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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

The Family strikes back

The decision to sack Yevgeni Primakov and face the Duma's impeachment vote head-on is pure Yeltsin: last-minute resoluteness (or reckless stubbornness) in a confrontation, which brings the country to the brink of political chaos. When Yeltsin eventually prevails, as he has done a dumbfounding number of times, he then retreats on vacation while his gains are frittered away by Kremlin and government apparat ineptitude.

Just how Yeltsin managed a hat trick last month -- i.e., dislodging Primakov, dodging an impeachment charge and winning confirmation of Sergei Stepashin -- nearly defies explanation. And yet, as astonishing as Yeltsin's re-emergence and effective reassertion of authority may be, the utter confusion and back-room infighting evident in the selection of cabinet ministers represent an exponential magnification of the factional rivalries that have marred previous governments.

The fierceness of the personnel combat is necessitated by the scarcity of resources at stake. In this incarnation, the government's members seem less determined to protect or invigorate economic reforms; this government's raison d'etre appears to be to secure access to sufficient funds to influence the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections. That is, assuming elections will actually be held. Speculation is rampant over the possibility of canceling the elections, and it is with great pessimism I note that it now seems anything could happen in Russia this year.
For the record, following are the more contentious of the government appointments to date:

Sergei Stepashin -- Prime Minister
Nikolai Aksenenco -- First Deputy Prime Minister
Viktor Khristenko -- First Deputy Prime Minister

Valentina Matvienko -- Deputy Prime Minister (social policy)
Vladimir Shcherbak -- Deputy Prime Minister (agriculture)
Ilya Klebanov Deputy -- Prime Minister (military policy)
Vladimir Rushailo -- Interior Minister
Mikhail Kasayanov -- Finance Minister
Leonid Drachevsky -- CIS Affairs
Vyacheslav Mikhailov -- Nationalities Minister
Mikhail Fradkov -- Trade Minister
Viktor Orlov -- Natural Resources
Alex Pochinok -- Tax Collection
Farit Gazizullin -- Privatization
Viktor Kalyuzhny -- Fuel and Energy Minister
Ilya Yuzhanov -- Anti-monopoly

Andrei Chernenko will head up the government apparatus.

(MOSKOVSKY KOMSOMOLETS, 26 May 99; Agency WPS/nexis, and RUSSIA TODAY FEATURES, 1 Jun 99; www.russiatoday.com)

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations
By Chandler Rosenberger and Sarah Miller

Done deal, or deal undone?
As NATO’s air campaign against Serbia moved into its third month, the US administration and NATO spokesmen insisted that the alliance remained firmly united behind its military and political objectives. The administration, however, having turned over much of the negotiating process to the Russians, enabled Moscow to use the Balkan crisis for its own, quite distinct, ends. The peace deal touted at the end of May had fewer contradictions than the proposal put forward at the beginning of the month, but it fell far short of the aims the administration had touted as worth fighting for. Russia, meanwhile, emerged from the confusion strengthened.

The fog of peace

In early May the Clinton administration turned to the G-7, a body not previously known for its diplomatic role, as the multinational instrument through which to boost its Kosovo peace plan. The body was perhaps a natural choice, given that it includes only those NATO members most resolute in pursuit of the White House’s aims and is a regular host of Russia, the country through which the administration hoped to reach Belgrade. Even a good bottle, however, cannot disguise a bad wine, and the ambiguities of the G-7’s plan left a bad taste in all the parties’ mouths.

The proposal, for example, insisted that "international civil and security presences" protect returning Kosovar Albanian refugees, but did not specify whether this meant a heavily armed NATO force, as the White House demanded, or peace keepers drawn from neutral countries under the United Nations’ command, as Russia preferred. Under the plan, the Kosovo Liberation Army was to disarm -- a demand the KLA leadership had already rejected. Even the eventual legal status of Kosovo was described in utterly contradictory terms. Rule over Kosovo, the plan said, would be determined while "taking full account of the Rambouillet Accords and principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia." Since the Rambouillet Accords had included a referendum on Kosovo’s legal status, and since such a referendum would have
almost certainly produced a declaration of the province's independence, the G-7 plan was either insubstantial or insincere -- or both. (THE OTTAWA CITIZEN, 7 May 99; nexis)

**Safe European home**

The Clinton administration, however, not only put forward a bad plan: The US asked the Russians to implement it. Moscow promptly exploited the proposal's internal contradictions to its own advantage. Russian Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov may not have survived Boris Yel'tsin's latest return to the world stage, but Primakov's assertive foreign policy suddenly suited Yel'tsin more than ever. Under the direction of longtime Primakov protege Igor Ivanov, the Russian foreign ministry picked at the very Western alliance on whose behalf it was supposedly acting.

Ivanov, for example, continued Primakov's long-term strategy of cultivating relationships with NATO's continental members under the rubric of the common European home that they and Russia share. He first had French President Jacques Chirac endorse a bilateral French-Russia working group on the Balkans, the appointment of Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari as the UN's international mediator, and the positioning of the UN as final arbiter of peace. (RUSSIA TV, 1600 GMT, 13 May 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts/nexis) Invited to a meeting of European Union foreign ministers, Ivanov then met separately with Greek Foreign Minister Yeoryios Papandreou and later promoted a Greek plan for a cease-fire. (NET TV, 1500 GMT, 17 May 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts/nexis)

In his own presentation to the EU meeting, Ivanov outlined a vision of European security under which Russia and the EU would cooperate during crises. Later, Russian ambassador to the EU Vassily Likachev explained that Moscow and Brussels needed to work especially closely when "the different poles of this multipolar world behave differently." (EUROPE REPORT, 22 May 99; nexis)
In his continual demands that NATO halt its bombing campaign, Ivanov put the blame for upsetting a European peace on the alliance's military commanders and hinted that the United States' role in European security would have to be dramatically reduced. NATO's relations with Russia, Ivanov said, "could never be the same as they were before March 24," the day the bombing began. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 1042 GMT, 25 May 99; nexis) Later, Ivanov suggested alternatives to the alliance -- organizations of which Russia is a member and in which the United States has a minor role. "The Council of Europe has every chance of becoming a foundation of the European architecture, similar to the OSCE," Ivanov declared. "This is particularly important given the lessons of the ongoing Balkan crisis." (INTERFAX RUSSIAN NEWS, 26 May 99; nexis)

The Indispensable Nation
Despite Moscow's hostility both towards the NATO alliance and the bombing campaign it was pursuing, the Clinton administration leaned on Russian diplomacy. In fact, the White House depended so heavily on Moscow's supposed "special relationship" with Belgrade that Russia was able to hold the entire negotiating process hostage.

