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The ISCIP Analyst

1999-06-23

The ISCIP Analyst, Volume IV, Issue 10

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/11923>

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THE ISCIP ANALYST
Volume 4, Number 10 (June 23, 1999)

Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

Anything goes

With the presidential coterie fresh from a series of startlingly unexpected victories in May, rumors of their further ambitions have focused on the upcoming elections. Speculation on the possible cancellation of the Duma elections seems overly alarmist, but as this has been a year of surprise maneuvers, anything's possible.

More interesting, though, are the various scenarios by which The Family would remain in power beyond the year 2000. While it is difficult to conceive as realistic a vigorous Yel'tsin campaign effort (should the Constitutional Court reverse itself and admit the possibility of a third term), it also seemed unlikely in early 1996 that Yel'tsin would then win re-election.

Some analysts consider it feasible that Yel'tsin will use the union with Belarus to create a joint presidency, which he would assume either after a referendum or by fiat. Some movement in this direction appeared in May, and there is some suggestion that Lukashenka would go along with the plan. ("Is Belarus Union Yel'tsin's 'Milosevic Model,'" MOSCOW TIMES, 28 May 99; nexis) Other reports suggest that The Family may attempt to run Tatiana Dyachenko as her father's successor. Whether or not this is seriously under consideration, it is clear that the Kremlin is on the attack against the competition as demonstrated by the widely reported war on presidential aspirant and Moscow mayor, Yuri Luzhkov.

If the motive for the assault on Luzhkov is, rather, an attempt to bolster Sergei Kirienko's mayoral challenge, The Family must have been taken aback by Kirienko's recent call for Yel'tsin to resign. (INTERFAX, 22 Jun 99; nexis)

The key undercurrent in all the speculation is a sense of desperation in the Kremlin as concerns over the political and financial future of The Family have become increasingly evident. It is within the context of this central motivation -- survival instinct -- that some recent events begin to make sense.

The most dramatic realization is that former Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov clearly overplayed his hand in attempting to pull the rug out from under the ever-unsteady Yel'tsin. It now appears that his attack on the Kremlin, characterized by the procurator's investigation and the "power-sharing" agreement allegedly negotiated among representatives from the legislature, presidential apparatus and government, pushed The Family back into an alliance with the resilient Boris Berezovsky and friends. While Primakov may have believed that prosecutorial investigations into Berezovsky's financial dealings and public disclosure of his taped conversations with Dyachenko would preclude further presidential access, The Family seems to have calculated that Primakov posed the greater threat.

What is not clear is an explanation of why, having rid themselves of Primakov and defeated the impeachment attempt, The Family allowed the formation of a new government to dissolve into a public brawl of competing clans. Perhaps Yel'tsin's failing health played its part here. It has been reported that Mikhail Zadornov's joint appointment as finance minister and first deputy prime minister was twice authorized by presidential decree before eventually being annulled. (NTV, 1800 GMT, 29 May 99; FBIS-SOV 1999-0528) Once again we may be observing a familiar pattern, with a new twist: Whoever has Yel'tsin's ear makes policy, however fleetingly. The problem this time is that the stakes are higher and Yel'tsin's grasp on the decision making is tenuous at best.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Chandler Rosenberger and Sarah Miller

Defining 'victory'

Although hard to remember now, NATO went to war in the former Yugoslavia for two main reasons: to convince the Yugoslav government to accept the Rambouillet plan for Kosovo, including a referendum on the province's future, and to prevent the forced expulsion of Kosovo's Albanian population. These initial goals, however, were quickly forgotten: Even as Yugoslav forces were driving 1.4 million Albanians from their homes, the US administration chose to drop its promise that the fleeing population might someday determine its own fate.

In announcing the end of NATO bombing on 10 June, President Clinton nonetheless declared the results of the 78-day campaign to be a "victory for a safer world, for our democratic values, and for a stronger America." (THE BOSTON GLOBE, 11 Jun 99)

Was he right? It depends on what the definition of "victory" is.

In turning diplomacy over to the G-7 and Russia, the administration demonstrated that a "crisis" cannot end in victory the way a war might, particularly if the parties in crisis seek counseling from outside. The very manner in which the peace deal was signed instead showed that an arbitrator asked to settle a "crisis" might pursue his own interests first.

Since Moscow first began propounding its doctrine of "multipolarity," the Russian foreign ministry has sought to strengthen international organizations at the expense of the Western alliance, particularly NATO. When the Clinton administration assigned the G-7 its new role as architect of United Nations

resolutions, the Russians welcomed their chance to be both referee and player. The Clinton administration wanted Yugoslav officials meeting NATO representatives in Kumanovo, Macedonia to agree to withdrawal before NATO suspended its campaign. Russia, on the other hand, insisted that NATO cease bombing and that the G-7 pass a draft resolution as Yugoslav troops withdrew. (ITAR-TASS, 1115 GMT, 7 Jun 99; FBIS-EEU-1999-0607) Strangely, this was the Yugoslav government's plan as well.

Events in Kumanovo ran to a schedule set in Moscow, particularly after Russia's military attache in Belgrade joined the talks. In Bonn, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov insisted that political decisions, such as when to resume a suspended bombing campaign, were for the UN, not NATO, to decide. When US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright finally struck out the sentence giving NATO the right to resume the campaign on its own, negotiations at the G-7 meetings and in Kumanovo moved swiftly towards a settlement. The "military and technical" talks, it turned out, were not so technical after all.

Visions of Bosnia

If Moscow wanted to harness NATO to the UN, the final agreement signed in Bonn could not have been better suited to the purpose. The agreement mentions NATO only in its appendices, and promises only that it will be a "substantial" part of an "international security presence" under the "unified command and control" of a body not determined. The agreement also creates a parallel civil force, under the direction of a UN special representative, which will coordinate closely with the security presence to "insure that both presences operate towards the same goals." Any resemblance to the "dual key" system that so hampered air strikes in Bosnia was surely coincidental.

The agreement also gave the "security presences" a job that the Yugoslav forces themselves had pursued -- disarming the Kosovo Liberation Army. The Yugoslavs were surely right to want NATO charged with a task that had become

all the more difficult; the expulsions of Albanians, after all, had given the KLA new credibility and new weapons, neither of which it has agreed to surrender. The Yugoslavs will not, however, be required to trust NATO entirely. Although the agreement calls for Yugoslavia to withdraw its forces from Kosovo, it also allows for an "agreed number of Yugoslav and Serb military and police personnel" to return to clear mines, defend Serb patrimonial sites, guard borders and coordinate with both the civilian and military authorities. (THE NEW YORK TIMES, 9 Jun 99; nexis)

The goals propounded when the bombing began are almost entirely absent from the G-7 agreement. There is no mention, for example, of a referendum for Kosovo; indeed, the province's promised autonomy is left dependent upon the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia and "other countries of the region" and "the demilitarization of the KLA." Prevention of expulsion was, sadly, a moot point.

