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PRESIDENCY

Putin's consolidation of power and the attack on Berezovsky

Since the swift and unexpected ascent of Vladimir Putin from the clandestine ranks of the Soviet spy rings to the apex of the Russian state, there has been an ongoing restructure of power within and around the Kremlin. (BBC NEWS, 1 Jan 00; via news.bbc.co.uk) Earlier this year, the Kremlin backed a coup to oust Rem Vyakhirev, the Yel'tsin-era chief of Gazprom (the massive Russian oil conglomerate with tentacles in many other areas of the economy), making room for Putin's old friend, Alexei Miller. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 30 May 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Recently, this restructure has spread to other large state-owned monopolies, particularly the rail ministry as well as the committees of customs and fishing, and it continues to affect the remaining privately owned media. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 1 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Putin is acting, through the selective enforcement of corruption laws, not only to distance himself from his Yel'tsin-era benefactors but also to consolidate more fully his own power by replacing these holdovers from the 1990s with men cut from the same fabric as Putin himself; namely, former security service members and others from his hometown of St. Petersburg.

The current phase of restructure, or as some would call it, a gentlemen's type of purge, has its roots in the political conflict between Boris Berezovsky and Putin. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 1 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) The two men, both contenders for power during Yel'tsin's final days, have taken their struggle past elections and across national borders. Currently, Berezovsky is in self-imposed exile, after having criticized Putin's authoritarian tendencies;
however, this has limited only temporarily Berezovsky's ability to act in the Russian political arena. Berezovsky has every intention of giving himself a chance to exercise his own authoritarian tendencies. By using his television station, TV-6 (in which he owns 75% of the stock), Berezovsky made the bold move of encroaching upon Putin's home turf of St. Peters burg early in September. "Berezovsky [has] started his attack on the president in St. Petersburg, having de facto gained full control over business in this city." (VERSIYA, 4 Sep 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) His scheme involves using his media and his money to expose corruption within the city's government, the onus being placed upon Mayor Vladimir Yakovlev and the Presidential Envoy for the Northwestern Federal District, Victor Cherkesov. In addition to this, Berezovsky is using his funds to finance "ghost" candidates in St. Petersburg's parliamentary elections, such as businessman Denis Volchek. His plan, according to some analysts, is to "get his proteges into the city parliament in all electoral districts and thus arrange his own parliament," from there to move systematically through the entire city government, and from St. Petersburg on to Moscow. (VERSIYA, 4 Sep 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Putin's response to this deliberate attack was delayed temporarily, perhaps by the events of 11 September, or perhaps because Putin and his St. Petersburg Group merely were formulating a coordinated response. In either case, his answer to Berezovsky was given on 22 October. Acting through the procurator's office, Putin's rebuff took the form of charges against Railways Minister Nikolai Aksenenko for abuse of office and an arrest warrant for Berezovsky, should he ever reenter Russia. Aksenenko, a Yel'tsin appointee, has been known to have limited time left in the Putin regime. The fact that Aksenenko has been linked by the press to Berezovsky was the final nail in his political coffin. The timing can hardly be a coincidence. However, Procurator Vladimir Ustinov has denied any connection, saying "To be honest, I can't figure out why individual media groups have linked these two events." (INTERFAX, 26 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1026, via World News Connection) Putin is using selective enforcement of corruption
charges to remove potential political rivals, and increasing the charges against those already in exile.

It is well known that Aksenenko's abuses during his tenure included using transportation services to pick up coal cheaply, paying in government transit concessions, and then selling the resources far beneath market prices, but far above what was initially paid, resulting in a hefty tax-free profit that went straight into undisclosed accounts. This resource stripping does not constitute one of the charges against Aksenenko. Rather, he is being charged with inappropriately purchasing accommodations for individuals not in his ministry and not paying railway taxes in 2000. Why only these reduced charges? It is assumed that the new Putin appointees will enjoy some of the unofficial benefits of a high-profile state ministry. Railway reform is the justification for this purge; however, it will remain to be seen if this is more than lip service to the struggle against corruption. (OBSHCHAYA GAZETA, 25 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1026, via World News Connection)

In addition to this attack on Berezovsky himself and his proteges, the Russian oil conglomerate LUKoil is now offering to purchase the majority of Berezovsky's shares in TV-6. At first glance this may appear to be a purely business transaction, but it is also highly political. The Russian government is the largest shareholder in LUKoil, and LUKoil has enough shareholder influence (roughly 10% ownership) within Berezovsky's TV-6 to liquidate the company. LUKoil's CEO Vaget Alekperov has avowed his influence and interaction with the Russian government, as reflected by Putin's new and regular meetings with industry leaders: "[T]his allows us effectively to open a dialogue with government officials and to exert influence over the drafting of legislation." This interaction most likely does not benefit Berezovsky, as he is a competitor with both LUKoil and Putin. Berezovsky has offered to purchase LUKoil's shares, and so far neither side has moved toward a compromise. It looks as if the dispute will soon go to court.
Clear

ly, Putin is moving to eliminate these challenges to his authority. He is also expanding the list of targets to include former supporters from a time when his own personal power was not assured. In Moscow, the mood is one of expectation for the purge to continue. Currently, Press Minister Mikhail Lesin has joined Aksenenko on an unplanned vacation and Emergency Situations Minister Sergei Shoigu, architect of the Unity Party which built pro-Putin support during the election, has "checked into a hospital Tuesday (30 October) reportedly complaining of high blood pressure." Under Russia's Labor Code, one cannot be fired while on vacation or in the hospital. Other areas under investigation include the State Customs Committee in general and former State Fisheries Committee officials Yury Sinelnik and Mikhail Dementev. On the St. Petersburg front, however, Berezovsky apparently has made some headway: Mayor Yakovlev has suspended his deputy, Valery Malyshev, under charges of bribery and at the behest of the procurator's office. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 1 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Putin, who often operates behind the scenes, was not in the country at the time of Aksenenko's indictment. In all these cases, it is apparent that the Audit Chamber, the department that initiates investigation, and the procurator's office, which takes the investigation into the courtroom, have become pawns within Russia's domestic political infighting; they constitute simply the means used to achieve the executive's ends. (THE ST. PETERSBURG TIMES, 2 Nov 01; via ISI Emerging Markets)

The battle for power in the Kremlin has not ended with Putin's election; rather it is entering a new stage of conflict. Although Berezovsky may give Putin a run for his money, it is unlikely that this veteran of the KGB will be dethroned anytime soon.
Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch
By Luba Schwartzman

REGIONS
Changing seasons...
The annual summer forest fires are dying down in the Far East; they have been localized from 120,000 acres to just 8,000. (ITAR-TASS, 0725 GMT, 27 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1027, via World News Connection) But regional leaders already have another major concern: preparations for the winter season.