Whether Russia actually has deep historical ties to the Serbs is debatable. (See Rosenberger, Chandler, "Russia's 'Little Slav Brother'?" in PERSPECTIVE, March-April 99) The historical legitimacy of the supposed relationship became irrelevant as the White House propounded the theory and the Russians gladly accepted their enhanced prestige. Moscow's influence grew so great that on 21 May United States Deputy Secretary Strobe Talbot found himself negotiating with two Russian partners, first meeting with special envoy Viktor Chernomyrdin and UN representative Ahtisaari, then holding separate talks with Ivanov.

Russia thus appeared above a conflict in which the United States was merely one of the combatants. As the peace mediator, Russia expected its wishes to be
respected, envoy Chernomyrdin said. If not, "Russia will simply withdraw from this process," he told Russian TV. "This is not our war. We did not start it."

(RUSSIA TV, 2046 GMT, 24 May 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts/nexis)

Faced with such threats, Talbot watered down the United States' position. The White House no longer demanded that all Serb troops remove themselves permanently from Kosovo. If "Belgrade completes the withdrawal of troops [from Kosovo]," Talbot said, "the international community may stop and think about how to let some Belgrade officials come back to the region." Nor was the United States still insisting that the Rambouillet Accords form the basis of peace. The US and Russia agreed, Talbot said, that Kosovo must remain within Serbia. Talk of a referendum that might end in Kosovo's sovereignty was dropped. This was a relief, perhaps, to those who had found the contradictions in the US policy troubling. It threw into question, however, why the US had insisted on war in the first place. (INTERFAX RUSSIAN NEWS, 26 May 99; nexis)

**Collateral damage**

However much destruction NATO had wreaked on Serbia and its military in May, the Clinton administration's questionable diplomacy harmed US interests in Europe to an even greater degree. The administration may yet choose to ignore the peace plan that it negotiated through Russia's good offices, and fight on the ground for the principles that launched its campaign from the sky. Washington, however, has managed to squander diplomatic control over its own military campaign. To use the language with which it once blurred moral distinctions in Bosnia, the United States is now merely one of the "warring parties."

**Are you with us?**

Russian efforts to build better relations with China may be succeeding. Lately, Russia and China have been seeing eye to eye on many global issues, including Kosovo. Indeed, both have demanded that NATO stop the bombing in Yugoslavia before the G-8 peace proposal can be taken to the UN Security
Council. However, before NATO could be persuaded, it bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. In response, China has threatened to prevent a UN Security Council resolution to adopt the G-8 plan. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 12 May 99) In the wake of the Chinese embassy bombing, Russian Presidential Envoy Viktor Chernomyrdin traveled to Beijing to meet with Chinese President Jiang Zemin and Prime Minister Zhu Rongji to address the delicate matter. Russia has an interest in maintaining its relationship with China as well as in ending the Kosovo crisis. According to Chernomyrdin, his trip to Beijing focused on gaining Chinese support for the peace plan in the Security Council. Although the Chinese gave no indication of their decision after the meeting, the trip indicates Russia's commitment to a peaceful, diplomatic end to the conflict, especially if Russia's efforts look successful at NATO's expense.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch
By Michael Thurman

FEDERAL ASSEMBLY
A busy couple of weeks for the Duma
Prime Minister Primakov was dismissed and his first deputy, Sergei Stepashin, was nominated to fill his position. This came just before the Duma debate on removing Yel'tsin on five articles of impeachment, the most serious of which was complicity in the bloody war in Chechnya. Some thought that the sacking of the popular prime minister would push enough legislators into the anti-Yel'tsin camp to pass one or more of the articles. This did not happen. The Duma then confirmed Stepashin's nomination for prime minister.
Two important questions can be asked in light of these recent events: Has Yel'tsin won at the Duma's expense, and what will a Stepashin prime ministership mean for the upcoming Duma elections?

It had become quite common to claim that Primakov was the real power in Moscow, with help from his Communist allies in the Duma. Yel'tsin was cast as a waning monarch who had become a national embarrassment. However, such assessments neglected to take into account the fact that the prime minister, no matter how powerful, serves at the pleasure of the president. The Duma, or more accurately the anti-Yel'tsin camp of deputies, lost in two ways: without the patronage of a prime minister like Primakov (Stepashin is loyal to the president), the Duma will be increasingly marginalized; and by voting for Stepashin, it has shown it cannot stand up to the president in the run-up to the elections in the fall. Not much more should be expected from this Duma.

However, the Duma's return to the margins of Russian political power is not so surprising: It is accustomed to being there. What is new, and will have a potentially far greater impact on the future of the federation, is the person of the prime minister. In an interview given just after his appointment as first deputy prime minister, Stepashin spoke of Yel'tsin's motives: "The president explained his decision in a conversation with me by the fact that there was a need to increase the work with the regions. This includes using the potential of the Ministry of Internal Affairs -- I think you understand what I mean by that. Secondly, there also is much work to be done in connection with the upcoming elections. The point is to stop criminal elements from getting to power whether in the executive branch or the legislative branch. In this sense, a first deputy premier who simultaneously is the minister of internal affairs and looks after regional policy and other areas of policy has a fairly major role to play." (NTV, 1700 GMT, 2 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0502)
With political parties and movements proliferating all over the place, and with the regions feeling their oats, Yel'tsin could easily be concerned that he may not be able to influence significantly the elections to the Duma in December and to the presidency a year after that. A prime minister with ready access to the troops of the state police, and one who is not afraid to use them, may be in a better position to push and prod at the edges of the electoral process to obtain a favorable outcome.