Since the US administration had long since dropped both its own objectives and the diplomatic means to pursue them, it could declare victory at virtually any point. But those who filled the vacuum with their own aims were not shy about claiming victory themselves. Ivanov welcomed the new weight the settlement had given to Russia and the G-7 it had joined. (ITAR-TASS, 10 Jun 99; nexis) Ivanov's mentor, potential future presidential candidate, and former Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov, went further, saying the settlement was the beginning of "correcting the mistake, departing from the NATO centrist tactics, and reinstating the role played by the UN." (ITAR-TASS, 11 Jun 99; nexis)

Crashing the NATO party

During negotiations of Russia's role in Bosnia, Primakov, then Russian foreign minister, managed to insist that NATO establish a Permanent Joint Council at which Moscow could have a say in the alliance's affairs. (See Editorial Digest, 21 May 97.) Although Russia's aims, such as the protection of Bosnian Serb war

criminals, did not meet the highest moral standard, the alliance kept its regular appointments with Russian representative Viktor Zavarzin.

Zavarzin himself appeared to find the meetings useful, at least until NATO began its bombing campaign in Kosovo, at which time he decided to take a more proactive role in the alliance's affairs. To the astonishment of the US administration, then confidently browbeating the Russians in Moscow, Zavarzin appeared at the head of a column of Russian troops that had moved from Bosnia to Pristina. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 1115 GMT, 12 Jun 99; nexis)

Subsequent investigation seemed to demonstrate that Zavarzin and Gen. Anatoly Kvashnin, chief of the Russian General Staff, had drawn up the planned deployment as a counter to NATO attempts to exclude Russian troops from the peacekeeping force, and had received President Yel'tsin's blessing shortly before their surprise move. (THE WASHINGTON POST, 19 Jun 99; nexis)

However the Russians decided to get the jump on NATO, their seizure of the Pristina airport quickly allowed them to extract additional concessions from a White House more concerned with playing it cool than meeting its objectives. Strobe Talbott, for example, in 24 hours went from telling the Russians that they had to accept having no sector in Kosovo to saying instead that "there will be parts of Kosovo where Russian participation will be important and manifest." (THE WASHINGTON POST, 14 Jun 99; nexis)

An agreement concluded on 19 June gave the Russians far more access to NATO decision making than Zavarzin could have imagined sitting at his desk in Brussels. Although the Russians will not have their own sector in Kosovo, Russian forces will be deployed in four of the five sectors and Russian defense ministry officials will work at every level of the NATO command in the province. Russian representatives will also be slotted into NATO's Southern Command headquarters in Naples, Italy. (THE LOS ANGELES TIMES, 20 Jun 99; nexis)

To the victor go the spoils

For all of the cheers President Clinton has received among Albanian refugees, for all of the accolades bestowed upon the administration in American newspapers, the simple facts speak loudly. NATO launched its war in Kosovo to prevent ethnic cleansing and to force the Serbs to accept the Rambouillet accords. The Serbs killed thousands, drove more than a million from their homes, then handed the task of disarming their chief opponents to the very military force they had defied. To the Serbs, Rambouillet is again nothing more than the name of a small village outside Paris.

Before the NATO campaign in Kosovo began, the Russians had continually sought greater influence in the alliance's structures, more restrictions on NATO actions and greater strength for any organization -- be it the G-7 or the UN Security Council -- in which they play a role. They have succeeded on all fronts.

Kosovo's global impact

The G-8 Kosovo summits have provided a forum that has kept the Russo-Japanese peace treaty negotiations alive, despite an impasse on the Kurile Island issue. Throughout the crisis, the Japanese and Russian governments got together on the margins of the G-8 meetings to discuss the peace treaty negotiation process. The next meeting will take place on 20 June, when President Yel'tsin will meet with Japanese President Keizo Obuchi. This meeting follows several diplomatic exchanges since late May. While making preparations in Cologne for the Kosovo summit, Foreign Ministers Ivanov and Komura announced a visa-free regime for the Kuriles, and at the Ivanov-Stepashin-Komura meeting in Moscow on 30 May, Japan pledged to help Russia dismantle and dispose of its nuclear weapons.

(INTERFAX, 1404 GMT, 30 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0530)

In a 30 May letter to Yel'tsin, Obuchi noted similar Russo-Japanese view on Kosovo and sought Russian commitment to the conclusion of a peace treaty by 2000. (KYODO, 1417 GMT, 29 May 99; FBIS-EAS-1999-0529) In response to this letter and the series of diplomatic exchanges in conjunction with Kosovo negotiations, Yel'tsin proposed the newest meeting. Until now, negotiations have been stymied by domestic political pressure in both countries.

Despite the flurry of diplomatic activity, negotiation efforts could be dampened by Russian mistrust of Japanese-US military cooperation. In a late May statement, the Russian MFA specifically expressed concern over the US Japanese Defense Pact and US National Missile Defense (NMD) plans in the region. (INTERFAX, 1313 GMT, 7 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0607)

China and Russia: together again

China's top general, Zhang Wannian, visited Russia on a "goodwill" tour in early June. His visit followed Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov's trip to Beijing in late May, at which the sides stressed commitment to multipolarity and to a "strategic cooperative partnership." While in Moscow, Zhang made diplomatic rounds, meeting with several Russian officials including Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, Security Council and FSB Director Vladimir Putin, and Defense Minister Igor Sergeev. In addition to military-technical cooperation, the meetings also addressed Sino-Russian views on Kosovo, the effects of US NMD plans on Asian security, and Taiwan. (ITAR-TASS, 1136 GMT, 9 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0609)

According to Putin, Zhang's visit gave "additional impetus to military cooperation between Russia and China." (INTERFAX, 1010 GMT, 9 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0609) Despite the countries' close contact throughout the Kosovo crisis, however, the diplomatic successes of the past few months seem in line with their overall "strategic cooperative partnership," which was outlined during Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji's trip to Moscow in February.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Michael Thurman

FEDERAL ASSEMBLY

Duma passes amendments to election law

The Duma passed a bill updating the existing laws on elections to the Duma. The bill basically renews the law passed in 1995, but it tightens the signature-gathering requirements and forbids the fielding of doubles or persons possessing the same names as the candidates who are placed in the race to confuse voters. The proposed law requires candidates to reveal whether they hold dual citizenship and whether they have had prior criminal convictions, provides for a certain amount of free airtime for candidates, and permits the top three candidates on the federal lists to run also from single-mandate districts. (ITAR-TASS WORLD SERVICE, 0712 GMT, 2 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0602) This law is a good start; let us hope it is enforced.

