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Patrushev, Gryzlov and power politics in the aftermath

The terror attack in Moscow constituted more than a simple cry for international attention to the Chechen quest for statehood or an attempt to blackmail President Vladimir Putin into ending that conflict. By bringing the war to the very steps of power in Russia, the terrorists attempted to challenge Putin's political dominance in a way that no exiled tycoon or rogue demagogue ever could have done. Putin rose to the presidency amid a wave of militant sentiment directed against a "lawless" Chechnya in the wake of the 1999 terror attack in Moscow. To have a similar but more audacious attack in the capital of the Russian Federation now, years after Putin resumed the war in Chechnya, demonstrates the failure of the brutal military campaign. Potentially this may undermine Putin's prestige, at least in the longer run, not to speak of the reputation of Nikolay Patrushev and Boris Gryzlov, the heads of the security services involved. Ultimately, this may benefit the officers of the regular military forces under the defense ministry, who have never been enamored of FSB and MVD "generals."

The amount of potential political damage to Putin as a result of the attack stood in direct relation to the duration of the crisis and its eventual outcome. Several Russian political commentators made remarks to this effect in the days prior to denouement of the crisis. (VREMYA NOVOSTEI, 25 Oct 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

The president spoke to the nation just before meeting with his FSB director, Patrushev, and Interior Minister Gryzlov. They were closeted with Putin throughout the crisis. (THE RUSSIA JOURNAL, 25 Oct 02; via ISI Emerging
In the dramatic finale, both men attempted to score public relations points, when the consequences of failure became equally apparent. Indeed, more and more questions on the clumsiness and the cover-up of the security services may cause a backlash. In a subsequent speech, following the storming of the Moscow theater, Putin outlined his policy concerning terror and placed great emphasis on the regular armed forces as opposed to the security services. He stated, "the General Staff will be instructed to amend the deployment plan for the Armed Forces due to the growing threat of international terrorism." Shortly thereafter Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov called for "a version of the national security concept 'in which plans for the use of armed forces will be an integral part and must be considered'." This may constitute the beginning of a decline in Patrushev's and Gryzlov's careers, and conversely, a rise in the stature of the defense ministry. The very occurrence of such an audacious attack in the heart of Moscow constituted a security failure from which it may be difficult to recover. At the same time, Putin has come forward with a plan to strengthen the regular defense ministry troops, while reducing their numbers in Chechnya itself. The defense minister has concluded that, "pinpoint-accuracy operations will be used against criminal formations." What we may be witnessing is a struggle between the defense ministry and the security services for the ear of the president.

In any case, both Patrushev and Gryzlov are men of considerable influence within Putin's circle, and it is worth looking at the nature of their relationship with him prior to the Moscow hostage crisis.
At that time, in March 2002, Patrushev's and the FSB’s stock was rising. A newly constructed Orthodox Christian church was opened for the FSB’s use. Both Patrushev and the Orthodox Patriarch, Aleksei II, were present at its dedication. Although the irony of the KGB’s successor agency being honored with such a religious dedication is evident, the political implications were also clear. Putin, Russian Orthodox himself, is also a veteran of the KGB and the FSB. Funds for the church were raised within his security organization. The restoration of the St. Sophia Church effectively by the FSB constituted a political signal highlighting a new trinity of the State, the Church, and the Special Services. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 7 Mar 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Gryzlov’s prestige was enhanced when, following the assassination of the Magadan governor, Valentin Tsvetkov, in a televised speech Putin assigned a major role in the investigation to Gryzlov together with Vladimir Ustinov, the prosecutor-general. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 21 Oct 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) At the time, Gryzlov was reported also to be a potential leader of Putin's United Russia Party in the Duma, should its current chairman, Aleksandr Bespalov, be removed for speeches targeting some of Putin's allies -- specifically Economic Development Minister German Gref and Finance Minister Aleksei Kudrin. (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 4 Oct 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Patrushev also had been the focus of media speculation regarding his potential ascendancy to the highly influential post as head of the Presidential Administration at the expense of Yeltsin’s choice, Aleksandr Voloshin. Such promotion would have given immediate and continuous access to the president; moreover, he would have had a say concerning who else had access to Putin. Gryzlov, on the other hand, has been mentioned as a possible secretary of the Security Council should the post open up in the near future. (NOVYE IZVESTIA, 7 Sep 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) The current secretary is the
politically impotent Vladimir Rushailo, himself a former Ministry of the Interior (MVD) chief.

Both Gryzlov and Patrushev were present at President Putin's recent 50th birthday party, a veritable who's who of power and influence in Russia. Absent was another competitor, Emergencies Minister Sergei Shoigu. (ITAR-TASS, 7 Oct 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Should Putin shift emphasis to the defense ministry in the wake of the hostage crisis, Patrushev and Gryzlov will not willingly surrender their influence.

Russian Federation: Security Services
By Michael Donahue

FSB
Failure, disgrace and death in Moscow: A victory over terror?
Surely, someone will pay. Does not someone have to pay? As the internecine war in Chechnya continues ad nauseam, Russian President Vladimir Putin will have ample opportunity to wreak a measure of revenge for last week's fiasco in a Moscow theater -- when 50 Chechen and other terrorists seized control of the theater, held more than 700 individuals hostage and demanded Russia end the war in Chechnya. Refusing to be cowed into negotiations, Putin's forces stormed the theater, and sent a stern message to the Chechens: Your fate is sealed.

The event can only be considered as a major failure for the FSB -- despite years of vicious war in Chechnya, a war in which Moscow repeatedly assured the public the rebel ranks had been decimated, more than 50 of them were able to sneak into the heart of Moscow, armed and (allegedly) loaded with nearly two tons of TNT. As the reports of the end of the siege continue to come in, it appears obvious that the special services learned nothing from the war in
Chechnya nor from Budennovsk nor, for that matter, from the cover-up and lies that accompanied the Kursk disaster and the Chernobyl catastrophe. The Moscow blunders bring to mind the operation carried out in June 1995 when Chechen rebels took several hundred persons hostage in a hospital at Budennovsk, in southern Russia - an episode that ended with more than 100 civilians dying when Russian troops stormed the hospital. (AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE, 25 Oct 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) This weekend Muscovites were shaken to see similar results when, as the terrorists' deadline approached, Russian forces pumped gas into the theater and stormed the building. If one measures the success of the operation solely in terms of whether or not the Chechens were killed, as Putin and the FSB predictably do, then this weekend's action was as unqualified a success as the Budennovsk operation. If, however, one considers the fate of the hostages when analyzing the mission, it would be impossible to call the operation, and the security services as a whole, anything but a colossal failure.

(The details of this tragic affair are addressed elsewhere in The NIS Observed.)

In addition to the disgraceful performance of the Russian intelligence community in apparently failing to monitor the movement of any of the more than four dozen uniformed terrorists into the heart of Russia, the ridiculous tactics of the special services (tried, tested and found to be inept in Budennovsk seven years before) which resulted in nearly twice as many civilians dead as terrorists demand that someone pay.

