Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Michael Comstock

PRESIDENCY

Putin, Rushailo and the Far East

In August, President Vladimir Putin toured the Far Eastern Maritime Territory of Siberia with the stated intent of bringing the region's security and demographic crisis under control. A declining ethnic Russian population due to emigration and dropping birth rates, combined with a rapid rise in immigration (legal and illegal) from neighboring China, has the Kremlin skittish and worried.

The Far East tour has shed further light on the role of Russia's Security Council and its secretary, Vladimir Rushailo. In the well-nigh public contest of wills between the Yel'tsin-era bureaucrats and Putin's St. Petersburgers, Secretary Rushailo is viewed as a prominent member of the Yel'tsin "family." His ascent to the key position in the once-prominent Security Council was seen at the time as a gain for the "family." However, many recent events -- including Putin's trip to the Far East - demonstrated the decline in Rushailo's role.

Putin's highly publicized tour seemed devoted primarily to his "cult of the personality." At one news briefing the president was asked about a song devoted to him that is currently on the radio. Putin reportedly replied that he was pleased such songs were appealing and would like to meet the beautiful girls singing them. In other words, for Putin this was a publicity tour. Reporters were "asked to be careful about quoting the president's answers" in his informal meetings with the media. (NTV MIR, 24 Aug 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)
Rushailo and the Security Council constituted an afterthought to the tour. As part of the policy emphasis on the Far East, Putin assigned Rushailo and other select members of the Security Council to go on a fact-finding trip of their own, immediately following the president's visit. The focus of Rushailo's tour was to be Russia's security apparatus, including border guards, "power" ministries and the regular military. (RUSSIAN PUBLIC TV, ORT, 24 Aug 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) It appears that Russia's backyard will be held on a much tighter leash than during the past 10 years.

However, Rushailo's tour involved no active role for the secretary himself. He was acting merely as a glorified envoy for President Putin; Rushailo's agenda had been set for him in advance, the substantive items decided by men more powerful than he is. Within the Yel'tsin "family," Alexander Voloshin as head of the Presidential Administration and Mikhail Kasyanov, currently the Russian prime minister, have much greater influence than did Rushailo's declining Security Council. In any case, Rushailo's trip terminated with his serious injuries in a major road accident. Now, automobile crashes constitute a familiar feature on Russia's landscape, not surprisingly given the national disease of alcoholism. However, quite a few of these accidents have occurred on suspiciously convenient occasions, including some in the midst of election campaigns. The jury is out, so to speak.

The president's tour managed also to highlight the increasingly high level of self-censorship attained by the Russian media. Not only were journalists "encouraged" to handle Putin gently, in some of the news briefings cameras were banned.

Russian Federation: Security Services

By Michael Donahue
Unpleasant unfinished business
When the ghost of unfinished business haunts Russian President Vladimir Putin and FSB Director Nikolay Patrushev, it focuses predictably on the manner in which Russia is fighting its "war on terror" and closing the book only slowly on more than 359 "terrorist bombings" which the government alleges have occurred since 1999. While the FSB claims to have solved 23 out of 27 criminal cases associated with these attacks, doubts abound concerning both the manner in which such cases were resolved and whether the threat of future attacks has diminished in the least. (INTERFAX, 1227 GMT, 4 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0904, via World News Connection)

In its most (in)famous instance, the 1999 bombings in Moscow and Volgodonsk which killed more than 300 persons, after almost three years of "investigation" the government seemingly has broken open its case with the arrest and alleged turning of the FSB's prime suspect, Adam Dekkushev. Under interrogation, Dekkushev allegedly fingered the (recently assassinated) Chechen warlord Khattab and another fighter, Achemez Gochiyaev, as being primarily responsible for the attacks (both of whom Russia claims to have found refuge at one time in Georgia's Pankisi Gorge).

In prosecuting the government's case further, Patrushev has demanded that cooperation and information sharing between Russian and Georgian security services need to be increased dramatically. Despite Georgia's cooperation in the arrest and extradition of Dekkushev, Russia apparently remains dissatisfied with Tbilisi's refusal to allow the FSB and Russian military services to patrol and search the Pankisi Gorge itself. (INTERFAX, 1602 GMT, 29 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0829, via World News Connection) Georgia, for its part, has vowed to clear the gorge of criminal and terrorist elements using its own forces, a pledge which has been exploited by conspiracy theorists in Moscow. According to Rossiyskaya gazeta, there are those in the FSB who have tied Georgia's insistence on its territorial integrity directly to an alleged buyout by fugitive tycoon Boris
Berezovsky. They allege that Berezovsky, purportedly nervous concerning his association with those implicated by Dekkushev, bankrolled Georgia's anti-criminal operations in exchange for Georgia's stonewalling Russia in order to (1) ensure that the FSB would never collect evidence tying him to the crimes, and (2) give himself a renewed forum for propagating his "misdirection" of blame for the bombings (as made famous in former FSB agent Aleksandr Litvinenko's book "The FSB Blows up Russia"). (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 30 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0830, via World News Connection)

In a rare public expression of support for the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) and MVD spetsnaz, Putin lauded "accomplishments" of these units in Chechnya despite what some describe as the unreasonable expectation that spetsnaz would follow the rule of law in time of war. Taking exception to the concessions granted to American soldiers by Central Asian states, in which the host countries have agreed to allow the US, rather than their own courts, to prosecute American soldiers for unlawful acts committed during the war on terror, Moscow wants a similar understanding for its own forces. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 29 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0829, via World News Connection)

What Putin and other Russian officials fail to understand is that such an agreement is hardly an "a priori pardon" for crimes to be committed, but rather a diplomatic and legal agreement by the host states based on a profound trust that America will indeed punish offenders. Unfortunately for President Putin, such trust does not exist between other post-Soviet countries and Russia. Russian officials understandably are upset over the apparent refusal of the international community to recognize that in the new, post-Communist, Russia acts as though state-sponsored (or -condoned) ethnic cleansing would never occur...except, of course, in Chechnya, but that's a "special situation."
REGIONS
Peat bogs, peat bogs, burning bright...