The government has washed its hands of responsibility for its citizens' comfort and well-being: On 30 October Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Khristenko, who reported that the program of winter preparation has been "fulfilled by the government," that "all fuel deliveries had been completed according to schedules and that even the defects in fulfillment of the schedules, for which the Ministry of Railways was to blame, were eventually eliminated." Thus, the responsibility for keeping the winter heating season "under control" now falls on regional leaders. (ITAR-TASS, 1204 GMT, 30 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1030, via World News Connection) In the Maritime region, one local leader already has demonstrated his readiness to keep the winter crisis under control. In response to the Dalenergo power facility's threat of a power shutdown throughout the city of Partizansk (except for the hospital), Mayor Vitaly Starchenko ordered armed police to take up key positions by the power plant's grid control system and boiler rooms to prevent blackouts. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 24 Oct 01; via lexis-nexis)
The federal government, however, is taking measures to care for the area's economic health by promoting economic development and the integration of the Far Eastern region, in an attempt to lessen its dependence on government handouts. Russian Economic Development and Trade Minister German Gref traveled to the Far Eastern city of Khabarovsk to chair a meeting "on the coordination of the federal target program for the economic development of the Far East and southeastern Siberia." Gref promised that the government will do "everything possible to breathe new life into the region and solve its social problems." (RIA, 0256 GMT, 23 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1023, via World News Connection)

Khabarovsk Krai Governor Viktor Ishaev is happy about the recognition of his region, quipping in an interview that "maybe governments have changed so often that they have not had time to find out where the Maritime Krai is on the map." However, he remains skeptical about some of the specific proposals the center is planning to implement. In particular, Ishaev opposes the Russian government's plan to build a bridge or a tunnel to Sakhalin, explaining that the region lacks a railroad infrastructure. He complained also of the federal government's failure to keep the cost of living -- especially railroad tariffs and energy prices -- low.
(ROSSIISKAYA GAZETA, 23 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1025, via World News Connection)

...changing presidents...
Another Far Eastern leader faces a different challenge even as he is still in power. Sakha President Mikhail Nikolaev enjoys wide support among his electorate, and still stronger backing from small business owners. The members of the local electoral commission also showed their support as the majority voted in favor of his registration as a candidate for reelection. The problem, however, is that the constitution of the Sakha Republic does not allow Nikolaev to run for what would be his third term. Plus, Nikolaev's opponents have found some irregularities in his registration (635,000 undeclared rubles and 674 irregular
signatures) that have aroused their ire. (ITAR-TASS, 1250 GMT, 24 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1024, via World News Connection) The case was considered briefly by the Russian Supreme Court, but was then returned to the region for its judgment. (MAYAK RADIO, 0500 GMT, 29 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1029, via World News Connection)

The Kremlin is hedging. After a meeting with Vladimir Putin, Nikolaev told journalists that the president said to him: "Mikhail Yefimovich, I am telling you for the third time, I support you and I am pleased with what you are doing." (ROSSIISKAYA GAZETA, 27 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1030, via World News Connection) At the same time, however, Presidential Plenipotentiary to the Far Eastern Federal District Konstantin Pulikovsky noted that it was Nikolaev himself who "painted himself into a corner" by not bringing regional laws in line with federal laws. (ORT, 30 Oct 01; via www.ortv.ru)

**POLITICAL PARTIES**

... and changing names

Russia's political parties are holding the expected congresses and making the expected statements. Lately, the more interesting developments concern the youth movements. One such movement already has called attention to itself: "Walking Together," an eager pro-Putin organization. Members of this organization have never been particularly respectful of the communists, and they don't plan to change their stance on 7 November. Instead, they plan to respond to the traditional October Revolution parade organized by the Communist Party with a "General Cleaning." Ten thousand Walking Together members will gather in Moscow to follow the column of marchers from Oktyabrskaya to Teatralnaya Squares carrying brooms, mops and other tools to "clean up" symbolically after the decades of communist control. (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 1 Nov 01; via lexis-nexis, and Walking Together homepage, www.iv.com.ru)
Another youth movement provides an alternative to this group. Soyuz Molodezhi, or Soyuzmol, is eerily reminiscent of Komsomol -- not only in name, but also in its structure (central committee, central control commission, the bureau of the central committee), and in its highly methodical program. According to one source, the first congress of the Soyuzmol was held two years ago on 29 October, to coincide with the birthday of the Komsomol. Despite all this, Soyuzmol advertises itself as a non-political organization, but rather one that aims to "consolidate young people and to conduct a dialogue with the state." (NTV, 1300 GMT, 29 Oct 01; via lexis-nexis, and Soyuzmol homepage, www.ruy.org.ru)

Russian Federation: Security Services
By Michael Varuolo

Test for the security services
Relations between Russia and other countries seem to be rolling along smoothly. This may reflect Russia's role vis-à-vis the "coalition against terrorism" or its declaration that it was abandoning key intelligence-collection sites. This cooperation has comforted many who have been concerned about the direction of Russian policies. However, beneath this serene surface, not all is calm, even within the security structures.

Russian corruption is hardly news, but news items concerning this topic are proliferating. Accusations of corruption and abuse of power recently have been launched against members of the Duma, government, ministries, "oligarchs" and even the law-enforcement structures themselves. The procuracy has been occupied with several high-profile cases. The first began on 23 October with a preliminary hearing against a group of former police officers from the Stavropol region. They were accused of using their positions and connections to launch a criminal group which engaged in the business of stealing and then dealing in
weapons. (ROSSIISKAYA GAZETA, 23 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1023, via World News Connection)

On 26 October, an investigation of a number of officials within the Ministry of Emergency Situations was opened. (INTERFAX, 1623 GMT, 26 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1026, via World News Connection) Then on 31 October, accounts belonging to Boris Berezovsky were checked for possible irregularities. (ITAR-TASS, 1459 GMT, 31 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1031, via World News Connection) However, accusations are far from convictions and these days the accused are not submitting quietly, as demonstrated by parliamentary deputy Vladimir Golovlev, who on 1 November vowed to launch a judicial appeal against the Duma. Golovlev had been stripped of his parliamentary immunity, pending the results of an investigation into charges that he abused his office when he headed the Chelyabinsk Region branch of the State Property Committee. He insists that the accusations are politically based and that he is determined to fight against these charges. (RIA, 1225 GMT, 1 Nov 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1101, via World News Connection) He broke with the SPS when it became a pro-Putin party and announced his intention to form an independent party.

