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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

Political Accord?

According to Tomas Kolesnichenko, a longtime friend of Yevgeni Primakov, the prime minister and CIS Executive Secretary Boris Berezovsky are at war. "Berezovsky himself declared a war to Evgeni Maksimovich. And war is war," Kolesnichenko claims. (ITAR-TASS, 12 Feb 99; nexis)

This state of open warfare can explain the raids on Sibneft for eavesdropping equipment apparently used even on the Yel'tsin family, the dismissals at Aeroflot, and the threat of bankruptcy proceedings launched at ORT (all Berezovsky financial concerns), but what does this signal in the relationship between the prime minister and the president? Berezovsky has been, after all, a very influential figure in Yel'tsin's inner circle, most notably with daughter Tatiana Dyachenko, and an attack on so close an associate (and financial supporter) would normally carry serious ramifications.

At the present time, the only apparent retributive victim of the attack on Berezovsky has been Procurator-General Yuri Skuratov, whose resignation was signed and forwarded to the Federation Council for acceptance by the president in a surprise "up from his sick bed" visit to the Kremlin. (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 1330 CET, 2 Feb 99; nexis) The procurator had involved himself in more than one high-profile investigation just prior to his resignation, however; in particular, he alleged that the Central Bank parked billions of dollars in reserves in an off-shore company called FIMACO. This accusation would seem to be controversial enough to provoke a forced resignation, except, of course, that the story was confirmed (with some discrepancy in the dollar amounts) by the current

and former directors of the Central Bank (much to the consternation of several Western creditors). (BBC News Online, 2137 GMT, 11 Feb 99)

Yel'tsin's most commented-upon reaction to date has been his trip to Amman for the funeral of King Hussein. Although initial reports announced that Primakov would lead the Russian delegation, Yel'tsin defied doctors' orders and attended the ceremony personally. (Press Conference with Dmitri Yakushkin from Federal News Service, 9 Feb 99; nexis) He was evidently not well enough to participate in the service, however. After paying his respects to the new king, Yel'tsin held brief meetings with several world leaders (the longest, ten minutes, was with French President Jacques Chirac), and then abruptly departed Jordan. If Yel'tsin's intention was to demonstrate to the Russian people and the world that he was, in fact, still in control, this appearance was hardly reassuring.

All of this takes place against the backdrop of the ongoing attempts to negotiate an agreement for political stability among the official centers of authority. Prime Minister Primakov's proposal, which drew criticism from the president last month (see last Digest), apparently was amended in a Security Council session held 5 February. The extent of the changes has not been fully revealed, most likely in an attempt to stem the debate over who wins or loses in the negotiations. According to some reports, guarantees that each branch of government would not use its constitutionally enshrined authority to destabilize any other has been limited for the duration leading up to the next parliamentary elections later this year. Other reports suggest that the dismissal of the prime minister, disbandment of the Duma, and impeachment of the president will not occur without "consultations" among the various leaders.

It is the latter variant that has been identified as the "Yel'tsin draft" (ITAR-TASS, 9 Feb 99; nexis), but it should be noted that Yel'tsin did not attend the Security Council session at which the draft was discussed. (Also absent was FSB Director Vladimir Putin, who was said to be on vacation). Primakov and General

Bordyuzha co-chaired the session in Yel'tsin's stead. (NTV, 1600 GMT, 5 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-036) General Bordyuzha, while vague about the actual elements of the draft accord, told reporters that he had "personally familiarized the President with the document, and he has sanctioned this version to be used as a working draft." (Agence France-Presse, 1732 GMT, 5 Feb 99; nexis)

The executive branch, which will present a joint Kremlin/government negotiating team led by Oleg Sysuev, is now preparing to discuss the draft agreement with the Duma. (BBC World Service, 1438 GMT, 15 Feb 99; nexis) The prime minister, who held his own pre-negotiation meetings with Duma deputies, has apparently already made "concessions" to the legislature. According to one deputy, Primakov promised to "convince Boris Yel'tsin on [the] admissibility of making amendments to the Constitution...." (ITAR-TASS, 12 Feb 99; nexis)

Primakov also addressed a conference of the influential Council for Defense and Foreign Policy this past weekend, where he, in an apparent attempt to downplay conflicts with the president, claimed that "Yel'tsin should continue to stay in the post of President to ensure stability in society in order [that] the elections due this year, go in a normal way." [Emphasis added.] (ITAR-TASS, 13 Feb 99; nexis) One can't help but wonder if the prime minister envisions a usefulness for the president after this year's parliamentary elections.

So, just what is the state of relations between the president and prime minister? If last month's attempt to circumvent the president through the proposal on political stability was judged a heavy-handed and clumsy maneuver by the prime minister, this month has seen a broader and more pervasive attack. Revelations about Berezovsky's wiretapping are likely to have compromising and possibly criminal consequences for the Yel'tsin family, particularly Tatiana, who figures prominently in a recently published "transcript" of taped conversation with Berezovsky. (Moskovsky komsomolets, p. 3, Russian Press Digest, 12 Feb 99; nexis) Yel'tsin's reaction has thus far been remarkably muted, perhaps because

his feasible political options are few. Primakov claims there is no clash with the president, but the utterly foreseeable ramifications of his attack on Berezovsky suggest otherwise.

To highlight the seriousness of the situation, it may be interesting to juxtapose Primakov's announcement of amnesty for prisoners in order to make room in jails for "economic criminals" (BBC News Online, 1155 GMT, 31 Jan 99) with a quote from a newspaper commentary on Berezovsky that Primakov's friend Kolesnichenko claimed he "liked": "the last friend of the Family has been released of his duties in connection with a transfer to another job of the enemy of the people." (ITAR-TASS, 12 Feb 99; nexis)

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By John McDonough and Sarah Miller

Russia just says 'no' to NATO in Yugoslavia

Russia "cannot accept" proposed military action by NATO against the Yugoslav Federation, foreign ministry spokesman Vladimir Rakhmanin told the Ekho Moskvyy radio station on 5 February. Rakhmanin stated that a NATO attack on Yugoslavia "would bring nothing but a disaster" and "that unilateral actions are counterproductive as long as there is a chance to preserve the unity of the international community." Rakhmanin went on to admit that the peace conference, which opened in France on 6 February, would not be without hurdles but stated that the international community would support the political negotiations and "the search for ways of political settlement." (ITAR-TASS, 1253 GMT, 5 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A, and Interfax, 1526 GMT, 5 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A) Rakhmanin also addressed the specific question of autonomy versus independence for Kosovo. The entire international community wants Kosovo to remain part of Yugoslavia, he said, but supports the concept of "extensive" autonomy. "This means a no to the status quo but also a no to the

independence of Kosovo," he said. Although this opinion is shared by some members of the Contact Group as well as other powers in Europe, Rakhmanin went on to state that "the internal division of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is within the competence of the Yugoslav authorities," making it unclear exactly what "no to the status quo" actually means. (Interfax, 1526 GMT, 5 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A)

One thing is clear, however: Success for Moscow at the Rambouillet talks will mean keeping NATO forces out of Yugoslavia. Any NATO presence in Kosovo would ultimately translate to a Russian foreign policy defeat, particularly on the eve of the formal induction of former Warsaw Pact countries into NATO. Russia has worked hard to avoid any introduction of NATO forces into Kosovo, perhaps more for Russia's multipolar world than for Balkan security.

You give me Butler, I'll give you another Iraqi promise

Moscow has apparently concluded its latest offensive for the removal of UNSCOM Chairman Richard Butler with a deal. On 30 January the Russian mission at the UN, headed by Sergei Lavrov, demanded Butler's immediate resignation. Referring to Butler's interview with the Australian newspaper Sydney Morning Herald, a Russian letter to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that Butler had seriously distorted Russia's position on Iraq in the UN Security Council and made several "indecent and tactless attacks" on Ambassador Lavrov. (ITAR-TASS, 2143 GMT, 30 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-030) This was phase one of the latest version of "Operation Remove Butler." Phase two of the operation began less than a week later with Prime Minister Primakov apparently offering the UN secretary-general a deal. Sources in the UN delegation attending the World Economic Forum in Davos said Primakov urged Annan to replace Butler in return for a promise by Moscow to persuade Baghdad to resume cooperation with the United Nations. (Al-Sharq al-Awsat, 3 Feb 99, p. 2; FBIS-SOV-99-034)

Moscow's latest offensive to remove Butler as head of UNSCOM has apparently become a "zero sum game" for Moscow. What the Russian mission to the UN failed to address was the fact that, although Butler refused to resign, he indicated that he would not seek another term as chairman of UNSCOM. Butler said that he would do what it takes to end the current inspection crisis when his current contract expires in June.