As the FSB is the most culpable agency, one would assume that director Nikolay Patrushev would be the first in a long line of resignations, but it is very doubtful that anything of the sort will happen. Instead Putin, who following the operation boldly declared that "we showed that Russia cannot be forced to her knees," predictably may attempt to use this incident to generate support for putative increased operations in Georgia's Pankisi Gorge -- an alleged refuge for
Chechen terrorists (so Moscow's story goes). Indeed, rather than seek to remedy the internal shortcomings highlighted by Russia's hapless resolution of the crisis, blame and retribution probably will be sought elsewhere.

**Russian Federation: Foreign Relations**

By Ansel Stein

**Iraq, in brief**

Moscow has continued to maintain its opposition to the United States' diplomatic campaign in the United Nations against Iraq. As reported by the Russian press, on 24 October Moscow rejected a revised version of the American and British draft resolution supposedly because it still contained provisions for the automatic use of force and assigned what Russia considers to be an impractical mandate to the international inspectors. (ITAR-TASS, 23 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1024, via World News Connection) The US and Britain were accused of trying to isolate Russia, France and China - two of which are overt critics of plans to force action against Iraq -- by presenting their resolution to the non-permanent Security Council members. (ITAR-TASS, 22 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1022, via World News Connection) Both France and Russia have introduced informal draft resolutions in response to the latest Anglo-American proposal.

**Iran**

Moscow curtailed much of its international agenda, including President Putin's trip to the APEC summit in Mexico, in response to the hostage situation in Moscow. Prior to this, however, several events of note occurred. Russian and Iranian officials met in Moscow on 21 October to discuss issues relating to the construction of a nuclear plant in Bushehr. According to the Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy, the meeting centered around the issue of returning spent nuclear fuel from Iran to Russia. (INTERFAX, 22 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1022, via World News Connection) The ministry downplayed a rumored American
"economic incentive" of $10 billion to end nuclear cooperation with Iran. "America did not make an official proposal to the effect at a Moscow meeting between Russian Atomic Energy Minister Alexander Rumyantsev and U.S. Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton last week," an atomic energy ministry spokesman said. (INTERFAX, 24 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1024, via World News Connection) Given the wording of the denial, however, one may assume an unofficial offer, in fact, has been made. Still, Moscow is covering all bases: Russia and Iran also reiterated that they are working steadily on the 10-year cooperation program agreed upon in July. The co-chairmen of the Russia-Iran intergovernmental commission met to discuss remaining (and unspecified) "issues of contention" on 24 October. (INTERFAX, 24 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1024, via World News Connection)

Rekindling another old flame
Mozambique's foreign minister, Leonardo dos Santos Simao, arrived in Moscow on 16 October to meet with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov. According to a foreign ministry spokesman, their talks focused on "creating a democratic system of international relations and combating modern global challenges, above all, threats of international terrorism." During the pre-Yeltsin period, Mozambique and the Soviet Union enjoyed close relations. Reminiscent of that era, the foreign ministry spokesman reiterated that "The positions of Russia and Mozambique on key problems are either close or coincide." (ITAR-TASS, 16 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1016, via World News Connection)

Igor of Arabia
In addition to its activities in support of Iran and Iraq, Moscow has been working to improve and expand its influence throughout the Persian Gulf region. Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov endorsed publicly a closer relationship with Saudi Arabia, noting Moscow's "growing cooperation with Riyadh." Referring to that relationship, Ivanov said that the first meeting on 15 October of the Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technological
Cooperation and its related business forum "confirmed the great opportunities for expanding bilateral interaction." (ITAR-TASS, 16 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1016, via World News Connection) Russia also has been cultivating relations with Kuwait in the wake of Arab opposition to US action against Iraq. At a meeting between Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Saltanov and a delegation of the Kuwaiti National Assembly, led by Deputy Speaker Mishari al-Anjari, it was announced that "Kuwait shares Russia's view on the need to settle the problem of Iraq by political and diplomatic means." (INTERFAX, 15 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1015, via World News Connection)

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch
By Kate Martin

The gambit
As reported in the previous NIS Observed, (16 Oct 02) the Unity Party had proposed a drastic increase in the popular vote threshold that political parties and blocs are required to pass in order to obtain a proportion of the 225 Duma seats available to party lists. The proposal - to amend legislation on political parties by raising the bar from the current 5% of the popular vote to 12% -- from the group that typically is viewed (by itself and others) as "Putin's party" was all the more startling when the Kremlin immediately trashed the idea. The Kremlin's response was echoed quickly by leaders of several parties.

With a clear lack of support for the proposal, what could the proponents in the Unity Party have been thinking? A cynical observer could imagine that no one ever had any intention of discussing a 12% threshold, and that the original proposal was merely a ploy to make a smaller increase - but an increase nonetheless - more palatable. Certainly, within days, both houses of parliament,
the Kremlin and the chairman of the Central Election Commission (CEC) all had backed a plan to raise the threshold to 7%, with barely a whimper heard, for parliamentary elections due to be held in 2007. The Duma passed the amended bill in the second reading on 25 October with a vote of 344 in favor, 31 against and 3 abstentions. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 25 Oct 02)

This amendment would constitute a continuation of the administration's "streamlining" of the political process that began in 2001 with the law on political parties, which effectively winnowed the 200-odd parties then extant to a significantly smaller number. Debates at the time featured the warning that the restrictions then proposed, such as minimum membership of 10,000 individuals and strict rules on party financing, might create a parliament consisting only of a pro-Putin faction and a Communist opposition. (DEUTSCHE PRESSE-AGENTUR, 1407 CET, 24 May 01; via lexis-nexis) Interestingly enough, the same warnings ensued when the 12%-threshold proposal was floated... but not during debates on the lower increase.

**Ramifications**

What would an increased threshold mean to the existing party lineup in the Duma? Based on the December 1999 elections, the expectations of a two-party parliament are not far-fetched: Unity and the Communist Party (KPRF) would overcome easily even the initially proposed 12% barrier; Fatherland - All Russia bloc won 13%, but has since become virtually invisible on the political landscape; the Union of Right Forces (SPS) led by Boris Nemtsov garnered 9%; while Grigory Yavlinsky's YABLOKO and Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) each received 6% of the votes. (ITAR-TASS, 29 Dec 99; via lexis-nexis) More recent polling, via the All-Russia Public Opinion Center, indicated that Putin's popularity remained high (73% in July), while that of political party leaders was as follows: Sergei Shoigu (Unity) - 18%, Gennady Zyuganov (KPRF) - 14%, Zhirinovsky (LDPR) - 8%, Yavlinsky (YABLOKO) - 6%, and Boris Nemtsov (Union of Right Forces) - 6%. (INTERFAX, 0747 GMT, 1 Aug 02; FBIS-
If one were to use the party leaders' popularity to extrapolate the population's support of the parties themselves, three political groupings face the possibility of not reaching the proposed new minimum, two of them precisely the more democratic elements in the Duma.

Of course, the possibility of cooperative agreements remains. The Union of Right Forces (SPS) and YABLOKO have maintained a tenuous relationship for years, but problems concerning personality rather than policy have prevented the two parties from merging. While SPS has absorbed much of YABLOKO's membership, Yavlinsky remains, in his own mind at least, more of a leader than a follower. When SPS proposed that the 20 democratic parties and group comprising the All-Russia Democratic Conference submit a single nominee for the next election, Yavlinsky's tenaciously (and successfully) demanded that the joint nominee not be named until after the 2003 parliamentary elections - when he will learn how much influence he retains with the voters. (ITAR-TASS, 1621 GMT, 21 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1021, via World News Connection)

During the debates, CEC Chairman Aleksandr Veshnyakov assured worried parliamentarians that the proposed threshold increase could be suspended - briefly - to ensure that at least three parties would fill the Duma. (ITAR-TASS, 0959 GMT, 11 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1011, via World News Connection)

Given how close the SPS, LDPR and YABLOKO are to the threshold, it seems that their leaders might view the proposed amendment as a convenient way to edge out some competition. Political egos rarely acknowledge the chance of losing.

