

GEORGIAN NEWSLETTER

*Weekly Information
report*



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WEEKLY CHRONICLES

Results of 1996 According to Estimations of Ministers, Deputies and Businessmen

The Minister of Economy Lado Papava: - The main result of 1996 was that prices for bread were liberalized and structural reorganization of power system of the country was begun.

The Minister of Trade and Foreign Economic Relations Konstantin Zaldastanishvili: - A program of stimulation of exporters was started being implemented, the Investment Center in order to help foreign partners was set up. There are achievements in the sphere of development of relations with foreign countries. In 1997 Georgian entering the **World Trade Organization** will be the most important task.

The Minister of Agriculture and Foodstuffs Bakur Gulua: - In 1996 right to property on land was restored in Georgia, the institution of a long term lease was set up, a system of state registration of lands was implemented and the special Department for Land was founded. The first projects of the international organizations were started being implemented in agriculture.

The Director of the Bureau for the International Humanitarian Aid Coordination Gayoz Kubaneishvili: - Volume of humanitarian aid was decreased greatly that year. Most International organizations are oriented at small business and farming development in Georgia that will promote increase of production, first of all foods, in the republic.

The Chairman of the Parliament Zurab Zhvania: - The most significant in 1996 was the fact that new state institutions were set up, a civilized approach to budget was formed. In 1997 tax and custom legislation should be passed, struggle against corruption is to be continued.

The Chairman of People's National-Democrat Faction Mamuka Giorgadze: - The Abkhazian question and Georgian-Russian interrelations were in the focus of the Parliament activity in 1996. It's a pity none of these two problems have been settled yet.

The member of Citizens' Union Faction Michael Saakashvili: In 1996 the court reform was begun, Law on Land adopted. In 1997 the legislative basis should be completed to be elaborated in order to carry out economic reforms.

The Chairman of the Majoritari Faction Vakhtrang Rcheulishvili: - The most important event of 1996 was land transference to private property. The budget is to be adopted in 1997 and social issues are to be solved.

The member of the Agordzineba Faction David Abashidze: In 1996 changes were made in the Parliament regulations that legalized parliamentary majority. In 1997 Law on Free Economic Zones has to be adopted.

The Chairman of the Abkhazeti Faction German Patsatsia: - The most important moment in 1996 was the fact that the Georgian Parliament adopted the resolution on the Abkhazian problem of April 17.

The Chairman of the National-Democratic Party Faction Irina Chanturia-Sarishvili: - In 1996 a decision on the oil pipeline construction was ratified. In 1997 we are to restore the territorial integrity of Georgia, ensure Russian troops withdrawal from the territory of the country.

POLITICS

Abkhazia: the Situation is to be Changed by the End of January

The past year brought nothing to refugees and guidance of the self-declared Republic of Abkhazia. However parliamentary elections carried out on the territory of Abkhazia testified to the fact that policy pursued by Mr. Vladislav Ardzinba hadn't changed. In spite of appeals of **UN, OSCE, the European Union** the parliament of Abkhazia was elected though there was no two thirds of the electorate.

A problem of refugees returning still remains the most urgent at the present time. The Abkhazian party doesn't agree that persons who have taken part in hostilities are to return back either. It should be mentioned that the guidance of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia situated in Tbilisi considers that those who "defended territorial integrity of the country with weapon must return first of all".

In observers' opinion returning of people who fought in Abkhazia can cause vendetta. Refugees don't hide their sentiments either, they are threatening to revenge themselves on killers of their friends and relatives. The analogous feelings have their Abkhazian neighbors.

This problem can be solved for a time being if a part of refugees return to the Gali region where the Georgians comprised 90 per cent of the population.

The sides make concessions as far as this question is concerned, though these concessions can't be noticed on the background of all general demands.

The Abkhazian party proposed a new more effective plan of refugees returning at the last negotiations in the Gali region. According to this plan their representatives had to be included into structures of local self-guidance and legislative bodies.

The Georgian party didn't agree with

that proposal as it considered bodies and structures that had been set up by Mr. Ardzinba's regime to be groundless juridically. Tbilisi considers the way out to be in formation of the joint governing body for a transition period. The international observers and mediators in the conflict regulation will take part in it.

