

# Covcas Bulletin

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## SUMMARY NOTES

### AZERBAIJAN

**M**ore than two months after the presidential elections, Azerbaijan continues to be the subject of international criticism not only for violations noted during the electoral process but also for police brutality against demonstrators and the opposition. U.S. authorities have called on Baku to launch an independent, transparent investigation into the frauds, and the director of the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Christian Strohal, called upon the Azeri authorities to recognize the violations during the electoral process.

According to the Azeri Ministry of the Interior, as of December 12, 2003, 107 people were still under arrest and 17 people were being sought for having taken part in the demonstrations. Many cases of torture were reported by local human rights organizations (10 to 30 per day). A hundred opposition party members were removed from their functions including 30 members of the Musavat nationalist party. A Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Prisoners was established by lawyers and human rights activists, which announced that the detained opposition leaders would begin a hunger strike as of December against the one-sided criminal investigations and inhuman conditions of their detention. Following the Council of Europe's call for an inquiry into police brutality during the demonstrations, an investigation was submitted to the office of the public prosecutor by the national police force's

department of interior investigations. However, to date, not only has no police officer been judged, but the Minister of the Interior, Ramil Usubov, publicly praised the "work" of the police during the events of October 15-16, 2003.

Finally, death threats were made by Azeri political circles, and in particular by the Organisation for the Liberation of Karabagh, against Armenian delegations visiting Baku in the context of international meetings such as those held by NATO or the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the member states of the the Black Sea Coalition. Concern has grown particularly since aggressive acts took place against the head of an Armenian delegation to the International Forum for the Protection of Human Rights, the perpetrator of which was immediately lauded and celebrated as a hero by the Azerbaijani press.

### GEORGIA

**T**he many violations committed during the parliamentary elections of November 2, 2003 were the subject of sharp criticism by observers and of demonstrations by opposition supporters, who demand recognition of the opposition's victory. The office of the Georgian president, rejecting the fraud charges, defended the vote as fair and transparent, but his calls for the opposition's co-operation remained unanswered. Backed by thousands of demonstrators, opposition leader Mikhail Saakashvili delivered an ultimatum to President

Shevardnadze to resign before November 5 to avoid a revolution. The Labor and New Right parties refused to join the protests, while the supporters of the Democratic Bloc led by Nino Burdjanadze and those of the Ertoba led by Djumber Patiashvili expanded the ranks of Saakashvili supporters. On November 11, Saakashvili called on Georgians to implement civil disobedience as the talks between the authorities and the opposition failed. Under these tumultuous circumstances, Shevardnadze found an unexpected ally in Aslan Abashidze, the leader of the autonomous region of Ajaria, who until then had conflicted with central authorities over prerogatives in his region. Abashidze called on Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan to intervene to prevent chaos in Georgia. The Ajarian leader even sent people to Tbilissi to support Shevardnadze as he was threatened with resignation. On November 20, an announcement disputing voting results accelerated events, and on November 23, 2003 President Shevardnadze declared his resignation, which was followed by the provisional assumption of presidential responsibility by Nino Burdjanadze, former president of the Parliament.

On November 25, the Supreme Court overturned the results of the parliamentary elections of November 2 for the 150 mandates allocated under the proportional system. The new leadership of the country named Mikhaïl Saakashvili as its candidate for the presidential elections of January 4, 2004, and the United States promised special help in carrying out democratic reforms in the country. Aslan Abashidze's threat of boycotting the presidential election in his region caused concern on behalf of the international community and elicited sharp reactions on behalf of the new authorities.

In the secessionist regions, the fear of renewed confrontations led the leaders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to take measures to secure their borders with Georgia. They reaffirmed that the institution of new leadership in Tbilissi did not change their will to separate from the official structure of Georgia. As for the minorities in Georgia (Armenian, Greek, Russian and Azeri), they

await to see if the new authorities of their country will implement concrete measures to improve their catastrophic economic situation and to restore their cultural and human rights. The two preceding presidents, Gamsakhourdia and Shevardnadze, had led a policy of repression and constraint with regard to minorities. Gamsakhourdia had deported 800 azeri families and had organized the destabilization of the Armenian region of Javakhk. Shevardnadze, who had somewhat softened the brutal methods of his predecessor, nevertheless had kept the minorities in a state of underdevelopment (roads in disrepair, energy crisis; the Georgian government had not made any investments in Javakhk since independence), resulting in a considerable exodus. Indeed, more than 100 000 Armenians left Georgia during Shevardnadze's rule. Saakashvili declared his plans to integrate the Armenians of Javakhk in Georgian public life. The Armenian movement Virk, according to him, declared that autonomy alone is the solution to the multiple problems of the Javakhk region.

## RESUMES

### AZERBAIDJAN

Plus de deux mois après les élections présidentielles l'Azerbaïdjan était toujours la cible de la critique internationale non seulement pour les violations constatées au cours du scrutin mais pour les violences commises par la police à l'encontre des manifestants et de l'opposition toute entière. L'administration américaine a appelé Baku à faire une enquête indépendante et transparente sur les fraudes et le directeur de l'ODIHR (Office des Institutions Démocratiques et des Droits de l'Homme de l'OSCE), Christian Strohal, a fait appel aux autorités azéries leur demandant de reconnaître les violations pendant le processus électoral.

D'après le Ministère de l'Intérieur, au 12 décembre 2003, 107

personnes étaient encore sous les verrous, et 17 personnes recherchées pour avoir participé aux émeutes. De très nombreux cas de torture ont été rapportés par les organisations de Droits de l'Homme locales (10 à 30 par jour). Une centaine de membres des partis de l'opposition ont été démis de leur fonction dont 30 membres du parti nationaliste Musavat. Un Comité de Défense des Droits des Prisonniers a été créé par des avocats et les défenseurs des droits de l'homme, qui ont annoncé que dès décembre, les dirigeants détenus de l'opposition commenceraient une grève de la faim contre l'enquête criminelle biaisée et les conditions inhumaines de leur détention. Suite à l'appel du Conseil de l'Europe d'enquêter sur les violences policières lors des manifestations, une enquête a été soumise au bureau du procureur public par le département des investigations intérieures de la Police nationale, mais à ce jour, non seulement aucun policier n'a été jugé mais le Ministre de l'Intérieur, Ramil Usubov, a publiquement loué le « travail » accompli par la police lors des événements des 15-16 octobre 2003 !!

A noter enfin les menaces de mort proférées par les milieux politiques azéris, et en particulier par l'Organisation de Libération du Karabagh, contre les délégations arméniennes en visite à Baku dans le cadre de rencontres internationales telles que les manœuvres de l'OTAN, ou le Conseil des Ministres des Affaires étrangères des pays membres de la Coopération de la Mer Noire. L'inquiétude a grandi depuis l'agression du chef d'une délégation arménienne du Forum International pour la protection des Droits de l'Homme, dont l'auteur avait été immédiatement relâché et célébré en héros par la presse azerbaïdjanaise.

### GEORGIE

Les observateurs et l'opposition ont réagi aux nombreuses fraudes commises lors des élections parlementaires du 2 novembre 2003, les uns par de vives critiques et les autres par des manifestations de rue demandant la

reconnaissance de la victoire de l'opposition. Le pouvoir du président géorgien, rejetant les accusations de fraude, a défendu le scrutin comme étant équitable et transparent. Mais ses appels à une coopération avec les forces politiques de l'opposition sont restés sans réponse, puis, fort des milliers de manifestants, Mikhaïl Saakashvili, le chef de l'opposition, a donné un ultimatum au Président Shevardnadze pour démissionner avant le 5 novembre sous peine d'affronter une révolution. Le parti des Travailleurs et celui de la Nouvelle Droite ont refusé de se joindre aux manifestations de protestation, alors que les supporters Bloc Démocratique de Nino Burdjanadze, et ceux d'Ertoba de Djumber Patiashvili ont grossi les rangs des partisans de Saakashvili. Le 11 novembre Saakashvili a appelé les Géorgiens à la désobéissance civile alors que les pourparlers entre les autorités et l'opposition échouaient. Dans ces circonstances troubles Shevardnadze a trouvé un défenseur inattendu en la personne d'Aslan Abashidze, le leader de la région autonome d'Adjara qui, jusque là, avait eu des relations conflictuelles avec le pouvoir central dont il contestait les prérogatives dans sa région. Abashidze a lancé un appel notamment à la Russie, à l'Arménie et à l'Azerbaïdjan afin d'intervenir en Géorgie dans l'intention de prévenir le chaos. Le président adjar a même envoyé des supporters à Tbilissi pour soutenir Shevardnadze menacé de démission. L'annonce, le 20 novembre, des résultats contestés du scrutin a accéléré les événements, et le 23 novembre 2003 le Président Shevardnadze a déclaré sa démission suivie par la prise en charge provisoire de la présidence par Nino Burdjanadze l'ancienne présidente du Parlement. Le 25 novembre la Cour Suprême annulait les résultats des élections parlementaires du 2 novembre pour les 150 mandats du scrutin proportionnel. La nouvelle direction du pays a nommé Mikhaïl Saakashvili comme son candidat aux élections présidentielles du 4 janvier 2004, et les Etats Unis ont promis une aide exceptionnelle pour accompagner les réformes démocratiques à mener dans le pays. L'annonce par Aslan Abashidze de la menace du

boycott dans sa région de l'élection présidentielle a suscité des inquiétudes de la part de la communauté internationale et de vives réactions de la part du nouveau pouvoir.

Dans les régions sécessionnistes, la peur de nouveaux affrontements a fait prendre aux dirigeants d'Abkhazie et d'Ossétie du Sud des mesures de sécurité particulières à leurs frontières avec la Géorgie. Ils ont affirmé que l'instauration d'un nouveau pouvoir à Tbilissi ne changeait rien à leur volonté de séparation de la structure étatique de la Géorgie.

Quant aux minorités (arménienne, grecque, russe et azérie), elles attendent des nouvelles autorités de leur pays des mesures concrètes pour améliorer leur situation économique catastrophique et pour rétablir leurs droits culturels et humains. Les deux présidents précédents, Gamsakhourdia et Shevardnadze avaient conduit une politique de répression et de contraintes à l'encontre des minorités : Gamsakhourdia avait procédé à des déportations de 800 familles azéries et organisé la déstabilisation de la région arménienne Djavakhk. Quant à Shevardnadze, qui avait relativement adouci les méthodes brutales de son prédécesseur, il avait néanmoins maintenu les minorités dans un état de sous-développement (état catastrophique des routes, absence d'énergie : l'administration géorgienne n'avait rien investi dans le Djavakhk depuis l'indépendance) tel qu'il a été à l'origine de la baisse considérable de leur nombre : plus de 100 000 Arméniens ont quitté la Géorgie pendant le règne de Shevardnadze. Saakashvili a déclaré son projet d'intégrer les Arméniens du Javakhk dans la vie publique géorgienne. Le mouvement arménien Virk a quant à lui, déclaré que seule l'autonomie peut être une solution aux multiples problèmes de la région du Djavakhk.

## DEVELOPPING EVENTS / REVUE DE PRESSE

### AZERBAIJAN / AZERBAIDJAN

#### 10/31/03 - EU to cooperate with new Azeri President, special envoy says- Turan news agency

"Democracy is the only way to firm stability," Heikki Talvitie, special representative of the European Union for the South Caucasus, told a press conference today commenting on prospects for the developments in Azerbaijan after the presidential elections. Talking about the results of the elections, Talvitie said that the EU's evaluation was reflected in a declaration dated 17 October. Talvitie pointed out that the elections had "pluses and minuses". At the same time, he stressed that the "EU will be working with Ilham Aliyev" and issues of democracy and human rights will become one of the directions of this cooperation.(...)

#### 10/31/03 - Aliiev inaugurated as Azerbaijan's President - Associated Press Worldstream

Ilham Aliiev was inaugurated as Azerbaijan's new president Friday, succeeding his ailing father as leader of this oil-rich former Soviet republic.

Aliiev, 41, was sworn in as president in a ceremony at the Respublika Palace attended by about 2,000 people. His father, Geidar Aliiev, missed the inauguration. The senior Aliiev is still too frail to leave a the U.S. hospital where he has been receiving treatment since July.

Citing the will of Azerbaijanis who elected him in a landslide vote this month widely criticized by Western observers, Aliiev stressed there was "no alternative" to continuing the policies of his father "that brought success in all areas."

Rioting broke out in the capital Baku the day after Aliiev's election, and one protester was crushed to death. Aliiev said he planned to develop the "non-oil sector" of the country's economy and called for strengthening the country's armed forces.

The new president also indicated that he might resort to military



pressure to resolve a long-festering dispute with Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave. Nagorno-Karabakh, an ethnic Armenian enclave in Azerbaijan, is under control of Armenia-backed forces that drove out the Azeri army in the early 1990s.

(...)

**11/03/03 - Azeri foreign minister rejects Armenian diplomat's economic cooperation offer - MPA news agency**

The visit of the OSCE Minsk Group cochairmen which was planned for November will now take place in December. The date has been changed in connection with the Azerbaijani government's schedule and with important issues that need to be resolved, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Vilayat Quliyev has said.

Commenting on Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Ruben Shugaryan's remarks that Nagorny Karabakh should become a party to the negotiations, Quliyev said that the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities of Karabakh should be equally presented. Quliyev said he hoped that the peace talks will resume provided that Azerbaijan's demands are taken into consideration.

Shugaryan said yesterday 2 November that Nagorny Karabakh's status should be defined during the talks. Azerbaijan has stated its readiness to grant this part of its territory the highest status of autonomy. However, Shugaryan said that Armenia has to know what this implies.

Economic cooperation between Azerbaijan and Armenia could be a way of resolving political conflicts, Shugaryan said. He did not mean cooperation in major projects. In his opinion, Azerbaijan and Armenia can cooperate on environmental issues and in the fight against drug smuggling and international terrorism and implement small projects relating to water resources. This will not be just economic cooperation but a way of strengthening trust between the two countries.

Responding to Shugaryan's remarks, Quliyev said that there could be no talk about economic relations with an aggressor-country unless the occupied territories are freed.

Shugaryan also said that Turkey was interested in opening the border with Armenia as much as Armenia itself since this was a mutually beneficial process. Azerbaijan must also be interested in this.

**11/03/03 - Azerbaijanis threat to revenge to the Armenian diplomat -PanArmenian News Analysis**

Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia is going to visit Baku where he may be unpleasantly surprised.

On 31 October the session of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation member-countries will start in Baku. The Armenian delegation headed by the Deputy Foreign Minister Rouben Shougarian will also leave for Baku. Certain forces in Baku have started a campaign in this connection.

A radical Azeri group named "Organization of Karabakh liberation" is going to picket the "Hyatt Regency" hotel where the members of Armenian delegation will be hosted. The leader of the organization, Akif Nagi demands from the authorities of his country not to allow the visit of Armenians and declares that otherwise he guarantees serious inconveniences. He says that "Whatever happens, the authorities will bear all the responsibility for the events, even if they arrest us".

But apparently, nobody is going to arrest the provoker. Up to now the authorities either have ignored or encouraged everything he did. For example, once he declared that the entrance in the country of the persons with Armenian origins should be prohibited. Last October when the session of the heads of railway institutions of CIS countries was being held in Baku, Nagi said that the participant from Yerevan would become the last Armenian to enter the territory of Azerbaijan.

It seems that his promises are not so unreal. In summer 2001 the Azerbaijani special services guarding the members of Karabakh delegation participating in the international forum on protection of human rights created all the necessary conditions for fulfilling the planned operation as a result of which an attack on the head of the Karabakh committee of "Helsinki Assembly" Karen Ohanjyan was

undertaken. As expected, the violator was immediately released after the arrest. The Baku press made him a hero.

The delegates of the scientific conference dedicated to the ecology problems were also met with slogans "Death to Armenians". The organizers were arrested but also released immediately. After only few days Akif Nagi again started his aggressive activity protesting against the arrival of representative of the Yerevan municipality who was participating in the General Assembly of the capital cities-members of the Black Sea Economic cooperation. Meanwhile, the Azerbaijani official persons and representatives of NGOs are always welcome in Yerevan. The Azerbaijani delegations visiting Yerevan from time to time are always satisfied with the hospitality of Armenians. "I was met with bread and salt in Yerevan airport. Armenians were demonstrating their hospitality and I felt myself comfortable in Yerevan," Health Minister of Azerbaijan Ali Insanov said after visiting Yerevan.

The above mentioned facts prove that the Azeri authorities do not even try to create guarantees of security for the members of the Armenian delegations. They do not appreciate the good will of the Armenian authorities and continue to create an atmosphere of hostility which is being noticed by the representatives of international organizations who are trying to avoid organizing international forums in Baku.

**11/03/03 - Human Rights Groups Claim Post-Election Detainees Tortured - RFE/RL Azerbaijan Report**

"Since the elections, every day we receive reports about torture and other unacceptable treatment against detainees. Nevertheless, if the number of those addressing us at first ranged from 20 to 30 every day, now this number has fallen to 12-13 people," said Leila Yunus, head of the Institute for Peace and Democracy.

Murad Sadeddinov, chairman of the Fund for the Development of Democracy and Protection of Human Rights, claimed that he has met with some detainees who were subjected to torture. Sadeddinov recalled that Azerbaijan has



undertaken certain obligations before the United Nations and the Council of Europe regarding human rights. The latest events have showed that these commitments are not being met. But Abutalib Samadov, head of the parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, said that he could not prove the reliability of the allegations regarding torture, since the committee does not possess such information.

Bahar Muradova, deputy secretary-general, of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party, said that allegations that prisoners undergo severe torture do not correspond to reality. According to Muradova, the dissemination of such contradictory reports is intended to discredit the government and law-enforcement bodies.

**11/03/03 - U.S. Calls For Investigation Of Presidential Elections - RFE/RL Azerbaijan Report**

The U.S. administration has called on Baku to conduct an independent and transparent investigation of offenses observed during the presidential elections on 15 October.

At a 27 October press briefing where he answered questions concerning the U.S. administration's position on the elections, U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Baucher said: "There were some violent clashes, I think, that have taken place since the election. We understand now that those might have ended. Obviously, we urge all the parties to exercise maximum restraint, and refrain from further violence.... The U.S. concurs with the OSCE assessment that the voting was 'generally orderly but the election process still fell short of international standards.' So we would call for an immediate, independent, thorough, and transparent investigation of all the violations."

Commenting on the U.S. statement, political scientist Eldar Namazov pointed out that the administration's statements regarding the presidential elections have had a certain impact. As a result of the administration's 21 October statement, most of those arrested in the post-election riots have been released. But all this should not give

the mistaken impression that the government has softened its position, since the arrest of opposition activists continues. Moreover, Namazov expressed doubt that Baku would take a positive approach to the U.S. administration's recommendation to launch a fair and unbiased investigation of election irregularities.

Namazov said that by smearing the presidential elections with numerous offenses and falsifications, the local authorities have placed themselves in a difficult situation on the international arena. The upcoming debates about the elections and political prisoners at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe bode nothing good for the incumbent government. According to Mubariz Ahmedoglu, head of the Center for Political Innovations and Technologies, Baku is forced to comply with Washington's call in certain issues. At the same time, the government will not take serious steps toward the cancellation of the elections results.

**11/04/03 - Azerbaijani opposition leader demands clarification of police action - RFE/RL Newsline**

Ali Kerimli, who is chairman of the progressive wing of the opposition Azerbaijan Popular Front Party (AHCP), has written to Prosecutor-General Zakir Garalov requesting answers to six questions relating to allegations of police brutality against opposition supporters who staged a protest demonstration in Baku on 16 October against the apparent falsification of the outcome of the previous day's presidential election, Turan reported on 3 November. Kerimli asked which agency authorized the use of violence against demonstrators; what measures are being taken to identify police and other officials who participated in the arrest of opposition supporters or who resorted to the use of torture against them after their detention; why people in pretrial detention are banned from religious observances and deprived of access to information; and what measures have been taken against people who approved the arrest of opposition election observers or members of local election commissions.

**11/04/03 - More than 100 Azerbaijani opposition supporters fired - RFE/RL Newsline**

More than 100 members of opposition parties have been dismissed from their jobs since the 15 October presidential ballot, including 30 Musavat Party members, Turan reported on 3 November, quoting Saftar Nehmatoglu, who heads a working group of the Committee to Combat Repression and the Falsification of Elections. At least seven members of the conservative wing of the AHCP have been fired from teaching positions at village schools, Turan reported on 4 November. In addition, some 300 Musavat Party representatives on district election commissions are reportedly being subjected to harassment. A school director in the industrial town of Sumgait has reportedly called for the deportation from Azerbaijan of all Musavat Party members, Turan reported.

**11/05/03 - Azeri opposition parties complain to Council of Europe about "repression" - ANS TV**

Presenter Azerbaijan's three opposition parties have sent a letter to the chairman of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe PACE, Peter Schieder, and to Council of Europe Secretary-General Walter Schwimmer.

The letter accuses the Azerbaijani government of committing violations of the law during the presidential elections. The joint statement by the People's Front of Azerbaijan Party, the Musavat Party and the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan reports mass violations during the elections and repression against the opposition in the aftermath. The opposition parties call for sanctions against the Azerbaijani authorities since they have failed to fulfil their obligations to the Council of Europe and PACE.

MP Samad Seyidov, who represents Azerbaijan in PACE, believes that such letters change nothing. A large group of PACE observers monitored the election, and it was on the basis of their reports that Schwimmer congratulated Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev (...)

**11/07/03 – Defence chief says double standards pushing Azerbaijan to war over Karabakh - Trend news agency**

"We regard the USA as our strategic partner and pay special attention to cooperation with it. We want our military cooperation to cover even broader spheres so that Azerbaijan can benefit from it. The current situation in the region has reached such a point that its continuation is dangerous not only for Azerbaijan but also for the world community," Defence Minister Safar Abiyev told the former US national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, today.

The minister said that as long as the Azerbaijani lands remain under Armenian occupation, it is inappropriate to talk about peace and stability in the South Caucasus. According to him, it is surprising that instead of naming the aggressor and containing aggressive separatism, the international community is pursuing a policy of double standards and is equally treating an aggressor and a country subjected to occupation and terror. This creates distrust in a negotiated settlement to the conflict and pushes Azerbaijan to war. "A lasting peace and stability in the region can be ensured only after Azerbaijan's territorial integrity is restored and refugees return to their native homes. Azerbaijan will not yield an inch of its land to anyone," S. Abiyev said.

The sides exchanged views on the military and political situation in the region, Azerbaijan's relations with its neighbours, the USA, NATO and so on. Zbigniew Brzezinski said US-Azerbaijani relations can actually be described as an alliance. On 7 November, Zbigniew Brzezinski was awarded the diploma of an honorary doctor of Baku State University.