**POLITICAL PARTIES**

**All-Russia movement plans to cooperate with new government**

The most recent, and potentially the most viable political movement, All-Russia, has announced it will cooperate with the new government of Sergei Stepashin. All-Russia was formed to represent the interests of the regions and it actively solicits support from the country’s governors. Although it is not a party, the movement could influence the coming elections by allying itself with a party which has registered to run.

Mintimir Shaimiev, the president of Tatarstan, claimed that the movement would seek to win a majority in the Duma in the upcoming elections, thereby ideologically linking the Federation Council and the Duma. (INTERFAX NEWS AGENCY, 22 May 99; nexis)

**Russian Federation: Armed Forces**

By CDR Fred Drummond

**Is there a doctrine in the house?**

Months before Operation Allied Force unleashed NATO’s airpower against Serbia, there were numerous calls within Russia to reform the country’s military doctrine. The conflict in the Balkans brought a new wave of criticism of the
existing doctrine, and new statements from Russian officials that military doctrine and security issues need to be revised.

Background:
In 1993 the document "Main Provisions of the Russian Federation Military Doctrine" was published. This was significant for two reasons. First, the Soviet Union never published a single source official military doctrine. Westerners were able to piece together what in effect was the Soviet doctrine only through careful analysis of Russian military writings in various journals and publications. Second, the publication of the doctrine in 1993 gave the West insight into the emerging Russian Federation's military direction. Looking back at the document with recent statements in mind, questions arise as to what part of the doctrine is seen to be needing revision. Some of the stated political foundations of the doctrine represented quite a departure from the Soviet era. Acknowledging the end of the Cold War with the statement of "overcoming of the confrontation brought about by the ideological standoff," the new doctrine stated plainly that the Russian Federation "does not treat any of the states as an adversary." Nuclear weapons were a key deterrent force, but Russia would work to reduce nuclear forces to a minimum and support stopping nuclear weapons testing. The primary sources of potential conflict were seen as nationalist and religious wars and conflicts, with those that were in the "immediate vicinity" of the Russian borders posing threats to the Federation. (MILITARY THOUGHT, special issue November 93, pp. 2-3)

The basic doctrine was modified in the following years, but those key concepts remained. Now, alarmed by NATO's (and, by implication, US) intervention within the internationally recognized borders of a sovereign country, Moscow may be working on a doctrinal revision. Defense Minister Igor Sergeev said that he received instructions from the president of the Russian Federation on this issue, but gave no details. (ITAR-TASS, 0736 GMT, 14 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0514) It's one thing when reading sentiments of this nature in Rossiyskaya gazeta, Komsomol'skaya gazeta, or (especially) Sovetskaya Rossiya, but Sergeev's
comments elevate the revision calls to a higher, more serious level. Unfortunately for the Russian officials, though, there is a critical gap between words in a document and the military and economic power to back up a more aggressive stance. Interestingly, Tass released two more press releases quoting Sergeev saying the same thing on 14 and 25 May, apparently in the belief that repeating anything often enough will make it so.

There were other similar, and familiar, press reports during May. In an address prepared for a military parade in Moscow, ITAR-TASS pulled out Sergeev's comments on the strength of Russia's nuclear forces and made a short release of that; ten days later a "leading Russian foreign policy analyst" called for a policy of "early use of nuclear weapons at the first sign of a threat." (ITAR-TASS, 1214 GMT, 7 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0507 and BNS, 1534 GMT, 17 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0517) Combined with the many published critiques of NATO's policies and actions, a change in doctrine seems inevitable. But is it really? The major US newspapers pretty much ignored these statements, as did the US government, at least publicly. Perhaps the West is taking most of these outwardly belligerent statements for what they are, examples of Russian frustration at the marginalization of Russia's influence on the world stage. The West, as well as the Russians, know that no real change in Russia's military direction can take place in the current economic situation. As a reminder of that, let's look at some other news items. In the meantime, if Russia succeeds in finding a diplomatic solution to the Kosovo crisis, perhaps that will be enough to restore some Russian pride and reduce the calls for revising its military doctrine.

Let's party
Tass reported on drug addiction and alcoholism in the Russian military in late May. The information came from members of the Main Military Prosecutor's Office. Its director stated that part of the problem is that the makeup of the armed forces reflects that of society at large; he also noted that the US experienced similar problems but solved them through an integrated effort to combat narcotics
distribution. (ITAR-TASS, 0947 GMT, 20 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0520) It was unclear if the director was referring to US military counter-drug efforts or the general war on drugs conducted by civilian authorities throughout the land. It is true that in the 1970s the US armed forces, with the significant players probably being the Army and the Navy, experienced serious drug abuse problems within the ranks. After rigorous programs were instituted, including mandatory random drug screenings which continue to this day, the US reduced illegal drug use to a very low level. So, with the right approach, and resources, such problems are not insurmountable.

On a lighter note, the Russian Pacific Fleet had two birthday parties this year, sort of. Turns out that the 21 April celebration of the fleet's 67th anniversary was off by a month and a few years, as historians determined that the Russian senate actually established the Okhotsk port and military flotilla on 21 May 1731. The party celebrating the 268th anniversary must have been a blast: The officers were to be entertained by the historians who discovered the "historic truth." (ITAR-TASS, 0040 GMT, 21 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0521) No word on what refreshments may have been served.

There isn't much to celebrate about the Russian air force these days, based on an Interfax report. (INTERFAX, 0706 GMT, 22 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0522) The short release starts out on a deceptive note, stating that "over one billion rubles" were saved by the merger of the Air Force (VVS) and the Air Defense Troops (VPVO) into one service. More than 44,000 personnel were retired, all with pay, which is indeed good news. Then comes the rest of the story. Training flights were cut in half, so that pilots now get 50 hours of flight time per year. Training flights for "graduates of Air Force schools were slashed to 100 hours, while the norm is 250 hours." To put those hours in perspective, US military tactical (i.e., fighter-type) pilots log about 20-25 hours each month on a normal basis, excluding operations in the Balkans and Iraq. USN student pilots undergo 250-275 hours of training before receiving their wings. USAF pilot training is
similar in length. Just as telling as to the state of the Russian air force were aircraft acquisitions: The service received 77 aircraft in 1992; 66 in '93; 29 in '94; 31 in '95; 19 in '96; 6 in '97; and zero in 1998.