While these investigations and appeals continue, perhaps the biggest recent challenge for the security organs has resulted from fears concerning possible terrorist attacks and (perhaps related) popular unrest. After possible cases of bioterrorism were reported in several regions of Russia, the FSB initiated sanitation and epidemiological inspections to ensure the safety of the mail. (ITAR-TASS, 0909 GMT, 24 OCT 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1024, via World News Connection) Similarly, the issue of airline marshals was revisited; however, as with other areas of concern, personnel selection, legal training and funding remain obstacles. (INTERFAX, 24 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1024, via World News Connection) And on 30 October, police and Federal Security Service personnel were needed in Moscow to quell attacks by rioters against minorities, resulting in
fatalities. The background of this incident is currently under investigation, but it seems to be a symptom of general unrest.

The manner in which the security organs conduct their investigations, as well as the ability of the procuracy to obtain convictions, may provide an indication of the efficacy of Russian law enforcement.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations
By Scott Bethel

The next Bush-Putin summit?
The next meeting between the presidents of Russia and the United States is still a week away, but foreign policy posturing clearly is in high gear. The question is who has a clearer agenda for the scheduled meeting at President Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas, on 13 - 15 November. Some analysts posit that these talks could constitute a watershed in Russia-US relations and may provide significant themes for future negotiations. Since everything is stained with the brush of the 11 September attacks, of course, the meeting will focus to some degree on counter-terrorism, but there are other issues with possibly broader implications.

Some of the issues on the table:
The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972: The Russians have done a remarkable job of keeping the Americans off balance on this issue since 11 September. Putin and Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov have kept the world guessing with their incompatible public pronouncements on this issue. Putin has been elusive concerning his long-range goals. During press conferences at NATO headquarters and later in Moscow, he was evasive when asked specific questions relating to future negotiations in this area, stating, at the same time, that Moscow intended to adhere to the letter of the treaty. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 16 Oct 01) In addition Russia introduced a resolution at the UN to
confirm the "preservation and compliance" with the treaty. (ITAR-TASS, 0945 GMT, 24 Oct 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

On the other hand, Ivanov has left the door open for negotiations in this area. During an open discussion Ivanov said, "Russia is ready to discuss a new framework for strategic cooperation." (ITAR-TASS, 2054 GMT, 29 Oct 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) However, in later pronouncements he was less than enthusiastic about the prospects of genuine movement in this area. (ITAR-TASS, 0747 GMT, 1 Nov 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Most likely some sort of informal understanding between the two leaders will emerge. Russia is not ready to make formal concessions, yet with the apparently cordial relations between Bush and Putin, the Russian president may be willing to foster some flexibility on NMD for Russian long-term gains concerning other issues.

Against the backdrop of the US State Department's obsession with "coalition building" and the willingness to elevate Russia's status to ensure its participation, official and unofficial statements made during and after the Bush-Putin meeting will need to be analyzed carefully. At issue is what the US may be willing to give up in order to ensure full Russian support for the "war on terrorism" and whether the Bush-Powell team will trade American short-term tactical gains for a coherent long-term Russian strategy.

Increased Russian Participation in World/European Gatherings. It is no secret that Russia views itself as a European power with Asian interests (though this sentiment was not evinced at the recent APEC meetings in Shanghai) and has long sought increased representation in important all-European organizations. Recently, both Putin and Ivanov have endorsed strongly the viability and importance of such entities as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (ITAR-TASS, 1405 GMT, 26 Oct 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) and the European Union. (RUSSIAN TV, 1600
Similarly, for more than three years the Russians have lobbied hard for entry into the World Trade Organization. (ITAR-TASS, 1853 GMT, 26 Oct 01; BBC, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Putin probably will make every effort to make Bush endorse increased Russian visibility in these organizations in the hope that such backing may enhance Russia's quest for a major role in Europe, as well as globally.

Endorsement of a larger role for Russia in any Middle Eastern settlement. Russia has been increasingly visible in the search for a Middle Eastern settlement adopting a somewhat less one-sided stance, although still tilting towards the Palestinian side. There have been several high-level meetings between Russians and Arab officials and fewer between the Russians and Israelis. However, Aleksandr Yakovenko reiterated the older (Soviet) line, stating, "We (US, Russian and European leaders) are of the unanimous opinion that a key final goal of the Middle East settlement is to implement the national rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and a national state." (ITAR-TASS, 1853 GMT, 26 Oct 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

**Russia moving toward OPEC**

During talks with President Hugo Chavez, the president of Venezuela and current chairman of OPEC, Vladimir Putin appeared to take a step toward increased cooperation with that cartel. The conversation reportedly lasted longer than planned and included a multitude of topics relating to oil production, distribution and pricing. (RUSSIAN TV, 1000 GMT, 22 Oct 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) The most significant statement was made by Russian Fuel and Energy Minister Igor Yusufov, who confirmed that, as production fluctuates, "Russia will coordinate its efforts with OPEC." (RUSSIAN TV, 1000 GMT, 22 Oct 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database)
Though Russia is estimated to have substantial oil reserves, most of its fields currently are underproducing or have experienced large fluctuations often tied to the rise and fall of oil prices set by OPEC. (CSIS, 20 Aug 01; via CSIS.org) Most of the regional oil is to be found in Kazakhstan (particularly the Tengiz field), Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan. These countries are not under Moscow's control, however, Russia wants to control the transshipment of oil from fields located in these countries through its Caspian pipelines to Russian ports on the Black Sea.

By allowing Moscow to act, de facto, as spokesman for the region, the US and NATO permit Russia to exert increasing hegemony over the area. This contradicts the long-term Western strategy of diversifying sources of energy supplies, enhancing the independence of the non-Russian republics and enhancing their control of the flow of oil. The more the West acknowledges Russian hegemony, the more Moscow will assume it.

**Reviving the market?**

Two recent developments indicate Moscow's interest in expanding its marketing of advanced weapons to a relatively new market -- Central and South America. Russia has had an off-again, on-again relationship with this region, including some major deals with Nicaragua and Peru. Since the fall of Communism, those ties have languished. However, now Russia has reopened links to Brazil and Nicaragua.

