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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

PRESIDENCY

Democradura or dictablanda? (1)

The shortcomings of transitional governments, previously democratic transitions, are legion, hence President Putin’s attempt to reshape the political landscape in Russia seems less Dadaism than neo-Realism; we’ve seen something like it before. For Russian political analyst Georgi Satarov, whether the leader is Yeltsin or Putin, whether the goal is democracy or dictatorship, there is one common element: weakness. The rule of Yeltsin and the rule of Putin are distinguished by different political trends and a common result. Yeltsin established a weak democracy; Putin is seeking to establish a weaker dictatorship. Both have led to disorder and confusion.² (2)

Satarov’s analysis is starkly simple: A strong dictatorship needs either a uniting and appealing idea or powerful officialdom.² (3) The collapse of communist ideology—even in its late lip-synching phase—left an ideological vacuum, which Putin has been unable to fill with his personal machismo. Nor has nationalism managed, thus far, to cement Russian statehood. Strong officialdom (AKA apparatchiki or political technologists), were kept off balance by Yeltsin’s teeter-totter regime and Putin has been slow to remove the detritus of the Yeltsin-era bureaucracy. While several well-known names have moved on to the private sector, some among them seem to have remained notably close to the Kremlin flame. (For a discussion of the remarkably stable roster of personalities at the governmental level, please see The NIS Observed, Vol. IX, No. 4) It is, however, Putin’s obvious inclination to staff the halls of the Kremlin and the White House with former security services officers that makes a resurgent state
the odds-on favorite scenario. There is one seemingly fatal flaw in this plan: The post-Soviet security services are suffering from the same malady contracted by most other post-Soviet institutions – a lack of public confidence brought on by incompetence. Anxiety about resurgent security services, given Russian and Soviet history, was clearly rational, but Beslan (and Qatar, et al) has demonstrated chinks in the armor.

Putin’s move³ to strengthen the power vertical,² coming in response to Beslan, looks less like a crackdown than a tactic to circumvent challenges the authorities are not able to control (e.g., terrorism, infiltration of the borders, corruption) through channels that they currently can control (i.e., the political environment via a withered opposition and legislative branch). As such, Putin’s Russia looks more and more like dictablanda, a soft dictatorship, with strongly centralized formal authority but little coercive power and no ideological zeal. Call it neo-Brezhnevian.

**Presidential seal of approval**

President Putin recently signed an interesting piece of legislation: The Duma adopted and the Federation Council approved amendments to Article 11 of the Constitution to permit government office holders also to lead political parties. Putin’s signature of this new bit of constitutional law is likely to solidify a³party of power² in government, but may also provide a new shade of veneer as leaders of allegedly³opposition² parties take up posts in Putin’s³inclusive² government. (4)

President Putin also recently appointed Aleksandr Glazkov as acting governor in the Astrakhan region. To quote the decree,³Aleksandr Pavlovich Glazkov has been appointed acting governor of Astrakhan Region to perform his duties until a newly elected governor⁵Stakes office.² (5 -- emphasis added) When would that be?

**Emergency restructuring**
In accordance with the President’s decrees on reforming the government administration (most recently, the July 11 decree), the Emergencies Ministry announced that it has disbanded its Information and Public Relations Directorate. The press service of the Ministry now will be responsible for communicating Ministry information to the media. According to the report, the Emergencies Ministry is to come into compliance with the reform-based new “manning table” that sets out a total administrative staff of 825 employees, which includes 140 fire safety officials and 250 members of the Civil Defense Forces, but does not include security personnel. (6) The Ministry structure now includes three deputy ministers, a chief military expert, a head fire safety inspector, a nineteen member board, eleven departments and eight directorates. At the regional level, the total personnel level of local ministerial bodies is not to exceed 26,900. (7)

SECURITY COUNCIL
A bid to define national security needs
According to the current Secretary of the Security Council, Igor Ivanov, the Sovbez is preparing to draft a new national security concept. Again. Ivanov held a public forum at Moscow State University on November 3 to invite discussion of the wording of the document. Of course, the Sovbez presumably has been engaged in the process of drafting a new security concept since October 2002, when Putin requested a revision of the existing concept in light of the Nord-Ost Theater attack. (8)

In September 2004, following the Beslan hostage taking, Ivanov initially announced the reworking of the security concept, which he noted was now “demanded by life itself.” (9) Among the areas of increased concern: the struggle against terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and proliferation.

While a dictatorship does not require truly effective security services, but merely those perceived to be so, it seems unlikely that Putin’s siloviki minions are making an overwhelmingly favorable impression. The security services needed
to be prepared for acts of terrorism – Chechen, international or a mix thereof – if
not after Budennovsk or Kizlyar, then certainly after Nord-Ost. Perhaps, outside
the Security Council chamber, they have formulated methods of protecting the
state, however, the announcement of a public meeting to discuss the proper
wording of a national security document that should, it seems, be drafted and
implemented by security services professionals certainly does nothing to inspire
confidence, instill fear or support for a democracy, dictatorship or hybrid.

Source Notes:

(1) Democradura and dictablanda refer to *neither here nor there* transitional
    conditions: democracies with suppressed civil and voting rights or *soft
dictatorships* with a formal centralization of authority.
(2) Novaya gazeta, 4 Nov 04 via Johnson’s Russia List (JRL)#8442, 5 Nov 04.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Interfax in Russian, 1916 GMT, 3 Nov 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-1103 via World
    News Connection.
(5) Interfax in Russian, 1859 GMT, 3 Nov 04; FBIS-SOV-2000-1103 via World
    News Connection.
(6) Agentstvo voyennykh novostey in English, 1512 GMT, 1 Nov 04; FBIS-SOV-
    2000-1101 via World News Connection.
(7) Ibid.
(8) RIA-Novosti, 3 Nov 04 via Lexis-Nexis Academic Database.
(9) Ibid.

Russian Federation: Security Services

By Eric Beene

Speaking to the State Duma late last month, Federal Security Services (FSB)
Director Nikolai Patrushev outlined what appears to be part of his response to the
task laid before him last July—the specific structures that will make up a
reformed FSB, geared toward implementing the federal government’s response
to terrorist acts. He recommended the creation of a command center that would
coordinate the efforts of all participating sections of government and the civilian
sector during an event such as another Beslan-style siege involving hostages.
The FSB, along with the Defense and Interior Ministries, has developed an
additional initiative to set up regional command centers, as well to monitor and
analyze situations in their respective regions, develop response plans, and to
coordinate the responses of all participating parties. The federal and regional
command centers would work together, as required; however, an important
element of this initiative is the special authority the regional command centers will
have to organize and execute a response to a terrorist event. (1) This plan
appears aimed directly at one of the major shortfalls highlighted most recently by
the Beslan siege: the apparent lack of command and control and communication
with on-scene authorities. By creating permanent federal and regional response
centers, tasked with developing response plans and coordinating them, and
given the authority to execute them without the requirement to wait for specific
authorization from the Kremlin, the power ministries will have taken a major step
forward in combating the threats Chechen separatists seem intent on bringing to
Russia proper.