**Workers of the world, disband?**

Meanwhile, other political leaders are working feverishly to ensure that their parties do not implode, in order to get through next year's elections. Following a newspaper interview in which oligarch-in-exile Boris Berezovsky entertained the
notion of a merger of left-wing and liberal opposition elements, an idea with which the co-chairman of the (by no means liberal) Union of Popular Patriotic Forces, Aleksandr Prokhanov, reportedly agreed, Duma Speaker Gennady Seleznev warned that the Rossiya movement he heads might withdraw from the union. (ITAR-TASS, 1821 GMT, 13 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1013, via World News Connection)

Indeed, Berezovsky's attempt to remain politically active from afar had a result that differed from what, apparently, he had hoped: The oligarch was ousted from the Liberal Russia Party, while the Communist Party and the Union of Patriotic Forces denied that any such cooperation with -- or financial support from -- him, would be accepted. (INTERFAX, 0938 GMT, 15 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1015, via World News Connection) In a move unlikely to be considered a coincidence, following Berezovsky's ouster the justice ministry decided that the numerous irregularities and inconsistencies that the ministry had cited as a reason for denying Liberal Russia's registration didn't exist after all, and granted the party's registration request. (INTERFAX, 1730 GMT, 17 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1017, via World News Connection)

Berezovsky's ill-advised move showed increased weakening of the opposition. Putin seems to be facing less and less resistance from the "usual suspects." YABLOKO, long a voice of (at times querulous) opposition, has been viewed in recent months as supportive of the president's administration. (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 2 Jul 02; via lexis-nexis) Many members of SPS are concerned chiefly with economic reforms, and so are somewhat manageable, provided Putin throws them some sops. While a merger of ideologically opposed parliamentary blocs, à la Berezovsky, clearly is absurd, the diminishing opposition does need to take a hard look at the situation before it accepts its own demise. The Kremlin seems to have found the perfect cocktail - appealing to political self-interest, co-optation and, when necessary, the judicious use of ministerial prerogatives - to put the opposition into a stupor.
Is Russia creating the next Iraq?
Recent events may point to the fact that Iran is the next major threat to regional security in the Middle East, and Russia is fueling the problem. On 20 October, Iranian elements in Lebanon received the Zelzal-2 missile system capable of carrying over 1,000 pounds of chemical, biological, nuclear or conventional weapons as far as Tel Aviv (a range of 150 miles). Once fired, the missiles would reach Tel Aviv in just a couple of minutes. For the first time, Iran is capable of targeting main cities and military installations in Israel; this acquisition has changed the strategic balance in the region. Iran didn't get this capability on its own. Russia played a major role in their ability to gain this military advantage.

[THE TIMES (LONDON), 20 Oct 02; via lexis-nexis]

This latest development is only the "tip of the iceberg." For years Moscow has been supplying military goods and services to help arm Tehran. Over the last two decades, Russia has sold Iran countless weapons such as anti-aircraft defenses, firearms, armored vehicles and anti-tank weapons. (AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE, 23 Sep 02; WPS Defense and Security, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Even more worrisome are the dual-use technologies that Russia has given to Iran both directly and through other countries (such as Ukraine) which profit from the transfer of knowledge and equipment to rogue states. Recent taped conversations between Ukraine's President Leonid Kuchma and the director of Ukraine's largest rocket maker, Yuri Alexeev, indicate that Ukraine supplied Russian rocket technology to Iran that surely helped that country achieve this most recent capability. (FINANCIAL TIMES (LONDON), 21 Oct 02; via lexis-nexis)
Russia also is actively engaged with Iran on nuclear development, helping the Islamic republic to build a nuclear reactor at Bushehr on the Gulf. This assistance has blossomed into Russia promising five nuclear reactors over the next few years. (AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE, 21 Oct 02; WPS Defense and Security, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) The West is concerned because the Bushehr project, and a flood of additional nuclear support assets, could provide a conduit for Russian nuclear specialists to be recruited into Iran's nuclear military effort. (THE WASHINGTON TIMES, 27 Jul 02)

In this month's International Arms Export Conference held in Warsaw, Russian officials talked about the need to control exports of so-called dual-application goods, but went no further than to claim that nuclear technologies it supplies would be used only for peaceful purposes. (RZECZPOSPOLITA, 4 Oct 02; FBIS-NES-2002-1011, via World News Connection) However, Moscow's sales of dual-application goods to rogue states, with no strings attached, speak louder than words. Russian officials reportedly refuse to take seriously the potential that Iran could use nuclear knowledge for military purposes. (THE BOSTON GLOBE, 19 May 02) Russia also is turning a blind eye to the dangers that Iran can pose to the region. Yakov Bravoy, the director general of ITAR-TASS international department, recently pointed to Iran as a pivotal regional state and said he saw signs for optimism with regard to Tehran's upcoming international forum: "Given that the forum marks Iran's orientation towards peace, it cannot be accused of supporting terrorism," he said. (IRNA, 1606 GMT, 9 Oct 02; FBIS-NES-2002-1009, via World News Connection)

Nothing could be farther from the truth. For decades, Iran has been articulating its hatred of the West and its willingness to use force to deliver its notion of justice. It also blames Israel and America for Iraq's eight-year war against Iran. In a recent newspaper article, Iran officially called America the "Great Satan" and pointed to the so-called "accidental" US missile attack on the Iranian Airbus (killing 300), the eight-year Iraqi war and US attacks on Iran's marine terminals
as reasons to fight. "American soil [has become] the safe haven and sanctuary for all the terrorists whose hands were stained with the blood of our innocent people and prominent figures everywhere in our country." (TEHRAN DAILY, 24 Sep 02; FBIS-NES-2002-0924, via World News Connection)

Iran has shown clearly its intent to use force. Now Russia has provided the means to use force (in the form of the Zelzal-2 missile system) and the potential to develop nuclear weapons (with the contract to build five nuclear reactors). It would be wise to keep an eye on Iran and not become so focused solely on Iraq that the danger signs from its neighbors to the east are missed.