**11/10/03 – Norwegian official criticizes post-election violence in Azerbaijan - RFE/RL Newslines**

Kim Traavik, who is a state secretary at the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, told journalists in Baku on 7 November that his government is concerned about the violations that marred the 15 October presidential election and the "police brutality" against opposition protesters that followed, Turan reported on 8

November. Traavik said he told Azerbaijan's Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Kalafov that the country "is not fulfilling its commitments to the Council of Europe and the OSCE." According to the opposition newspaper "Hurriyet" on 9 November, as cited by Groong, newly elected President Ilham Aliyev refused to meet with Traavik because of the latter's statement of support for Norwegian Ambassador to Azerbaijan Steinar Gil. A leading member of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party demanded on 4 November that Gil be declared persona non grata for having offered sanctuary in the wake of the post-election clashes to Rauf Arifoglu, editor in chief of the opposition newspaper "Yeni Musavat."

**11/19/03 - Azeri police disperse pressure group's picket outside Russian, US embassies - ANS TV**

[Presenter Leyla Hasanova, over video of police dispersing protesters] A group of members of the Karabakh Liberation Organization [KLO] has attempted to stage an unauthorized picket outside the US and Russian embassies [in Azerbaijan].

The Russian embassy was cordoned off [by police] before the action. The demonstrators chanted "Karabakh", "Shame on pro-Armenian forces" and "Armenia is an aggressor".

The picket was planned to be continued outside the US embassy in Baku. But after the police intervention the pickets were forced to stage it on a road leading to the embassy. Although the pickets failed to read out a resolution outside the two embassies, the KLO chairman, Akif Nagi, considered the picket successful. The KLO members said that the actions of this type would continue until they yield serious results.

**11/20/03 - OSCE/ODIHR human rights chief calls on Azeri authorities to recognise violations during presidential election - OSCE Press Release**

– Ambassador Christian Strohal, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, today urged the authorities of Azerbaijan to acknowledge the serious violations that occurred

during the recent presidential election process.

He was visiting Baku to present the final assessment of the ODIHR Election Observation Mission and to discuss recommendations that must be implemented in order to restore public confidence in the election process.

"This election has been a personal disappointment, since the ODIHR has worked intensively with Azerbaijan since 1998 to improve the election process," he said.

During his one-day visit he met officials of Azerbaijan, opposition leaders and representatives of non-governmental organizations. He also visited a detention centre, and spoke to several people who were arrested in the days and weeks following the election on 15 October.

The ODIHR Director expressed serious concern about the conduct of the presidential election, which failed to meet OSCE commitments and other international standards. He reminded the authorities that there were many breaches of the Election Code of Azerbaijan, and said that a culture of impunity regarding breaches to the Election Code could not be permitted.

He expressed deep concern about the post-election developments, especially the wave of arrests of election officials, opposition party officials and supporters. He also mentioned dismissals of Azeri citizens from their jobs, allegedly because of their political opinions or affiliations, and urged the authorities to ensure that these persons were reinstated.

In the meeting with officials, the Ambassador stressed the need for an independent, thorough, expeditious and transparent investigation into electoral violations, which was one of the recommendations in the final report of the Election Observation Mission.

He suggested an investigation commission, which could comprise representatives of electoral authorities, political parties, civil society, and prominent and independent-minded public figures.

A Special Elections Prosecutor could also be appointed to investigate and prosecute those persons guilty of breaking the election-related laws.

Finally, the ODIHR Director called for concrete steps to restore public confidence, to promote

reconciliation, and to open a genuine dialogue with all segments of society.

**11/27/03 – Religious leaders of Azerbaijan, Russia, Georgia and Armenia call for dialogue - Azertac**

A quadripartite meeting of religious leaders of Azerbaijan, Russia, Georgia and Armenia dedicated to problems of resolution of conflicts in Caucasus took place in Svato-Danilov cloister, Moscow on November 26.

Before the meeting, patriarchy of Moscow and all Russia Aleksiy II met with head of Caucasian Muslims' Clerical Office sheikh ul-Islam hajji Allahshukur Pashazadeh and discussed inter-confession issues and situation in the Caucasus region.

Then, religious leaders of Azerbaijan, Russia, Georgia and Armenia discussed situation in the Caucasus region and Georgia. The parties strongly condemned terrorism and any manifestations of nationalism. 'Terrorism may have no religious justification. The states must do their best to stop the extremists, in particular, it is necessary to control weapons and cut short the financial inflow supporting terrorism. They appealed to all peoples of Caucasus to solve the disputable problems by peaceful means, by dialogue, within the international law.'

(...)

**11/29/03 – Azerbaijan rejects « pridnestrovian model » for settlement of conflicts - PanArmenian News**

Azerbaijan considers unacceptable to apply the so-called "pridnestrovian model" for the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, head of the Azeri President's administration department for foreign links Novruz Mamedov told Interfax agency. He viewed the assumption of some local mass media that first deputy to the Russian foreign minister Vyacheslav Trubnikov during his visit to Baku proposed to use the "pridnestrovian model" for the Karabakh conflict settlement as "far from reality". N. Mamedov considers such method of the conflict resolving unacceptable for Azerbaijan, for in this case a unitary

state becomes a federal one. "Each of the conflicts available is unique and application of the same model for their settlement is impossible", - the representative of the President's administration said.

**12/01/03 – Azerbaijani opposition parliament deputies ready to stand bail for detained activists - RFE/RL Newsline**

Five Azerbaijani parliament deputies representing the progressive wing of the opposition Azerbaijan Popular Front Party (AHCP) have written to Prosecutor-General Zakir Garalov offering to stand bail for 107 political activists and journalists arrested in the wake of the unrest in Baku following the disputed 15 October presidential election, Turan reported on 27 November. AHCP Chairman Ali Kerimli, one of the five deputies, said the same day that the opposition does not reject "civilized dialogue" with the authorities, but that the latter must first establish "civil relations" with the opposition, Turan reported. On 28 November, opposition representatives established a committee to protect the rights of the detainees. Also on 28 November, Interior Minister Ramil Usubov said the authorities are searching for a further 17 people suspected of participating in the post-election clashes, Interfax reported.

**12/01/03 – Azerbaijan, Russia seek to expand economic cooperation - RFE/RL Newsline**

Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev met in Baku on 28 November with visiting Russian Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Khristenko to discuss ways to expand bilateral economic cooperation, Turan and Russian media reported. Aliyev expressed the hope that more Russian companies will invest in Azerbaijan. In talks with Azerbaijan State Oil Company head Natick Aliyev (no relation to the president), Khristenko proposed revising the 1996 agreement under which Azerbaijan pledged to export 5 million tons of oil via the Baku-Tikhoretsk-Novorossiisk pipeline beginning in 2002. Aliyev said increasing exports from the present 2.5 million tons annually would not be advantageous due to the high tariffs (\$15.67 per metric ton) and the fact that high-quality Azerbaijani crude is

degraded by being transported by the same pipeline that is used for inferior-quality Urals crude. Khristenko and Azerbaijani First Deputy Prime Minister Abbas Abbasov signed a memorandum on 28 November on cooperation in space.

**12/01/03 - Imprisoned Opposition Leaders Begin Hunger Strike - RFE/RL**

The imprisoned opposition leaders, arrested in the wake of the 15-16 October events in Baku, are going on hunger strike on 1 December. This was stated during a 28 November roundtable discussion, the participants of which founded a committee for the protection of the detainees' rights. Lawyers and human rights activists said the leaders were going on strike because of the biased nature of the criminal investigation and the hard living conditions of the prisoners. After the 15 October presidential elections, the United States and the Council of Europe called on Baku to investigate the alleged cruel treatment of citizens by police during the postelection clashes. According to Interior Ministry press secretary Ehsan Zahidov, the national police Internal Investigation Department has conducted an investigation and submitted its findings to the Office of the Public Prosecutor. But to date no police officers have been brought to trial. Nevertheless, at a 28 November meeting, Interior Minister Ramil Usubov praised the work of the police during the 15-16 October events. Usubov noted that to date 107 people have been detained, while 17 are on the wanted list. (Rovshen Ganbarov and Asef Guliev).

**12/03/03 – Media watchdog concerned at trends in Azerbaijan - RFE/RL Newsline**

Reporters Without Borders Secretary-General Robert Menard held a press conference on 2 December at the end of a two-day visit to Baku, during which he met with government and presidential administration officials, journalists arrested following the 15-16 October violence in Baku in the wake of the disputed presidential ballot, and editors of opposition papers, Turan reported. Menard



said he received the impression that the Azerbaijani leadership has no interest in either taking measures to resolve media-related problems or in establishing an independent public television station. He said papers' debts to publishing houses and artificially created shortages of newsprint should not be used to pressure the press. Menard also said he sees no reason why Rauf Arifoglu, editor of the opposition newspaper "Yeni Musavat," who was arrested for his role in the post-election clashes, should not be released on bail pending trial, Turan reported on 1 December.

On 2 December, presidential administration official Ali Hasanov confirmed that Arifoglu will be tried and predicted that he will be found guilty, referring to video footage where Arifoglu allegedly said, "I organized it all," Turan reported.

**12/03/03 – Azerbaijani ruling party chastises Council of Europe rapporteur - RFE/RL Newline**

The press service of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party has released a statement accusing Swiss parliamentarian Andreas Gross, who is the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's special rapporteur for Azerbaijan, of interfering in the country's domestic political affairs, Turan reported on 2 December. The statement refers to Azerbaijani media reports quoting Gross as urging the Azerbaijani opposition to emulate its Georgian counterpart and stage a "bloodless revolution." It is not clear when Gross is alleged to have made those statements, given that his most recent visit to Baku preceded the ouster of Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze .

**12/03/03 – Official denies Azerbaijan will host U.S military base - RFE/RL Newline**

There is no truth to rumors that Azerbaijan will host a U.S. military base, presidential administration foreign relations department head Novruz Mamedov told journalists on 2 December, according to Interfax. He added that bilateral military cooperation with the United States focuses on cooperation in the war against international terrorism, participation in international peacekeeping operations, and NATO activities.

**12/04/03 - Foreign minister slams OSCE - AzerNews**

Addressing the OSCE summit Azeri Foreign Minister focused on OSCE's principles as well as the execution of decisions and resolutions adopted by the organization. "The existence of unsettled conflicts in OSCE member-states and destructive separatist activities against sovereignty and territorial integrity can be explained by the OSCE's indecision and non-adherence to its own principles," Guliyev stressed. He also underlined that the activities of the OSCE and its Minsk Group regarding for resolution of the Upper Garabagh conflict were inefficient. Expressing his country's view on the issue, the foreign minister stated that Azerbaijan would never accept resolution of the conflict on the basis of existing realities.

Guliyev called on Armenia and its supporters to give up their illusions as soon as possible and take up a constructive position.

**12/04/03 – Baku denies rumor on talks on placing US military bases in Azerbaijan - PanArmenian News**

Official Baku has not held any talks with US representatives on placing American military bases in the territory of Azerbaijan. Such official statement, as reported by "Day.Az," was made after in the light of the visit of defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld to Baku, commencing today, Azeri media published information on the contrary. Nevertheless, Azeri government representatives noted they did not rule out opportunity of military cooperation between the two countries. Meanwhile, as a source in the Azeri defense ministry told "Echo" Baku newspaper, "one of the issues D. Rumsfeld will discuss with the leadership of Azerbaijan, will be the topic of reconnoitring the locality, where Americans would like to have a point to base their servicemen in the prospect." According to the source, military airdromes of the former USSR, situated in Kyurdamir, Gala and Haji settlements are meant.

**12/06/03 - President Assesses OSCE Minsk Group's Activities as Unsuccessful The President noted 10-year successful activities of OSCE Minsk Group, voicing his dissatisfaction with the activities of the Minsk Group co-chairs and delay in resolution of the conflict - Baku Today**

"Azerbaijan still hopes the activities of the OSCE Minsk Group will yield effective ends, as this is an only organization directly involved in resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Karabakh conflict," President Ilham Aliyev said in meeting with OSCE Minsk Group co- chairs on Friday, Trend reports. The President noted 10-year successful activities of OSCE Minsk Group, voicing his dissatisfaction with the activities of the Minsk Group co-chairs and delay in resolution of the conflict. "Absence of results of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs gave birth to distrust on this organization in Azerbaijan," underlined the President, at the same time stressing the cease- fire regime observed by the conflicting. (...)

**12/07/03 - Azeri pressure group slams OSCE mediators' visit to Karabakh via Armenia - ANS TV**

[Presenter Azar Mammadov] The OSCE Minsk Group cochairmen have again gone to Nagornyy Karabakh through Armenian territory.

[Correspondent, over archive footage of Nagornyy Karabakh] The OSCE Minsk Group cochairmen have gone to Karabakh not from Azerbaijan, but Armenia. The head of the press service of the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry, Matin Mirza, has advised us not to touch upon this issue. He believes that the cochairmen are mediators. It makes no difference for mediators whether they go to Karabakh from Azerbaijan or Armenia.

But the chairman of the Karabakh Liberation Organization [KLO], Akif Nagi, believes that this move by the OSCE is a manifestation of its disrespect towards Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

(...)

**12/10/03 – Azerbaijani official again castigates opposition - RFE/RL Newsline**

Presidential administration department head Ali Hasanov condemned on 9 December what he termed the inappropriate behavior of Azerbaijani opposition parties in the wake of the disputed 15 October presidential election, Turan reported. He also condemned as "a political show aimed at achieving illegal aims" the hunger strike launched on 1 December by an unspecified number of the approximately 100 people detained for their alleged participation in clashes in Baku between police and demonstrators on 15-16 October. Hasanov reiterated earlier offers by Azerbaijani leaders, including President Aliyev, for dialogue with the opposition, but stressed that that invitation does not extend to Musavat Party leader and defeated presidential challenger Qambar, Turan reported.

**12/12/03 – Armenian, Azerbaijani Presidents meet - RFE/RL Newsline**

Robert Kocharian and Ilham Aliyev met for 90 minutes in Geneva on 11 December on the sidelines of the World Information Summit to discuss the Karabakh conflict, Western media reported. The two presidents subsequently told journalists that their talks amounted to a frank exchange of views. Armenian Public Television quoted Kocharian as saying that he and Aliyev "analyzed the new situation," but did not discuss specific peace proposals. Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Vilayat Guliev told journalists that the purpose of the meeting was to enable the two leaders "to get to know each other," according to AP as cited by Groong. Guliev said that earlier talks between Kocharian and Aliyev's father and predecessor as president, Heidar Aliyev, had yielded some progress toward resolving the conflict, but that no written agreements were ever concluded between the two, and that "we do not exclude starting from scratch." Guliev's Armenian counterpart Vartan Oskanian said in an interview published on 11 December in the Yerevan daily "Haykakan zhamanak" that "we expect...positive signals from

Azerbaijan's president to continue negotiations on the existing basis," which would make it possible to reach a solution to the conflict next year, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reported.

**12/12/03 – Azerbaijani court sentences volunteers for Chechen cause - RFE/RL Newsline**

After a two-month trial, Azerbaijan's Court for Serious War Crimes passed sentence on four young men, including one citizen of Algeria and one of Mauritania, who under the guise of engaging in humanitarian activity recruited volunteers to fight with the Chechen resistance, Turan reported on 12 December. The two Arabs were sentenced on 11 December to nine years' imprisonment, while two Azerbaijanis found guilty of undergoing military training at a camp in neighboring Georgia were each jailed for three years.

**12/12/03 - US envoy describes first meeting of Azeri, Armenian leaders as successful - ANS TV**

[Presenter Qanira Atasova] The US ambassador to Azerbaijan, Reno Harnish, regards as successful the first meeting between the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents. [Harnish in English with Azeri voice-over] I am very glad that the presidents of the two countries have held a tete-a-tete meeting in Geneva, because there has not been any progress on this issue for a long time. The OSCE Minsk Group invited the two presidents to Geneva. You know that the USA is one of the co-chairs. That is why you see US concerns on this issue. I regard as positive the fact that the newly-elected Azerbaijani president gave his consent to these talks. [Azerbaijani ex-President] Heydar Aliyev took part in these talks before. It is very good that now [President] Ilham Aliyev holds a direct tete-a-tete dialogue with the Armenian president. This meeting shows much. It shows that they want to solve the problem. My country believes that this was a success.

**12/12/03 – Heidar Aliyev, former Azerbaijani President, dead at 80 - Eurasia Insight**

Officials announced December 12 that Heidar Aliyev, the former Communist Party boss who served as Azerbaijan's president for more than a decade, had died. He was 80.

Aliyev died at the Cleveland Clinic, a facility in Cleveland, Ohio, where he had been receiving treatment for heart and kidney ailments. Cole Hatcher, a Cleveland Clinic spokesman, told EurasiaNet that the former president died at 10 a.m. on December 12. He had not been seen in public since the summer. Aliyev's decline began in April, when he collapsed while delivering a speech on national television.

(...)

In August, Aliyev's administration set in motion the first dynastic succession in any former Soviet state by elevating the president's son, Ilham, to the post of prime minister. Ilham Aliyev, who had served as a top executive at SOCAR, the state oil company, won the presidency in October, in elections widely criticized by international observers as flawed.

(...)  
Opposition leaders repeatedly alleged during the election campaign that officials covered up the extent of Aliyev's illness in order to facilitate the process of handing power to his son. Some opposition media outlets went so far as to report that Aliyev had died, and that authorities were delaying release of the news until after the election. Up until the presidential election, aides had insisted that Heidar Aliyev was recovering and would return to Azerbaijan.

Heidar Aliyev was born in May 1923 in the Azerbaijani exclave of Naxcivan, which would serve as his power base throughout his political career. After graduation from Azerbaijan State University, Aliyev worked in the state security apparatus, serving as the then-Soviet republics KGB chief from 1967-69. In 1969, he became the first secretary of the republics Central Committee, a post he held until 1982. He eventually rose to the top echelon of Soviet power, serving as a member of the Communist Party's Politburo.

As independent Azerbaijan president, Aliyev aggressively

courted Western investment, both private and governmental, with promises of oil and gas exports from the Caspian Basin. He was the driving force behind the development of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, a 1,093-mile route that will be the first of its kind to bypass Russia. It is tentatively scheduled for completion in 2005.

Aliyev's courtship of Western interests began amidst the upheaval sparked by Azerbaijan's conflict with Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Aliyev returned from political exile in 1993 to help negotiate a ceasefire to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and restore a sense of political stability in Baku. Over the years, however, Aliyev was unable to agree with his Armenian counterparts on a lasting political settlement for Karabakh. (...)

Aliyev governed in an authoritarian manner, tightening control over the country's political life and media development. During his administration, human rights organizations expressed growing concern over the Azerbaijani government's record on protecting individual rights.

#### **12/18/03 - Azerbaijani NGOs demand release of detainees - RFE/RL Newsline**

In a joint statement released on 17 December, the Committee Against Election Falsification and the Committee to Protect Prisoners' Rights appealed to the Azerbaijani leadership to release 121 people who remain in detention for their alleged roles in the clashes between police and demonstrators in Baku on 15-16 October, Turan reported. The statement claimed the clashes were triggered by "provocateurs," and that opposition leaders tried to dissuade demonstrators from acting illegally or destroying property. Those still in pretrial detention include People's Party Chairman Panah Huseinov; Democratic Party of Azerbaijan General Secretary Sardar Djalaloglu; and Rauf Arifoglu, editor of the newspaper "Yeni Musavat." Huseinov's lawyer told Turan on 17 December that no investigation into his client's alleged crimes has been launched. Also on 17 December, a senior member of the Gyanja branch of the opposition Musavat Party was arrested for

reasons that remain unclear, Turan reported.

#### **12/18/03 - Human Rights Groups Dismiss ECGD Decision to Back Baku-Ceyhan Pipeline as Politically Motivated - KurdishMedia**

Human rights groups[1] investigating BP's hugely controversial Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline were today dismissive of the decision of the Export Credits Guarantee Department (ECGD) of the UK government to provide \$150 million in support for the project, calling it politically motivated. The groups expressed surprise at the benefits the ECGD claimed would flow from the BTC project [2], given that many of the claims are contradicted by readily available evidence. For instance, ECGD claims that the pipeline "will serve to promote regional stability." In the past two months, there has been a revolution in one of the pipeline's host countries, Georgia; elections in another, Azerbaijan, that have been called "fraudulent" by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe [3]; and major bomb attacks in the third, Turkey.

Similarly, ECGD touts "the establishment of high quality operations to international standards", when a recent report from the Baku-Ceyhan Campaign identified no fewer than 173 violations of mandatory World Bank standards

[4]. ECGD also claims that "significant temporary employment will be created", in the same week that workers building the pipeline in Georgia went on strike in protest at receiving less than 50 US cents a day [5]. "It's pretty obvious that the ECGD has decided to back the BTC project for the same reason everybody else has: massive political pressure from the US," said Greg Mutti of PLATFORM, one of the groups involved in researching the pipeline. "We presented ECGD with extensive research showing how the pipeline violates their own standards on numerous counts. It seems the standards don't count for much."

Kerim Yildiz, of the Kurdish Human Rights Project, another group in the campaign, said, "The ECGD maintains that the project complies

with international human rights and environmental standards. However, this is clearly not the reality. KHRP is in the process of submitting cases to the European Court of Human Rights on behalf of a large number of villagers, who state that their human rights have already been violated". Noted Hannah Griffiths of Friends of the Earth, "ECGD shouldn't be using taxpayers' money to support projects that will further fuel climate change. We're bitterly disappointed that despite its so-called commitments to the environment, ECGD is still supporting unsustainable projects." "The ECGD has recognised that the project is not yet satisfactory and has set conditions before cover is made available," concluded Nick Hildyard of the Corner House. "No money should be provided until the public has been able to comment on the conditions and on BP's fulfilment of them. Taxpayers must be satisfied that BP has addressed longstanding concerns over compensation and new allegations - admitted by BP - of faulty welding." Notes:

[1] Groups involved in the Baku-Ceyhan Campaign, which has extensively investigated the BTC project and advocates that it should not be awarded public money while it still fails to meet mandatory human rights and environmental criteria, include Corner House, Platform, Friends of the Earth and the Kurdish Human Rights Project.

[2] See ECGD's announcement and note of decision of December 17 2003 at [3] BBC Radio 4 Today Programme, 24 November 2003, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE and Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe: "You know that not only in Georgia but also in Azerbaijan and Armenia - two other countries in that important region - there were fraudulent elections quite recently." The full interview can be found on the BBC website. [4] For this report, compiled as part of the 120 day disclosure period for the BTC project, and other independent analysis included reports of mission to the region and interviews with affected people, see [5] See "PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN GEORGIA STRIKE FOR PAY INCREASE" RFE/RL, Dec 16 2003



**12/20/03 - Azerbaijan Enters List of "Non-Free Countries" - Baku Today**

Azerbaijan along with the list of 49 world countries 'non-free nations', according to the last report for 2003 by US law defense organization "Freedom House", Trend reports. Azerbaijan entered the list of 'partially free countries' in the previous report by "Freedom House". However, the violations during the 15 October presidential elections and post-election situation caused changes in Azerbaijan's rating, the report underlines. In compliance with the report, there are 88 'free countries', throughout the world with 55 'partially free countries.' The Baltic nations are considered free among other post-Soviet states, while Armenia, Georgia, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova are referred to as 'partially free', despite the critical notes on the elections held in Armenia and Georgia. Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, like Azerbaijan, entered the list of 'non-free countries'.

