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School of International Affairs

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In this issue:

- Azerbaijan and Japan: An Interview with H.E. Mr. Masamutsi Oki, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan in Azerbaijan
- Fariz Ismailzade, "The New Meaning of January 20th in Azerbaijan: a Personal Reflection"
- Paul Goble, "Nabucco after Budapest: Old Problems, New Challenges and a Changed Role for Azerbaijan"
- A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy
- Note to Readers

AZERBAIJAN AND JAPAN

An Interview with H.E. Mr. Masamutsi Oki Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan in Azerbaijan

January 22, 2009
Baku, Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan in the World: What do you see as the main focus of relations between Japan and Azerbaijan?

Ambassador Masamutsi Oki: The relations between Japan and Azerbaijan are excellent in many fields, and we look forward to even closer ties in the future. The visit of President Ilham Aliyev to Japan in March 2006 gave an important boost to these excellent relations. In addition, our two countries have regular high-level visits in both directions. Every year, we hold a political dialogue at the Deputy Foreign

Minister level and a Joint Economic Committee session involving businessmen and government officials to promote economic ties. All these things make a positive contribution to the development and growth of our bilateral relations. But of course there is still room for growth in cooperation in various fields.

AIW: How have relations between Azerbaijan and Japan evolved during the post-Soviet period? How do you rate the level of these relations at present? What directions in bilateral ties have been most successful and where is additional attention needed?

Amb. Oki: Japan recognized the independence of Azerbaijan in December 1991 and established diplomatic relations with Baku in September 1992. In January 2000, Japan opened its embassy in Baku, and in October 2005, Azerbaijan established its embassy in Tokyo. Japan has allocated three soft loans to Azerbaijan, in 1997, 1999, and 2005 for various electric power generation projects all together amounting to 396 billion yen (440 million U.S dollars). We are also involved in grant projects which cover such fields as agriculture, education, health care, water supply, sports facilities, and other things. As of now, Japan's grants to Azerbaijan have reached 730 million US dollars.

In March 2006, as I have already mentioned, President Ilham Aliyev and his spouse visited Japan and met with Emperor Akihito, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, Minister of Foreign Affairs (and the present Prime Minister) Taro Aso. The two sides issued a joint statement and signed an agreement on technical cooperation, and the Japan-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Committee restarted its activity as a result of this Presidential visit. In February 2008, the fifth meeting of that group took place in Tokyo.

Our two countries have also had meetings at a senior level within the framework of GUAM+Japan summit held in Baku in June 2007 and in Batumi in July 2008.

In the future, I would like to continue to promote our relations not only in political and economic fields but also in other spheres such as culture, sports, tourism and environment.

AIW: What are the main directions of cooperation between Japan and Azerbaijan?

Amb. Oki: As I have mentioned, the main areas of cooperation between Japan and Azerbaijan are in the fields of politics and economic cooperation, while we also have grant programs in agriculture, education and health. Such programs primarily aim at improving life standards of local people, which is why most of them have been implemented in rural areas of Azerbaijan. In the future, I hope we can cooperate more actively in environment and water supply projects. And we are eager to broaden the scope of relations in culture, sports, and tourism, etc.

AIW: Japan has always expressed its full support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. Why then did it not vote in favor of the UN General Assembly Resolution 10693, passed in March 2008?

Amb. Oki: Japan considers that the final settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is essential for the peace and stability in the Caucasus region and that it is important to settle the conflict in a peaceful way based on a principle of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan within the internationally recognized borders. The Government of Japan supports the mediation efforts by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE

Minsk Group, but at the time of the vote, sufficient and substantial consultations between the Co-Chairs and Azerbaijan about the resolution had not taken place, and the Co-Chair countries all voted against the resolution. Therefore, the government of Japan abstained from voting.

AIW: What is the state of cooperation between Japan and GUAM within the "GUAM+Japan" format? Which are the main areas of cooperation? How does Japan view the future evolution of GUAM and the further evolution of Japan-GUAM cooperation? Are there any plans towards deepening this cooperation?

Amb. Oki: The GUAM+Japan dialogues at high levels have taken place four times during the last 18 months, following the first meeting in June 2007. In addition, in Tokyo, the periodic meetings take place between the Director-General of the European Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the Ambassadors of GUAM countries. It is expected that a National Coordinators meeting will be held in Tokyo early 2009.