POLITICAL PARTIES

Political movements continue to form

Leaders of the All Russia political movement stated that their purpose was "to actively oppose political extremism, national and regional separatism, as well as those who stand for refusal of democracy and market reforms." At the founding congress in St. Petersburg, members elected an 18-member presidium, including St. Petersburg Governor Vladimir Yakovlev; Tatarstan's President Mintimer Shaimiev; Bashkortostan's President Murtaza Rakhimov; Ingushetia's President Ruslan Aushev; governors of Irkutsk, Astrakhan, Chelyabinsk and Omsk regions and Khanty-Mansi ethnic autonomy; Russia's Regions leader Vladimir

Medvedev; and For Equality and Justice leader Boris Agapov. (ITAR- TASS WORLD SERVICE, 1252 GMT, 22 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0522)

Recently, Tatarstan President Shaimiev called on the country's regional leaders to join forces lest they lose everything to the Communists. As if to nudge the process along a little, Shaimiev also claimed that the "four movements" -- All Russia, of which he is a member, Voice of Russia, led by Saratov Governor Konstantin Titov, Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov's "Fatherland" party, and Our Home is Russia -- are "doomed" to join forces. He correctly points out that unless the "four movements" work together, they will siphon votes off from one another and this could only benefit the opposition. (MOSCOW TIMES, 11 Jun 99; nexis)

What is unclear is how All Russia and Voice of Russia, both of which have pointed out that they are not parties but are election organizing vehicles, plan to work in a Duma of which they might become part. Similarly, it is not easily understood why Luzhkov, who in some polls is the country's most popular politician with the most popular party, would want to work with two non-parties and one that the polls suggest is defunct -- Our Home is Russia (NDR). No wonder its head, Viktor Chernomyrdin, is rumored to be running for the Duma from his former natural gas fiefdom, Yemalo-Nenets. (INTERFAX, 1210 GMT, 28 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0528)

Kemerovo Governor Aman Tuleev has also formed a political movement, this time on the left, complete with the clumsy title, "For Revival and Unity." Tuleev is also the co-chairman of the People's Patriotic Union. Communist Party leader Gennadi Zyuganov lamented the creation of yet another left-wing political organization, claiming that unity before the Duma elections must be maintained. Tuleev responded that there has not been unity nor would there be as long as the left consisted of 200 parties and movements. (NTV, 1540 GMT, 4 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0604)

REGIONS

Zhirinovskiy fails in his bid for the governorship of Belgorod

The citizens of Belgorod rejected the highly visible and always controversial leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR): 53 percent voted for the incumbent, Yevgeni Savchenko, 20 percent for the auditor of the Comptroller's Office, Mikhail Beskhmel'nitsyn, while Zhirinovskiy received only 18 percent. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 1 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0601)

As it becomes increasingly apparent to Zhirinovskiy that his LDPR may not reach the 5-percent hurdle in the Duma elections in December, it should be interesting to follow Zhirinovskiy's carpetbagging attempts to secure a Duma seat somewhere in the federation. If he does not make it back into the Duma, maybe he can secure funding to open a research institute.

Luzhkov seeks early mayoral election in Moscow

The next mayoral elections in Moscow are originally scheduled for next summer, but Mayor Yuri Luzhkov wants to shift the date to coincide with the Duma elections this December. Recently, the Moscow city Duma consented to move up the mayoral elections. State Duma Speaker Gennadi Seleznev said he had no problems with the change in date for elections, although he prefers they do not happen. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 0842 GMT, 11 Jun 99; nexis)

Luzhkov's motivation stems from his potential run for the presidency next year. By moving the elections up to a time when his Fatherland party will probably do well, his re-election as mayor is certain. Additionally, should he run for president and not succeed, his position in Moscow will be secure. Former Prime Minister Sergei Kirienko has announced that he will challenge Luzhkov for the mayor's office. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 0842 GMT, 11 Jun 99; nexis)

There have been calls from certain "liberal" corners complaining of Luzhkov's plans. Of course there is nothing wrong in changing the dates for elections, but

such change should be made in the interests of the voters, not the political ambitions of one politician. This is not the first time the law has been bent to benefit Luzhkov, and most likely it will not be the last time.

Newly Independent States: CIS

By Sarah Miller

Snip and tuck

The 4 June CIS Heads of Government Summit in Minsk breathed "new life in to the commonwealth" according to Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka. (BELAPAN, 1355 GMT, 5 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0605) The daylong face lift in Minsk culminated in reduction, consolidation, and reorganization of the CIS executive structure. The heads of government unanimously "endorsed" a statement that created a new, streamlined Executive Committee to replace the Executive Secretariat and the Interstate Economic Committee. Twelve "equal" member-state representatives will fill the committee. (INTERFAX, 0738 GMT, 5 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0605) The plan has been in the works since the 2 April Heads of State meeting, but this is the first mention of the actual structure of the committee or cooperation measures within it. (See Editorial Digest, 26 Apr 99) However, actual implementation of the plan will be another issue.

Despite the premiers' apparent success, divisions within the CIS were much more evident at the preliminary foreign ministers meeting, which failed to reach agreement on either of the two main issues: CIS reorganization and the Free Trade Zone. (BELAPAN, 1315 GMT, 4 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0604) Six states -- mostly GUUAM members -- submitted their own proposals, thereby "sabotaging" the foreign ministers' meeting, according to the Belarusian representative. (BTK, 1800 GMT, 7 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0608) Unable to reconcile their differences, they passed the issues along to the Heads of Government. The premiers pushed through the -- by now -- relatively non-

political reorganization agreement, but six member states were not persuaded to adopt the 1994 Free Trade Zone proposal already ratified by the other six.

Russian officials have made efforts to de-emphasize the GUUAM since its inception. New Russian CIS Minister Leonid Drachevsky has noted the divisions within the CIS, but cautioned against "overdramatiz[ing] some... ventures," in reference to the GUUAM alliance. (MAYAK, 1530 GMT, 7 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0607) Thus far, it has been more expedient for Russia to overlook GUUAM, since to highlight Russia's displeasure would only threaten much-needed bilateral relations. However, the western orientation of GUUAM could prove threatening to those relations as well. Despite tacit disapproval on both sides -- specifically of Russian hegemony by GUUAM and of GUUAM's western orientation by Russia -- both groups will continue to support the CIS in name while their differences will thwart its growth.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Tammy Lynch

UKRAINE

Who am I?

Ukraine's multiple personality disorder seemed to worsen this month, as the country continued to pursue its goal of creating "a safe zone of peace and stability" around it, while simultaneously trying to maintain some sort of independence. (ITAR-TASS, 1330 GMT, 10 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0610)

This month, Ukraine again repudiated the CIS Collective Security Treaty, then cheered as Prime Minister Valery Pustovoytenko was elected chairman of the CIS Heads of Government; reaffirmed its commitment to a "deepening of relations" with NATO, then denied any desire to be a part of the alliance; passed a law limiting the movement of Russia's Black Sea Fleet, then repealed the law

limiting the movement of Russia's Black Sea Fleet; denied the use of its airspace to Russia, then gave Russia the use of its airspace; served as the site of the interparliamentary conference supporting Slavic integration, and then rejected the goals of the interparliamentary conference supporting Slavic integration.

The country did, however, make the almost definite decision to offer 1,400 troops for peacekeeping in Kosovo. According to the deputy chief of the General Staff, Maj. Gen. Mykoa Dzyubak, Ukraine will most likely send a military hospital, a "special company," a helicopter detachment and a pontoon battalion. (UKRAINIAN TV FIRST PROGRAM, 1400 GMT, 14 Jun 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts/nexis) Or, it won't. President Kuchma cautioned that no final decision has been made, because "haste has no place here." (INTERFAX, 18 Jun 99; nexis) That's for sure.