Muscovites have become used to hearing about natural disasters. Occasionally, the Moscow government organizes humanitarian actions to help the regions. A train with 41 cars of food, clothing and medication left for the flood-damaged Krasnodar Krai on 24 August. A few days earlier, a train with 20 cars was dispatched to Daghestan. In July, humanitarian supplies were shipped out by train and airplane to North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Stavropol Krai and the Republic of Adygea. (ITAR-TASS, 0300 GMT, 24 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0824, via World News Connection)

But this summer Muscovites have been exposed to a disaster of their own, the like of which they haven't seen -- they first thought, since the 1970s, and now, it turns out ever -- in their lives. The amount of suspended soot particles in the air, the huge clouds of smoke brought in from the peat bogs in the regions surrounding Moscow, especially to the south and east "exceeds the maximum permissible concentration of nitrogen oxide by 150-300 percent," according to Mosekomonitoring (state ecological monitoring agency) Director Nikolai Fursov. (ITAR-TASS, 0705 GMT, 5 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0905, via World News Connection)

The severity of the fires is due, in part, to natural causes: This summer has been exceptionally dry -- the driest in about 100 years -- and the rains that, meteorologists predict, will put out a large number of the 1,959 separate fires that cover about 1,350 acres of land are not expected until later this week. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 6 Sep 02; via Johnson's Russia List) The situation seems to
improve when winds blow the clouds away from Moscow, or when a light drizzle washes the particles down, but then, once again, Muscovites wake to acrid air and walk around itchy-eyed, some covering their mouths and noses with handkerchiefs. Those with allergies or asthma are warned to stay indoors, and cases of fainting spells have been reported.

But there are other factors that keep the fires burning week after week. The lackadaisical attitude of the authorities is of particular concern. That is not to say that officials are not reacting. They are setting regulations forbidding teachers to take schoolchildren outside for sports or excursions, appealing to residents not to panic, and delaying flights at times when visibility is worst. They are declaring states of emergency and ordering investigations into the ecological effects of the smog. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 6 Sep 02; via Johnson's Russia List) They are promising financial aid to the burning regions and dispatching soldiers to help fight the fires. However, the real problem derives from the extent to which emergency services have been run down in the past 15-20 years, the way that equipment has been stolen, sold, or broken, the lack of preparation, the empty emergency reservoirs and the delays in taking action. Moscow Oblast' Prosecutor Eduard Denisov announced that about 3,000 officials will have to shoulder administrative responsibility for negligence. (ORT, 6 Sep 02; via www.ortv.ru)

**Don't rain on my parade**

Muscovites were especially upset last weekend when, in honor of the Day of the City, rain clouds, which could have brought some relief, were dispersed by chemical means upon the orders of the city government.

Officials are also downplaying the severity of the conditions. Deputy Mayor Valery Shantsev publicly cited a health department ruling that the smog has "no possible influence on health." (FINANCIAL TIMES, 6 Sep 02; via Johnson's Russia List) This is still better, however, than the stories that are told of Soviet
times, when dozens of soldiers were sent to their deaths in fighting fires with inadequate means.

**Follow the leader**

With the fires raging around Moscow, it was wise of several politicians to follow Russian President Vladimir Putin's lead -- and orders -- and to travel to various Russian regions to discuss other issues, ranging from illegal fishing to illegal migration. In particular, Federation Council Chairman Sergei Mironov traveled to the Far East and Siberia, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture Alexei Gordeev toured the Orel and Rostov Regions, and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov traveled to the Far East and Siberia. The visits constituted an end-of-summer push of Putin's usual agenda of keeping far-flung federal constituencies under the watchful eye and guiding hand of the Kremlin. The president himself kept to a pretty tight schedule -- an eight-day whirlwind tour through the Maritime Region, the Chita and Kemerovo Oblasts and the Republic of Tatarstan.

In Vladivostok, the primary issue brought up by the Russian president was the "accelerated immigration of Chinese nationals to the Russian Far East" as "proceeding against the backdrop of ongoing migration outflow of Russians from the region." (ITAR-TASS, 0745 GMT, 24 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0824, via World News Connection) President Putin recommended a solution to the problem -- the strategic development of the Far East with the goal of "integration in the Russian national and world economic spheres." He stressed the importance of the special Far East Development Program which -- if fully implemented -- would double the region's GDP and result in financial self-sufficiency. (ITAR-TASS, 1250 GMT, 23 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0823, via World News Connection) At the same time, the Russian Migration Service recommended the introduction of a triple tax on labor migrants -- labor duty, migration duty and payment for a migration card. (ITAR-TASS, 0950 GMT, 23 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0823, via World News Connection) Then, the president
met with environmental scientists and fishermen to discuss professional problems they were facing.

Putin continued on the professional trail in Kemerovo, when he met representatives of the coal-mining industry. He also visited a number of military installations in the Far East and Siberia. (ITAR-TASS, 1848 GMT, 28 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0828, via World News Connection)

The most important visit -- to one of the Russian Federation's most independent republics, Tatarstan -- Putin saved for last and timed to coincide with the World Congress of Tatars in Kazan. He chaired a meeting to discuss the celebration of the upcoming (August 2005) 1000-year anniversary of the founding of Kazan and met with the delegates to the Congress, taking the opportunity to make some points. President Putin called upon the participants of the World Congress to work toward the peaceful coexistence of various ethnic groups and religious confessions, reassured them of the noble intentions behind the upcoming census, took a stand against banning the study of national languages, asserted the importance of independence for religious organizations, and emphasized the importance of coordination between federal and regional bodies. (ITAR-TASS, 0529 GMT, 3 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0903, via World News Connection)

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Ansel Stein

Blast from the past?
Expectations that Putin's Russia would be a dependable ally in the "war against terror" appear increasingly to have been naïve or at least premature. Russia's August flurry of diplomatic action in the Middle East was aimed at undermining American policy in the region. The logic is quite simple. Following a string of diplomatic setbacks on issues in which Russia's hand is not strong (e.g.,
Georgia, Central Asia, the curtailment of the ABM Treaty, etc.), Russia has focused its relations with those states that are embroiled in conflict with the US (e.g., Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Syria, etc.). Indeed, some of the very same individuals who organized Soviet support for these rogue states in the past may have played a role in Russia's current relations.

