Georgian national flag was hoisted in the Gali region. This event took place shortly after the headquarters of the Abkhaz government in exile was

moved from Tbilisi to Zugdidi and the leaders of the government in exile declared the Gali region a buffer zone. Later, on the night of May 20, clashes between the Abkhaz nationalities and Georgian armed groups broke out. The Abkhaz side stated that they were protecting their territory from those people regarded to be Georgian terrorist groups. The Georgians asserted that they were protecting the Georgian population of the region from the Abkhaz militia who were combing the territory."

Although nobody has authorized me to say this, probably the embassies of the countries participating in the Group of Friends of the UN Secretary-General, accredited in Georgia, came to

the same conclusion, concerning the start of the Gali conflict in May.

The events taking place in Gali on May 20-26 are not separate from the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict as a whole. The propaganda war has been carried on over a long period of time. The two sides accuse each other of using harsh words. It is inconceivable to think that one can make any considerable process towards settling the conflict under the conditions of a propaganda war.

An important event these last few years has been the return home of a great number of inhabitants of the Gali region (about 60,000 people). I often heard in Tbilisi that this was not a return of all, that the mentioned action did not stand for it, etc.

Neither in mass media nor in private conversations have I come across a serious analysis regarding the refugees' return to Gali. Meanwhile, they spoke of a mass occurrence, worth taking care of not to expose the returned refugees to unnecessary risks.

One cannot find any justification for driving innocent and peaceful people out from their homes en masse. It is a tragedy when people have to run away, abandoning everything they own. Is the Abkhaz side to blame for this? Yes, it is. I have a firm opinion of my own on this account—they are to blame. A peaceful population should not suffer, but there is another question—are not the Georgians to blame as well? In such a case, it would be right for us to lay claim to ourselves, as our Christian culture admonishes us.

Q: What is your opinion on the efficiency of activities carried out by the Russian peacekeeping forces in the region?

A: The peacekeeping contingent is composed of about 1,500 people, performing their duties under extremely difficult conditions: since they were brought into the conflict zone in 1994, 56 have been killed and over 100 wounded.

We are told that the Georgians, as well as the Abkhaz, are being killed there. It is precisely this fact that confirms the level of tension between the sides involved in the conflict, how dangerous their work is, and in what conditions the Russian peacekeepers have to serve. If the parties do not make sufficient efforts to restrict the passage of arms, if armed formations—whether they consider themselves partisan detachments or not—are looking for

reasons to kill each other, are not they to blame for the death of Georgians, Abkhaz, and Russians? And isn't the main activity of the peacekeeping forces to close the floodgates through which streams of blood would otherwise flow? A necessary condition for a peacekeeping operation is an honest commitment on the part of both sides to their obligations, i.e. they should take upon themselves the responsibility not to fight with each other; because if they want to fight, no peacekeepers can serve as a barrier. Peacekeepers can be a force maintaining peace, they can extinguish the dying embers of tension, and deter unfavorable tendencies. But I repeat that peacekeepers should not be living shields between parties that wish to fight. Those parties do not have the right to demand this, for first they have to demand of themselves that all kinds of hostilities cease. It seems strange: the Russian peacekeepers are admonished for failing to ensure security exactly by those who condone or at least consider admissible the use of force, which in essence places obstacles in the way of maintaining security.

The peacekeepers succeeded in averting a much greater conflict in the Gali region in May. They did not let heavy artillery pass through from either side. Owing to these circumstances, the geographical range of armed clashes was limited. Otherwise, the hostilities would easily have overstepped the boundaries of the Gali region.

I also object to the insinuations that the Russian peacekeepers supported the Abkhaz side. I would like to take note of the fact that a lot of people living in the Gali region gathered at many of the peacekeepers' posts and found safety there. Russia is a mediator. Russia has not come to the aid of either of the fighting sides and is much more interested than others in their reconciliation. But the attainment and maintenance of peace, as well as the settlement of the conflict, is in the first place the responsibility of the conflicting parties.

I would like to repeat: one cannot blame the Russian peacekeeping forces for failing to ensure security as long as no sufficient measures are undertaken for the complete elimination of all armed activity in the conflict zone.

Q: What position do you adhere to about bringing multinational peacekeeping forces into the conflict zone?

A: We always say that it is an abnormal situation when the collective forces of the CIS are

made up of only Russians. The operation, attended by losses of killed soldiers and heavy material damage, is a heavy burden. But the countries who are willing to share it are not yet in sight.

Q: In your opinion, what chance is there to resolve the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict?

A: Resolution of any international conflict is, first of all, the responsibility of the sides involved in the conflict. The result of one or another negotiation depends on them. On either side of the Inguri river, society should well understand that no act of armed aggression can be justified. Certain obligations are spelled out and the sides have to fulfill their duties.

The efforts of the international community will never yield results if the conflicting sides do not try to regain the confidence each has lost in the other.

Hence, I can draw the following conclusion: neither conflicting side has made any sufficient effort thus far to create an atmosphere of confidence, which it can be assumed is the only possible basis for resolving the conflict.

Creating an atmosphere of confidence and searching directly among the conflicting sides for mutually acceptable arrangements is the main course to be taken for resolving the conflict. Everything else occurs on the sidelines.

Gali: An Attempt at Conflict Escalation

A confrontation between the Abkhaz forces and Georgian guerilla groups in the Gali region resulted in an armed clash by the end of May. The inevitability of escalating tensions was expected.