**12/23/03 - Azeri MPs protest at Swiss recognition of "Armenian genocide" - Turan news agency**

The Azerbaijani Milli Maclis today adopted a statement which expresses a decisive protest against the recognition of the so-called "Armenian genocide" of 1915 by the Swiss parliament. In its statement the Milli Maclis draws attention to the groundlessness of the "myth" about the Armenian genocide as it distorts historic facts. In fact, it is Armenian nationalists who have been conducting an aggressive policy against the Azerbaijanis and Turks for 200 years. As a result of this policy, the entire Azerbaijani population of Armenia was ousted from that country. Moreover, Armenia has occupied 20 per cent of Azerbaijani territory, including Nagorny Karabakh and seven adjacent districts. As a result of this aggression, about 20,000 Azerbaijanis were killed and over 50,000 wounded and maimed. Furthermore, in the last 15 years Armenia carried out 32 terrorist attacks in Azerbaijan that claimed 2,000 lives and left thousands wounded.

The Milli Maclis regards the decision

of the Swiss parliament as misappropriation of "the referee's role and interference in the internal affairs of another state". This decision does not promote the establishment of peace in the Caucasus but hinders it. The statement points out that the Milli Maclis expresses its "decisive protest against this unfair decision".

**12/26/03 - Baku site for violence set against Armenians - Michnews.com**

By J. Grant Swank, Jr.

According to Pan Armenian Network, Armenia, plans are in place by terrorists to attack Armenians in Baku. The "Organization of Karabkh Liberation," a leftist Azerbaijani conclave reports violence is in the offing. NATO is scheduling the "Partnership for Peace" agenda, the conference located in Baku. Within that caption will be the "Cooperative Best Effort - 2004" military maneuvers to be located in Azerbaijan.

The Representative of the Defense Ministry of Armenia is expected to be present for the meeting. If Armenia sends its militia to Baku, they may come under terrorists' attacks. The Organization of Karabakh Liberation leader, Akif Nagi, reported that he's ready to prohibit Armenian soldiers from entering Yerevan. "We shall not allow the presence of Armenian soldiers in Baku," he pointed out. He promises a surprise attack if they show.

"We are not afraid of arrests," he elaborated. He concludes that the UN Security Council will have to "bear the responsibility for everything taking place." Deputy Barat Imani confirmed Nagi's threat by saying: "If necessary, we will organize terrorist acts right in Armenia." Another leader recited: "We are ready even to follow the experience of the Chechen patriots." Some Armenian spokesmen are stating that it might be a smart move to abandon the idea of having maneuvers in Azerbaijan, moving them

to "some other country that would be able to create more favorable conditions."

**12/27/03 - MP of Azerbaijan attended ICO arrangement - Azer Tag**

On 25-27 December, in the city of Islamabad, Pakistan was held the 11th session of the Science and Technologies Standing Committee of the Islamic Conference Organization (COMSTEC). The Republic of Azerbaijan was represented by the Member of Parliament, academician Ali Abbasov. Discussed were the issues of development perspectives of the science and technologies in the ICO member countries, ways of global cooperation, adopted necessary decisions for realization of new projects. In his remarks at the opening sitting, representative of Azerbaijan Republic Ali Abbasov spoke of the state and perspectives of science and technology in the Republic, Embassy of Azerbaijan in Pakistan told AzerTaj correspondent. Likewise, the Ambassador told the participants of occupation by Armenia a part of Azerbaijani territories and damage caused to science and education as a result of aggressive policy of the neighboring country. Participants of the session were received by President Musharref Perviz and Prime Minister Mir Zafarulla Khan Jamali. Participants of the session adopted appropriate decisions and recommendations to accelerate the development of science and technology of the ICO member states, strengthen their cooperation and data exchange. Academician Ali Abbasov held a gathering at the Embassy of Azerbaijan Republic in Pakistan and updated the staff on the socio-political situation, on the Decree of President Ilham Aliyev on strengthening socio-economic development in the Republic and the tasks resulting from it. At the Embassy, Mr. Ali Abbasov also met the former Pakistani President, supporter of the ruling party at the parliament of Pakistan, national leader Farug Ahmad Khan Legari, who came to express his condolence on demise of President Heydar Aliyev, and the parties had exchange of views on the issues of mutual interest. Mr. Legari recalled his meetings with esteemed Heydar Aliyev in 1995 in Islamabad, and then in Baku, in 1996, asked to convey his sorrow to President Ilham Aliyev. Ambassador Eynulla

Madetli asked the Member of Parliament to make necessary efforts to better parliamentary links between Azerbaijan and Pakistan.

**12/27/03 - Azerbaijan's former defense minister has his prison sentence reduced** - Associated Press Worldstream

Azerbaijan's Appeals Court reduced the prison sentence of a former defense minister, whose name had been put on the Council of Europe's list of political prisoners. The court ruled Friday to reduce Ragim Gaziyeu's sentence from life imprisonment to 15 years. Taking into account the time he has already served behind bars, Gaziyeu now has 8 1/2 years left of his sentence, the court said. Gaziyeu, who served as defense minister from 1992-93, was found guilty and sentenced to death in 1995 for surrendering some regions of Azerbaijan to Armenian troops in the war over Nagorno-Karabakh, embezzlement of state property and illegal possession of state weapons. His sentence was passed in absentia after Gaziyeu escaped from prison in September 1994 and fled to Russia. In 1996, Russia police detained Gaziyeu in Moscow and extradited him to Azerbaijan. Two years later, Azerbaijan outlawed the death penalty and commuted Gaziyeu's sentence to life imprisonment. Gaziyeu has maintained that his conviction was politically-motivated. The Council of Europe, the continent's leading human rights body, has championed his case, putting him on their list of political prisoners.

Former Azerbaijani President Geidar Aliev, who died this month in a U.S. hospital, had often dealt harshly with political opponents in this former Soviet republic. Aliev was succeeded two months before his death by his son, Ilham, who won the October presidential elections.

**12/30/03 - TV says 1,080 Azeris released from Armenian captivity up until now** - ANS TV

A total of 1,080 Azerbaijanis were released from Armenian captivity between 1992-03, Avaz Hasanov, the head of the international working group for hostages and missing people, has said. We want to further speed up our activities from 2004.

We deal with all work pertaining to the exchange of hostages because of a lack of bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

**ARMENIA / ARMENIE**

**10/30/03 - US insurance company made public list of Armenians, who insured life in Ottoman Empire** - PanArmenian News

"New York Life" US insurance company has made public the list of Armenians owning insurance policies, who resided in the territory of the Ottoman Empire before the Armenian Genocide in 1915. According to the information provided by the Armenian Association of Lawyers, there are over 2300 names of the insured in the list extracted from the archives of the US Federal Court, "Arminfo" agency reported. The list indicates the preliminary nominal sums of insurance in pound sterling and French francs. It should be reminded that lately Congressmen Adam Schiff (D-CA) and George Radanovich (R-CA) introduced before the House a bill providing for US contribution to victims of the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Turkey in getting insurance compensation. As reported by the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), the document named "Armenian Victims Insurance Fairness Act" will allow the US to demand that insurance companies open the archives of the period of perpetration of the Armenian Genocide (1875-1923) and present the list of holders of insurance policies of the period. (...)

**10/31/03 - Deputy Minister Rouben Shougarian lead an Armenian delegation to the 9th Black Sea Economic Cooperation Ministerial Conference in Baku** - Press Release

The Armenian delegation participated in the Ninth Meeting of the Council of Ministers which was held from October 29 to 31.

In his statement at the Conference, Deputy Minister Shougarian noted that "Some progress has been achieved in such vital areas of [regional] cooperation as energy, transport and tourism."

He continued, "At this stage one of the major tasks for our organization is the search for a coherent policy to meet the challenges of global developments. In an interdependent world economic system, regionalism is seen as an agent of integration and globalization as well as a lever of transformation from planned economic systems to market economies. Regional cooperation is also a means of strengthening democratization process and democratic institutions."

(...)In Baku, Deputy Minister Shougarian responded to reporters' questions. On Armenia's advocacy of open borders with Turkey, he explained that this would be of benefit to both countries, and to the region. Responding to a question about a possible upcoming meeting between the Armenian and Azeri presidents, he said that nothing is set yet, and that there may be opportunities to meet within the framework of various international meetings(...)

**11/05/03 - Turkish Intellectuals Want Anti-Armenian Propaganda Removed from Books** - Asbarez Online

A number of Turkish intellectuals have founded the 'History for Peace' organization, to campaign against an April 2003 Turkish Education Ministry decision to introduce anti-Armenian, anti-Greek, and anti-Assyrian material in schools.

The Turkish-German human rights organization TUDEY, welcomed the organization's initiative, stressing that this is the first time Turkish intellectuals have united to address Turkey's greatest taboo--the Armenian Question.

The members of 'History for Peace,' well-known cultural workers, scientists, pedagogues, attorneys, historians, and journalists, recently issued a statement saying: 'We, as citizens and parents, are greatly concerned over the changes to be introduced in history books and curriculum.'

They stress that school instruction must be conditioned by international views, not by one-sided arguments that may result in political confrontation.

Teaching, they urge, must be undertaken 'in the spirit of mutual understanding and trust between various nations and ethnic groups.'

The new books present Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians as 'enemies, spies, and barbarians,' while their spiritual centers, churches, and schools claim to 'damage communities.'

**11/06/03 - Armenian, Russian security chiefs sign action plan for 2004 - Mediamax news agency**

The secretaries of the Armenian and Russian Security Councils, Serzh Sarkisyan and Vladimir Rushaylo, signed a plan of action for 2004 in Yerevan today.

Speaking at a briefing in Yerevan today, Vladimir Rushaylo said that "Armenia and Russia have no common borders, but they have common goals to ensure stability and peace in the Caucasus". Rushaylo pointed out that the document that was signed today would boost bilateral cooperation. The Russian security chief stressed that "the Armenian and Russian presidents are continuously directing and orienting us towards these tasks".

Vladimir Rushaylo noted that during the talks with the Armenian leadership "we agreed that today's realities require more active and deep cooperation". Having said this, we attach great importance to intensifying contacts within the framework of the Caucasus Four Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, Rushaylo said.

"Transcaucasus is our common house, and we have to assess real threats and take joint actions in order to preserve peace in the Caucasus," Vladimir Rushaylo said.

**11/10/03 - Thorny way to Europe - A1 Plus**

PACE Monitoring Commission held a session on November 5 in Paris to consider European experts reports on Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The reports' details are not being revealed so far.

Member of Armenian parliamentary delegation to CE Armen Rusramyan told journalists Monday that a wide range of issues, including corruption and Karabakhi conflict, is presented in the report on Armenia. OSCE and CE propose Armenian lawmakers to make amendments to more than a dozen laws.

Jehovah's Witnesses should be registered in Armenia as religious organization.

Armenia's authorities are ready to fulfill the Europeans' demands, including above-mentioned one, though there is a serious disagreement between the sides on two points. Armenian authorities think demands to make amendments to Constitution as well as to the Law on Ombudsman should be within reasonable limits.

**11/10/03 - Armenia elected to important UN body - Press Release**

Armenia, today, was elected to the United Nations Economic and Social Council on the first round of vote, receiving more than 2/3 of the vote.

The other two candidates, Poland and Belarus will be competing against each other for the second seat, in the second round.

Armenia, already a member of the UN Commission on Human Rights, is now also a member of the Economic and Social Council. This body is the principal organ to coordinate the economic and social work of the UN and the specialized agencies and institutions. The council has 54 members who serve for three-year terms. The main function of the Economic and Social Council (known as ECOSOC) is to serve as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues, and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to member states and to the UN system.

**11/13/03 - Armenia, Russia sign further military - cooperation agreements - RFE/RL**

Visiting Yerevan on 10-12 November, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov met with President Robert Kocharian, Prime Minister Andranik Markarian, parliament speaker Artur Baghdasarian, and with his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sarkisian, Noyan Tapan and ITAR-TASS reported. On 11 November, the two ministers signed agreements under which the 3,000-man Russian military facilities at Giumri in northern Armenia will be merged into one base in keeping with Russian Defense Ministry requirements. Armenia will make available additional territory for the combined base. They also signed a

cooperation agreement between their respective ministries for 2004. Ivanov told journalists the same day that Russia will continue to supply Armenia with weaponry and military hardware of "a purely defensive nature," stressing that such materiel does not serve, as some Azerbaijani politicians have claimed, to destabilize the situation in the South Caucasus. A Russian military aircraft crashed in northern Armenia on 12 November for reasons that have yet to be clarified, killing the pilot, ITAR-TASS reported.

**11/15/03 - Armenian foreign minister discusses ties with Turkey in Moscow - Mediamax news agency**

Issues of normalizing Armenian-Turkish relations have been discussed at a meeting between Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanyan and his Russian counterpart Igor Ivanov in Moscow. During the meeting which took place on 14 November, Oskanyan briefed Ivanov on his latest meeting with his Turkish counterpart Abdullah Gul, the Armenian Foreign Ministry press service told Mediamax.

The ministers also exchanged views on the development of relations with European agencies and NATO, and "on coordinating efforts in this direction", the press service said.

**11/17/03 - Armenian speaker, UNDP Rep sign memo on ombudsman programme - Mediamax news agency**

Speaker of the Armenian National Assembly Artur Bagdasaryan and the permanent representative of the UNDP, Lise Grande, today signed a memorandum on the execution of a programme of enhancing knowledge in society about the institution of ombudsman.

Artur Bagdasaryan said that the establishment of an independent ombudsman structure is a serious achievement for Armenia, and the joint programme with the UNDP will focus on the enhancement of its role in the field of human rights.

Lise Grande said that the programme would be carried out under the aegis of the government of Netherlands which allocated 216,850 dollars for the project's implementation.



**11/18/03 - Brother of two prime ministers sentenced in killing of Armenian TV executive - Associated Press Worldstream**

Ten defendants, including a brother of two former prime ministers, were convicted and sentenced to terms of up to 15 years in prison on Tuesday in the killing last year of an Armenian television executive. Armen Sarkisian, accused of organizing the slaying of state-owned Armenian Public Television chief Tigran Nagdalian, was sentenced to 15 years in prison along with Djoh Arutyunian, convicted of carrying of the killing. Sarkisian's brother Aram Sarkisian is now an opposition leader. He was fired as prime minister six months after being appointed to the post following the October 1999 shootout in parliament killed his predecessor and brother, Vazgen Sarkisian. Four other men convicted of being members of an organized crime group involved in Nagdalian's killing were sentenced to prison terms ranging from seven to 12 years, while four other defendants were given suspended sentences and released from custody.(...)

**11/20/03 - Armenian Justice Ministry registers 52 religious organizations -Noyan Tapan news agency**

The Armenian Justice Ministry has registered 52 religious organizations as legal entities, four of them are the Armenian branches of foreign organizations, the department for the registration of public organizations, non-commercial legal entities and media outlets of the Armenian agency for state registration has told our correspondent.

The state registration agency registered only five religious organizations in 2003. The latest was registered in August. It was the Word of Life Church with branches in the town of Kapan in Syunik Region, in Abovyan in Kotayk Region, in the towns of Nor Achn and Charentsavan, in Tashir in Lori Region, in Razdan and Vayots Dzor.(...)

**11/24/03 - Armenian foreign minister voices support for Baku-Ceyhan pipeline - Mediamax news agency**

Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanyan said in Yerevan today that the implementation of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline construction "will contribute to the stabilization of the situation in the region".

Mediamax news agency quoted Vardan Oskanyan as saying that after the construction of the pipeline it would be more difficult for Azerbaijan to opt for the use of force in solving the Nagorny Karabakh problem, "since Baku will have to agree with the foreign investors' opinions who are investing great means in the project".

**11/24/03 - Armenia-Georgia relations to remain unchanged - FM - ITAR-TASS News Agency**

Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanyan said on Monday that the Armenian bodies of power saw "no reasons for any changes in relations between Armenia and Georgia" after President Eduard Shevardnadze was on Sunday swept out of power by a wave of opposition.

"Our contacts will remain as they are," the minister confirmed. Mr. Oskanyan also expressed hope that "peace and stability will be restored in Georgia shortly". "That is necessary not only for Georgia, but for Armenia and the entire region as well," the top diplomat told Itar-Tass.

According to the foreign minister, "Armenia followed the development of events in Tbilisi with concern and anxiety". "Luckily, everything ended on Sunday night without violence and major turmoil," he stressed.

**11/24/03 - Armenian fulfilled one more obligation to CE - PanArmenian News**

Today permanent representative of Armenia in the Council of Europe, Ambassador Christian Ter-Stepanyan handed the document on the ratification by Armenia the CE frame convention "On Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of incomes derived criminally" to the deputy to the CE Secretary General Mod de Bur-Bukikio. As reported by the RoA MFA press service, the agreements aims at the

simplification of the international cooperation in this sphere by means of determining the ways of interaction and measures essential to be taken in this direction by the member-countries of the convention. By ratifying the present convention Armenia fulfilled one more obligation undertaken at the entry to the CE.

**11/27/03 - National assembly of Quebec adopts a bill to proclaim Armenian Genocide memorial day - Arminfo**

The National Assembly of Quebec has adopted a bill to proclaim 24 April of each year Armenian Genocide Memorial Day.

The assembly member Yvan Bordeleau says that there were the following prerequisites for the bill adoption: in recent years, a number of countries have in various ways acknowledged the existence of the Armenian genocide; the Armenian community of Quebec has over 20,000 members; the fellow citizens of Armenian origin strongly desire to perpetuate the memory of those who died; Quebecers wish to share the painful memory their fellow citizens of Armenian origin have of the tragic events of 1915, and have expressed this wish on many occasions in the National Assembly of Quebec; in keeping with their social values, Quebecers have always rejected intolerance and ethnic exclusion; and finally since 1980, the National Assembly of Quebec has unanimously supported every motion to commemorate the Armenian genocide.

**11/28/03 - Commission clears nuclear safety technical assistance action programme - Europe Information Service**

The European Commission approved on November 25 by written procedure a Euro 64 million TACIS 2003 Action Programme for Nuclear Safety covering Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. The programme looks to promote an effective safety "culture" in these countries, foreseeing assistance for both plant operators and regulators. The specific activities will be based on on-site assistance, improving the safety culture on the part of nuclear plant operators, support for strengthening regulatory authorities,

and measures concerning protection and management of radioactive waste.

One of the main objectives is to improve the safety of the design and use of Soviet-type reactors and other installations, as well as to bring short-term improvements in terms of supplying equipment and making alterations to power stations. The programme also aims to promote the creation of independent regulatory authorities and appropriate legislation and authorisation procedures. A number of as yet unrealised projects featuring in the 1997, 1998 and 2000 Programmes (totalling Euro 20.31 million) have been included. Aside from multi-country allocations, the funding breaks down as follows:

Russia (Euro 29.17 million), Ukraine (24.77 million), Armenia (0.70 million), Kazakhstan (Euro 1 million)

**11/28/03 - Armenia shows highest rates of economic development in CIS** - PanArmenian News

The highest rates of economic development are fixed in Armenia for year 2003 among the CIS member-countries, as reported by Mediamax agency, the annual Transition report 2003 of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) says. The document also notes a number of principal directions Armenian government, in the opinion of the EBRD, should concentrate its attention at. "For improving the business atmosphere in the country it is necessary to activate reforms in the enterprises, court and tax systems, as well as implement the laws on publishing the financial information and on the struggle against corruption, in the state and customs services especially", - the report runs. Despite the reduction of Armenia's state debt, the EBRD experts advise to bring the tax collection and the export incomes up to standard for the financing of the infrastructures and increasing the expenses for the social sphere provided by the strategic program for poverty reduction.

**11/30/03 - Russian, Armenian leaders discuss Caucasus after Shevardnadze** - Agence France Presse

Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Armenian counterpart Robert Kocharian on Sunday discussed prospects for the Caucasus as a new era begins in Georgia, a Putin staff member said.

"The events in Georgia and everything connected to the political process in that country are important, not only for Armenia," Kremlin foreign policy chief Sergei Prihodko said as Putin and Kocharian began talks.

"Time will tell in whose interests Georgia's new leaders will govern -- in the Americans' interests or in the interests of Georgia's people," Prihodko told journalists. (...)

Some 300,000 Armenians live in Georgia, many of them suspicious of the West-oriented leadership of the uprising's chief architect Mikhail Saakashvili, who hopes his country will one day join the European Union and NATO. (...)

**12/03/03 - Armenian Parliament gunmen sentenced to life imprisonment** - RFE/RL

The five gunmen convicted of murdering eight senior officials in the parliament chamber in October 1999 were sentenced to life imprisonment on 2 December, together with a sixth man convicted of abetting them, RFE/RL's Yerevan bureau reported. A seventh defendant was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment. All seven said they will appeal the sentences. People's Party of Armenia Chairman Stepan Demirchian, whose father Karen was among the eight victims and who suspects the Armenian leadership of involvement in the killings, accused the Armenian authorities of seeking to "cover up the crime," adding that the gunmen should have been sentenced to death. (...)

**12/04/03 - Armenia to take part in NATO exercises in Azerbaijan** - Mediamax news agency

Armenia will take part in the Cooperative Best Effort-2004 military exercises which will be held on Azerbaijani territory within the

framework of NATO's Partnership for Peace programme.

A special correspondent of Mediamax has reported from Brussels that an invitation to take part in the exercises was handed over to Armenian Defence Minister Serzh Sarkisyan during his visit to the headquarters of the Allied Command Operations of NATO. "We shall certainly take part in these exercises," Serzh Sarkisyan told the Mediamax correspondent. Azerbaijan ignored an invitation to take part in the Cooperative Best Effort-2003 exercises which were held on Armenian territory this summer.

**12/04/03 - Armenia appeals for closer ties to EU** - Associated Press Worldstream

Armenian President Robert Kocharian appealed to the European Union on Thursday to offer his country closer political and economic ties to boost reforms in the Caucasus nation.

In his visit to EU headquarters, Kocharian asked European Commission President Romano Prodi to include Armenia in a new political plan to set up closer relations with the EU's neighbors after it expands eastward next year.

"We hope our region will be included in new neighborhood strategy," Kocharian told reporters. Prodi said his office was still busy drawing up the plans and it was "too early to say" whether Armenia would be included in the so-called Wider Europe strategy, which EU leaders asked Prodi to formulate this year.

"We have to intensify the scope of agreement and cooperation," Prodi said, adding that the EU stood ready to "deepen" relations with Armenia and its neighbors, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

The aim of the strategy is to forge closer cooperation in key areas such as the fight against human trafficking, drugs and organized crime with countries that will remain outside the EU as of next May, when 10 new members join. (...)

**12/04/03 - Eurocommission provided 4 million euros to Armenia** - PanArmenian News

The European Commission has provided the remaining 4 million euros to the Armenian government

within the food security program of a total cost of 9.5 million euros. As reported by the press service of the ministry of finance and economy of Armenia, the funds will be assigned to finance programs in agriculture, real estate cadastre, statistics and social maintenance. The initial \$5 million within the program were provided to Armenia in June-August 2003. At present a new agreement with the European Commission on rendering a second grant of 9.5 million euros under preparation for signing. Since 1996 within the food security program the European Commission has provided Armenia grants of a total of 67 million euros.