Maybe sticks and stones, but threats of reduced aid?

In what appears to be the latest round of the sanction/economic assistance war, the Russian Federation has decided to play hardball. Responding to a US threat to withhold aid to Moscow for the latest Russian commitment to sell weapons to Syria, Moscow went right on the offensive. In an official foreign ministry statement, Vladimir Rakhmanin said that "we do not recognize the extraterritoriality of American laws -- be it in Cuba, Iran or Syria." (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1225 GMT, 5 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A) Syria, a beneficiary of billions of dollars in Soviet-era aid and military hardware as well as several billion dollars in post-Cold War military deliveries, is apparently planning to buy conventional antitank weapons from Russia. In an attempt to defend not only its commitment to Syria but perhaps Iran as well, the foreign ministry further stated that Moscow "proceed(s) from the fact that military-technical cooperation between sovereign states is their inalienable right in line with the right to self-defense, laid down in the UN Charter." Rakhmanin highlighted that the UN has not introduced any sanctions against Syria and emphasized that Moscow strictly adheres to its international obligations, including those in the sphere of nonproliferation and export control as well as the UN sanctions regime. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1225 GMT, 5 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A)

These statements are an indication that Russia will not only go forward with weapons sales to Syria but will proceed with its alleged sale and transfer of missile and nuclear technology and material to Iran as well. Rakhmanin's comments are also an indication that a US threat of reduced aid will be almost as

successful as the piecemeal sanctions that were recently imposed against three Russian institutions implicated in assisting Iran with its weapons of mass destruction program.

Spymaster to PM: The posts change but the words remain the same

Now that Prime Minister Primakov has a grasp on the economic woes that have plagued Russia for the past several years perhaps he now plans to focus more of his attention on ensuring the construction of a multipolar world. At the World Economic Forum held in Paris at the end of January, Primakov stated that Russia's economic problems are a "temporary phenomenon" and said the economic situation will "not do anything to prevent Russia [from] playing an active role" in international diplomacy. (AFP (North European Service), 1832 GMT, 30 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-030) Emphasizing not only the historical role Russia has played in the international arena but Russia's resources as well, Primakov sought to assure the world community that Russia was not going to fade away despite its current economic hardships. Primakov stated that Russia still can play a major role in world politics, given its "traditions, experience, territory, potential and resources and, finally, the military potential," and emphasized Russia's opposition to a unipolar world. Primakov also took the occasion to attack NATO, stating that Russia was against any coalitions aimed against each other (ITAR-TASS, 2200 GMT, 30 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-030), apparently overlooking the de facto coalitions that Moscow has maintained with Syria and continues to develop with Iran.

Splat! Will Russia squash the North Korean Y2K bug?

The realities of the Y2K bug have hit the Korean Peninsula, and South Korea is taking no chances. The ROK has asked the Russian defense structure to help North Korea ensure that the year 2000 will not trigger the firing of its rocket arsenal. (RFE/RL Newswire, 2 Feb 99) South Korea is justifiably concerned, since the division of the peninsula has left many of those rockets directed at it. Although Russia is having Y2K-related troubles of its own, it may be able to

provide unique guidance on the DPRK matter since the rockets in question are Russian-designed. Even though the DPRK has not yet publicly commented, the readiness of the ROK to approach Russia directly through diplomatic channels indicates that Russian diplomatic efforts in East Asia may be useful in the resolution of other peninsular issues as well.

On the wrong side of the fence

Now that demarcation of the Chinese border with Russia is nearing completion and strides are being made towards demarcation along the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Tajik borders, it has become apparent that over 1.5 million Chinese are living illegally in Russia. (Interfax, 1218 GMT, 28 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-028) This estimate makes the 200 Chinese who were repatriated at the end of December pale in comparison. It also raises questions about who was repatriated in "Operation Vikhr-3." (See Editorial Digest, 1 February 1999) According to Federal Border Service Director Konstantin Totsky, the lack of a "well-balanced legislative base" and "the optimum amount of funds" diminish the effectiveness of the Border Service in preventing illegal migration. In his comments, Totsky appeared more concerned about the demographic effect of the Chinese presence than on a means of rectifying the legal inadequacy to which he referred. "Russia could virtually find itself a dump for these illegal migrants," he said. (Ekho Moskv, 1605 GMT, 29 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-029) In an attempt to curb the number of illegal "shuttle traders" in the Jewish Autonomous Republic, the government has reduced the number of Chinese allowed to work there legally by 400, for a total of 1,400. (Tass, 0843 GMT, 3 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-034) Unlike the ethnic Chinese residing on Russian soil to whom Totsky referred, these traders enter the autonomous republic on tourist visas and illegally engage in economic activity.

Japan stands firm on Kurile issue

Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi has made the completion of a Russo-Japanese peace treaty by 2000 conditional on the resolution of the Kurile Islands issue. The prime minister's stance is in line with both the 1993 Tokyo

Declaration, which said that a peace treaty would be signed after the territorial issue was concluded, and the 1998 Moscow Declaration, which officially specified the year 2000 as the target date. The Japanese government maintains that its policy has been consistent since 1993, but the new declaration reveals domestic roots: Japan has a relatively new government which is still suffering from last month's report in Yomiuri that an "interim" with Russia had settled the fate of the Kuriles. (Kyodo, 0756 GMT, 7 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A) (See also Editorial Digest, 13 January 1999) The Russian side continues to face domestic pressure as well. The Sakhalin Island Duma recently voted to send a resolution to Yel'tsin urging the government to lift a fishing ban on the waters around the Kuriles. Later the same day, the State Fishing Committee of Russia annulled the ban and allowed fishermen to return to the waters. Apparently, they hadn't been gone long, since reports of cut Japanese nets were still fresh. (Kyodo, 2338 GMT, 4 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A) The domestic situations facing both governments have made compromise on any part of the issue virtually impossible. Unfortunately, it seems that the dispute can only be resolved by equitable compromise. The Yel'tsin-Hashimoto talks last year provided some reason for optimism, but the diplomatic shuttling since then has only resulted in the formation of two separate committees on demarcation and the treaty. Obuchi's remarks may have been directed at a domestic audience, but the signal being sent can hardly benefit the diplomatic efforts to find a solution.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Michael Thurman

REGIONS

Stroev betrays feelings on federalism

"It is essential to develop and enshrine in law the mechanisms for federal intervention in the event that constituent parts of the Russian Federation fail to comply with their constitutional obligations," Federation Council Chairman Yegor Stroev said. Previous governmental attempts to address the issue of federalism via "primitive treaties" with the regions, Stroev suggests, have had no effect.

The chairman noted that the regions "have gone in different directions" and this is precisely what has caused the present "impasse." A second cause of the present economic and political problems, he believes, was the liberalization of the economy. "When the state stopped regulating the economy it facilitated the destruction of the single economic space," and this laid the foundation for separatism, he said. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 0926 GMT, 26 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-027)

Within this interview, three philosophical or perceptual problems common in contemporary Russian political discourse can be seen. First, Stroev seeks to establish some legal mechanism for ensuring regional compliance with the federal constitution, seeming to forget that this is the purpose of the procurator and a Constitutional Court. If he wishes to ensure regional compliance, he needs to invigorate and liberate from political influence both the procurator's office and the Constitutional Court. The most commonly vetted solutions to Russia's problems inevitably come in the form of pursuing "new" initiatives, such as new legislation, consultative bodies, or other extra-governmental coordinating entities. A better solution would be to make the present system work. There are no organizational silver bullets which, when discovered, will cut through the present mess and make the Russian system work. Making Russia work will mean eliminating personal influence and establishing the rule of law in fact as in theory.