There is no sense in pointing out now what could have been done by the conflicting sides in order to avoid the clash. It is a fact that the process of conflict resolution became more complicated under the circumstances. It is very difficult to foresee the results and consequences of the May events, but there is no doubt that they caused a delay in the fulfillment of the steps already laid out in peace talks as well as the refugees' complete and safe return home.

For a period of five years, the Abkhaz government, as well as the government of Georgia, could not exercise control over the region.

The Abkhaz government in exile, active supporters of the idea of returning Abkhazia by the use of force, made an attempt to resort to force. The Georgian partisans exhorted the local population not to submit themselves to the Abkhaz authorities.

The guerilla movement, which originated soon after the termination of the Abkhaz war, has gradually expanded and gathered strength. It includes guerilla detachments like the "White Legion," the "Forest Brothers," and others. Some of these are formed by residents of the Gali region, others by

refugees living in different parts of Georgia. There are also military alignments which are said to act under the control of the Abkhaz government in exile. Tbilisi is well-informed regarding the existence of such detachments but denies having any connection to them.

The Georgian guerilla movement became especially active in 1997 (over sixty acts of sabotage were committed in the region from April to June of that year). The Abkhaz, for their part, counteracted the Georgian partisans. All these actions resulted in the suffering of the civilian (and peaceful) population.

Since April 1998, the intensity of sabotage in the twelve kilometer security zone has significantly increased.

In response to the fact that Georgian partisans became more active, the Abkhaz side started to take decisive steps to strengthen their control over Gali, bringing extra detachments of Abkhaz militia into the region.

Aggravation of the conflict situation was also caused by a Declaration of the heads of CIS member countries (Moscow, April 29), dealing with the recommendations on the withdrawal of the existing administration in the Gali region and the establishment of a provisional united administration, which would include UN and OSCE representatives.

The summit participants discussed the question of expanding the security zone in Gali (an offer the Abkhaz side had rejected as early as 1997).

The May events were preceded by a decision of the Abkhaz government in exile to move from Tbilisi to Zugdidi. Later, members of the parliamentary faction, "Abkhazeti," defended by White Legion fighters, crossed the Inguri river into Gali. Under the pretense of dispensing humanitarian aid, the Georgian flag was hoisted on the territory of Gali. In response, large detachments of Abkhaz militia were brought into the "zone" for the first time since the war ended.

According to information disseminated by the Georgian mass media, on May 18 the Georgian partisans initiated their activities, resulting in the deaths of 29 Abkhaz militia (according to Abkhaz data, six were killed). This was followed by a severe Abkhaz reaction.

From May 20-26, military operations using "scorched earth tactics" raged all over the Gali region. The Georgian villages of Sida, Repo-Ztseri, and Khumushkuri were burned down. The Abkhaz armed detachments destroyed Georgian villages in the security zone even when falling back, according to foreign journalists operating in the zone of military activities. According to sources of information dealing with the Abkhaz standpoint concerning the Gali events, "for five years, the Abkhazian leadership had been unable to reintegrate the people of the Gali district into Abkhazian society. The terms of the pecekeeping operation limited the Abkhazian authorities in their operational capacity to maintain peace and security in the district. Active proponents of the idea of gaining Abkhazia by force, the government-in-exile attempted to use the same methods in the Gali district. In turn, Georgian saboteurs called on the local population to disobey the Abkhazian authorities. In May, Georgian fighters raised the Georgian flag on local administration buildings in a number of villages in the Gali district. They also attacked and killed Abkhazian policemen and civilians, and seized hostages. They spread the idea that the "legitimate" government-in-exile would soon extend its authority over the Gali district. In effect, 60,000 refugees who had spontaneously returned to the Gali district became hostages to the Georgian guerilla groups."¹

On May 26, the Foreign Ministers of Georgia and Abkhazia signed a joint protocol on an immediate cease-fire and separation of the conflicting sides. But in spite of this, they kept on fighting and a number of Georgian villages (Sida, Zemo and Kvemo Bargebi, Tagiloni, and Otobaya) were set aflame. Over 30,000 Georgian residents of Gali, most of them newly-returned refugees, crossed the Inguri river in search of refuge in the Zugdidi region. Considering the fact that refugees from Abkhazia had been living in Zugdidi since 1993, this new stream of people aggravated the social and economic situation in the region even more. It turned out that a new wave of refugees had to live in much worse conditions. This fact was at the base of harsh criticism leveled against Tbilisi. The government was accused of being unable to protect the population. The government of Georgia, and especially President Shevardnadze, ran into difficulties. The President was said to be in an embarrassing situation, having no choice. If he had sent armed forces to the region, it would have signified fresh warfare; no such case was possible. Peace negotiations aimed at averting the danger of the conflict escalating had begun.

Many people, almost everyone in fact, ask the question: Who needs the peacemakers, and what are their duties they are obligated to perform? At a press conference held on May 27 in Sukhumi, the Abkhaz President reproached the peacemakers for the first time. However strange this may be, the opinion of the Abkhaz leader regarding the effectiveness of the peacemakers' activities has concurred with the opinion of the Georgian president in this respect. But who will take the place of peacemakers: the UN or NATO?

It is difficult to foresee the results of the meetings and predict whether they will make any mutually-acceptable decision. But one thing is clear: the May events in Gali proved once more that there is no possibility to attain peace and security in the region with the use of guerrilla detachments or by means of punitive operations.