Iraq
In August it came to light that Russia and Iraq are finalizing the details of a long-term cooperation agreement along the lines of the deal between Russia and Iran. The agreement, according to Russian sources, is valued at between $40-60 billion. Moscow's stand, according to the foreign ministry's spokesman, Boris Malakhov, is that "the long-term program absolutely does not contradict the demands of the sanctions regime that is in effect in respect of Baghdad. And it cannot be different: indeed, Russia as a permanent member of the UN Security Council strictly adheres to its assumed international obligations. This naturally applies in a full measure to Iraq too." (ITAR-TASS, 19 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0819, via World News Connection) Russia is being particularly careful to claim that the pact will be strictly economic in nature, and will not include military aid. (INTERFAX, 19 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0819, via World News Connection) Such promises, however, raise doubts regarding this issue. At the very least the agreement is likely to provide so-called dual-use goods service, along the lines of the fiber optic cable that China sold to Iraq to upgrade the Iraqi air defense system.

Russia remains Iraq's largest trading partner. (ITAR-TASS, 13 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0813, via World News Connection) To describe the relationship as primarily economic, however, would be naïve. Moscow often goes to bat for Baghdad on the international political stage. For instance, Russia has begun to lobby for a change in the Iraqi oil-pricing mechanism, framing a "humanitarian" argument: If the retroactive pricing mechanism is not done away with, Moscow asserted at the 20 August meeting of the Iraq sanctions committee of the UN, the
United Nations humanitarian program will fail and the consequences for the Iraqi people will be disastrous. (ITAR-TASS, 20 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0820, via World News Connection) Russia's track record regarding the wellbeing of persons within its own borders, particularly in Chechnya, makes such stated concerns for Iraqis less than persuasive. More likely motivations stem from competition with the United States and the desire to ensure that Iraq will be able to pay for the "economic cooperation" it is purchasing from Moscow.

Lastly, and most importantly, Russia is firmly backing Iraqi efforts to arouse international opposition to any military action by the United States against Saddam Hussein's regime. Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov went so far as to say that Russia hoped the United Nations Security Council would not be asked to approve military action against Iraq, "so there will be no need for a Russian veto." (THE NEW YORK TIMES, 2 Sep 02; via lexis-nexis) The message could not be clearer.

**Iran**

Russo-Iranian ties are being strengthened daily. Russian scientists have begun installation of heavy equipment at the first atomic unit of the Bushehr nuclear power plant, the director-general of Atomstroyeksport, Viktor Kozlov, told ITAR-TASS on 1 September. (ITAR-TASS, 1 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0901, via World News Connection) Moreover, as if it did not suffice that Russia refuses to respond to US warnings concerning transfer of nuclear technology to Iran, Russia now admits that five reactors, not merely Bushehr, are under discussion. According to Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov, "a program of interaction of Moscow and Tehran has been prepared," referring to the sister agreement to the aforementioned Russo-Iraqi compact (a program of trade, economic, industrial and scientific-technological cooperation for the years to 2012). (ITAR-TASS, 28 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0828, via World News Connection)
On 22 August, First Deputy Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Trubnikov (former chief of the FSB), signaled that cooperation was diplomatic as well as economic. Russia, Trubnikov said, "does not consider America's attitude to Iran constructive. Israel's interests," he continued, "show through clearly on this issue." (ITAR-TASS, 22 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0822, via World News Connection) In addition, Iranian and Russian experts discussed the "strengthening of strategic stability, preparations for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, prospects for the entry into force of the Treaty on Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban (CTBT), the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and international negotiations on strengthening the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological Weapons," according to the Russian foreign ministry. (ITAR-TASS, 23 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0823, via World News Connection)

**Syria**

Finally, it was announced by Israeli military officials that Israel had become aware of a request by Syria to Rosoboroneksport for a consignment of Igla SAMs. Damascus’ intention to hand over the systems and ammunition (i.e., 9M39 anti-aircraft missiles) to its allies on the territory of Lebanon controlled by the Syrian army (i.e., Hezbollah) is not being concealed. It is here that the short-sightedness of Russian policy becomes painfully obvious. Hezbollah (which has been declared "a terrorist organization" by the US and compared to al-Qaeda by a senior US diplomat) is certainly sympathetic to Chechen fighters. Russia lost two military helicopters to Igla missiles in the last month, events that were costly in lives and in prestige. Russia must be aware of the potential risk, but it is likely that the sale will go through anyway.

**Russian Federation: Armed Forces**

By Steve Kwast
Increased equipment sales bring more than just money

The past few months have unveiled even more evidence that Russian President Vladimir Putin is accelerating the sale of Russian military equipment and using it as a fundraiser to help save the future of the armed forces and Russia's "rightful" strategic place in the world. Flooding world markets with military equipment not only puts money in his pocket, it also increases his influence and bargaining position in each region of sales.

This year Russia increased such sales to $3.5 billion worth of military hardware. This is a $300 million increase over last year. The general director of the state-owned exporting agency Rosoboroneksport, Andrei Belyaninov, told the RBK news agency that Russia's arms export has developed a distinct uptrend over the last few years. The increase consists mostly of aircraft technologies and space services (ITAR-TASS, 1427 GMT, 21 Aug 02; FBIS-CHI-2002-0821, via World News Connection) and includes over 1,000 contracts with 69 countries. (ITAR-TASS, 1237 GMT, 17 Jul 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0717, via World News Connection)

The president is not satisfied with simply this increase in total volume. In a meeting with his minister of science, industry and technology on 6 August, Putin reiterated the "need for more vigorous restructuring of the military-industrial complex in order to enhance the competitiveness of our products on the markets and to maintain the armed forces of the Russian Federation at the modern level." (VREMYA MN, 8 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0808, via World News Connection)