During the first GUAM-Japan meeting, energy saving, environment protection, as well as investment and trade were agreed as the basis for cooperation at the initial stage. A workshop on energy saving technologies was held in Tokyo in September 2007. In February 2009, we plan a joint workshop on investment and trade, a meeting that will provide a good opportunity to showcase the attractiveness of the GUAM countries in Japanese business circles. As GUAM develops, we believe that it is promoting values like democracy, human rights, market economy and rule of law, and through that contributes to the peace and stability in the region. We look forward to more concrete steps in cooperation among the GUAM members, and we will keep working to further deepen our relationship with GUAM both through mutual visits and technical cooperation.

AIW: What is the essence of Japan's initiative aimed at creating an "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity?" Are there any specific actions currently carried out or planned under the initiative?

Amb. Oki: Japan's "arc of freedom and prosperity" initiative is intended to assist efforts at developing freedom, democracy, market economy, rule of law and respect for human rights in the countries in north-eastern Asia, the Central Asia, the Caucasus region including Azerbaijan, Turkey, central and eastern Europe and Baltic countries. The promotion of those values in those countries will contribute to the peace and security of the Euro-Asian region.

It is under this initiative that Japan has launched the dialogue with GUAM within the "GUAM-Japan" framework.

AIW: What in your view ought to be the next steps in relations between Azerbaijan and Japan?

Amb. Oki: We are doing many things, but I must admit that the presence of Japanese private companies in Azerbaijan is limited. Azerbaijan has a big potential for development. We hope that Azerbaijan will continue its efforts to improve the investment environment and to ensure a competitive business climate in order to attract more foreign investors. At the same time, when there are more people-to-people contacts, the friendship between the two nations will become even more solid. For that purpose, we should have more cooperation in culture, sports,

tourism, and other similar areas.

AIW: Given your own experience, what advice would you give young Azerbaijanis beginning their careers in diplomacy?

Amb. Oki: One of the major duties of a diplomat is to strengthen relations between two countries. That requires forming solid human relationships, and for that, there must be trust. That requires honesty, and diplomats must always be honest and trustworthy.

It also requires a deep understanding of the country you are posted in. For that, diplomats must study the culture, traditions, history, and preferably the language of that country. In my career, I have noticed that if you speak someone's language, he or she will open his/her heart to you more fully.

My third piece of advice is to respect diversity. Today, there are so many conflicts arising from ethnic and religious differences. Diversity enriches our life, gives us pleasure and is a source of strength. And most importantly, it is wrong to think one group is superior to another.

THE NEW MEANING OF JANUARY 20TH IN AZERBAIJAN: A PERSONAL REFLECTION

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Editorial Note: January 20, 1990, was a turning point in the history of Azerbaijan and indeed in the fate of the entire USSR. On that date, Mikhail Gorbachev ordered 26,000 Soviet troops into Baku in order to try to save the communist order there. This attack, which left more than a hundred dead and many hundred more wounded had exactly the opposite effect. It destroyed whatever emotional links Azerbaijanis had to the Soviet system and paved the way for the restoration of their independence.

In its report on Black January, Human Rights Watch noted that the violence used by the Soviet Army on the night of January 19-20 was so out of proportion to the resistance offered by Azerbaijanis as to constitute an exercise in collective punishment. Since Soviet officials have stated publicly that the purpose of the intervention of Soviet troops was to prevent the ouster of the Communist-dominated opposition, the punishment inflicted on Baku by Soviet soldiers may have been intended as a warning to nationalists, not only in Azerbaijan, but in the other republics of the Soviet Union.

Some of the Azerbaijanis who died on that terrible night are buried in the Alley of Martyrs on a high hill overlooking Baku. Every year, Azerbaijani leaders and ordinary Azerbaijanis mark this date by putting flowers on their graves and recalling the contribution they made to the independence the Azerbaijani people now enjoy. Below is a reflection on what such commemorations mean by Fariz Ismailzade of the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy.

January 20th, the anniversary of the Soviet effort to block Azerbaijan's drive for independence, is one of the most significant days in the year for its people. This year, when I walked through the memorial to that event with 26 new recruits to Azerbaijan's diplomatic service, I experienced a strange mix of feelings.

On the one hand, the government's renovation of the Alley of Martyrs reinforced my conviction that my country is on the right course. But on the other, looking at the faces of those young people accompanying me and then at the faces on the memorials to those who died, I was struck that these two groups have a lot in common, but if the latter sacrificed their lives for the cause of independence, the former are in a remarkable position to take full advantage of what those who gave so much would want them to do.