As far as the concrete mechanism of refugees' returning is concerned, the Georgian party offered to use "the regional principle" - refugees should return to some villages. In any case people safety is necessary and it is Russia that can resolve this problem.

The new Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Peacemaking Forces Doria Babenkov expressed readiness to secure defence of refugees if there was a corresponding decision of the military guidance of Russia and interested parties.

At the same time there are appeals to withdraw the peacemaking forces from the conflict zone in Abkhazia, threats to start partisan warfare against them. The author of this "ultimatum" is the Deputy of the Georgian Parliament, the leader of the **Union of Abkhazian Liberation** Boris Kakubava.

The situation is getting from bad to worse and a mechanism of negotiations should be changed in order to settle it. Georgia still demands firmly to fulfil obligations concerning the defence of refugees who will return back or to transfer the security zone deep to the territory of Abkhazia.

Deputy Chairman of the Georgia Parliament, the head of provisional Parliamentary Commission on the Abkhazian problems Vakhtang Kolbaya stated that "some approaches" would be changed that year. There is little time for this as well as for some Russian definite measures in order to make its role in the conflict settlement more active as on January 31 a term of peacemaking forces mandate expires.

some information on strength of the Abkhazian armed forces. Actually they are armed with not more than 60-70 units of armoured machinery including BMP, BTR, self-propelled artillery installations. There is no information on quantity of tanks but obviously it doesn't exceed 20 of them. The self-declared republic has 80 artillery systems. 5 Grad volley fire installations, some installations of volley fire Uragan of 240 mm caliber and 42 mortars. Obviously the Abkhazian party has also 2 CU-25 aircraft, 6 MI-2, MI-8 and MI-24 helicopters. It is armed with 23 naval means among them civil tugboats are, where machine-guns and free flight rockets are installed. The Abkhazian armed forces have three fast Grif boats.

98 Per Cent of Refugees are Going to Return to Abkhazia.

Data of Sociologic Inquest Carried out by OMRI

Not long ago the American Open Research Mass Media Institute carried out sociological inquest among refugees from Abkhazia.

305 persons answered questions concerning social-political problems. 97,7 per cent of them were the Georgians.

62,3 per cent of respondents answered that they were interested "much" or "not much" in politics. About 52 per cent participated in the Parliamentary elections in Georgia. 24,9 per cent voted for political **Abkhazia-My House** movement, 11,8 per cent voted for the Georgian **Citizens' Union**. The main reasons the respondents didn't take part in the elections were: "uncertainty in future" (9,2 per cent); "were not on the territory of Georgia at that time" (4,6 per cent); "don't trust elections" (3 per cent).

31,1 per cent of respondents were partially satisfied with the results of the elections, 18 per cent were "not completely satisfied" and 23,1 per cent were very satisfied; 66,2 per cent are

going to take part in the next elections.

66,9 per cent of refugees consider that "returning back of Abkhazia is the most urgent problem Georgia faces at the present time". 18,7 per cent declared that the only way out was to restore the Georgian territorial integrity as soon as possible. 98 per cent are going to return to Abkhazia. 1 per cent of respondent have decided to remain in Tbilisi.

41,3 per cent of refugees are sure the President of Georgia "is aware of the people's needs"; 87 per cent consider that "Georgia needs a strong leader who would resolve the problems of the country without looking back at the Parliament or the Supreme Court".

In opinion of 80,6 per cent "it is necessary to forbid some political parties", 84,2 per cent of respondents thought "it is necessary to forbid to express points of view that can do harm to the state".

Answers on the questions concerning the Mass Media showed that Georgian Mass Media had the greatest influence on forced migrants. Most of them consider the work of the Georgian State Television to be "the most useful". At the same time their attitude with respect to these interviews is critical: 42,3 per cent "entrust to some extent"; 16,1 per cent "don't accept the Georgian state press". As far as other press is concerned, 55,1 per cent of respondents "never read Russian press", 26,9 per cent "don't trust it".