One example of this is the state-sponsored collaboration of the Mil and Kazan helicopter factories in Moscow, and the Kronstadt company in St. Petersburg to transform the Mi-17 helicopter into a custom-made, affordable military helicopter targeted to specific countries throughout the world. The package of equipment and services that comes with this sale gives Russia a clear lead over any other
supplier in the world and increases its appeal. (ITAR-TASS, 0715 GMT, 22 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2002-0722, via World News Connection)

These efforts to coordinate a strategy towards increasing military sales are working. In the last month alone, Syria, Iran, Nigeria, Columbia, Kuwait and Turkey all have moved forward to buy a significant amount of Russian equipment. It is interesting to note the language and theme of each press conference announcing a sale. The press conference regarding Nigeria, which took delivery of three Mi-34S helicopters, focused on how its successful operational use of the helicopters would help Russia to promote the same type of sales in the markets of other countries. (ITAR-TASS, 1240 GMT, 6 Aug 02; FBIS-AFR-2002-0806, via World News Connection) Columbia took delivery of six Mi-17-MD helicopters in a ceremony similar to the one in Nigeria. The theme was the Mi-17's superiority over any American helicopter of the same class, and how other countries could also take advantage of this military capability. (ITAR-TASS, 0133 GMT, 3 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0803, via World News Connection) The same "hard push for sales," and "advertisement-style" press conferences were evident in the case of the contracts for Syria, Iran, Turkey and Kuwait. They represent a change in the way Russia markets its military equipment and highlight the fact that Moscow is pursuing a strategy to sell as much military equipment as possible to as many countries as it can.

The reason for this strategy is clear. Putin needs the money if he wants to transform the Russian military in line with his 2010 plan. Earlier this year he adopted an arms program for the year 2010 to set up a powerful and efficient military with primary focus on its space force and strategic rocket force. To support that goal, and also spend 79 billion rubles on national defense this year, Putin needs to be aggressive about increasing his incoming cash flow. (KOREAN CENTRAL BROADCASTING STATION, 0538 GMT, 19 Jul 02; FBIS-EAS-2002-0719, via World News Connection)
Putin, however, gains much more than just money by selling military goods. He gains influence, access and international prestige in every arena in which he sells military hardware. He also benefits from the fact that the US spreads itself thin trying to maintain a balance of access and influence in each region. A good example is China.

Russia has been selling military and high-tech (dual-use) technology and equipment to China at an alarming rate. Over the first six months of 2002, Russia sold China $20.8 million worth of equipment in the high technology sphere alone, compared to only $11.7 million for all of last year. (INTERFAX, 1126 GMT, 31 Jul 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0731, via World News Connection) This fact, coupled with the increase in sales of traditional military hardware, has further increased US concern regarding that region of the world. Additionally, at last month's Asian Regional Forum in Brunei, as US Secretary of State Colin Powell was busy drumming up support for global counter-terrorism, China proposed a new security doctrine that envisions China, and not the US, as the dominant player in a new regional security order. (THE NATION, Internet Version, 12 Aug 02; FBIS-EAS-2002-0812, via World News Connection) If China were able to collect enough military hardware to stage a conventional amphibious attack on Taiwan thanks to Russian arms sales, the US would be caught off guard with no military presence in the area that could stop such an attack. In the end, therefore, such sales enable Putin to increase his influence in the region.

The US needs to re-think its capabilities-based planning to stay proactive, and not reactive, to Russia's increased military sales around the world.

The Caspian Sea Exercise: Intimidation alone, or a precursor to invasion? Last month, Russia held the largest military exercise ever undertaken in the Caspian Sea. It came about because of Putin's frustration with the failure of the five-nation Caspian Summit to reach an agreement desired by Moscow on the delineation of the Caspian Sea. The official goal outlined by Russia was merely
to test the ability of the troops to battle terrorism and crack down on criminal activities at sea. (TA KUNG PAO, Internet Version, 18 Aug 02; FBIS-NES-2002-0819, via World News Connection) However, Putin obtained three benefits from one exercise. He signaled to the four other littoral states that he holds all the military cards in the region, he obtained some marginal training for his troops, and he maintained a level of fear in Chechnya and Georgia.

The intimidation is subtle but clear, and consistent with the ongoing moves by Moscow to pressure Georgia at every opportunity and re-establish Russian influence. In a news conference held in Kaspisysk, just as the military exercise was reaching its highest point, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov didn't focus on the exercise but rather on Georgia's Pankisi Gorge, reiterating Moscow's demands for direct involvement. "This issue can only be settled by using force. There is no point in talking with terrorists, trying to convince them or reasoning with them. The whole world knows it. Either they [terrorists] must face the law-enforcement agencies or their bodies must be presented for identification." (INTERFAX, 1149 GMT, 10 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0810, via World News Connection) This statement was punctuated by the massive military operation going on just miles away.

Moscow has been using every incident in the Chechen conflict lately to present Russian incursions onto Georgian territory as part of counter-terrorism efforts. Two week ago Russia accused Georgia of harboring terrorists and quickly blamed those "terrorists" for shooting down the Mi-26 military transport helicopter that crashed near Khankala killing over 116 soldiers. (INTERFAX, 1358 GMT, 20 Aug 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0820, via World News Connection) Russia also justified the latest series of cross-border air raids into Georgia as nothing more than raids on terrorists. (THE NEW YORK TIMES, 24 Aug 02) It is not a stretch to conclude that these Caspian Sea exercises are meant to flex Russian military muscle in the region that might be used eventually to invade Georgia under the pretext of fighting terrorism.
UKRAINE

Time for Yushchenko to 'stand up'

Since their country declared independence 11 years ago, Ukrainians have been disappointed regularly by those who would lead them. Charges of corruption, criminality, oppression and incompetence have plagued most public officials, disillusioning those who originally backed them, and leading to a loss of support for the political system that produced them. In the last two years, the country, among other things, has seen its former parliamentary speaker arrested in the United States for large-scale embezzlement and its current president accused of murder.