Recognized in this recommendation is the requirement for legislative changes
that will enable tougher responses to terrorist events, not just the decentralization
of response authority, but new prosecution and punishment rules and standards.
(2) Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev has also recommended tightening entry
requirements into Russia in an attempt to enhance border security and minimize
the corrupt practices that have allowed instigators passage into and out of the
country. (3) Drawing significant criticism, Russian Prosecutor-General Vladimir
Ustinov suggested ³use of the help of the relatives of terrorists by the law
enforcement agencies during special operations.² (4) This was interpreted in the
Duma and the media as a request for legal leeway to take the relatives of
hostage-takers hostage to assist in the release of civilians. Various assailed as state-sponsored terrorism, a return to Nazi tactics and an overwhelming abuse of human rights, it is not clear that this legal change will be pursued further. (5)

On the same day that many of these proposed changes were announced, regional authorities carried out a counter-terrorism exercise in front of media at a military training facility near Novocherkassk in the Rostov region, although it is not clear that the announcement and the exercise were purposely coordinated. However, this exercise demonstrated, in highly scripted form, exactly how the government would respond, in an idealized situation, to the next hostage-taking event. In this exercise, approximately 1,500 troops from the FSB and Interior Ministry special forces, Civil Defense, Emergency and Defense Ministries, and police fell under the command of Russian Army Colonel Vladimir Afonin to respond to a gang of 30 hostage-takers who had simulated the takeover a village. This regional³tactical team² responded with full force, and executed all the procedures with the efficiency one might hope such a team would possess, including, somewhat surprisingly, on-scene negotiations (over a loudspeaker for demonstration purposes) with hostage-takers to gain more time and a pair of helicopters delivering a landing team to engage the hostage-takers and take prisoners. The whole event took no more than an hour to conclude with a minimum of simulated friendly casualties and included a display of all the latest weaponry and tools. (6)

This demonstration appears to have highlighted all the elements for the lack of which the government was criticized during the Beslan siege: a quick and coordinated response with representatives from all necessary branches of government under the command of one competent leader; real-time communications across this force; well-practiced actions, restraint and negotiation until the last possible minute; and the ability to make decisions on the scene, rather than waiting for word from the authorities in Moscow on what to do next. Indeed, if the government could guarantee such an effective response to
terrorist attacks, no doubt popular perceptions of security in Russia would be significantly enhanced.

However, there are limits to the lessons one can draw from such a sleek and highly staged event. For one thing, Rostov Deputy Governor Viktor Usachev told reporters that such tactical command teams operate throughout the country, headed by the senior deputy chairmen of the regional counter-terrorism commissions, but it is not clear that they are all as well-manned and regionally responsive as they appeared during this demonstration. Of course, southern Russia, in and around the region where this demonstration took place, has been the scene of quite a number of such terror attacks, so if this response is repeatable in real time, the government should be lauded, but it is somewhat bewildering that this capability could have been created in a scant two months, as it was clearly not available during the first days of September in North Ossetia. Also, it is unlikely all the tactical teams that do exist are as well equipped as demonstrated here. It is also somewhat disingenuous to show such a tidy conclusion after so short a time, without demonstrating how such a force could respond to a much longer-lasting event—will troops operate 12 hours on/12 hours off to stay sharp? Are there first-responders scattered across the regions to buy time for the rest of the force? Will they be able to operate effectively at night (indeed, would that not give them an advantage over hostage-takers)? This last question may be the most enlightening as night scopes for rifles cost upwards of a million rubles each. Evidently, the press were also left with many unanswered questions during a media conference that preceded the exercise. (7)

While the coordination between the public discussion in Moscow and the demonstration in the Rostov region is itself impressive, in addition to the coordination demonstrated during this exercise, there is a higher level of coordination not demonstrated here that has already been highlighted—the ability to prevent such events. Earlier in October, Lieutenant General Yevgeni Abrashin, deputy Commander of federal interior troops in the North Caucasus
region, wrote an opinion piece for Izvestiya discussing how terrorists were able to set up several successful attacks in Russia this year (Grozny, Ingushetia, and Beslan) and what could have been done (and could be done in the future) to prevent such attacks. Not surprisingly, he highlighted the security services¹ tendency to fail from acting on the most basic information (not the nuanced human intelligence from deeply-inserted spies, but practically common knowledge in the area, including known movements of large bands of militant groups), to refrain from reinforcing poorly-manned units in areas of known militant activity, to neglect the need for increased attention at specific border entry points when necessary, and to fail coordinating federal and regional forces. He did not even mention corruption as a contributing factor in these events. He did emphasize the fact that ³ in August 2004, all areas of the Southern Federal District set up permanent command-and-control groups to combat terrorism,² presumably referring to the capability demonstrated by the Rostov exercise, but blamed the Interior Ministry for not setting such groups up in Ingushetia and North Ossetia, where they could have been very useful. (8) (Usachev claimed that such groups existed everywhere except Chechnya and Astrakhan¹, regions populated already with significant numbers of troops.)

While both Duma presentations and scripted counter-terrorism exercises are useful advances, only the next terrorist attack will provide an adequate measure of the Russian government’s true intent to attempt reforming its counter-terror capabilities and the actual capability this intent engenders. Clearly, at least one tactical command unit exists, with access to adequate response equipment, but it remains to be seen if there are enough of these units across the country or if these can respond where needed in time. Furthermore, all these units need good equipment, from basic body armor to the high-technology tools like night-vision equipment that can give government forces the tactical edge over terrorists, but, as demonstrated during the Beslan siege, even the elite FSB and Interior Ministry special forces units are not equipped adequately today. (9) The 400 billion rubles that law enforcement and security services are slated to receive
may help relieve the shortfall, but much of it is already earmarked for other necessities, including wages, housing, and education. (10)

And while all of these plans serve to enhance President Putin’s tarnished reputation as the guarantor of peace in Russia, only the next step will truly make Russia more secure—using these and other forces to prevent terror attacks before they occur, even if it means no headlines or lively television footage. Duma meetings and hour-long firefights make for good theater, but the best theater in the war on terrorism is very boring, ensures that such events never happen. It doesn’t bode well for the security services, and their leaders, that they tend to demonstrate their capabilities publicly.

Source Notes:

(1)³Russian FSB Head Calls For Creation of Counterterrorism Center, New Legislation,² Itar-TASS, 29 Oct 04, FBIS-SOV-2004-1029 via World News Connection.
(2) Ibid.
(4) Ibid.
(6)³Russian South Hosts Anti-Terror War Game,² RIA Novosti, 29 Oct 04 via Lexis-Nexis and ³Counter-Terrorism Exercise Takes Place,² by Arkadi Yuzhny, Gazeta, 1 Nov 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.
(7) Ibid.
(8)³Unforgivable Mistakes: A General Speaks Out About Russia’s Failures in the Caucasus,² by Yevgeni Abrashin, Russia Profile, 20 Oct 04 via Johnson’s Russia List, #8421, 22 Oct 04.
Russian Federation: Foreign Relations
By Rebecca Mulder

Stumbling blocks to peace?
Tensions remain high despite the 5 November negotiations in Sochi between the Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania and the South Ossetian leader Eduard Kokoity, in the presence of the Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister Valeri Loshchinin. They were supposed to create the necessary conditions for the eventual settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict.