Russia is concentrating on its short-term material self-interest without regard to potential consequences. While funding is a major motivation, (see THE NIS OBSERVED, 11 Sep 02) politics and strategy also play a part. On 3 October, Russian President Putin explained the connection of trade to status at a session of the Commission for Technological Cooperation: "The strengthening of Russia's political and economic position depends directly on the success of its technological ties." (INTERFAX, 1613 GMT, 3 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1003, via World News Connection)

Moscow also is motivated by potential regional influence. One man who has been on the inside of Russian strategic planning over the past decade, Colonel-General Leonid Ivashov (now vice president of the geopolitical studies academy), was interviewed recently by the Russian press. When asked about Iran he indicated that the appearance of US troops in Central Asia now requires Russia to stay engaged in the region militarily, politically and economically to the maximum extent possible. (WHAT THE PAPERS SAY, 21 Oct 02; via lexis-nexis) These two statements support the latest trend in Moscow to sell as much as possible to any state that will open up its pocket book. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 11 Sep 02) It is a trend that is creating greater and greater concern, especially because of countries such as Iran.
It could be argued that the Iranians have the same desire to use weapons of mass destruction as Iraq. They are, without question, closer to possessing the technology and materials to produce nuclear weapons. To treat them as no threat would be to turn a blind eye to the facts. Combining Iran's nuclear potential, delivery vehicle capability and the current political environment in the Middle East, creates the recipe for disaster, and Russia must take a share of responsibility. Moscow’s blatant disregard for the geopolitical consequences of its military and dual-use technologies sales may create the next major crisis in the region.

**Putin fires Black Sea Fleet Commander**
Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree to end a very public dispute between Russian Navy Commander Vladimir Kuroedov and Black Sea Fleet Commander Vladimir Komoedov. The decree, issued on 9 October, dismissed Komoedov from service although reportedly he was quite successful in his position. Only the president can appoint and dismiss fleet commanders in the Russian Navy.

The dispute began in June when Kuroedov ordered Komoedov relieved of duty based on a post-operative medical examination. The Medical Commission of the Defense Ministry declared Komoedov "fit for military service with limitations but unfit for service on ships." (WPS OBSERVER, 19 Jul 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database) However, military doctors did allow Komoedov to go to sea for up to three months. In an attempt to keep his position, Komoedov filed a suit in military court against Kuroedov, noting the contradiction of being declared "unfit for service on ships" yet being allowed to serve at sea for limited stretches. Kuroedov offered Komoedov the position of commander of the St. Petersburg Naval Academy, but Komoedov refused the post and the case became sensationalized in the media as a personal conflict between the two admirals. (TRUD, 10 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1009, via World News Connection)
While the two officers reportedly have disliked each other for some time, the catalyst for the dismissal seems to be the argument between Komoedov and Kuroedov over the transfer of several vessels from the Black Sea Fleet to the Ukrainian Navy. Others believe that Komoedov sympathized with left-wing political movements and had become too rebellious. (NEZAVISIMOE VOENNOE OBOZRENIE, 18-24 Oct 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database) Ultimately Komoedov's medical problems presented a convenient means for his removal.

Putin's eventual action was most likely dictated by the growing media interest in the court case and his relationship with Kuroedov. Putin did not dismiss Kuroedov as the Navy commander after the Kursk sinking and had attended Kuroedov's presentation of his scientific thesis. (VREMYA NOVOSTEI, 10 Oct 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database)

Komoedov's replacement, appointed by President Putin, is 55-year-old Vice Admiral Vladimir Masorin, who previously commanded the Caspian Flotilla with considerable success. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 10 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1010, via World News Connection) As commander, Masorin will have to deal with the problems unique to the Black Sea Fleet, due to its location in Sevastopol, Ukraine. The Russian sailors stationed there suffer several hardships related to foreign basing which include lack of housing, difficulty in obtaining Russian passports and salaries paid in Ukrainian hryvnas. (VREMYA MN, 10 Oct 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database)

**MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX**

**Monopoly lost**

Rosoboronexport, Russia's state-run military arms export company, has been shot down in its bid to achieve complete monopolization of Russian foreign weapons sales. Established only two years ago, Rosoboronexport controlled 87% ($3.2 billion) of the $3.67 billion in military sales in 2001 and clearly was
aiming at control of the remaining portion as well. However, on 3 October, the Russian government's committee for military-technical cooperation met with President Putin and decided that military-industrial holdings can conduct foreign trade operations and export their products independently.

At present six other companies (MiG, Antei, the Design Bureau of Machine Building, the Design Bureau of Equipment Industry, the Scientific-Industrial Organization of Machine Building and Rubin Central Design Bureau for Naval Equipment) hold licenses to export weapons produced by Russia's various manufacturers and compete directly with Rosoboronexport. (KOMMERSANT, 5 Oct 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Russian Political Monitor Database)

Prior to this announcement Rosoboronexport had been on pace to achieve a record $4.2 billion in sales for 2002 and was aggressively trying to broaden its control beyond being simply the agent for arms sales. The company saw three initiatives as key to ensuring primacy. First, it tried to control the sale of spare parts and after-sale servicing of military equipment, rights which individual manufacturers that could not export finished products had retained. Rosoboronexport, however, had established the subsidiary Prompostavka to control this profitable portion of the business. (KOMMERSANT, 5 Oct 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database) Rosoboronexport also is trying to prevent foreign companies from carrying out upgrades and/or modernization of Russian-built weapons, combat vehicles and aircraft. General Director of Rosoboronexport Andrei Belyaninov has claimed that companies conducting these programs are violating the copyrights of Russian arms manufacturers and that the upgrades are of low quality. Lastly, and perhaps most telling, is the desire to establish control over the plants that actually manufacture the military products. Belyaninov stated that "Sharing the capital stock of enterprises operating on our contracts is our strategic goal." (VREMYa NOVOSTEI, 22 Aug 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Defense and Security Database)
Putin's decision, however, along with previous decrees that permit the establishment of integrated defense companies within Russia's military-industrial sector, stands to have a significant negative impact on Rosoboronexport's plans. Already three holdings -- involving Sukhoi aviation, Almaz-Antei air defense concern and Tactical Missile Weapons - have been established. Almaz-Antei is licensed to conduct foreign sales and Sukhoi may soon gain such a license as well. Since, more than 50% of its sales consist of Sukhoi aircraft and other air defense weapons, Rosoboronexport stands to lose a significant amount of revenue. Eventually, Rosoboronexport may disappear as producers directly export their weapons and other military equipment. (KOMMERSANT, 5 Oct 02; What the Papers Say, via ISI Russian Business Monitor Database)

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Nadezda Kinsky

UKRAINE
Legal nihilism
In the last two weeks the continuing opposition protests have achieved a new dimension by sparking a controversy in the realm of law in Ukraine. After the "People's Tribunal" of 12 October sentenced President Leonid Kuchma to "the highest form of people's punishment - public condemnation" on 24 counts, (see WWW.PRAVDA.COM.UA) oppositionists politicians Oleksandr Moroz, Yuliya Tymoshenko, Grigory Omelchenko, Yosif Vinsky and Oleksandr Turnichov applied for a legal case to be opened against the president with the Kyiv Court of Appeals. Against general expectation, Yuriy Vaylenko opened the case on 15 October, charging Kuchma with the violation of 11 articles of the Criminal Code, based on documents from the parliamentary commission set up to investigate the Gongadze murder and on the Melnichenko tapes, which had been delivered to him by opposition MPs. However, the judge is not under any illusions as to the
effectiveness of his action: In an interview published by Ukrayina Moloda, Vasylenko showed his realistic side. In response to a question about the legal consequences he expects, he said: "None, of course. I opened the case, they will close it." When asked whether he believes the case will take its legal course unhampered by interference from Kuchma: "Do I look like an idiot? Of course I don't believe that." (UKRAYINA MOLODA, 17 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1017, via World News Connection)