Brazil has accepted Russia's proposal to have the Su-35 compete against Western fighter planes as the Brazilian Air Force attempts to upgrade its 1960s-technology (primarily US) aircraft. Brazil also will look at the US F-16 Fighter. (STRATFOR, 2145 GMT, 22 Oct 01; via STRATFOR.com) The Russians also are offering their most advanced engine, the AL-31, to sweeten the deal, making their aircraft more competitive as compared with the F-16. (AVN MILITARY NEWS, 26 Oct 01; via AVN website)
At the same time Russia is courting Nicaragua. The Russians signed a military-technical cooperation agreement with Managua, creating the framework for "strengthening the integration between the two countries." (ITAR-TASS, 1725 GMT, 27 Oct 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) This agreement rekindles a longstanding relationship begun under Daniel Ortega's Sandinista regime. Though Nicaragua may not be the largest or most lucrative market in Central/South America, it provides another opportunity for Russia to expand its market share among states needing to modernize aging fleets.

The most significant aspect is that Russia will be competing directly against US weaponry in the Western Hemisphere. This gives Russia another opportunity to showcase its hardware against a peer competitor; the Sukhoi design bureau has made great efforts to bring its products up to a global standard. Moreover, it hits a market area historically dominated by the US. A quick look at the inventories of Central and South American countries shows a dominant US flavor (F-5s, Iroquois helicopters, etc.). From a foreign policy standpoint, Russia also offers something the US does not: no-strings-attached deals. Moscow does not tie the delivery of advanced weapons to compliance with human rights, or commitments to refrain from aggression. The Russians deal on a strictly cash-and-carry basis.

Given the checkered history of the region in terms of human rights abuses, coups and corruption, the Russian option may look increasingly attractive. Of course, the lower price of Russian hardware also plays a role. If the Monroe Doctrine is to extend to foreign military sales, Washington has to stop assuming that it is the only supplier on the block.

**Russian Federation: Armed Forces**

By Walter Jackson

Who's really afraid of US NMD? Certainly not Russia
As discussed previously (see THE NIS OBSERVED, 24 Oct 01), Russia's announcement that the Lourdes and Cam Ranh Bay facilities would be abandoned, whatever its public relations aspects, may be viewed also in terms of military economics, given Russian concerns about the US technological edge with regard to National Missile Defense (NMD). NMD systems consist of satellites and ground-based radar (detection and tracking) systems, as well as the most complex component, the "Archer," a weapons system that actually engages and destroys incoming ballistic missiles. While Russia's financial weakness precludes the development of a similar system, the savings from the closure of military installations abroad will fund partially the launching of badly needed additional satellites, and presumably will enable Moscow to improve launch systems as well. In fact, Russia is expanding its space operations by aggressively pursuing the construction of two space centers, one on the French Guinea island of Kuru, and another on Australia's Christmas Island, to launch Soyuz rockets. The Australian Asian-Pacific Space Center already has allocated $51 million for building the site, with the first launch scheduled for 2003. (VEDOMOSTI, 24 Oct 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

The Russian Space Command continues to use existing early-warning radar sites in Azerbaijan, Belarus and Kazakhstan, in addition to building new ones. The new Belarus radar site in the town of Baranovichi completed testing last summer and will be capable of monitoring ballistic missile launches from the West. It will be combat-ready soon. (ITAR-TASS, 1226 GMT, 19 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1019, via World News Connection) And since the collapse of the former Soviet Union, Moscow has been using sites on the territory of CIS states. Money pouring into the Russian space program is linked intricately to building and improving radar sites (a modern missile defense shield). On 26 October, after the successful launch of an SS-18 intercontinental ballistic missile, the Russian strategic missile force reported that it was capable of countering anti-missile systems. (KOMMERSANT, 27 Oct 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) There can be little doubt that Moscow is pursuing actively anti-missile-
missile technology and already is engaged in an NMD race with the US. What Russia really wants is for the US to slow down, since only the US has the resources to maintain its global military superiority, thus overshadowing Russia's armed might.

**Who's afraid of biological attacks? Certainly not Russia**

A recent press release by the Russian defense ministry stated that "radiation, chemical, and biological protection units and buildings are not dangerous for the population or the environment." In addition, the "command of the radiation, chemical, and biological protection forces monitors the situation [throughout] the [entire] world. These units will be able to cope with their tasks [preventing, detecting and combating disasters] at any moment if necessary." (KRASNAYA ZVEZDA, 23 Oct 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

As anthrax cases mount in the US, the question of the spores' origin remains unanswered. There has been reference to Russia, both as a direct and indirect source, in some scenarios put forth by credible sources. United Nations arms advisor Jim Kelly is one of several Western experts who claim that Russia may have been responsible for the spread of the disease in the US. (NOVYE IZVESTIA, 24 Oct 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Former Soviet defense ministry scientist and biological weapons expert Ken Alibek (formerly Kanatzhan Alibekov), who is well versed in Russia's scientific endeavors, gives a compelling and authoritative account of Russia's past and present biological warfare production, stockpiling and proliferation capabilities and initiatives. According to Alibek, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, cultures of anthrax were transferred to North Korea and Iraq. Over the past decade, conflicting reports have emerged from Russia. Former Russian President Boris Yel'tsin stated in 1992 that the Russian stockpile of biological weapons had been deleted (whatever that means), and as recently as October 2000, Chief of the General Staff Anatoly Kvashnin told the Duma that there were
no biological weapons in Russia. However, immediately following Kvashnin's statement, General Yuri Kalinin, who headed the secret Biopreparat plant in 1973, claimed that Chechen terrorists possessed biological weapons stolen from Russian laboratories. His announcement came after a mysterious epidemic of Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever broke out in the Rostov region, the location of one of the secret Biopreparat plants. (NOVYE IZVESTIA, 24 Oct 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

The US provided Russia with $1 billion to destroy its biological weapons stockpile. However, accounting for these funds has been less than stringent; some claim the money actually was spent on improving, rather than destroying, these weapons. In light of the Russian defense ministry's refusal to grant access to the storage facilities, despite international agreements, such claims seem credible. Thus, Russian biological warfare research may be continuing to this day at several secret locations, including the Microbiology Institute in Kirov, the defense establishment vector at Novosibirsk, and the Yekaterinburg center for defense problems (a.k.a. the biological Chernobyl). (VREMYA NOVOSTEI, 22 Oct 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) According to Bakhyt Atshabar, director of the Anti-plague Institute, as recently as last August a male from Aralsk died of plague. Atshabar stated that he didn't believe that the disease would spread, but noted that there were other places where the "pest existed."
(ROSSIISKAYA GAZETA, 18 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1019, via World News Connection)

Thus, Russia has decades of experience in biological warfare development (and people continue to be exposed to its "pests" to this day) and, more than likely, has stockpiled vaccines against many biological strains. Russia bears responsibility, it seems, for transferring production technology to countries like Iraq and Iran. What has Moscow actually done to assuage global concerns about biological terrorism? Russia has yet to be forthcoming by opening its facilities to scrutiny.
Whose mess is it anyway?
Russia's track record for cleaning up its messes is abysmal. Nuclear, chemical and biological research and production facilities (especially in former Soviet states) are no exception. Kazakhstan constitutes but one example. The US and Kazakhstan have formed a program dubbed "Joint Reduction of Threat" to clean up the nuclear, chemical and biological infrastructure and facilities that Russia left behind following Kazakhstan's independence in 1991. (ROSSIISKAYA GAZETA, 18 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1019, via World News Connection) While the constantly shifting relationships of those days may have contributed to confusion, Russia has continued to ignore this egregious environmental hazard, relying on Western financial support to fund not only the clean-up but also to pay off Russian scientists.