The second philosophical or perceptual problem is blaming the regions for the nation's ills, somehow forgetting that, had the federal authorities been competent

in running the country in the first place, there would have been less cause for the regions to take matters into their own hands.

The third problem is that Stroevev, who often speaks of federalism in an approving tone, also refers to it as "separatism. It is true that one of the time-honored specters of Russian politics is the potential disintegration of the federation. But federalism and separatism are two entirely distinct things, and it does not help when the head of the upper chamber of parliament uses "federalism" to legitimize laudatory regional activity while invoking "separatism" to discredit regional actions he deems less worthy.

Resolution in Vladivostok not likely until next fall

The deputy head of the Russian president's local government directorate, Viktor Zelenkin, predicted that, due to voter apathy, it is unlikely that the required number of voters would turn out to validate the eventual election returns should elections for the city council be held today. But the worst thing, Zelenkin notes, is that Vladivostok remains without a legitimate municipal government. And responding to a question from an ITAR-TASS correspondent, he noted that Yel'tsin's 11 December 1998 removal of then-Mayor Cherepkov from office did not have the intended effect of stabilizing the situation in the Maritime Territory. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1027 GMT, 27 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-027)

The rowdiness of Vladivostok politics is legend, and unfortunately for those living in the midst of it, this had become a means for legitimizing an intolerable situation. What is in fact revealed by the ongoing crisis in Vladivostok is that the federal authorities have lost control in favor of local dons who use Moscow as a pawn in their fight over the allocation of regional wealth and influence. But when Moscow seeks to fix the problem, as it presumably tried to do with Yel'tsin's removal of Cherepkov, matters only worsen. The solution, to the degree there is one, is for the citizens of Vladivostok to take matters into their own hands, preferably through the ballot box.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Michael Reardon and LCDR Fred Drummond

Mir errs with Mir-ror

Oh, now I see the light -- or actually -- no, I don't. But I could have, if Gennadi Padalka and Sergei Avdeev, cosmonauts on the Russian space station Mir, had been successful on their most recent mission.

In an effort to enlighten the world, or at least part of it, the two cosmonauts attempted to deploy a gigantic reflector, 25 meters in diameter, in deep space on 4 February. The effort to set up the huge mirror, code-named the "Znamya" (Banner) experiment by the Russian Space Agency, involved releasing the reflector from its location in a bay of the cargo ship "Progress" via remote control from inside the Mir space station. The Progress was to remain connected to the mirror, acting as its power source to position it. Once the reflector was pushed a distance of 400 meters from the Mir space station, the cosmonauts were to unfold it. Then, Padalka and Avdeev would maneuver the cargo spaceship from the Mir to keep the reflected beam steady, illuminating a single location on Earth. Once the experiment was concluded, the mirror would be ejected into space to burn up in the upper layers of the atmosphere. The Progress would also be discarded, either burning up or dropping into the ocean with no plans for recovery. (ITAR-TASS, 1004 GMT, 3 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-034)

That was the plan anyway; execution was somewhat different. The cosmonauts were given the go-ahead to deploy the mirror at 1133 GMT on 4 February. They began the release process and the mirror started rotating, moving away from Mir. About one minute into its travels, the rotation abruptly halted. When queried as to what happened, the crew's commander, Gennadi Padalka, provided an in-depth, technical explanation for the malfunction: "It just stopped." (ITAR-TASS World

Service, 1148 GMT, 4 Feb 99, N/A) When questioned later, Vladimir Solovev, chief controller of the Mir station, told press correspondents at Mission Control that failures began at the very start of the mission. (Interfax, 1716 GMT, 4 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A) He explained that, when the Progress cargo ship departed from Mir, an unknown malfunction in the docking system caused the system's antenna to deploy. Then the turning membrane of the mirror made 15 rotations before getting entangled in the protruding vibrator of the antenna, thus causing the mirror to stop spinning. Padalka and Avdeev tried to free the mirror by moving the antenna and "tapping the gas pedal" on Progress. They thought they had succeeded, again attempting to unfold the mirror, but the process promptly ended 40 seconds later. (Interfax, 1716 GMT, 4 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A) In the early hours of 5 February, Mission Control specialists told the press that the experiment had been officially canceled. They said the Progress cargo vessel would descend and "disappear" into the ocean with its equipment on board. (NTV, 0700 GMT, 5 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A)

The experiment was designed to have the gigantic membrane, covered with a five micron thick aluminum coating, catch the sun's rays and then reflect them to earth, illuminating multiple locations in Kazakhstan, Russia, France, and Canada. Specifically, the mirror was to beam light five different times, for several minutes apiece. The locations included the Russian cities of Saratov, Aktyubinsk, Kovel, and Poltava, the Kazakh city of Karaganda, the French city of Compiègne, and a location described as "the east of Canada." (ITAR-TASS, 1004 GMT, 3 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-034)

Prior to the attempt, Vladimir Syromyatnikov, who heads the Znamya experiment, provided the press with reassurances as to its safety, stating that "There is nothing hazardous (in the light being reflected)." Then he followed with some very valuable advice to those on the ground; "however, one should not look right into the light" as the sunbeams "will be several times brighter than the Moon."

Definitely in command of the obvious, he probably would advise not to put a lit stick of dynamite in your pocket.

Apparently, Syromyatnikov wasn't 100 percent sure of the cosmonauts' ability to shine the light in the right places. He said Russian space experts used the Internet to inform all countries which the reflected sunbeams might also reach (Ukraine, Belgium, Germany, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia). (ITAR-TASS, 1004 GMT, 3 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-034) Imagine that, using the Internet to reach the mass populace of the Czech Republic or Slovakia. I bet they'd use the telephone to notify the population of North Korea or televisions for the tribes of central Africa. Maybe I can help with a message in a bottle, launched across the Atlantic.

One final interesting fact is that the Znamya experiment was first carried out six years ago to the day, on 4 February 1993. In that experiment, the mirror was smaller and the cosmonauts only tested its construction and reflected no sunbeams. (ITAR-TASS, 1004 GMT, 3 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-034) I guess that's another way of saying "it failed back then too!"

Keep focused RSA: Mir + ISS may equal MISS

Officials from NASA and the Russian Space Agency (RSA) will meet later this month to discuss the schedule for the International Space Station (ISS). NASA has shown concern recently that the RSA may not be able to meet the current schedule due to limited funding. This concern was amplified when Russia announced that it planned to keep the antiquated Mir space station "spacebound" for another three years past its scheduled deactivation in 1999. The RSA called reports that funds for the upkeep of the Russian orbiting space station would be disbursed from the monies earmarked for the ISS "groundless." An official RSA release noted that "the 1999 federal budget provides for the necessary sums to be allocated for the Russian segment of the ISS." (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1426 GMT, 1 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-032) Of course, the 1998 federal budget

also contained "necessary sums" for the payment of the armed forces, and we saw how well that went! Responding to reports, supposedly from the Russian side, which claimed that Russia was not going to honor its commitments on the ISS, the agency's press service stated, "This runs counter to the position of the RSA." (ITAR-TASS, 1322 GMT, 2 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-033) The launching of the third element of the ISS, the service module, was originally set for April 1998, but has been set back to July 1999 -- for the time being. However, the latest information received by NASA from Russian counterparts is that the launch "will take place at least in September." This is apparently due to the complexity of "a very difficult program of checking readiness of the module for a liftoff, including its test-bed experiments," accordingly to an unnamed American official. (ITAR-TASS, 1322 GMT, 2 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-033) The second element of the ISS was launched into space by the Russians last November, but it cost the US a whopping \$60 million (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 4 Nov 98, p. 3; FBIS-SOV-98-313) -- quite a partnership! Only time will tell whether the ISS will remain even close to schedule given the severe Russian budget constraints and possible competing interests of Mir. What are its chances? I can only say, "It's hit or Mir-ISS at this point."

Russian roulette -- the nuclear home-game version

Here are the rules:

SET UP: First, build thousands of nuclear weapons. It doesn't matter exactly how many, so continue building until all your funds are depleted. (Borrow, or print more money if needed. Don't worry about how much money you borrow, you don't have to pay it back anyway.) These weapons can be put on big boats hidden underwater, on planes that can fly very far and/or in big holes anywhere on your playing field. (For added fun, you can choose the option of using trucks to move some of the weapons around instead of putting all of them in big hole, however, these will take a little longer to put into play.) Finally, build a control

system that links all the weapons and can watch all your opponent's weapons to see when he begins play.

