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Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Luba Schwartzman

SECURITY SERVICES
New millennium, old fears
20 December was the Day of the Security Services, and the heirs of the KGB celebrated the 80th birthday of the legacy with flair -- those who had really distinguished themselves received medals from President Putin himself, and the rest were rewarded with his kind words and the 22-track CD of songs "by spies, about spies and for spies." (THE CALGARY HERALD, 26 Dec 00; via lexis-nexis)

However, the confidence expressed by the president that the past has been left behind, that "the times when [the security service] was used for suppression are gone," is not shared by all. (RUSSIA TV, 20 Dec 00; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis)

One draft law on the rebuilding of a more inclusive security service structure had failed in the State Duma in November. However, it is not unlikely that a slightly more modest conglomerate -- one which would add the Federal Agency for Government Communications and Information as well as the Federal Protection Service (but neither the Foreign Intelligence Service nor the Border Troops) to the Federal Security Service -- would succeed, and result in an even more powerful and single-minded organ. Furthermore, there is speculation that, in the wake of the restoration of Soviet-era symbols, such as the music of the Soviet anthem and the red banner for the armed forces, the name KGB itself would be brought back. (SEGODNYA, 5 Jan 01; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis)
A particularly dangerous concept, one former KGB general, Oleg Kalyugin, suggested, is that recently "the Chekisty have been extremely successful at resurrecting the myth that Russia is under threat from foreign enemies and at creating an aura of glory around [their] past services to the homeland." (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 20 Dec 00; via lexis-nexis) Taking advantage of the Russian population's not unreasonable desire for peace and order, the FSB is becoming progressively more aggressive and deliberate in pursuing so-called spies and instigating anti-Chechen, as well as anti-Western, sentiments.

POLITICAL PARTIES
First steps towards spring cleaning?

On 28 December 2000, President Putin submitted a draft of the federal law "on political parties" (developed by a working group of the Central Electoral Commission) to the State Duma. An attached explanatory memo indicates that the law is necessitated by the need for a "clearer definition of the role and place of political parties among the institutions of civil society." The proposed definition is "a voluntary association of Russian Federation citizens, created with the purpose of participation in the political life of the nation by forming and expressing the political will of the citizens, participating in elections, and representing the interests of the citizens in the state's legislative organs and in local government." To be registered as a political party, the organization must have a minimum of 10,000 members, with at least 100 members in at least half of the nation's 89 regions. Only Russian Federation citizens of 18 years of age or older (who are not incarcerated or deemed incapacitated) can be party members or contribute funds, and all party organs must be located on the territory of the Russian Federation. Several regulations are introduced: Time limits are set for registration procedures, certain documents now are required for registration and transparency of the party's financial activities is demanded. Direct government financing of the parties, proportional to the number of members registered in the
latest State Duma or to voting percentage in presidential elections (if passing the 3-percent hurdle) is provided for -- therefore, the only commercial activities a party is allowed to conduct to gather additional funds are the sale of party-symbol souvenirs and publishing enterprises.

The parties must not work against the unity, or against the basic constitutional order of the Russian Federation. A party, or its regional branches, can be liquidated by the decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation. (DRAFT OF THE LAW ON POLITICAL PARTIES; via www.fci.ru, official website of the Central Electoral Commission of the Russian Federation)

Aleksandr Veshnyakov, the chairman of the commission, predicted that of the approximately 200 parties currently registered, between 10 and 30 would make the cut. While members of the major political parties took part in the development of the draft, many parties are opposed to at least some aspects of the proposed law: In particular, the Union of Right Forces is against government financing, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation opposes the ban on commercial activities, and the Russian Regions Group is unenthusiastic about the elimination of regional parties. (ITAR-TASS, 12 Jan 01; via Johnson's Russia List)

REGIONS
Less is more
Governors of several regions have exchanged their views on a supposed plan for merging some of the 89 regions of the Russian Federation to as few as 50. Tatarstan President Mintimer Shaimiev noted that, "Tatarstan will not argue if any other region wishes to be annexed to it there are many territories desiring to be part of Tatarstan." (ITAR-TASS, 0709 GMT, 7 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0107, via World News Connection) In other parts of the former Soviet Union, this prospect arouses less optimism. According to the alarmed Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the list of new subjects mentioned as eligible to join the Russian Federation (following the appropriate additions to the Constitution) includes
Of all ethnic republics, Tatarstan has been the most successful at avoiding central control. Recently, the Tatar Duma approved the switch from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet beginning in the current school year, and a not-unfavorable compromise on the issuing of passports has been reached in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan: Passports will contain an inset in the Tatar and Bashkir languages, respectively. (THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, 1 Sep 00; via lexis-nexis, and ITAR-TASS, 2040 GMT, 15 Dec 00; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis)

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Sarah Miller

Russia and Japan: Deadline passes, deadlock continues

The deadline may have passed, but the Russo-Japanese deadlock over the Kurile Islands and the associated peace treaty remains firmly in place. Despite some last-minute diplomatic maneuvering on the Japanese side late in December, and some press reports indicating an imminent compromise, the four Kurile Islands known as the Northern Territories in Japan seem fated to remain under Russian control.