**12/04/03 – Armenia sets up post of envoy to European Human Rights Court - Noyan Tapan news agency**

Guided by the Rome Convention of 1950 "On the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms" and with the aim of ensuring Armenia's representation in the European Court of Human Rights, the Armenian government on 4 December set up a post of plenipotentiary representative of the Armenian government in the European Court of Human Rights and endorsed regulations concerning the plenipotentiary representative, the Armenian government press service has told Noyan Tapan news agency.

**12/08/03 – Armenian, Turkish foreign Ministers meet - RFE/RL**

Vartan Oskanian met on 5 December in Brussels on the sidelines of a meeting of NATO's Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council with his Turkish counterpart Abdullah Gul, RFE/RL's Armenian Service and Armenian news agencies cited by Groong reported. It was their third meeting this year. Topics discussed included bilateral relations, the situation in the South Caucasus, and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamlet Gasparian said Oskanian is "satisfied" with the meeting and believes it constituted a small but positive step toward improving relations between the two countries. Mediamax quoted Oskanian as predicting that within the next few months "we will achieve the first small positive result" in the question

of opening a land border crossing between Armenia and Turkey.

**12/08/03 - ...Yerevan... - RFE/RL**

On 6 December, Trubnikov and the Minsk Group co-chairmen met in Yerevan with Armenian President Robert Kocharian, according to ITAR-TASS and Armenian news agencies cited by Groong. Perina said after that meeting that Aliyev and Kocharian have both agreed that a face-to-face meeting between them to discuss resolving the conflict should take place, but he did not specify any time frame for that meeting. Russian co-Chairman Yurii Merzlyakov said the co-chairmen have suggested "new ideas" to the conflicting sides that offer a means of overcoming the impasse created by the Armenian insistence on a "package" peace plan that addresses all contentious issues simultaneously and Baku's preference for resolving contentious issues one at a time (the "stage-by-stage" model). He said the new ideas focus on "combining" the package and stage-by-stage approaches, but did not elaborate.

**12/08/03 - Turkish Ministry Calls for Centralized Secret Files on Minorities - Asbarez Online**

According to recent news accounts, the Turkish Interior Ministry has issued a secret memorandum calling on district magistrates in Turkey to establish files on minorities living in their territories, reported the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy.

In a directive addressed to eighty-one magistrates, the Interior Ministry calls for a special census of minorities, including the Armenian, Greek, Jewish, Assyrian and Chaldean communities, to be centrally catalogued at a processing facility(...)

**12/11/03 – Human Rights commission receives 800 complaints - ArmenPress**

A presidential human rights commission said today it has received about 500 written complaints from the start of the year. Deputy commission chairman, Hayk Alumian, said apart from written complains there were also

around 300 verbal complaints registered in a special book.

Thirty percent of written complaints concern court rulings which complainants say were unfair. Another 30 percent of complaints are of social nature and ten percent of complaints are beyond the reach of the commission. The commission has intervened asking relevant bodies to consider the complaints and notify about the results.

**12/16/03 - Swiss parliament recognizes slaughter of Armenians; Turkey rejects the charge - Agence France Presse**

Making a crisis with Ankara virtually inevitable, the Swiss parliament followed several other legislatures around the world Tuesday in recognizing that the slaughter of much of the Armenian people under the Ottoman Empire amounted to the crime of genocide.

Turkey was quick to react, condemning the Swiss action and warning of unspecified consequences.

"We strongly condemn and reject the decision adopted by the lower house of the Swiss parliament on the so-called Armenian genocide," the Turkish foreign ministry said.

It added without elaborating that Switzerland would "bear responsibility for the negative consequences" triggered by the decision, which it said was taken without consideration for bilateral ties(...)

**12/16/03 - Nakhichevan Armenians call on Council of Europe to Protect Monuments - Yerkir**

The convention of Nakhichevan Armenians, which convened in Yerevan, cited the barbaric destruction of 3,000 khachkars (cross-stones) and several Armenian churches of the medieval Armenian city of New Julfa reported by Nakhichevan authorities, and called on the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) to take the Armenian monuments under its control to prevent further destruction.

"The goal of Nakhichevan Armenians is to gain the right-guaranteed by international organizations--to consider their opinion when their historic



homeland's borders are altered or are given special status; these rights include free access to Nakhichevan and resettlement," said a statement released by the convention.

**12/16/03 – Armenian opposition launches new protests - RFE/RL**

More than 1,000 people attended a protest rally in Yerevan on 13 December convened by the opposition Artarutiun bloc to demand a nationwide referendum of confidence in President Robert Kocharian, RFE/RL's Yerevan bureau reported on 15 December. People's Party of Armenia Chairman Stepan Demirchian told participants that such a referendum is "a civilized way of solving the problem" of the leadership's legitimacy. He said the opposition will stage further demonstrations in coming weeks to secure popular support for the referendum. Demirchian lost the presidential runoff ballot in March 2003 to Kocharian and claims that the outcome of the voting was rigged in favor of Kocharian, who is therefore not the legitimate president. Speaking at the 13 December rally, Albert Bazeyan of the opposition Hanrapetutiun Party said that the ouster last month of Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze has shown Armenians that it is possible to remove an unpopular leader.

**12/18/03 – Armenian Parliament passes bill on alternative military service - RFE/RL**

Parliament passed on 17 December in its third and final reading a bill providing young Armenian men with an alternative to compulsory military service, RFE/RL's Yerevan bureau reported. Under pressure from the Council of Europe, the draft was amended to permit young men to perform civilian service; the original draft offered only the option of performing non military tasks in military units. The length of alternative military service remains unchanged at 42 months, compared with 24 months for regular military service.

**12/19/03 – Armenia is a "partly free" country - AZG Armenian Daily**

US-based 'Freedom House' organization ranked Armenia among 'partly free' countries in its annually issued report on human rights and basic freedoms.

Freedom House described five CIS countries, among them Armenia, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia and Moldova as partly free. Political rights and civil liberties were taken as basis for the survey.

Armenia, together with Ukraine and Georgia received 4 points both in political rights and civil liberties criteria.

Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Belarus and Kazakhstan are ranked as not free countries. Among these countries Azerbaijan was downgraded by the Freedom House from 'partially free' to a 'non free' status.

**12/22/03 – OSCE Yerevan workshop focuses on identification of trafficking victims- OSCE**

An OSCE workshop on identification of human trafficking victims held in Yerevan marked a turning point in the development of a strategic partnership between the Armenian government and civil society actors in setting up a viable mechanism for assistance to victims.

"The Armenian Government has this year taken a major step forward in combating trafficking in human beings," said Andrea Strasser, Democratization Officer at the OSCE Office in Yerevan, at a press conference. "Trafficking is now recognized as a crime and there is legal responsibility in place."(...)

**12/27/03 – Since 1991 some 1 million people emigrated from Armenia – PanArmenian News**

Since 1991 some 1 million people have emigrated from Armenia, chief of the department of migration and refugees under the Armenian government Gagik Yeghanyan told journalists. He added over 70% of them have left for Russia. However, since 2002 a zero migration balance has been observed in Armenia, i.e. the numbers of those leaving the

country and those arriving are equal, he emphasized.

**GEORGIA / GEORGIE**

**11/03/03 – Georgian elections marred by chaos, falsification allegations - RFE/RL Newslite**

Voting in the 2 November Georgian parliamentary elections was marred by chaos and numerous reported violations, Georgian and international media reported. Up to 10 percent of voters, including opposition National Movement (EM) Chairman Mikhail Saakashvili, found their names were omitted from electoral rolls, but they were nonetheless permitted to cast ballots upon producing reliable identification in line with a ruling the previous day by Central Election Commission Chairwoman Nana Devdariani. Some polling stations in Kutaisi opened late, and remained open for an additional two hours after polls closed elsewhere so that all those waiting in line would be able to vote. Observers from the NGO Fair Elections were reportedly assaulted at polling stations in Tkibuli and Ninotsminda, Caucasus Press reported. Ballot-box stuffing was reported in Akhmeta, unidentified people smashed ballot boxes in Rustavi, and a ballot box was stolen in Mtskheta. Interior Minister Koba Narchemashvili characterized the atmosphere as tense and said additional police had been deployed and several persons arrested for election-related infringements.

**11/04/03 – Georgian President says elections were "most transparent" - RFE/RL Newslite**

In his regular Monday radio interview, Eduard Shevardnadze said on 3 November that the previous day's parliamentary election was "the fairest and most transparent election ever held in Georgia," Caucasus Press reported. Shevardnadze said he is ready for constructive cooperation with all political forces, that he does not anticipate "confrontation" between himself and a parliament in which opposition parties hold a majority of mandates, Reuters reported. Meanwhile, with some 50 percent of

the proportional vote counted, the pro-presidential For a New Georgia bloc has polled 23.7 percent of the vote, the opposition National Movement 22.8 percent, the Labor Party 14.3 percent, the Burdjanaze-Democrats bloc 8.3 percent, New Rightists 8.21 percent, the Revival Union 7.9 percent, and Industry Will Save Georgia 6.8 percent, according to Caucasus Press on 4 November.

**11/05/03 – Georgian opposition issues ultimatum - RFE/RL Newsline**

Thousands of Georgians took to the streets of Tbilisi on 4 November to protest the alleged falsification by the authorities of the outcome of the 2 November parliamentary election, Reuters and Georgian agencies reported. Smaller-scale protests also took place in Zugdidi, Gori, Zestafoni and Samtredia, according to ITAR-TASS. Some 6,000 people attended a protest convened near the Tbilisi City Hall by opposition National Movement (EM) leader Mikhail Saakashvili, who called on President Eduard Shevardnadze to concede the defeat of his For a New Georgia (AS) bloc and resign by midday on 5 November or face "a revolution." The Labor Party, which according to official returns ranks third with some 15 percent of the ballot, declined to join the protests, as did the opposition New Rightists. Supporters of the Burdjanadze-Democrats Bloc and Ertoba head Djumber Patiashvili, who had staged a parallel protest at the Tbilisi Philharmonic, later marched to join Saakashvili's supporters.

**11/10/03 – Georgian President warns against civil war - RFE/RL Newsline**

Two people were reported injured on 7 November when unidentified armed men opened fire on a demonstration in Zugdidi convened by the opposition National Movement (EM) to protest the apparent falsification of the outcome of the 2 November parliamentary election, Georgian and Western media reported. In an unscheduled address on national television on 7 November, Eduard Shevardnadze affirmed his readiness to meet with opposition leaders the following day to discuss "all topical issues." At the same

time, he warned against allowing a "civil standoff" to develop, as it could, he said, easily degenerate into civil war. Shevardnadze further protested what he termed interference by U.S. financier George Soros, who is believed to fund the opposition youth movement Kmara, in Georgia's internal affairs, Caucasus Press reported.

**11/10/03 – Georgian opposition stages further protest demonstrations - RFE/RL Newsline**

On 8 November, 8,000-10,000 supporters of the EM and the Burdjanadze-Democrats election bloc attended a demonstration in Tbilisi at which EM leader Mikhail Saakashvili again demanded that the Georgian authorities acknowledge his bloc's victory in the parliamentary elections and that the government and President Shevardnadze resign. Saakashvili said first that he does not intend to overthrow the government by force, and then that if Shevardnadze refuses to recognize the opposition's victory, he and his supporters will break through the police cordons surrounding the state chancellery and demand Shevardnadze's resignation, according to ITAR-TASS. Numerous EM supporters from other regions of Georgia were reportedly intercepted by police and prevented from traveling to Tbilisi to join the protest. Interior Ministry spokesman Paata Gomelauri told Caucasus Press on 8 November that police will use force if the situation in Tbilisi spirals out of control.

**11/12/03 – Georgian opposition leader calls for civil disobedience - RFE/RL Newsline**

Addressing several thousand supporters congregated outside the parliament building in central Tbilisi on 11 November, Saakashvili warned that if Shevardnadze does not make unspecified concessions to the opposition, the people will paralyze the functioning of local and national government and force the president to resign, Caucasus Press reported. Several opposition parliament deputies began a hunger strike outside the parliament building late on 10 November, according to the website of the

independent television station Rustavi-2, while 10 members of Saakashvili's National Movement have begun a hunger strike in the western Georgian town of Zestafoni, ITAR-TASS reported on 11 November.

**11/13/03 – Talks between Georgian authorities, opposition fail - RFE/RL Newsline**

Talks at the Georgian parliament building late on 12 November between President Shevardnadze's representative, former Defense Minister Giorgi Karkarashvili, and the leaders of two prominent opposition blocs failed to yield a compromise solution to the ongoing standoff in the wake of the disputed 2 November parliamentary election, Reuters reported. National Movement leader Mikhail Saakashvili, who claims his bloc was the winner of the ballot, said afterward that the president "is not willing to compromise." Earlier that day, Saakashvili began collecting signatures to a petition demanding that Shevardnadze resign, Caucasus Press reported. He also appealed to businessmen to withhold paying taxes to a "corrupt government."

**11/14/03 – Georgian regional leader warns of possible civil war - Reuters**

A powerful Georgian regional leader said Friday he felt the unrest in Georgia was increasingly reminiscent of events that drove the country to civil war after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

"If we allow a situation similar to that in late 1991 then peace will never come to the Caucasus. But I have this gut feeling that the situation is turning in that direction," said Aslan Abashidze, the leader of Adzhara, after lengthy talks with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov in Moscow.

Analysts say Abashidze, a perennial rival of President Eduard Shevardnadze, was acting as an emissary for the Georgian leader. Shevardnadze and Abashidze met for talks in Abashidze's autonomous homeland on the Black Sea last weekend.

Ivanov said Russia was concerned about the impact of the unrest in Georgia, sparked by a contested election result, on the Caucasus as

a whole, but said it would not get involved.

"Seeking a solution through protest and pressure on authorities is not acceptable. I hope they find a suitable political solution," he said. But Abashidze said the Georgian government needed international help to halt the unrest.

"If the international community, especially (Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) doesn't take active steps to settle the conflict before it is too late, then it will be difficult to predict what will happen tomorrow," he said.

**11/16/03 - Russia Says it Could Help in Georgia Political Crisis - Voice of America**

Russia says it could help mediate the crisis in Georgia, after days of opposition calls for President Eduard Shevardnadze to resign. Speaking at a news conference in Moscow, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Valery Loshchinin said events in the former Soviet republic of Georgia concern neighboring countries and that they must be involved.

He raised the possibility of Russia working with Georgia's neighbors Armenia and Azerbaijan to resolve the political crisis between embattled Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze and the opposition.

Mr. Loshchinin spoke after meeting with Aslan Abashidze, a Georgian regional leader who is lobbying on Mr. Shevardnadze's behalf. He met with several Russian officials after stops in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Also on Saturday, Mr. Shevardnadze called Russian President Vladimir Putin for the second time in two days about the situation in Georgia.

The consultations come after nearly two weeks of demonstrations by the opposition, which complains that parliamentary elections earlier this month were not free and fair. On Friday, some 20-thousand protesters marched toward parliament buildings in the capital, Tbilisi.

The situation in Tbilisi on Saturday was quiet, with most protesters heeding a call from opposition leaders to take a break. Mr. Shevardnadze has said more protests could lead to civil war.

**11/19/03 - Georgian Presidents' ally sends supporters to Tbilisi - RFE/RL Newsline -**

Adjar Supreme Council leader Aslan Abashidze dispatched several thousand men to the Georgian capital where they participated on 18 November in a demonstration of support for embattled President Shevardnadze, Reuters and Russian and Georgian media reported. That action is due to last for several days. Tsotne Bakuria, who heads the Tbilisi branch of Abashidze's Democratic Revival Union (DAK), was quoted by Interfax as saying the demonstrators from Adjara are "far from happy" with Shevardnadze's leadership, but that "all processes should proceed in accordance with the current constitution." Also on 18 November, Gogi Topadze told journalists in Tbilisi that his Industry Will Save Georgia electoral bloc will join the DAK-sponsored demonstration of support for Shevardnadze, Interfax reported. He said doing so will demonstrate that "there are objective political forces that do not want political chaos" in Georgia. Topadze's faction was the third largest in the outgoing parliament, but with votes from almost all polling stations counted, it is not clear whether it has garnered the minimum 7 percent of the vote needed to win representation in the new legislature.

**11/19/03 - And opposition leader calls for their expulsion - RFE/RL Newsline**

Opposition National Movement leader Mikhail Saakashvili told journalists on 18 November that Adjar Supreme Council leader Abashidze and President Shevardnadze are planning to bring 2,000 Adjar police to Tbilisi where, he claimed, they will occupy the Philharmonic Building (the largest venue for meetings in the city center) and block traffic. He called for efforts to evict the participants of the pro-Shevardnadze rally from the capital, Interfax reported.

**11/21/03 - Georgian election results announced - RFE/RL Newsline**

Georgia's Central Election Commission (CEC) announced the final results of the 2 November parliamentary election on 20 November, the deadline set by the election law for doing so, Caucasus Press reported. Five CEC members representing opposition parties refused to endorse the final results, which gave the pro-presidential For a New Georgia (AS) bloc 21.39 percent of the proportional vote, or 38 seats, followed by the Democratic Revival Union (DAK) (18.84 percent, 33 seats), the Saakashvili-National Movement bloc (18.8 percent, 32 seats), the Labor Party (12.04 percent, 20 seats), the Burdjanadze-Democrats bloc (8.79 percent, 15 seats), and the New Rightists (7.35 percent, 12 seats). Of the 75 mandates from single-candidate constituencies, AS won 19, DAK six, Saakashvili-National Movement four, New Rightists three, Industry Will Save Georgia two, Burdjanadze-Democrats one, and Labor one. Independent candidates won 16 of the single-mandate constituencies; repeat voting is scheduled in the remaining 23. AS can therefore count on up to 84 seats, including the 16 "independents" and 11 deputies elected in 1992 from constituencies in Abkhazia whose mandates are automatically prolonged. DAK, whose leader, Adjar Supreme Council Chairman Aslan Abashidze has affirmed his support for Shevardnadze, has a total of 39 seats, giving the two factions a combined total of 123, or just over half the total 235.

**11/21/03 - Georgian opposition refuses to accept election outcome as valid - RFE/RL Newsline**

Mikhail Saakashvili, who heads the eponymous opposition bloc, said on 20 November that he considers the new parliament illegitimate and will continue to fight to have the election results annulled, "The Daily Telegraph" and "The New York Times" reported on 20 November. He said he will stage a peaceful protest march on Tbilisi to thwart the first session of the new parliament, which is scheduled for 22 November. The two leaders of



the Burdjanadze-Democrats bloc, outgoing parliament speaker Nino Burdjanadze and her predecessor Zurab Zhvania, similarly said they will boycott sessions of the new parliament and work to have them overturned, according to ITAR-TASS. The Labor Party too has threatened to boycott the new parliament, Caucasus Press reported on 20 November.

**11/21/03 - As US expresses disappointment - RFE/RL Newsline**

Speaking in Washington on 20 November, U.S. State Department spokesman Adam Ereli said the United States is "deeply disappointed" by the official results of the 2 November ballot and in the Georgian leadership, an RFE/RL correspondent reported. Ereli said the "results do not accurately reflect the will of the Georgian people, but instead reflect massive vote fraud in Adjara and other Georgian regions."

**11/22/03 - 'Coup' takes place in Georgia - CNN.com**

A state of emergency is declared in Georgia Saturday after President Eduard Shevardnadze denounces a coup attempt.

But a leading opposition figure has appeared on television to declare she is taking over power.

Shevardnadze, who is believed to be at the ministry of defense, issued a statement denouncing the coup which happened as he addressed the convening of parliament. He has vowed to fight protesters.

He was hustled out of the country's parliament after anti-government protesters stormed the building.

Masked men with machine guns in pick-up trucks surrounded the president's car as he left the scene. Other politicians had fled the chamber also.

Shevardnadze had been speaking to parliament, swearing in a new government, after controversial elections.

Dozens of demonstrators forced their way into the chamber after about 20 minutes waving flags, chanting and banging desks.

Chaotic scenes developed outside with shuffling and pushing, while protesters burnt flags and placards. No gun fire has been heard.

Police appeared to run away from the scene, leaving protesters in control of the square.

Shevardnadze has in the past refused to stand down until the end of his tenure in 2005 despite weeks of protests against the November 2 election.

A stand-off had developed between pro and anti-government supporters Friday in Freedom Square outside the parliament.

The opposition parties -- the National Movement and the United Democrats -- claim Shevardnadze rigged the elections in favor of parties loyal to him.

The Georgian president -- who has held office since 1992 -- has warned Georgians that demonstrations could provoke a civil war.

When the official election results were announced, the president's Party for a New Georgia and the allied Revival Party took first and second place. The National Movement, the largest opposition party, came in third.

National Movement leader Mikhail Saakashvili believes his party should have come in first, suggesting there was voter fraud. International election observers -- and the United States -- condemned the vote.[...]

**11/23/03 - Georgia's Shevardnadze Says He Quits - Reuters**

Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze said Sunday night that he had quit.

Speaking on television he said:

"I am going home." When asked who was next president of Georgia he said: "It is not my business."

**11/24/03 - Leaders of Georgia's unrecognised Republics confer, streng then security - RFE/RL Newsline**

Eduard Kokoyty, who is president of the unrecognized Republic of South Ossetia, told Interfax on 22 November that he discussed developments in Tbilisi by telephone earlier that day with Raul Khadjimba, prime minister of the unrecognized Republic of Abkhazia. Kokoyty said they were both concerned that the standoff in Georgia could trigger broader destabilization throughout the South Caucasus. Both entities introduced heightened security measures on 22

November. On 23 November, Kokoyty said following Shevardnadze's resignation that the change of leadership in Georgia will not deter his republic from continuing its efforts to become a subject of the Russian Federation. Khadjimba, for his part, similarly told Interfax that the change of leadership in Georgia cannot change Abkhazia's status as an independent state.

**11/25/03 - Supreme court partially annuls Georgian election results - RFE/RL Newsline**

In response to a lawsuit brought by the NGO Fair Elections, Georgia's Supreme Court annulled on 25 November the results of the 2 November parliamentary ballot for the 150 mandates to be allocated under the proportional system, Caucasus Press reported. The final returns promulgated on 20 November by the Central Election Commission (CEC) gave the pro-presidential For a New Georgia (AS) bloc 21.39 percent of the proportional vote, or 38 seats, followed by the Democratic Revival Union (DAK) (18.84 percent, 33 seats), and the Saakashvili-National Movement bloc (18.8 percent, 32 seats). Popular anger that the authorities rigged the outcome to give AS and DAK a majority served as the catalyst for the mass demonstrations that culminated in Shevardnadze's resignation. On 24 November, CEC Chairwoman Nana Devdariani said she considers it "practically impossible" to hold new presidential and parliamentary elections within the time frame required by the constitution. The presidential ballot must take place within 45 days, and on 25 November parliament scheduled it for 4 January. Devdariani pointed out that new election commissions must be appointed and voter lists revised and corrected, otherwise the repeat elections risk being as flawed as those of 2 November, Caucasus Press reported. On 25 November, acting President Burdjanadze said the priority is to hold new presidential elections, and that parliamentary elections might be postponed until April-May as it is "too difficult" to hold both ballots simultaneously, Caucasus Press reported.