The administration's immediate response on 15 October was hardly surprising. Spokeswoman Olena Hrmontyska called the case "illegal and anticonstitutional," and described Kuchma as "emotionally bewildered." Viktor Medvechuk, the head of the presidential administration, described the situation as "legal nihilism" and a "manifestation of judicial defiance of the law." Minister of Justice Oleksandr Lavrynovych summed up the reasoning against the case quite neatly: "The very fact of opening the criminal case is quite controversial... under the constitution people's deputies and the president are untouchable." More to the point, however, is his admission that there is a "slight problem" with the impeachment process: Procedures for such a process are not in place. (INTERFAX, 15 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1015, via World News Connection)

The case cannot simply be deemed illegal and closed; the Supreme Court must review it. Prosecutor-General Svyatoslav Piskun lodged an appeal for such a review by the court on 16 October. As opposition protests continued outside the court building in favor of hearing the case, the Supreme Court sent it back to the Court of Appeals "to bring the appeal in order with current legislation." Not surprisingly, the prosecutor-general doesn't seem to be satisfied with that decision. He maintains that prosecution of the country's president -- while he is in office - is unconstitutional. He disagrees with Justice Minister Lavryovych, however, that there is no practical procedure for removing the president from office. He cited article 111 of the Constitution, which establishes the necessary
ad hoc committee to decide on impeachment and allows the Supreme Court to rule as to whether the president has committed any criminal offense.

On 16 October, the Supreme Court ruled that the February 2002 bill on "Rules and Amendments to the Constitution" was in compliance with the Constitution. (INTERFAIX, 17 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1017, via World News Connection) This bill includes regulations on impeachment of the president by a two-thirds parliamentary majority. Such a vote is highly unlikely, however. The opposition still is calling for the president's resignation or impeachment; the last resolution was signed by protesters on 19 October, the "mournful anniversary" of ten years of Kuchma's rule. Four days later Moroz again issued such a call for impeachment in order to "enable citizens to control the authorities." (INTERFAIX, 23 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1023, via World News Connection) Former Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko, though, continues his fence sitting: He distanced himself clearly from the idea of impeachment, claiming that this would throw Ukraine into a deep crisis. In a meeting with the Union of Right Forces in Russia, he and his Russian colleagues argued against an enforced removal of the president, saying that Kuchma should be allowed to stay in office until the end of his term in 2004, lest Ukraine suffer even more than now as a result of a political crisis accompanying an impeachment process. In the words of the Russian Irina Khakamova: "We do not support Kuchma, but his resignation would be a catastrophe for Ukraine." (INTERFAIX, 22 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1022, via World News Connection) Irina Gerachenko, press secretary of Our Ukraine, called the "mass media coverage" of those statements "incorrect" and "distorted," (IBID.) but the basic stance seems unlikely to change. Yushchenko's fear of political upheaval has led him to continue his balancing act between opposition and pro-presidential factions ever since the protests erupted, and he does not seem likely to change his strategy.

An even greater surprise than the case having been opened in the first place would be to see it ending in any positive result.
BELARUS
One step too far?
The union plans of Russia and Belarus seemed to be continuing smoothly until about a week ago; interestingly, the blow against unification did not emanate from those opposed to it, but from Minsk itself.

On 22 October, Boris Nemtsov and Irina Khakamada of Russia's Union of Right Forces made their way to Minsk to attend the opposition conference, "Belarus-Russia: New Integration." They never arrived at the conference, though - Nemtsov was detained and subsequently deported by Belarusian authorities, and Khakamada chose to go back to Russia with him. The official justification for Nemtsov's ouster was his alleged plan to "destabilize the situation in Belarus." Nemtsov and Khakamada allegedly were carrying literature and money to support opposition and anti-unification forces in Belarus - in a folder that Nemtsov afterwards repeatedly stated was planted on him as he deplaned in Minsk. Among the materials were flyers asking about the disappearance and murders of several Belarusian figures from the legal, political and journalistic professions - an issue that recently also has received renewed attention from within Belarus and from abroad. There is no doubt that Nemtsov is not a big fan of the Minsk administration. Recently published transcripts of illegally taped telephone conversations revealed Nemtsov's opposition to Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka and the union plans. (Nemtsov has since described his opinion to be in line with Putin's idea of a union state along the lines of the EU model.)

On 23 October, after the first reactions of outrage arrived from Moscow, the Belarus State Secretary for the Union State of Russia and Belarus, Pavel Borodin, maintained that the two ousted Duma members "have an anti-state, anti-Belarusian and on the whole destructive position" with regard to the Russia-Belarus union. The Belarus State Security Committee said that "Boris Nemtsov
arrived on a private visit and was offered to leave the country in accordance with national legislation." Incidentally, protest demonstrations erupted at the Minsk opposition conference center quite without the need for outside "provocation" and several participants in the demonstrations reportedly were arrested.

This incident undoubtedly will damage Russian relations with Belarus. All analysts agree that, in this instance, Lukashenka has overstepped the mark. Although Lukashenka claimed that "this incident will have no effect on Belarusian-Russian relations," (INTERFAX, 24 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1024, via World News Connection) Moscow reacted somewhat unexpectedly. Aleksei Gromov, Putin's press secretary, spoke of the Kremlin being "bewildered and concerned," (ITAR-TASS, 23 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1023, via World News Connection) while the foreign ministry commented that the incident had "cast a shadow on the process of building the union state" and that it "could lead to a negative attitude of the Russian public towards the Belarusian authorities."

Belarus authorities are still trying to justify the incident, which Nemtsov termed a "cheap provocation marking the death-pangs of Lukashenka's police regime." (IBID.) Respublica, the Belarusian opposition group that had awaited Nemtsov's visit, has demanded a full investigation into the incident. (BELAPAN, 24 Oct 02; via lexis-nexis)

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Miriam Lanskoy

The raid
As we post this article, the number of Moscow hostages who have died from gas poisoning stands at 118 and may surpass 200, over 400 individuals remain hospitalized. (WWW.NEWS.RU, 28 Oct 02) Russian authorities are refusing to tell the doctors just which gas was used, thwarting efforts to treat the poisoned. German doctors who are treating hospitalized German hostages think that it was
Fentanyl, a form of which can be used in anesthesia, and that the fatalities were caused by the huge dose pumped into the theater. [THE TIMES (LONDON), 29 Oct 02]

Two hostages were shot by their captors during the three-day ordeal, in which Chechen terrorists seized a Moscow theater and held nearly 800 persons hostage until Russian special forces stormed the building early on Saturday morning, 26 October. The Chechens had mined the building and threatened to blow themselves up together with their captives in the event of a raid. According to hostage testimony, at roughly 2 a.m. on Saturday a hostage who had panicked and attempted to run for an exit was killed and two others were accidentally wounded. However, it seems that, despite the Chechen threat, hostages were not being executed. (See chronology on WWW.POLIT.RU, 29 Oct 02)

It is not entirely clear what precisely prompted the authorities to begin the assault on the theater. Starting about 5 a.m. on 26 October, Russian security services introduced an unidentified poisonous gas into the theater; an FSB special unit, Alpha, stormed the theater about an hour and half later. According to Kommersant, the gas was issued to Alpha immediately prior to the raid and is not part of the unit's tool kit. The FSB's Alpha team led the raid and had been administered the antidote, perhaps Naloxone or Narcan. The MVD's SOBR team which followed Alpha was not given the antidote (neither were the hostages) and the members of the unit were seized with vomiting fits as soon as they entered the theater. (KOMMERSANT, 28 Oct 02)

By the time the raid began, the Chechens were incapacitated and unable to attempt detonating the explosives. Nevertheless, all the terrorists were shot dead on the spot. A member of the Alpha group told Kommersant, “we were afraid they would come to and set off the explosives or have convulsions, so we used control shots.” (KOMMERSANT, 28 Oct 02) It is not clear why Alpha and SOBR decided to forego the opportunity to arrest many incapacitated hostage takers. If
taken alive they could have provided important information about the organization and sponsorship of the raid, not to speak of revealing how 42 of them in camouflage uniforms, with rifles, mines, and explosive belts, could have cruised undetected across Moscow in three Jeeps. Another unanswered question is why did most of the hostage takers wear face masks if they did not intend to make a getaway?