Throughout the last year, a settlement over the islands seemed as distant as ever, but, in the face of the self-imposed 31 December 2000 deadline (already conveniently pushed forward from 1 January 2000), the Japanese intensified their efforts to bring the sides to the negotiating table, but to no avail. Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono's trip to Moscow, scheduled for late December, never materialized and there is still no firm date for the upcoming Irkutsk meeting.
between Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Mori. (ITAR-TASS, 27 Dec 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1227, via World News Connection) However, given the recent proclivity to postponement and the tenacity of the 44-year deadlock, even if Putin and Mori were to meet, it is doubtful that they would accomplish anything more than they did at their four meetings in 2000.

After two unsuccessful meetings early in the year, press reports following the September 2000 Putin-Mori meeting in Tokyo indicated that the sides might have reached a tentative compromise agreement whereby Russia would relinquish control of two of the four. Furthermore, reports of an "interim" peace treaty, which would set the territorial issue aside until a later, unspecified date, have continued to appear in the press. (ITAR-TASS, 1404 GMT, 8 Sep 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0908, via World News Connection) However, subsequently, the Russian side denied the existence of a compromise.

For the Russians there does not yet seem to be profitable compensation for return of the islands. Thus far, the Russians have been able to accomplish their objectives in the region without any concessions on the issue. Although the Japanese did freeze their loans to Russia, it appears that Russia's diplomatic efforts to move Russo-Japanese relations forward even prior to a settlement are working. Despite a missed treaty deadline, the Japanese extended a $61 million credit to Yakutia to build a tuberculosis center and two hospitals. (ITAR-TASS, 0614 GMT, 21 Dec 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1221, via World News Connection) Contacts between the two countries on security matters clearly are not suffering either. In early 2000 the Russian Navy chief, Vladimir Kuroedov, met with Japanese Maritime Defense Chief Kosei Fujita: Russo-Japanese naval exercises were implemented, and a permanent line of communication between the two naval forces was established as part of a dual commitment to eliminate the numerous fishing boat incidents that occur each year. (RIA NOVOSTI, 18 Feb 00; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis) As long as Russia continues to obtain what it wants from the Japanese, there is little incentive to
relinquish control of the islands when they could be used for greater collateral in subsequent dealings with Japan.

For the foreseeable future, barring any dramatic change of heart by the Russian government, all indicators suggest that 2001 will not bear any territorial fruit for the Japanese. Once again -- to Russia's benefit -- possession is nine-tenths of the law.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces
By Richard Miller

Sergeev visit paves way for military cooperation, arms sales
In the first visit of a Russian defense minister since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Defense Minister Igor Sergeev met with his counterpart, Iranian Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani, and with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami in a late December, three-day visit to Tehran and Isfahan. Sergeev also met with Hoseyn Firuzabadi, head of the Iranian Armed Forces Joint Command Headquarters: Yahya Rahim-Safavi, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps: and Kamal Kharrazi, the foreign minister.

The visit comes on the heels of Russian notification in November that it would quit the 1995 Chernomyrdin-Gore agreement to halt conventional arms transfers to Iran. Sergeev's visit has paved the way for signing long-term bilateral military cooperation agreements and is a suitable lead-in for a possible summit meeting of the two leaders later this year.

Prior to the trip, numerous senior Russian officials reiterated that Russia has every intention of honoring its obligations to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction technologies and missile control regimes. Leading up to and during the visit, various Russian officials repeated that arms sales of systems or
spare parts would only include defensive systems. As deputy chief of the General Staff, Colonel-General Valery Manilov, stated, "the cooperation between Russia and Iran poses no jeopardy to third countries. It is targeted to strengthen peace and stability in that important region." (ITAR-TASS, 1359 GMT, 8 Dec 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1208, via World News Connection)

**What is driving the initiative?**

Many reasons have been postulated as to Russian motives for this meeting, impending military cooperation and arms sales. They could be just another Moscow challenge to the American pursuit of a National Missile Defense (NMD) system, especially since Iran is one of the "states of concern" which American officials have cited as justification for an NMD system. They also could be a vehicle to test the new Bush administration and its initial policies in the Gulf region. Furthermore, Russia may be looking to establish a strategic partner to stem the perceived influence and spread of fundamental Islamic movements, such as the Taliban in Afghanistan, towards its southern frontier. Likely there is some element of all these reasons in the recent approach; however, a factor looming large is support of the Russian arms industry and the potential economic benefit of the sales. Speaking from Iran at the conclusion of his visit, Sergeev even hinted, "1995 [year of the Chernomyrdin-Gore agreement] brought a lot of losses to both parties [Russia and Iran]; there will be no pauses from now on." (RIA, 0541 GMT, 28 Dec 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1228, via World News Connection)