This column will go on hiatus until August, when the 1999-2000 military fellows will resume covering the Russian armed forces. Inbound are Lt Col Jill Skelton, USAF, and LCDR James Duke, USN. CDR Drummond will be joining the staff of Commander Carrier Group Four in mid-June.

Newly Independent States: CIS
By Sarah Miller

Defense ministers meet in Yerevan
On 20 May, the CIS defense ministers held their first session since the CIS Collective Security Treaty withdrawals and GUUAM enlargement last month. Although the Russian government has stressed that withdrawal from the Collective Security Treaty does not affect CIS membership, the attendance roster in Yerevan suggests that GUUAM members do intend to limit their involvement, at least in military-related CIS affairs. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan opted not to attend, while Moldova and Ukraine, as well as non-GUUAM members Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, sent only representatives. In contrast, Armenia, Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan -- all of which are members of the Collective Security Treaty and traditionally pro-Russian on CIS matters -- sent their defense ministers. Prior to the meeting, the Armenian and Belarusian ministers took the opportunity to sign a military bilateral agreement which "lays the legal foundations for military cooperation between Yerevan and Minsk," according to the Belarusian minister. (INTERFAX, 0814 GMT, 20 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0520) The session addressed many issues of CIS military cooperation, including coordination efforts, Collective Security implementation, and a CIS air defense system. (ITAR-TASS, 1240 GMT, 20 May 99; FBIS-SOV-
In effect, the meeting highlighted the increasing polarization of the CIS in the past month between the "Russian 6" (the five ministerial Yerevan attendees plus Tajikistan) and GUUAM. The venue alone -- Yerevan, instead of a more neutral capital -- did little to make non-Collective Security members feel welcomed at the session.

In with the new...

New CIS Executive Chairman Yuri Yarov met with new Russian Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin in Moscow on 22 May to discuss CIS reorganization efforts in preparation for the 4 June CIS Heads of State summit. (INTERFAX, 0650 GMT, 22 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0522) The two met after Yarov's first round of CIS-wide shuttle diplomacy. Yarov has indicated that his foremost concerns are implementation of a CIS single economic zone and downsizing of the CIS executive structure, both of which were discussed at the last CIS Heads of State summit. (See The NIS Observed, 26 April 99) Thus far, Yarov has failed to persuade several CIS members that a single economic zone is in their interest, especially since membership could conflict with possible membership in other non-CIS economic organizations such as the World Trade Organization.

According to Turkmen President Saparmurad Niyazov, joining the CIS free trade zone is unfeasible since there is no way of assuring an "equal and mutually advantageous partnership." (INTERFAX, 1122 GMT, 14 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0514) In fact, only 6 out of 12 CIS members have signed the 1994 agreement, which was scheduled to become effective on 1 January 1999. (SNARK, 1530 GMT, 19 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0520)

Meanwhile, GUAM has taken steps to realize a new economic partnership with Poland that would pipe oil along a proposed Baku-Gdansk line. The plan has been discussed at several bilateral meetings between Ukraine, Poland and Azerbaijan. Ukraine has taken the initiative to develop relations with both countries and has nearly completed its end of the deal, a large-capacity oil terminal outside of Odessa. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 18 May 99) If
the pipeline does open, it will provide an alternative route for oil that cannot be pumped through the unfinished Baku-Ceyhan line while providing another new economic partnership with Poland, a NATO nation. In light of Azeri, Georgian, and Ukrainian interest in NATO programs and eventual membership, these economic inroads could prove helpful in the future.

Newly Independent States: Western Region
By Tammy Lynch

UKRAINE

Much ado about not much; No ado about everything else
Police in Simferopol are searching for the individual(s) who set off an explosive device near Communist Party headquarters during the Crimean Tatar demonstration commemorating their expulsion in 1944. The explosive device was reportedly planted in the vicinity of a tent city erected by the demonstrators in Lenin Square.

From the amount of attention given the event by the news media, one would assume that the explosion caused major damage, or at least substantial injuries. The media explained that the explosion "shook the building of Ukraine's Communist Party" (UKRAINIAN TV THIRD PROGRAMME, 1500 GMT, 20 May 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts/nexis) and "... a missile exploded in the air ... in the vicinity of the tent city." Russia's NTV reported that "last night's explosion may shutter [sic] the fragile stability that the authorities have managed to achieve in the republic." (NTV, 0400 GMT, 23 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0523)

However, there were, in fact, no injuries, and the only damage now appears to have been a few broken windows in the Communist headquarters building. Meanwhile, the deputy chairman of the unrecognized Tatar Assembly denied that demonstrators had been involved in the incident. Remzi Ablaev blamed "certain
forces" for trying to "drive a wedge between the Crimean Tatars and other members of Crimean society." (ITAR-TASS WORLD SERVICE, 1245 GMT, 23 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0523)

The apparent outrage over this incident contrasts sharply with the almost complete lack of attention given to the significant rise of violence against Tatars. As reported in The NIS Observed of 10 May, several mosques were recently destroyed in suspicious fires, graveyards were seriously damaged and a monument to those who died during deportation in 1944 was vandalized. The negative attention also overlooked the general peacefulness of the protest. Although the Tatars held a week of demonstrations in at least six major Crimean cities, culminating in 40,000 people converging on Lenin Square on 18 May, there was no violence reported until the explosion. Despite this fact, and despite the massive numbers of protesters, there was minimal press coverage of events commemorating the deportations.

In contrast, the "First Congress of Ukrainian Russians," held in Kyiv on 22 May, garnered significant attention by both the media and the government. President Leonid Kuchma sent a message of greeting to the participants. That greeting read, in part, "Our state shows constant concern for ensuring the constitutional rights and vital needs of those Russians for whom Ukraine has become home and promotes the preservation of their ethnic, linguistic and cultural distinctiveness." (ITAR-TASS WORLD SERVICE, 0739 GMT, 22 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0522) Unfortunately, no such greeting was sent to the Tatars, and none is expected any time soon.

