

# War in the Caucasus escalates as Turkey threatens intervention

by Konstantin George

The successful Armenian military offensives in the first half of April have brought the war in the Caucasus between Armenia and Azerbaijan to the brink of being internationalized, with incalculable consequences. The Armenian offensives, characterized unjustly by most media as simply "attacks" which "seize Azerbaijani territory," are in reality acts of desperation. As a consequence of the blockade imposed on it by Azerbaijan and Turkey, Armenia has just gone through a cruel winter, as thousands have died of hunger, cold, and disease. The country cannot survive a second such winter. All appeals to the United Nations and the western powers to have the blockade lifted have fallen on deaf ears.

These facts define the causality behind the present offensives. A blockade, under international law, is an *act of war*, and any nation which is the victim of a blockade has the sovereign right to undertake whatever military action is necessary to either break the blockade outright, or to create the political setting wherein the blockade can be lifted. A secondary, though crucial feature of the offensives is to militarily neutralize southwest Azerbaijan, and thus protect the narrow 60-kilometer-wide "finger" of Armenian territory that borders on Iran, and which forms Armenia's only secure land link to the outside world.

By mid-April the offensives had opened a second corridor between Armenia and the besieged Armenian enclave of Karabakh, and had brought Armenia within reach of capturing all Azerbaijani territory between Armenia and Karabakh, and indeed most or all of southwest Azerbaijan, which is nearly cut off from the rest of Azerbaijan.

As a result of the dramatically changed military situation, for the first time in the five-year conflict, the threat of a military intervention against Armenia by NATO member Turkey, Azerbaijan's chief ally and protector, has crossed the line from rhetoric to becoming a real possibility. As the fighting moves ever closer to the Iranian border, deepening involvement by Armenia's other Muslim neighbor, Iran, is also now certain, the only question being how deep.

Should Turkey enter the war, then the next and most dangerous level of internationalization is at hand, as Armenia is a signatory of the Russian-led Community of Independent States (CIS) Defense Pact, signed in the Uzbek capital

of Tashkent last summer. The pact mandates Russian forces coming to the assistance of any pact member in the event of its being invaded. At present, the fear of forcing a Russian military response is the only real consideration holding Turkey back from military intervention.

## The military situation

The Armenian drive began in the last days of March and first days of April with a series of attacks that culminated in the capture of the Azerbaijan town of Kelbadjar (in the Turkish spelling, Kelbecer). By capturing this town, a corridor running from Armenia to the northern part of Karabakh was opened. This was the second corridor linking Armenia to Karabakh. The first corridor, running through the town of Lachin to the southern part of Karabakh, was seized last spring. Armenia can formally occupy the territory between the two corridors at any time, as all Azeri forces and the civilian population of 50-60,000 living in the region have fled northwards behind the Azeri lines, to the north of the second corridor.

The second offensive began April 4, with Armenian forces driving south from Karabakh into Azerbaijan, by which they began the envelopment of the crucial town of Fizuli, control of which holds the key to all of southwest Azerbaijan. Southwest Azerbaijan is the part of the country along the border with Iran, bounded on the south by Iran, on the north by Karabakh, on the west by Armenia, and now, in part in the east by the Armenian axis of advance southwards.

In the offensive's second phase, which began April 10, Armenian forces drove 15 km and more deep into Azerbaijan. These gains have positioned them to easily threaten the road through Fizuli linking southwest Azerbaijan with the rest of the country, to complete the envelopment of Fizuli, and put them within striking distance of the Iranian border.

## Armenia preempts land grab

It was the second Armenian offensive, which began on April 4, that ignited a vitriolic Turkish reaction. The reason for this response lies in an agreement signed in March between Turkey and Azerbaijan for the construction of a

## The Caucasus war theater



1,060 km oil pipeline between Baku and the southeast Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan, in the Gulf of Iskenderun. The pipeline is scheduled for completion within three years, with an annual capacity of 25 million tons.

The pipeline as such, which would connect Turkey with all Central Asia, is a fine project. The problem lies in the political geography of the route. No pipeline can connect Azerbaijan with Turkey without running through the 60 km of Armenian territory separating Azerbaijan from the Azerbaijani enclave of Nakhichevan. Both Turkey and Azerbaijan totally reject this. The only alternative would be to bypass Armenia and run the pipeline through 60 km of Iranian territory. This alternative, which Turkey and Azerbaijan thought they had "in the bag," evaporated, when on April 11, Teheran told Azerbaijan that it had to repudiate the pipeline agreement with Turkey and instead carry its oil through Iran to the Persian Gulf, as the price for Iran supporting Azerbaijan in the war against Armenia.

Armenia knew of the Iranian position, and knew that Turkey would stop at nothing, including seizure of the Armenian strip, to ensure its full control over the entire length of the pipeline. The Armenian gains have made

any easy seizure impossible.