Who needs electricity anyway?

Almost five years ago, in a memorandum of understanding between Ukraine and G-7 leaders, Ukraine agreed to close the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant by the year 2000, gradually shutting down its three functioning reactors. As a condition of Chernobyl's closure, the G-7 agreed to help finance the construction of two new reactors at other Ukrainian plants through the auspices of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The financing was to total \$1.8 billion, and should have been paid gradually as part of a five-year action program.

Unfortunately, the five-year action program turned out to be mostly of the lip-service variety, producing no funding as yet for the two reactors and causing the Kuchma administration to suggest recently that one Chernobyl reactor will continue to run indefinitely. The administration "is unequivocally linking the closure of Chernobyl to the beginning of operation of the compensatory reactors," spokesman Oleksandr Martynenko said on 16 June. (ASSOCIATED PRESS, 16 Jun 99; nexis) The statement echoes President Kuchma's words on 11 March.

"We just cannot shut down the nuclear power plant and remain without the inexpensive atomic electric energy we badly need," he said. (INTERFAX, 1631 GMT, 11 Mar 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0311)

At the Cologne G-7 summit, almost five years after their initial commitment, leaders were at last scheduled to deal with this situation by approving the disbursement of a \$1.8 billion loan to Ukraine. The money was to be used to complete construction of the two new reactors -- one at Rivne and one at the Khmel'nitsky plant. According to President Kuchma, these reactors have been 80 percent completed using internal financing, but the country cannot afford to finish them without international assistance.

On the verge of the summit, however, in a vote called for primarily by the Social Democratic Party and Alliance 90/Greens, the German Bundestag voted to oppose the loan. (ADN News Agency, 1808 GMT, 17 Jun 99; BBC Monitoring Europe/nexis) G-7 leaders then postponed their decision on granting Ukraine the money. A German spokesman said Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder will travel to Ukraine in July "where he will seek to persuade the Ukrainian government to consider non-nuclear alternatives." (AFX NEWS, 18 Jun 99; nexis)

Curiously, the spokesman did not discuss what those alternatives might be, or why the "alternatives" were not pursued when the original memorandum was signed. Since Kuchma signed the memorandum, Ukraine has shut down two of the three functional Chernobyl reactors, thereby putting pressure on its energy system. It has shut down the remaining reactor for significant repairs, and will do so again this summer. In addition, the country has seen a marked drop in energy production because it cannot afford to supply enough fuel to all of its non-nuclear plants. Ukraine's gas supply is tenuous as arrears continue to increase. According to government statistics, by the year 2005, 80 percent of the country's energy-generating equipment will be at least 30 years old. (INTELNEWS, 0450 GMT, 14 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0614) Last winter, limited energy rationing was

introduced, and will probably increase this coming winter. Most of all, the country has already spent hundreds of millions of dollars on the two new reactors after receiving assurances that international assistance for their construction would be forthcoming.

The G-7 is scheduled to meet again to discuss this situation at the end of July. Perhaps by then they will be able to explain what alternatives might be available for Ukraine.

BELARUS

Preparing for Armageddon

Thanks goodness for the KGB: Without it, Belarus wouldn't be prepared for the impending attack of NATO forces. They're coming, you see, and Belarus is going to be ready.

On 10 June, air raid alarms sounded in Minsk, as "governors and ministers were trained to govern the country in war conditions." (NTV, 1800 GMT, 10 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0610) The exercise appears to have been held just in the nick of time, because NATO is about to make its move. The "next Kosovo" strategy was disclosed on 8 June by Communist Russian Duma Deputy Viktor Ilyukhin. "The plan," he explained, "is to transfer fighting and bombing to Belarus after the military operation in the Balkans comes to an end." (NTV, 1500 GMT, 8 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0608)

But, have no fear, citizens, Alyaksandr Lukashenka has everything under control. Yes, he is aware of the plan, and yes, it concerns him, but "they have not fought against modern systems." And, most of all, "they would have to deal with me. That would not be very easy for them to do," he said. (Ibid.)

There is also, of course, military cooperation with Russia. Belarus, Lukashenka said, "is developing unique things to defend our country.... We are in the final

stage of developing joint plans with Russia. We are providing the defense of our union on the Western sector." Everything appears to be under control, because, as Lukashenka explained, "those brainless people in the West who plan these operations, including against the president of Belarus, do not know our reality." (BELAPAN, 2030 GMT, 11 Jun 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts/nexis) Truer words were never spoken.

Won't you please be my president?

President Lukashenka showed his grace this month by offering Boris Yel'tsin the job of president of the Belarus-Russia Union. Lukashenka is content, he explained, to be vice president. The "great and sacred cause" of unification should be placed ahead of political ambition, he said. (INTERFAX, 11 Jun 99; nexis)

As Lukashenka continues to wax eloquent about the importance of unification, however, Russia continues to back away. Just days before Lukashenka's remarks, Minister for CIS Affairs Leonid Drachevsky said that there will be no president and vice president of the union. Instead, a Supreme Council will govern. Unification, he said, "is not a case in which everything happens overnight." (INTERFAX, 1731 GMT, 7 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0607) Sadly, it appears as if Lukashenka may have to wait for unification until after he defeats the NATO invasion forces.

MOLDOVA

NATO is coming! NATO is coming!

The countries of NATO sure do get around. First Belarus, and now Transdniestr. Media reports -- particularly from Russian sources -- during the last month in Moldova have been filled with pronouncements that Dniestr will be the next target for NATO forces. In a meeting with Rudolph Perina, the US ambassador to Moldova, Dniestr leader Igor Smirnov recently expressed his concern about "US-based media reports that President Bill Clinton was viewing Dniestr as a threat to

peace and intended to use NATO troops for local conflict settlement." Those reports curiously seem only to be available to Russian and Dniestr politicians. Ambassador Perina, of course, denied those "media reports." (INFOTAG, 1920 GMT, 7 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0607)

The denials did nothing to dampen the spirit of the Cossacks, however, who "are ready to rise in defense of the Transnistrian land, as it was in 1992." In a letter to Smirnov, Aleksandr Martynov of the Russian Union of Cossacks claimed that "a special role will be played by the US paratroopers from the 83rd division" when NATO forces attack. Proof of the impending attack can be found, he said, from "the results of President Petru Lucinschi's trip to the NATO anniversary celebration party, where he managed to convince the US President that the Dniestr region presents a threat to the whole world." (RIA-NOVOSTI NEWS AGENCY, 0818 GMT, 17 Jun 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts/nexis, and INFOTAG, 1815 GMT, 15 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0616)

Comment

Although pronouncements like these may seem laughable on their face, these statements, combined with continuing agitation from the Russian Duma, have added to the already unstable environment in the Transdnestr area. Although Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine have agreed to the OSCE-brokered peace agreement that would give Dniestr broad autonomy and remove Russian troops and weaponry, Dniestr representatives have been unsatisfied with its components. Their hesitance has allowed Russia to delay fulfillment of the Russian terms of the agreement. Now, the Kosovo situation has provided an excellent opportunity for Dniestr's leaders and the Russian Duma to claim that Russian weaponry is essential to Dniestr's survival, and they appear to have made their case superbly.