**Everybody smile and say, 'Decree!'**

Question: How many decrees does it take to make a re-elected president?
Answer: As many as Leonid Kuchma can sign by 31 October.
Just days after the official start of the presidential campaign, and armed with a suggestion by the IMF that the organization may grant Ukraine an additional $350 million this year if progress is made on reforms, President Leonid Kuchma has begun a new decree spree.

In mid-May, Kuchma announced that, on 1 June, he would introduce at least six new decrees and over a dozen other presidential "measures" dealing with everything from banking to tariffs to licensing of businesses to tax breaks to privatization tenders to repayment of wages. The measures include detailed sell-offs of hundreds of state companies and at least 20 land sites. (INTELNEWS, 0600 GMT, 18 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0518)

The decree spree was highlighted by Kuchma in Lvov at a conference of executives from Western companies. At the conference, Kuchma seemed confident of an election victory. "Ukraine's policy will remain balanced, consecutive and there will be no throwback," he said. "I am sure that the future presidential election will bring no surprise." His decrees will "make life easier" for foreign investors, he said. (REUTERS, 24 May 99; Russia Today)

In spite of the support given Kuchma's actions by the IMF, many of the announced decrees and measures seem impractical in today's political environment, while others seem to be simple election pandering.

For example, although Kuchma announced on 17 May that the large number of state companies protected from privatization because of "strategic importance" would be "reduced within one month," on 21 May, his cabinet of ministers added 70 new companies to that list.

In addition, Kuchma announced many "draft laws" to be submitted to parliament that stand little chance of passage. His privatization and tax decrees also will
undoubtedly encounter trouble in the parliament. Past Kuchma privatization and tax decrees have become the subject of a power struggle between the presidential administration and the parliament. In fact, the parliament voted on 14 May to halt the privatization of a large aluminum plant; a privatization that had been sought and approved by the Kuchma administration under a 1993 decree. (REUTERS, 14 May 99; Russia Today) In a frightening commentary on the state of Ukrainian politics, it is unclear whether the parliament's vote to halt this privatization is binding, since the chain of command in Ukraine has become so confused. Do Kuchma's decrees overrule the votes of the parliament, or is it the other way around? No one -- not Kuchma nor the members of parliament -- seem to be able to provide that answer. In this environment, Kuchma's decrees have occasionally been effective, but often not. Nevertheless, Kuchma's announcement garnered support from the Western companies represented in Lvov. Perhaps Western investors understand that in Ukraine, "occasionally effective" is better than not at all.

BELARUS

And the winner is ... a secret

Like fireworks that fizzle before being shot into the sky, the Belarusian opposition-sponsored presidential election has ended with a pop rather than an explosion. After 10 days of voting conducted in "mobile polling stations" erected by the opposition, the alternative presidential election produced only one clear winner ... Alyaksandr Lukashenka's dictatorial policies.

On 19 May, Viktor Hanchar, chairman of the Central Election Committee, quietly declared the results of the election to be invalid, without announcing which candidate had received the most votes. Just two days earlier, Hanchar had announced himself satisfied with the voting, saying that voter turnout had been over 50%, and therefore, the election results would be valid. (BELAPAN, 1330 GMT, 17 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0517) "The turnout itself demonstrates a rejection of the regime by the population," he said. He believed the election
would have "serious" international consequences, and that it would give a "powerful impetus to governmental and international organizations," ensuring "a different attitude by the OSCE and other international organizations."

These statements turned out to be wishful thinking, however. By 17 May, police had arrested over 100 opposition vote-takers and were holding one of the two opposition candidates, Mikhail Chygir, in jail indefinitely, while the OSCE had arrived to announce that the election was important to democratic principles, but that it would not "meet the OSCE's standards." (BELAPAN, 1210 GMT, 18 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0518) At the same time, there was palpable silence from many international organizations, and few countries expressed more than passive support for the activities of the opposition.

Perhaps most importantly, when Hanchar made his statements of success, the votes had not been counted. It can be inferred from his statements during the press conference that Alyaksandr Lukashenka received the highest number of votes. "... [S]ince the state bodies of power have barred citizens from electing a president freely and have denied them a right to discuss the candidate's election programs comprehensively and freely, the election outcome has been declared invalid," he said. (INTERFAX, 1525 GMT, 19 May 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts/nexis)

The election was also undermined by the sudden and questionable withdrawal of Zenon Poznyak, the candidate representing the Popular Front. Poznyak withdrew his name from consideration just days before the close of voting because of "irregularities."

Within days of Hanchar's announcement invalidating the election results, the European Union and the United States released statements praising the efforts of the opposition. The statements called on Lukashenka to begin negotiations with opposition representatives. (EUROPEAN NEWS SERVICE, 22 May 99;
nexus, and US Department of State, 20 May 99; www.secretary.state.gov/www/briefings/statements) Meanwhile, Hanchar has vowed to hold another election "with new candidates" in three months. (REUTERS, 20 May 99; Russia Today) Perhaps this time the fireworks will at least get off the ground.

MOLDOVA

Same ole, same ole
Moldova's government structure will remain unchanged, after the failure of a referendum that would have increased dramatically the powers of President Petru Lucinschi. Although 60 percent of those casting ballots approved the measure, voter turnout was only 56 percent. According to Moldova's constitution, turnout needed to be 60 percent for the referendum to be valid. (REUTERS, 25 May 99; Russia Today)

The failure of the referendum leaves Moldova with perhaps the most powerful parliament among all CIS states, and the least powerful president. Moldova's constitution dictates that the cabinet be formed from a specific formula based on parliamentary majority. The lack of a majority in the last election resulted in fragile coalitions and two changes of government in the last several months. The president also has minimal decree powers, a fact which has often left the government paralyzed in a struggle between the leftist parliament and centrist president. Lucinschi has not stated whether he will hold another referendum on the same issue in the future.