1. Transitions Vol.5 No.7 July 1998 "Aiding and Abetting Terrorism" p.68-69

The Abkhazian Dilemma

The Abkhaz problem has once again had an international impact. After the May events in Gali, the seriousness of the problem increased. Provocations resulting in military actions in the peacekeeping zone undermined the stability of the region and could lead to a new war.

A new stream of refugees aggravated social and economic conditions in Georgia, difficult as they already were.

It should be noted that the Gali factor also initiated a domestic political crisis in Georgia. A question arises: the resumption of armed conflict was in whose interest at the present stage? It is extremely difficult to answer the question in one word, insofar as in appraising the situation it is evident that neither Georgian nor Abkhaz sides were interested in stirring up a new war (due to difficult economic and demographic conditions). With respect to Russia, it is hardly likely that Moscow (facing a financial crisis and its own North Caucasian dilemma) was interested in contributing to hostilities in the region. On the contrary, the intensification of the Russian government's activities in the North Caucasus, as noted by Vice-Premier Abdulatipov in April, was aimed at neutralizing the emergence of hotbeds of dangerous conflict. Proof of this can be seen in the reduction of Russia's military potential in the North Caucasus, on account of the strengthening of internal force structures designed to conduct military operations of a preventive-local character and not large-scale aggressive actions. The decision of the Russian government that Georgia has the right to control its own land and sea borders is also noteworthy in this respect.

It is logical to examine the geopolitical factors of the May events in Gali, which can be linked to the transport of Caspian oil. The following circumstances may be noted:

1. The May events are a sequel to the assassination attempt against the Georgian President in February, as well as the April kidnapping of UN representatives in Zugdidi, the aim of which was to create chaos in the political life of the country and, at the same time, exclude Georgia from the "oil geopolitical orbit." The oil magnate and CIS Executive Secretary B. Berezovsky's active participation in the Georgian-Abkhaz negotiations also supports the "oil version." Berezovsky's suggestion made in Sukhumi, that the oil cartel should invest \$200 million in Abkhazia, is also noteworthy. Federation Council chairman E. Stroe's suggestion that the Baku-Supsa-Sukhumi-Novorossiisk route should be one of the basic alternative routes for oil transportation should not be excluded from this scenario.

2. Large-scale military operations in Gali could range over the area of Anakopia-Poti, thus throwing doubt upon the ability of the Baku-Supsa-Ceyhan route to function. Hence, it is assumed that the well-played "Abkhaz card" was an attempt to balance the interests of certain circles in the region's countries.

The regional "Abkhaz dilemma" is turning into an international conflict. Resolution of the conflict will, sooner or later, become a problem of the international community. The more effective the strategy of UN preventive diplomacy is, the sooner we will be able to overcome the existing deadlock.

Vakhtang Maisaia

USAF Institute for National Security Studies

There will be no winners in the Georgian-Abkhazian war

Statement

of the position of the representatives of Georgian intellectuals involved in the Georgian-Abkhaz dialogue initiated by ICCN

Today we are confronted with the fact of renewed military confrontation in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. We all have to recognize the sorrowful circumstances that new war and bloodshed could bring.

The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict has become a problem of global scale and a subject of manipulation in the strategic interests of great powers. All this emphasizes the fact that the Georgian-Abkhaz problem will not be resolved through the use of force.

The result of the war has been the violation of the primary human right - the right to life: villages have been burned down, homes vacated,

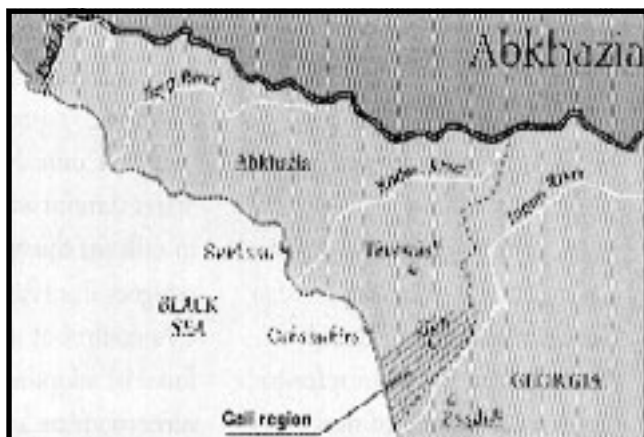
and a new wave of refugees created.

The conflict escalated anew precisely at that moment when a real possibility for the peaceful resolution of the problem arose.

So we ask: isn't everything being calculated so that the problem will be unresolvable, the bloodshed will continue, and Georgia and Abkhazia will find themselves in a new war?