In fact, expectations prior to the negotiations were more realistic and dependent on whether Russia will give a positive signal to Kokoity who is under its influence. (1) In an interview with Novaya gazeta’s Anna Politkovskaya, Georgian Minister for Conflict Resolution, Geory Khaindrava discussed the results of closed-door talks in Moscow between himself, Georgian Parliamentary Speaker Nino Burdzhanadze, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and the Secretary of the Russian Security Council, Igor Ivanov. Russia paid lip service to the concept that the territorial integrity of Georgia presupposes that Abkhazia and South Ossetia are Georgian regions. (2) Mr. Khaindrava emphasized that Georgia has all rights to the Rok Tunnel and that it was evident that Georgia’s rights have been infringed upon. According to Khaindrava, Georgia would grant as much autonomy to S. Ossetia as North Ossetia enjoys within Russia, and that in effect, one was not dealing with distinct North and South Ossetian people – there are only Ossetians who live in Russia and Ossetians who live in Georgia. (3)
Following the negotiations between Zhvania and Kokoity, a statement disseminated by the Russian Foreign Ministry stated that all illegal armed groups must be withdrawn from the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone by 20 November. Only peacekeeping forces (present since 1992) are to remain in the zone. (4) Mr. Kokoity claimed that during the talks, the Georgian side acknowledged their responsibility for conflicts last summer and that South Ossetia was forced to take defensive actions. (5) Georgian Deputy State Security Minister Batu Kutelia, confirmed only that the sides discussed the demilitarization of the conflict zone, joint control over hills in the zone and establishment of joint control over the Roksy tunnel. (6) Tbilisi’s commitment to retaining its territorial integrity was not to be undermined by the negotiations. Zhvania reaffirmed this commitment by stating, “I explained to the representatives of the Ossetian and Russian sides that the main aim of the Georgian government is to restore the integrity of Georgia. This is the main thing we’re fighting for and we’ll certainly reach it.” (7)

During the course of the meeting, Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili held his own press conference at which he claimed that Georgia would not allow itself to be provoked into any kind of confrontation or large-scale conflict in the Tskhinvali region. (8) His commitment has been tested by the recent alleged kidnappings of Georgians by South Ossetian forces and an explosion that injured a Tbilisi news crew that occurred a day after the Sochi negotiations. According to Georgian Minister of Internal Affairs Irakli Okruashvili, these events are being used as a means to goad the Georgian side into a reckless situation. (9) The Georgian population has been urged not to give in to any such provocations, and parties on both sides have agreed to join in efforts to search for the missing, one in particular, a resident of Agabeti, Georgy Kakhniashvili, who went missing 3 November and is believed to be held by the Ossetians. Some Georgian retaliation for the kidnappings occurred when ten Ossetian residents were taken hostage on 5 November, though there are plans for their release. The Ossetians have released 32 of 50 or so hostages, though Mr. Kakhniashvili was not one of
them. (10) Representatives of the mixed peacekeeping contingent present in the region are conducting a search for Mr. Kakhniashvili.

Mr. Kokoity, commenting on results of the meeting, claimed,³ Zurab Zhvania belongs to that group of Georgian politicians who support the peaceful settlement of the conflict and I think we'll seek all possibilities to release those people who were taken hostage² adding however, that South Ossetia does not intend to make concessions over its status. (11) With neither side willing to concede their ultimate intentions in the region – the Georgians desire for territorial integrity and the South Ossetians claims of independence these talks and even the current tensions may represent progress on the road to peace, not just with each other, but with Russia. Russia’s intentions with regard to Georgia are unclear, particularly following the events in Beslan. Hostilities in the region provide Russia with an advantage as mediator, one that enables it to influence policies and arrange for outcomes that are to Moscow's advantage. As the Georgian-Ossetian conflict simmers, Russia's true desires, whether for peace or for something less benevolent, may become more evident.

**The Kyoto Protocol**

On 5 November, President Vladimir Putin ratified the Kyoto Protocol on global warming. The United States and Australia, among others, rejected the treaty's ratification and thus Russia was the only country left whose signature could clear the way for the treaty to take effect next year. (12) The decision to ratify the treaty was made in September and the Russian Parliament voted to ratify the protocol on 22 October, but these decisions did not occur without extensive internal debate among Russian officials.

The debates were centered on whether Russia's ratification would benefit or harm the Russian economy. According to Vsevolod Gavriolov, Deputy Director of the Economic Development and Trade Ministry Department, the protocol itself will not harm the Russian economy; it depends on Russia's own actions whether
it will benefit the country. (13) For success within the context of the treaty, Russia needs to³ make the Kyoto Protocol¹'s mechanisms a natural continuation of the country¹'s internal policy.² (14) Proposals have been made to implement the protocol successful in two stages. The first would be to offer support for industry operators who are willing to restrict greenhouse emission limits on their own accord; the second, well into the future, assumes that Russian national procedures have been aligned with those in the protocol, and the decision that remains is whether to make the obligations binding and compulsory. (15)

Though the ramifications may be unknown, it is apparent that Russia¹'s decision to sign the treaty opens it to greater international cooperation and pride in the fact that the Kyoto Protocol could only take effect because of Russia¹'s participation.

Arafat, Russia and the Middle East
With Yaser Arafat¹'s rapidly declining health, Russia¹'s role in the Middle East peace process has the chance to change. Potentially, Arafat¹'s decline could propel Russia to assume a greater role in implementing the³Road Map,² which it signed in 2003, along with the United States, the U.N. and the European Union. Russia also could take a more neutral stance than it has in the past.

President Putin¹'s relationship with the newly re-elected President Bush could be an asset, as Russia has aligned itself with strong anti-terrorist U.S policies, though this type of alignment could also be seen as detrimental in the region. Russia¹'s ties with both the large number of Russian-speaking émigrés in Israeli, and its support for the Palestinians could truly work to an advantage, giving Russia the chance to play both sides.

Source Notes:
Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Robyn Angley

POLITICS AND SOCIETY

If you can't take the news, don't read the paper

³I simply wanted to read every copy of that paper, and I paid for all of the copies with my own money. I can show you the receipt,² said acting Prefect Alla Revazova in her explanation of why she seized copies of Ekran Vladikavkaza
that contained an article criticizing North Ossetia’s President Aleksandr Dzasokhov. (1)

The article was a reprint of a piece by Konstantin Chedzhemov, an outspoken member of the opposition, criticizing Dzasokhov for the massacre in Beslan. The article was printed initially in Sotsial-Demokrat Alanii, a paper with a circulation of 3,000, which remained undisturbed at newsstands for a week, indicating that the confiscation by government officials may have had more to do with the reprint’s wider distribution of about 7,700. The same day those papers disappeared from kiosks, Sergei Burnatsev, editor-in-chief of Ekran Vladikavkaza, was notified that he would have to vacate the property where the editorial offices are currently located – the Iristonskiy municipal district prefecture.