PREPARATION FOR PLAY: Let the game clock tick ahead 50 or 60 years. Spend much more time and energy on rhetoric than on maintenance. Let your big boats literally rot in the water until only three or four can patrol the waters at any one time. Promise the boat operators a good salary, but don't actually pay them. For added excitement (and because reserves may be needed to feed the operators now), don't stock the boats with food supplies. Let your planes age and don't modernize them. Only let the pilots train a few hours each year. This will add to the suspense when they are called to take off. (When play begins, carefully record how many are too broken to take off or crash shortly thereafter.) As for the weapons in big holes, the strongest part of your arsenal, remember most will be past their operational life when play begins. You can choose to either build more modern weapons but only a maximum of 35-40 per year, or maintain your existing inventory at a cost of \$3 billion per year. (Note: Even if you choose the "Print lots more money" option, you will only have enough to do one or the other.) Finally, set your early warning system effectiveness on 85-90 percent. This will give you a gap of only three to four hours per day when you can't see whether your opponent has launched during that time. Understand, the 85-90 percent assumes the rest of your system actually works the rest of the time, a VERY optimistic assumption. (Increasing the effectiveness rating is not possible, since you don't have enough money to deploy the added satellites necessary.)

STRATEGY: Negotiate with your opponent to stop production of additional weapons. Go ahead and begin negotiations for reductions in total numbers of weapons, but DON'T actually complete them. This will ensure that when play begins, you are at a severe disadvantage numerically as your arsenal deteriorates further. Furthermore, don't negotiate for further reductions as this would provide you a slim chance for parity as play commences. (Note: This may

not seem logical, but there is a peculiar bug in the program for this game that produces a perceived political gain by following this course. Understand, this is only a perceived gain and has no real effect on your opponent.) The final strategy is very risky, with very low probability for success. It involves convincing your opponent that you have none of your arsenal targeted at his portion of the playing board. Even considering you've both stopped building new weapons (except your modest 35 to 40 per year) and you are floundering in your ability to feed your players, don't expect this strategy to be successful. Only the most inexperienced opponents would actually believe that claim.

BEGIN PLAY: Pick a player to lead your team who is not very friendly to your opponent. Give him partners, equally unfriendly and who may be more concerned with another game -- "Politics at Home" -- which they are playing simultaneously. Reduce your early warning system's effectiveness to 67 percent, increasing the time you are unable to view whether your opponent to seven to eight hours per day. Set the game clock to 31 December 1999, 2330 hours. (Don't forget, you have not paid any attention to that Y2K bug thing.) You pick a card from the military doctrine pile. It says -- Current Policy: Launch on Warning! Okay -- go -- you have the first move!!!

WINNING THE GAME: There is no winner, and it's not really fun playing either! (Final Note: This game is designed for two players, however, at your current rate of deterioration a third player may join the game within a decade. This player may have a force comparable to yours, but a force that is decades newer and more likely to actually work.)

While the game above may never outsell Monopoly or Trivial Pursuit, it is more than a bit unsettling how much reality is interwoven into its makeup. The once mighty Russian military is literally crumbling under its own weight, and with it so too is their strategic triad. Russia's nuclear missile submarines are in the worst state. With scores already decommissioned, it's believed there are no more than

three on patrol at any one time. (Associated Press, 1324 EST, 11 Feb 99) Next, their nuclear capable Bear bombers are over 40 years old, and they have less than two dozen modern bombers. Of course, increasing the number of planes is not the answer since the pilots who would be called on to fly them are getting very few training flying hours annually. The third leg of the triad, the land-based missile force, is in better shape, but with each passing day more of the missiles exceed their operational design shelf life. The outlook for the future is no better. With no new bombers, only a handful of nuclear capable submarines and a maximum of 350-400 new Topol-M ICBMs planned over the next decade, it may be sooner than later that China eclipses Russia as a nuclear power. (Associated Press, 1324 EST, 11 Feb 99) Now an overall reduction in the numbers of nuclear weapons to some "minimum" level necessary for deterrence or defense is certainly not a bad thing; however, when the reduction is due solely by deterioration (assuming START-II is not ratified by the Russian Duma anytime soon) unreliability becomes an issue. Officials high in the Russian Federation government (Primakov, Maslyukov, Lebed, etc.) have made no secret that they consider Russia's nuclear arsenal as their only remaining "geo-political stick." For instance, Aleksander Lebed recently said, "The only thing for which Russia is respected in the world and which makes us worthy partners ... is our strategic rocket forces."

Now, even with the Cold War over (which may be debatable in and of itself) both the US and Russia remain on constant alert. Each side maintains the policy that, if attacked, massive retaliation will be unleashed, even before the enemy warheads arrive (Washington Post, 10 Feb 99) -- a "launch on warning" strategy. This is probably the most prudent form of defense, while maintaining a no first strike policy and discouraging the same from the opponent. Most prudent, that is, only IF you have a reliable early warning system.

Even when the Russians' system was working at its peak, mistakes happened. In 1983, the Soviet early warning system erroneously reported that the US had

launched nuclear missiles towards the Fatherland. If the mistake hadn't been recognized by the officer on duty, the world may have been a different place today. Then again, in 1995, the launch of a Norwegian scientific rocket sent false alarms as high as Yel'tsin. (Washington Post, 10 Feb 99)

Recently there have been new reports that the Russian early warning system is in worse shape than expected. It is estimated the Russians have gaps of between three and seven hours per day when they are unable to see if the US were to launch a nuclear missile. Some have questioned if they have any lookdown capability in the Pacific Ocean at all. Without this warning, Theodore A. Pistol, an MIT professor says, "There are large parts of the Russian forces that could be attacked from the Gulf of Alaska and would be destroyed without Russia even knowing an attack was underway. Moscow would be destroyed within four to five minutes of the radars seeing the incoming warheads." (Washington Post, 10 Feb 99) And it can only get worse as Russia's financial crisis deepens and they have no funds to replace or maintain the existing early warning satellites.

So, where do we go from here? I'd suggest we stick to Candyland or Chutes and Ladders. Go ahead, pick a card or roll the dice.

Ship for sale?

One consistent element in an otherwise unstable Russian business environment is the sale of Russian weapons systems, in particular the selling off of ships from the once mighty Soviet navy. One of those formerly formidable vessels, the Admiral Gorshkov, remains in the news. Recently we reported on the status of the Gorshkov, the fourth and last aircraft carrier of the Soviet-era Kiev class, in a discussion of a new ship-based missile system. (Editorial Digest, 13 January 99) The Asian Age out of Delhi reported recently that an Indian navy team may soon be on its way to inspect the ship prior to any sale. Interestingly, a former Indian navy chief of staff was quoted in opposition of acquiring the ship. (The Asian Age, 1 Feb 99; FBIS-NES-99-032)

Despite what appears to be slow but steady progress in leading to an eventual sale, and despite a signed memorandum between Russia and India allowing the possibility of selling the ship, at least one high-ranking Russian is disputing any possible transaction. Interfax quoted the head of the Russian navy who "refuted" the sale of the Gorshkov. (Interfax, 1747 GMT, 8 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A) Apparently the admiral hasn't talked to Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov, who was responsible for the memorandum. What is the significance of all this talk? There are several points. Russia is in the business of selling off its navy; we predict the sale will go through if India decides the acquisition is in its best interest. Failing that, the Gorshkov may be sold for scrap. It is highly unlikely that the ship will ever sail again under the Russian navy ensign; the ship has been docked pierside since 1994, where a fire broke out on board. There's little if any money to refurbish the ship and then man it for operational use. The admiral's remarks may just be the quite understandable frustration resulting from seeing another once-prominent warship being permanently removed from the inventory of the Russian Navy. In reality, it has been out of commission for years already -- might as well make some money from it.