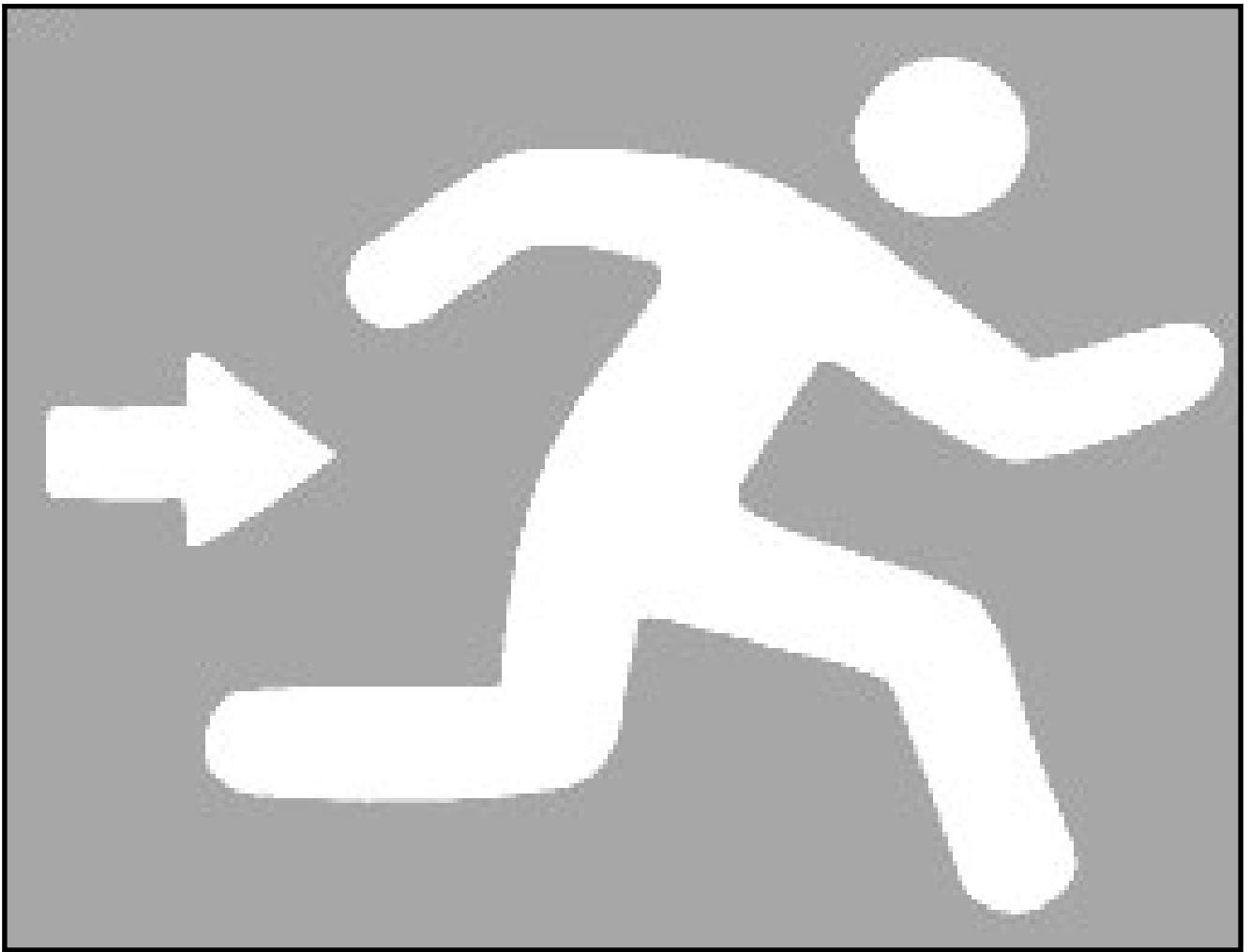
But war will erase even the smallest positive results which the two sides have achieved in the last years through peaceful negotiation.

In this war, if it begins, there will be no winners.



REUTER





June 16, 1998 International Day of Refugees

June 16 was announced as the International Day of Refugees.

In response to their bad situation, a campaign for their defense starts, which includes a study of their problems and the reasons for their death, as well as how to protect their rights and assist them.

This day tens of thousands express their support to refugees. We know that everything they once possessed has been destroyed or lost: home, family, job, friends...

All they have now is the hope that they will receive our support and assistance.

Of course, we cannot return to them everything that was destroyed, and perhaps not every one of us is able to offer them financial aid, but we can still support their cause. That may not be much, but for refugees it means an opportunity to recognize themselves as full members of society.

• National Minorities:

Ethnic Germans in Georgia

In the last issue of C&N we published an article acquainting readers with the legal status of the Meskhetian repatriates in Georgia. In the article we adhered to the idea that the law cannot and should not divide people by nationality and make selective choices with respect to some ethnic group. We would like to consider the legal status of the Germans living in Georgia from the same point of view.

For more than two centuries Germans have been living in Georgia. Today few people remember when they first settled here. According to some figures, most of the migrants came from Schwaben. They left in 1816, saving themselves from starvation (the years 1811-1816 are known in Germany as the "years of famine"). With the consent of the Russian government and the emperor Alexander I, the Germans started on a journey from the Danube and part of them, having crossed the Black Sea, settled in Georgia, building 8-9 settlements. Attracted by the healthy climate and the opportunity for vine growing, over five hundred German families organized compact settlements.

As far back as 1886, over 5000 Germans resided in the Tiflis province; 1178 lived in the city of Tiflis; 1578, in Borchalo district; and 1074 in Sartichala.

Georgia's spiritual climate enabled these people with a different way of life and culture to easily adapt. After some time, Germans were represented in state, legal, civil, education, military, and other institutions of Georgia.

It should be noted that Germans made a significant contribution in the exploration of Georgia's richest flora and fauna, as well in the architecture of our capital. The curious reader will search in vain for the names of former German settlements, such as Waldheim, Grunstal, Traubenstal, Rosenfeld, Ekaterinofeld, etc., on the map of Georgia.