For me, as for most of us, it is very difficult to understand the circumstances under which one might sacrifice his or her life. But it is clear to me now that the cause must lie in something bigger than one's own life. That is what the young people whose faces stare out at passers by from the plinths on the Alley of Martyrs possessed.

On January 20, 1990, Soviet troops sought to destroy the Popular Front and to terrify ordinary Azerbaijanis. They wanted a return to the repression of the past rather than allowing people to move forward toward freedom. And they killed at least 160 Azerbaijani men and women, people of all nationalities, races and religions. Hundreds more were wounded, including all too many children, women and the elderly who were unable to run from the guns quickly enough. The hospitals were full of victims, and the republic was descending into chaos.

In looking back now, we can see that January 20th was not only a political disaster for the Soviet regime but also a pathetic attempt to preserve the life of a collapsing empire, one that echoed earlier efforts by Moscow in Hungary in 1956, Prague in 1968, and so many other places. But on January 20th, this happened to my republic, destroying any hope that the Soviet regime could or would address the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict or provide Azerbaijanis with the freedom they now have.

Nineteen years have now passed since that day, a day universally condemned by people of good will around the world. The Soviet Union is no more. Its tanks have left. And Azerbaijan is independent.

Every year Azerbaijanis pause on this date to remember, but like my experience at the Alley of Martyrs this year, more and more of them have come to view that date not only as a national tragedy and thus day of mourning but also as a day of heroism on the part of the Azerbaijani people in the face of state terrorism. That is how it should be, I think. Americans found their heroes quickly after September 11, 2001. It has taken Azerbaijanis longer. But we have gotten them and now we too have found out heroes, the people who gave up their lives and those like my young colleagues who are living the dream those who sacrificed their own lives made possible.

**NABUCCO AFTER BUDAPEST:
OLD PROBLEMS, NEW CHALLENGES
AND A CHANGED ROLE FOR AZERBAIJAN**

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Held in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Georgia, which revealed the vulnerabilities of all pipelines bypassing the Russian Federation, and of the gas war between Moscow and Kyiv, which underscored Moscow's commitment to using gas as a political weapon against its neighbors and Europe, the Nabucco Budapest summit on January 27th was organized in order to give new impetus to plans for yet another alternative gas pipeline from the Caspian Basin to Europe.

But instead of achieving that goal, the meeting highlighted the old problems which have dogged this project since the beginning, called attention to the new challenges that both the project's backers and other countries now face, and showcased the changed status of Azerbaijan within this project and more generally, a shift that was highlighted by one of the most important speeches President Ilham Aliyev has ever delivered.

Three old problems with this 10.1 billion US dollar, 3300 km project which have plagued it since the beginning were very much on public view in the Hungarian capital. First of all, the Nabucco pipeline flows through so many countries and affects so many of their neighbors that any final agreement is difficult if not impossible to obtain. That is particularly true because any one of the countries involved potentially has the ability to kill the project by holding out for its special needs or falling under the pressure of outsiders. At Budapest, there were not only the six original Nabucco partners – Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Turkey – but also representatives from six other countries, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Investment Bank, and the European Union.

Second, and at least equally important, two important players were not there: the Russian Federation and Iran. Nabucco, of course, has been promoted to avoid having gas flow through either of these countries lest Moscow exercise too much influence over Europe through its control of gas supplies and lest Iran escape the international isolation that the United States has insisted upon for many years. But their exclusion had the unintended effect of causing Moscow to demonstrate its ability to affect the project by putting pressure on Central Asian suppliers and of highlighting the ways in which Iran is now playing an expanded role in the Caucasus after the August war in Georgia.

Third, the Budapest meeting called attention to tensions within and among suppliers, transit countries and consuming nations, tensions which may be inherent in any pipeline deal but which the organizers of Nabucco have done little or nothing to address. Moreover, the meeting showcased the change in status of one country – Azerbaijan – from being only a transit route to being that and a supplier as well, a reminder to all concerned that new discoveries and new technologies may

fundamentally alter the landscape and hence the value of particular strategies of pipeline diversification.

Moreover, lying behind all of these is a harsh reality that few of Budapest's organizers wanted to acknowledge: Even if all these problems are overcome, Nabucco, if it becomes operational, would supply only 31 billion cubic meters of gas a year, only about six percent of Europe's current consumption. And that in turn means that others, the Russian Federation in particular will play a far larger role in supplying Europe's natural gas at least in the next decade or two than the Nabucco countries ever could.