Aircraft industry consolidation, Russian-style

Since 1991 the US aviation industry underwent dramatic buyouts, consolidation and reorganization; this left the US with three major aircraft companies from what used to be a dozen or more during the Cold War. The same thing is occurring in Russia today.

NTV, among other sources, reported on the possibility of the Sukhoi design bureau being merged into the VPK MAPO Military-Industrial Complex. (NTV erroneously labeled the overall concern as MAPO MiG.) (NTV, 0700 GMT, 3 Feb 99; FBIS-UMA-99-034)

The Soviet, and now Russian, aviation industry is not directly comparable to that in the US. Instead of one company designing and then manufacturing its own aircraft, there existed in the USSR aircraft design bureaus, of which MiG and Sukhoi designed fighter and attack aircraft. Typically aircraft were designed by a specific bureau, and the actual aircraft were built in state-owned plants. The design bureaus still exist in Russia, but to reduce duplication and better manage scarce resources, the Russian government is directing consolidation of the various bureaus and associated aircraft industries. As NTV explains in its report, MAPO is a "state-owned military-industrial corporation" created in 1996. The Mikoyan (MiG) Design Bureau and the Kamov helicopter design bureau are two of the twelve concerns united under MAPO. The proposed merger would incorporate Sukhoi design bureau and production complex with its chief rival, MiG. The Sukhoi complex already includes the Beriev design bureau along with several aircraft manufacturing plants. (Interfax, 1105 GMT, 2 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-033)

Aviation Week and Space Technologies magazine provided some more details on the merger. Former high-ranking Sukhoi official Nikolai Nikitin was named as designer and director general of VPK MAPO. Aviation Week points out how far the Russian military aviation industry has fallen, with "production facilities ... running at only 5% of capacity." The Soviet practice of supporting and acquiring rival designs from MiG and Sukhoi is no longer affordable in Russia. Conflicts have been ongoing over whether the MiG-29 or Su-27 has the higher priority for support. (Aviation Week and Space Technology, 8 Feb 99) The merger should help alleviate such conflicts, and resolve such issues as which future designs should be pursued, in particular the MiG Project 1-42 or the Sukhoi S-37. The consolidation makes sense, and shows the Russian government's commitment to protecting what it can of the country's military aviation industry.

Spies, spies everywhere

Two issues ago we mentioned a spate of Russian press releases concerning espionage efforts being conducted against Russia. (Editorial Digest, 13 January 99) The Russian navy was slow to jump on that bandwagon, but they too have joined the chorus of seeing spies everywhere. Interfax quoted a military counterintelligence official as saying that the Russian navy is the target of American, NATO, and Baltic states spying efforts and agent recruitment. (Interfax, 0807 GMT, 7 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A) The official was vexed over "new methods" of information/intelligence collection, including joint research programs and foreign travel by Russian experts. Supposedly the "foreign intelligence services are particularly interested in Russia's latest achievements in shipbuilding and in the advanced know-how used by the Russian Navy."

It is obviously hard for many Russians to accept the steep military decline Russia has undergone since the collapse of the USSR. Likewise, there exists much distrust of now open source information on the Russian military, where once-secret information is routinely reported just as in the West on military forces, structures, and weapons system. So, the Russian pronouncements reflect in part the distrust of revealing military information so openly, and probably are fueled in part by Russian pride -- "the West MUST be spying on us, seeking to uncover our superior technology that they are unable to duplicate." As we have said before, the Soviets/Russians have indeed made some very interesting, very novel advances in weaponry and machinery; yes, the West is interested in the Russian military. That's only natural. However, the nature (and stakes) of the military competition between the US and now Russia have changed, dramatically. Maybe we should be reading the cries of increased espionage as products aimed for Russian consumption, efforts aimed at reducing such open access to Russian military matters. The counterintelligence official cannot have been pleased with such revelations as published in the latest issue of the US Naval Institute's Proceedings. A two-page article titled "The Typhoon Saga Ends" by Norman Friedman details the unique characteristics of the world's largest submarine, along with informed speculation on design, tactics, weapons, and

topics. (US Naval Institute Proceedings, February 99) Perhaps the sorrow felt by the Russians on articles of this nature is reflected in the title: The six Typhoons are heading to the scrap heap and, to make matters worse, with US assistance.

Newly Independent States: CIS

By Sarah Miller

Collective Security Treaty's future is anything but secure At the CIS foreign ministers meeting in Moscow, ministers from Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan said that they would extend the CIS Collective Security Treaty beyond the April expiration date. (Tass, 1909 GMT, 4 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A) Against Azerbaijan's urging, Georgia has said that it will extend the treaty, but has made its participation contingent upon unspecified changes to the agreement. (Interfax, 1626 GMT, 4 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A) The Uzbek and Azeri governments have decided to withdraw entirely from the treaty, while Kazakhstan has followed the Georgian example.

According to a statement issued by the Uzbek government, it sees "no point in further membership." (Tass, 1246 GMT, 4 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A) Interfax quoted a high-ranking foreign ministry official who said that the treaty "does not meet present-day requirements and does not perform its function." (Interfax, 1155 GMT, 3 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-034) This statement refers to events that transpired last November between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. (See Editorial Digest, 16 November 98) Uzbek differences with Moscow on major political policies such as NATO expansion, Iraq and Kosovo have been additional impediments to Uzbek involvement. (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 5 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A) Despite its withdrawal from the treaty, the Uzbek government has suggested that little change will occur in its bilateral relations with CIS member states.

Azerbaijan, which has its own reasons for departing from the security treaty, has supported Uzbekistan's decision to withdraw. In reference to the Armenian problem, Azeri State Foreign Policy Advisor Vafa Guluzade said that Azerbaijan shouldn't be involved in a collective security arrangement that couldn't even protect one member state from another. (Turan, 1615 GMT, 4 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A) The Azeri government has condemned the Russian government for supplying Armenia with arms used to wage war against Azerbaijan. Furthermore, the Azeri deputy foreign minister stated that Azerbaijan was never a member at all, since Azerbaijan failed to ratify the treaty. In a telling move, the Azeri foreign minister attended a working meeting in Germany rather than attend the Moscow summit, saying that "integration into European and Transatlantic institutions is Azerbaijan's undisputed priority." (Jamestown Foundation Monitor, 8 Feb 99)

Based upon the Uzbek withdrawal, Kazakhstan has followed the Georgian lead. On 10 February, Kazakh Foreign Minister Kasymzhomart made Kazakh participation in the treaty contingent upon unspecified revisions. (Jamestown Foundation Monitor, 10 Feb 99) The Georgian side did not openly specify its conditions, but they are likely to be associated with its stance on border issues. Georgia does not accept the concept of CIS external borders and has brought up the issue at previous meetings. Now that the treaty members are dwindling in number, Moscow might actually give Georgia some of the changes it has sought.

The latest meeting on the Collective Security Treaty has brought attention to the differences between theory and practice. Only five of the original nine members are committed to the treaty in its present form. Those who have withdrawn have stressed that, in practice, the treaty has fallen short on its prime function: providing protection from security threats. The Russian government has countered these criticisms by stating that the Federal Border Service will return parts of external CIS borders to their own countries. (Tass, 1620 GMT, 29 Jan 99; FBIS-UMA-99-029) Still, this does not address intra-CIS conflicts such as the Uzbek-Tajik problem or the Azeri-Armenian fighting.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Tammy Lynch

UKRAINE

What goes down does not necessarily go up

Following meetings with IMF and World Bank representatives, on 9 February the Kuchma administration announced a new trading corridor for the hryvnya -- the second de facto devaluation in six months. The corridor will be lowered from 2.5-3.5 to the dollar to 3.4-4.6 to the dollar. (AP Worldstream, 0925 EST, 9 Feb 99; nexis)

Before the Russian economic crisis began, the hryvnya had been trading at 1.8-2.25 to the dollar. The devaluation will eliminate the need for the government to spend its cash reserves to "prop up" the currency. However, the devaluation also makes a default on external debt more of a possibility. Ukraine now has slightly less in reserve than the \$1 billion in external debt payments that will come due this year. Without a resumption of lending from the IMF, it is doubtful that the country could meet its obligations.