The German assault on the Soviet Union was a fatal day for more than 1,900 Germans living in Georgia. In four months three decrees were issued removing the Germans from their places of residence. According to the decrees, the State Defence Committee allowed fifteen days for each operation to be carried out. Thus, from September to October, 19,186 people (or 5,226 families) were deported from Georgia to Kazakhstan. Only a small number of Germans, mainly women married to Georgians,

escaped deportation. As a consequence of the deportation, the Germans lost their mother tongue. Since it was dangerous to speak German, the young Germans in exile were deprived of the opportunity to hear their native language, and little by little they became Russian speakers. After Stalin's death, in the period of the so-called "thaw," many of the deported Germans returned to Georgia. At first they were forbidden to live in Tbilisi, and many of them settled in Rustavi.

About 200,000 citizens of German origin live in Georgia at present. They reside mainly in Tbilisi (1500), Rustavi, and Batumi, while some families also live in Bolnisi.

In August 1991, the Germans of Georgia founded in Tbilisi the association "EINUNG" (German for "unity"). According to its officially approved statutes, this public organization carries out its activities on a voluntary basis and is not engaged in politics or commerce. The association serves to revive German language and culture and Lutheranism among the Germans living in Georgia. The association is a member of the international organization "Federal Union of European National Minorities" and maintains close contacts with the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Embassy in Georgia, and the organization "The Union of German Life Abroad". Out of two thousand Germans living in Georgia, 1,500 are members of EINUNG.

"Revival of the German language is the main problem of our community," said **Nodar Kurdiani**, chairman of the association and professor of Tbilisi State University, doctor of technical sciences. "We teach the German language. Instruction is free of charge for both Germans and other individuals willing to learn the language. The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides the funding for the German language teachers conducting courses that are available not only to Germans but to everyone."

The problem of religion has also been solved. Germans living in Georgia before the deportation were Lutherans, but the Lutheran church was destroyed after they were deported. Thanks to the efforts of Mr. Khumel, theologian and professor of Saarbrücken University, a new building for the church has been constructed on the site of the former one.

Once acquainted with this information, a quite natural question might arise among readers: how exactly are the rights of Germans infringed upon in today's Georgia? Everyone knows that they were rehabilitated under the Soviet system and have long adapted to Georgian society, where "Germanophobia" never existed. And the fact that they enjoy the support of the German government is hardly of little importance. Against the background of the common social and economic conditions of the country's citizens, many would even envy the members of this community.

So, what is meant by the infringement of the Germans' rights?

The answer is simple: the rights of the Germans are infringed upon by a new law of the parliament of Georgia. Strangely enough, although the law aims to defend the rights of Georgia's citizens, it in fact curtails their rights even more. How?

Nodar Kurdiani provides an explanation: "For a long time we have been seeking approval of the law on the rehabilitation of peoples repressed under the Stalin regime. Analogous laws exist on nearly the entire territory of the former Soviet Union. In the republics of Moldova, Ukraine, the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan, everywhere, Germans deported from their settlements have already been rehabilitated. The situation is different in Georgia. Long ago, we raised the question about the necessity to develop an appropriate law. Last year, a letter was sent on behalf of the German community to the President of Georgia. Later, we informed the president of Germany about our legal status, when he was on an official visit to Georgia. We also appealed with the same request to the Foreign Minister of Germany who, for his part, reported to the President of Georgia. Finally, last December the Georgian Parliament adapted the law 'On Recognition of the Victims of Political Repression among the Citizens of Georgia and the Social Protection of the Repressed.' But to our great regret, the third article of the law reads: "The law applies only to

citizens of Georgia and not to those persons counted among the ethnic groups which were deported from February 25, 1921 and October 28, 1999. The procedure for their rehabilitation will be considered separately." It is evident that the rights of citizens, including our, are infringed upon by this law, for the simple reason that deported Germans are citizens of Georgia. Actually, the law has created artificial distinctions among the population of Georgia and discriminated by nationality, thus producing a gross violation of civil rights. According to the third article, many other deported persons living in Georgia - like Germans, citizens of the country (Greeks, Kurds) - are placed outside the law."

Mr. Kurdiani answered C&N's question about the measures EINUNG has taken considering the offending law as follows: "We have expressed our negative opinion at the meeting of the Council of Nationalities, we have also addressed an appeal to Mr. Gerasimov, the presidential advisor on the problems of nationalities, to solicit parliament for an alteration to the third article of the law. We suggest the following wording for the notorious third article: 'The law applies to all citizens of Georgia, including the persons returned from deportation and who are considered to be citizens of Georgia.' First, a law on rehabilitation should be adopted which applies to all residents of the country enjoying Georgian citizenship. The problem of repatriating those who live outside the borders of Georgia should be settled in a subsequent stage, considered separately due to its complexities." Such is the position of the German community.

It would naturally be interesting for readers to know the opinion of the Government of Germany concerning the return of Germans to their historical homeland.

"According to the Constitution of Germany," said Mr. Kurdiani, "the Germans have the right to return to Germany. But at present the German government places certain obstacles in the way of returning home in order to deter new migrants, particularly from the republics of the former Soviet Union. This is easily understandable, as the number of Germans living in these republics amounts to several million. So, the German government set a quota of 200,000 people per year. Only those who have suffered repression are received in the first place. But many Germans, considering Georgia to be their native country, do not even think of leaving

it and cherish hopes for the rebirth of the country. Now the matter depends on the Government of Georgia; the country should defend the rights of their ethnic German citizens. Those who suffered repression are mostly old people who do not have much longer to live. They are in need of the material support provided by law. And above all, the law should be based on the moral principle that it is a kind of apology to those people with wounded pride, who were exiled and punished through no fault of their own.”