But perhaps more important for the future are three new challenges that the Budapest meeting highlighted. First, by highlighting both the competing interests between and among the participants, the Budapest summit pointed to precisely those weak links that the project's opponents could exploit. Many commentators suggested that the biggest problem with Nabucco is not the political geography through which its pipeline must pass but rather the question of whether there would be enough gas to make it worthwhile. Russia and Iran rank first and second in the world in terms of proved natural gas reserves, and neither will be sending gas this way. And partially as a result, Moscow has been able to pressure Uzbekistan to send gas to Europe via Russia, and Tehran has been working with Ashgabat to get Turkmenistan, the country with the third largest proved natural gas reserves in the world, to dispatch its production via Iran.

Second, in the wake of Georgia and Ukraine, Budapest underscored just how much the rules of the game in the gas sector have changed in the last six months. None of the countries in the region can be sure of just how far Moscow may be prepared to go to advance its interests. Consequently, all of them are recalibrating their policies, seeking to avoid alienating the Russian authorities lest Moscow's power be directed at them. Nor can the Nabucco countries be sure of what the US and the EU might be willing to do to counter Russian actions – or even whether the new American administration may open a dialogue with Iran, an action that would make that country a far easier, less expensive and more attractive route out for Caspian Basin gas and one that would almost certainly postpone if not kill Nabucco.

And third, the meeting was held as the world financial crisis deepened, a development that not only makes the financing of this project more problematic but raises questions about the level of price and demand for gas in the future. Many consuming nations are cutting back, and in the face of high prices, they are seeking alternative sources of energy. While producers and transit countries seem confident that the consumer will not be able to make any fundamental shift away from gas and oil quickly, they cannot be sure. And that uncertainty has the effect of casting a shadow over the entire project.

But perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the meeting was the increased status of Azerbaijan, a rise that President Ilham Aliyev called attention to in his speech and one that is likely to play a major role not only in the plans of the backers of Nabucco but also in the calculations and actions of its opponents.

Aliyev began his speech by stating flatly that "Azerbaijan has always supported this project" and asserting that "we will continue our support" as part of Baku's general approach to oil and gas issues as laid out in the declaration of the

Energy Summit there last fall. The Azerbaijani president then made three major points:

First, he said, Azerbaijan now has a new status in Nabucco. Originally, it was defined only as a transit country, a reflection that reflected the lack of awareness of the enormous natural gas reserves on its territory. "But today the situation is different," and Azerbaijan is not only a transit country but a supplier in its own right, with some two trillion cubic meters of gas," enough natural wealth to last "through the next decades and even century." And that supply means that it wants to be heard in this dual capacity and not treated any longer "exclusively as a source of raw materials."

Second, President Aliyev pointed out, Azerbaijan has always been committed to the diversification of pipeline routes. It has been a leader in the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, and it is a participant in five other pipeline projects, a reminder that from Azerbaijan's point of view – and the point of view of many others even if not expressed – Nabucco is far from the only game in town.

And third, the Azerbaijani leader said that recent events had demonstrated that "the time has come to unite the interests of all participants – suppliers, transit countries and consumers" to resolve the issues of pipelines and prices so that gas will "unite peoples and countries" rather than divide them. But at the same time, he stressed that Azerbaijan is financially and politically independent and wants "a partnership" with others and clearly not a junior one.

Each of President Aliyev's points represents a challenge to the Nabucco organizers even as he reaffirmed his commitment to the project, but they also suggest that Azerbaijan which as Aliyev has often said is at "the energy crossroads" not only east-west but north-south is likely to be subject to new pressures, not only directly but indirectly from Russia and Iran, who oppose Nabucco, and Europe and the United States, who want to see this pipeline built.

And to the extent that conclusion is correct, it will mean that Budapest has pushed Azerbaijan and perhaps the other Nabucco countries into a new and more complicated political game, however much the leaders of all these countries say that this gas pipeline project is all about economics.

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev tells the Nabucco summit in Budapest that Azerbaijan has been a leader in promoting the diversification of pipelines out of the Caspian Basin, supports the Nabucco project, and because it has enormous natural gas reserves of its own which "will last for decades if not a hundred years," is now participating not only as a transit state but as a supplier. Moreover, the Azerbaijani leader says, Baku is committed to the principle that "energy questions must not divide but unite

peoples” and that that oil and gas must “not be used as instruments of political pressure” (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/145529.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev says the West is guilty of double standards in its criticism of the March referendum in Azerbaijan on proposed constitutional amendments that will allow presidents to serve more than two consecutive terms. In Europe, such arrangements are the norm, he adds. He also says that he considers Western criticism of the state of human rights in Azerbaijan as “without foundation” and highly selective, noting that the West “ignores crude violations of rights in countries where it has geopolitical interests” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145851.html>).