**11/26/03 – New Georgian leadership names Presidential candidate - RFE/RL Newsline**

At a joint press conference in Tbilisi on 26 November, the three opposition leaders who spearheaded the campaign for President Shevardnadze's resignation in the wake of the rigged 2 November parliamentary elections announced the nomination of a single candidate, National Movement Chairman Mikhail Saakashvili, for the preterm presidential election scheduled for 4 January, Caucasus Press and Reuters reported. Acting President Nino Burdjanadze said the decision to align behind a single candidate was dictated by the need to "preserve and protect the achievement we have won together with the Georgian people." Saakashvili said that Burdjanadze, whom he termed "the most attractive political face in Georgia," will head the opposition list of candidates in the parliamentary ballot, for which no date has yet been set. Former Economy Minister Lado Papava, who is now Burdjanadze's main economic adviser, told Reuters on 26 November that "Saakashvili deserves to become president and Nino Burdjanadze has little chance of beating him."

**11/27/03 – Saakashvili runs for presidency - AZG Daily**

The leaders of the bloodless revolution, which led Shevardnadze out of office, announced November 26 Mikheil Saakashvili as their single candidate to run for presidential elections, scheduled for January 4, the Georgian online Civil.ge paper informs.

Nino Burjanadze and Zurab Zhvania said they put aside all the personal rivalries in order to succeed in the presidential and parliamentary elections.

The decision was widely anticipated, as Mikheil Saakashvili was a driving force of the three-week long street protests demanding Shevardnadze's resignation.

'The presidential election campaign has already started and I am sure we will win. I am ready for our victory in the forthcoming elections,' Mikheil Saakashvili said at a joint news conference given together with

interim president Nino Burjanadze and Zurab Zhvania.

Mikheil Saakashvili also said that his National Movement party and United Democrats party, led by Nino Burjanadze and Zurab Zhvania, will form a joint election bloc to run for the parliamentary elections, the date of which is not scheduled yet.

'Nino Burjanadze will be the leader of our election bloc,' Saakashvili added. Zurab Zhvania said that the revolution is over. 'However we are facing huge challenges ahead. First of all we should secure free and fair elections,' he added.

**12/01/03 - Georgia's new leaders seek to stabilise situation - ITAR-TASS News Agency**

To the new leadership of Georgia "at the present stage it is most important to stabilise the situation," presidential candidate Mikhail Saakashvili told Armenia's Public Television network in an interview on Sunday. "We must effect serious reforms: launch struggle against corruption and stabilise the taxation situation at the first stage and subsequently lower taxes, especially those on small businesses," Saakashvili said. In particular, there is an intention to exempt investors in the country's economy from taxes altogether for two years, he added. Saakashvili said, "We must orient ourselves towards a society of knowledge and high-technology production processes". He expressed the conviction that there exist ample opportunities for regional co-production arrangements. "We shall invest the bulk of funds in education and intend to set up a regional educational centre," Saakashvili emphasised.

**12/01/03 – New Georgian state Minister, interior, foreign, and finance Ministers appointed - RFE/RL Newsline**

Meeting late on 27 November after failing to raise a quorum for the morning session, parliament deputies approved the candidacy of former parliament speaker Zurab Zhvania, whom acting President Nino Burdjanadze proposed as minister of state, Caucasus Press reported. Zhvania resigned as parliament speaker in November 2001 and declared his opposition to

then-President Eduard Shevardnadze. Deputies also approved the nomination of former parliament Defense and Security Commission Chairman Giorgi Baramidze as interior minister; of Tedo Djaparidze -- who served from 1999-2002 as ambassador to the United States and since February 2002 as National Security Council secretary -- as foreign minister; and of Zurab Nogaideli as finance minister. Nogaideli held that post from May 2000 until May 2002, when Shevardnadze sacked him after Georgia failed to meet budget targets for four consecutive months

**12/01/03 – New Georgian election official named - RFE/RL Newsline**

Parliament deputies confirmed on 30 November the appointment of Zurab Chiaberashvili, head of the NGO Fair Elections, as chairman of the Central Election Commission (CEC), Caucasus Press reported. He replaces Nana Devdariani, who was one of several alternative candidates suggested by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to President Shevardnadze. Devdariani resigned under pressure on 28 November, together with five other CEC members, having incurred criticism for the CEC's imputed role in falsifying the outcome of the 2 November parliamentary election, allegedly at Shevardnadze's behest. Chiaberashvili, whose NGO was instrumental in registering and publicizing election violations, pledged that the 4 January presidential ballot will be absolutely fair, and said he is confident it will prove possible to revise and correct voter lists before that date, ITAR-TASS reported on 30 November.

**12/01/03 – Reprisals reported against former Georgian President's allies - RFE/RL Newsline**

A spokesman for the Christian Democratic Union (KhDK), which was one of the parties that aligned in the pro-Shevardnadze For a New Georgia (AS) election bloc, accused supporters of the new Georgian leadership of attacking the party's offices in unspecified Georgian towns, Caucasus Press reported. KhDK Chairman Vazha Lortkipanidze was quoted by the

daily "Akhali taoba" on 26 November as saying that the ouster of Shevardnadze was anything but democratic and that a danger now exists of dictatorship. He said his party joined AS with the aim of neutralizing "odious forces" and promoting democratic constitutional change.

**12/01/03 – And against media - RFE/RL Newsline**

The daily "Tribuna" reported on 27 November that members of the student movement "Kmara!" staged reprisals over the previous three days against several journalists and media outlets, Caucasus Press reported. The victims included the Tbilisi office of Adjar Television, which has been closed down; National Television, and the pro-government daily "Sakartvelos Republika." The Kavkazia television channel has also been shut down.

**12/01/03 - Georgia's Leader Warns Russia on Talks with Separatists - ASBAREZ Online**

Georgia's interim President Nino Burdzhnadarze accused Russia on Monday of undermining her country's independence by holding talks with leaders from three of its restive regions last week. Burdzhnadarze, an opposition leader appointed after Eduard Shevardnadze quit following accusations of vote rigging in last month's parliamentary elections, said Russia was important to Georgia's stability but should not undermine its sovereignty. Leaders from South Ossetia and Abkhaziawhich broke free of Georgian control more than a decade ago and Adzhara which has never espoused outright separatism met Russian officials in Moscow last week, seriously irritating Tbilisi.

"We are ready to step out of a box of historical prejudices and start our relations from a clean paper. At the same time this should be a two-way street," Burdzhnadarze told a summit of foreign ministers in the southern Dutch city of Maastricht. "Our Russian colleagues should also understand that actions undermining Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity similar to those we witnessed during the last week in Moscow ruin all positive messages and put us in an

avoidable confrontational position." (...)

**12/02/03 – Will new Georgian authorities change their attitude towards local ethnic minorities ? - AZG Daily**

Georgian ambassador to Armenia Nikoloz Nikolozishvili told Armenian president Robert Kocharian at a meeting in Yerevan that the new leaders of his country- Nino Burdjanadze, Michael Saakashvili and Zurab Zhvani are eager to maintain and develop Georgian-Armenian friendly relations. A similar wish was expressed by the Georgian new authorities regarding Azerbaijan. Zhvania told Baku's 'Leader' TV channel that Azeris and Georgians had 'many common issues and tragedies. I can assure that Georgia can have no closer state than Azerbaijan'.

The figure of ethnic Azeris and Armenians in Georgia is totaled 550 thousand (together), or an estimate 12 percent of Georgia's population.

The previous presidents of Georgia, Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze applied analogous policy towards the country's minorities. During the reign of Gamsakhurdia 800 Azeri families were deported from Dmanisi region of Georgia. Gamsakhurdia, though, couldn't do the same with Armenians in Javakhk, who let not one out of four different prefects appointed in Javakhk by Gamsakhurdia during his one-year tenure.

Shevardnadze, unlike his radical predecessor, eased brutal policy implemented towards ethnic minorities in Georgia, but left the socio-economic conditions neglected, which resulted in sevenfold decrease of Greek population, and fivefold drop of Russian population in the country. The number of Armenians living in Georgia decreased by 100,000 during Shevardnadze's reign.

In the November 2 parliamentary polls Armenians of Javakhk mostly voted for Shevardnadze, this conditioned by the fact that they are isolated from information due to bad communications with the central regions of Georgia, and were familiar only with the acting president. Also their support for Shevardnadze (Shevardnadze's bloc collected 70 percent of votes in Akhalkalak and Tsalka) was explained by their worry that a

change in authority may bring back the harsh treatment of Gamsakhurdia times. Whereas Armenians of Tbilisi, who have access to everyday information, voted either for Sahakashvili's or Burdjanadze-Zhvania blocs.

Anyway, the underlined anti-Armenian manifestations have been quite frequent in pre-electoral period in Georgia, with various political figures playing with the mentality of Georgian citizens voicing the threat of Armenian figures gaining seats in parliament. The soon-to-be president of Georgians, Michael Saakashvili told daily Azg, as well as Armenian Public TV November 30 that all the citizens of Georgia are going to be treated equally, and are not going to be discriminated in respect to their ethnic belonging. This declaration of the leader of Georgia's 'rose revolution' gains weighty hope as Armenians in Georgia and Armenia proper hope to see a brotherly nation with federal mentality, not one like it has been since the break up of the USSR.

**12/02/03 – Georgian State Minister warns against revanchist forces - RFE/RL Newsline**

Zurab Zhvania told a press conference in Tbilisi on 1 December that the new Georgian leadership is ready to counter any actions by revanchist forces that "until recently controlled the Georgian economy," adding that there is no evidence linking those forces either with former President Shevardnadze or with Defense Minister Lieutenant General David Tevzadze, Interfax and Caucasus Press reported. State Security Ministry spokesman Nika Laliashvili warned on 1 December that unnamed people in Georgia and abroad are planning to assassinate former and present politicians in order to create "chaos" in Georgia, ITAR-TASS reported. Echoing statements by Burdjanadze last week, Zhvania described the economic situation as "catastrophic," and said Georgia might appeal to the international community for food supplies for prisons and the armed forces, the website of the independent television station Rustavi-2 reported. Zhvania also said the criminal charges against former State Security Minister Igor Giorgadze, who is wanted for his alleged participation in a 1995 car-



bomb attack on Shevardnadze, will not be dropped, ITAR-TASS reported. Giorgadze is one of 13 potential candidates for the 4 January presidential election.

**12/03/03 – Georgia unlikely to join Nato in near future - RFE/RL Newsline**

Georgian Defense Minister Lieutenant General David Tevzadze said in Brussels on 2 December that his country is unlikely to join NATO before 2010 at the earliest, Reuters reported. Tevzadze predicted that it will take up to 10 years to carry out the required military reforms and sufficiently improve the country's economy.

**12/05/03 – U.S announces further aid for Georgia - RFE/RL Newsline**

Following talks in Tbilisi on 4 December with Saakashvili, Zhvania, and acting President Nino Burdjanadze, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Lynn Pascoe told journalists Washington will allocate \$5 million for "post-revolution rehabilitation" in Georgia and a further \$2 million for paying winter heating bills for some 40,000 indigent families, Caucasus Press and the website of the independent television station Rustavi-2 reported. Pascoe also met on 4 December with Central Election Commission Chairman Zurab Chiaberashvili to discuss preparations for the 4 January presidential ballot, which Pascoe said he hopes will be conducted with "minimum violations," rustavi2.com reported.

**12/08/03 – U.S Defense secretary pledges support for new Georgian leadership - RFE/RL Newsline**

Donald Rumsfeld held talks in Tbilisi on 5 December with acting Georgian President Nino Burdjanadze, Minister of State Zurab Zhvania, and presidential candidate Mikhail Saakashvili, Caucasus Press reported. Together with Defense Minister Lieutenant General David Tevzadze, Rumsfeld also toured the Krtsanisi military base where Georgian commandos are being trained within the framework of the U.S.-funded Train

and Equip program. The new Georgian leadership has asked for that program to be extended beyond the original two-year term, which ends in May, and for financial aid to pay military salaries. A U.S. official accompanying Rumsfeld acknowledged that complying with the latter request "is not easy," according to washingtonpost.com on 6 December. Rumsfeld said Washington is ready to help Georgia in implementing democratic reforms.

**12/08/03 – And calls for closure of Russian bases - RFE/RL Newsline**

During his talks with Georgian leaders on 5 December, Rumsfeld underscored Washington's commitment to Georgia's territorial integrity and stressed the need for Russia to comply with its commitment, made at the OSCE Istanbul summit in November 1999, to close all its military bases in Georgia. Meeting in Brussels on 4 December, NATO foreign ministers similarly called on Russia to close its remaining bases in Georgia by early next year, rustavi2.com reported. Russian officials say that it will take a minimum of 11 years to do so unless the international community provides funds to build alternative accommodation in Russia for the troops to be pulled out of Georgia.

**12/08/03 – Georgian politician calls for postponement of Presidential ballot - RFE/RL Newsline**

Irina Sarishvili-Chanturia, who has quit the pro-Shevardnadze For a New Georgia election bloc to establish a new political movement named New Force, traveled on 5 December to Batumi for talks with Adjar Supreme Council leader Aslan Abashidze, Georgian news agencies reported. The two agreed that it is inexpedient to hold elections for a new Georgian president on 4 January, as scheduled. Sarishvili pledged to begin collecting signatures on 8 December to demand that the presidential ballot and the parliamentary elections tentatively scheduled for 25 January be postponed for six months. Abashidze also discussed the time frame for the elections with Union of Traditionalists Chairman Akaki

Asatiani, who told journalists on 8 December he thinks the presidential ballot should take place on 4 January in accordance with the constitution, but that he is not against postponing the parliamentary election, Caucasus Press reported. No details are available of reported talks in Batumi between Abashidze and the leaders of the Labor and Socialist parties, Shalva Natelashvili and Vakhtang Rcheulishvili, respectively.

**12/09/03 – New movement formed to support Georgian Presidential challenger - RFE/RL Newsline**

Members of the Georgian intelligentsia who support National Movement head Mikhail Saakashvili announced in Tbilisi on 8 December the creation of a new movement, named Decisive Struggle for Georgia, the objective of which is to support Saakashvili's candidacy in the presidential ballot scheduled for 4 January, Georgian media reported. The movement's founders warned that "the revolution in Georgia is not yet over," as "the danger of revanchism still exists."

**12/09/03 - Georgians Make Perilous Promise to Fight Corruption - ASBAREZ Online**

The United States, apparently impressed with Georgia's new plans to fight corruption and indict corrupt officials before 2004, has agreed to provide unprecedented aid to Georgia's Ministry of Internal Affairs. This would be a "reconfiguration" of Washington's aid to Georgia, said a senior American official who spoke to EurasiaNet on December 4, and a fresh chance for a ministry that diplomats have long considered corrupt. The American official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, spent two days meeting with leaders from Georgia's interim government. According to the official, an advisor from Washington will soon report to the ministry. This would be a major vote of confidence in the leadership of temporary president Nino Burjanadze and presidential contender Mikhail Saakashvili, who swept into power when former president Eduard Shevardnadze resigned in the face of mass protest on November 23. Defections from his security forces played a key role in forcing

Shevardnadze to quit. This show of support from the military may have emboldened the new leaders who have promised to launch an anti-corruption campaign with several notable indictments before the January 4 parliamentary and presidential elections.

**12/10/03 – Grenade explosion kills one in Georgian school - RFE/RL Newsline**

A teenage boy was killed on 9 December and six others injured when a hand grenade exploded during a class on basic military training at a Tbilisi school, Caucasus Press and Russian media reported. The student was dismantling what he believed to be a dummy grenade. Police are investigating how a live grenade was substituted for the dummy. A bomb explosion in Tbilisi early on 10 December outside the offices of the Magticom company, which is owned by former President Eduard Shevardnadze's son-in-law Gia Djokhtaberidze, caused structural damage to the building but no casualties, Caucasus Press reported. Two bomb alerts at schools in Tbilisi were reported on 9 December, bringing the total for the past three days to 74, State Security Minister Vakhtang Khaburzanias told journalists late on 9 December. He said his men have not been paid for two months, and that the ministry cannot cope with its duties unless it receives funding and logistical support, Caucasus Press reported.

**12/11/03 - Russian diplomat on situation in Georgia - RosBusinessConsulting Database**

Russian policymakers are for the territorial integrity of Georgia and believe that problems should be settled at the negotiating table only, Russian Ambassador in Armenia Anatoly Dryukov announced today. He noted that Russia was concerned about developments in Georgia and opposed the destabilization of the political situation in the country. The ambassador expressed hope that the upcoming presidential elections in Georgia would go off smoothly, and Georgian citizens would be able to make their choice in a free and democratic form.

The diplomat also mentioned that Russia had agreed to close its military bases in Georgia. According to him, the decision was made during recent talks in Istanbul, Turkey. The next round of talks on this issue will take place in Moscow next week, the ARMINFO news agency quoted Dryukov as saying.

**12/15/03 – Six candidates registered for Georgian Presidential ballot - RFE/RL Newsline**

Only seven of the 15 people who announced their intention to contest the 4 January presidential election succeeded in collecting and submitting to the Central Election Commission by the 12 December deadline the 50,000 signatures in their support required for formal registration, Caucasus Press and www.rustavi2.com reported. The seven are United National Movement Chairman Mikhail Saakashvili, former Imereti Governor Temur Shashiashvili, former State Security Minister Igor Giorgadze, lawyer Kartlos Gharibashvili, academician Roin Liparteliani, Mdzleveli political organization co-Chairman Zurab Kelekhsashvili, and League of the Disabled Chairman Zaza Sikharulidze. Central Election Commission Chairman Zurab Chiaberashvili told journalists on 13 December that Giorgadze was not formally registered as a candidate because he is wanted on an international arrest warrant for his presumed role in the unsuccessful attempt in August 1995 to assassinate then-parliament chairman Eduard Shevardnadze, and because he cannot demonstrate compliance with the requirement that candidates should have lived in Georgia for three years prior to the ballot.

**12/17/03 – Georgian reinforces border with Russia - AZG Armenian Daily**

Commander of the Georgian Border Guard Department Valeri Chkheidze said today that Georgia reinforces borders with Russia, amid reports over possible incursion of the Chechen militants into Pankisi gorge, Civil.ge reports. He said that the situation on the Georgian-Russian border is under control at the moment.

According to the Russian media reports, Chechen rebels intend to penetrate into the Pankisi gorge from Dagestan.

The Russian media also reported on December 15 that the group of Chechen militants, which raided the village in Russian Republic Dagestan, neighboring with Chechnya, after they penetrated into Russia from Georgia. However, Georgian Border Guard Department denied the report.

**12/17/03 – New right-wing alliance formed in Georgia - RFE/RL Newsline**

Union of Traditionalists of Georgia Chairman Akaki Asatiani announced in Tbilisi on 16 December the merger of his party with the National Democratic Party of Georgia to form a new right-wing party, Georgian media and Interfax reported. The new party is to be provisionally named the National Democratic Party-Union of Traditionalists, and talks are continuing on the possible alignment with it of the New Rightists and Industry Will Save Georgia. Asatiani said the new party will remain in opposition to the new Georgian leadership because "many pledges made by the interim administration are unacceptable for us." In early November, Asatiani aligned with the Georgian opposition parties protesting the falsification of the 2 November parliamentary election, but later withdrew that support, accusing National Movement leader and presidential candidate Mikhail Saakashvili of populism.

**12/17/03 – New Georgian body to promote National reconciliation - RFE/RL Newsline**

Georgia's National Security Council has proposed establishing a government commission to promote the rehabilitation of supporters of deceased President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Caucasus Press reported on 16 December. It will be headed by Guram Absandze, who served under Gamsakhurdia as finance minister and was recently appointed deputy minister of state, who is to draft within 10 days a program for reconciliation. It is hoped that the creation of the commission will help defuse tensions in the west Georgian

region of Mingrelia, a bastion of support for Gamsakhurdia, caused by the new Georgian leadership's appointment of a new regional police chief. A parliamentary commission to expedite the rehabilitation of Gamsakhurdia supporters was established in the late 1990s.

**12/18/03 - Georgian foreign Minister holds talks in Moscow - RFE/RL Newsline**

Tedo Djaparidze flew on 16 December to Moscow from Baku, where he attended the funeral the previous day of former Azerbaijan President Heidar Aliyev, and met on 17 December with Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister Valerii Loshchinin to discuss a range of issues relating to bilateral relations, Russian and Georgian media reported. Djaparidze characterized the talks as "positive," stressing at the same time that pragmatism rather than emotions should determine the course of bilateral relations. He noted that the two sides have still not agreed on the text of a framework treaty on bilateral relations. Djaparidze also said he has informed the Kremlin of Tbilisi's wish to schedule a visit to Moscow by acting President Nino Burdjanadze for next week. In an interview published in "Izvestiya" on 17 December, Djaparidze said he has presented the Russian Foreign Ministry with a written acknowledgment that Tbilisi was at fault in allowing self-exiled Russian oligarch Boris Berezovskii to visit Tbilisi earlier this month using a British passport with another name.

**12/18/03 - "sabotage group" arrested in Georgia - RFE/RL Newsline**

Georgian security services have arrested three members of a sabotage group, including a Defense Ministry colonel, and confiscated large quantities of explosives and detonators from them, Caucasus Press reported on 17 December. Also on 17 December, the Georgian Interior Ministry announced the discovery in a church in the Pankisi Gorge of a large quantity of armaments including ground-to-air missiles. Meeting on 17 December at the Defense Ministry with the heads of law enforcement agencies, acting

President Burdjanadze expressed concern at the inability of various "force" ministries to coordinate their work, Caucasus Press reported. She said the National Command Center established 18 months ago within the framework of the U.S.-funded "Train and Equip" program should begin functioning immediately. She said its primary function will be to develop a response in the event of violations of Georgia's territorial integrity or attacks on senior officials, Interfax reported.

**12/19/03 - Russian President ambivalent on Georgian territorial integrity - RFE/RL Newsline**

Speaking during a live radio and television broadcast on 18 December, Vladimir Putin said Russia cannot insist that its own territorial integrity be respected while denying the same right, which is recognized under international law, to its neighbors, including Georgia, Russian media reported. But, Putin added -- in a clear allusion to aspirations on the part of the leadership of Georgia's breakaway Republic of South Ossetia to a merger of that republic with the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, which is a subject of the Russian Federation -- that "there are certain specific aspects." "The highland peoples form a kind of community and Russia cannot ignore this," Putin said. On 19 December, Caucasus Press quoted Liberal Democratic Party of Russia head Vladimir Zhirinovskii as saying that if he wins the 14 March Russian presidential election, he will grant both South Ossetia and the unrecognized Republic of Abkhazia the status of Russian Federation subjects. In Tbilisi, acting Georgian President Nino Burdjanadze on 18 December welcomed Putin's statement that Russia respects Georgia's territorial integrity, ITAR-TASS reported.