By just about every Western measurement, Ukraine is sliding backward toward authoritarianism. Freedom House continuously has noted a steady decline in democratization, while Transparency International recently found Ukraine to be one of the most corrupt countries in the world -- ahead of Zimbabwe, Nicaragua, and Argentina, to name a few. (For further information, see www.freedomhouse.org and www.transparency.org) It is no surprise then that Ukrainians, in survey after survey, say they do not trust any political leader -- any political leader, that is, except former Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko.

For two years, the former prime minister has been the most trusted, liked and publicly supported politician in Ukraine. This reputation was earned. During his brief two-and-one-half-year tenure beginning in 1998, Yushchenko created an economic policy that resulted in the eradication of wage arrears in most sectors, resumption of international aid, reduction of energy shortages, and an increase in agricultural production. Most controversially, he also attempted to rein in the
"oligarchs" who have, according to many observers, criminally profited while controlling the country's major industries. As a result of all of this activity, Ukraine's gross domestic product grew for the first time under Yushchenko's cabinet and its standard of living increased (albeit only moderately). With competent leadership, the country finally was headed in the right direction.

Then, tapes appeared that reportedly contained a conversation implicating Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma in the death of investigative journalist Georgiy Gongadze. Kuchma became an international pariah, internal unrest skyrocketed and Yushchenko's popularity became a threat to the besieged president. In April 2001, after a long political battle between the presidential administration and the parliament, Yushchenko was ousted. Leaders of the newly formed, Gongadze-inspired Ukrainian opposition quickly rallied around the former premier, and Yushchenko seemed to embrace their ideas. When asked at the time about the future of Ukraine, Yushchenko responded easily. "I am optimistic," he said. "Today democratic forces were able to hear the bell they couldn't hear before. You have to fight for transparent politics and a non-criminal economy and democracy. If we want to have it, we have to fight for it." (WASHINGTON POST, 29 April 01; via lexis-nexis) The statement seemed to signal a new era in Ukrainian politics, when leading opposition figures would unite to fight for a more democratically oriented Ukraine.

Yushchenko, however, was hesitant to criticize personally the man who had orchestrated his ouster. The opposition, he suggested, should be "mainly oriented at a unifying notion and not against somebody." (IBID.) That somebody, of course, was President Kuchma.

He followed the same principle at the start of his campaign during the parliamentary elections of 31 March 2002. In fact, he worked to separate his bloc, Our Ukraine, from the more radical opposition parties of Yulia Tymoshenko and Oleksandr Moroz, which included Kuchma's impeachment in their platforms.
But, as Yushchenko’s access to the media was cut off and law enforcement officials began to target him regularly, he began vigorously criticizing administration-supported candidates in the election, and lashed out at Kuchma’s interference in the electoral process. The tactic worked. When all was said and done, Our Ukraine had won the clear majority of party list seats in the chamber. More important, Viktor Yushchenko had demonstrated his status as the most significant political leader in the country, and appeared able to challenge President Kuchma if he chose to do so.

It seems he did not. Six months after its victory in the parliamentary elections, Yushchenko’s Our Ukraine has been reduced to a minority by Kuchma’s back-room maneuvering. Despite the fact the voters wholeheartedly rejected the parties backing him during the election, Kuchma now boasts the support of 231 deputies in the 450-person body. Opposition members accuse the president of using bribery and blackmail to "convince" deputies elected on their party lists, as well as those elected as independents, to support the "majority." Regardless of the methods used, the result has been the installation of a pro-Kuchma speaker of parliament and control of the major parliamentary committees. All the while, Yushchenko has occasionally complained, but acted very little.

Tymoshenko and Moroz, on the other hand, have formed a strong partnership and have worked to keep the opposition movement united, active and as effective as possible in the face of enormous pressure from the authorities. They have enlisted the support of the Communist Party, which is also staunchly anti-administration. The Communists will support the opposition, Party leader Petro Symonenko said, "until we get answers to the main questions of Kuchma's dismissal and the adoption of laws to boost democracy in this country."

(INTEFAX, 31 Aug 02; via lexis-nexis) As a result, for the first time, Ukraine truly does have a diverse, active and self-sustaining opposition movement. Yushchenko, however -- the man with the best ability to reach and mobilize the
public -- seems to be nowhere in sight. As human rights come under attack more aggressively than ever before, Yushchenko remains remarkably inactive.

This is nowhere more evident than in the preparations for the "Stand Up, Ukraine!" demonstrations to be held throughout the country. On 2 September, Tymoshenko, Moroz and Symonenko called on the country to join them in commemorating the second anniversary of the disappearance of Georgiy Gongadze, calling for democratic reforms, and urging that early presidential elections be held (Kuchma's term expires in 2004). The three then departed for a national tour, where as many as 10,000 persons met them at each stop along the way. The tour will culminate in Kyiv on 16 September, the date that Gongadze went missing.

Instead of participating in this action, however, Yushchenko chose to release an "open letter" to the president. In it, he called upon Kuchma to "support Our Ukraine's initiative for the formation of a parliamentary majority based on the political force that was the leader in the parliamentary elections," and "appoint a coalition government formed by the parliamentary majority," among nine total points. The letter also reiterated "the readiness of the political forces making up Viktor Yushchenko's Our Ukraine bloc for a broad dialogue,..." since, no doubt, dialogue had worked so well in the past. (KYIV POST, 6 Sep 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Yushchenko then promised not to make any decision about whether to take part in the 16 September protest action until he received an answer from the president.

This answer came quickly, and was not exactly a surprise. "As president, I will not accept the demands," Kuchma announced. (UKRAINIAN NEWS, 6 Sep 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) And that was that.
Yushchenko’s decision, however, has not been as swift. In fact, he has remained indecisive and noncommittal. As a result, he has undermined the protest action, and left his three most important allies on their own.

Tymoshenko must feel Yushchenko's distance more than anyone, since she once again is being targeted by administration officials in questionable criminal probes. This time, Kuchma's prosecutor-general, Sviatoslav Pyskun, plans to charge Tymoshenko with embezzlement. The charge is just the latest in several years-worth of failed attempts to convict Tymoshenko of something -- anything. Authorities are proceeding, however, with renewed vigor following the recent formation of the pro-Kuchma parliamentary majority. On 21 August, in fact, Pyskun sent a letter to parliament asking that the body revoke Tymoshenko's parliamentary immunity. Although it is unlikely, one of the benefits of the new majority could be an agreement to do just that. Even though this decision could affect an ally, however, Yushchenko has followed his now familiar pattern and remained silent.