Novosti reported on 17 June, "A number of Dniestr region radicals have already stated that they will not allow the pullout of Russian property and armaments and

confirmed their decision to seize them if the Russian operation group leaves the region. The possibility of carrying out operation 'Lilac Mist' is being openly discussed in Tiraspol. This operation will block cantonments and ammunition depots." (RIA-NOVOSTI NEWS AGENCY, 0818 GMT, 17 Jun 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts/nexis)

Of course, if Russia truly intended to remove its regiment and weaponry, no amount of Lilac Mist could stop them. However, the necessity to maintain order and stability has always been an important pretext for Russian involvement in this -- and other -- intrastate conflicts, and the Kosovo situation will undoubtedly create yet another opportunity for at least a minimal number of Russian troops to remain indefinitely in the area.

It should be noted that publicly Russia continues with its plans to end its presence in the area. Russian Deputy Defense Minister Vladimir Isakov recently expressed his hope that "leaders of Tiraspol will be imbued with responsibility in the situation and will not hamper the implementation of the agreements being negotiated." (RIA-NOVOSTI NEWS AGENCY, 0818 GMT, 17 Jun 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts/nexis) It does not appear that, at least for now, the leaders of Tiraspol are listening.

Newly Independent States: Transcaucasus

By Miriam Lansky

CHECHNYA

Old dog -- old tricks?

Russia had managed to go two years without launching air strikes against Chechnya until Sergei Stepashin returned to his old beat. Since the end of May Russia has twice bombed targets in Chechnya: On May 28, Russian helicopters fired missiles at militant Chechen field commander Khattab's bases in retaliation

for his attacks on an MVD base in Dagestan. Then, on June 17, seven Russian MVD guards were killed in Stavropol krai and, in a separate but contemporaneous incident, Russian helicopters chased a convoy of Chechen fighters from Dagestan back into Chechnya, destroying them on Chechen territory. This escalation of bombing raids reflects Stepashin's long-standing policy of "annihilating bandits." (IZVESTIA, 19 Jun 99)

Although Chechen leaders condemned the Russian attacks, they have neither retaliated militarily nor backed out of the current round of peace negotiations. In fact, Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov met with Stepashin shortly after the first attack to plan for a long-awaited meeting between Yel'tsin and Maskhadov. Could it be that third parties are trying to obstruct talks at the Presidential level? Or, is it possible that Russian forces are deliberately targeting Maskhadov's internal opponents with his tacit approval?

ARMENIA

Targeting new missiles at pipeline?

In May Azerbaijan publicized its official complaints against China's sale of eight Typhoon missiles to Armenia. The sale was arranged in the summer of 1998 when then-Defense Minister (and current Prime Minister) Vazgen Sarkisian accompanied Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev on a trip to Beijing. The missiles were delivered in January and have been deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh and in Armenia. (TURAN, 1100 GMT, 19 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0519) Chinese authorities responded by claiming that the sale represented a private business venture and did not involve the government. Beijing also prohibited the future sale of such weapons to Armenia. (INTERFAX, 1157 GMT, 3 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0603)

Citing an unnamed American military expert, Turan reported that the Typhoon missiles could be used to destroy the compressor stations on the Baku-Supsa pipeline. The "expert" also suggested that "Azerbaijan must take very serious

preventive measures to protect the pipeline." (TURAN, 1110 GMT, 11 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0615) Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanian responded immediately, saying that the missiles are not aimed at the Supsa terminal in Georgia. (SNARK, 1630 GMT, 11 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0611) However, he failed to refute the charge fully. Are the missiles aimed at parts of the pipeline on Azerbaijani territory?

AZERBAIJAN

Has Ocalan's testimony complicated relations with Turkey?

Abdullah Ocalan unleashed a major scandal in Azerbaijan, testifying at his trial for treason in Turkey that the Azerbaijani government cooperates with his Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). Although condemned officially by the governments of Turkey and Azerbaijan, this revelation deeply humiliates Azerbaijani President Heidar Aliev.

The text of the testimony has not been made available, but an Azerbaijani oppositionist newspaper learnt of Ocalan's exact statement from an attorney representing the victims of PKK attacks, Zeki Haji Ibrahimoglu.

Ibrahimoglu: "Have you relations with Turkic republics? Have you met the heads of states of these republics?"

Ocalan: "I have not met heads of states. But we have organizations in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan. And our strongest organization is in Azerbaijan! In Azerbaijan state officials are assisting the PKK." (YENI MUSAVAT, 4 Jun 99; BBC Worldwide Monitoring/nexis)

Several prominent Azerbaijani newspapers and political parties publicized this news widely and demanded an official investigation. Aliev's vulnerability to the accusation stems from a recent scandal where the government accused the leader of the main opposition party, former President Abulfaz Elchibey, of

criminal libel against Aliev. Elchibey had written that Aliev, together with former Russian Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov, participated in launching the PKK in the 1970s. (See Editorial Digest, 9 Dec 98.) The case never made it to trial at least in part because the president feared a public broadcast of his activities as a Soviet-era KGB and party official; a reasonable fear since the exposure of such information would fail to enhance his current nationalist credentials. By implying that such cooperation between the PKK and Azerbaijan is ongoing, Ocalan's claim validates and supersedes any previous statement by Elchibey.

Ocalan's claims cannot be confirmed on the basis of the information currently available. He has offered no specific evidence of official Azeri support for the PKK and he certainly has every reason to sow the seeds of discord between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Turkish President Suleiman Demirel told Azeri journalists that he deems Ocalan's revelations "lies," which will not be allowed to affect relations between the fraternal Turkic states. "It is impossible that circles supporting the PKK exist in these countries," he said. (AZADLYG, 17 Jun 99; BBC Worldwide Monitoring/nexis)

Yet, some see signs of possible strain between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Earlier this month, Liz Fuller noted that, although Aliev canceled several important engagements in Turkey ostensibly due to health reasons, some in Azerbaijan conjecture that Turkey's leadership called off those visits due to Ocalan's testimony. (RFE/RL CAUCASUS REPORT, 17 Jun 99) The view that members of Turkey's government might be more wary of Aliev than they are willing to state publicly derives even greater credence from the report that Bulent Ecevit, Turkey's new prime minister, discussed Ocalan's revelations with Elchibey in a telephone conversation on 21 June. According to the report, the two ended their conversation with mutual promises to maintain regular contact -- an outcome that could not have pleased Aliev. (TURAN, 1500 GMT, 22 Jun 99; BBC Worldwide Monitoring/nexis)

GEORGIA

See no evil ...

