

What Did Lavrov Say?

On Aug. 15, the Associated Press featured a story in its news round-ups under the headline, “Georgia can ‘forget’ regaining provinces.” Writers David Nowak and Christopher Torchia led the item, “The foreign minister of Russia said Thursday that Georgia could ‘forget about’ getting back its two breakaway provinces, and the former Soviet republic remained on edge as Russia sent tank columns to search out and destroy Georgian military equipment.”

EIR correspondents found that even members of the Washington diplomatic corps were chagrined by the brutal-sounding formulation, attributed to Russia’s top diplomat. And it didn’t sound to us quite like Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, so we looked it up in the transcript of Lavrov’s Aug. 15 interview with Radio Ekho Moskv, and we double-checked by listening to the audio recording.

It turns out that Lavrov was answering a tendentious question from interviewer A. Benediktov, and the exchange went as follows:

Q: “Look, there have been three Presidents in

post-Soviet Georgia, completely different people. Zviad Gamsakhurdia, with one biography; Eduard Shevardnadze, with a different one; and Mikheil Saakashvili, with a third. And all three of them ended up attempting a solution of the conflict by force.... It would appear that a history of force-based relations with South Ossetia and Abkhazia is something predetermined with Georgian Presidents. Irrespective of their upbringing and education. Maybe it’s kind of a systemic story?”

Lavrov: “*If that is the case*, then I think that talk about the territorial integrity of Georgia can be forgotten, because forcing the Ossetians and Abkhazians to agree with that logic, that they can be returned to the Georgian state by force, will be impossible.”

Lavrov went on to elaborate how the events on the ground, with the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali in ruins and civilians slaughtered, have created a situation in which “neither the South Ossetians nor the Abkhazians want to live together in one state with a person who sends his troops against [them],” so that, important as the principle of territorial integrity is, the real situation will make it difficult to honor.