The Chechen unit was headed by Movsar Baraev, nephew of the infamous Arbi Baraev, who had earned the mocking title "general of the slave trade" from journalist Sanobar Shermatova, who has been investigating the group for five years for MOSKOVSKY NOVOSTI. (29 Oct 02) Arbi Baraev's Islamic Special Forces (IPON) made a name for itself with kidnappings and cruelty - not in actual combat. Baraev did not distinguish himself in the first war, but he did have close ties to the Islamist propagandist Movladi Udugov (who now runs the kavkaz.org web site from Qatar) and to (the late) Dzhokhar Dudaev's Vice President Zelimkhan Yanderbiev, who served as president after Dudaev was assassinated and now also resides in Qatar. According to Shermatova, in 1997 Yanderbiev gave Arbi Baraev his starting capital of $200,000, to finance the IPON.

Throughout 1997 and 1998, Baraev was associated with several of the highest-profile kidnappings of journalists and the beheading of four foreign telecom workers in December 1998. Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov had ordered IPON to be liquidated in July 1998 but was unable to have the command executed. In December, after the beheadings, Maskhadov had mobilized the Chechen reserves, but again was not able to deal a decisive blow to the dreaded "Baraevtsy." "By this time," writes Shermatova," the rumors first appeared that the general of the slave trade had high-level mentors in Moscow, without whom his bloody business would have been impossible."

Once the war began, such suspicions multiplied. According to Shermatova's local Chechen sources, Arbi lived openly in Russian-occupied Alkhan-Kala. He drove
his own car throughout the republic and crossed checkpoints with the aid of MVD identification. "A Chechen journalist who was hot on Baraev's trail was able to write down the identification number. Thereupon he was detained by a Russian security service unit. He sat in a pit for three days until his acquaintances from another Russia security service were able to secure his release." Bareav's identification number and all his other notes were seized from the journalist during the arrest.

Arbi Baraev was killed in June 2001 in a special operation conducted by the joint efforts of GRU and ethnic Chechens who had a blood feud with him. "On 23 June 2001 Baraev was taken captive by Chechen krovniki who were working with a special detachment of GRU [the Main Investigative Department of the General Staff]. The Chechens had to storm the commandant's office at Alkhan-Kala where Baraev was hiding together with his guards. After their capture, Baraev and four of his associates were questioned by GRU officers for 11 hours and this was captured on videotape. Then Baraev and his men were shot. Subsequently the Chechens who had taken part in the capture of Baraev were killed under mysterious circumstances."

After Arbi's death, Movsar Suleimanov took his uncle's last name and became the new leader of IPON. He and other members of the gang continued to live unhampered in Russian-occupied Alkhan-Kala and busied themselves by assassinating fellow Chechens, members of the pro-Russian administration. Movsar was not known for any particular leadership or military talents -- he owed his position to his uncle. Shermatova's sources doubt that Movsar independently could have commanded the raid on the Moscow theater. Moreover, Shermatova writes that Movsar probably was being used by others and "he could use his uncle's Moscow connections to prepare the terrorist act." The real organizers of the hostage-taking should be sought among Udugov's and Yanderbiev's associates, Shermatova suggests.
During last week’s raid, Baraev had demanded an end to the war and the withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya. He was not permitted to appear in the Russian media, but did receive many visitors. Excluding representatives of the Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, and other medical personnel, the list of persons who entered the building to speak with the hostage-takers includes: Duma deputies Aslanbek Aslakhanov, Boris Nemtsov, Irina Khakamada, Grigory Yavlinsky and Lorsif Kobzon; journalists Mark Franchetti and Anna Politkovskaya; Former Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov; former President of Ingushetia Ruslan Aushev; and a singer, Alla Pugacheva. (See EKHO MOSKVKY, WWW.ECHOMSK.RU, WWW.POLIT.RU, and WWW.NTV.RU for detailed chronologies of the events of the three days.) None of these personalities was authorized to conduct negotiations and none has commented on whether the hostage takers were willing to settle for something less than their initial demands.

Consequences
The crisis demonstrates that the war has not accomplished its purported goal of fighting terrorism. If one believes that the explosions in Russian buildings in September 1999, which triggered the present war, were the work of Chechen terrorists, then the present crisis shows that three years of war have not been effective. If one believes that the FSB and GRU, rather than Chechens, were behind the initial explosions, then as a result of the war the Chechen side has degraded substantially, stooping to the level of terrorism. Whatever the initial presupposition about the origins of this war, it was becoming clearly unpopular. According to VTsIOM opinion polling, 57% would opt for holding negotiations over continuing the war. And for all of 2002, at least half of the Russian population has opposed the war. (See VTsIOM data posted on WWW.POLIT.RU, 26 Oct 02) Memorial has reiterated its call to negotiations with the elected executive and parliamentary representatives of Chechnya, who had been recognized by Russia prior to the war. (WWW.MEMO.RU, 24 Oct 02)
However, in the short term the security services are set to maximize their advantage. President Vladimir Putin abstained from political comments during the crisis as well as in his television appearance on 26 October, during which he asked forgiveness that "we were not able to save them all" and declared a national day of mourning. However, only two days later he was insisting that the terrorist act demands greater military response; he ordered the military to draw up new plans against what he termed "increasingly bold, more cruel" methods used by "terrorists." "If anyone tries to use such methods against our country, Russia will retaliate with commensurate measures against terrorists and their ideological and financial backing wherever they may be," Putin said in televised remarks. "Russia will never make any deals with terrorists and will never give in to blackmail," Putin vowed. (AGENCE-FRANCE PRESS, 28 Oct 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) On the following day, Putin instructed the Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov to rewrite the National Security Concept to authorize greater use of the military. Ivanov also commented that Russian plans for Chechnya remained unchanged - a Chechen MVD would take over for the military, which should be gradually withdrawn. (WWW.NEWSRU.COM, 29 Oct 02) This plan has been articulated at least half a dozen times by senior officials over the last year, but has not been implemented.