### Turkey threatens Armenia

As soon as the second Armenian offensive started, Turkish threats and retaliatory actions began in earnest. On April 4, Turkey expanded its already-existing total embargo against Armenia by banning all western humanitarian aid shipments to starving Armenia going overland through Turkey or using Turkish air space. A train carrying 300 tons of food and medicines provided by France was stopped at the Turkish-Bulgarian border. That same day, Turkish President Turgut Özal took off for a 10-day tour of the Turkic republics of Central Asia, arriving in Azerbaijan on April 14. The tour was designed not only to line up these republics to support Azerbaijan, but to have them exercise their influence as members of the CIS Defense Pact to restrain or prevent Russian military support for Armenia in the event of a Turkish military intervention.

If it were left to a vote of the Turkish population, that military intervention would already have occurred. Popular outrage against Armenia has been growing by leaps and bounds during April, fueled by continual blood-curdling re-

ports in the Turkish press, citing the Azerbaijani embassy in Ankara, of "Armenian massacres" of Azeri civilians. Many hundreds of Azeri civilians have died *of cold and exhaustion*, by fleeing on foot over mountain regions up to 3,000 meters high, to escape the advancing Armenians.

To date, however, Turkey has confined its response to tough words and intimidating military activities, stopping short of actual intervention. In the latter category, Turkey has heavily reinforced its troops along the Armenian border, and, if Turkish press reports are true, initiated reconnaissance flights over Armenia and Azerbaijan. Starting April 4, Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel and the entire military leadership and key cabinet members have been in daily crisis sessions, in the words of Demirel on April 4, to "coordinate" with Azerbaijan "further steps" to compel Armenia to end its "aggression."

On the diplomatic front, Turkey has demanded action by Russia, the United States, and the U.N. Security Council to stop "Armenian aggression." At the U.N. level, the only action taken to date was a U.N. airlift to Baku of emergency relief supplies for Azeri war refugees, which was inaugurated April 14.

### **The next round of escalation**

The initial hesitation of the Turkish regime aside, the pressure for Turkey to intervene is growing. A verbal escalation has been apparent since the weekend of April 10-11. The catalysts were the latest Armenian breakthroughs, and the fact that Azerbaijan, in anger over Turkish inaction, for the first time in the war turned to Iran for military help. This occurred on April 11, when Azeri Deputy Prime Minister Penah Husseinov arrived in Teheran with an urgent request for Iran to help. Iran responded by strongly condemning "Armenian aggression," and offered military help on condition that Baku repudiate its pipeline agreement with Turkey.

The news of the Iranian conditions, carried front-page in *Hurriyet*, the leading government-connected national daily in Turkey, exploded like a bomb in Ankara. By April 13, even Turkish Vice Premier Erdal Inonu, not known as a hardliner, joined the chorus of Demirel and the military, to the effect that Turkey cannot stand idly by, and that Turkish patience "will come to an end." Addressing the deputies of his Social Democratic People's Party caucus, Inonu warned that if Armenia did not immediately end its attacks, then "unending suffering will befall the people of Armenia." He stressed that Turkey would support "our brother country" Azerbaijan, branding Armenia an "aggressor state."

Turkey will definitely await the outcome of the April 16 extraordinary CIS summit in Minsk, Belarus, which will focus on the CIS Defense Pact, before making any decision on military intervention. After that, anything is possible, including a strategic miscalculation by Ankara that would transform the Caucasus "regional conflict" into a world strategic crisis.

# Fujimori proclaims against terrorism of

by Carlos Méndez

With the support of the Armed Forces, the National Police, and the great majority of the population, I rebelled April 5, 1992 against a pseudo-democracy, against a system that tried to force me into a compromise, and against a state of things in which the Congress and the Judiciary practically protected the narco-terrorists, said Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori in a message to the nation on April 5.

April 5, 1993 was the first anniversary of what has come to be known as Fujimori's "self-coup," the presidential decree which shut down the Congress and the Supreme Court because of their tolerance of narco-terrorism.

For a year, the U.S. State Department has maintained a political, economic, and propaganda offensive against President Fujimori, accusing him of being anti-democratic and authoritarian, and against the Armed Forces of Peru for their alleged "systematic violations of human rights." Among those collaborating in this offensive, which has often taken the form of explicit defense of the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) narco-terrorists, have been Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez, the Organization of American States (OAS), and a handful of the so-called non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as Amnesty International, Americas Watch, and even the International Red Cross. That offensive reached the point of imposing upon Peru the "Haiti treatment" of a punishing economic embargo.

And yet, despite all of this, one year later Fujimori has strengthened himself both at home and abroad, for events have proven him right and his enemies wrong. In his message, Fujimori stated that the greatest achievement of his government has been the capture and sentencing to life imprisonment of narco-terrorist chieftains Abimael Guzmán and Víctor Polay. In particular, he denounced the "Shining Path" experts who predicted that with Fujimori's April 5 actions, "Shining Path would end up winning. . . . What is meant by this is that Guzmán, because of Fujimori's error, would head the popular uprising against the 'dictator' and would grow, and emerge triumphant.

"Today, one year later, we know that this is just one more of their fantastic arguments, given that precisely the opposite has occurred. . . . Here is Guzmán, totally defeated. . . . However, in their time, some eminent 'Senderologists' subscribed to these fantastic theses, while further taking respon-