Azerbaijan distributes to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe a declaration on the 60th anniversary of the deportation of Azerbaijanis from Armenia. In addition to those of Azerbaijanis, the declaration includes the signatures of more than 20 deputies from Great Britain, Germany, Turkey, Latvia, Estonia, Bulgaria, Albania and other countries. The declaration says that more than 150,000 Azerbaijanis were expelled from Azerbaijan between 1948 and 1953 and that even more were forced to flee as a result of Armenia’s actions at the time of the Nagorno-Karabakh war. And it calls on the international community to pressure Yerevan to recognize the rights of Azerbaijanis who were deported by it “from their historic lands in 1948-53 and also in 1988” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145512.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

US Ambassador to Azerbaijan Ann Derse says that “only the Azerbaijani people” can decide whether to change their constitution. The international community’s concerns, she adds, involve only the process by which these changes are made (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145153.html>).

Lluís Maria de Puig, president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that his organization is concerned about proposed changes in the number of terms an Azerbaijani president may serve and about Baku’s decision to end the re-broadcasting of foreign radio networks on Azerbaijani stations (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145339.html>).

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the European Union’s commissioner for external affairs, says that Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov has told her that Baku is ready for dialogue on the question of the re-broadcasting of foreign radio networks on Azerbaijani stations (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/144457.html>).

Matthew Bryza, the U.S. deputy assistant secretary of state for the Caucasus, says that “Azerbaijan is capable of providing a resource base for Nabucco” and that Baku has “demonstrated that it is a reliable partner” in energy matters. He calls on all interested parties to support the project lest “a historic opportunity” be missed (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145368.html>).

Prominent Russian analyst Sergey Markedonov says that Moscow will always have many ways of influencing Baku besides the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Consequently, those who think Russia is interested in keeping this conflict going in order to pressure Azerbaijan are making a mistake (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/144083.html>).

Lawrence Sheets of the International Crisis Group says that "Azerbaijan cannot exclude Russia from talks [about Nagorno-Karabakh or other issues] because [Moscow] is a strong regional power with its own interests in the Caucasus" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/144764.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

31 January

During a working visit to Moscow, Azerbaijan Defense Minister Col. Gen. Safar Abiyev meets with his Russian counterpart Anatoly Serdyukov to discuss cooperation between their two ministries. The Russian minister tells him that his country did not transfer to Armenia during 2008 arms "in the amounts and of the kind" that have been reported in the media (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145878.html>).

30 January

President Ilham Aliyev gives an interview to CNN in which he discusses the current economic crisis and energy issues (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145769.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev meets with Israeli President Shimon Peres, Latvian President Valdis Zatlers, and Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus during his visit to Davos. He also meets with Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha and with a series of European bankers and international business leaders (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145827.html>, <http://www.day.az/news/politics/145708.html>, and <http://www.day.az/news/politics/145724.html>).

Azerbaijan Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov sends a letter to the US Congressional Helsinki Commission in response to its complaint concerning Baku's decision to shut down the re-broadcast of international radio networks on domestic stations. Mammadyarov notes that a law adopted in 2002 required Baku to do so and points out that these international broadcasters can still reach their audiences via shortwave, the Internet and cable channels (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145799.html>).

29 January

President Ilham Aliyev meets Prince Andrew of Great Britain and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk during the Davos conference. He also meets the director of Statoil-Hydro, Helge Lund (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145550.html>).

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan says in Davos that Turkey will always support Azerbaijan "on the question of the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The resolution of this problem and Turkish-Armenian relations are interconnected" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145614.html>).

Following the meeting between President Ilham Aliyev and his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan, the co-chairs of the Minsk Group release a statement in which they express the hope that "in the nearest future" agreement will be found "where disagreements exist" and that new meetings will take place among the parties (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145646.html>).

28 January

President Ilham Aliyev meets with his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan in Zurich first with only the two of them present and then with their foreign ministers, Elmar Mammadyarov and Edward Nalbandyan, and the Minsk Group co-chairs, to discuss the territorial dispute between the two countries (<http://day.az/news/politics/145486.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev gives an interview to "The Wall Street Journal," in which he discusses the negotiations with Armenia on Nagorno-Karabakh, energy transit issues and the future of Nabucco, and the economic prospects of Azerbaijan and the region (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145528.html>).