Military construction savings from Cuba and Vietnam should go where?
President Putin is pushing hard to improve the living standards of the Russian military. This, along with better pay, is a prerequisite to attracting quality professionals to the Russian military forces and keeping them there. Whether to build new military bases (and if so where?) or modernize old ones is an issue.

Like other countries, Russia must combine national concerns with long-term investments in military infrastructure. The Black Sea Fleet relocation is one such case. The Russian-Ukraine agreement to base the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol doesn't expire for another 16 years. The plan most likely to be adopted is to move the fleet to Novorossiisk. But Ukraine may accelerate the move. For instance, in order to (putatively) join NATO, Ukraine may not have foreign (i.e., Russian) troops based on its territory. There are numerous roadblocks to meeting the 16-year plan. The politicians and military engineers in the alternate base of Novorossiisk cannot agree on who pays for what, or even exactly what requirements will be that far in the future. There doesn't appear to be money for the new naval facility infrastructure, which must be built from the
ground up, including berthing for warships. (VOLNAYA KUBAN, 9 Oct 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) So where are military construction funds going? Well, if you follow the money trail...

**Follow the money**

Following President Putin's announcement of the abandonment of the Lourdes radar installation in Cuba, a key base of military intelligence (GRU), and the Navy's base in Cam Rahn Bay, Vietnam, the Russian military is scrambling. The announcement came on the heels of Putin's military modernization plans, which include force reductions, military pay increases and procurement of new weapons systems. However, some in Moscow did not connect the economic dots. Many inside the Russian Federation are skeptical about Moscow appearing to be offering too many concessions to Washington. Maj-Gen Aleksandr Kalita, deputy secretary of the Federation Council's Committee for Defense and Security, commented "the president's decision is impulsive. This decision will hurt Russia's defense and security." (ROSSIYA, 24 Oct 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) This sounds like a holdover from the old Soviet military mindset. For Moscow effectively to modernize its military, fiscal efficiency must be achieved, without compromising Russian national security. Clearly giving up overseas bases in exchange for modernization efforts at home makes sense.

**But you're building bases in all the wrong places**

According to Col-Gen Aleksandr Kosovan, in charge of military housing, Russia is spending 2 billion rubles in military construction in Chechnya. He stated that the construction project at the Kalinovskaya garrison was almost completed, and will house an entire motorized infantry regiment. This includes 9 barracks, 2 hostels, 2 canteens, 2 medical posts and 11 ammunition depots. Reportedly, many servicemen bring their families with them to Chechnya. A school was even opened in August. In Khankala the infrastructure for the 42nd motorized infantry division and for a helicopter squadron is being built. Also included is a health
center and kindergarten, to support servicemen's families. (KRASNAYA ZVEZDA, 26 Oct 01; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

This could well be a transparent attempt to show where housing money has gone, or perhaps to demonstrate that President Putin's military modernization efforts are being implemented with the benefit of servicemen's families in mind. Whether or not that infrastructure really exists in Chechnya is another story. Certainly no independent reporters are there to verify the report. However, it does seem to indicate that at least some elements in the Russian military are engaged in building up force structure in Chechnya -- an earnest of the intention to keep forces there for the long term.

Regardless of ultimate plans for Chechnya, there is also the question of resource allocation. Modernization of military housing and facilities throughout Russia is desperately needed. Such a capital-intensive and long-term infrastructure project will take many years for Russia to complete. In the meantime, Moscow cannot afford to pour military construction money into the wrong places.

Newly Independent States: Western Region
By Tammy Lynch

UKRAINE
Back to old times?
For the first time in over a year, President Leonid Kuchma this past week returned to one of his favorite themes: the evil, no-good parliament and its refusal to amend the constitution for his benefit. (UNIAN, 1412 GMT, 2 Nov 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) The return to this theme is significant, given the fact that it was dropped in the aftermath of the Gongadze tapes scandal. At that time, Kuchma's position in the country's political power
structure was weakened, while many parliamentary deputies suddenly became viable forces of opposition.

But, that was long ago. Since then, Kuchma has used his considerable political acumen, control of the country's power ministries, and influence with the country's most powerful business interests to re-solidify his power base. At the same time, those in parliament have shown themselves unable to craft a stable movement independent of presidential interests and have squandered whatever momentum they gleaned from the Gongadze situation. Kuchma's return to his attacks on parliament, therefore, confirms -- if any confirmation was needed -- that the old Ukrainian power structure has re-emerged, with the president holding most of the cards.

This does not mean that the political landscape has not changed. In April of 2000, at Kuchma's behest, Ukrainians voted overwhelmingly in favor of amending the constitution to give the president the right to disband parliament under certain circumstances, eliminate parliamentary immunity and cut the number of parliamentary deputies from 450 to 300. During this period, the public's backing of Kuchma was solid; he was the most popular politician in the country and had been convincingly reelected not long before (thanks again, in no small part, to his effective control of state power organs). Conversely, the public at the time viewed parliament generally as a stagnant, ineffective body.

Then, suddenly, the Gongadze tapes appeared. For the first time, coherent opposition organizations were created and it seemed that one effect of the scandal would be the long-overdue creation of a viable political party system in the country. Additionally, as the scandal continued, Kuchma's personal popularity plummeted. While Kuchma has since proved himself able to withstand the political challenges created by the scandal, his personal popularity has recovered only slightly. Consequently, Kuchma has largely lost his ability to use popular sentiment against his remaining rivals in the parliament. He was, in fact, able to
demonize the parliament earlier because the public seemed to view him as
different from "those" politicians. This is no longer the case.

In Ukraine, however, popularity does not equate with power: Control of security,
media and business outlets does. Kuchma has retained his control of these,
reviving his sense of infallibility. The inability -- or unwillingness -- of parliament to
create an alternative power base makes the president's personal popularity a
moot point. His renewed sense of freedom to attack parliament, although it is
most unlikely to result in any concrete action, demonstrates this point clearly.
(See THE NIS OBSERVED, 18 Jan and 4 Apr 00, for further background on
Kuchma and his referenda.)