Ironically, in what was supposed to be their heroic moment, representatives of the security services still acted like blundering bullies. The services not only withheld information about which gas was being used; the doctors were not even told that a gas was used at all. The emergency personnel, therefore, were not prepared for treating gas victims - doctors and nurses thought they would tend to bullet and shrapnel wounds. It seems that some hospitals eventually were administering some antidote to the victims whereas others were not. (WWW.NEWS.RU, 28 Oct 02) For the first day the doctors were told to diagnose heart failure or respiratory failure as the cause of death and avoid references to gas. (WWW.NEWSRU.COM, 28 Oct 02) Family members waited outside clinics and were not permitted access to the victims.
The media have come under increasing scrutiny as some calls to introduce censorship were aired. The press ministry threatened to revoke Ekho Moskvy’s radio broadcasting license for allowing Movsar Baraev on air. The station's website was closed down briefly on 25 October but was allowed to resume functioning after the transcript of the interview was removed. (WWW.ECHOMSK.RU, 25 Oct 02) Similarly, on 24 October the authorities jammed the connection when a hostage who was on the telephone with an NTV talk show handed the phone over to one of her captors.

There are reports that police have started searching dormitory rooms of Chechen students in Moscow and that mandatory fingerprinting of all Chechens is about to be implemented throughout Russia. Several beatings of Caucasians have been reported in Moscow, but so far it seem like nothing on the scale of police brutality that occurred in September 1999, when thousands of Chechens and other Caucasians were arrested at random throughout the city. This time it seems that Caucasians stayed home to avoid being caught up in police sweeps or skinhead attacks.

Did Maskhadov know?
It is not surprising that Russian officials are accusing President Maskhadov of involvement in the organization of the hostage-taking operation in Moscow. The surprise is that this time there may be some truth to it.

"Baraev said that this is a joint action by Maskhadov and Basaev and that they are here by their order," Sunday Times reporter Mark Franchetti told Moscow Echo radio after meeting Baraev on Thursday night. (AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE, 25 Oct 02; via ISI Emerging Markets Database) On 24 October, Maskhadov's representative, Akhmed Zakaev, said that "Maskhadov tried 'until the last minute' to restrain the armed forces subordinate to him from taking such radical action, but that 'what was bound to happen, happened,'" according to
Chechenpress.com. “(This statement subsequently was removed from the Chechenpress.com website. For Zakaev's quote, see RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 25 Oct 02) On 25 October, Zakaev issued a clarification saying that Maskhadov was not aware in advance of the terrorists’ plans.

On the eve of the raid, Maskhadov gave an interview to Chechenpress.com in which he claimed to be in control of all Chechen forces, including a handful of Arabs fighting in Chechnya. In his statements since 22 October, Maskhadov has sought to distance himself from the attackers. Speaking through Zakaev on 25 October, he "categorically condemned this terrorist act" and said "we are ready to cooperate in any way to prevent a bloodbath in Moscow." However, Maskhadov never explicitly asked Baraev to release the hostages, nor did he say that the hostage taking would only bring terrible retaliation against the members of the Chechen nation. Instead, Maskhadov reiterated his willingness to hold talks and claimed that Moscow was ultimately responsible for the desperation of the Chechen fighters. (See WWW.CHECHENPRESS.COM, 24 & 25 Oct 02)

It seems that the extreme elements that Maskhadov had opposed in 1997 -1999 but had accepted into the government this summer (chiefly Movladi Udugov, Shamil Basaev, and Zelimkhan Yanderbiev) are manipulating Maskhadov and radicalizing and degrading the resistance. Hence Maskhadov's union with and dependence on the radicals, is not the cause, but rather the result, of this war. If Maskhadov really wishes to appear as a responsible and capable leader, he must rid himself of these damaging associates.

**Aslakhanov: the real alternative?**

Overall, Chechen politicians did not perform very well. The first public reaction from a Chechen activist in Moscow came from Adlan Magomedov, a member of the pro-Moscow Chechen administration. He offered himself up as a hostage and claimed that he commanded a unit of 100 who stood ready to storm the building. Later Baraev said he would trade 40 or 50 hostages for Putin-appointee Akhmad
Kadyrov. Magomedov is likely to have been together with Kadyrov, and neither of them actually went to the theater. A discombobulated Abdul-Khakim Sultygov, the presidential representative for human rights in Chechnya, made more stale promises to regulate the excesses of the military. (WWW.ECHOMSK.RU, 25 Oct 02)

The only person who acted like a responsible and courageous leader was Duma Deputy and retired MVD General Aslanbek Aslakhanov. He arrived at the theater as soon as the news became known on Wednesday night and was the first person to enter the theater after it had been seized. He remained in the building for hours on 23 October but Baraev rejected him as an intermediary. Aslakhanov tried again to launch talks on Friday night, this time accompanied by Yevgeni Primakov and Ruslan Aushev.

Before he entered the theater on the first night of the crisis, Aslakhanov spoke to journalists and articulated what many Chechens probably were feeling:

"I am ready to do anything so that there will be fewer negative consequences. More than that, I am ready to give my life so that no Muscovite will have to suffer...

I want to say to those people who took the hostages that this will not bring peace closer in Chechnya, and the situation in the Republic will only get worse. I am very worried that this event can lead to an explosion of anti-Chechen and anti-Caucasian sentiment in Moscow...

... what they are doing will bring harm first of all to fellow Chechens. A Chechen never went to war against women and there are women in that theater. We have to prove to everyone that a Chechen is not a bearded guy covered in garlands of ammunition, but a civilized person." (WWW.NEWS.RU, 23 Oct 02)
Newly Independent States: Central Asia
By David Montgomery

Religion & politics: a meeting of Jews and Muslims and the fear of extremism

Religion in Central Asia remains as much about politics and economics as it does about faith. But a somewhat surprising series of meetings involving the Eurasian Jewish Congress and members of the Kazakh Islamic clergy made Kazakhstan a seemingly unlikely spot for Jewish-Muslim dialogue. While the number of Jews in Central Asia is minimal now (the largest population lives around Bukhara, Uzbekistan), the Congress brought together rabbis from 28 countries to show support for an agenda emphasizing that 1) Judaism and Islam are not contradictory and 2) Islam is not a faith of violence and terror.

Members of the Congress met with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev, encouraging him to use his influence and good relations within the global Muslim community to make Kazakhstan a leading center for Jewish-Muslim dialogue. According to Congress President Aleksandr Mashkevich, Nazarbaev was asked to be a mediator for global relations between Jews and Muslims because he is trusted by the international community and Kazakhstan was "the only CIS country that managed to avoid religious extremism and interconfessional problems." "President Nazarbaev is positive about this idea and has agreed to promote this dialogue," Mashkevich said. (INTERFAX, 1148 GMT, 22 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1022, via World News Connection and KHABAR TELEVISION, 1400 GMT, 21 & 22 Oct 02; BBC Worldwide Monitoring, via lexis-nexis)

Nazarbaev, of course, is a political leader and moderate Muslim whose clout rests largely on his personal wealth and the large oil reserves of the country. True, there has been relative peace in Kazakhstan where ethnic Kazakhs comprise around 50 percent of the population, but in the face of the most...
ethnically balanced population in Central Asia, that peace could be maintained only through a politically pragmatic policy of pluralism. While the countries of Central Asia remain guarded against the threat of extremism, Kazakhstan has seen less of the Islamic militant manifestations than others because Kazakh leaders must be more cautious in their treatment of significant minorities.