It would be a good thing to live in a country that is able to apologize to its citizens. Everyone

would agree with this, but how can turn this dream into reality?

For a post-totalitarian society, democracy is a notion that is difficult to understand but still attainable. That is why the German community keeps on fighting against the discriminatory law, thereby defending not only their rights but those of the entire Georgia society. Thus far only a little bit has been achieved, but the most important thing is that Georgian legislators admit the imperfection of this law.

Material prepared by *Manana Dardjanja*

• Public Organizations:

Georgian Council of Nationalities

Georgian Council of Nationalities is an incorporated non-governmental and non-profit organization. The Council includes more than thirty ethnic organizations introducing the representatives of different nations living in Georgia- the Russians, Urranians, Azeris, Armenians, Jews, Greeks, Germans, Bulgarians, Ossets, Lithuanians, Chekhs...

The Council is chaired by Mr. David Chanturia.

Main objectives of the Council are:

- protection of human rights of the citizens of all nationalities living in Georgia
- furthering the legal education of population, being an indispensable factor to observe the law in democratic state building process
- promotion of mediatory mission within public diplomacy in ethnic conflict resolution
- favouring the development of native language, national culture and traditions
- establishment of complicated contacts with the Georgian compatriots abroad and nations living in Georgia

Acting as a mediator between the population and authorities the Council is entitled to provide all governmental institutions with public opinion on different problems.

Due to information supplied by the Georgian Council of Nationalities a dozen of issues on recently adopted law “Victims of political Repression and their Social Protection” have been discussed in Parliament.

Parliament considered alternative variants of this law. Regarding various suggestions the Council has worked out a conception on compatriots living abroad.

The Council cooperates with similar foreign NGOs, especially those of neighbouring countries.

So, joint efforts will successfully contribute to peacekeeping process throughout the Caucasus.

• ICCN Projects

NEWMEC

Network for Early Warning and Monitoring of Ethnic, Social and Religious Conflicts



In the previous issue of C&N we informed the readers about the launching of a new research project "Network for the Early Warning and Monitoring of Ethnic, Social and Religious Conflicts" developed by the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation with support from the John D. and Catherine T. McArthur foundation.

In this article we wish to describe in details the results of the first stage of the project. Among the South Caucasian republics, Georgia is considered to have the most diverse population. There are several regions where ethnic minorities are compactly settled.

Ethnic and religious diversity, poor social conditions, imperfect administrative and territorial distribution, and other negative factors breed conflict.

Besides the existing conflicts, there are many hotbeds of potential ethnic confrontation on the territory of Georgia.

The government of Georgia along with others interested in stability are faced with these main problems:

- how to peacefully resolve existing conflicts (to prevent conflict escalation)
- how to keep peace and stability and improve the situation within zones of potential ethnic conflict.

The main objectives of the Project are:

- to practically apply scientific methods of early warning of ethnic conflicts
- to research conflicts erupting on the territory of Georgia: causes for the conflict's outbreak, stages of development, and mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of the conflicts
- to research and analyze the situation in regions compactly populated with ethnic mi-

norities

- to work out recommendations for governmental authorities on the basis of scientific methods for early warning in order to prevent new conflicts.



The strategic objectives of the Project are:

- To create a common network to get perfect information from the regions
- To work out an empirical model for the early warning of conflicts
- To process and analyze analytical information from the regions based on an empirical model of early warning
- To elaborate recommendations for governmental authorities based on the analysis of results
- To increase the role of the third sector and build trust between NGOs and the population in order to strengthen NGOs' mediation between the population

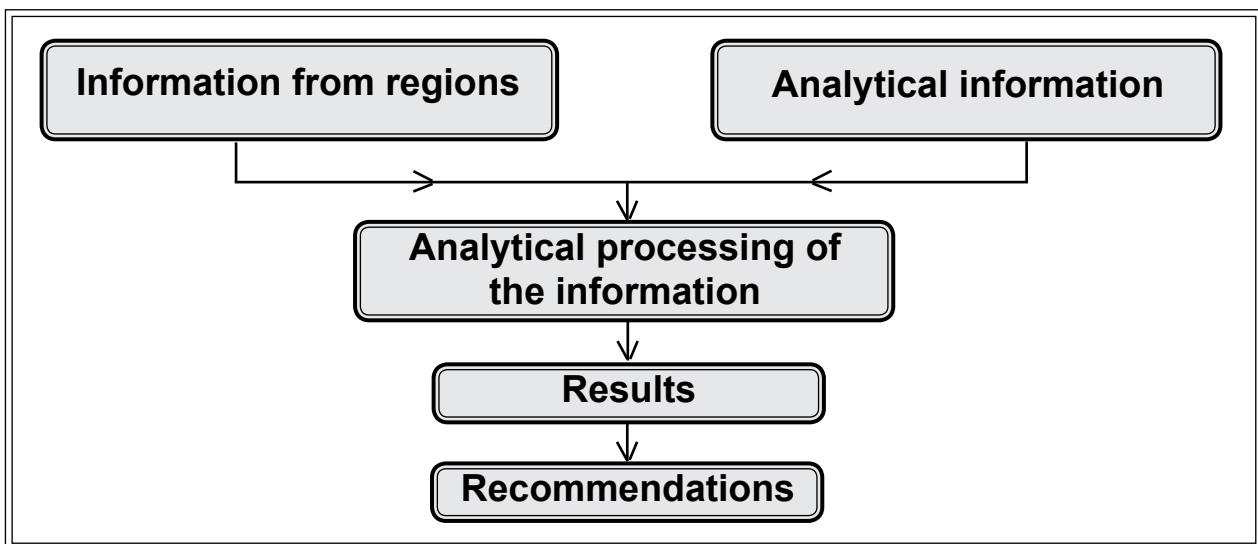
and authorities.