GUUAM

Wherefore art thou GUUAM?
This past month, the limitations of the GUUAM organization (encompassing
Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova) have become
abundantly evident. Despite the fact that the new GUUAM Charter lists as an
objective the "strengthening of regional security in all spheres of activity,"
and the fact that its members have committed themselves to "ensuring the security of the
transport infrastructure in the territories of the GUUAM member-states,"
the organization's ability to deal with internal ethnic conflict clearly remains limited.
(YALTA GUUAM CHARTER AND FINAL COMMUNIQUE OF THE YALTA
GUUAM CHARTER) In fact, there appears to be little will to commit anything to
this problem except discussion.

For example, as fighting escalated in Abkhazia (punctuated by attacks on
Georgian positions by helicopter gunships flying from Russian airspace) and an
embattled Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze searched desperately for
an alternative to Russian "peacekeepers," the other GUUAM countries barely
responded. Similarly, as the self-proclaimed Dniestr Republic (still watched over
by more than 2,000 Russian soldiers now called "peacekeepers") began an
economic blockade against Moldova proper, GUUAM countries reacted little. And, of course, as Azerbaijan continued to request assistance urgently concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, GUUAM's members continued to invest only words in the issue. This attitude does not bode well for an organization created to help foster stability and to oppose Russian-fostered separatism. As instability has increased, the group's activities have not.

Unfortunately, it is GUUAM's largest and most influential member -- Ukraine -- that seems to be most responsible for this attitude. The country appears to be unwilling to accept a leadership role in the region, apparently wanting neither to embroil itself in the internal struggles of its neighbors nor incur the wrath of Russia. While that attitude is understandable, it becomes problematic when these internal struggles threaten the future of a project as important as the TRACECA Transport Corridor (in particular, the Odesa-Brody-Gdansk pipeline), and when they run the risk of escalating to a full-blown conflict (as in Georgia).

These issues do not seem to concern Ukraine, however. In fact, with the exception of an arms agreement with Uzbekistan, the country has gone to great lengths in recent weeks to maintain total neutrality in the post-Soviet region. During a recent tour of the Caucasus, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Anatoliy Zlenko stopped not only in GUUAM-members Azerbaijan, but also in Armenia, Azerbaijan's foe. His meeting with Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanian resulted in the signing of two cooperation accords -- one dealing with their foreign ministries and one with agriculture. (MEDIAMAX, 0820 GMT, 19 Oct 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Previously, during Zlenko's meeting with Azeri Foreign Minister Vilayat Quliyev, the Ukrainian foreign minister had stated pointedly, "We are ready to provide a venue to continue dialogue to resolve the conflict using peaceful political means." All previous talk of Ukrainian peacekeepers -- which always had seemed designed for public consumption only -- was gone. Zlenko also suggested, according to Ukraine's Novyy Kanal television, that GUUAM be redirected to fight terrorism. (NOVYY
But, although that redirection might provide the organization with more international attention, it would not solve the internal struggles threatening the region.

While in Georgia, Zlenko made it clear that Ukraine was in no rush to provide replacements for Russian "peacekeepers" in that country. He insisted -- despite earlier statements by Shevardnadze to the contrary -- that Ukraine had not been asked to provide peacekeepers. Shevardnadze understood, Zlenko said, "that by asking Ukraine to take on the functions now being undertaken by Russia in the region, he could thereby bring a certain tension not only into Georgian-Russian, but also into Ukrainian-Russian relations. So, the question of replacing the peacekeeping contingent in Georgia is not a pressing one for us." (SEGODNYA, 24 Oct 01; BBC Monitoring, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) But just a week before, Shevardnadze had suggested that Ukraine's participation in a peacekeeping operation was probable. "The best option," he said, "would be for representatives of various countries to perform this [peacekeeping] function. By the way, the president of Ukraine has already expressed such a desire. There are other states ready to do the same." (TV1, 1500 GMT, 16 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1016, via World News Connection)

Ukraine also was blasted by Moldova when President Kuchma met in Kyiv with Igor Smirnov, the leader of the separatist Dniestr Republic. Moldovan Foreign Minister Nicolae Dudau said in a statement, "separatism... should be condemned as a phenomenon in principle, without applying double standards and regardless of the political balance of forces." (BASAPRESS, 1320 GMT, 26 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1026, via World News Connection) Kuchma's advisor, Victor Doras, responded by calling the meeting "beneficial because they help Smirnov get rid of his illusions." It doesn't seem to have worked. Smirnov was able to use the meeting publicly to his advantage in Dniestr and, judging by his decision to blockade the Moldovan railway, his illusions remained unharmed.
The foundations of GUUAM may be another story. It is true that GUUAM continues to function on an administrative/working group level, and that the group speaks together on many important international issues. But, the decision of Ukraine to put its individual interests ahead of its partners' geopolitical interests could point to deep problems for the organization in the near future. Given its own pressing domestic issues, Ukraine apparently has decided to forge the easiest path for itself -- total neutrality. Unfortunately, that decision leaves GUUAM without a leader, and in a difficult and precarious position.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus
By Miriam Lanskoy and Michael Donahue

Pogrom in Moscow
On 30 October roughly 300 skinheads wearing insignia of the fascist Russian National Unity (RNU) party and wielding metal bars went on a rampage in a Moscow market at the Tsaritsino metro station. There the thugs killed 2 persons and injured 22 others. The police arrived and fired warning shots but more than 100 attackers escaped and continued on to the Kakhovskaya metro station. There they killed one person and injured 12. The attackers yelled racist slogans and targeted dark skinned persons -- Armenians, Roma, Indians and Afghans.
(KOMSOMOL'SKAYA PRAVDA, 1 Nov 01; via polit.ru, and MOSCOW TIMES, 1 Nov 01)

On 31 October, Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov told the state-run strana.ru news service that the "pogrom" was organized by "Barkashov's people and [other] chauvinists." Since its founding in 1990 by Albert Barkashov, the RNU has staged many pogroms in Russian regions. One of the most widely reported incidents involved a September 2000 attack against a Jewish school in Ryazan. In 1998 the regional RNU was denied registration as a political party in Moscow.
and split into several skinhead factions. (It remains an official political party registered in other regions, including Ryazan and Stavropol.) Komsomol'skaya pravda commented that there had been several pogroms by skinheads in Moscow in the last year: 21 April 2001, 29 May 2001 and 1 June 2001. The paper listed incidents of racial beatings of Africans, Roma and Caucasians.