Chairman of the Ajarian Supreme Soviet Aslan Abashidze recently commented on the possibility of the withdrawal of Russian border guards from his republic:

"I proposed to them: whoever wants to stay and continue to serve, we will create all the conditions for this -- accommodations, services, pay. When they have completed their service, they can be advisers, specialists.... After all, we have already trained 3,000 Ajari border guards with the resources of the Russian border forces here. As for combat hardware, we have more of it than Georgia's border forces." (MOSKOVSKY KOMSOMOLETS (Electronic Version), 28 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0531)

In a telegram to the Russian "peacekeepers," President Boris Yel'tsin congratulated them on the fifth anniversary of their stay in sunny Abkhazia, thanking them for "fulfilling their mission in a region adjacent to Russia, ably representing Russia's national interests." (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 25 Jun 99)

Speaking at the celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the Separate Operational Task Division of interior troops (ODON), Sergei Stepashin "said the division had gone a valorous path of flashspots in Sumgait, Baku, Yerevan, Abkhazia, Ingushetia and Chechnya," (ITAR-TASS, 26 Jun 99; nexis)

Is it possible that the Russian border guards are helping Abashidze set up his own military to oppose Georgia? Nah, couldn't be. They've never done that before.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Monika Shepherd

KAZAKHSTAN

Kazakh-Uzbek negotiations over trade, border issues produce few results

The most significant agreements reached by Kazakh Prime Minister Balghymbaev and his Uzbek counterpart, Otkir Sultonov, during their meeting on 28 May was a document which set conditions for the establishment of embassies on each other's territories. The issue of debt settlement (three regions in Southern Kazakhstan are in arrears for Uzbek gas supplies and the Uzbek government owes payments to Kazakhtelecom and Kazakh Railways) remained completely unresolved. The problem of border delimitation was simply tabled until a joint commission could be formed to discuss the matter. (KHABAR TV, 1430 GMT, 28 May 99; BBC Worldwide Monitoring/nexis).

The negotiations' lack of success is not terribly surprising, as relations between the two countries have been somewhat tense over the past several months. Russia's economic crisis caused most of the Central Asian states to impose strict controls on imports and to raise trade and transport tariffs on goods crossing their borders. The primary result of these actions was to limit severely the volume of commercial traffic between the five Central Asian countries themselves. Naturally, this ignited considerable anger and frustration on the part of local merchants, traders, and government officials, particularly in the border regions.

The 16 February bombings in Tashkent served to exacerbate Kazakh frustrations vis-a-vis Uzbek trade sanctions even further when the Uzbek government banned Kazakh cars and buses from traveling through Uzbekistan's territory. (KHABAR TV, 1110 GMT, 27 May 99; The British Broadcasting Corporation/nexis) Since the Central Asian states continue to rely mainly on the old Soviet highway system, this made it quite difficult to travel from Kazakhstan's southwestern regions to Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and points farther south. At the beginning of May, the Kazakh government imposed a number of customs duties on Uzbek vehicles engaged in transporting cargo across Kazakh territory

to a third country, ostensibly in response to similar measures taken by Tashkent some months earlier. Uzbek transport officials argued that, on the contrary, it was they who were responding to the Kazakh government's imposition of tariffs.

(KHABAR TV, 1330 GMT, 24 May 99; BBC Worldwide Monitoring/nexis)

Regardless of whether it was the Uzbek or the Kazakh government which first established this particular trade barrier, it is quite clear that the two countries have been waging a trade war since last fall, to the further detriment of not only their own economies, but also the economies of neighboring countries. These are hardly the most auspicious circumstances under which to begin discussions on such delicate matters as debt settlement and border delimitation. What is surprising is not that these discussions brought virtually no results, but that the two sides attempted to hold talks on these issues at all, especially given the fact that the two prime ministers were not even in agreement on the meeting's agenda. (KHABAR TV, 1110 GMT, 27 May 99; The British Broadcasting Corporation/nexis) Until both governments put an end to their trade war, it is unlikely that they will be able to resolve either of the other two issues; perhaps even more importantly, Central Asian trade relations as a whole will continue to suffer. Unfortunately, under present circumstances, where all of the Central Asian governments continue to pursue a policy of protectionism and, in some cases, even isolationism, in an attempt to shield themselves from the effects of further international economic crises, there is little chance that any of them will begin significantly lowering trade barriers.

TURKMENISTAN

Niyazov to free his country of foreign troops by November 1999

In late May, President Niyazov announced that he does not intend to renew the 1993 Turkmen-Russian treaty which permits 300 Russian border troops to assist in the protection of Turkmenistan's "external" borders. The treaty will expire in November 1999. Turkmenistan has formed its own border protection service, which will assume the responsibility of guarding all the country's borders, when

the Russian troops begin their withdrawal in the fall. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 1422 GMT, 25 May 99; nexis) The departure of Russian troops from Turkmen territory would also include the removal of Russian naval forces currently stationed in the Turkmen sector of the Caspian Sea. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 26 May 99)

President Niyazov's decision to terminate Russia's military presence on his country's borders has been interpreted as a move to improve Turkmenistan's relations with the West, as well as with NATO. A Nezavisimaya gazeta article even went so far as to state that the Turkmen president took this action specifically at the behest of the US government, which ostensibly has refused to provide any aid to Turkmenistan until the Russian border troops have been withdrawn. (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 27 May 99; What The Papers Say/nexis)

Whether or not President Niyazov expects that the Russian military forces' departure will garner US financial aid for his country, his decision does come on the heels of a visit by General Anthony Kolsteren, the new director of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) Coordinating Center. Gen. Kolsteren arrived in Ashgabat at the invitation of the Turkmen government; during his visit he attended meetings at the Turkmen Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense. The main topic of these meetings was the Turkmen government's desire to broaden its level of participation in the PfP program. (TURKMEN PRESS, 1050 GMT, 11 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0514)

Neither Gen. Kolsteren nor any other official connected to NATO has publicly stated that Turkmenistan's increased participation in the PfP is contingent upon the termination of Russian military aid to Turkmenistan. However, President Niyazov, who has gained a reputation for his refusal to join any regional political or military blocs, has seemed particularly determined of late to reject any alliance which involves the Russian Federation, including the agreement on the establishment of a "CIS Free Trade Zone." Turkmenistan has also joined

Uzbekistan in withdrawing from the CIS Free Travel Agreement and in requiring visas from all foreign citizens wishing to enter the country, regardless of whether they are citizens of CIS countries or not. (INTERFAX RUSSIAN NEWS, 14 May 99; nexis, and ITAR-TASS World Service, 1148 GMT, 15 May 99; BBC Worldwide Monitoring/nexis)

The theories put forward by Russian and Western media sources to account for Turkmenistan's decision to terminate its border guard treaty with the Russian Federation are not implausible. However, President Niyazov's 14 May statement to CIS Executive Secretary Yuri Yarov may provide the best and simplest explanation for his recent efforts to distance his regime from virtually all treaties and agreements which benefit the Russian government. Meeting with Yarov in Ashgabat on 14 May, President Niyazov rejected Turkmenistan's participation in the CIS Free Trade Agreement, and gave a detailed and fairly forthright justification for his decision. The crux of his argument was that, given Russia's earlier refusal to sign a contract on natural gas shipment which would have been profitable for both itself and Turkmenistan, he saw no reason for the Turkmen government to support an initiative which principally benefits other countries. He further stated that as long as Russia continues to block the export of Turkmen natural gas to Western markets, there is no reason to expect any cooperation from his government. (INTERFAX RUSSIAN NEWS, 14 May 99; nexis)