Increased arms sales match previously stated Russian goals to boost domestic defense industries and exports. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 8 Nov 00, for further discussion of the Russian arms industry.) Recently, officials have expressed a willingness to sell virtually any conventional weapons system to buyers with enough cash. In fact, proposed sales to Iran, currently estimated at $4 billion, could reach as high as $7-8 billion. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 6 Dec 00) This would provide a critical influx of currency as the armaments industries struggle through the early stages of the latest reform and consolidation program.
Agreements reached recently between the Russian and Iranian central banks should help to facilitate the funding mechanics of this new cooperation.

Further evidence of an aggressive arms sales policy is seen in Southeast Asia. As Aleksandr Simakov, director of the Center for World Armaments Markets, recently explained, tactical aircraft sales to China not only reflect improved Russo-Chinese military-technical cooperation, but they would also be good because China's neighbors may be spurred to increase purchases of combat aircraft and defensive systems from Russia. (ITAR-TASS, 1417 GMT, 18 Dec 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1218, via World News Connection) This profit-driven motivation for arms sales can hardly be seen as a policy pursued by someone concerned about "strengthening peace and stability."

**Hardware implications**
Following the meetings, Russian military sources indicated that some of the equipment under consideration for Iran included the following:
- Repair two of the three KILO-class submarines
- Repair, parts and upgrade for SU-24 and MiG-29 combat aircraft
- Repair, parts and upgrade for T-72 tanks
- Purchase large numbers of S-300 missile systems, Igla shoulder-fired rockets, transport helicopters, SU-25 attack aircraft and radars

The Russian source added that Moscow is ready to offer more submarines, missiles, landing and patrol boats, minesweepers and other weapon systems. (INTERFAX, 0728 GMT, 28 Dec 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1228, via World News Connection) Additionally, the two countries agreed to consult on a variety of other military doctrinal and organization issues, discuss common threats and challenges, hold bilateral exchanges and train Iranian military personnel in Russian military academies. (RIA, 0807 GMT, 28 Dec 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1228, via World News Connection)
Tehran's enthusiasm for Russia's return to arms transfers is no surprise given Iran's diverse and aging mix of Western military systems dating back to the Shah which are now virtually obsolete and difficult to maintain. The T-72, for example, is the only tank out of over half a dozen different types in their inventory with modern fire control and sighting systems along with capable anti-armor rounds. Likewise, their older US-made combat aircraft are virtually impossible to maintain as a credible fighting force. However, with other systems apparently under consideration, it is difficult to see the "defensive" nature of such systems and even more difficult to grasp how other Gulf states could not see them as anything other than threatening.

Perhaps the most menacing proposal to regional neighbors and the West is the increase in capability, and possibly numbers, of Iranian submarines and other naval technology. Sitting alongside the Straits of Hormuz, Iran has the potential to threaten shipping through this vital international strait with dire consequences for oil exporters and importers alike. Ongoing territorial disputes over islands such as Abu Musa and the Tunbs also add to the maritime dimension of the threat posed by Iranian naval capability. Possible transfers of advanced Russian anti-ship missile technology, mines, and more naval vessels could greatly increase Iranian capability relative to other Gulf states. These types of systems have little to no value as "defensive" weapons for Iranian maritime interests and can only add to nervousness felt by Iran's neighbors and the world economy dependent on the uninterrupted flow of affordable oil from the Gulf region.

Arms sales central to Putin foreign policy

The fact of the matter is Putin appears to be championing export arms sales not only to boost domestic defense industries in helping support them for Russian rearmament, but also as a cornerstone of his developing foreign policy.

In aircraft sales alone, Russia has been pushing forward deals aggressively in recent weeks. China is purchasing SU-27 and SU-30 tactical aircraft as well as
A-50 Sheml airborne early-warning radar aircraft. India just concluded a contract for licensed production of SU-30 fighters and associated thrust-vectoring engines. Over 100 (possibly up to 140) jets will be assembled by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) over a 15-year period. More than 100 Russian defense plants will be involved in the contract as well. Valued at close to $4 billion, "this is the largest arms export contract in the history of Russian-Indian military relations" according to a communiqué released by Russia's new consolidated arms trading company, Rosoboronexport. (INTERFAX, 1201 GMT, 28 Dec 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1228, and ITAR-TASS, 1451 GMT, 28 Dec 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1228, via World News Connection) In past months, Putin and his emissaries in overseas delegations have discussed potential arms sales with several other states, many former clients of the Soviet Union. These recent initiatives look disturbingly similar to policies pursued under Brezhnev in the Soviet days of old.