During the same election, voters cast ballots in regional elections. Results in seven of the nine regions have so far been declared valid. Under 20 percent of the residents of Chisinau voted, however, making a second election necessary. It is widely expected that incumbent Mayor Serafim Urecheanu will eventually be declared the winner. (ITAR-TASS WORLD SERVICE, 1605 GMT, 23 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0523)
ARMENIA

Unity bloc takes the lead

The Unity bloc, headed by the last pre-independence Armenian leader, Karen Demirchian, and the current defense minister, Vazgen Sargsian, became the largest party in parliament following the 30 May elections. The Unity party won 40 percent of the vote; the Communist Party came in second with 12.5 percent. (REUTERS, 2 Jun 99; nexis) Despite errors in the voting rolls and some reports of ballot tampering, the Central Electoral Commission approved the results immediately. The first group of European observers to publicize an appraisal of the poll, the European Institute for the Media (EIM), described the journalistic coverage of the campaign as "neutral and objective." The Armenian media rated "okay" in relation to European standards and "good" in comparison with other post-Soviet states. (SNARK, 1300 GMT, 31 May 99; BBC Worldwide Monitoring/nexis)

Under Armenian law, Vano Siradegian's parliament seat extends his immunity from prosecution. Siradegian, who has been accused of ordering contract killings while he served as interior minister in Levon Ter-Petrosian's government, has not been prosecuted fully due to his immunity as the leader of the Armenian Pan-National Movement and his status as an electoral candidate.

Echoes of Kosovo

The leaders of the Caucasian states did not wait for a resolution for an end to the bombing of Serbia to draw lessons from the conflict. While in Washington for the NATO summit, Armenia's foreign minister drew parallels between Armenia's support for Nagorno-Karabakh and NATO's support of the Kosovar Albanians. "By using our own forces, we created a security buffer. What NATO is trying to
achieve today in Kosovo is what Armenians did in Nagorno-Karabakh. We did NATO's job at the time." (WASHINGTON POST, 28 Apr 99; nexis) This statement provoked biting criticism in Yerevan where the prevailing mood favors Russia and Serbia and regards Turkey and the Albanians with hostility. "Both Serbs and Armenians, not only the Karabakh Armenians, defended their motherland(!) respectively from Albanian-Muslim and Turkic expansion."
(GOLOS ARMENII, 5 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0507)

President Heydar Aliev of Azerbaijan offered a different view: "[T]he territorial integrity of every nation should be inviolable. We are against separatism." (WASHINGTON POST, 28 Apr 99; nexis) Although the Azerbaijani government seeks membership in NATO, and has taken every opportunity to show goodwill to the West (even volunteering to send personnel to Kosovo at the outset of the crisis), Aliev fears the precedent that the Kosovo crisis may set. On what grounds can NATO members continue to insist on a restoration of Azerbaijan's sovereignty over all of its territory if they preside over the partition of Serbia?

AZERBAIJAN
What price oil as deadline for the Ceyhan pipeline approaches?
Construction of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline could start in the next three months, Heydar Aliev announced in late May. Ankara echoed this optimistic assessment when the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources offered the terms of a commercial proposal to Azerbaijan. Citing the 13 April Istanbul Declaration, Ankara stressed its commitment to finalizing three key agreements in early June. (ANATOLIA, 0938 GMT, 27 May 99; BBC Worldwide Monitoring/nexis)

The construction of the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline has been repeatedly postponed because neither the governments nor the companies concerned have come up with the necessary funds. The dramatic decline in the price of oil in 1998 and early 1999 to the nadir since the 1950s represented particularly bad luck for
Azerbaijan and Turkey because it has discouraged the consortium member companies from making the necessary investments.

The cost of building the pipeline, estimates of which vary between $2.5 billion and $4 billion, will be easier to meet now that the price of oil has rebounded. Since the end of 1998 it has gone up 60 percent from about $10 to $16 per barrel and some experts predict an increase to as much as $20 or $21. (BUFFALO NEWS, 25 May 99; nexis) Under such conditions the pipeline to Ceyhan may turn out to be much more profitable than previously expected.

Recent events reveal another advantage of the Ceyhan route: its independence from Russia and the Persian Gulf. As oil prices began to show a recovery in March, several of the major oil producers, including OPEC, Russia, and Mexico, announced they would reduce the amount they supply in an effort to drive prices even higher. As an oil-importing state, the US would benefit if a new independent oil producer entered the market.

**Russian journal exhibits rare candor**
In its March 1999 issue, the journal Vlast (Power), which draws its audience from the presidential administration, the government, and the Federal Assembly, ran the article "Caspian Oil and Russian Security," by Artem Mal'gin, an instructor of International Relations at the Moscow State Institute for International Relations (MGIMO), which falls under the foreign ministry.

Mal'gin argues that American interests require that the US pursue non-OPEC sources of oil, while Russia stands to benefit from "limiting the number of 'sellers' on the energy market, which would allow them to agree upon and maintain the necessary price level. The appearance of new independent or US-dependent market participants is disadvantageous for Russia."
Some may note that the oil producers have failed to collude successfully to set the price on numerous recent occasions and that the volume of oil from the Caspian would not come in sufficiently large quantity to alter the market price. Still, the political implications of his argument are clear: Russian interests are served best if Caspian oil remains in the ground. But if it must reach the market, it should go through Russian pipelines.

How will Russia pursue this objective? This "became evident in January-February of this year and in the first place concerns the Baku-Ceyhan route. On the eve of the adoption of the final decision regarding the route of the main artery for Caspian oil, Armenia tapped into the PVO [air defense system] of the CIS. In this way, the republic falls under Russia's powerful 'umbrella'. The existence of this 'umbrella', as many in Baku believe, can stiffen Yerevan's resolve in the negotiations over Nagorno-Karabakh, where in the event of renewed hostilities the military balance would not be in Azerbaijan's favor." Moreover, Western investors, Mal'gin argues, must worry about the proximity of Nagorno-Karabakh to the export route: Wouldn't they be scared off by a new upsurge in the fighting?