Most important, the former prime minister has been muted in his response to Kuchma's offer to limit his own power. The president suggested in a nationally televised address on Ukraine's Independence Day that the country must move from a presidential to a parliamentary republic. While this technically would limit Kuchma's authority, in reality, it would very efficiently remove most power from the next president and place it in the hands of the pro-Kuchma parliamentary group. This would allow Kuchma to continue influencing political events even in the years following his retirement -- in essence, a form of the Yel'tsin scenario. Additionally, it would barely affect Kuchma currently, since he now effectively controls parliament.

Observers have suggested numerous reasons for Yushchenko's inactivity, from simply an aversion to confrontation to a secret agreement with Kuchma. If, for example, Yushchenko remains silent about the persecution of Tymoshenko and
does not participate in the 16 September protest, will he be given the soon-to-be-vacant post of prime minister? Or does he truly believe that compromise and appeasement will achieve his goals? Likely, a combination of these two approaches is closer to the truth. It seems that Viktor Yushchenko may be attempting to maintain as much neutrality as possible in order to preserve what little remaining influence he has in the administration, or possibly to increase his influence in the near future. Perhaps he hopes to use this influence to accomplish what Tymoshenko and Moroz are attempting to achieve through protest. Yushchenko has, after all, never been one to confront; throughout his career, he has relied on his ability to compromise and form coalitions. Until recently, that ability served him well. But to form coalitions genuinely, there must be more than one side willing to compromise. Unfortunately, it seems likely that compromise on Yushchenko's part at this point would accomplish little more than legitimizing a corrupt administration, while undermining the opposition. Perhaps Viktor Yuschenko understands this, perhaps he does not. But either way, it seems that the people of Ukraine may be on the road to yet another disappointment from a once promising political leader.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Tammy Lynch

GEORGIA

Georgia secures Pankisi Gorge

On 23 August the Georgian MVD moved into the Pankisi Gorge with 1,000 men and established checkpoints throughout the area. Two days later the army held exercises with up to 1,500 soldiers in the same district which were clearly meant to provide backup to the MVD. (WWW.CIVIL.GE, 26 Aug 02) The Georgian side has established control over the troubled gorge and has arrested several suspects, including an ethnic Arab carrying a French passport.
Hence, over the last two weeks, Georgia has effectively countered Russia’s claim that order cannot be restored without the use of Russian troops. Since the accusation that Georgia cannot control its territory is no longer tenable, Russian pressure is being directed along another vector -- towards inflaming Georgia’s rebel territories and using KGB provocateurs to smear Shevardnadze.

It should be noted that over a month of threats and aggression from Russia, Georgia's mainstream political parties have remained firmly behind Shevardnadze. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 14 Aug 02)

**Abkhazia and South Ossetia to cooperate**

Leaders of the rebel regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia met in Sukhumi on 7 September to coordinate their plans. "President" of South Ossetia Eduard Kokoita and "Prime Minister" of Abkhazia Anri Dzhergeniya said that Georgia's operation in Pankisi is a farce. ... Kokoita claimed that Chechen fighters who have been squeezed out of the Pankisi Gorge are amassing on the Russian-Ossetian border. The two rebel regions of Georgia pledged mutual assistance. (RUSSIAN TELEVISION, ORT, 7 Sep 02)

**Giorgadze: 'If I wanted to kill Shevardnadze'**

The former head of the Georgian Security Service, Igor Giorgadze, fled Georgia after his aborted coup against Shevardnadze in 1995. Since then the internationally wanted criminal apparently has been living in Russia, which, despite repeated Georgian requests, has refused to extradite him. Igor's brother Pantelemon is the chairman of Georgia's Socialist Party and the only Georgian politician who has demanded Shevardnadze's resignation in the context of the current crisis.

In his interview with Izvestia on 4 September, Igor Giorgadze asserted that "If I wanted to kill Shevardnadze, we would be standing on his grave." Giorgadze asserts that he has extensive documentary evidence of Shevardnadze's
"crimes," including ordering murders during the Soviet period when he served as the MVD minister of Georgia. This approach of dredging up dubious Kompromat from the hazy past is reminiscent of the suit filed by several Duma deputies accusing Shevardnadze of betraying Russia's interests when as Soviet foreign minister he negotiated the division of the Bering Sea between the USSR and the US.

Giorgadze claims that his "All-Georgian Patriotic Alliance" was legally registered in Georgia in the summer of 2001 and represents nine opposition parties of the extreme left and the extreme right. "In the not too distant future" this alliance will "emerge as the nucleus around which certain parts of the Georgian opposition can unite," he said. He also claims that at the proper time the alliance can bring 50,000 persons into the streets to demand Shevardnadze's resignation and new elections.

From Russia Giorgadze does not expect military support but help with economic reconstruction and energy supplies. In keeping with Russian propaganda, Giorgadze goes on to say that, according to his Georgian sources, the terrorists who exploded buildings in Moscow in 1999 are hiding in the Pankisi Gorge and that on 23 August 2002 Georgia's planes bombed their own territory! (Since Giorgadze's interview, the FSB has begun to repeat his allegations that the organizers of the 1998 blasts are hiding out in Pankisi Gorge.)

**CHECHNYA**

**Chechen MVD under attack from military**

Two recent incidents suggest that the Russian military is gunning for the Chechen MVD. President Putin has repeated on several occasions that the Chechen MVD should take on the leading role in providing order in the republic and most of the military units currently in Chechnya should be withdrawn. The military, however, is committed to sabotaging such plans.
On 3 September a truck carrying Russian and Chechen MVD officers was blown up as it was returning to the Shali commandant's building after carrying out a special operation in Duba Yurt, Kommersant reported on 4 September. Eight persons were killed and 11 were wounded. Kommersant reporter Musa Muradov was told that the truck was blown up as a result of artillery bombardment by the Joint Group of Forces in Chechnya. The head of the Shali Administration, Sharip Alikhadzhiev, asserted that the truck was blown up by the 70th Division and commented that such incidents occur often. Presidential Representative for Human Rights in the Chechen Republic, Abdul Khakim Sutygov, also claimed that it seemed more likely that the truck was destroyed by artillery than by a mine.