President Putin also has institutionalized his power over the arms export business through recent decrees and statutes. A Military-Technical Cooperation Commission has been established to oversee policy and make recommendations for foreign sales of Russian weapon systems. This body has wide-ranging authority throughout government, industry and academic research institutes to draw on information in formulating plans. It is empowered also to "examine the differences between the federal organs of executive power arising during the organization and implementation of military-technical cooperation and also elaborating recommendations for their elimination." (ROSSISKAYA GAZETA, 7 Dec 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1211, via World News Connection) The governing statutes give the Russian president alone the authority to approve the commission's membership and he exclusively will decide on the export, leasing, transfer, and all other forms of military assistance to foreign clients. These laws, when coupled with the recent appointment of former KGB officials loyal to Putin to three of the critical posts in the new arms-export business and oversight, give Putin virtually unlimited control over foreign arms sales.
Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Tammy Lynch

UKRAINE

Signs of things to come, or the last desperate throes of a dying breed?

Over the last several months, the central question in the Georgy Gongadze affair has changed continually. Is Gongadze dead? Is Kuchma guilty? Who is behind the release of the "Kuchma tapes"? Is the investigation of the matter corrupt? Can Kuchma withstand the pressure? And finally, the question that now seems inevitable: When and how will President Leonid Kuchma lose power? As public demonstrations increase, media pressure mounts and more parliamentarians desert him daily, it has become likely that, barring the release of extraordinary evidence supporting his statements, Kuchma will be forced to resign. And, perhaps, he ought to consider it.

Yes, it is possible that Kuchma's voice was not actually on the so-called "Moroz-Kuchma tapes." It is entirely possible that he knows nothing about what really happened to Gongadze. It is possible that Kuchma is the victim in all of this. An open, timely investigation of the matter might have shown this to be true. Unfortunately, the crude, inept and arrogant attempts of Ukrainian Prosecutor-General Mikhaylo Potebenko to stall the investigation into Gongadze's death have cast doubt on this possibility, while the actions of other government representatives almost guarantee that Kuchma increasingly will be viewed with distrust.

Since the decapitated body of Georgy Gongadze was discovered in the woods of Tarashcha in early November, Ukraine's power ministries have been mobilized increasingly in support of Kuchma. Opposition media have found themselves pressured more diligently than ever by local police and tax officials. Protests organized by an ostensibly incompatible coalition of Communists and nationalist
parties have been dispersed forcibly by police. The biggest demonstration -- a tent city erected by hundreds of Kharkiv-based protesters in the newly created "Ukraine Without Kuchma" movement -- was reportedly destroyed by police with little regard for the demonstrators themselves. Several persons were taken to the hospital, some with serious injuries. Andriy Bilohryshchenko, the regional leader of the Socialist Party, and Oleksandr Holovash, an aide to MP Volodymyr Mukhin, were two of the most seriously injured, according to Mukhin. (UNIAN, 0856 GMT, 12 Jan 01; via lexis-nexis)

At the same time, several pro-Kuchma demonstrations were taking place. Unfortunately, many of them appear to have been arranged using coercive techniques. In fact, several Ternopil oblast party organizations recently appealed to the Kuchma administration to stop using "force" to make people rally in support of the president. The letter accused local government representatives of "using their official position and power" to compel "teachers, professors and students, state employees and other people... to participate" in demonstrations, and said the situation represented an "apogee of pressure of power on the public." (KPNEWS.COM, 11 Jan 01)

While local officials, police and tax officials were dealing with protesters, demonstrations and the media, Prosecutor-General Potebenko worked tirelessly to bury the Gongadze story. For over two months, Potebenko tried to convince the world that the body discovered in Tarashcha did not belong to Gongadze, even though Gongadze's friends had identified it, based on x-rays.

First, the prosecutor-general's office confiscated the body from the local coroner before independent DNA tests could confirm the identification. Then, despite promising Gongadze's family and friends that DNA tests would take place immediately, the office delayed the tests for weeks, finally undertaking them only after Gongadze's mother complained loudly to the international press.
Lately, Potebenko has spent most of his time defending his boss, President Kuchma. Potebenko has been Kuchma's staunchest supporter during the tapes scandal. The tapes, released by Oleksandr Moroz after being secretly recorded by Kuchma's former bodyguard, Mykola Melnychenko, purportedly eavesdrop on Kuchma suggesting that he would favor the elimination of Gongadze. Potebenko has pronounced the tapes "fake," and suggested that even if they weren't, he would not use them as evidence. The material, he said, "was obtained in an unlawful way" and, under Ukrainian law, "only materials obtained in a lawful way and by relevant bodies which have the right to collect information can be accepted as a basis of proof." (ITAR-TASS, 12 Jan 01; via lexis-nexis)