This rather blatant threat comes from a person who teaches Russia's future foreign policy practitioners and a journal aimed at its current policy makers. Interestingly, it contains no mention of the legal status of the Caspian, or of a legality of any kind.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia
By Monika Shepherd

TAJIKISTAN
Opposition threatening to withdraw from NRC for second time
The United Tajik Opposition (UTO) is threatening to withdraw its representatives from the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) for the second time since the June 1997 signing of the inter-Tajik peace agreement, unless President
Rahmonov and his administration agree to the immediate fulfillment of a number of conditions. These conditions include: the release of 93 opposition troops from prison, in accordance with the amnesty law which President Rahmonov finally agreed to put into effect earlier in the month; the granting of full legal status to the opposition parties and organizations which constitute the UTO; removal of restrictions on the opposition media, which were officially prohibited in 1993 by Tajikistan's Supreme Court; the transfer to UTO members of their full 30 percent share in the country's executive and legislative bodies, both at the national and local level; 30 percent representation in Tajikistan's foreign diplomatic missions and in the banking sector by the opposition; and the approval of the UTO's nominee for the post of defense minister, Mirzo Ziyo. The deadline for these demands to be met is mid-July. The opposition leadership would also like to see parliamentary elections held prior to the presidential elections, contrary to President Rahmonov's proposal. (ITAR-TASS WORLD SERVICE, 1236 GMT, 24 May 99; BBC Worldwide Monitoring/nexis, and RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 25 May 99)

Said Abdullo Nuri, the chairman of both the UTO and NRC, had already published a number of these demands in an open letter to UN Special Envoy to Tajikistan Jan Kubis approximately three weeks ago, when the peace process stalled over President Rahmonov's refusal to approve the NRC's proposed constitutional amendments. At a news conference following his return to Dushanbe from Iran (where he had been receiving medical treatment), Nuri explained the reasons behind the UTO leaders' decision to withdraw their representatives from the NRC if their demands are not soon met. He stated that the NRC would not be able to complete its remaining tasks until the president and his administration agree to meet the UTO's demands (most of which are stipulated by the political protocol) and therefore it would be futile for the opposition representatives to attend any further NRC meetings. He added that the government's reluctance to implement the terms of the political protocol was causing considerable dissatisfaction among UTO members, as well as creating a serious obstacle to any further progress in the peace process. (VOICE OF THE
President Rahmonov has assured everyone that he firmly intends to hold new presidential elections by the time his own term of office ends and that new parliamentary elections will then follow. However, he seems to have forgotten that, unless the opposition parties which make up the UTO are legalized with ample time to organize political campaigns, the next presidential and parliamentary elections will be as meaningless as the last ones were. It is not surprising that President Rahmonov is less than willing to create conditions for free and fair elections; however, it is surprising that he has chosen to flout the terms of the peace agreement so openly. It is also worth noting that although spokespersons from the EU, the UN, the United States and Iran have urged the Tajik president to accelerate the rate of the peace process by complying with the political protocol, the Russian government has so far remained silent. Russia recently signed a military cooperation agreement with Tajikistan which grants the Russian government an even greater degree of influence over Tajikistan's affairs than in the past. The agreement also reaffirmed Russia's support for Tajikistan's current regime. As a result, President Rahmonov may now feel confident enough to ignore international pressure and adhere to his own agenda, which is unlikely to include ceding power to members of the opposition.

Over 1,000 UTO troops now working for Russian border guard
According to Major-General Mahmudbek Ahmedov, more than 1,000 troops from the Tajik opposition forces have been integrated into Tajikistan's State Border Protection Committee and now assist in patrolling the Ishkoshim, Murghob, Panj and Qala-i Khum sections of Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan and China. Former UTO troops are also stationed along the Tajik-Uzbek and Tajik-Kyrgyz border. Although the State Border Protection Committee is a Tajik entity, it is operationally subordinate to the Russian Federal Border Service command stationed in Tajikistan. Russian troops guard Tajikistan's "external" borders and
supervise the activities of the Tajik State Border Protection units which operate there. Tajikistan's "internal" borders are guarded only by native forces, which now consist of approximately 9,000 men. (ITAR-TASS WORLD SERVICE, 0534 GMT, 4 May 99; The British Broadcasting Corporation/nexis)

These appear to be the only UTO troops which have thus far been fully integrated into Tajikistan's national armed services. By assigning the UTO troops to border guard units, the Tajik government accomplishes a number of aims. Firstly, the opposition fighters are kept well away from President Rahmonov's center of power in Dushanbe, which has shown itself to be quite vulnerable to attacks from discontented militia leaders. Border guard duty is also a fairly difficult and dangerous task, which frequently involves shoot-outs with groups of smugglers from Afghanistan. The UTO units, seasoned as they are, will no doubt have their hands full trying to curb the narcotics and weapons trade. Their proximity to the smuggling trade also provides an opportunity for Tajik government officials and Russian border guard commanders to use them as scapegoats in the corruption scandals which occasionally surface in the Tajik government. Finally, the Tajik government has managed to assign ultimate responsibility for the former UTO troops' conduct to the Russian border guard command, instead of to Tajik military leaders. Thus, none of Tajikistan's government or military officials will have to answer for the former UTO fighters' shortcomings.

Newly Independent States: Baltic States

By Kate Martin

ESTONIA

Activities of special ops leader focus attention on group's lack of oversight

While President Lennart Meri would not accept Defense Forces Commander Lt. Gen. Johannes Kert's resignation over the issue, charges of criminal activity by
the leader of the forces' Special Operations Group will likely continue to have reverberations. An ad hoc commission examining the group cited a discrepancy between the actual and legal chain of command of the unit, and suggested that there had been violations of various regulations by members. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 2 Jun 99) According to police, Sgt. Indrek Holm, the acting head of the Special Operations Group, has been pursuing extracurricular activity that clearly conflicts with his job. In mid-May Holm was shot in the shoulder and the head when he and his accomplices attempted to rob three men near the village of Kaberneeme, police said, in an operation that bears similarities to a robbery that occurred in January east of Tallinn in which a cash collector was killed. In both robberies, three perpetrators, wearing dark clothing and black masks, first clubbed a security guard and then attacked the driver, according to Baltic News Service, and the same caliber gun was used both times. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 18 May 99) Holm reportedly used his service weapon, a Glock pistol, in the May attack. The Special Operations Group he commands is officially subordinated to the defense forces' guards battalion and military police.