President Niyazov failed to mention either the border guard treaty or the CIS Free Travel Agreement in this statement, but one could draw the conclusion that, for the time being, he has no interest in backing any project which does not immediately benefit his government, and in which Turkmenistan is not a full and equal partner. Furthermore, he implied that the Russian government owes his country some compensation for the fact that it was the export of Turkmen energy resources by the Soviet regime which partially funded the construction of the existing pipeline network. (INTERFAX RUSSIAN NEWS, 14 May 99; nexis) The presence of even a small Russian military contingent on Turkmenistan's borders

with Iran and Afghanistan and patrolling maritime borders in the Caspian Sea is clearly of no benefit to the Turkmen government. In fact, those troops could prove to be an active threat, depending on the level of Moscow's determination to prevent the official division of the sea into national sectors. Even if the Russian forces take no action in regard to the Caspian energy resources, their mere presence gives Moscow a certain degree of influence over Turkmen affairs, including the opportunity to affect the Turkmen government's relations with Iran and Afghanistan. Thus, if President Niyazov wants to deprive Russia of all opportunities to use his country's resources for its own ends, expelling the border guards is a logical and necessary step.

The Turkmen government's decision to withdraw from the CIS Free Travel Agreement will permit Turkmenistan to limit the influence of outside actors in its affairs even further, by imposing tight controls over who enters the country. Requiring visas of everyone who wishes to enter Turkmenistan may also increase the national security forces' ability to monitor all foreign citizens' activities while they are in the country.

It is too early to determine whether President Niyazov's latest rejection of direct cooperation with the Russian government, as well as his refusal to participate in Russian-dominated CIS initiatives, is the beginning of a Turkmen campaign to court the West actively, or whether it is simply a continuation of the Turkmen president's non-alignment policy. However, regardless of President Niyazov's views on forging an alliance with Western Europe and the US, he is plainly trying to limit Russian influence over his country's affairs as much as possible.

Newly Independent States: Baltic States

By Kate Martin

Fewer little piggies are going to market

Attempts by the Saeima to protect the Latvian pork industry from external competition have not proven to be quite as helpful as MPs might have hoped. The Latvian parliament decided on 27 May to establish an additional 70 percent customs tax on pork imports (with a minimum 34 santims per kilogram) to be effective from 1 June to 17 December 1999 in an effort to encourage the domestic pork market. Government requests to exempt imports from Lithuania and Estonia from the additional tariff were rejected. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1300 GMT, 27 May 99) In addition to cries of "foul" from the governments of neighboring Baltic countries who saw the move as a violation of the Baltic Free Trade Agreement, the establishment of the tariffs may actually have been a cause of decreased orders for pork products. Several major Estonian clients of the Rigas Miesnieks meat packing company have reduced their orders by some 90 percent as of June. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 28 May 99) This should make summer barbecues a bit more dear, especially since the Estonian government subsequently banned the import of Belgian pork, due to a toxic hazard from fodder contaminated with dioxin. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1900 GMT, 4 Jun 99) [Latvia followed suit a few days later, banning food imports from Belgium, France and the Netherlands due to the dioxin scare. (RADIO RIGA NETWORK, 1500 GMT, 7 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0607)]

The demand for the tariffs sprang from Latvian farmers, who also have sought temporary additional customs taxes on dairy and sugar imports from the European Union and other countries. The farmers, who towards the end of May gathered at the Grenctale customs checkpoint to ensure that their voices, and more demands, were heard, also seek a countrywide agricultural concept to be developed by the government, a system of farmers self-government, restrictions on the number of customs checkpoints through which agricultural imports can enter the country for careful weighing and testing, and the adoption of legislation aimed at domestic market protection. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1300 GMT, 28 May 99) Tempers clearly were high at the demonstration, which

resulted in the farmers forming a roadblock at the customs checkpoint; National Armed Forces Commander Raimonds Graube has ordered an investigation into the solution decided upon by military police, who tried to ram their way through barriers erected by the protesting farmers. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 28 May 99) The farmers stopped their protest.

ESTONIA

Defense forces under siege

The country's defense forces remained in flux this past month, with the dissolution of the Special Operations Group (following the arrest of its commander), the scandal of 16 officers lying about their educational records (and possibly facing prosecution as well) and the changing of a chief for the paramilitary Kaitseliit.

While the (now former) commander of the armed forces Special Operations Group, Indrek Holm, faces charges for armed robbery (see previous NIS Observed), the consequent investigation into the group resulted in its dissolution. The government agreed with the recommendation of an ad hoc committee established by the defense ministry which concluded that the group was unnecessary. The committee reported violations to firearms regulations, possible conflicts of interests, and a discontinuity between the actual and legal chains of commands. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 2 Jun 99)

The same committee uncovered more problems with the armed forces as a whole. Commander-in-chief Lieutenant General Johannes Kert announced he would punish 16 officers who submitted false information about their educational background once he had examined all the evidence. The chief of staff for the armed forces, Major General Ants Laaneots, admitted that the shortage of officers with the necessary level of education and training was the biggest obstacle facing the forces. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 3 Jun 99) Given that awareness, it is unclear whether falsification of records was

done with or without the complicity of the higher ranks. Thus far, charges have been leveled against the director of the armed forces advanced education school, Captain Leo Kunnas, and a high-ranking border guard officer, Lieutenant Colonel Viktor Hansen. Officers who have been forced to resign include the former head of the Kaitseliit unit in Tartu.

The overall Kaitseliit is now working with a new commander; President Lennart Meri appointed Benno Leesik to be chief of the paramilitary organization. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 8 Jun 99) Leesik had been serving as acting chief of staff since last autumn, under acting commander Lieutenant Colonel Lui Jaanson, who has surpassed the recently established age limit for senior officers. A member of Kaitseliit since 1991, Leesik rose through the ranks from the Laanemaa district unit to platoon commander and then commander of the Risti company. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1600 GMT, 1 Jun 99)

LATVIA

Former commander under indictment

Estonia's defense forces are not the only armed services reeling from scandal. Former National Armed Forces Commander Juris Eihmanis, currently teaching at Baltic Defense College (Baltdefcol) in Tallinn, now faces criminal charges for abuse of service for covetous reasons. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 24 May 99) The charges stem from the expensive repair and redecoration to his service apartment in central Riga, which cost approximately 43,000 lats (US \$72,268) of defense forces funds. If convicted, Eihmanis could be sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. He denies the charges. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 24 May 99) Eihmanis also lost his contract with the Latvian National Guard, for whom he served as a consultant. National Guard Commander Janis Kononovs, however, was quick to point out that the termination of Eihmanis' contract stemmed not from the indictment, but rather from his other work commitments, which were preventing him from meeting the

contract's obligations. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 4 Jun 99)

Language debate rises to presidential level...