It appears, however, that the IMF will, in fact, soon vote to release the second tranche of a \$2.2 Extended Fund Facility loan. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1030 GMT, 4 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A) The country received the first tranche of \$336 million in September, but funding was suspended when Ukraine failed to meet certain IMF requirements. (See Editorial Digest, 29 January 99) The second tranche has been reported to be around \$150 million. In addition, the World Bank has confirmed that it will release approximately \$150 million to Ukraine before April. (Interfax, 0756 GMT, 30 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-030) This is good news for Viktor Yushenko, chairman of the National Bank, who announced the new trading corridor. "If the IMF and World bank loans arrive on time," he

said, "our reserves will fall by no more than 90 million dollars." (Agence France-
Presse, 1634 GMT, 9 Feb 99; nexis)

Dear Boris Nikolaevich: Please send firewood ... and blankets, too

Ukraine joined the treaty non-ratification game last week, when Oleksandr Razumkov, a member of the Ukrainian National Security Council, announced that his government may consider the suspension of all agreements relating to the Black Sea Fleet. (Interfax, 1334 GMT, 28 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-028) Although the issue of the fleet agreements was downplayed by President Leonid Kuchma during Russian Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov's visit to Kyiv, there is no doubt that Ukraine has begun trying to use the fleet as a "chip" with Russia's Supreme Council. (Interfax, 1520 GMT, 30 Jan 99; FBIS- SOV-99-030)

On 12 August 1998, Ukraine and Russia completed three treaties related to the Black Sea Fleet, including one dealing with the "Status and Terms of the Presence of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation on the Territory of Ukraine," and one which divided the fleet between the two countries. (For further background, see Vechirniy Kyiv, 13 Aug 98; FBIS-SOV-98-254) The Ukrainian Duma has so far refused to ratify the treaties until Ukraine's borders are recognized by Russia, but the government has lived up to the terms agreed to in the documents nonetheless. Now, the government is suggesting it may reconsider that position, starting with its agreement to provide electricity and water supplies.

Perhaps to illustrate the control Ukraine has over the fleet, on 25 January both the electricity and the water supplies to the fleet were completely cut off.

According to a Russian television report, the temperature in the non-heated sailors barracks at one point dropped to 5 degrees centigrade, while water was delivered on barges. The Sevastopol government explained its action by saying that Russia owes the city "large amounts of money." (NTV, 1900 GMT, 26 Jan 99; FBIS-UMA-99-027) That seems to be an understatement. Last November,

Moscow radio reported that the Russian Fleet's debt to Sevastopol for electricity had climbed to 13 million rubles. (Mayak Radio Network, 0420 GMT, 30 Nov 98; FBIS-UMA-98-337) The power and water supplies were suddenly turned back on after one week with no explanation, except for a statement from the Russian defense ministry that the problem was settled after discussions between the two sides. (ITAR-TASS, 1314 GMT, 29 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-029)

Meanwhile, the Russian Supreme Council has said it would consider the treaty recognizing Ukraine's borders and territorial integrity on 15 February. The consideration of the treaty by the council has been suddenly put off twice during the last month, however. (For background, see Editorial Digest, 29 January 99) If that is the case, or if the treaty is rejected, the chill won't just be over Ukrainian-Russian relations -- the Black Sea Fleet's sailors will likely be staying warm by the fire and washing with barge-water again.

Lebed's nuclear waste war backfires

In January, Aleksandr Lebed began complaining that Ukraine was not paying enough to store its nuclear waste at the Zheleznogorsk Plant in his Krasnoyarsk Region. According to an agreement signed between Moscow and Kyiv, Ukraine was paying \$280 for storage of each kilogram of waste. According to Lebed, the "world price" was \$1,000. So pay it, Lebed said, or you won't store your waste here.

With that, against the wishes of the Russian Ministry of Nuclear Energy, he issued an order that nuclear waste would not be accepted from Ukraine until it began paying the "world price." (Intelnews, 0106 GMT, 22 Jan 99; FBIS-TEN-99-022) His region needed tax revenue, he said. It was not fair, he said, that workers at the storage facility could not receive any wages because of the low storage price paid by Ukraine. The region was only getting \$60 million, when it should get "five times that."

Lebed apparently forgot to mention that a majority of the waste stored at the Zheleznogorsk Plant is actually from Russian plants, and that, while some countries do pay \$1,000 per kilogram for nuclear waste reprocessing and transportation, the Ukrainian waste was only being stored. There was no reprocessing or transportation involved. (Interfax, 1254 GMT, 6 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-006, and NTV, 0900 GMT, 8 Jan 99; FBIS- SOV-99-008)

These were two facts that did not go unnoticed by Ukraine. The country has so far been able to store its nuclear waste at the Chernobyl plant. Soon, however, there will be no more room. So, last week, Ukraine began using the money it is no longer paying Russia to complete the construction of its own storage facility. According to the nuclear energy ministry, the facility has been under construction since 1993, but was not completed due to a lack of funds. Thanks to Governor Lebed, Ukraine now has those funds -- \$60 million per year. Maybe Krasnoyarsk should have been receiving "five times that" for their services, but now it seems that they'll be receiving \$0.

Curiously, not long after Ukraine began completing construction on its facility, Lebed told the media that he thought the conflict could be settled. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1032 GMT, 30 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-030) He also apparently no longer requires \$1,000 per kilogram. "For us," he said, "500 dollars will do." (ITAR-TASS World Service, 0842 GMT, 13 Jan 99; FBIS-TEN-99-013)

BELARUS

The opposition just keeps going and going and going ...

Aleksandr Lukashenka continues to feel the effects of the Russia-Belarus Union declaration, although not as he may have expected. Although he has so far received few, if any, benefits from the union, the opposition to his rule has been emboldened by the issue. In fact, at a 28 January congress of democratic forces in Minsk, 800 delegates gathered to hear Samon Sharetski, chairman of the disbanded 1996 parliament, say, "Favorable conditions have now developed in

Belarus for overthrowing Aleksandr Lukashenka's anti-people dictatorial regime, and this chance should not be missed." (Belapan, 1605 GMT, 29 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-030)

In addition, for the first time since Lukashenka disbanded the parliament in 1996, trade unions are threatening a general strike. The unions held a large protest rally on 27 January, and announced that, if Lukashenka does not stabilize the currency and pay their wages by 30 March, they will hold a general strike. Perhaps the most interesting demand made by the union leaders at the rally was access to the media for working people. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 0548 GMT, 28 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-028) It seems that Lukashenka's increasingly strict oversight of the media (which has reportedly included break-ins to newspaper offices by the security service) has passed even the relatively high level of control previously accepted by Belarusians.

The media control has also prompted the founding of at least one radio station outside Belarus to broadcast "objective information" into the country. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1320 GMT, 8 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A) The Westminster Foundation for Democracy is reportedly (but not confirmed to be) involved in funding the station in Lithuania, which will be called "Baltic Waves." The station will broadcast in short-wave in both Russian and Belarusian. (Informatsionnoie Agentstvo Ekho Moskv, 1625 GMT, 5 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-005, and ITAR-TASS World Service, 1320 GMT, 8 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A)

Meanwhile, for his trouble, Lukashenka has received very nice words, but no action, from Russian Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov. Speaking before the Russian cabinet on 3 February, Primakov discussed the increased debts being incurred by CIS countries. "We cannot pile up these debts indefinitely," he said, "...as not all of our debtors are in a political accord with us." But, don't worry Belarus. Primakov explained that "only Belarus is settling its paying matters with Russia well." (ITAR-TASS, 1132 GMT, 4 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A) Apparently,

Primakov forgot to tell Gazprom. On 28 January, Russia cut gas supplies to Belarus by 12 percent, after Belarus' debt increased to \$320 million. (Belapan, 1222 GMT, 29 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-029)

MOLDOVA

Double, Double, Toil and Trouble

The administration of new Moldovan Prime Minister-designate Serafim Urecheanu began inauspiciously this week, when Urecheanu (the former mayor of Chisinau), joined with President Lucinschi in suggesting that they be given the opportunity for two years to legislate by using decrees. (Interfax, 1614 GMT, 8 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A)

Urecheanu also suggested that the new cabinet should be formed from "professionals," and not be based on party affiliation, as was the last cabinet. Each party's representation in the last cabinet was matched proportionally to its representation in the parliament. "This did not permit a team to be created," Urecheanu said. "...all decisions, including urgent ones, were debated for a long time and voted upon." (Interfax, 1614 GMT, 8 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-N/A) Surprisingly, the parliament has not responded well to these suggestions.