- To expand and intensify contacts between regions

The Center is provided with information by the Project's regional representatives:

1. Zugdidi/Abkhazia
2. Tskhinvali
3. Javakheti/Akhalkalaki
4. Kvemo Kartli/Marneuli
5. Akhmeta/Pankisi Gorge

The mechanism of obtaining and processing the information Schedule:



At a given stage, analytical study requires the processing of the following information from the regions:

- historical origins of the conflicts and the intermingling of ethnic minorities
- the moment and causes of the first serious confrontation
- stages and catalysts of the conflict escalation
- stages and mechanisms of peaceful settlement of a conflict
- current situation (monitoring)

This analysis examines the following topics:

- the demographic picture of the region; migration processes (statistics, dynamics, causes)

-
- current political, economic, religious, and social situation of the region
 - political and public organizations of the region and their influence (impact) on the situation
 - analysis of local media
 - the influence of the general situation in the Caucasus on the region

Expected results:

- To create a general system (Network) to obtain information from the regions
- To develop and improve scientific methods for the early warning of conflicts
- To apply a common scientific model while processing information obtained from different regions
- To establish relations and develop cooperation among the regions of Georgia
- To assist authorities in making an objective assessment of the situation in the regions of tension

Scientific Research, Improvement, and Practical Application of the Theoretical Methods of Early Warning of Conflicts

One of the main trends of the Project Network is to research theoretical methods of early warning of conflicts and application of these methods to obtain analytical results.

International experience with the application of the Early Warning of Conflicts Network, analysis of the conflicts existing in Georgia, as well as the processes taking place in regions where ethnic minorities live compactly, proved that it is possible to create a general scientific method for the early warning of conflicts in various regions on the basis of comparative analysis of common and different characteristics.

The general theoretical model (or empirical model of early warning of conflicts) determining the degree of risk that conflict will emerge in multiethnic regions, studying the causes of conflict outbreak and mechanisms of a conflict prevention, as well as revealing the common tendencies of a possible course of events and prediction, has been developed within the project framework. The model is based on the existing practice of networks of early warning and is an original synthesis of indicator processing of information and methods of system analysis.

The existing experience in studying ethnic conflicts shows that there are a number of indispensable conditions necessary for the outbreak of conflict between ethnic groups:

- Reason for conflict (in ethnic conflicts, this may be expressed either by conflict of interests in politics and economics, or in historical points of view, etc.)
- Comparative equality of forces on each side of the possible confrontation (as a rule, if one possesses a decisive advantage over another, the probability that conflict will emerge is sharply reduced);
- Absence or weakness of forces interested in maintaining stability in the region;
- Presence of forces interested in inspiring a confrontation, etc.

However, these conditions are far from being a sufficient basis for the emergence of a large-scale conflict. The outbreak of a conflict between ethnic groups, as a rule, is a result of the consecutive development of logically interdependent events (occurrences, facts) that apparently lead to a situation in which the slightest cause can give rise to the emergence of a large-scale conflict. Proceeding from this is an empirical model worked out with a view to determine whether it is possible to assess the results through observing (monitoring) the situation in the region:

1. Has the situation in the region changed (for better, for worse, not changed) following the chronological course of events at a given time;
2. What factors contributed to the change in the situation (i.e., what kind of phenomena-political, economic, etc.- caused the alterations);
3. Degree of risk that conflict will break out (increased, reduced, unchanged) as a result of the influence of these factors

It is natural that any model based on mathematical methods when describing social processes is only a "good approximation" to the real situation. Therefore, the accuracy of such models depends on the accuracy of subjective assessment of one or another phenomena.

Deborah Welsh is in the Caucasus again

Early in June, a training program for conflict prevention and the role of leaders in the conflict resolution process was conducted at Tbilisi State University. The training was supported by the American National Foundation for Peace, the Georgian committee "Transcaucasian Women's Dialogue," and the Soros Foundation. The coordinators of the Training Program were Irakli Kakabadze and Deborah Welsh, experts from the Harvard University Center on Conflict Studies.



Deborah Welsh

As a representative of the "Transcaucasian Women's Dialogue," Tamare Jashi, noted, the basic goal of the training was to involve young leaders in the process of conflict resolution.

Thanks to this program, 53 students of the International Relations Departments from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia developed skills in the technique and strategy of conflict management.

The training organisers introduced new methods and approaches to conflict resolution and the making of quick decisions in extreme situations.

Organizers attempted to develop a new mentality among students. Irakli Kakabadze stated: "The training ensures us that in 10-15 years the soil on which today's conflicts rest will no longer exist."

• Conferences

The Second International Geopolitical Colloquium on Euro-Atlantic Security

The Second International Geopolitical Colloquium on Euro-Atlantic Security was held on May 6-10, 1998 in Garmish (Germany). The Colloquium organized by European Center for Security Studies, was attended by political analysts and experts from European countries, the USA, and the CIS.