In a country that has debated the use of language for years, it is more than a little ironic that the person finally chosen for president in an extraordinary session of parliament is a linguist and psychologist. Vaira Vike-Friberg, a native Latvian who spent most of her life abroad and who recently gave up her Canadian citizenship, has focused much of her work on Latvian folk songs. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE, 1804 GMT, 17 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0617) Unaffiliated with any political party, she was not even in the running for the first several rounds, in which MPs could not settle on any candidate proposed, even though some well-known and popular figures were considered, including Communications Minister Anatolijs Gorbunovs, New Party leader Raimonds Pauls, and People's Party MP Vaira Paegle. An extraordinary session of parliament was called after four rounds of voting failed to result in one acceptable choice. (RADIO RIGA NETWORK, 1600 GMT, 17 Jun 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0617)

The lack of appeal of the presidential candidates proposed among parliament members clearly was foreshadowed by the populace in a poll taken several weeks before the election. Residents of Latvia, who have no direct say in the matter, noted a preference for a lawyer to fill the position (26 percent), or an economist (24 percent). A political scientist appealed to 12 percent of those polled, followed by a historian (9 percent). Most clearly unacceptable were philosophers (0.1 percent), who were beaten by photographic models (0.2 percent) and computer experts (0.5 percent). Slightly more palatable were teachers, writers, doctors, agronomists, and artists. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 24 May 99)

... and stalls in parliament

While the poll made no mention of how popular an OSCE commissioner might be, there is little doubt that -- due to recent statements -- even philosophers would outpoll him. Acknowledging the furor that has resulted from his continued comments about the proposed language law, OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities Max van der Stoel recently said that he understood the grave consequences of occupation and the need to protect the Latvian language. (RADIO RIGA NETWORK, 1300 GMT, 24 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0524) The next day he added that, on the whole, he believed the law was good, however, unclear wording of some sections could lead to too many interpretations. He urged lawmakers to focus on defining internal versus public segments of the private sphere, so that the public segment could require the use of the state language while a free choice of language would be allowed in the internal segment. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 25 May 99) Even that move did not appease the Fatherland and Freedom (FF/LNNK) party. At the party congress on 29 May, members adopted a statement that said compliance with the OSCE recommendations would threaten the continued existence of the Latvian language. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1800 GMT, 29 May 99) Members of parliament from the Fatherland and Freedom FF/LNNK faction sought unsuccessfully to bring the much-discussed language bill for its final reading before the end of the spring session; however, the parliamentary committee for education, culture and science decided to postpone consideration of the bill until the autumn session, which begins in August. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 8 Jun 99) The contention over the law, and Stoel's comments on it, earlier prompted President Meri to recommend a reorganization of the OSCE mission in Estonia, to that of a research chair at Tartu University. (See The NIS Observed, 2 Jun 99.) After Prime Minister Mart Laar reaffirmed the Estonian government's desire to water down the OSCE's work, Stoel said he found that idea interesting but reminded the government that reorganization is up to all member nations of the OSCE, who reach decisions by consensus. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1800 GMT, 10 Jun 99)

LITHUANIA

Oil supplies interrupted once more

Mazeikiu Nafta began to shut down refinery operations on 21 May after Russia halted crude oil supplies, costing the plant some 300,000 litas (US \$75,000) a day. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 24 May 99) Parliament speaker Vytautas Landsbergis rejected Russia's claims that the oil supply was stopped due to an urgent domestic demand for the products during crop-sowing season, and called Russia's move "a blockade." "One can imagine how all of a sudden a shortage of oil products needed for agricultural purposes emerges in Russia and how this problem is being resolved by stopping supplies only to Mazeikiu Nafta," Landsbergis said. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 24 May 99) Supplies resumed shortly thereafter, and the refinery restarted on 31 May. Under May contracts, 541,000 tons of crude oil were to be delivered; only 81,000 tons were received. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1300 GMT, 31 May 99) Members of parliament have charged repeatedly that Russian interruptions of crude oil delivery were a response to the Lithuanian government's decision to offer controlling interest in the country's national oil concern to the US-based Williams International. Still, parliament approved the sale of a 66-percent stake in Mazeikiu Nafta to Williams on 3 June. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 3 Jun 99) LUKoil representatives said economics, not politics, caused the halt to supplies. "When there were negotiations between the Lithuanian side and the NIKoil group on the purchase of 33 percent shares of the Mazeikiiai refinery, long-term guarantees of deliveries by LUKoil were also discussed. But after two years of negotiations the Lithuanian side made a political decision to turn over the package to the United States Williams company.... By this political decision the Lithuanian authorities put relations with the Russian suppliers on a purely financial basis," explained a representative of the LUKoil press service. (ITAR-TASS WORLD SERVICE, 1509 GMT, 25 May 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0525)

Coalition agreement breaks under new leader

Following the acceptance of Rolandas Paksas' government, the Lithuanian Christian Democrats unilaterally denounced their coalition with the Conservative Party, citing what they viewed as a "lack of responsibility" by their coalition partners in the formation of the government. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1800 GMT, 1 Jun 99) The Conservative Party had delayed naming the newly appointed prime minister as a Conservative Party delegate since the forced resignation of previous Prime Minister Gediminas Vagnorius. (See The NIS Observed, 2 Jun 99.) On 1 June, President Valdas Adamkus approved the government formed by Paksas. The government consists of:

Environment -- Danius Lygis; Finance -- Jonas Lioginas; National Defense -- Ceslovas Stankevicius; Culture -- Arunas Beksta; Social Security and Labor Protection -- Irena Degutiene; Transportation and Communications -- Rimantas Didziokas; Health Care -- Raimundas Alekna; Education and Science -- Kornelijus Platelis; Justice -- Gintaras Balciunas; Economy -- Eugenijus Maldeikis; Foreign Affairs -- Algirdas Saudargas; Administration Reforms and Municipal Affairs -- Sigitas Kaktys; Interior -- Ceslovas Blazys; and Agriculture and Forestry -- Edvardas Makelis. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 1 Jun 99)

Legislation aimed at flushing out intelligence risks

The Lithuanian parliament, meanwhile, is focusing on the country's internal security. As a result, several former employees of the Soviet KGB security apparatus will be unemployed. A law which went into effect on 1 January bars former KGB staff members from taking positions at different government, defense and law enforcement agencies, as well as at communications, banks, diplomatic services and strategic plants. Thus far, the Lithuanian Genocide and Resistance Research Center has been contacted by employers about more than 250 subordinates who were once employed by the KGB. The director of the center, Rytas Narvydas, said that his institution and the State Security Department collected information about 130 persons mentioned; about one-half of those studied were fired after an analysis of the former activities and a

comparison with their recent employment was completed. About 400 former KGB agents are believed to live in Lithuania today. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1300 GMT, 9 Jun 99) The Seimas expanded the hunt for security threats by adopting a controversial bill which stipulated that former employees of the KGB and GRU who are currently serving as heads of enterprises, companies, organization, or their subunits must declare this to the State Security Department. The bill, proposed by Speaker Vytautas Landsbergis, aims to end the activities of organizations which serve as fronts for foreign intelligence services. By a court decision, a company serving as such a front is liquidated and its property is confiscated by the state. (Baltic News Service DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 8 Jun 99)

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Unless otherwise indicated, all articles appearing in this journal were written especially for

Analyst. This article was originally published at

<http://www.bu.edu/iscip/digest/vol4/ed0410.html>.