This incident, along with the recent revocation of the license of the newspaper Angusht in Ingushetia for publishing a list of persons who had been killed, wounded, or had disappeared in the last few years, (2) highlights several of the problems with media freedom in Russia. (Angusht earlier had reprinted an article from Novaya gazeta – a paper registered at the Russian Ministry of the Press – by Anna Politkovskaya, criticizing Russia’s policy toward Chechnya. For this it received a warning from M. M. Kalimatov, the prosecutor and senior justice advisor of the Republic of Ingushetia.) (3) The Russian Federation actually possesses fairly sound media laws, originally drafted in 1991. These laws outline the rights of journalists, prohibit censorship, and detail the registration process. For example, the law confirms the right of journalists to visit specially protected places of natural disasters, accidents and catastrophes, mass disorders and mass gatherings, and also localities where a state of emergency is declared.² (4) The problem lies in the application and enforcement of the law (or lack thereof).

During the events in Beslan, a number of journalists were detained or hassled by the police and the Federal Security Service. Some journalists, among them reporters for Novye izvestia and Moskovskie novosti, were detained by police
asking to see passports, accreditation certificates, and North Ossetian provisional registration documents. Other journalists, Anna Politkovskaya and Nana Lezhava, allegedly were poisoned while attempting to cover the hostage taking. (5) If the rights of Russian journalists have any meaning, these incidents should be followed up and investigated.

The media law currently is undergoing revision. The Ministry of Culture and Mass Communications, the Agency for Press and Communications, and the Industrial Committee are developing a draft of a new media law, expected to be ready by the end of this year.

The draft involves several points of contention, among them the inclusion of the Internet in the law as a form of media, the question of normative censorship, and the inclusion in the new law of the word "owner" in addition to/or in place of "founder."^2

Use of the Internet in Russia (the Runet) boomed in 2003, at one point reflecting as many as 350,000 new users a month. (6) Current levels recently surpassed the 15 million mark of persons who have used the Internet at least once in the last six months. (7) Although Internet usage is heavily concentrated in Moscow and St. Petersburg and is hampered by the low bandwidth capability of phone lines, the Internet is growing as a viable means of spreading information. For instance, Anna Politkovskaya’s article that led to the Angusht a warning from authorities was posted subsequently on the Internet as an alternative source. (8)

Those in charge of drafting the new law are divided concerning the issue of the Internet. Senior Deputy Culture Minister, Leonid Nadirov, says the law should include the Internet. (9) The Chairman of the Duma's Information Policy Committee, Valeri Komissarov, advocates regulating online publications, but acknowledges the drawbacks of regulating the entire World Wide Web. ^If we
were to shut down the .ru domain, for example, which many sites use, they would all just switch to the .com domain site.² (10)

Komissarov expects licensing requirements to apply to online publications, the definition of which could become complex. What qualifies as publishing? Is there a distinction between publishing and posting information? How is such a law enforced?

The Deputy Minister of Information Technology and Communications Ministry, Dmitri Milovantsev, disagrees with Nadirov and Komissarov. He says the Internet should not be considered part of the mass media. (11) It remains to be seen which elements will prevail.

The issue of censorship has also arisen with the new law. Alexander Kotenkov, Plenipotentiary Representative of the Russian president at the Federation Council and head of the commission for information policies at the Federation Council, says the new law should include §normative§ censorship, providing explicit legal norms on what may be covered. (12)

That a representative of the president is advocating censorship raises concerns in a country whose media already are affected by a great deal of self-censorship, a tendency that increased after the 2002 Dubrovka attacks, when the authorities threatened to pass laws regulating media coverage of terrorist attacks. The result was the Antiterrorist Convention developed by the Industrial Committee and signed by representatives of the media. The conventions are voluntary, but nevertheless are observed by the media. Indeed, coverage of Beslan skated a treacherously thin line between lamenting the event and ensuring avoidance of criticism concerning the authorities¹ response to the situation. Even so, some politicians are lobbying for regulations prohibiting the media from covering terrorist events supposedly for the sake of protecting the nation’s psyche. (13)
Self-censorship notwithstanding, the Russian Television Academy awarded several honors to canceled political shows, sending what analysts agree amounted to a message protesting government pressure on the television industry in Russia. Awarded shows included the canceled NTV programs ³Freedom of Speech,² ³Namedni,² and ³Krasnaya strela.² (14)

It appears that the lack of diligent protection of journalists¹ rights, coupled with the failure to follow through on suspicious actions by the authorities, and the voluntary self-censorship of the media, already amount to a form of normative censorship. As for protecting the nation¹s psyche, it is the citizen¹s decision whether to read the paper or not, and the media¹s job to provide balanced and accurate reporting. The role of the authorities is simply to enforce the laws protecting the journalists¹ rights to pursue and provide information.

The third issue concerns the inclusion of the word ³owner² in the new law. FC Deputy Speaker Dmitri Mezentsev, who works on information policy-related issues, recently commented that the new law ³must protect copyright and intellectual property and will not only do that but will also make provisions to curb unfair advertising and dirty tricks. The new media law, of course, must become an instrument for fight [sic] against those organizations that have made terror a tool for obtaining money.² (15) One wonders if media owners who permit their reporters to print critical articles will be subject to charges of using terror as a tool for obtaining money.

Protest at last
Public political action was visible in Moscow on October 23, when more than 2,000 persons congregated to protest the Chechen War. The seemingly small turnout was over four times what the organizers had anticipated. (16)
The protest was coordinated by For Human Rights and the Committee for Anti-War Activities with support of Committee 2008. The speakers also decried the increased role of the security services under Putin and the rising number of politically-motivated criminal cases.

**Score: Mothers 1, Putin 0**
The Union of Committees of Soldiers¹ Mothers will meet with Aslan Maskhadov, possibly in November, to discuss the war in Chechnya. The New York Times published an appeal by the Union in October. Akhmed Zakayev responded to the message on Maskhadov’s behalf. The subject and details of the meeting have not yet been determined. (17)

Source Notes:

(1) ³Local paper pays price for criticizing North Ossetian president,² BBC Monitoring, 22 Oct 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.
(2) ³Editor in Russia’s Ingushetia denies printing of ‘extremist’ material,² BBC Monitoring, 26 Oct 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.
(3) ³Ingush editor hits out at attacks on press freedom,² BBC Monitoring, 20 Oct 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.
(4) ³Chapter V: The Rights and Duties of the Journalist,² accessed 3 Nov 04 via (http://www.internews.ru/law).
(5) ³Special operation in Beslan a success: Operation against journalists,² Novaya gazeta, 20 Sep 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.
(6) ³Internet use skyrocketing in Russia,² accessed 3 Nov 04 via http://www.gcis.ca/n-aa/cdne-514-may-30-2003.html.
(7) ³Over 15 million Internet users in Russia,² RIA-Novosti, 3 Nov 04 via Johnson’s Russia List (JRL) #8439.
(8) ³Ingush editor hits out at attacks on press freedom,² BBC Monitoring, 20 Oct 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.
(9) ³Self-censorship,² What the Papers Say (WPS), 7 Oct 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
If censorship is introduced, we would have a different country,² WPS, 20 Oct 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

Self-censorship,² WPS, 7 Oct 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

Envoy says media law should envisage Œnormative censorship¹,² ITAR-TASS, 6 Oct 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-1006 via World News Connection.

Duma official says antiterrorism steps must not restrict media freedom,² Moscow RIA-Novosti, 19 Oct 04: FBIS-SOV-2004-1019 via World News Connection.