**12/19/03 - Council of Europe urges Adjar leader not to boycott Georgian ballot - RFE/RL Newsline**

Adjar Supreme Council Chairman Aslan Abashidze met in Strasbourg on 18 December with Council of Europe Secretary-General Walter

Schwimmer, who told him it is essential that voting in the 4 January presidential election also take place in Adjara because that region is a constituent part of Georgia, Caucasus Press reported on 19 December. Abashidze has repeatedly said the poll is not legitimate and no polling stations will be opened in Adjara. He wants both the presidential ballot and repeat parliamentary elections to be postponed for several months. ITAR-TASS on 18 December quoted Saakashvili as saying Abashidze will have to answer before the law if he refuses to allow voting in the presidential election to take place. Some 10 percent of Georgian voters are resident in Adjara.

**12/22/03 - Former Georgian security officials arrested - RFE/RL Newsline**

Four former members of a special security unit created by former State Security Minister Igor Giorgadze have been arrested in Tbilisi on charges of illegal weapons possession, Interfax and "Nezavisimaya gazeta" reported on 20 and 22 December respectively. Their lawyer, Guliko Gabaidze, told "Nezavisimaya gazeta" that the charges are illegal insofar as all four men are employed by a private security agency and therefore permitted to carry firearms. She added that her clients are "victims of the political persecution of Giorgadze," who has been barred from contesting the 4 January presidential election on the grounds that he has not lived permanently in Georgia for the past two years and is wanted by Interpol on charges of masterminding the August 1995 car-bomb attack on then-Georgian parliament Chairman Eduard Shevardnadze.

**ABKHAZIA / ABKHAZIE**

**11/07/03 - Abkhaz parliament passes election law in second reading - RFE/RL Newsline**

Deputies have adopted the law on parliamentary elections in its second reading, Caucasus Press reported on 6 November. At the urging of Central Election Commission Chairman Sergei Smyr, it was decided that voters are



to cast their ballots in the constituency where they are registered as resident even if their actual domicile is in a different constituency. Political parties may propose a parliamentary candidate in each of the 35 constituencies.

**11/15/03 - Situation in Georgia does not help settlement of Georgian-Abkhaz conflict - RU:World**

The situation in Georgia does not help the settlement of the conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia, announced Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister Valery Loschinin.

"The situation in Georgia does not help the settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, on the contrary, it interferes with the solution," he said on Saturday in Moscow during a joint press conference with Aslan Abashidze, the leader of the Adzharian autonomy in Georgia. The Russian diplomat stated "there are some positive developments in the negotiation process on the settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict that might lead to certain agreements." Mr. Loschinin underlined that Moscow hopes that the agreements will be finally signed.

In his turn, Aslan Abashidze said that during his visit to Moscow, the sides discussed the Abkhaz issue, as well.

In his opinion, "people who represent democratic forces in Georgia at the moment, have neglected the Abkhaz issue altogether." Mr. Abashidze stated that the responsibility of the settlement of the conflict between the Georgian authorities and the opposition lies solely on the Georgian president, that "the present administration must remain in power," and Adzharia will provide assistance to the legitimate Georgian authorities." Mr. Abashidze underlined that he expects political support from Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the settlement of what he believes an explosive situation in Georgia, which is dangerous for the Caucasus region and all neighbouring countries. Mr. Abashidze believes that "the situation in Georgia has been staged according to well-planned and paid scenario; therefore, the political conflagration that has started there will not be extinguished easily."

**11/20/03 - Abkhazia denies planning Kodori offensive - RFE/RL Newsline**

Sergei Shamba, foreign minister of the unrecognized Republic of Abkhazia, told Interfax on 19 November there is no truth to Georgian media speculation that Abkhazia might take advantage of the domestic political turmoil in Georgia to seize the upper, Georgian-populated reaches of the Kodori Gorge. On 15 November, Kodori Governor Emzar Kvitsiani told Interfax that the district's Georgian population is "in panic" and is trying to flee by car despite heavy snowfall. On 18 November, Interfax quoted Kvitsiani as telling a meeting of President Shevardnadze's supporters that Sukhum is planning to occupy the upper reaches of the gorge. On 19 November, Shevardnadze said domestic political tensions are hampering a resumption of negotiations with the leaderships of both Abkhazia and the similarly unrecognized Republic of South Ossetia, Caucasus Press reported.

**11/25/03 - Senior UN official visits Abkhazia - RFE/RL Newsline**

Jean-Marie Guehenno, who is UN undersecretary-general for peacekeeping operations, met in Sukhum on 22 November with Abkhaz Prime Minister Raul Khadjimba, Foreign Minister Sergei Shamba, and parliament speaker Nugzar Ashuba to discuss recent initiatives intended to expedite a solution to the Abkhaz conflict, Caucasus Press reported. Guehenno also discussed with Ashuba questions related to economic reconstruction. Guehenno visited Sukhum and Tbilisi on a similar fact-finding mission one year ago.

**11/25/03 - Georgian guerrilla leader calls on Abkhaz parliament, government-in-exile to resign - RFE/RL Newsline**

Zurab Samushia, who heads the White Legion guerrilla formation active in the Abkhaz conflict zone, on 24 November called on the Tbilisi-based Abkhaz government-in-exile and the parliament-in-exile headed by Tamaz Nadareishvili to

resign immediately, Caucasus Press reported. Samushia argued that those bodies have betrayed the trust of Georgian displaced persons who fled Abkhazia during the 1992-93 war and look to the exiled leadership to forge a settlement that would enable them to return. Nadareishvili met in Tbilisi the same day with acting President Burdjanadze and with Zhvania, both of whom said they do not support Samushia's demand for Nadareishvili to step down.

**11/26/03 - Campaign for resignation of exile Abkhaz government intensifies - RFE/RL Newsline**

Some 40 NGOs representing the interests of the Georgian displaced persons who fled Abkhazia during the 1992-93 war launched a picket in Tbilisi on 26 November to demand the resignation of the Tbilisi-based Abkhaz government and parliament-in-exile, Caucasus Press and rustavi2.com reported. They say they will continue their protest until Abkhaz Supreme Council Chairman Tamaz Nadareishvili resigns. After meeting on 24 November with Burdjanadze and Saakashvili, Nadareishvili rejected a demand by Georgian guerrilla leader Zurab Samushia for his resignation.

**12/09/03 - Abkhaz leaders send mixed signals over resumption of talks - RFE/RL Newsline**

Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini, who is UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's special envoy for Abkhazia, met in Sukhum on 8 December with Raul Khadjimba, prime minister of the unrecognized Republic of Abkhazia, and Foreign Minister Sergei Shamba, Caucasus Press reported. Tagliavini told journalists after the meeting that the Abkhaz leadership has confirmed its readiness to continue peace talks under the UN aegis, the next round of which will take place in Geneva in February. Two days earlier, Tagliavini and German Ambassador to Tbilisi Uwe Schramm met in Sukhum with Abkhaz Vice President Valerii Arshba, who reportedly said Abkhazia will agree to further talks with Georgia only after the election of a new president and the signing of a document on the non-

resumption of hostilities, Caucasus Press reported on 8 December. Georgian presidential candidate Saakashvili has pledged to restore Georgian control over Abkhazia. Arshba also said that any further talks should focus on three documents: Abkhazia's Constitution and its Act of National Independence, and the April 1994 UN statement on Abkhazia that the Abkhaz construe as acknowledging the republic's independent status. The UN is urging Sukhum to take as a basis for future talks the UN-drafted "Basic Principles for the Distribution of Competencies between Tbilisi and Sukhumi."

**12/11/03 – Bomb explodes in Abkhaz capital - RFE/RL Newsline**

A bomb exploded in Sukhum during the evening of 10 December near the monument to those killed during the 1992-93 war, but caused no casualties, ITAR-TASS and Caucasus Press reported.

**12/12/03 – Abkhaz President says he is not too ill to govern - RFE/RL Newsline**

Vladislav Ardzinba has told journalists in Sukhum that his illness does not prevent him from addressing the problems facing his unrecognized republic or from taking decisions, Caucasus Press reported on 11 December. Ardzinba has undergone several lengthy periods of treatment over the past few years for an unknown disease. The opposition public movement Amtsakhara last month raised in parliament the question of devising a legal procedure to pressure Ardzinba to step down before the expiry of his second presidential term in October 2004 because of his physical incapacitation.

**12/16/03 – Abkhaz leadership steps up security measures - RFE/RL Newsline**

The Abkhaz security service has intensified protection of strategic facilities, including power stations, reservoirs, large industrial enterprises, bridges, and the Abkhaz State University building in Sukhum, in response to reports of anticipated terrorist attacks in the run-up to the 4 January Georgian presidential election, Interfax and

Caucasus Press quoted Abkhaz National Security Service head Givi Agrba as saying on 15 December. Also on 15 December, Davit Shengelia, who heads the Forest Brothers Georgian guerrilla formation, disclaimed responsibility for the explosion on 10 December that damaged a war memorial in Sukhum, Caucasus Press reported.

**12/18/03 – Pressure mounts for Abkhaz official to resign - RFE/RL Newsline**

Some 10,000 people have signed a petition calling on Tamaz Nadareishvili, chairman of the Tbilisi-based Abkhaz parliament in exile, to resign before the 4 January presidential election, Caucasus Press reported on 17 December. Calls for Nadareishvili's resignation began immediately following the ouster of former Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze. A spokesman for an umbrella body that groups together organizations representing the interests of Georgian displaced persons who fled Abkhazia during the 1992-93 war said he is concerned that Nadareishvili might try to flee the country, since he has reportedly asked the Finance Ministry in exile to give him 7,000 euros (\$8,689) for medical treatment abroad. The spokesman appealed to the Georgian Border Protection Service not to permit Nadareishvili to leave Georgia.

***CHECHNYA /  
TCHETCHENIE***

**11/06/03 – Putin criticizes western failure to support Russian policy in Chechnya - RFE/RL Newsline**

Speaking on 5 November at a joint press conference in Rome with Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi, President Putin assailed the West for its imputed reluctance to help Moscow combat "terrorism" in Chechnya, Reuters reported. Putin complained that while the international community acted in unison to combat Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, "no one notices the activities of Al-Qaeda in the North Caucasus, especially in Chechnya."

Aslan Maskhadov, who was elected Chechen president in 1997, has repeatedly denied any connection between Al-Qaeda and the Chechen resistance, most recently in an interview with chechenpress.com on 6 October.

**11/06/03 – Chechen leader sets deadline for "neutralizing" militant commanders - RFE/RL Newsline**

Addressing a 5 November meeting in Grozny of senior police and security officials, district administration heads, and Russian military commanders, Kremlin-recognized Chechen President Akhmad-hadji Kadyrov tasked police and security forces with wiping out the remaining Chechen resistance forces and their commanders before the end of the winter, Interfax and dpa reported. He did not mention specific field commanders by name, and it is not clear whether the order extends to Maskhadov. Kadyrov further called for "drastic changes" in the work of the Interior Ministry, of which Alu Alkhanov has been reappointed the head. Interior Ministry General Yurii Maltsev, who heads the regional antiterrorism headquarters in the North Caucasus, said that district authorities will oversee night patrols, according to Interfax. That decision effectively gives carte blanche to the security force headed by Kadyrov's son Ramzan to continue to engage with impunity in the nocturnal abduction for ransom of Chechen civilians.

**11/06/03 – Chechen official deplores delay in reconstruction - RFE/RL Newsline**

Reconstruction in Chechnya is lagging far behind schedule, primarily because of bureaucratic foot-dragging and lack of coordination between federal and local agencies, Chechen Security Council Secretary Rudnik Dudaev told Interfax on 5 November. He added that Moscow has "no clear understanding" of Chechnya's priorities. Three days earlier, Dudaev told Interfax he has issued orders to check systematically whether claims by federal agencies to have completed reconstruction work in Chechnya are true. He specifically took issue with a report by the Russian Economic

Development and Trade Ministry that 454 schools in Grozny have been rebuilt, and with a claim by the Russian State Construction Committee that all newly built homes in Grozny are connected to mains heating, electricity, and water supplies.

**11/07/03 – Chechen President discusses causes of war with Russia - RFE/RL Newsline**

Aslan Maskhadov, who was elected Chechen president in January 1997 in a ballot recognized by Russia and the international community, met with foreign journalists at an unspecified location in early November, chechenpress.com reported on 6 November. Maskhadov said that former Russian President Boris Yeltsin's reluctance to sign an inter-state treaty with the Chechen Republic Ichkeria in 1997 generated "legal uncertainty" over Chechnya's status. He said the Russian authorities were behind the August 1999 Chechen incursion into Dagestan and the bombings of residential buildings in three Russian cities that the Kremlin subsequently adduced as part of its rationale for launching a renewed military incursion into Chechnya. He said that Russia's attempts to pacify Chechnya by means of a referendum on a new constitution and the installation of a new "puppet" leader will only fuel resistance, even though the Chechen people are worn down after four years of war.

**11/07/03 – And prospects for ending it - RFE/RL Newsline**

Maskhadov expressed regret that the international community is currently focused on conflicts in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the South Caucasus and is siding with Russia over Chechnya because it needs Russia's input in resolving those conflicts. He said Russian leaders have "painted themselves into a corner" in Chechnya and that only a "third force" in the form of a third country or an influential international organization can stop the war. Maskhadov recalled that his foreign minister, Ilyas Akhmadov, has proposed the concept of "conditional independence" for Chechnya.

**11/10/03 – EU disavows Berlusconi's Chechen comments - RFE/RL Newsline**

In a statement on 7 November, EU spokesman Reijo Kemppinen said the European Commission "does not share" the views on Chechnya expressed the previous day in Rome by Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, the "International Herald Tribune" reported on 8 November. EU Commissioner for External Relations Chris Patten characterized Berlusconi's positive assessment of President Putin's Chechen policy as "unbelievable," according to "The Times" on 10 November. Berlusconi said during the Russia-EU summit in Rome on 6 November that Chechens are engaged in "terrorism," and that Chechens voted overwhelmingly in a "democratic referendum" to remain part of Russia.

**11/13/03 – Census results challenged on religion, nationality totals - RFE/RL Newsline**

Council of Muftis head Ravil Gainutdin told reporters on 11 November that he disagrees with the preliminary conclusion of the Russian census that there are only 14.5 million Muslims in Russia, "Izvestiya" reported on 12 November. According to Gainutdin, there are no fewer than 20 million Muslims in Russia. Part of the problem is that the census-takers did not count all segments of the population, such as illegal immigrants. He estimated that there are no fewer than 4 million people living and working in Russia from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Aleksei Malashenko of the Carnegie Moscow Center told the daily that he also believes that Russia has significantly more Muslims than the census suggests. However, Malashenko said he does not think the issue will affect relations between different religious groups and the matter in the end is one for scholars and statisticians. The daily also reported that the number of ethnic Chechens has increased 1.5 times in recent years. According to "Trud" the same day, a number of unidentified experts are skeptical of the purported rise in the Chechen population.

**11/14/03 - Chechnya: Military units in to become fully professional by June 2005 Rostov-na-Donu- Interfax-AVN military news agency web site**

Chechnya-based units of the North Caucasus Military District will become fully professional before June 2005, district commander Vladimir Boldyrev said on Friday 14 November. As many as 13,000 professional servicemen are to join the district to replace active-duty servicemen from 2004 to June 2005, Boldyrev told reporters. "Nearly all junior commander positions have become professional in the 42nd Motorized Division stationed in Grozny," he said. In addition, 5,000 servicemen's positions in Chechen military commissioner offices are to become professional over this period of time. A total of 20 units of the North Caucasus Military District, or about 60,000 positions, are to become professional in 2004-2005. "The Necessary funding for transition to professional service has been allocated for up to 2007," Boldyrev said. Commenting on possible reductions in the military force in Chechnya, the commander said, "The military force in Chechnya has reached an optimal level, and we do not plan any large-scale reductions." At the same time, he said that several battalion-level task forces will leave Chechnya for their permanent stationing areas in 2004 as planned.

Viktor Kazantsev, presidential envoy to the Southern Federal District, told reporters, "Next year sees the beginning of dramatic changes in the professional-to-conscript ratio in the army." Commenting on President Vladimir Putin's recent decree allowing foreign citizens to join the Russian armed forces on a professional basis, Kazantsev did not rule out that Russian-speaking people, primarily from Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Armenia will be the first to opt for such service. "Naturally, these people will be preliminarily checked by special services of the Russian Federal Security Service and Interior Ministry before being contracted," he said.



**11/14/03 – British court throws out Russian request to extradite Chechen official - RFE/RL Newsline**

A London magistrates' court rejected on 13 November a demand by the Russian Prosecutor-General's Office for the extradition of Akhmed Zakaev, vice premier in Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov's government, British media reported. Judge Timothy Workman said there is "a substantial risk" that Zakaev would be subjected to torture if he were sent back to Russia to face what are widely regarded as fabricated charges of terrorism, hostage taking, and murder. The Russian Prosecutor-General's Office condemned the court decision as an example of "double standards," Interfax reported on 13 November, while Russian presidential aide Sergei Yastrzhembskii described it as an attempt to justify terrorism, according to chechenpress.com. Yastrzhembskii warned that the ruling could negatively affect Russian-British relations.

**11/14/03 – Final Chechen Deputy Premier named - RFE/RL Newsline**

Akhmad-hadji Kadyrov, named by the Kremlin as the winner of a disputed 5 October presidential ballot, appointed Bilkhis Bidaeva on 13 November as deputy prime minister with responsibility for social issues in his pro-Moscow government, ITAR-TASS reported. She is the last member of Anatolii Popov's new cabinet to be named, and its only female member. The other members of the new cabinet were announced on 4 November. Eli Isaev is first deputy premier and finance minister; former First Deputy Prime Minister Dukvakha Abdurakhmanov was named deputy premier and agriculture minister; Lema Dadaev -- education minister; Shakhid Akhmadov -- health minister; Abdula Magomedov -- economic development and trade minister; Taus Dzhabrailov -- nationalities and media minister; and Amad Temishev -- industry, science, technology, and computerization minister, Interfax reported on 4 November.

**11/18/03 – Pro-Moscow Chechen leader sets condition for talks with Chechen President - RFE/RL Newsline**

Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov, who was named the victor in a controversial presidential ballot in Chechnya last month, told journalists in Moscow on 14 November that he does not rule out talks with Aslan Maskhadov provided the latter admit that he was ineffective as president, "Nezavisimaya gazeta" reported on 17 November. Maskhadov, who headed the Chechen resistance forces during the 1994-96 war, was elected Chechen president in January 1997 in a ballot recognized by Moscow and the international community. Kadyrov had earlier repeatedly ruled out talks with Maskhadov. Kadyrov also met in Moscow with Chechen politician Salambek Maigov, who resigned in August as Maskhadov's representative in the Russian Federation. Kadyrov expressed his support for Maigov, who plans to run as a candidate for the State Duma from a Chechen constituency, according to Interfax on 24 September.

**11/20/03 – Duma candidate's campaign manager abducted in Grozny - RFE/RL Newsline**

Aboyadig Saayev, the campaign manager of former Chechen envoy in the Russian Federation Salambek Maigov, who is running in the 7 December State Duma elections, was kidnapped by gunmen in Grozny on 19 November, Interfax reported quoting NTV. Chechen police and republican presidential administration sources told Interfax they have no information about the kidnapping. Maigov, who heads the Gromos Fund for Economic Cooperation and Development, is one of five registered candidates running from Chechnya's single mandate district. Pro-Moscow Chechen leader Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov last week expressed support for Maigov and his policies.

**11/20/03 – Arab field commander threatens attacks in Russian regions - RFE/RL Newsline**

Abu al-Walid, an Arab field commander operating in Chechnya, has vowed in a videotape broadcast

by Al-Jazeera on 19 November to strike against targets in other parts of Russia, dpa reported. On 14 November, Russian military spokesman for North Caucasus operations Colonel Ilya Shabalkin said that Russian law enforcement agencies will pay \$100,000 for information leading to al-Walid's "neutralization." One month earlier, Chechen police said they believed al-Walid was killed during an air strike in southern Chechnya in late September or early October, Interfax reported on 17 October.

**11/30/03 - In Chechnya, echoes of Afghanistan Surrogate: Russia tries to hand off its responsibility, but the country is ready for a political solution - Baltimore Sun, MD**

By Thomas De Waal

Fourteen years ago, the Soviet army pulled out of Afghanistan and handed it over to Moscow's chosen leader, Najibullah. In February 1989, Boris Gromov, the last Russian soldier in the country, symbolically crossed the iron bridge at Termez over the Amu Darya River, and peace was declared. But of course it was not over. The withdrawal led to a brutal civil war, years of fighting between rival warlords, and the arrival of the Taliban and al-Qaida. Now there is a disturbing parallel with that other victim of Russian military power, Chechnya. Of course the comparison is far from exact, and Moscow has no intention of letting go of Chechnya altogether. But in one sense the parallel goes very far. Moscow is now subcontracting its war to a local appointee. The role of Najibullah has been assigned to Akhmad Kadyrov, a former rebel commander who switched sides and was elected "president" of Chechnya in a widely reviled poll Oct. 5. Russian President Vladimir V. Putin is hoping to cut back on Russian troop numbers in time for his own bid for re-election next spring, handing much of the "burden of security" to Kadyrov's loyal police force of 12,000 men. The pro independence rebels are not defeated, so in effect this means Chechnya is about to have a civil war: very much Afghanistan revisited. It is worth reflecting on

what the consequences could be, not only for Chechnya and Russia, but for the wider world. Like Afghanistan, Chechnya has been subjected to the most intense of violence over the past nine years. That has created a new generation of young militants, many of whom are turning to radical Islam and taking their violence outside the borders of Chechnya, including to Moscow. By unilaterally imposing a local satrap on Chechnya, Moscow has given up hopes of a broad-based political process. The first Chechen war of 1994-1996 was the nastiest of a series of post-Soviet conflicts fought over the division of the spoils of the U.S.S.R. Dzhokhar Dudayev, the Chechen leader who tried to proclaim independence, was a recognizably Soviet figure: a loyal Communist and army officer who belatedly discovered nationalism. What distinguished the first Chechen war from the wars in Tajikistan, Nagorno-Karabakh or Abkhazia was the scale of the violence. It was as though the Russian army unleashed all the destruction in its own rebel republic that it had kept pent up during the Cold War. The second war, which started in 1999 - and which has claimed the lives of at least 5,000 Russian soldiers, and as many Chechen fighters - has mutated into something just as brutal and more sinister.

The first sign of a new kind of conflict came a year ago when masked Chechens seized the theater showing the Nord-Ost musical in Moscow and took the audience hostage. More than 120 hostages and all the attackers died when Russian special forces stormed the theater. The young Chechen hostage-takers paid awkward homage to tapes they had seen of Hamas and Islamic Jihad and even gave their own video to Al-Jazeera. They wore masks and headbands with Arabic inscriptions.