The event is Shali follows on a similar disaster in Shatoi. Award-winning journalist Anna Politkovskaya published a lengthy and detailed analysis of the incident in Shatoi where 17 Chechen MVD officers perished on 6 August. (NOVAYA GAZETA, 26 Aug 02) According to Politkovskaya, when the truck carrying the Chechen MVD hit a mine not 50 meters from the Shatoi headquarters, Russian positions were given the order to shoot. And in fact Russian soldiers shot at the burning truck with wounded Chechen MVD personnel. The order to shoot at the truck was issued by Shatoi Commandant Aleksandr Bondarenko. According to witness testimony obtained by Politkovskaya, the MVD unit left the headquarters on the oral instructions from Bondarenko, without taking proper precautions.

According to the official version, three Chechen saboteurs were responsible for the Shatoi incident. But Politkovskaya is able to show that the persons accused were picked up by masked spetsnaz in Grozny on 30 July. Then they were killed and their bodies shown on television as perpetrators of the Shali bombing. The real organizers, Politkovskaya hints, were GRU.

Two helicopters downed
Two military helicopters were shot down over the last month. An Igla missile took out an MI-26 transport helicopter near Khankala on 19 August and an MI-24 helicopter was shot down on 31 August. The death toll from the first crash alone (121) exceeds the number of those who perished on the Kursk.

Some newspapers (see, for instance, NOVYE IZVESTIA, 3 Sep 02) suggest that Chechen fighters have acquired a large stock of anti-aircraft weapons, most likely Igla. The paper conjectures that the weapons can play the same role in Chechnya as they did in Afghanistan in the 1980s, altering the environment in favor of the partisans against the military. However, the Chechens have had the Igla for some time and there have been spates of helicopter downings in the past. For instance, four helicopters were downed over roughly six weeks in January and February 2002.

**Maskhadov: Dead again?**

On 4 September Moskovsky komsomolets started the unconfirmed rumor that Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov is dead. The "news" was picked up by NTV during its midday broadcast and then spread throughout the media. Denials were issued by the official web page of the Chechen government, chechenpress, and by Maskhadov's spokesman, Akhmed Zakaev.

Moskovsky komsomolets claims that the Russian side learned of Maskhadov's death from soldiers who were captured in July. According to this version, the Chechen president was killed in a rocket attack in June. Moreover, Russian surveillance purportedly has not picked up Maskhadov's telephone conversations since June nor has Maskhadov appeared on camera.

In the unlikely event that Maskhadov is dead, this may explain the string of bizarre appointments. Since June "Maskhadov" has appointed his archenemies Shamil Basaev, Movladi Udugov, and Zelimkhan Yanderbiev to top positions. Another strange factor is that Russian officials refuse to comment on the rumor of Maskhadov's death, whereas in the past military and security services officials
have rushed to claim the laurels for their service. For instance, when in April the FSB announced that its agents had eliminated Khattab, the head of the General Staff Anatoly Kvashnin immediately claimed that his men had killed Basaev. Kvashnin's claim was proven false shortly thereafter when Basaev contacted the press. This time around Maskhadov most likely will do likewise.

**Newly Independent States: Central Asia**

*By David Montgomery*

**Seeking one voice, living another: poverty without representation**

At the recent United Nations' World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 26 August - 4 September), issues relevant to Central Asian countries were in the forefront: the responsible use of natural resources, sustainable integration into the global economy, and the improved quality of life around the world. (For more information, see www.johannesburgsummit.org)

Arguing that poverty is connected to frailties of humanity ranging from the irresponsible use of resources to incidents of terrorism, analysts have suggested that the alleviation of poverty is one responsibility necessary to ameliorate these ills.

Citing the Ferghana Valley (a region shared by Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) as an example of poverty creating an atmosphere supportive of religious extremism and the threat of terrorism, the Central Asian states suggested the importance of improving the population's standard of living, bringing it more in line with that of developed nations. The argument prevailing at the summit was that it is up to developed and developing nations to join in responsible ways to curtail human and environmental poverty. The summit declaration stated clearly, however, that "democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and freedoms, and achievement of peace and security are essential for the full achievement of sustainable development." (EURASIANET, 6
Such statements require the governments of Central Asia to be more equitable in the distribution of wealth and application of legislation, and to embrace reform strategies favoring a stable multi-party political system.

While the standard of life in Central Asia generally is regarded as low, there are resources of wealth that, if properly utilized, could go far in addressing the issue of poverty. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have deposits of fossil fuels that could infuse the social services funds with needed resources. And while Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan do not have the large oil and gas reserves, they do have water and hydroelectric potential that could be made more productive through the upgrading of physical plants and the selling/exchange of water for the fossil fuels of its neighbors. (Assigning an economic value to water and convincing other nations that it is a resource that should be purchased is complicated; but water does stand as an ever important resource, especially to countries in short supply, such as Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.)