Russian media elites honor canceled shows to protest pressure on TV,² FBIS Report, 18 Oct 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-1018 via World News Connection.

Russia’s FC to discuss concept of new media law Wednesday,² ITAR-TASS, 6 Oct 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

2,000 call for end to Chechen war,² St. Petersburg Times, 26 Oct 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.

Woman, don’t be silent,² Kommersant, 21 Oct 04 via ISI Emerging Markets.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Jeff Kubiak and Kyle Colton

INTERNAL

In a report released on 20 October, the New York-based group, Human Rights Watch, shines a light on one of the uglier problems facing Russian officials. The report outlined the culture of abuse that exists primarily among the conscripted force in the Russian military. According the report, virtually institutionalized dedovshchina, or "rule of the grandfathers,"² exposes hundreds of thousands of new recruits in the Russian armed forces during their first year of military service to grossly abusive treatment at the hands of more senior conscripts. (1) The report claims that dedovshchina exists in military units throughout the Russian Federation and that "[w]hile dedovshchina may once have served the purpose of initiation, it has in the past twenty years degenerated into a system in which
second-year conscripts, once victims of abuse and deprivation themselves, enjoy untrammeled power to abuse their juniors without rule, restriction, or fear of punishment.² (2) It concludes that ³abusive practices associated with dedovshchina have persisted due to an almost universal failure on the part of the officers¹ corps to take appropriate measures² and accuses Russian leaders of having largely ignored the problem. (3) Along with making a number of other specific recommendations, Human Rights Watch called on Russian leadership, starting with President Putin, to take a firm and clear stance against dedovshchina. (4)

The report appears to make conclusions that are not entirely supported by the data. The group¹s research consisted of interviews with persons concerned in cases involving only 100 conscripts. These cases had to do with conscripts from 50 bases across 25 of Russia¹s 89 provinces over a two year time period. (5) The horror stories documented are substantial enough not to be discounted, but they hardly appear to constitute a scientific sampling that can be used to draw conclusions about the entirety of the Russian military and its readiness. In this time period, more than 600,000 conscripts were inducted into the Russian armed forces. Despite making statements such as ³even when conscripts complain about their treatmentŠmilitary officials were wholly uninterested in investigating,² (6) the report made no mention about the fact that the Main Military Prosecutor¹s Office had tried more than 1,500 cases this year and convicted more that 3,200 servicemen (over 400 of them officers) on charges of abuse or physical violence. In 2003, 3,500 cases were tried and 3,400 servicemen (500 officers) were convicted. (7)

The Defense Ministry¹s response to the report was predictably defensive, yet appeared somewhat persuasive. The official response from the Defense Ministry was posted on the Human Rights Watch website and cited these facts:
For a number of years the crime rate in the armed forces has been 2-2.5 times lower than the overall national level. During 2002, 2003 and 2004, 90% of units experienced no dedovshchina, and 80% had no violations whatsoever. The fact that hooliganism in the barracks does not take place on a massive scale is also proven by the findings of Human Rights Watch’s rights-defenders, who found only 100 victims of dedovshchina in the 3 years of research, and on whose statements they rely for their report. (8)

Just as in many situations when analyzing matters Russian, using government numbers, statistics, or other facts is problematic due to a lack of transparency and inability to validate the data. The reality is that dedovshchina is just one of several debilitating problems facing the Russian military. The author of the Human Rights Watch report claimed during a recent press conference that³ Štens of thousands of families every year² have tried to ensure their sons are not called up due to their fear of dedovshchina. (9) The reality is that the system of deferments, which allows the vast majority of draft-eligible young men to avoid service and reduces the conscription pool to the sludge of society, has evolved over more than a decade. During this time period the army could not feed, shelter, clothe or provide medical care for its troops and was engaged in bloody fighting in Chechnya. Funding of the military is still so poor that Russia’s lieutenants get paid only about $150 a month and nearly a third of the 165,000 officers do not have apartments. (10) According to Viktor Litovkin, in an article in RIA novosti,³”The situation with rights of the militaryŠcan be changed only when everyone, from privates to generals, starts treasuring service in the army. Without it there is no army.”² (11)

The Defense Ministry agrees wholeheartedly. Its formal response to the report ended with this conclusion:³”The final solution of the problem depends directly on the level of prestige of the military service and on the level of moral, psychological and physical readiness of the young generation for service in the army and awareness of its public and political significance. And this is the field
for the activities of such an important instrument as mass media affecting the authorities, the minds and hearts of people, as well as for different non-governmental organizations and movements and society as a whole.\(^2\) (12) To this end, proposals for reinvigorating the program of patriotic education were discussed at a recent conference in Moscow. A large gathering from the various regions, government ministries and departments, and leading social organizations heard proposals to spend more that 669 million rubles to organize patriotic education. The military has asked that 406 million rubles from its budget be allocated towards the effort. (13)

The government's strategy for bringing order to the military has several points of attack. First is to fix what officials perceive as the public relations problem, illuminated above. The authorities apparently are pursuing two courses of action to address this issue. Not only will they engage in a program of patriotic education in order to encourage young people to want to serve in the armed forces, but also, in typical Soviet fashion, they will attempt to silence groups who would speak disparagingly about the army. The notorious \(^3\)Black Colonel\(^2\) State Duma Deputy Viktor Alksnis announced that he will ask the Justice Ministry and Prosecutor-General's Office to investigate the Soldiers' Mothers Committee. According to Alksnis, that organization conducts an \(^3\)anti-army campaign with Western money.\(^2\) (14) The security services have been following the Soldiers' Mothers groups and claim to have \(^3\)data to prove that they are financed by the West and are conducting subversive work against the Russian Armed Forces.\(^2\) (15) The Human Rights Watch report, which was written with extensive assistance from various Soldiers' Mothers groups, even quotes Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov as asking questions about the purpose of the groups: \(^3\)One other thing that concerns me are the runaways, sometimes hundreds of kilometers, to so-called committees of soldiers' mothers... In fact, there are hundreds of such committees, or even thousands. Who supports them, how they live, that remains a big question.\(^2\) (16)
The second branch of Ivanov’s strategy to return order to the military is to continue the conversion to a professional, contract force, reducing the reliance on conscripts to fill the force. The bad news here is that units fully converted to contract servicemen have shown comparable moral weaknesses to those noted in the conscripted force. The program for conversion to contract servicemen still suffers from being under-funded. The poor pay and general lack of infrastructure attracts and satisfies only low quality recruits. Statistics show that crime rates in contract units actually are higher than in similar units comprised of conscripts. (17) The 76th Airborne Division has demonstrated additional evidence of the lack of discipline in the contract forces. Barracks that were commissioned only two years ago for this unit already are in need of refurbishment because, according to the Russian Deputy Defense Minister in charge of construction and billeting, Col-Gen Anatoli Grebenyuk, hotheads among the paratroopers like to show bravado, reducing furniture, doors and washrooms practically to smithereens.² (18) And although Ivanov has claimed repeatedly that no conscripts will serve in Chechnya, he is referring only to Ministry of Defense forces there. The Interior Troops¹ 46th Brigade will be manned by only 33% contract servicemen by the end of the year. (19) Other military units will still be populated by conscripts, including construction troops, border troops, and other security services units.