They talked about martyrdom and - incoherently - about Islam. These were not post-Soviet nationalists, and they offered no sense of a political goal. Putin has been able to keep Chechnya out of people's consciousness in two ways. First, the Russian media have basically stopped covering the conflict. And effectively neutralizing Western criticism, Putin presents Chechnya as being a front in the "war on

terror" and the battle against Osama bin Laden. There is an al-Qaida link in the Chechen conflict. Saudi money and a handful of volunteers have infiltrated Chechnya. The connection, however, is still more ideological than physical. Luckily for the Chechens, the high mountains of the Caucasus prevent all but a handful of volunteers from getting across. Moreover, most Chechens, even those with an abiding hatred of the Russian army, are still loyal to their old Sufi religious practices and hostile to foreign proselytizers. Chechnya remains sui generis. But Chechnya is slowly corrupting almost every aspect of Russian society. Putin's rolling-back of the media, once vibrant under Boris N. Yeltsin, has been made easier by the "war on terrorism." The Russian army seems to grow more criminal, and military reform has been postponed. Chechnya has also boxed in Russian politics, providing it with a self-fulfilling threat of terrorism that dictates an authoritarian response. Putin's Russia is less tolerant than Yeltsin's. Hateful views about Chechens are aired freely. In a recent debate on the BBC central Asian service, I was put up against a Russian member of parliament named Alexei Mitrofanov, who said almost casually, "Putin missed his chance on Sept. 12, 2001. When America was busy, he should have wiped Chechnya off the face of the Earth." The tragedy is that Chechnya is now ready for a political process, if someone were willing to initiate one. If anything has changed in the past few years, it seems to be that the Chechen population has stopped supporting either side. An opinion poll conducted in May by Grozny University sociologists with the help of a Russian polling company suggested two contrary impulses: After the disastrous experiences of the 1990s, most ordinary Chechens have given up on the idea of independence, but they identify the Russian military as by far their biggest everyday problem. That suggests a way forward. A "road map" for Chechnya should reflect this silent majority, powerless in the face of the armed groups and warlords in the republic. To get things moving, the rebels should revoke their claim to independence

for Chechnya: With the republic in ruins, the concept is more or less meaningless.

In return, Moscow should invite international observers into Chechnya. That could clear the way for investment and a genuine political process based on Chechnya's traditions of collective decision-making, rather than thuggish leaders like Kadyrov. Chechnya needs many leaders, not one, and is better suited to a parliamentary rather than a presidential system of government. That process should include anyone who is prepared to accept its rules and to renounce violence. In the end, someone must take responsibility for the Chechnya tragedy. Russia is too inclined to amnesia, as the aftermath of its Afghan war shows. But that case is a reminder of what can happen when a country disappears into a black hole of violence. Thomas De Waal is the author of Black Garden, published by New York University Press. He wrote this article for the British magazine Prospect.

#### **12/03/03 - Grozny to be rebuilt within five years ? - RFE/RL Newsline**

The Chechen capital will be completely rebuilt within five years, Russian Minister for Chechen Affairs Stanislav Ilyasov told a 2 December session of the governmental committee to oversee reconstruction in Chechnya, ITAR-TASS reported. Ilyasov's spokesman Aleksandr Arapov predicted that the population of Grozny will increase to 500,000. Ilyasov also told the committee session that the payment of compensation to Chechen families whose homes were destroyed in the fighting is proceeding more slowly than anticipated. On 19 November, a Chechen official told ITAR-TASS that only 246 families have received compensation payments over the previous two months and a further 160 applications for compensation are under consideration. Some 39,000 families are scheduled to receive compensation over the next two years.

**12/05/03 – Chechen leader says security measures in place for Duma election - RFE/RL Newsline**

Chechen Republic head Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov told journalists in Grozny on 4 December that security measures are in place to prevent Chechen fighters thwarting the voting in the 7 December Duma election, ITAR-TASS reported. On 1 December, the same agency reported that the republic's 428 polling stations are being guarded around the clock. Seven candidates -- including Moscow-based businessman Malik Saidullaev and President Aslan Maskhadov's former representative in Moscow, Salambek Maigov -- are contesting the single-mandate district in Chechnya. Three other candidates withdrew from the race. The OSCE does not plan to deploy any of its election observers in Chechnya.

**12/06/03 – 300 Chechen mercenaries reported to fight against Karabakhon Azerbaijan's side in 1992 - Arminfo News**

Almost 300 Chechen mercenaries fought against Karabakh on Azerbaijan's side in early 1992, says the experts of Caucasian Media Institute Hayk Demoyan in his monograph "The Karabakh Drama: Secret Deeds." The mercenaries were recruited under a military agreement between the Azeri and Chechen authorities: the Chechen side pledged to provide fighters against arms and ammunition. However, the Chechens were heavily beaten and left Karabakh soon. After the mid-1993 defeats the Azeri government was forced to order mercenaries from Afghanistan. Referring to the memoirs of the American journalist Thomas Goltz, Demoyan writes that the former US special service agents who took part in the Iran-Contras affair sent mercenaries to Azerbaijan and retrained Azeri pilots in Texas. But soon the FBI revealed Baku's ties with the organizers of the terrorist acts against the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and stopped the assistance. The former Greek ambassador to Armenia Leonidas Kristanopoulos says in his memoirs that in Oct 1993 Turkey tried to take advantage of Russia's parliamentary crisis and to invade into Armenia. According to the French secret services, the

speaker of the Russian parliament Ruslan Khasbulatov and the Turkish prime minister Tansu Ciller signed an agreement allowing Turkey to invade into Armenia in case of the victory of the anti-Yeltsin group in Russia. The former US ambassador to Armenia has confirmed this fact. Referring to Armenian, Russian, Turkish, Azeri, American and French sources as well as the archives of the State Department of National Security of Karabakh, Demoyan says that in 1991-1992 the Turkish air forces made a series of secret flights to Azerbaijan to deliver arms and ammunition to that country. Azeri officers and soldiers were actively retrained in Turkish military schools. The Turkish secret services in close contact with the Azeri office of the Turkish "Gray Wolves" organization began actively recruiting mercenaries from the Turkish 3rd field army (Kars and Igdır provinces) and sending them to Azerbaijan. Ankara did its best to resolve the Karabakh problem to Baku's advantage.

Apr 3 1993 Turkey officially closed its border with Armenia and signed an agreement for supplying arms to Azerbaijan and retraining Azeri servicemen thereby violating the OSCE 1993 ban on the import of arms into the Karabakh conflict region.

**12/08/03 – Chechen leaders deny responsibility for train bombing - RFE/RL Newsline**

In a statement posted on chechenpress.info on 5 December, the Foreign Ministry of the Chechen Republic Ichkeria said that the Chechen leadership and the military forces under its control were not responsible for the bombing earlier that day of a Russian passenger train en route from Mineralnye Vody to Kislovodsk, in which 44 people died. The statement stressed that "we do not use the methods of the Russian leadership, which does not differentiate between the civilian population and the military, between legal and illegal means." It said the Chechen leadership condemns any acts of violence against the civilian population anywhere.

**12/08/03 – As Republic head says neighboring states should bear responsibility - RFE/RL Newsline**

Pro-Russian Chechen administration head Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov denounced the 5 December train bombing in the North Caucasus in a telephone interview with Interfax on 5 December. He said such terrorist acts cannot be staged without "generous funding or planning from a single terrorist center." Kadyrov further argued that neighboring states that fail to prevent the perpetrators of terrorist acts from entering Russia from their territory should be called to account. In that context, he noted that some foreign mercenaries detained in Chechnya were carrying passports with Georgian visas.

**12/08/03 – Estimates of Chechen turnout in Duma elections contradictory - RFE/RL Newsline**

Abdul-Kerim Arsakhanov, who is chairman of the Chechen Central Election Commission, told journalists on 7 December that approximately 70 percent of Chechnya's registered 585,624 voters (including some 40,000 Russian troops) cast their ballots in the Russian State Duma elections by 6 p.m. local time, Interfax and ITAR-TASS reported. He added that the highest turnout was registered in Grozny. But a Chechenpress journalist told chechenpress.info that most Chechens failed to participate in the ballot. He claimed that in three large villages in Urus-Martan only some 80 people voted, mostly members of the pro-Moscow administration and their families, while in a further 17 polling stations he visited he counted a total of 58 people who came to vote. In addition, he cited reports that some polling stations were burned down during the night of 6-7 December, and that unidentified persons opened fire on 60 polling stations in Gudermes, Itum-Kale, Shatoi, Nauri, and Shelkovskii raions.

**12/09/03 – Chechen President chairs war Council session - RFE/RL Newsline**

Aslan Maskhadov has chaired a meeting in southeastern Chechnya of field commanders to discuss adapting tactics during the



winter in response to an intensification of Russian military activity in southeastern Chechnya, according to a Chechenpress report of 8 December posted on chechenpress.info.

Maskhadov characterized the 5 December bombing of a commuter train in Stavropol Krai as "recognizable a mile away as an FSB provocation."

He again stressed his leadership's unconditional rejection of terrorism. Maskhadov also observed that the extremely low turnout in Chechnya in the 7 December Duma elections, which he estimated at between 2.5 and 3 percent, shows that both President Putin and the pro-Moscow Chechen leadership can count on only minimal support from the Chechen population.

**12/10/03 - Unified Russia candidate to represent Chechnya in Duma - RFE/RL Newsline**

Unified Russia candidate Akhmar Zavgaev, who formerly represented Chechnya in the Federation Council, has been elected Chechnya's Duma deputy with some 65 percent of the vote, defeating six rival candidates, "Nezavisimaya gazeta" reported on 10 December. Meanwhile, defeated Chechen presidential candidate and Achkhoy-Martan Raion administration head Shamil Buraev cast doubts on official claims that voter turnout in Chechnya was more than 70 percent, saying it did not exceed 5 percent. An Ingush human rights activist similarly told "Nezavisimaya gazeta" that Chechen colleagues informed him that voter turnout for the 7 December vote was far lower than that for the 5 October presidential ballot, and that only a handful of the thousands of Chechen displaced persons still living in camps in Ingushetia participated in the ballot. Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov has estimated voter turnout on 7 December at between 2.5 and 3 percent.

**12/11/03 - Final Chechen Duma election results announced - RFE/RL Newsline**

The Chechen Central Election Commission confirmed on 10 December that former Chechen representative to the Federation Council Akhmar Zavgaev has been elected to the Duma from the

Chechen single-mandate constituency, Interfax reported. Zavgaev received 46.1 percent of the vote, less than originally estimated. Of the remaining six candidates, Chechen Pedagogical Institute Rector Bekhkan Khasbulatov received 13.59 percent, and Moscow-based Chechen businessman Salambek Maigov 13.23 percent. Voter turnout for the single-mandate constituency vote was 85.99 percent, and for the party list vote 87.1 percent. Pro-Moscow Chechen leader Akhmadhadji Kadyrov told ITAR-TASS on 10 December that no decision has yet been made on who should replace Zavgaev as Chechnya's representative on the Federation Council.

**12/12/03 - Putin adviser says merger of Chechnya, Ingushetia "expedient" - RFE/RL Newsline**

Speaking in Rostov-na-Donu on 9 December, Aslanbek Aslakhanov, who is President Putin's adviser on Chechen affairs, said he considers "possible and expedient" the creation of a single federation subject by combining Chechnya and Ingushetia, "Nezavisimaya gazeta" reported on 11 December. Pro-Moscow Chechen leader Akhmadhadji Kadyrov first advocated such a merger shortly after his election in October. At that time, Aslakhanov expressed doubts whether Ingushetia would agree to such a merger, and Ingush President Murat Zyazikov said that a merger is unnecessary and not economically viable. Zyazikov's predecessor, Ruslan Aushev, said in October he believes the idea originated in the Kremlin. "Nezavisimaya gazeta" on 11 December quoted Aushev as saying the population of the two republics would reject a merger, and it would only exacerbate tensions in the North Caucasus. A Russian political scientist told the same paper that the Kremlin might push for such a merger if and when it decides to withdraw support for Kadyrov, who is lobbying for the right to retain all taxes raised in Chechnya together with profits from the republic's oil sector. In referendums on 7 December, the electorates of Perm Oblast and the Komi-Permyak Autonomous Okrug approved a proposed merger of those two entities.

**12/15/03 - And touches on Chechnya - RFE/RL Newsline**

Asked by "Izvestiya" why three Chechen groups that the United States designated as terrorist organizations in February are not among the groups currently included on the list of designated foreign terrorist organizations found on the U.S. State Department's website, Black answered that the department is continuing to "gather information" on the groups and to analyze it in order to be able to back up its charges. Asked whether there is evidence of links between terrorist groups operating in Iraq and in Chechnya, Black said the State Department cannot rule out such links, but has "too little information to draw an unequivocal conclusion."

**12/17/03 - As Presidential envoy to propose pilot projects next month - RFE/RL Newsline**

Presidential envoy to the Northwest Federal District Ilya Klebanov told media in St. Petersburg that his office is preparing suggestions for merging several regions in his district, "Vremya novostei" reported on 16 December. "There are two or three pilot projects that we plan to present to the presidential administration at the beginning of 2004," Klebanov said. Valerii Khomyakov, director of the Agency for Applied and Regional Politics, told the daily that the process of unification "will be opposed by regional elites, who will hardly support a reduction in the number of leadership posts." He added that in his opinion initiatives for merging regions should come exclusively from below, and the most promising regions in this regard are "Chechnya and Ingushetia and the Altai Krai and Altai Republic."

**12/24/03 - Chechen terrorists are being sponsored from Baku - Pan Armenian Network**

According to the statement of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Azerbaijani authorities are aware of this but do not take any measures to prevent financing of terrorism.

The law-enforcement bodies of Russia have revealed new facts confirming the close ties between the Chechen terrorists and

Azerbaijan. The regional operative headquarters of anti-terrorist operations has spread recently information that in Baku there is a fund financing the activity of extremist groups operating in the Northern Caucasus. Immediately after, the Russian Ministry of Interior publicized a statement reading about the successful operation on reveal of the channels of financing. The Ministry of Interior of Russia assures that the trace of the sponsors reaches the capital city of Azerbaijan.

The employees of the operative headquarters of the anti-terrorist operation managed to find a confirmation of their information thanks to the arrest of a soldier, Rizvan. According to him, the Islamic fund "Assalam" operating in Baku finances several criminal groups terrorizing the inhabitants of Nozhay-Yurt and Veden regions of the Chechen Republic. "The above-mentioned fund provides finance assistance to the soldiers that live in Baku or pass a course of medical treatment there," the release spread by the press-service of the Ministry of Interior reads. It is stressed that according to evidences of Rizvan, "the Azerbaijani authorities are aware of the activity of the fund of "Assalam" but still do not undertake any measures for its liquidation". Even the officials of Aliyev administration do not deny the fact that in Baku there are structures financing the terrorists. The Minister of National Security Namik Abbasov said one of these days that he did not rule out the possibility of such information". However, it is difficult to understand, what can this mean, but in any case it is evident that the "Assalam" foundation is functioning not for the first year. In this sense the statement of the head of the department of registration of juridical persons of the Azerbaijani Justice Ministry Fazil Mamedov is very interesting: he confirmed the fact that in 2000 the administration of the fund has made an application for official registration. The law enforcement bodies did not undertake anything to prevent the illegal activity of the fund financing the terrorism. This is not the first case when the Russian special services reveal the ties of the Chechen terrorists with Azerbaijan.

A year ago the assistant to the President of Russia Sergey Yastrzhembski made a statement saying there were undeniable proofs that the Azerbaijani branch of the "Benevolence International Foundation" was accumulating money supposed for financing of the bandit groups fighting against the Federal forces and carrying out terrorist acts in Moscow and Northern Caucasus cities. The leader of the "Benevolence International Foundation" Enaam Arnault confirmed this information. However, up to now Baku remains one of the biggest points of sending arms and money for terrorist in Chechnya. The law enforcement bodies or cannot, or do not want to prevent these activity. All these cause the dissatisfaction of Russian authorities. According to the commentators, as result of the indifference of Azerbaijani Special Forces, a visa regime may be introduced by Moscow. This issue is being already raised in the State Duma.

### ***NAGORNO KARABAKH / HAUT KARABAGH***

**31/10/03 – New situation around Karabakh settlement process created in Armenia and Azerbaijan after election, EU special representative says** - PanArmenian News

A new situation around the Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement was created in Armenia and Azerbaijan after the presidential election, EU special representative for the South Caucasian issues Heikki Talvitie told journalists in Baku the day before. Noting about the readiness of the parties to continue talks, Talvitie emphasized that now the terms of resuming of the negotiation process should be fixed. The European Union in its turn is ready to contribute to the process, the EU special representative said announcing about his intention to visit the conflict region more frequently in 2004.

**11/06/03 – Children's rights Karabakh education problems voiced at UNESCO** - AZG Armenian Daily

'Children all over the world have equal rights to receive education' was the call of the Karabakh's state university rector Hamlet Grigorian to his recently attended UNESCO's 32-nd General Assembly conference in Paris.

Addressing the international organization's conference Mr. Grigorian called the attention of the attendees to the fact that the children of the unrecognized republics worldwide, due to obvious reasons, lag in receiving the same level education as the kids of their age do in other states. The head of the Karabakh's university has pointed out that the educational background of Karabakh's school children is much weaker than that of, for instance, Armenia's kids. He also said that the Karabakh war has left a psychological scar on many of the Karabakhi children, and there is a stratum of them with an unsatisfactory level of primary, secondary and higher education. In Grigorian's words, there are few pre-secondary educational institutions in Karabakh, whereas secondary and higher educational institutions lack cooperation and mutual legacy. The situation in Karabakh fully goes counter to the declaration on 'Education for all', adopted by 150 countries in Thailand in 1990.

Noting that next year will mark the 1600-th anniversary of Armenian writing, Grigorian called on the UNESCO officials to attach special attention to Armenia and Karabakh, and include the celebration of this jubilee in the 2004-2005 schedule of UNESCO events.

Grigorian also submitted an application to the UNESCO member states, asking them not to politicize the education sphere and requesting equal rights for all children to receive education, irrespective of the status their land of habitat has.

**11/06/03 - Azeri President needs time to understand Karabakh situation** - Mediamax news agency

Russia does not intend to put pressure on the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents and to

impose upon the sides a settlement of the Nagorny Karabakh problem, Russian Security Council Secretary Vladimir Rushaylo said in Yerevan today.

Speaking at a briefing in Yerevan today, Vladimir Rushaylo noted that the new head of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, "needs some time to appreciate and understand the situation around the Karabakh settlement at the presidential level". "Only after this can he make real proposals," Vladimir Rushaylo said. As for Armenia's position on a settlement, "it is known to Russia and we have often discussed it", Vladimir Rushaylo said.

**11/12/03 - Consultation At The Ministry Of Building - Azat Artsakh**

On November 8 the NKR minister of development of industrial infrastructures and building held a consultation. The participants were the representatives of those debtor enterprises implementing state financed building programs, which did not manage to complete the works in time. During the meeting Yuri Ghazarian mentioned that of the 1800.0 million dollars provided from the state budget for the implementation of construction works building of only 1411.0 million drams has been carried out. Yuri Ghazarian also spoke about the faults, works done and to be done in this sphere. At the same time he gave recommendations to the officials of the ministry to work towards eliminating faults in this sphere through strict control. The participants of the meeting discussed questions referring to the development of building, improvement of quality and qualification of specialists. During the consultation the minister answered the questions, listened to the opinions and suggestions of the representatives of debtor enterprises. In the end the minister of building advised the participants to establish a club of builders which will not only unite the latter but will also promote the solution of a number of problems.

**11/15/03 - Karabakh foreign minister says Azerbaijan "not interested" in peace talks - Mediamax news agency**

"The authorities of the Nagorny Karabakh Republic (NKR) have been trying to guarantee transparency of the peaceful settlement," NKR Foreign Minister Ashot Gulyan has said in Stepanakert.

A Mediamax correspondent reported from Stepanakert that Gulyan had said this addressing a "round table" on "Political settlement of the Karabakh problem". Touching upon prospects for the resumption of the talks, Gulyan spoke about two possible scenarios: the resumption of the talks between the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents or the resumption of the talks under the aegis of the OSCE Minsk Group.

"If the talks within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group resume, Nagorny Karabakh will certainly partake in them as a fully-fledged party to the conflict," Gulyan said. Karabakh is legally entitled to this in line with relevant international documents, he said.

Azerbaijan is not interested in the continuation of the talks and is doing its best to disrupt them, Gulyan added. That is why, Azerbaijan has begun talking about the format of the talks. Gulyan said in connection with this that the trilateral NKR-Azerbaijan-Armenia format was the best one(...)

**11/21/03 - Armenia says it would welcome Karabakh inclusion in talks - ArmenPress**

Armenian authorities have revealed today that they would welcome the inclusion of Nagorno Karabakh authorities in the talks for seeking a peace formula to end the long-running opposition over Nagorno Karabakh.

Speaking to journalists Armenian foreign affairs minister Vartan Oskanian said that "we too find that direct negotiations between Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh are the most effective format of negotiations."

Oskanian said that the Armenian side does not anticipate a new peace plan from the OSCE Minsk group cochairmen, who are expected to visit the region in later December. "We believe that an extensive exchange of opinions will

take place and probably new approaches will be formulated in their meetings with authorities in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh and then, after they feel that there is a mutual understanding between all the parties, they may put their proposals on paper," Oskanian said.

**11/24/03 - Several acceptable variants of Karabakh conflict settlement available at present, US mediator stated - PanArmenian News**

Principally new solutions of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict are not existing, US co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group Rudolf Perina told "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" Russian newspaper. In his words, there are 5-6 more or less acceptable variants for the settlement of the problem. "Nevertheless we are trying to find new approaches, viewing the issue on another angle. We have just been working in this direction this year and new ideas are probable to occur, however these being ideas only but not proposes", - he stated. Nowadays, when the elections are over in Armenia and Azerbaijan, opportunities for the conflict resolving have appeared, Rudolf Perina noted. "If there is a hope to settle the problem, the moment is the most appropriate today. We wish to take the occasion", - the US diplomat noted. "To our mind, the future settlement of the problem as well as the determination of Nagorno Karabakh's status should be worked out in the course of multilateral negotiations and be acceptable for all the parties. Only the decision based on mutual consent will establish peace and stability in the region", - the OSCE Minsk Group co-chair said.

**11/25/03 - Armenian minister, MPs hold meeting to discuss Karabakh peace process - Noyan Tapan news agency**

Foreign policy and cooperation issues were discussed today at a closed session of the Armenian National Assembly's standing commission on foreign relations which was attended by Armenian Foreign Minister [Vardan Oskanyan] and the commission's chairman [Armen Rustamyan].



"This was a very sincere discussion. We listened to important information and evaluated it," Rustamyan told journalists after the session.

The session chiefly discussed the priorities of Armenia's foreign policy, the current stage of the talks on the Karabakh conflict and regional problems. Oskanyan gave the MPs detailed information about the Key West plan for settling the Karabakh conflict.

Rustamyan said that the plan was acceptable as a whole, but was later rejected by Azerbaijan. Clear explanations were given in connection with the latest speculation about the alleged handover of Mejri [presumably as part of a Karabakh accord] to Azerbaijan.

The session approved of the idea of conducting two parliamentary hearings: on Nagorny Karabakh and on regional problems, including Armenian-Turkish relations. The hearings will be held in order to specify different viewpoints and to draw up a joint document - to all appearances, a statement.