27 January

President Ilham Aliyev meets in Budapest with Bulgarian Prime Minister Sergey Stanishev, Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolanek, and Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany. He also meets with the president of the European Investment Bank, Philippe Maystadt, and gives interviews to the Hungarian media and Bloomberg News (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145210.html>).

Azerbaijani Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov says in Istanbul during talks about the proposed Platform for Stability and Cooperation in the Caucasus that "without the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the realization of the platform which opens the path to cooperation with Armenia is impossible" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145331.html>).

Russian Ambassador to Azerbaijan Vasily Istratov says that the document purporting to show that Moscow transferred weapons to Armenia is "disinformation and a falsification," and he expresses regret that so many people were giving it credence (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145283.html>).

Russian Ambassador to Azerbaijan Vasily Istratov says that Moscow has both political and humanitarian interests in the exhumation and reburial of the 26 Baku commissars in Azerbaijan's capital. The individuals involved are very much part of his country's political history, and there are relatives of those who died in 1920 still living in Russia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145303.html>).

Akshin Mekhtiyev, Azerbaijan's permanent representative to the United Nations in New York, is jointly accredited as ambassador to Jamaica and presents his letters of credence to the governor general of that island nation, Kenneth Hall (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145509.html>).

26 January

US Ambassador to Azerbaijan Ann Derse says that Washington has proposed to Baku that the two countries reach agreement on an international accord that would allow the restoration of the re-broadcasting of foreign radio networks on Azerbaijani stations. She says that such a step "would be a positive signal for the new US administration" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145149.html>).

Romanian Ambassador to Azerbaijan Nikolae Ureche says that he has "no doubts" that the Nabucco summit will be a success (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/145112.html>).

With the support of the Azerbaijan foreign ministry, a six-day session of the NATO International School opened in Baku. The sessions are for government officials and political analysts (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/144979.html>).

24 January

Moscow's *Nezavisimaya gazeta* suggests that the reports about the transfer of Russian arms to Armenia originated in "radical parts of the Armenian establishment" who may have been interested in forcing Moscow to act (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/144972.html>).

23 January

General Franciszek Gagor, the chief of the Polish general staff, tells Azerbaijan's defense minister Safar Abiyev that "the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict can be resolved only in the framework of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/144829.html>).

Hungary plans to open an embassy in Baku in the near future, Azerbaijani media report, citing unnamed "diplomatic sources." Budapest reportedly has rented a building for this in the Old City of the Azerbaijan capital (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/144868.html>).

22 January

President Ilham Aliyev receives Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov during the latter's visit to Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/144653.html>). Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says the Bulgarian leader's visit concerned shipments of gas to his country (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/144495.html>).

21 January

President Ilham Aliyev receives the EU Commissioner for external affairs Benita Ferrero-Waldner, who is in Baku to work out the details of Azerbaijan's inclusion in the EU's Eastern Partnership program (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/144479.html> and <http://www.day.az/news/politics/144384.html>).

Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says after meeting Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the EU Commissioner for external affairs, that the Eastern Partnership program could help Azerbaijani citizens get Schengen visas more easily, something they have had problems with up to now (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/144492.html>).

20 January

Matthew Bryza, US deputy assistant secretary of state, says that foreign radio broadcasts represent "a very important source of information" for Azerbaijanis and that he and his colleagues believe that "a way out of the current situation" in

which Baku is blocking the re-broadcast of such foreign networks on radio stations in Azerbaijan can be found (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/144310.html>).

19 January

President Ilham Aliyev receives the co-chairs of the Minsk Group to discuss the state of negotiations about the dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/144260.html>).

Ziyafet Askerov, the vice speaker of the Milli Majlis and the head of Azerbaijan's delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO, says that Russia's decision to arm Armenia will have serious consequences not only for stability in the region but for Azerbaijan's relations with Moscow, which is a co-chair of the Minsk Group which is supposed to serve as a mediator between Azerbaijan and Armenia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/144263.html>).

Belgian Ambassador to Azerbaijan Philippe Jottar says that the document on military cooperation between Belgium and Azerbaijan is "ready for signing" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/144201.html>).

17 January

Baku media, picking up from Iranian media, report that Iran and Armenia have agreed to build a hydroelectric station on the occupied territories of Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/144094.html>).

16 January

Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov speaks by telephone with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov about reports that Moscow has supplied Armenia with 800 million US dollars-worth of military equipment and weaponry. Lavrov says that the reports are not true (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/144050.html> and <http://www.day.az/news/politics/143987.html>).

Note to Readers

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