Potebenko has also vilified Melnychenko's character, accusing him of being money-hungry, someone else's stooge and a criminal. "We have initiated a criminal case against Melnychenko and issued a warrant for his arrest and transportation here," he told New Channel Television. (NEW CHANNEL TV, 1700 GMT, 10 Jan 01; via lexis-nexis) What case does the prosecutor have against Melnychenko? He left the country quickly, Potebenko told reporters, on a false passport and without declaring that his previous job allowed him access to classified information. Although Potebenko has appealed to Interpol for help in apprehending this fugitive, curiously he has received little response so far.

The Ukrainian parliament, however, has become understandably frustrated with the lack of progress of the investigation. On 10 January, Potebenko was called before the Ukrainian parliament and finally announced the results of his office's DNA tests on the body found in Tarashcha; the tests proved to a probability of 99.6 percent that the body was Gongadze. The next day, after perhaps receiving a less than supportive response to his announcement from his superiors, Potebenko apparently changed his mind and suggested that new information showed Gongadze may still be alive! (KPNEWS.COM, citing UNIAN, 11 Jan 01)

The furor over Potebenko also has resulted in the collapse of the parliamentary pro-presidential majority, as several parties are refusing to support any legislation
proposed by the government until Potebenko is removed. In response, Kuchma has begun attacking the body for its inaction.

Not to be outdone, Gongadze's mother Lesya has filed a lawsuit asking that Potebenko and his deputy, Oleksy Bahanets, be removed. If the Ukrainian court system "does not take into account my complaints and does not punish Potebenko, who is guilty in the present situation before me, my family, the whole country, and the Ukrainian people," she told Radio Liberty, "I will address international institutions. I will address Strasbourg." (KPNEWS.COM, 12 Jan 01)

Taras Chornovil, son of Rukh founder Viacheslav Chornovil and now a member of parliament, has also offered to address everyone regarding the tapes. He suggested on 12 January that Melnychenko's descriptions (in interviews) of private conversations Chornovil had with the president were accurate. He has asked to hear the tapes in order to "recognize [his] voice and the logic of the conversation." (UKRAINIAN NEWS, 12 Jan 01; via KPNews.com) Melnychenko has suggested that dozens of persons could do the same to help authenticate the tapes. So far, the government has not pursued that avenue -- the one approach that could vindicate Kuchma easily.

Instead, the government has chosen to use the Ukrainian police and special forces to intimidate the press and public in hopes of killing the story. The censorship of state-run media to deny much of the Ukrainian people information on the scandal is unlikely to be overlooked.

Potebenko's attempts to stymie the investigation into Gongadze's death have been disastrous for Ukraine's international reputation as well as the relationship between the government and its own people. That President Kuchma has allowed him to continue along this path is very telling, unfortunately. The president may or may not have committed the initial offense, but there is no question that he has allowed his government to make use of tactics reminiscent
of Soviet times, with power based on fear and the dissemination of disinformation and half-truths. His government now appears to be ignoring its own human rights laws and turning its back on the laws of the very international organizations it has worked so hard to join. In the process, it has become stagnant and ineffectual. Either Kuchma is directing the actions of his government representatives or he has lost control of his administration; either way, his continuance in office may constitute an obstacle to restoring the confidence of his own people, international organizations and other governments.

It is unfortunate that, at a time when Ukraine is finally making economic progress and receiving praise for its reform efforts, the status quo should be disturbed. It is also worrisome; any uncertainty in a country as volatile politically as is Ukraine -- and as dependent on a few oligarchs -- can be problematic. But there appears to be no choice. Certainly, Kuchma's prime minister, Viktor Yushchenko, would be prepared and able to maintain Ukraine's current course, should Kuchma prove unable to continue.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Miriam Lanskoy

CHECHNYA

Another Andrei Babitsky?

Ken Gluck, an American relief worker with the Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), was seized by masked men on 8 January -- almost one year since the detention of Andrei Babitsky and the start of his ordeal. It also coincides with the return of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) assistance mission to Chechnya and the arrival of the inspection team from the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly. The latter will report to the Council of Europe (CE) prior to its 22-26 January meeting, when the CE will consider the possibility
of reinstating Russia's voting rights, which were suspended last April due to violations of humanitarian law in Chechnya.