Finally, in a recent interview, Ivanov has stated that a modern military is not all about troop strength – it’s primarily about technology.² (20) Questions regarding the soundness of this assertion notwithstanding, on this issue his efforts are likely to fall short as well. According to a recent analysis, Russian military expenditure on armaments is not modernizing the military but instead devoted to upgrading old hardware. The analysis claims that of the 300 samples of new weaponry and technology promised in 2005, the reality is that most of these weapons are refurbished or updated versions of previous systems. (21) Because the military industrial complex was placed virtually on starvation rations by the defense budgets of the past ten years, it has relied almost exclusively on sales to foreign
governments. In order to maintain cash flow, elites in the military industries have focused on upgrading late Soviet models to meet the immediate needs of foreign customers. As a result of privatization, the industry’s design bureaus were separated from production units, inhibiting enterprises from being capable of capitalizing on technological advances. (22) For this reason, one of Russia’s premier defense manufactures, Sukhoi, will not be capable of producing its fifth generation fighter aircraft until 2013, while the U.S. already is producing F-22’s and, by 2010, will be producing the Joint Strike Fighter. (23)

The road to soundness for the Russian armed forces undoubtedly will require that it pass through a period marked by even more downsizing. Political forces are likely to render impossible improving the quality of the conscripted force. Fiscal constraints will continue to delay conversion to a contract force of any size. Attempts to modernize will be limited by corruption and a devastated military industrial complex. In the meantime, it appears that Russian officials will continue to attempt to find forces in the West to blame for this condition.

Source Notes:

(2) Ibid.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibid.
(5) Ibid.
(6) Ibid.


(10) *Human Rights Watch Diagnoses Russian Army; Treatment Debated,* RIA Novosti, 28 Oct 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

(11) Ibid.


(14) *Legislator Attacks Soldiers' Mothers Committee,* RFE/RL, 21 Oct 04.


(18) *Deputy Defense Minister Says Funds for Contract Personnel Inadequate,* Krasnaya zvezda, 26 Oct 04; BBC Monitoring International Reports via Lexis-Nexis.


(20) Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov: We Will Deliver Preventive Strikes If Necessary, Komsomolskaya pravda, 26 Oct 04; WPS Defense and Security via Lexis-Nexis.
Almost 15 years after the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia is still looking to reform its military, specifically its Navy, into a 21st century force. The transformation of the Soviet Navy into the Russian Navy has been slow and essentially without direction. Russian political and military leaders have not forged any useful reform plans that take into account the current economic realities, instead preferring to hold on desperately to the vision of the Soviet blue water Navy.

President Yeltsin failed to provide the Navy with any firm guidance regarding its role in the future of Russian security, let alone fleet disposition or composition requirements. He was much more concerned with solidifying power and strengthening the economy. His economic measures resulted in a severely reduced budget for the Navy. It was not until after NATO's operation in Yugoslavia and the Kursk disaster, that President Putin signed a directive On Russia's Maritime Activity and an associated document entitled, "The Foundations of Naval Policy of the Russian Federation Until the Year 2010." In July 2001, President Putin approved the Naval Doctrine of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020. Both of these documents are extremely vague and do not provide the Navy with any specific requirements. The documents have been characterized as nothing more than "a wish to return Russia to the world ocean before other powers divide its riches."
Last week at EURONAVAL 2004, the 5th International Naval Force Equipment Exhibition, held in Paris, Russian Presidential Aide Aleksandr Burutin uttered the truism, "a concept outlining further development of the Russian Navy is a serious issue." (2) During his interview with ITAR-TASS, he openly pondered the question, "Should Russia have ocean-going aircraft carriers with the necessary support ships or (should) the Navy be (focused on) accomplishing missions in the Russian sea zone?" (3) "We have to know precisely what kind of Navy we'll have by 2015, even by the year 2025 if we take into account the long period of construction of serious naval equipment. We should adopt the necessary programs of fleet development and follow them accurately," Burutin said. (4)

The idea of a long-term naval acquisition strategy is not new to Russian politicians. In 1976, Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union Sergei Gorshkov said, "the long time needed to create the material and technical resources for a Navy, the relatively short service life of ships and the associated danger of the obsolescence of naval forces place special demands on science, which must indicate the course of naval construction years and even decades in advance." (5)

**Russian naval history**

Russian state security has rarely, if ever, been threatened from the sea and, therefore, the Russian Navy has never been considered a vital element in state security. Perceived threats and antagonists in the Baltic and Black Seas led to the development of a Navy in the 17th and 18th centuries. Naval development was sustained by the view that a Navy is a symbol of great power status and imperial expansion, but the Russian Navy never achieved more than a secondary status compared with its predominantly land focused military.

The Soviet Union retained Russian naval traditions and expanded the Navy's role within the military. The Navy was seen as an example of Soviet economic
and scientific power. The USSR, boasted the highest naval potential in the mid-80s – with 62 nuclear-powered guided-missile giant submarines of strategic designation, over 400 nuclear-powered and diesel-driven universal submarines and over 700 surface ships in its service. These numbers were always padded due to Admiral Gorshkov hesitance to decommission any ships.

The Soviet Navy did have numerous problems. One, with lasting effects for the current Russian Navy, was its choice of ship designs. Instead of copying NATO ship designs, the Soviet leaders wanted their Navy to comprise a new, original trend in the development of the navies of the world. So, the Soviet Navy was designed as an offensive force – to fight large World War II style naval battles at sea against NATO forces. Admiral Gorshkov stated that the primary mission has to "successfully oppose a strong enemy Navy and repel his attacks from seaward." (6)

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Navy lost numerous key bases on the Black, Baltic and Caspian Seas, several major shipyards beyond the confines of Russia, and the majority of non-Russian personnel. The rate of decommissioning grew immensely while the rate of warship construction fell dramatically. With no need for the offensive power inherent in Soviet surface ship design, a severe lack of funding, and limited basing, the Russian Navy was rendered useless except as a coastal force.

**Russian threat perception and the utility of a Navy in future wars**

Russian threat perception, especially among its naval leaders seems to be stuck in the Cold War. Admiral Vladimir Valuyev, Commander of the Baltic Fleet, commented on Russian television: "Every nation, including Russia, must seek to strengthen its armed forces and its Navy. It will prove useful. If NATO behaves peacefully, we'll stick to peacetime tasks. If, however, the situation is escalated, we'll always be ready to take appropriate action." (7) For naval leaders, the rhetoric also displays a type of self-preservation; if the Russian Navy does not
have NATO and the U.S. as enemies, then it could be justified only as a large coast guard.

Russian threat perception, outside of the Navy, would likely include, in varying degrees, the United States, NATO and NATO expansion, the People’s Republic of China, Islamic Fundamentalism and terrorism, and Japan. Russian forces are active in Chechnya, Georgia (Abkhazia, Adjaria, South Ossetia), Moldova, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Additionally, protection of Russian citizens and suppression of separatism in many autonomous Republics, autonomous oblasts and other regions present a perceived, if not real, security concern. In surveying this list, Russia’s perceived threats and security concerns are almost exclusively land oriented with the exception of the United States and NATO. With Russia’s threat perception and current economic position, it does not seem that the Navy is in a position to win the competition for scarce military resources.

