

HIV/AIDS epidemic in southern Africa continues to be a major developmental and security issue, with more than 10% of the adult population infected in some countries.”

During the conference, SADC Acting Executive Secretary Prega Ramsamy told the summit, “We now appeal for the cancellation of multilateral debt, as in most countries this is the source of problems preventing government from responding to urgent social needs, particularly in health and education.”

### Land Redistribution Widens

The SADC support comes right at the time that Zimbabwe has begun the land resettlement process, and also announced the expansion of the program. More than 200 of the first 804 farms designated for redistribution are now in the process of having their land redistributed to the landless. At the same time, the Zimbabwe government intends to increase the number of farms designated for redistribution from 804 to 3,000 by the end of the year.

On July 31, President Mugabe’s official spokesman George Charamba told the state-owned *Herald* daily, that the government’s National Land Acquisition and Redistribution Committee has agreed “to expedite the process of identifying more farms” for settlement.

Local Government Minister Ignatius Chombo is quoted: “The numbers are not important. What is important is that we are accelerating the resettlement program and that we are involving all stakeholders in the process. . . . The resettlement process technically has started at a very fast pace. This coming week we are going to see quite a lot of persons being settled in all provinces.” The military will be employed to assist in the process of redistribution. The government wants to resettle up to 500,000 people before the rainy season begins in October.

The expansion of the program follows efforts by the Anglo-American-backed opposition to escalate its attack on the government. This was signalled by the formation of yet another British-based front, the so-called Zimbabwe Farmers Holiday Trust Fund, based in Great Britain (see *EIR*, July 28, 2000). No sooner was this group organized, than commercial farmers threatened a national strike, implying that the country would be faced with starvation. The strike was supported by the opposition Movement for Democratic Change and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions. But, both actions fizzled out. The commercial farmers, who mostly grow tobacco or horticultural products for export, account for less than 20% of the country’s food supply — thus the starvation threat was somewhat hollow. The strike was cut back from four days to one, because its only effect would have been to hurt the same business community that supports the opposition.

Nonetheless, pressure on the government continues, particularly by the IMF and World Bank, which have cut all aid to the country since 1998. In early August, the government devalued its currency by 25%, in the face of an inflation rate of 50%.

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## The Goble Project

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# Nasty Geopolitics in the Transcaucasus

by Hovhannes Galajian

*This is adapted from an article published in the Armenian weekly Iravunk.*

While Armenian peasants were busy trying to sell this year’s bumper harvest of apricots, and urban residents were wrapped up in the conclusion of the investigation into the assassinations in Parliament last Oct. 27, radio station “Azatutun” broke in with some troubling news. It seems that geopolitician Paul Goble, who is associated with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, has not forgotten about Armenia’s southern district of Megri, and is still thinking about new projects for exchanges of territory among Transcaucasus countries.

Not long ago, Goble admitted that the first version of what became known as the “Goble plan,” offered in 1992, did not take regional circumstances into account. The new version suggests that Megri be exchanged for the Sadarak region of Nakhichevan, a district of Azerbaijan that borders on Turkey, but is separated from the rest of Azerbaijan. Nakhichevan would then be contiguous with the rest of Azerbaijan, but not with Turkey, while Armenia would still have a land border with Iran. The disputed Nagorno-Karabakh district would either become a separate country, or join with Armenia. It would seem that the new version is designed with an eye toward the restoration of relations between the United States and Iran.

Like previous such prescriptions, the new Goble plan is far from being in the national interests of Armenia. Since the armistice of 1994, after the Armenia-Azerbaijan war over Karabakh, Armenia has had its pre-existing 150 km border with Iran, while the land connection of Karabakh with Armenia was secure, and optimal from the standpoint of defense, and Nakhichevan remained divided from Azerbaijan by a rather wide barrier. If the new Goble project were implemented, the Armenia-Iran frontier would shrink to 25-30 km, Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan would be contiguous, and the Lachin Corridor between Karabakh and Armenia would be reduced to only a few kilometers, insufficient for security. It would take only a few hours to cut Lachin, as well as Sadarak, if Turkish Army participation is presumed. Nor would Azerbaijan obtain an advantageous situa-

FIGURE 1

## The Transcaucasus Region



tion, and it is doubtful that Baku would agree to have no border with Turkey.

Evidently this version is ideal, only for that section of the Anglo-American elite, interested in the process of globalization. The mutual vulnerability of the countries of this region will allow the “globalizers” to dominate the region with ease, and to dictate any condition they please. They would have the opportunity to change the fates not only of such small countries as Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, but also Iran and Turkey, and to control Russian influence in this region.

Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian reports that the co-presidents of the Minsk group (dealing with Nagorno-Karabakh) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, who recently visited this region, did not have anything new to offer, and there is nothing more to be expected from them. Probably only Armenia and Azerbaijan will look for new versions of a solution, but this search will be done at the prompting of the capitals of superpowers. It is obvious from Oskanian’s words, that the search for any version is now quickening. “It is in everybody’s interest,” he said, “including ours — Armenia, Karabakh, Azerbaijan — to solve this problem as soon as possible. Today, nobody is interested in a merely temporary solution, or postponement of this question.”

The best demonstration of a “temporary solution” is the so-called Turkish Republic of Cyprus, which has been in a “temporarily solved” status for almost a quarter-century. There is a dangerous parallel of the words of Oskanian with those of ex-President Levon Ter-Petrosian from his notorious article, “War or Peace: Time To Be Serious”: “It is not beneficial for Armenia and Karabakh to have this

question remain unsettled.” So, it should be understood that pressures on Armenia are increasing.

### Russia’s Role

What happens with the new edition of the Goble plan, depends on Russia, and on the results of President Robert Kocharian’s meeting with President Vladimir Putin. It is less probable, but not to be excluded, that the Russians and Americans will choose a model of joint governance of the region. Experts suggest yet another version of mutual concessions: Russia would have military control, while the U.S. exercised economic dominance over the Transcaucasus. Any such mutual concessions between the United States and Russia, however, would likely be violated as need arose.

As for the response of the Armenian elite, President Kocharian and Foreign Minister Oskanian assure that they are not negotiating yet about any such scheme, Defense Minister Serge Sargsian remains silent, and Prime Minister Andranik Markarian is strict, saying: “Armenia is not going to make its strategically important territories a question for negotiation.” Moreover, the government has adopted a plan for the social and economic development of Megri.

It is natural that Markarian, appointed only in May, will seek to strengthen his position. Thus, a late-July session of the government rejected the draft regulations on rallies and demonstrations, which would have barred such activities near government buildings. It is clear that this restriction would have benefitted those whose position is already strong, such as President Kocharian and Defense Minister Sargsian. But, naturally, the threat of imposition of the new Goble plan will be a strong incentive for forces across the political spectrum, to unite.