The Russian military and FSB spokesmen have blamed the Chechens for Gluck's disappearance. Chechen spokesmen deny that they are holding Gluck and President Aslan Maskhadov has offered a reward for information leading to Gluck's return. (ITAR-TASS, 0785 GMT, 11 January 2001; via lexis-nexis) In contrast, Lieutenant General Ivan Babichev claimed that the MSF and Gluck are to blame for failing to notify the army of their travels. Putin's human rights envoy to Chechnya, Vladimir Kalamanov, came to a similar conclusion -- "some humanitarian organizations ignore security issues and the rules of the stay in Chechnya." (ITAR-TASS, 12 Jan 01; via lexis-nexis) The Nobel peace prize-winning organization vehemently denies such charges. In fact, every two weeks Babichev himself signs the paperwork approving the travel plans of the MSF personnel. (CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, 16 Jan 01)

All of this sounds eerily familiar. First the authorities denied that Babitsky was in custody, and intimated that his disappearance was his own fault for reporting from Chechnya in the first place. Then they said he was collaborating with the enemy. Eventually they admitted he was being held in a filtration camp. Eventually they let him go, but subjected him to a trial.

In December 2000 Gluck appeared on a Russian talk show and criticized the war, visibly upsetting the Russian officials present. Then he became the target of harassment at checkpoints where he was repeatedly accused of "collecting military information." "From our point of view," said Liphan Basaeva, a representative of a leading Russian human rights group, Memorial, the "kidnapping was either an organized and well-planned action [by the Russians] or an initiative of some Russian military groups controlled by nobody." (CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, 16 Jan 01) Another highly regarded human rights group, Glasnost, reports that the residents of Starye Atagi believe that the Russian
security services are responsible for the abduction. A Chechen policeman confirms that there were orders to arrest Gluck and several operations to capture him had failed. (GLASNOST DAILY NEWS SERVICE, 15 Jan 01)

Russian humanitarian groups issued an appeal begging international NGOs not to abandon Chechnya. Those who perpetrated this crime wanted the foreigners to leave. "We are convinced that the masterminds of this kidnapping are seeking the termination of the work of the foreign representatives there in order to isolate Chechnya completely from the world community and bring down an iron curtain behind which they can perpetuate their heinous crimes. If you suspend your work now, you will be doing exactly what they planned." (GLASNOST DAILY NEWS SERVICE, 15 Jan 01)

The town where Gluck was kidnapped is the same from which Fred Cuny, an American relief worker, disappeared in April 1995. In 1996 the murder of four Red Cross workers persuaded foreigners to leave on the eve of the Chechen election -- that was at Starye Atagi as well.

Last week UN and EU agencies pulled out of Chechnya. It works every time.

**Dyarchy again?**
If not for the war, this month would mark the end of the term in office for President Aslan Maskhadov, who was elected in January 1997. However, his press service has announced that, in accordance with article 71 of the Chechen constitution, the term of office is being extended until 27 January 2002. (GLASNOST DAILY NEWS SERVICE, 10 Jan 01)

The Russian government is no hurry to take advantage of this opportunity to hold new elections in Chechnya. The director of the Audit Chamber and former prime minister, Sergei Stepashin, commented explicitly against the idea of Chechens voting and "making a difference." (GLASNOST DAILY NEWS SERVICE, 10 Jan
18) Instead there is the expectation of the appointment of the former governor of neighboring Stavropol krai, Stanislav Ilyasov, to serve as Chechnya's prime minister, under Archmad Kadyrov. (ITAR-TASS, 1635 GMT, 13 Jan 01; lexis-nexis) Stavropol krai has a substantial Cossack minority that still hankers for the three northern districts of Chechnya which were transferred to the republic when it was reconstituted after the Chechens were allowed to return from internal exile in Central Asia in 1956.

AZERBAIJAN

The merits of creative ambiguity

During his summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin on 9-10 January, Azerbaijani President Heyder Aliev exhibited an impressive ability to preserve his options and maintain maximum room for maneuver. Despite Putin's best efforts to entangle Azerbaijan in a tight net of military and political obligations, Aliev successfully avoided making any binding commitments, leaving open the possibility of enhanced security arrangements with NATO and the US.

Although military contacts with the United States are limited by Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, Azerbaijan does have a military cooperation agreement with the US, which was signed in December by General Charles Simpson. The upcoming visit by Lord George Robertson, the NATO secretary-general, promises to broaden that cooperation.

Putin and Aliev signed an onshore oil contract and a statement of non-binding principles on the division of the Caspian Sea. However, Aliev stalled on the substantive political and military issues. Although the "Baku Declaration" speaks of "readiness to develop long-term bilateral defense and military-technical cooperation," the particulars of the military cooperation are not spelled out. Moreover, "this cooperation will not be directed against third countries or contradict the international commitments of the sides." (INTERFAX, 10 Jan 01; via lexis-nexis) This means that the Russian-Armenian military cooperation
remains intact, as do Azerbaijan's ambition to join NATO and its policy to promote cooperation within the GUUAM framework.