A recent report by the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights sheds light on why the Moscow authorities have done so little to protect minorities. The Human Rights in Russian Regions Report for 2000 contains 30 pages of painstakingly documented cases of abuses by Moscow police against dark-skinned non-Muscovites. One African student comments that every African he knows has been beaten by skinheads. These attacks are frequent throughout the year but become particularly vicious around Hitler's birthday — 20 April. The report makes clear that the authorities pursue a policy of deliberate harassment and intimidation ranging from arbitrary identity checks to eviction, illegal detention, torture, and murder.

**Journalist grabs at straws**

With regard to the 30 October pogrom, who perpetrated the violence upon whom was so obvious that no Russian official or news organization sought a Chechen trace. But the Western press saw things differently. Actually, for the most part the Western media saw nothing at all, hence they simply didn't report the story. Clem Cecil, however, broke with the pack. Hard-pressed to find factual support for UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw's statement that Chechen separatism poses a "real terrorist threat" to Russia, Cecil came up with a resourceful and inventive solution. [TIMES (LONDON), 1 Nov 01] He reported that there had been "a spate of terrorist attacks" and treated the RNU pogrom as one such incident:

"Moscow saw two outbreaks of fighting between Russians and Caucasians. In one, a riot at a street market, two people were killed and 28 arrested. In the other, more than 100 people attacked a hotel on the southern outskirts of the city,
in an area where many Afghans live. Eleven people were injured. Cecil's other example of "Chechen terrorism" involved only Dagestanis. Cecil mentioned the 30 October assassination of the deputy chairman of the Dagestani parliament, Arsen Kammaev, and the regional director of Promstroi bank, Abdulkalik Masaev. What Cecil neglects to mention is that the person arrested in connection with those murders, Dzhabrail Khachilaev, is a Dagestani Lak. (polit.ru, 1 Nov 01)

Dzhabrail's brother, Nadirshah, is a notorious personality. Elected to represent Dagestan in the Duma, he was arrested for his role in a 1998 attempted coup in Dagestan. He was deprived of parliamentary immunity in Duma hearings and then released from detention without trial. In 1999, Nadirshah resurfaced in Chechnya where he did his utmost to destabilize the Maskhado government. Those efforts culminated with Nadirshah's participation in the 2 August 1999 incursion from Chechnya into Dagestan's Tsimudin region -- an event that involved only returning Dagestanis. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 4 Aug 99)

**Bizarre trial almost over**

Besides the incursions into Dagestan, the other main trigger of the Chechen war in September 1999 was provided by the explosions in apartment buildings in Russian cities. A trial of five men from Karachaev-Cherkessia (none of them ethnic Chechen) is underway under a special regime of secrecy in a top security prison in Stavropol Krai.

It was reported widely that the men were being tried for organizing the explosions in Moscow and Volgodonsk. (See, for instance, INTERFAX, 17 Oct 01) Now we learn that this is not the case. The head of the Stavropol Krai prosecutor's department, Vadim Romanov, "reluctantly admitted" that the men are "not charged with involvement in the Moscow and Volgodonsk explosions." (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 31 Oct 01) Previous reports to that effect were apparently a "simple misunderstanding." The charges against the
defendants have not been elucidated. Still the wheels of justice grind on -- the judges have adjourned to deliberate and the prosecutor has called for a 14- to 20-year sentence.

AZERBAIJAN

Oil and water do mix

With oil reserve estimates that rival the North Sea, Central Asia and the Caucasus have quickly become the global center of attention, for more reasons than just being at the eye of the counter-terrorism hurricane. Bordered by Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, the much-disputed Caspian Sea already has begun to show its potential as a (putative) alternative to Middle Eastern oil for the United States and Western Europe. For the five countries vying for control of the supply, it has begun to demonstrate its potential as a cash cow and as a means to regional dominance.

The countries with the strongest claims to the still-speculative reserves are Iran and Azerbaijan. These competing claims have, in recent months, escalated to saber rattling: Iranian warships threatened an Azeri oil vessel and the Iranian Air Force has violated Azeri air space consistently since July. In response to growing insecurity in the region, the Turkish Air Force dispatched fighters to participate in a Baku air show, as an unsubtle show of solidarity with their closets strategic ally in the region. (BBC WORLD SERVICE, 23 Aug 01; via BBC online) Turkish concern for regional security is rooted in the developing plans for the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline linking the Azeri capital to the Turkish port city via Georgia.

The Baku-Ceyhan pipeline is seen as a viable alternative for getting Caspian oil to Western markets without having to go through Russia or Iran. The pipeline's other major contributor, the United States, also has offered assistance in maintaining regional security with aid designed to strengthen Azeri border security. (BBC WORLD SERVICE, 27 Aug 01; via BBC online) What Baku-Ceyhan is expected to provide in terms of oil, the Baku-Erzurum pipeline is
expected to do for natural gas. According to the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) and British Petroleum (BP), Baku-Erzurum should deliver 7.2 billion cubic meters of gas annually to European markets. (BBC WORLD SERVICE, 30 Sep 01; via BBC online)

Other than Azerbaijan, and despite limited resources of its own, Georgia may be the country to benefit the most from the development of both Baku-Ceyhan and Baku-Erzurum. With transit fees for gas flowing through Georgia en route to Turkish ports alone estimated at $2.75 billion, Tbilisi is waiting with bated breath for the completion of the $150 million BP feasibility study on the oil pipeline. (BBC WORLD SERVICE, 21 Jun 01; via BBC online) However, given the already tense atmosphere surrounding the American "war on terror" currently targeting Afghanistan, foreign investors in the region as a whole are concerned about possible backlash by Islamic fundamentalist groups. Furthermore, while Georgia stands to benefit substantially from both pipelines, tension in Russo-Georgian relations, a potential resumption of the Abkhazia war, and sudden civil unrest may delay or even threaten Baku-Ceyhan entirely. (EURASIANET, 29 Oct 01)