Although the allied forces' campaign in Afghanistan is credited with neutralizing and scattering one of the largest threats of Islamic militancy, the ghosts of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (now believed to have merged with other groups to create the Islamic Movement of Central Asia) frighten Central Asian capitals which react now to some political movements as if all Islamic manifestations threaten the social order. Some countries attempt to control Islam through the state; Uzbekistan governs religious practice through a state committee and the presidentially appointed Grand Mufti of Tashkent, but such control breeds underground movements of opposition such as Hizb-ut Tahrir (HT). And while the American budget for assistance projects in Central Asia has increased over the past year from $240 million to $442 million, there is little sign that this increased influx of funds is being felt in the impoverished regions where groups such as HT gain their support. (SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, 29 Sep 02; via lexis-nexis.)

Expressions of Islam that are seen as counter to the state agenda are closely monitored. In Tajikistan, this has resulted in the closure of 33 of 152 mosques in the Isfara region and the corresponding failure to approve 11 of 52 imams for not meeting criteria established by the state. While Tajik President Imomali Rakhmonov claimed that the Isfara region has twice as many mosques as it does schools, the failure of some imams to gain state approval is viewed as political in nature. According to Dodojon Yakubov, a regional chairman for the Islamic Revival Party (IRP), "the majority of imams who failed registration are those who share our views." (KESTON NEWS SERVICE, 18 & 21 Oct 02; via www.keston.org) While Muhammadsharif Himmatzoda, deputy leader of the IRP,
has claimed that his group supports the idea of globalization over the establishment of a caliphate -- clearly distancing the IRP from HT (ASIA-PLUS, 19 Sep 02; BBC Worldwide Monitoring, via lexis-nexis) -- Tajikistan and others view politicized religion as a threat.

In Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, according to the recent US State Department annual report on religious freedom, non-approved religions (including some minority faiths and conservative Islamic groups) face a policy of "state hostility." (AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE, 7 Oct 02; via lexis-nexis) While the political agenda of some conservative Islamic groups poses a serious threat to regional stability and may necessitate a response, the fear is that, given the strong presidential control of power, legitimate opposition movements may be treated indiscriminately by the state as extremist.

In Kazakhstan, two students - one in Almaty and one in Shimkent - recently were detained by police for distributing literature on HT. (INTERFAX, 0856 GMT, 15 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1015, via World News Connection) Responding to the distribution of the pamphlets and the threat of religious extremism, an anonymous officer of the Kazakh National Security Committee reported that there exists "a certain hidden recruitment process by foreign preachers, especially amongst young people in villages, to various forms of radicalism. We are shadowing them and trying to suppress them." (MN NOVOSTI NEDELI, 16 Oct 02; BBC Worldwide Monitoring, via lexis-nexis) Echoing these sentiments, Oralbai Abdykarimov, speaker of the Kazakh upper chamber of parliament, said that extremist agendas such as those of HT could "somehow slow down democratic reforms," thus altering the nature of the state. (INTERFAX, 0851 GMT, 16 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1016, via World News Connection) The message is that extremist opposition will not be tolerated. The fear is that any opposition may not be tolerated.
Thus, while members of the Eurasian Jewish Congress came to Central Asia to propagate the message of Islam's nature of nonviolence and compatibility with Judaism, the overall feeling is that political Islam can be violent and must be checked accordingly. In terms of Jewish-Muslim relations, the Congress meetings were important. With regards to religious pluralism in Central Asia, however, they were less significant.

Newly Independent States: Baltic States

By Michael Varuolo

LATVIA
Building a government

Winning seats in the recent Latvian parliamentary elections is proving easier for the victorious parties than reaching agreement on the composition of the next coalition government. Four center-right political parties -- New Era (26 seats), Latvia's First Party (10 seats), Green and Farmers Union (12 seats), and Alliance Fatherland and Freedom (7 seats) - have agreed in principle on the formation of a coalition government under the leadership of New Era. (BNS, 1217 GMT, 21 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1021, via World News Connection) The stumbling point appears to be distribution of the 16 ministerial portfolios within the proposed government. (BNS, 0723 GMT, 17 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1017, via World News Connection) Originally, the primary obstacle to agreement was the distribution of the so-called "economic bloc" ministries - economics, agriculture and transportation. Each party had made claims on these positions and proposed its own candidates. Compromise is difficult because these positions are vital to the weaker coalition members seeking sufficient political clout to counter the overwhelming strength of the coalition leader, New Era. (BNS, 1217 GMT, 21 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1201, via World News Connection)
Negotiations were started, then frozen again on 23 October, when the Green and Farmers Union requested still further representation in the new government. The group originally had sought the positions of environment protection and agriculture, but subsequently increased its demand to include either the economics or transport ministries or a combination of the welfare and finance ministries. (BNS, 1635 GMT, 23 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1023, via World News Connection) If these demands were met, then the Green and Farmers Union would receive at least one of the "economic bloc" ministries and a powerful position from which to further its political platform of conservative economic and agricultural reform within Latvia.

The group insists that it is entitled to a position of importance within the new coalition government; however, that view is not shared by the victorious New Era party. The leader of New Era (and most likely Prime Minister), Einars Repse, has refused categorically to allow his party to yield the position of finance minister. This has placed the negotiations once again at an impasse with no further official discussions scheduled to take place before 30 October. (BNS, 1635 GMT, 23 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1023, via World News Connection) Without an agreement as to the distribution of power within the new government, the coalition partners are in a precarious position as they prepare for the first plenary session of the 8th Saeima on 5 November.

ESTONIA

Deconstructing parties
Meanwhile, the results of local elections in Estonia have threatened to change the face of Estonian politics. Following the polling on 20 October, two major political figures in Estonian politics reportedly have tendered their resignations as leaders of their respective parties. Both Toomas Hendrik Ilves - the former minister of foreign affairs -- and former Prime Minister Mart Laar now are contemplating their respective future in Estonian politics following the poor performance of their parties.
The local elections, which saw the largest voter turnout ever - 52.37% of registered voters - served to demonstrate the growing political power of the new party of Res Republica, which emerged as the winner of 21 local governments and placed second in 39 rural municipalities. The most noticeable gains made by Res Republica came in Tallinn where the newcomer placed second with 21 percent of the vote and secured 17 seats within the municipal government. (BNS, 0910 GMT, 21 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1021, via World News Connection)

Ilves attributed the poor performance of his Moderate Party to the perception that as the party's leader he is out of touch with the current situation in Estonia. As Ilves announced his resignation from the leadership of the party he noted that "The Moderates are the only strong social democratic party defending working people's interests in Estonia, but I'm regarded as an intellectual with my head in the clouds." (BNS, 1047 GMT, 23 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1023, via World News Connection) Ilves does not intend to disappear from Estonian politics altogether; he restated his candidacy in the March 2003 parliamentary elections.

Laar, on the other hand, has not made a definitive decision about relinquishing his leadership position within the Fatherland Alliance; however, he has called an extraordinary party congress for the purpose of discussing his resignation. Laar maintains a pessimistic view of the election results because, despite gains elsewhere in the country, Fatherland suffered a devastating defeat in the politically critical city of Tallinn. The results, Laar said, should serve as "a valuable wake-up call, and not solely for the Fatherland Alliance" which must be answered by the party's leadership. (BNS, 0734 GMT, 23 Oct 02; FBIS-SOV-2002-1023, via World News Connection)
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