Similarly, no agreement was reached on the status of the Gabala early warning radar station. Russia continues to use the station but Azerbaijan politely declined to formalize the arrangement. There was complete lack of progress on Nagorno-Karabakh. Putin called for more bilateral meetings while also mentioning the OSCE Minsk Group process.

Of course, it's possible that there are secret deals in the works. Indeed Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev has stated that a program to train Azerbaijani officers in Russia will be finalized soon. (ITAR-TASS, 12 Jan 01; via lexis-nexis) But the mere fact that the question remains an open one is testimony to Aliev's diplomatic savvy. He has tried to show that it may be possible to have warm relations with Putin without giving him everything he may desire.

During his visit, Russian President Vladimir Putin presented his Azerbaijani counterpart with a copy of his diploma from the KGB University in St. Petersburg, which graduated Aliev in 1949. Putin commented that he too attended the same academy and hence regards Aliev as his "compatriot." (ITAR-TASS, 10 Jan 01; via lexis-nexis) That highly symbolic gesture represents an invitation and a suggestion to Aliev that he belongs more with Putin and the Chekists than with the national cause of the fledgling Azerbaijani state.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia
By Lt. Col. James DeTemple

The Caspian region: Southern pipeline route through Iran
Kazakhstan held discussions in December with France's Total inaElf, British Gas and Italy's Agip to study the feasibility of building a Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-
Iran oil pipeline to transport energy resources of the Caspian Basin to Asia and the Pacific region. If the deal goes through, the proposed southern export route could deal a significant blow to the US-sponsored plan for a Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline from Azerbaijan to Turkey. Certain energy analysts and international oil companies appear to favor the Iranian route as the economically more profitable way to tap northern Caspian energy resources.

The argument over determining energy transport routes has emerged as the single most politically charged issue confronting the five Caspian states -- Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Iran. (SIPRI YEARBOOK, 1999) Prior to 1998, Caspian oil and gas pipelines ran primarily through Russia. While Russia sought to preserve its monopoly, the other land-locked Caspian states approached Western oil companies about other energy transport corridors to relieve their excessive dependence on Russia.

The other Caspian states have considered several alternatives to bypass Russia: a western route through Georgia to the Black Sea; a southwestern route from Azerbaijan and Georgia to the Mediterranean coast of Turkey; southern routes through Iran, or Afghanistan and Pakistan; and eastern routes from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to China. Despite US government objections, certain European capitals and multinational oil corporations -- including some US oil companies such as Mobil -- prefer the Iranian route as the more profitable viable energy transport corridor. (SIPRI YEARBOOK, 1999)

Iran seeks to capitalize on the revenues that will result from the exploitation of Caspian energy products and to expand its influence in the region. An Iranian pipeline would link the Caspian Basin to the Persian Gulf and place Iran in a strategic position to serve as a conduit for energy exports. (JANE'S INTELLIGENCE REVIEW, 26 Jun 00)
The US opposes the Iranian pipeline and increased energy dependence on the Gulf states, instead lobbying heavily for a route from Azerbaijan to Turkey's Mediterranean port of Ceyhan. The US is also relying on Kazakhstan's potential participation in the proposed Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan line to ensure the profitability of the east-west transit corridor. The US government has been asking Kazakhstan to commit enough oil to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan line to ensure its economic viability if sufficient volumes of oil are not found in Azerbaijan. (FINANCIAL TIMES, 11 Dec 00) Elizabeth Jones, recently appointed adviser on Caspian energy issues to the US president and a former ambassador to Kazakhstan, discussed plans with Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbaev on 13 December in Almaty for extending the proposed $2.4-billion Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline to the Kazakh port of Aktau. Kazakhstan's president expressed interest in the US plan but no agreement has been reached.

According to the US proposal, 80 percent of the pipeline's capacity of 1 million barrels per day would be used for the export of oil from Ajerbaijan's sector of the Caspian and the remaining 20 percent would be reserved for Kazakh oil. (INTERFAX, 1311 GMT, 13 Dec 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1213, via World News Connection) Additionally, US diplomats have stressed that if Kazakhstan selected the Iranian option, it would be vulnerable to any disruption to the smooth passage of oil tankers through the Straits of Hormuz, a strategic "choke point" in the Gulf. (FINANCIAL TIMES, 11 Dec 00) This should be an important impediment for any country wishing to choose the Iranian option.

The US is promoting the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline to help ensure the economic and political independence of the former Soviet states in the Caspian region, particularly the South Caucasus, and to enhance regional stability. US Caspian regional policy is also designed to ensure access to Caspian energy resources and to reduce Western dependence on Middle East oil, as well as to prevent Russia from reasserting domination over the region and to prevent Iran from gaining a stranglehold on Caspian energy products.
Newly Independent States: Baltic States

By Kate Martin

A line in the sand

Like a crowd of persons desperately trying to ignore the presence of a 600-lb. gorilla, the West has been resoundingly silent about reports that Russia has deployed tactical nuclear weapons in its already heavily militarized enclave, Kaliningrad. Only those states in closest proximity to Kaliningrad -- the Baltic countries and Poland -- have issued comments on the report by the Washington Times published earlier this month. Those statements by and large have been calm but concerned, and have included a number of calls for an inspection of the region to ascertain what is and isn't there.