Participants in the Colloquium introduced security problems of the countries they represented.

Professor George Khutsishvili and Prof. Alexander Rondeli, Director of Foreign Affairs Research and Analysis Center, participated in the Colloquium on the Georgian side.

The term "geopolitics" is used in various ways. Therefore, in order to avoid confusion, the participants decided not to refrain from defining the term.

One of the main objectives of the Colloquium was to reveal the similarities and differences in the geopolitical perspectives of different countries.

The Conference attempted to determine how geopolitical perspectives could help to understanding and favouring the processes of democratization and market economy in Post-communist states.

Interdependence of economy, geography and security that is known as "geoeconomy" will become the main factor in new Europe only in case it recognizes as necessary the limited power of the state on global market.

The Conference participants noted the necessity of realisation of the role of educational institutions for transformation of some geopolitical concepts (codes).



Meeting with Otto von Habsburg, son of the last Emperor of Austria-Hungary and Member of the European Parliament

The question arises: How geopolitical perspectives can favour the provision of security, democratisation process and economic development in Eurasia?

As it was noted at the Colloquium, it's not possible to find answer to this question at one or two conferences. Thwe participants agreed to hold a number of conferences in order to discuss important and urgent problems in the sphere of global security.

The above mentioned Second International Colloquium (the first one was held on November 12-15 1995) proved that the settlement of these problems is one of the main factors in maintaining stability and peace worldwide.

• Conferences

International Seminar on Economic Cooperation and Regional Security in the South Caucasus

The Fredrich Naumann Foundation jointly with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation of Germany held in Sofia, May 22-25, 1998 a seminar "On Economic cooperation and regional Securityin the South Caucasus". The seminar aimed at supporting the dialogue for overcoming the ethnic conflicts in the region, discussion of normalization of the economic relations favouring the relaxation of tension and exchange of opinions among the experts from Azerbaijan, Armenia, Germany and Georgia with a view to seek for new ways out of the current situation in the region.

The Seminar was attended by representatives of political parties, non-govern-mental organisations, parliament members and journalists from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia as well as independent experts. Vakhtang Rcheulishvili, Kakha Chitaia, Erosi Kitsmarishvili, Irakli Kadagishvili and George Khutsishvili participated in the Seminar on the Georgian part.

The Seminar proceeded very interes-tingly. The participants were discussing the issues of political and economic cooperation between the Caucasus Region and West Europe.

The speakers stressed the necessity of gaining stability in the region; the participants demonstrated the identity of views on the significance of international organisations in conflict resolution and attainment of security in the South Caucasus.

In conclusion, special attantion was attached to the development of cooperation among thq NGOs of the South Caucasus to keep peace in the region. The participants talked over the urgent problems of the region.



Georgian Delegation at the meeting in Sophia

• Conferences

Noe Jordania International Conference on Georgia and the Caucasus

An International Conference dedicated to the memory of independent Georgia's first head of government Noe Jordania was held on May 26-26 in Tbilisi. The conference was held in celebration of the 80th anniversary of the declaration of the Democratic Republic of Georgia.

The conference was opened by Georgia's President Eduard Shevardnadze. The chairman of parliament Zurab Zhvania addressed the conference as well.



Professor Redjeb Jordania is answering journalists' questions.

Of particular significance is the fact that the son of the first leader of the Democratic Republic of Georgia Mr. Rejeb Jordania was the first to suggest the idea of arranging the conference. Co-organizers of the conference were the Harriman Institute, the U.S. Georgian Association, the American-Georgian Institute, the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, and Georgia's State Office. The agenda of the conference was distinguished by a variety of topics. For two days the participants in the conference discussed problems of strategic development in Georgia and the whole of the Caucasus, as well as legal development of Georgian society. Particular consideration was given to the domestic policy of the First Republic.

Just before the conference in Tbilisi, an analogous conference was held at the Harriman Institute, Columbia University of New York. The final conference dealing with the same subject is

scheduled to be held under the aegis of UNESCO in Paris in November. The foreign experts showed particular interest in discussing the question of Georgia's strategic perspectives and expressed their confidence in the inevitability of integration of Georgia's economy in the world economic system.

One trend in the conference was the psycho-social method of approach towards the comprehension of statehood and democracy-building in the First and Second republics.

It was noted that three factors, economic, psychological, and political, are required for a declaration of independence. The conference participants agreed that psychologically Georgia was well prepared for the declaration of independence in 1918-21, more so than in the early 1990s. As regards the political aspect, at present Georgia receives greater backing from the international community than from the first republic. While discussing the question of Georgia's economic situation at the beginning of the century and today, the opinions of the participants varied. Participants in the conference noted that one urgent problem at present is to support the health care system.

Today, as never before, it is important to glance back at the path traversed by the country to mark the parallels in the course of events and try to resolve the urgent problems of today.



Chairman of Parliament Zurab Zhvania is addressing the conference.

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ობიექტურად, არა გულგრილად

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და
მოლაპარაკებები**

იბაძღვა კონფლიქტოლოგიისა და
მოლაპარაკებათა სტრატეგიის
საერთაშორისო ცენტრის მიერ

"With Objectivity, Not Indifference"

**Conflicts
&
Negotiations**

*Published by the International Center
on Conflict and Negotiation*

Editorial Staff:

- George Khutsishvili /Editor-in-chief/
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- Tina Gogueliani /Political Analyst/
- Archil Khidesheli /Computer Works/

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