Opportunistic as ever, Russia also has raised its profile in the Caspian oil contest through the recently completed Caspian Pipeline Consortium, connecting western Kazakhstan with Novorossiisk, Russia. The pipeline began transporting oil on 15 October 2001. While not yet at full capacity, the consortium pipeline, which includes Russian, Kazakh and American investment interests, eventually could transport 67 million tonnes of oil. Not satisfied with only the Kazakh share of Caspian oil, the former Russian state-sponsored energy company, LUKoil, recently announced that it would consider investing in Baku-Ceyhan. (EURASIANET, 29 Oct 01) By aggressively pursuing its energy agenda in the region, and by aggressive policies toward Georgia thereby threatening the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, Moscow is establishing the conditions for continued hegemony in the area.
Despite primarily American and Russian investment in the Caucasus, interest in access to Caspian oil is far from limited to the former Cold War adversaries. Recent visitors to the region include Louis Michel, the Belgian foreign minister acting as the representative of the European Union, and Mircea Geoana, the Romanian foreign minister and OSCE chairman-in-office. The international interest in developing the region's natural resources and streamlining transportation to the West is best exemplified by the new Polish ambassador to Azerbaijan, who articulated his country's desire to assist in the exploitation of Azeri oilfields as a means of breaking Poland's reliance on Russian oil, currently 90% of all Polish oil imports. (TURAN, 26 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1027, via World News Connection) Whether it is attempting to limit American reliance on the Middle East or East European reliance on Russia, the successful exploitation of Caspian Sea oil reserves and their subsequent safe movement to Western markets is likely to be a major factor in setting the international agenda for the immediate future.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Fabian Adami

TAJIKISTAN

Rahmonov’s choice: To help, or not to help

Immediately following the 11 September attacks on America, Tajik President Imomali Rahmonov announced that Tajikistan would cooperate with the US "war on terrorism" only after consulting with Moscow. This attitude contrasted sharply with the course taken by Uzbekistan, whose President Islam Karimov sought to distance his country from Russian influence by offering the use of airbases and other military facilities. The Uzbek action has been a source of such concern to President Vladimir Putin that he has embarked on a mission to place the remaining Central Asian republics remain firmly under Russian hegemonic power.
Putin's method of achieving this aim has been to emphasize the fact that Russia and the United States have different endgames in mind for Afghanistan. There have been hints from Washington that some more moderate groups currently supporting the ruling Taliban may be permitted to participate in a post-war multi-ethnic coalition government in Afghanistan. Russia and some Central Asian republics -- and in particular Tajikistan -- oppose this vehemently due to the Taliban's support for fundamentalist Muslim groups in the region, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Instead, Russia unequivocally advocates a (predominantly Tajik and Uzbek) Northern Alliance government, viewing it as the best possible safeguard against the further spread of Islamic radicalism. A joint statement made after Putin's meetings with Northern Alliance political leader, Burhanuddin Rabbani, and President Rahmonov emphasized this approach: "The Taliban Movement has compromised itself by cooperation with international terrorist organizations." (EURASIA INSIGHT, 25 Oct 01; via Eurasianet)

At the same time as Russia is seeking to extend its hegemony, the United States is also seeking to court Dushanbe. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has been on a whistle-stop tour of Russia and Central Asia. While in Dushanbe, he held talks with President Rahmonov and Foreign Minister Talbak Nazarov. Rumsfeld sought to elicit more Tajik support for operations against Afghanistan than is currently on the table: As of now, overflight permission has been granted only for humanitarian flights.

Nazarov stated that permission had been granted for Rumsfeld to study several airbases, including the Soviet-built Kulyab airbase, as possible future staging grounds. In return for cooperation, Tajikistan would receive tens of millions of dollars in aid. (CBS NEWS, 3 Nov 01; via www.cbs.com)

Tajikistan is in a somewhat precarious position, since the main political opposition is formed by the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), which dominated
the anti-government faction during the 1992-1997 civil war. The leaders of the party have threatened to abandon the 1997 Peace Accords, should Rahmonov collaborate with the United States. (EURASIA INSIGHT, 20 Sep 01; via Eurasianet) It is questionable, however, how serious this threat is: Many of the non-governmental and humanitarian organizations, such as the Aga Khan Foundation, which had evacuated Dushanbe for fear of reprisals, have begun slowly to return their staff and resume their work.

If Rahmonov helps America, he will receive much-needed aid, and can begin to rebuild his shattered country. However, he risks attacks by the IRP. Alternatively, he can opt for the continuation of the fragile status quo. It is not an enviable choice.

Newly Independent States: Baltic States

By Michael Varuolo

LATVIA
Disagreement within the LSDSP
Results of municipal elections recently held in Latvia suggest that the Latvian Social Democratic Workers Party (LSDSP) is increasing in popularity. The LSDSP, which occupies the center-left position within Latvia's parliamentary coalition, is the fifth-largest party and, judging by the municipal election returns, is likely to become the second-largest party at the next general elections. Its current achievements constitute the strongest showing by the LSDSP since Latvia regained independence. The party receives most of its support from the Russian-speaking minority, and from rural areas in the (eastern) Latgale region. The municipal elections indicate that its base of support is spreading westward. Should this trend continue, and should the LSDSP participate in the post-general election coalition cabinet, the political complexion of Latvia's government would shade to the left.
Juris Bojars, the leader of the LSDSP, looks to consolidate the different factions within the party in order to maximize its position within a putative coalition government. He believes that this can be achieved only by enhancing intra-party discipline. He is attempting to unite the various ethnic minorities and social-democratic groups in the country. On 30 October, he presented a draft for constitutional amendments that include a popularly elected president, a mixed election system to replace the current proportional representation system, and a detailed listing of the obligations and rights of the country’s top officials. (BNS, 1631 GMT, 30 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1030, via World News Connection) If passed, these amendments would give additional clout to the rural areas in which the LSDSP is gaining momentum. His proposals were received coldly, not only by rival parties but by LSDSP members, indicating that he needs to strengthen his position within his own party.

Given the diverse views of LSDSP members who were chosen in the municipal elections, it is evident that the party is not homogeneous. Sharp critics of Bojars, Janis Gulbis and Risard Labanovskis, are promoting a party split. In their opinion, Bojars’ style of authoritarian leadership is ruining the party. Although they regret the need for a split, they feel that as long as Bojars remains at the head of the organization, the party cannot represent its constituency properly. (LETA, 1601 GMT, 27 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1028, via World News Connection)

Political instability affects not only the LSDSP, but also the performance of the governing coalition as a whole. Other parties find it difficult to coordinate policies with a LSDSP that lacks clear leadership. This comes of a highly inopportune time, as Latvia seeks to implement directives by the European Union and to enhance its candidacy for NATO membership.

**Anthrax alert**
Concerns regarding anthrax have made their way across the Atlantic and into the Baltic states. In preliminary tests, anthrax was determined to be contained in two mailbags within the US Embassy in Vilnius, Lithuania. (LETA, 1833 GMT, 31 Oct 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-1031, via World News Connection). This prompted the closure of mail rooms at the US embassies both in Vilnius and Tallinn, but did not disrupt normal daily operations of the embassies.