**Putin and Kuroyedov**

President Putin and the Russian Navy have been friends for a long time. As Deputy Chief of the presidential administration in 1997, President Putin served on the military council of the Navy. Within months of Putin’s appointment in 1997, Admiral Vladimir Kuroyedov replaced Admiral Felix Gromov as the Navy’s Commander in Chief. The President attended the defense of Admiral Kuroyedov’s doctoral thesis, which has become the basis for the Foundation and Policy papers of 2000 and 2001.

Admiral Kuroyedov appears to be much more savvy than his predecessors or his other service contemporaries. He seems to be able to fuse President Putin’s political arguments into his military strategies. In his maritime strategy essay (morskaya strategiya), he maintained that Russia’s maritime strategy should help it achieve practical results in the shortest possible time; almost the exact the same words were used in Putin’s argument that Russia’s first task is improving its economy. (8)
Admiral Kuroyedov has suggested a much more progressive ship building strategy, unlike his predecessors' demands to counter the U.S. and NATO ship for ship. He has suggested developing new combat systems that are capable of adjusting or flexing to disrupt enemy operations. He has suggested additionally that the Navy should no longer be required to maintain its global presence, but has made numerous contradictory statements on this point. In the same maritime strategy essay, he promoted the idea that the threat from the sea is global and Russia requires a blue-water, balanced Navy to counter the threat.

Admiral Kuroyedov was approved for a one-year extension past the mandatory retirement age earlier this summer. His extension will allow him to have the primary input as the Navy concludes its bidding and design contest for construction of long-range oceanic combatants. He will also be able to approve the design of new joint interoperable weapons, capable of being adapted to all ships of all projects. Both design contests will be complete before the end of the year.

**Conclusion**

Russia’s defense spending cannot support a big, blue water Navy, so the Russian leadership has only two options. It can allow the Navy to continue its decline into obsolescence or transform the Navy into a smaller, less personnel intensive, high tech force, which is interoperable with Russia's current ground and air forces and capable of interacting with regional associations, other naval powers and the United Nations.

Due to financial constraints, Russia will continue to scrap her older ships and submarines, retaining only those units necessary to maintain its strategic nuclear deterrent and coastal defense. Unless there is a dramatic turnaround in the Russian economy and a corresponding increase in defense spending, it is unlikely that the Russian Navy will ever rival the United States Navy or achieve...
the goal of a Soviet blue water Navy. President Putin has made it clear that Russia's Navy will be rearmed. He said last October: "Russia has a program of rearmament" and "its implementation will elevate our Navy to a wholly new level."

(9)

If the Russian Navy is going to be the first Russian armed service that successfully reforms into a 21st century force, it does not need to go to a new level. It needs President Putin, Defense Minister Ivanov and Admiral Kuroyedov to forget the Soviet blue water Navy and envision a much smaller, jointly interoperable Russian naval force. The acquisition decisions in the next few months will be a tell-tale sign as to which option the Russian leadership has chosen.

Source Notes:

(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibid.
(6) Ibid.
Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Elena Selyuk

UKRAINE

Russian-speakers are still not convinced

According to the official results, the first round of the presidential elections in Ukraine led to a virtual tie between the two main candidates: Viktor Yushchenko gained 39.78 percent of the vote and the current Prime-Minister, Viktor Yanukovich, 39.32 percent. (1) According to independent exit-polls, however, Yushchenko was a clear victor in this tour. Some exit-polls reported an obvious landslide in Yushchenko’s favor. Apparently, Yushchenko’s lead was large enough that the authorities, fearing massive disturbances in the county, did not dare present Yanukovich with a clear victory in this round. But they may attempt to do so on 21 November – the second round of the elections.

While it is undoubtedly true that Yanukovich and his whole entourage resorted to lawless measures in order to assure their 
³victory² in the first round; while there was massive fraud and intimidations of Ukrainian citizens by Yanukovich¹ supporters to vote for him; while there were shameless exclusions of the Ukrainian citizens from the voter’s lists; while it is almost certain that the current administration is to blame for the disappearance and murder of an opposition journalist, Georgy Gongadze, and an apparent poisoning of Victor Yushchenko; while Ukraine’s economy is in a desperate state; and while Ukrainians realize that the current government is extremely corrupt and that their potential president is an ex-convict, a large proportion of the population still voted for Yanukovich without being forced to do so. Why?
The argument that Ukraine is divided into the Russian-speaking East, which seeks some form of federation with Russia, and an Ukrainian-speaking West, which is Europe-oriented, may not suffice to explain this phenomenon. Despite the sentiment for Mother Russia, it is doubtful that Russian-speaking Ukrainians will be willing to trade potential prosperity and stability in Ukraine (should Yushchenko become the president and put Ukraine on the path to join EU and NATO) for an almost unachievable dream of unification with Russia. However, this depends on Yushchenko showing the Russian speakers that he is serious about protecting the interests of this very large group.

Although Yushchenko does claim that he does not divide his electorate into Russian and Ukrainian speakers and promises to work for the wellbeing of both groups, many feel that he was not very successful with getting this message across. He may not have achieved enough of that crucial outreach to Russian-speakers, even if this consists of as little as speaking in Russian occasionally. Many Russian-speakers still fear that their children will not being able to communicate in proper Russian if the only choice they have is to attend Ukrainian schools and universities; they are concerned that Russian will never obtain the status of a state language, they are worried of not being able to see a movie or a theatre play in Russian. They realize full well that an ex-convict Yanukovich is far from being the most desirable candidate, but they still believe their life as Russian-speakers will be more assured with him as president. And while they also realize that Yushchenko is someone who can open a new chapter for Ukraine and put it on the path of economic recovery, they are not sure what role they will play in this process.

To be fair, given difficult conditions under which the opposition had to work, it was often hard to reach out to its primary voters (Ukrainian-speakers), let alone Russian-speakers and there certainly is a fine line between upsetting your clear supporters and pleasing potential ones, but the Russian-speaking minority is too large not to be targeted more aggressively. Yushchenko needs all possible
support when, almost certainly, it will come to contesting the results of the second ballot. It is clear that he is a much better candidate when it comes to the future of Ukraine and all its peoples but, for some reason, many Russian-speakers in Ukraine still are not convinced. Yushchenko has ten days to persuade them.

**BELARUS**

**Russian ruble**

The Russian ruble may never become the means of payment in Belarus. Initially, the date of its introduction into the Belarusian economy was scheduled for 1 January, 2005, later it was moved to 1 January, 2006, but even this date seems too close to actually making the introduction of the Russian ruble a reality. (2) Vladimir Novikov, the First Secretary of Belarusian embassy in Russia explained some reasons why Belarus is apprehensive about this step. He expressed concern about how Russia would support Belarus in case of economic problems there, which could, for example, be caused by a sharp drop in oil prices. He also declared that Belarus would expect financial support in case of adoption of the Russian currency: “There (in the EU) all new members receive funds for economic adaptation,” stated Novikov. (3)

**Referendum results**

As more time elapses since the Belarusian referendum, more information about lawless actions by the authorities becomes public. According to the Gallop organization exit-poll, only 48.4 percent of the population voted in favor of allowing Lukashenko to run for the third term, not the 79.4 percent declared by the government. (4) Falsification to the amount of 30 percent is definitely substantial (evidently, it was necessary to obtain overwhelming support of the population in order to change the constitution). Still, the fact that almost half of all Belarusians are happy with Lukashenko and his policies and are willing to solidify a dictatorship in the country is astonishing. A not very substantial showing of
protesters several days after the elections is a confirmation of this. Half of Belarus may indeed have made a democratic choice – to remain a dictatorship.