48,2 per cent of asked people believe that their standard of living will "improve", 30,8 per cent consider it will remain the same. 56,1 per cent of respondents consider that Georgia has a chance to improve general economic situation. 16,1 per cent hope quantity of crimes will decrease.

While answering the question "what does prevent you from returning to Abkhazia" most of respondents answered - political instability. There were other reasons: "many relatives were killed and wounded, I can't forget it"; "I'm afraid members of my family will be worried", "my house has been rui-

What are the main Reasons of the Georgian-Abkhazian War?*Population of Sukhumi (per cent)*

	All	Abkhazians	Russians	Armenians	Georgians	Persons displaced to Gali	Experts
Economy	2.1	1.7	2.3	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
National propaganda	6.8	6.9	6.5	6.7	4.5	18.6	8.3
International enmity	4.4	6.4	2.8	2.7	0.0	14.0	8.3
Georgian official policy	62.7	73.4	57.5	56.0	36.4	2.3	33.3
The Soviet Union disintegration	20.8	8.2	26.6	29.3	54.5	37.2	41.7
Abkhazian official policy	0.5	0.4	0.9	0.0	0.0	18.8	0.0
It is difficult to answer	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.0	4.5	9.3	0.0
Another reasons	1.0	2.1	1.4	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nor answers	0.3	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0		

What are the main obstacles of mass repatriation of the ethnic Georgians?*Population of Sukhumi (per cent)*

	All	Abkhazians	Russians	Armenians	Georgians	Persons displaced to Gali	Experts
Propaganda of ethnic hate	13.4	13.3	15.0	18.0	1.5	0.3	16.7
Lack of economic assistance to displaced persons	12.9	9.4	16.4	14.7	18.2	4.7	8.3
No personal security	25.1	28.3	18.7	29.3	22.7	40.5	20.0
Political leaders have no tolerance and flexibility	9.6	6.9	9.3	13.3	18.2	9.3	0.0
Political factor	22.3	28.3	19.2	16.0	13.8	20.0	0.0
Closing of the Abkhazian-Georgian frontier	6.1	4.7	7.0	12.0	0.0	2.3	16.7
It is difficult to answer	5.4	3.9	7.0	2.7	22.7	7.0	0.0
Another reasons	4.2	4.3	6.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	33.3
No answer	0.9	0.9	1.4	0.0	0.0		

ned", "my house has been occupied by the Abkhazians", "I'm afraid I won't get the job".

44,9 per cent of respondents will return to Abkhazia under condition the new guidance acceptable for Georgia comes to power, 14,4 per cent said "after all persons who have injured members of my family are punished".

14,4 per cent affirmed that the main argument in favour of returning back to Abkhazia is the presence of independent observers protecting human rights in Abkhazia. 13,8 per cent consider strict police control over the situation in the region to be obligatory. 8,9 per cent will return in case UN peacemakers will stay in Abkhazia. 4,9 per cent if there is material assistance and 3,6 per cent will return if there is presence of Russian peacemakers. 2,3 per cent needed help in search of job. 9,8 per cent said if there

was compensation for lost property.

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ECONOMY**Again on "Borjomi" in the Light of the Draft Bill on Intellectual Property Protection that is being Elaborated.**

In January 1997 the Georgian Expert Council on Licenses will discuss a question of exploration of mineral water springs in the Borjomi Gorge. The point is almost 50 firms are engaged in this mineral water bottling at the present time. About 20 of them have special licenses on bottling, the rest of them are situated in the near-by garages and sheds, they prefer to use a cottage method.

As it turned out 21 applications for **Borjomi** bottling licenses have been received by the Expert Council. According to the Chairman of the Council Zurab Kutelia, less than 10 licenses are supposed to be granted.

- None of existing firms is able to explore the whole volume of springs. Even **Georgian Glass & Mineral Water Company** can bottle 150 cubic meters of water per twenty four hours, while daily volume of water outflow is 450-500 cubic meters. Thus monopoly on extraction, bottling and realization of **Borjomi** is out of question.

The main question is not how many firms will produce **Borjomi**. There is a unique situation in Georgia concerning names of famous drinks, not only mineral water but wines and brandy. Having one and the same name they differ in taste and quality from one another.