The proposals should not be unexpected given Urecheanu's background. He is an independent -- unaffiliated with any party. Perhaps because of this, his constituency support is weak. From 1990-1994, he served in parliament. In 1994, he took his only major political office when he was appointed mayor of Chisinau by then-President Mircea Snegur. The appointment was made possible when low voter turnout invalidated the mayoral election of that year. (Interfax, 1400 GMT, 5 Feb 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts)

Lucinschi chose Urecheanu precisely because of his independence. Lucinschi said, "[Urecheanu] has experience, he does not belong to any party and is

capable of putting an end to partisan political arguments." (Interfax, 1400 GMT, 5 Feb 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts) One can hope.

Comment

Ion Ciubic, the former prime minister, was unable to break through what he called a "paralysis of authority." The fact is that the Moldovan government could never decide how to deal with the aftermath of the Russian crisis, and so simply ended up doing very little.

The next two weeks will determine if Moldova will turn East or West. Within those two weeks, Urecheanu must present his new cabinet to the parliament for approval. There are already signs that several parties from the former ruling coalition will most likely not back Urecheanu -- ironically because of his lack of party affiliation. So, the president and Urecheanu have turned to the Communists for support. The current parliament of 101 seats has a clear Communist majority by number (40), but the other three parties (Revival and Accord, 26 seats, Democratic and Thriving Moldova, 24, and Party of Democratic Forces, 11) had formed an anti-Communist ruling coalition. Now, it appears that the Communist Party could become the actual political majority. At the very least, the party will no longer be shut out of the decision-making process. This transition could be more than a search for a way out of "paralysis." If a new coalition is not formed, it could be the beginning of the re-emergence of the old guard in Moldova.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Monika Shepherd

TAJIKISTAN

Uzbek-Tajik relations still fraught with problems

Tajik Prime Minister Yahyo Azimov's 7 January conciliatory visit to Tashkent, during which he conferred with Uzbekistan's president and prime minister on how

to improve the two countries' recently deteriorated relationship (Radio Tajikistan First Channel Network, 1400 GMT, 8 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-009), has not succeeded in eliminating all hostility between the two states. Roads leading from Uzbek territory into Leninobod, Tajikistan's northernmost province (oblast'), have been closed to through-traffic since 5 November 1998, no doubt as a consequence of Colonel Mahmud Khudoiberdiev's attempt to take control of Leninobod's provincial administration in early November. Tajikistan's National Customs Committee Chairman, Rahim Karimov, met with the chairmen of Uzbekistan's Tashkent and Sirdarya Regional Customs Committees later that month and obtained the Uzbek officials' consent to reopen the roads to Tajik rail and motor vehicle traffic; however, shortly thereafter, the roads were once again closed. As a result, on 21 January 60 train cars which were carrying food products and building supplies to Tajikistan were halted by Uzbek rail officials in Khavvas District (in Uzbekistan's Sirdarya Province, southeast of Tashkent). The chief of the Khavvas District's eastern rail station, Berdiquil Sanginov, responded to Tajik customs officials' complaints by claiming that Uzbekistan's Cabinet of Ministers had issued orders prohibiting Tajik trains from traveling through Uzbek territory, but he was unable to produce any documents to substantiate his statement (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 0230 GMT, 22 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-023)

Drug-related crime increasing, Tajik border guards blamed

According to a report issued by the Ministry of the Interior, in 1998 drug-related crimes were up 80 percent overall in Tajikistan, compared to 1997. In Dushanbe crimes involving narcotics rose by 90 percent and in Hissor District (just west of Dushanbe) by as much as 650 percent. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 0700 GMT, 18 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-018) A few days before the interior ministry's report was made public, President Rahmonov identified the smuggling and sale of narcotics as the most serious problem facing his country today. The Tajik president was addressing an international conference on drug smuggling held in Dushanbe and attended by members of the diplomatic community, as well as by

representatives of various international organizations. President Rahmonov went so far as to state that Tajikistan's continued independence and stability are directly linked to the successful reduction of drug traffic across Central Asia. He called on all the states and organizations represented at the conference to join in the effort to curb narcotics smuggling in the region. (Radio Tajikistan First Channel Network, 1110 GMT, 15 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-018)

At a news conference less than two weeks later, Lieutenant General Nikolai Reznichenko, commander of the Russian Federal Border Guard (FBS) in Tajikistan, stated unequivocally that under the present circumstances it would be impossible for the Russian border command to relinquish its control of the Afghan-Tajik border. (ITAR-TASS, 0921 GMT, 24 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-024) In fact, Lt.-Gen. Reznichenko even hinted that the FBS might soon seek to tighten its monitoring of the Tajik-Afghan border, by bringing that section which is currently patrolled by Tajik Border Protection units back under Russian supervision. (NTV, 1300 GMT, 30 Jan 99; FBIS-TDD-99-030)

Approximately 150 kilometers of the Tajik-Afghan border and the entire Uzbek-Tajik border are patrolled by Tajikistan's own, still-developing frontier guard units. These units operate under the auspices of the State Border Protection Committee, which was formed two years ago. The Russian FBS assisted in providing training and logistical support for Tajikistan's new border guard forces, which were then charged with monitoring part of the eastern half of the Tajik-Afghan border, from the Moskovsky District (south of Kulob) eastward into the Pamir Mountains. (ITAR-TASS, 1335 GMT, 28 Jan 99; FBIS-UMA-99-029) It is this segment of the Tajik-Afghan border which is most popular among drug smugglers. The mountainous terrain makes it very difficult to follow and apprehend anyone crossing the border and much of the population is hostile to both Russian and Tajik government authorities. Gorno-Badakhshon Province (oblast') was an opposition stronghold during Tajikistan's civil war and was virtually cut off from Dushanbe for much of the war. Thus, the Tajik border patrol

forces are expected to monitor what may be the most difficult section of the Tajik-Afghan border.

Until recently the Russian border command seemed to consider the Tajik border service's efforts adequate to the task; Lt.-Gen. Reznichenko told news agencies on 28 January that the Russian government planned to reduce slightly the number of FBS units in Tajikistan and allow Tajik forces to replace them. (Radio Tajikistan Second Channel Network, 0600 GMT, 28 Jan 99; FBIS-UMA-99-029) One or two days later, following an incident in the Shuroobod region of the Tajik-Afghan border (east of Kulob), when 15 armed men attempted to cross into Tajikistan and a battle ensued with the Tajik border patrol, Lt.-Gen. Reznichenko announced that he would propose to the Tajik government that the Russian FBS assume full control of the Tajik-Afghan border again. (NTV, 1300 GMT, 30 Jan 99; FBIS-TDD-99-030)

Comment

The ostensible reason for Lt.-Gen. Reznichenko's decision to request that the Tajik-Afghan border be put back under the complete control of Russia's FBS is that the Tajik frontier guard units are not capable of doing the job and that narcotics smuggling has greatly increased along the 150 kilometers under Tajik supervision. Smugglers apparently know that they can penetrate this section of the border much more easily, due to the Tajik guards' inadequate skills. However, one should keep in mind that this part of the Tajik-Afghan border has always been very difficult to control, even when Russian FBS forces were in charge, and that the Tajik units have had some success in repelling smugglers. In the recent Shuroobod incident, for instance, none of the 15 intruders succeeded in the mission; one was killed and the others were chased back into Afghanistan. The real question seems to be why a new, relatively inexperienced frontiers guard force was charged with controlling one of the most difficult sections of the Tajik-Afghan border.