MOLDOVA

Protest in Chisinau

A group of protesters, which included teachers, parents and students of Romanian schools in Transdniestr, as well as the representatives of the Moldovan Bureau of the Helsinki Human Rights committee picketed the embassy of the Russian Federation in Chisinau last Wednesday. The protesters carried posters saying: “Politicians and criminals, do not involve children into your dirty games.” (5) The protesters claimed that the Russian Federation was the only country capable of influencing the Dniestr authorities with regard to this issue.

Approximately fifty Romanian schools in Transdniestr, which currently use the Cyrillic alphabet, would like to switch back to the Latin alphabet. They reason that studying in the so-called “Moldovan language” might close a lot of doors to Transdniestr students, since the Dniestr republic is the only (unrecognized) country where this form of language is used. (6)

Source Notes:

(1) Ukrainskaya pravda website, 10 Nov 04 via (www.pravda.com.ua).
(3) Ibid.
A month and a half ago, Kazakhstan held elections for the Majlis (lower house). The polls resulted in an overwhelming majority for President Nursultan Nazarbaev's Otan party, and a significant achievement for his daughter Dariga Nazarbaeva’s Asar party. However, according to the OSCE as well as Kazakhstan’s opposition parties, the election was characterized by massive fraud and voter intimidation. (1)

Immediately after the results were published, Ak Zhol and Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan announced that they had filed suit with the Kazakh Supreme Court to reverse the outcome. (2) Several weeks later, the two parties announced that they were holding consultations regarding a possible merger. The purpose of such a venture might be to propose a joint candidate to stand against Nazarbaev in presidential elections slated for early 2006. (3) It is possible that the exiled former Prime Minister, Akezhan Kazhegeldin, Nazarbaev's vocal critic is preparing to propose himself as a candidate. (4)

Most recently, on 27 October, the leadership committee of Ak Zhol held a news conference in which it proposed that a nationwide referendum be held in order to challenge the election results. The committee, including Altynbek Sarsenbayev and Bolat Abilov, proposed six questions for the Kazakh people, regarding general reforms of Kazakhstan’s political system. The question pertaining to the elections asked: ³Do you deem it necessary to find the elections to the Majlis of parliament unlawful and to initiate new elections?² (5)

Although President Nazarbaev probably expected attacks from opposition parties, it is likely that dissent from within his own Otan party was surprising and unexpected.
On 14 October, Zharmakhan Tuyakbai, the Speaker of Kazakhstan’s lower house, and Deputy Chairman of President Nursultan Nazarbaev’s Otan party, published an open letter in Vremya, in which he claimed that the elections had witnessed massive violations of voters’ rights. Several days later, on 18 October, Tuyakbai held a press conference, during which he resigned as Speaker. During the press conference, Tuyakbai stated that Nazarbaev should find the election result illegitimate and order new elections are held.

On the President’s behalf, Yermukhamet Yertsbayev, President Nazarbaev’s spokesman and adviser, was quick to respond to these attacks. Speaking to the newspaper Respublika on 22 October, Yertsbayev stated that Tuyakbai’s comments should be viewed as nothing more than political provocation and treason, and intimated that Tuyakbai was working at the instigation of former Information Minister Altynbek Sarsenbayev, rather than being impelled by his own convictions.

Early this month, on November 3, Nazarbaev addressed the newly-elected Majlis deputies. Nazarbaev told the house that he was convinced that confrontations between the various branches of government would serve only to slow the reform process. He added that you have heard and are hearing all the thoughts and opinions regarding parliamentary elections; I believe that from now on, you will be responsible yourselves for your words and deeds. In the context of recent events, this statement surely must be viewed as a warning, rather than as an attempt at conciliation. It is clear that Nazarbaev and those loyal to him are becoming increasingly concerned because the furor over the elections has not subsided. Therefore, they are attempting to terminate discussion of the polls so that they can move forward with their plans for reform, consolidation of power, and the establishment of Nazarbaev’s daughter as successor once the President chooses to retire.
Kyrgyzstan elections

On 26 October, President Askar Akaev gave his traditional annual address to the people and parliament of Kyrgyzstan. Akaev’s speech focused on the lead-up to next year’s Presidential and parliamentary elections. He stated that as a result of the events of 1991, Kyrgyzstan had made an abrupt turn from authoritarianism to democracy. Akaev noted that the Kyrgyz media have a responsibility to strengthen statehood instead of provoking civil conflict during the forthcoming elections. Finally, the President promised that he would ensure that these elections would be in complete conformity with the Constitution of the country and Elections code.

President Akaev’s comments are of interest, not least because of his own position. Under the Kyrgyz constitution, as it currently stands, he is forbidden from running for the Presidency again. As yet, no clear candidate to replace him has emerged, and until this point Akaev has stated that he will not run again. At the same time, there is a movement under way in Southern Kyrgyzstan, under the auspices of a public fund called Elim uchun, elim menen (for the people, together with the people), which is collecting signatures to allow Akaev one more term in office. At this point, it is not clear whether the fund is a cover organization designed to gauge the public’s mood on Akaev’s behalf, or whether it is, in fact, a grassroots organization set up legitimately by private citizens.

Kyrgyzstan’s opposition groups have also been active in recent weeks. A new group has emerged in the wake of last month’s local council elections. Led by former Foreign Minister Muratbek Imanaliev and former Finance Minister Sultan Meredov, the group, calling itself New Direction has stated that its goals are the revamping of government, as well as the removal of corruption from politics in Kyrgyzstan. As yet, the group has not announced any Presidential ambitions. The absence of an announcement now however, does not rule out the possibility that the group may propose a candidate in the coming months.
Another opposition party, the Popular Patriotic Movement has begun gathering signatures for the impeachment of President Akaev. (18) The group claims that the initiative has been started because of Akaev’s failure to remove from office the head of the Central Election Commission (Sulaiman Imanbaev) for not preventing violations during the October local council elections. (19)

These activities on the opposition’s part make clear that it does not trust President Akaev’s declared intentions to step down. It remains to be seen whether it is correct in that assessment.

Source Notes:

(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibid.
(7) Ibid.
(8) Respublika, 22 Oct 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(9) EurasiaNet Partner Post from RFE/RL, 6 November 04 via (www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/pp110604_prshtml).
(10) Ibid.
(13) AKIpress News, 26 Oct 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(14) RFE/RL Newsline-Transcaucasus & Central Asia, 27 Oct 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(15) AKIpress News, 26 Oct 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(17) RFE/RL Newsline-Transcaucasus & Central Asia, 1 Nov 05 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(18) RFE/RL Newsline-Transcaucasus & Central Asia, 1 Nov 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(19) Ibid.

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