Poverty does appear to create a more receptive environment for extreme expressions of discontent, but such expressions are more complex than poverty alone and are usually directed against the ruling governments. Thus, while the fact that the support base for Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT), a radical Islamic group prevalent in the Ferghana Valley and elsewhere that advocates the establishment of sharia, has increased is important, what is more significant is that the increased membership is not seen as being a revival of personal religious devotion, but, as one observer noted --requesting anonymity for fear of government harassment -- because of "unemployment, declining living standards and vague prospects for the future." (EURASIANET, 5 Sep 02; via www.eurasianet.org)
Unemployment, lower living standards, and future opportunities are linked to dissatisfaction with the government. Thus, in a region where voices of political opposition have been quelled through legal sanctions and intimidation, increased membership in HT in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, or protest marches in Kyrgyzstan express the collective discontent with government's success in improving the standard of living and incorporating oppositional views. Examples of political repression and political intimidation include the recent seven-year prison sentence of Ghalymzhan Zhaqiyanov, a Kazakh opposition politician (CENTRAL ASIA - CAUCASUS ANALYST, 28 Aug 02; via www.cacianalyst.org), and Kyrgyz Prime Minister Nikolai Tanaev's call for inquiry into the finances of protest groups. (INTERFAX, 1134 GMT, 3 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0903, via World News Connection) The depth of discontent can be symbolized by the staging of a 600-kilometer march from southern Kyrgyzstan to Bishkek, wherein protestors are requesting the resignation of President Askar Akaev. (INTERFAX, 1009 GMT, 4 Sep 02, and ITAR-TASS, 1409 GMT, 4 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0904, via World News Connection)

In response to calls for political reform, however, both President Akaev and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev have balked. On 4 September, the Constitutional Council in Kyrgyzstan proposed that some powers of the president be passed to parliament. Specifically, the council has suggested strengthening the role of the prime minister, wherein the prime minister would be elected by parliament rather than appointed by the president. Not surprisingly, Akaev has expressed his opposition to yielding power to parliament, arguing that "the idea of a parliamentary republic is not viable at present because the political structure is still weak"; that democracy has not developed enough and "insufficiently strong political parties [are] represented in the parliament." (INTERFAX, 0953 GMT, 4 Sep 02, and ITAR-TASS, 0955 GMT, 4 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0904, and ITAR-TASS, 1042 GMT, 3 Sep 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-0903, via World News Connection)
Likewise, President Nazarbaev has argued against a parliamentary foundation of
government wherein his control of power might be mitigated: "What Kazakhstan
currently needs is strong state power with a presidential form of government."
(INTERFAX, 1435 GMT, 29 Aug 02, and ITAR-TASS, 1346 GMT, 29 Aug 02;
FBIS-SOV-2002-0829, via World News Connection)

Thus, both Akaev and Nazarbaev argue for strong presidencies wherein their
control of power remains close to absolute. There appears to be little room for
the legitimate development of a political opposition which can express divergent
views. The absence of a developed forum to voice concerns gives credence to
HT and protest marches as expressions of discontent. And while the
governments of Central Asia are interacting in international forums, calling for the
world community to assist them in bringing their standard of living to a level
comparable to that of developed countries, to do so without democratic
incorporation of voices within the country seems unlikely to produce positive
results.

Newly Independent States: Baltic States
By Michael Varuolo

EU-US rift causes concern in the Baltics
When Lithuanian sovereignty was overlooked and the European Union (EU) and
Russia started negotiations concerning the Schengen Agreement and
Kaliningrad transit rights, little did Latvia and Estonia realize they too would
become embroiled in a struggle between two powers. This time the debate is
between two apparently "friendly" powers -- the United States and the European
Union, a situation which Estonian Prime Minister Siim Kallas called "having to
choose between mother and father." (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE, 5 Sep 02; via
lexis-nexis) While both the US and the EU claim to want the same thing for the
Baltic states - free market economies governed by democratic governments
subjugated to the "rule of law" -- the illusion of like-mindedness was dispelled abruptly in the face of discussions concerning the International Criminal Court (ICC). The US, which is opposed to the ICC, is seeking immunity for its servicemen through bilateral agreements; the EU has called for aspirants to close ranks and support the official EU position by blocking the US from reaching such bilateral agreements.

The ICC controversy reportedly has brought about US threats to withdraw military support from ICC signatory states. The warning was allegedly delivered by the US ambassador-at-large for war crimes issues, Pierre-Richard Prosper, who alarmed the Baltic states and other NATO applicant countries, when he stated during a video interview that "If they (meaning applicants) do not enter into such an agreement, this will be an issue raised in the context of NATO. That is the situation. We cannot avoid raising the matter. It is something that worries the United States." (POLITIKEN, 21 Aug 02, FBIS-EEU-2002-0821, via World News Connection)

Prosper's statement highlighted a US law known as the American Servicemembers' Protection Act. This act, which becomes effective with the ratification of the Rome Statute (establishing the ICC) by 60 of the signatory countries, forbids military assistance to any country that is a member of the Rome Statute, except those that are members of NATO or other key allies (defined as Australia, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Argentina, South Korea, New Zealand, and Taiwan). (AMERICAN SERVICEMEMBERS' PROTECTION ACT, HR4475). As aspiring members to NATO, the Baltic states are not included within this list. Thus the countries are in a precarious position: Solidarity with EU policy could mean the loss of US military aid, while signing the bilateral agreement would put the states at odds with the EU.

The withdrawal of US military aid would be devastating for the Baltic states. In the last year alone, millions of dollars in US military aid have been provided.
Without this kind of funding, not to mention the possible loss of political support, a formal invitation to join the alliance would be unlikely.

For the last decade, the mainstay of all three Baltic states' foreign policy has been to obtain membership in NATO, a move seen as vital to the prevention of any neo-imperialist actions by Russia in the region. Joining the European Union, on the other hand, is viewed as critical for the Baltic states' return to Europe both economically and politically. If the US and the EU cannot settle the matter, the Baltic states may be forced to decide whether NATO or the EU best suits their long-term security needs.

Fortunately, on 4 September, US President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powel allayed Baltic fears by informing Estonian Prime Minister Siim Kallas that at this time the issue of the ICC would not affect any invitation to join the alliance at the upcoming Prague Summit. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE, 5 Sep 02; via lexis-nexis) This confirms earlier statements made by Estonian Defense Minister Kristiina Ojuland that Estonia had not encountered and does not expect to receive pressure from the US concerning the ICC bilateral agreement. Furthermore, she hinted that the EU and the US will reach a settlement on the ICC in mid-September. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE, 26 Aug 02; via lexis-nexis) An ICC settlement would let the Baltic states off the hook altogether. According to Latvian Prime Minister Andris Berzins, there is no such thing as too much security. "Pragmatically approaching these matters, we see that our participation in NATO is an additional guarantee that nobody ... ever divides the world into spheres of influence behind our back, that there are no new modifications of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact[s]."

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