Former UTO gangs and Otakhon Latifi's murderers apprehended

During the last week of January, Tajik interior ministry forces conducted two operations aimed at destroying two of the most notorious criminal gangs, led by former United Tajik Opposition (UTO) commanders Ravshan Gafforov and Saidmukhtor Yerov. These two groups had established themselves in the Kofarnihon and Leninsky Districts on the outskirts of the capital. (ITAR-TASS, 0909 GMT, 26 Jan 99, FBIS-SOV-99-026) Both gangs have been held responsible for many abductions, murders, and robberies since the civil war ended in December 1997. Ravshan Gafforov had also been charged with the murder of National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) member (and UTO representative) Otakhon Latifi last September. Between 23 and 27 January, Saidmukhtor Yerov and three of his supporters were killed in a shoot-out with government forces in Leninsky District, other members of his gang were arrested, and Ravshan Gafforov and a number of his men were also brought into custody. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 0557 GMT, 25 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-025, and Interfax, 1252 GMT, 27 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-027) Mr. Gafforov subsequently admitted to participating in Otakhon Latifi's murder and part of his confession was broadcast on television. Mr. Gafforov alleged that Saidmukhtor Yerov was the one responsible for ordering Mr. Latifi's death and that he and another man, Abdulloh, actually carried out the murder. (NTV, 1100 GMT, 29 Jan 99, FBIS-SOV-99-029) However, he gave no motive for why Saidmukhtor Yerov ordered Mr. Latifi's death and Tajik interior ministry officials have thus far offered no theories of their own.

Mass arrests in Leninobod Province

At the end of January the Leninobod Prosecutor's Office released a number of statistics related to Col. Mahmud Khudoiberdiev's November invasion of Leninobod Province, including the number of people currently being prosecuted for allegedly colluding with Col. Khudoiberdiev's forces. 197 people were arrested in connection with the incident, including 70 of Khudoiberdiev's supporters and 38 law enforcement officials and military personnel. At the end of January when

these statistics were made public, 162 of those arrested were still in custody. The Prosecutor's Office expects to end the investigation into the November insurrection by the end of March. (Interfax, 1328 GMT, 29 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-029)

The first trial of those who are suspected of having aided and supported Col. Khudoiberdiev will likely be held in the beginning of March, according to unnamed sources in the power ministries. Most of those who are charged with orchestrating and planning the incursion (e.g., Col. Khudoiberdiev himself, Abdumalik Abdullojonov, and a number of other former government officials) have sought refuge outside Tajikistan, but there are as yet unconfirmed rumors that Abdughani Abdullojonov, the former mayor of Khujand and Abdumalik Abdullojonov's younger brother, has been captured and is in custody in an unknown location. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1218 GMT, 30 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-031)

As this wave of arrests and prosecutions continues, as yet unnamed forces in Khujand seem to be launching a counterattack by targeting former provincial and city officials. Dustmamat Mukhamadiev, a former aide to the chief of Leninobod Province, was shot to death outside his home on 27 January by masked men wielding assault rifles. Tolib Boboev, a retired official from the Leninobod Prosecutor's Office (which is in charge of investigating the November events), was also killed recently. Tajik authorities have not yet determined whether the same persons are responsible for both deaths, or whether the two murders are related. (Radio Rossii Network, 0800 GMT, 28 Jan 99; FBIS-SOV-99-029)

Newly Independent States: Baltic States

By Kate Martin

ESTONIA

Note condemns van der Stoel's comments

Fifteen parliamentarians have sent a letter to Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebaek voicing strong disapproval of comments made by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) High Commissioner for Ethnic Minorities, Max van der Stoel. Norway currently holds the presidency of the OSCE. At the end of December, Van der Stoel had urged Estonian President Lennart Meri not to promulgate amendments to the country's election and language laws which would require command of the Estonian language for eligibility to parliament and local government councils. "We wrote that Stoel's statements have triggered anti-European Union and anti-Eurointegration attitudes among the electorate," said Lauri Vahtre, a member of the Pro Patria Union and the initiator of the protest. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1400 GMT, 29 Jan 99) Other parliamentarians who signed the letter include Mart Laar and Toivo Jurgenson of Pro Patria, former parliament speaker Ulo Nugis from the Coalition Party, and Country People's Party Chairman Arnold Ruutel.

The requirement concerning command of Estonian for government officials had been under discussion for several years. The Riigikogu tried since 1996 to pass a law requiring command of the Estonian language for members of parliament and local governing councils, but the president refused to promulgate such legislation. In November 1998 the State Court ruled that establishment of language proficiency requirements would not be unconstitutional per se (as one of the aims of the constitution is preservation of the Estonian nation and culture), provided that the form of such a law conformed to the constitution. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1700 GMT, 4 Nov 98) At issue has been which branch of government would be responsible for establishing the need for and extent of language fluency.

In mid-December, parliament passed legislation, to be effective May 1, 1999, requiring proficiency in Estonian for all candidates for parliamentary and local elections. In a letter to President Meri, Van der Stoel said that the requirements

would interfere with the national integration process and reminded Meri that the European Convention on Human Rights forbids discrimination based on language. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1100 GMT, 29 Dec 98) Over the objections of the OSCE high commissioner and vocal Russian deputies, Meri did promulgate the amendments on 31 December. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1600 GMT, 2 Jan 99)

LITHUANIA

LUKoil holds Mazeikiai Oil over a barrel

The US-based Williams Company's announcement that it would begin pumping oil via the Butinge terminal in late February prompted a quick and clear response from LUKoil. In an apparent attempt to blackmail its way into shareholding, LUKoil's representatives reportedly said oil would not be supplied to the new Butinge oil terminal until Lithuania agreed to sell at least 33 percent of Mazeikiai Oil's shares to LUKoil's investment company, Nikoil. LUKoil's press secretary, Mikhail Mikhailov, told the Lietuvos Zinios newspaper that talks on oil supplies would not begin until a share-buying opportunity was provided. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1400 GMT, 22 Jan 99) LUKoil's demand for one-third of the oil concern's shares is at odds with state plans for shareholding. Last autumn, when much of the Lithuanian oil industry was restructured, the government announced that 33 percent of the consolidated Mazeikiai Oil (Mazeikiu Nafta) shares would be sold to the Williams Company (an active participant in Lithuania's oil industry, especially with the construction of the Butinge terminal); 32 percent would be offered in a tender; and the remaining shares would be held by the state. (ITAR-TASS, 1236 GMT, 30 Oct 98; FBIS-SOV-98-303) As a result of the consolidation, Mazeikiai Oil now includes the Mazeikiai refinery, the Butinge terminal, and the Naftotiekis oil pipeline. The sale of shares to Williams International is expected to occur next month. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1900 GMT, 4 Feb 99)

A week after the LUKoil statement, the Mazeikiai plant -- the only refinery in the Baltic states -- reported that a shutdown was imminent, since its oil supplies from Russia (managed by LUKoil and its subsidiaries) had ended. As plant operations ground to a halt and the refinery's director traveled to Moscow in order to negotiate for more crude oil, the Lithuanian government protested to Russia over the termination of supplies. "We have made checks and established that such contracts exist, which means that oil must be supplied to Lithuania," said Chancellor Kestutis Cilinskas. (Interfax, 1551 GMT, 1 Feb 99; FBIS-SOV-99-032) When questioned about the cutoff in supplies, a LUKoil representative blamed the refinery. According to LUKoil Baltija's director general, Ivan Paleichik, Mazeikiai Oil did not have any contracts for oil supplies with Russian companies. Previous contracts -- at US\$52 per ton -- provided for too little supplies, Paleichik added. However, according to LUKoil economics, paying more per ton would loosen any bottleneck in supplies: "The price is the key thing. If Mazeikiai Oil paid \$59 per ton, i.e., one dollar above the price (at which crude) is supplied to Ventspils, there would be plenty of oil," he said. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1100 GMT, 4 Feb 99) The Latvian port of Ventspils is the primary Baltic outlet for Russian crude oil exports. Despite Paleichik's claims, the Mazeikiai plant reportedly had signed agreements with several Russian companies for an additional 223,000 tons of crude oil for the first quarter of the year. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1100 GMT, 2 Feb 99) However, Mazeikiai Oil's general director, Gediminas Kiesus, admitted that such deals could have been voided if LUKoil withheld approval. "Such a thing may happen because LUKoil is the coordinator for oil supplies for the Baltic states," Kiesus said. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1400 GMT, 22 Jan 99) The plant controls over one-third of Lithuania's light product market. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1400 GMT, 27 Jan 99)

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