

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 Moskvyy, 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.

publics of the former Soviet south, and [these] could flare anew.”

September 2004: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Sept. 8 protests the behavior of Russia’s “Western partners,” who he says “bear direct responsibility for the tragedy of the Chechen people when they give political asylum to terrorists.” The immediate focus of Lavrov’s statement is the actions of the United States and Great Britain in giving political asylum to Chechen separatist leaders.

December 2004: A larger-scale repeat of the Georgian “colored revolution” experiment, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, culminates in the Victor Yushchenko-Yuliya Tymoshenko team coming to power.

August 2005: Vice President Cheney warns of a possible nuclear hit on Iran.

January 2006: Russia arrests a British diplomat in Moscow for spying. Putin declines to expel some of those involved, saying, “As soon as we send those agents back, others will come. Maybe smarter ones,

and then we’ll have to bother about finding them.” The Russian government cracks down on NGOs it said had received funding through this particular diplomat. Putin speaks about destabilizations in Eurasia, including recent riots in Uzbekistan. “We know better than you do,” he tells a reporter, “who trained the people who ignited the situation, . . . where they were trained, and how many of them were trained.” Citing the volatility of the ethnically mixed region, Putin adds, “You probably know what the Fergana Valley is and you know how difficult the situation is there, the population’s situation and their level of economic well-being. We do not need a second Afghanistan in Central Asia, and we shall proceed very carefully.”

August 2006: Bush signs Iran Freedom Support Act, which not only codifies sanctions against Iran, but mandates secondary sanctions on its partners, emphatically including Russia, which is the major contractor on Iran’s nuclear power station.

October 2006: Tensions increase between Russia