**11/27/03 – Karabakh conflict complicates Ankara dialogue with Yerevan, Turkish Minister said - PanArmenian News**

The solution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict is important for all countries of the region, national education minister of Turkey Huseyin Celik told ITAR-TASS agency. In his words, the conflict makes Turkey's dialogue with Armenia more complicated.

"We do not have diplomatic relations with that country, land borders are closed. We could have had wonderful trade relations, but, unfortunately, we do not due to that conflict," the Turkish minister said. At that he expressed a wish for the soonest possible settlement of the problem and establishing good relations with "our neighbor - Armenia." "Turkey had done and is doing everything possible to assist in the conflict settlement. Russia, which has close relations with Armenia, plays a large role in solving the issue," Huseyin Celik noted.

**11/27/03 – Extremist organization guilty of Istanbul acts of terrorism recruited fighters for Nagorno Karabakh war – PanArmenian News**

Great East Islamic Raiders Front" organization, guilty of a number acts of terrorism in Turkey, was engaged in recruiting "saint fighters" for war against Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh in its time. As reported by "Mediamax" agency, "Gulf News" newspaper being issued in United Arab Emirates writes about it.

According to the source, "Great East Islamic Raiders Front" sent fighters to Chechnia and Dagestan, too. "However, in the course of time the Front leaders have perceived, that it is much easier to kill people in Turkey itself," the newspaper writes.

**11/28/03 – Azeri organization for Karabakh liberation threatens to commit terrorist act in Armenia - PanArmenian News**

Azeri Organization for Karabakh Liberation (OKL) is ready to commit terrorist act in Armenia provided that the world recognizes Armenia as an "aggressor". Assistant to the OKL chairman Barat Imani stated yesterday addressing the picketers who gathered near the British Embassy in Baku. It should be reminded that the OKL is carrying out a series of unauthorized actions of protest in front of the Embassies of different countries and the offices of the international organizations. "Let the whole world know that patience of the Azeri people is coming to an end. If necessary, we will commit acts of terrorism in Armenia. Down with the diplomatic missions of the states pursuing the policy of double standards toward Azerbaijan!"- B. Imani stated. The picketers demanded the world powers to raise in the UN Security Council the question of soonest recognition of Armenia as an aggressor and to apply corresponding sanctions against it. "We will use the whole variety of protests. And tomorrow when these radical measures are put into practice, the five members-states of the UN SC will account for the happenings", - OKL chairman Akif Nagi told Zerkalo Baku newspaper. To note today the OKL is organizing

pickets at the French Embassy and the Baku UN Office.

**11/30/03 - Russia offers help in settling Karabakh problem - Kremlin - ITAR-TASS**

If need be, Russia is prepared to take part in settling the Karabakh problem. Deputy head of the Kremlin administration Sergey Prikhodko has said the "problem of Nagorny Karabakh is a question of political dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which we support". "We are prepared for this, as much as Russia's efforts are needed," Prikhodko said.

He said that this question was discussed at today's talks between the Russian and Armenian presidents in St Petersburg. Prikhodko said that, in addition, Vladimir Putin and [Armenian President] Robert Kocharyan discussed the situation in Georgia. "We are not indifferent to the situation in the Caucasus and events in Georgia," Prikhodko said. "Political processes in that country are important not only for Georgia but also for Russia and other countries."

**11/30/03 - Azeri leaders "positively inclined" to settlement of Karabakh issue - Putin - Interfax**

Russian President Vladimir Putin believes that the Azeri leadership is positively inclined towards the settlement of the Nagorny Karabakh problem.

"It seems to me that the Azeri leadership is in a positive mood. Although it is a complex and chronic problem, there is such inclination," Putin said during talks in St Petersburg on Sunday [30 November] with Armenian President Robert Kocharyan.

He said that he held a telephone conversation recently with Azeri President Ilham Aliyev on "further prospects for the settlement of the Karabakh issue".

Putin emphasized that he was glad to have an opportunity to exchange views with Kocharyan about this problem.

He recalled that recently he had a meeting with spiritual leaders of the Caucasus, and precisely after that meeting, the telephone conversation between him and Aliyev took place.

**12/05/03 - Armenia calls to resolve Karabakh conflict ten years after cease-fire - PRAVDA**

Armenia is calling for a settlement to the Karakakh conflict in the run up to the ten-year anniversary of the cease-fire in 2004, said Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanyan in Maastricht at an OSCE meeting of ministers.

'This upcoming spring we will celebrate the tenth anniversary of the cease-fire on the Karabakh front, which is the only cease-fire agreement in the world that is controlled by the conflict adversaries themselves. The reason for this is the political will of both Armenia and Azerbaijan, which compels us to refrain from bloodshed. The leaders of both countries in the Karabakh conflict are working toward negotiating a solution, which will allow their citizens to live a routine way of life,' said Oskanyan. He also said that at the present time the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic is stable enough to also have its own voice in the solution of the conflict. Oskanyan called on making the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic one of the negotiating parties in the settlement process.

At the present time, peace talks are taking place only between the leaderships of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Oskanyan recently stated that Armenia was prepared to leave the peace process if Nagorno-Karabakh was not given an independent place at the negotiating table.

**12/05/03 - Time to kickstart stalled Karabakh peace talks: envoys - Agence France Presse**

International mediators from France, Russia and the United States were in Azerbaijan Friday urging the country's leaders to renew efforts to find a peaceful solution to its long-running conflict with neighbouring Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave.(...)

The mediators, making their first visit to the region after a year-long hiatus as the peace process became deadlocked, said it was time to look again at the search for a peace deal.

"We share the frustration over this conflict and that we have not made greater progress in resolving this over the last decade," said Rudolf

Perina, the US diplomat seconded to the mediation mission at a meeting with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev.

"Our countries are determined to help find a just, lasting peace," he added. "We believe there is a new, very important opportunity for both sides to take advantage of... We hope that this meeting will be a first step.

The trio of envoys form the so-called Minsk Group, which has been mandated by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe to help tease out a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

They are due to travel on from Azerbaijan to Armenia. They said they will be trying to arrange a peace summit between Azerbaijan's Aliyev and his Armenian counterpart Robert Kocharian.

"In Azeri society there is an impression that the Minsk Group will not produce results in the future. I do not want to believe that and hope that its activities will lead to peace," Aliyev told the envoys.

French envoy Henri Jacolin said the chance of reaching a deal was better than it had been for years after the election in October this year of 41-year-old Aliyev as Azerbaijan's president.

"There is a quite new situation," he said. "We have two leaders who are of the same generation... I personally believe the conditions for achieving success have never been so clear as they are today."

**12/06/03 - Armenian, Azeri presidents ready to meet - OSCE mediator - Mediamax news agency**

Armenian President Robert Kocharyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev have agreed with the mediators' proposal that it is necessary to hold a meeting between the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents at first opportunity, the US cochairman of the OSCE Minsk Group, Rudolf Perina, said in Yerevan today.

OSCE Minsk Group cochairmen Yuriy Merzlyakov (Russia), Henri Jacolin (France) and Perina met Kocharyan in Yerevan today. The talks between the mediators and Kocharyan lasted for one hour.

Despite the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders' readiness to resume the dialogue, the precise date and venue of their meeting

have not been determined yet, Perina said. He added that "Robert Kocharyan and Ilham Aliyev have agreed with the mediators' opinion that it is necessary to speed up the negotiating process which has slackened off in the past year for a number of reasons".

**12/08/03 - ...And Stepanakert - RFE/RL**

The Minsk Group co-chairmen traveled from Yerevan to Stepanakert, where they met on 7 December with Arkadii Ghukasian, president of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR), Armenian news agencies reported. Merzlyakov told journalists that while the Minsk Group recognizes Nagorno-Karabakh as a party to the conflict, the decision whether to include a representative from the NKR in direct talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan must be made by those two countries. In mid-September, Interfax quoted Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Vilayat Guliev as saying that Azerbaijan would negotiate directly with the NKR only if Yerevan acknowledged that the

conflict is an internal affair of Azerbaijan and opted out of further talks. Akif Nagi, head of the Organization for the Liberation of Karabakh (OLK), on 7 December denounced as a violation of respect for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity the Minsk Group's decision to travel to Karabakh from Yerevan rather than from Baku, according to ANS TV, as cited by Groong. He said by doing so the co-chairmen are trying to "give some kind of legitimacy" to Karabakh's leaders, whom he dubbed "terrorists." The OLK favors a new war to bring the unrecognized NKR back under the Azerbaijani central government's control.

**12/08/03 - French mediator upbeat about Nagorno-Karabakh resolution - Interfax**

Favorable conditions for settling the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict have emerged, France's co-chairman in the OSCE Minsk Group Henri Jacolin told a press conference on Saturday.

Now that presidential elections have been held in Armenia and Azerbaijan, there are presidents in office the OSCE can work with to

resolve the conflict, Jacolin said. This is the first time such favorable conditions have existed, he said.

U.S. co-chairman Rudolph Perina said that a mediator group conducted crucial talks with Azerbaijani authorities on Friday. The meeting with President Ilham Aliyev was very productive, he said. However, no new official initiatives were announced, and the exchange of opinions was aimed solely at clarifying the Azerbaijani president's position, he said.

Baku's course towards a Nagorno-Karabakh settlement remains consistent, he said.

**12/11/03 - Armenian leader holds first Nagorno-Karabakh talks with Azerbaijan's new president - Associated Press Worldstream**

by JONATHAN FOWLER;  
Associated Press Writer

Armenia and Azerbaijan's leaders held get acquainted talks Thursday to start a new attempt at resolving the long-running Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Armenian President Robert Kocharian and his Azerbaijani counterpart, Ilham Aliyev, smiled and appeared relaxed as they stood together to be photographed after the meeting, which lasted nearly double the one hour that had been scheduled.

Officials said, however, that they took no new steps toward ending the intractable 15-year dispute over the ethnic Armenian enclave.

"This meeting was meant to allow them to get to know each other," Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Vilayat Guliev told reporters. "It can form a basis for future negotiations."(...)

Neither would give details of their talks. Aliyev said only that he was satisfied with the discussions, while Kocharian declined requests for comment.(...)

"We do not exclude starting from scratch, because Ilham Aliyev is a new president. He may have some new ideas," Guliev added. He did not elaborate.

**12/12/03 - Peace proposals based on Azerbaijan's integrity doomed to failure, Armenian MP - Arminfo**

Any proposal by the OSCE Minks Group on settling the Nagornyy Karabakh conflict on the basis of the principle of Azerbaijan's

territorial integrity is doomed to failure, Armen Rustamyan, chairman of the Armenian National Assembly's standing commission for foreign relations, has told Arminfo news agency.

Armenia has rejected such proposals over the seven years of peace talks on resolving the conflict. "Even such a powerful state as the USSR could not keep Nagornyy Karabakh within Azerbaijan through pressure, for Nagornyy Karabakh has been an Armenian territory from time immemorial," Rustamyan said. He said that the co-chairmen have to come up with a proposal on resolving the conflict that would be acceptable to all the sides to the conflict and whose implementation could be enforced on the participants if need be.(...)

**12/12/03 - USA welcomes renewed Azeri-Armenian dialogue, envoy says - Trend news agency**

The USA welcomes the resumption of a direct dialogue between the Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents over a negotiated settlement of the Nagornyy Karabakh conflict, US ambassador to Azerbaijan Reno Harnish has told journalists.

"I am pleased with the fact that the two presidents have held a bilateral meeting because there had been no changes in this issue for a long time," he said. According to him, the USA, which is a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, is interested in boosting the Karabakh peace talks. The ambassador described as positive Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's consent to resume the direct dialogue, while the latest round of the talks held in Geneva demonstrates the sides' interest in resolving the problem, he said.

**12/15/03 - Judging from all, there are contradictions among the co-chairmen - Pan Armenian Network**

On December 9 the French co-chairman of the Minsk group Henry Jacolin in an interview with the "Express" newspaper, Azerbaijan, doubted the fact that Karabakh was an independent party of the conflict.

"No need for Karabakh to participate in the peace talks as a party," the French diplomat noted. "I do not think it necessary as the Karabakh

Armenians participate in the talks through Armenia. I believe that the positions of Armenia and Karabakh are the same as far as the talks are concerned. Besides, Robert Kocharian himself is from Karabakh," he said.

These words totally contradict to the position of the Russian Ministry of Foreign affairs expressed by the diplomats representing Moscow in the talks. A day before the abovementioned statement of the French co-chairman, Russian representative Yuri Merzlyakov said that for Kremlin Karabakh is a party of the conflict. "Nagorno Karabakh is a party of the conflict, and this can not be negated," he said. The former special representative of Russia on Karabakh issue, Vladimir Kazimirov, even having stopped his diplomatic activity, continues to insist on the importance of involving Karabakh in the negotiation process. (...)

**12/17/03 - Armenian troops due in Azerbaijan for planning joint NATO exercises - Mediamax news agency**

Three officers of the Armenian armed forces will take part in the first conference on planning the Cooperative Best Effort-2004 exercises which will be held in Baku in the first half of January, Lt-Gen Artur Agabekyan, the Armenian deputy defence minister, said in an interview with Mediamax news agency today.

The deputy minister said that the representatives of the peace-keeping subunit and operations department of the headquarters of the Armenian armed forces will take part in the first conference on planning the Cooperative Best Effort-2004 exercises. Artur Agabekyan said that Armenia will be represented by one unit in the Cooperative Best Effort-2004 exercises.

Cooperative Best Effort-2004 will be held in Azerbaijan next September within the framework of NATO's Partnership for Peace programme.

**12/20/03 - Armenia, Azerbaijan lawmakers say peace needed in Nagorno-Karabakh: report - Agence France Presse**

Armenian and Azerbaijani lawmakers meeting in Scotland said Saturday that peace is the only



acceptable resolution to their conflict over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, Britain's Press Association reported.

The presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan held last week in Geneva the first top-level meeting between the countries for over a year on the 14 year-old conflict over the enclave.(...)

### **JAVAKHK / DJAVAKHK**

#### **11/06/03 – Russian military base in Georgia reportedly on high alert Akhalkalaki - Arminfo**

The 62nd Russian military base in Akhalkalaki (Armenian-populated region of Georgia) has been put on high alert due to a difficult political situation which has developed in Georgia since the parliamentary elections.

The situation is now quiet in Akhalkalaki, however, it cannot be ruled out that there will be acts of sabotage, A-Info news agency reports.

Grigor Kerobyan, a resident of the village of Vachyan, was arrested on 3 November on a charge of insulting the Georgian president on election day, the source says. After spending 12 hours in a remand centre, Kerobyan was set free as the state of his health was deteriorating.

In addition, a brawl broke out between supporters of the candidates from the Ninotsminda constituency, Genzel Mkoyan and Mger Grigoryan, in Akhalkalaki on 3 November. As a result, an employee of Grigoryan's campaign headquarters was seriously injured.

#### **11/06/03 – Council of Armenian Organizations Calls for High Alert - ASBAREZ Online**

Continued opposition protests across Georgia may have prompted commanders of the Russian military base in the mostly Armenian populated Georgian region of Akhalkalaki to put troops on alert, although the situation in the region was stable, and as opposition leaders called for a break in protests throughout the country on Thursday.

Preliminary results of the November 2 parliamentary elections in Georgia indicate that the bloc

supporting President Eduard Shevardnadze will again emerge as the country's most powerful political grouping. The Council of the Armenian organizations in Javakhk called on the local population, political parties, and candidates to remain calm and avoid confrontations.

Local Armenian Grigor Keropian, was arrested by police on election day for "profanities against the president," and was released after 12 hours. Another clash was reported in Akhalkalaki between supporters of candidates Henzel Mkoyan and Mher Grigorian. [...]

#### **11/07/03 – Russian commander denies reports of alert at base - Prime-News news agency**

The commander of the 62nd Russian military base in Akhalkalaki town in Armenian-populated region of southern Georgia, Yevgeniy Achalov, has categorically denied yesterday's mass media reports that the base had been put on high alert due to a difficult political situation in Georgia after the 2 November parliamentary elections.

"Russian servicemen at the Akhalkalaki military base are continuing their service in a normal regime," Achalov told Prime-News. "Reports of some kind of high alert are untrue, it is an act of provocation," the commander added. Passage omitted Achalov noted that about 50 per cent of the base's personnel were local residents, who were "supporting stability".

#### **11/25/03 – Samtskhe-Javakhetia governor sent resignation - PanArmenian News**

After the resignation of Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze, yesterday Samtskhe-Javakhetia governor Gela Kvaratskhelia also submitted a request on retirement. Vice-governor Vazha Beridze is fulfilling his duties now. As reported by "A-Info" agency, within the period of the so-called "velvet revolution" November 23-24 the situation in the region predominantly populated by Armenians remained quiet. The necessity to preserve stability was spoken about in the course of the yesterday's telephone conversation between chairman of the board of the Akhalkalaki region Artyush Hambartsumian and secretary of the Security Council of Georgia

Tedo Japaridze. Meanwhile, according to the source, on the night of November 24 several residents of Akhalkalaki region were cruelly beaten. Having found out that at the past parliamentary election Akhalkalaki agricultural commodity traders voted for "For New Georgia" pro-Shevardnadze bloc, a group of Tbilisi residents fell upon them and cruelly beat them. It is interesting that the Tbilisi police has not undertaken any actions on the fact in question yet.

#### **11/25/03 – Refutes news of rallies and plans to establish autonomy - ASBAREZ Online**

The Council of Representatives of the Armenian NGOs of the Samtskhe-Javakhk and Kvemo Kartli regions of Georgia welcomed the resignation of Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze, and said the action averted the possibility of bloodshed in the country.

Convinced that constitutional order and democratic values would be established in Georgia, the council urged the Armenian population of Georgia to show restraint and vigilance. The new government, it said, would work to solve the socio-economic, cultural, and political problems of Javakhk Armenians, and all the other ethnic minorities.

The local Armenian radio station "Impulse" reported that a transition to autonomy within a constitutional framework has started in Akhalkalaki, following the resignation of the local administration appointed by Shevardnadze, and that mass rallies are being held.

The Armenian Council, however, refuted the information reported by "Impulse" radio, declaring that the situation is stable and no rallies are taking place.

Referring to reports on steps to establish Javakhk's autonomy, the Council points to attempts by certain forces to aggravate the situation in the region, in order to retain posts or take on positions of power.

In fact, states the Council, these are the same forces that have consistently been critical of autonomy; their goal, however, is to frighten Tbilisi officials in order to retain their posts.

**11/25/03 – Situation in Akhalkalaki stable - Arminfo News**

The Council of representatives of Armenian public organizations in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli refuted the information reported by the Armenian "Impulse" radio on a strained situation in Akhalkalaki.

The A-INFO news agency reports that the situation in Akhalkalaki is stable and no meetings were held. Commenting on the appeal for initiating Javakheti self-government made by the Youth Sport and Cultural Union, the Council points out that it is a provocation of certain forces that are trying to consolidate their positions. The Council states that some forces are now trying to distort the idea of Javakheti's self-government and make use of it to get or retain their posts. Today, the forces that were recently highly critical of this idea are behind those calling for Javakheti's self-government. Their goal is frightening official Tbilisi with this idea to retain their own posts.

The Council urged the population to show restraint and reason. The Council is sure that the establishment of democracy and constitutional order in the country will allow the socio-economic, cultural and political problems of both the local Armenian population and all the nations residing in Georgia to be resolved.

**12/01/03 – Armenians of Samtskhe-Javakheti do not take part in political and public life of Georgia: Mikhail Saakashvili - Arminfo News**

The Armenians of the Georgian Samtskhe-Javakheti region do not take part in Georgia's political and public life which is not good, the candidate for the Georgian presidency Mikhail Saakashvili told Armenia's Public Television. He considers it vital to involve the Javakheti Armenians in the political and social processes taking place in Georgia. He compared the region with the North Pole. "The region has no proper roads, receive little if no information. In fact they feel themselves forgotten." "One should not treat his own citizens like that." Saakashvili said that the government should encourage the

Javakheti Armenians to learn their mother tongue simultaneously with Georgian so that they can be involved in the process of state building. "Stability in Georgia highly depends on the extent of the ethnic minorities' involvement in the country's life." Speaking about the Armenian army Saakashvili said that it is better organized than the Soviet army was. "I would like our army to be as strong and well-organized as yours."

Concerning the tariffs of the Georgian railways, Saakashvili said that the first thing the new Georgian government will do is to reduce the transit costs. "Now they are high because of corruption."

The same is true for the Batumi-Poti-Ilichevsk train ferry. It should be noted that today the tariff for carrying cargos from the Sadakhlo (Armenian-Georgian border) to Poti (385 km) is \$15.8 for a ton, which is twice as much as to carry cargos from Poti to the Georgian-Azeri border (360 km). Especially strange considering the fact that in both cases the greater part of the route is the same (Poti-Tbilisi 300 km). One-day fee for the use of the train ferry is \$7,000-10,000.-

**12/02/03 – Armenian member of Georgian parliament walks out of Pro-Shevardnadze faction - ArmenPress**

Van Bayburdian, an Armenian member of the Georgian parliament, announced about quitting the pro-Shevardnadze's faction For New Georgia. In a statement Bayburdian said his decision was prompted by the faction's head Irakly Goguava's allegations that the resignation of Shevardnadze had been plotted and assisted by the US and that the US Armenian organizations had also contributed to it.

The statement also rebuked some ethnic Georgian parliament members for their insulting anti-Armenian attitudes.

**12/04/03 - Saakashvili Due to Visit Javakheti on Campaign Trail - ASBAREZ Online**

National Movement leader and Georgian presidential candidate Mikhail Saakashvili, is due to visit Javakheti soon, as a part of his campaign strategy. Saakashvili, who is the de facto leader of the

governing provisional triumvirate in Tbilisi, is widely viewed as the odds-on favorite to win the presidential vote. Russian officials worry, however, that a Saakashvili-led administration in Tbilisi will make a radical foreign policy departure--steering Georgia away from Russia's sphere of influence and towards integration with Western political, military, and economic structures. Moscow kept up its verbal assault on the Georgian provisional government December 3, condemning Tbilisi for not taking steps to arrest visiting Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky, who is wanted in Russia. Berezovsky, who lives in exile in Britain, jetted to Tbilisi on December 3 to supposedly visit a friend.

**12/10/03 - Georgia's Armenian population proposes talks over status - Georgian Times**

(GT News) The head of the unregistered political party Virk David Rstakian, representing the interests of Armenian population of Georgia's southern region of Djavakheti, proposes the negotiations with the new Georgian leadership on granting the region formal status, the GT reports. "Autonomy is the way to preserve everything that helps us feel Armenian: our language, culture, and traditions," Rstakian said. Rstakian also added that the Russian military base in Akhalkalaki serves as the guarantor of the physical security of Djavakheti's Armenian population but the new Georgian leadership is demanding the closure of the base. According to Rstakian, over 2,000 local Armenians serve in the military base.

**12/12/03 – Akhalkalaki new governor appointed - A1 Plus**

Governor of Georgian province of Akhalkalaki Artyush Hambardzumyan announced his resignation. Reliable sources say he resigned under pressure of forces leaning to the republic's new authorities.

On the Georgian interim president Nino Burdzanadze's order, Arthur Yeremyan will succeed Hambardzumyan as the province's governor.