According to the paper, the movement of nuclear weapons was detected in June, although details did not appear in the Military Intelligence Daily, the Defense Intelligence Agency's main intelligence report, until December. The newspaper cited Clinton administration arms-control officials as suggesting the tactical nuclear weapons in Kaliningrad may be part of an attempt by Moscow to test the incoming administration of President-elect George W. Bush. (THE WASHINGTON TIMES, 3 Jan 01; www.washingtontimes.com) While it is doubtful the Russians were so insightful as to predict the outcome of the long-disputed November election several months in advance, it is quite likely that the West is being tested to see how it will react to Moscow's latest line in the sand. So far, the West's reaction is unimpressive. If indeed this move was intended as a response to discussions of NATO expansion, NATO has blinked first. In fact, NATO keeps on blinking, apparently hoping that the problem will just go away on its own.
Russia has continued to describe the reports as untruthful, absurd, provocative, and meant to distract the world's attention from NATO's own controversies concerning depleted-uranium munitions reportedly used in the Balkans. Russia has no reason to put tactical nuclear weapons in Kaliningrad, according to press services and academics. Besides, Russian officials assure the nervous, Russia signed an (admittedly nonbinding) agreement to keep the Baltic area nuclear-free. Alas, as Poland's defense minister, Bronislaw Komorowski, said, "this is a problem, whether to treat as credible the assurance from the Russian side that there are no nuclear weapons in the Kaliningrad Region." He added that Poland will continue to monitor the situation closely. (PAP, 1017 GMT, 4 Jan 01; FBIS-EEU-2001-0104, via World News Connection) Subsequent news reports explained that satellite pictures had confirmed the deployment of the weapons, while NATO's knowledge of the situation was also made clear. Polish Foreign Affairs Minister Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, "As a member state of NATO, Poland had and still has information about the situation in Kaliningrad."

(RZECZPOSPOLITA, 5 Jan 01; FBIS-EEU-2001-0105, via World News Connection)

Baltic and Polish leaders have called for international inspections of the enclave, but there has been no supportive clamor from other countries. Indeed, despite the satellite verification, and broad hints that few persons were surprised by the reports of the weapons deployment, Swedes stated -- with a straight face -- that there was no need to disbelieve Russian denials. The initial silence of other members of the international community has been explained, at best, as meant to allow Russia to remove the weapons without an international uproar, thereby saving face.

The reason behind such optimism is unclear, however. Russia's leaders have shown time and again their lack of concern over Western reactions -- witness the continued war against the Chechen people, the refusal to abide by agreements to withdraw troops from Transdniestr, the repeated persecutions of Captain
Aleksandr Nikitin and businessman Edmund Pope for daring to process unclassified information. Each time, the West has issued empty threats that demonstrate its ambivalent attitude towards Russian actions. Now, as Russia refuses to consider calls for an international inspection of the enclave, and requests from the US for more information from the Kremlin likewise remain unheeded, the West isn't making even a show of protest, indicating quite clearly that Russia will face no price for increasingly aggressive behavior. This does not bode well for Kaliningrad's neighbors: While Poland, now a member of NATO, may have little to fear that an attack would go unanswered, the Baltic states have no such assurances. Worse still for the small countries, indications are evident that the West would react much as it has already.

Of course, if the deployment of the weapons is meant to intimidate NATO into public acknowledgement that Baltic chances for inclusion in the alliance are limited, there is a small chance that the ploy could backfire -- a possibility which at least one official in Latvia saw quickly. "In the end it could leave the impression among Western policymakers that will decide about NATO expansion that the Baltic states have no basis to trust Russia," Latvian Defense Minister Girts Valdis Kristovskis told AFP. "Russia is once again showing these policymakers their security policy is unpredictable or deceptive." (AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, 8 Jan 01; via lexis-nexis)

However, judging from the low volume of reaction, more likely the opposite is true. Estonia's former chief of staff, Major-General Ants Laaneots, explained his country's dilemma to the Baltic News Service. "It's like a rattlesnake's rattle to Western Europe," Laaneots told BNS. "Personally, I very much doubt if the bringing of nuclear missiles to Kaliningrad will help Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania ahead in their speedier accession to NATO; it's rather the opposite, because now we must wait for the reaction of our so far biggest supporter, the United States," he said. (BNS, 1432 GMT, 4 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0104, via World News Connection) It looks as though there may be a very long wait