Don't let the door hit you ...

President Lennart Meri, clearly indicating that enough is enough, has suggested other uses for the funds of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) than its current mission in Tallinn. "... I think the OSCE Mission should be, not wound up, but reorganized so that it would also in the future help our state overcome the Soviet past," Meri said, suggesting that perhaps a research center, or an academic chair at Tartu University, could be considered. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 7 May 99)

OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities Max van der Stoel continues to pepper the government with recommendations about amendments to its laws on elections and language. The election law will require fluency in the Estonian language for members of parliament and local self-government councils. The
language law amendment mandates the use of the Estonian language in the private sphere as well. According to Prime Minister Mart Laar, the government has higher priorities than discussing Stoel's memorandum. "It is nice for Estonia to have such an active adviser who sends us letters of different contents, which we here read with great interest," he added. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 6 May 99) One of Laar's higher priorities was taking the visiting president of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Lord Russell-Johnston, on a tour of the northeastern region of the country, where the population is predominantly Russian-speaking. The visit seemed to pay off, since Russell-Johnston announced he heard no complaints of discrimination during his visit. He also took the opportunity to support vocally the much-discussed language law. "I'm not an expert in this field, but Estonian is the official language in Estonia and I don't see any reason why people here shouldn't be able to speak it," he remarked at Concordia University in Tallinn. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1300 GMT, 12 May 99)

Another group quickly becoming organization non grata is the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS). The council's commissioner, Ole Espersen, often has echoed allegations emanating from Russia that there are human rights violations occurring in Estonia. Continuing the new tactic of Estonian officials to stop accepting free unsolicited advice on the country's legislation, Foreign Minister Toomas Hendrik Ilves said the CBSS is addressing matters outside its purview. "The Council of the Baltic Sea States should concentrate on solving economic problems," Ilves said. "...Estonia's official position is that the mandate of [Council Commissioner] Ole Espersen is fulfilled. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 17 May 99)

LATVIA

Political typhoon rocks ship of state

A political crisis nearly swamped Prime Minister Vilis Kristopans last month, and, while he survived a vote of no confidence in parliament, the storm may not have
passed yet. The catalyst for the crisis was at times quite vocal dissension, claims and counterclaims between the government and one of its members, Economics Minister Ainars Slesers. Slesers charged that entrepreneur and Ventspils Mayor Aivars Lembergs held too much sway over the Kristopans government. Slesers also said that Lembergs had named himself a state trustee in the Latvian energy company Latvenergo, and in reaction to Slesers' accusations of possible conflict of interest, brought pressure to bear on the ministry and the government. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1800 GMT, 10 May 99) Slesers, a member of the New Party, indeed was forced from his position after he failed to take advantage of the opportunity to resign voluntarily. He claims the dismissal was due to his unwillingness to heed "the dictate by sponsors." (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1800 GMT, 10 May 99) Much more likely a motivating force is Kristopans' oft-stated refusal to deal with vocal opposition from within his government.

However, rumors had begun to swirl earlier in the month, with reports from the Kristopans camp that the opposition was attempting to destabilize the government. Intimations of increasing instability were verified by members of the government and of the opposition, which hinted that defections from the government coalition could lead to Kristopans' overthrow. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1800 GMT, 6 May 99) Opposition People's Party spokesman Gundars Berzins said his faction was waiting for action by members of the coalition, specifically the New Party, to initiate a vote of no confidence. "This is a decisive moment in the fate of the New Party and the government's survival is in the New Party's hands," Berzins said. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 10 May 99) In the end it was Skele's People's Party that filed the motion to hold a vote of no confidence in the parliament against Kristopans. While Kristopans claimed the move was political, and Lembergs charged Skele with fomenting instability in the government to further his own business interests (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1300 GMT, 12 May 99), the real catalyst most probably is a combination of the two. Still smarting from earlier scandals
that virtually ensure he won't lead a Latvian government despite the continued popularity of his People's Party, Skele has not hesitated to voice his disapproval of the incumbent PM. Moreover, given the current discussions concerning privatization, the government needs to appear balanced in its dealings with all economic interests that are eager to participate in the process. In the end, the New Party remained with the coalition government. The motion of no confidence failed to pass with 24 votes for, 60 against, and 14 abstention. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 20 May 99)

LITHUANIA

Government instability ends in new leadership

While dissent within the government coalition was not sufficient to topple Latvia's government, discord between the prime minister and president in Lithuania (see The NIS Observed, 19 May 99) did manage to bring in new leadership. Although the Conservative Party political council at first promised not to accept any nomination for PM to replace member Gediminas Vagnorius, the tune changed when President Valdas Adamkus began discussions with Rolandas Paksas, mayor of Vilnius. Thus, on 5 May the political council announced that "the president should not nominate and appoint a Conservative party member to the prime minister's post." (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 5 May 99) Less than one week later, Conservative faction spokesman Arvydas Vidziunas announced a reversal: "If a member of the Conservative Party accepts at his own free will the presidential trust and the proposal to become a candidate to the prime ministerial post, the parliamentary Conservative faction will not mind." (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 11 May 99) Paksas, who public opinion polls name as the most popular figure in the Conservative Party, obtained a clear signal of support from parliament: The Seimas vote on his appointment was 105 in favor, 1 against, with 12 abstentions. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1800 GMT, 18 May 99) Paksas' years as mayor of Vilnius, overseeing the often-contentious City Council, should serve as valuable experience as he heads the new government. He also approaches his new
position with at least a verbal guarantee that the storm which sank his predecessor's government will not unseat him: At a meeting of Adamkus, Landsbergis and Paksas, it was agreed that the new premier alone will select ministerial candidates. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 12 May 99) Tensions between Vagnorius and Adamkus had heightened over charges that the president was interfering overmuch in the government's work. Paksas presented his Cabinet -- only half of which is comprised of ministers from the Vagnorius government -- to parliament for approval on 1 June.