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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

Yel'tsin away while Chechen campaign intensifies

Does it strike anyone else as odd that President Yel'tsin is vacationing on the Black Sea shore while his military is bombing refugees? At least before he left Moscow, Yel'tsin broke his public silence over the attack on Chechnya, referring to the region as "the center of international terrorism." (ITAR-TASS, 27 Oct 99; via nexis)

Is international terrorism really what is at issue here? Now that the extent of the operation and the planning it required reveals the military's obvious intention to attempt, once again, to subjugate this rebellious region, does this not give lie to the justification of the attack as an ad hoc response to fatal bombings within Russia? Should Yel'tsin be compelled to explain the true nature of this campaign? Or does the fact that this onslaught has popular support immunize the administration from providing a credible account of its military plans, as well as the evidence of Chechen responsibility for the terrorist bombings that so radicalized public opinion?

President Yel'tsin's actions at the initial stages of this Chechen campaign so closely mirror his response to the 1994-96 war that, despite serious concerns as to the state of his physical and mental health, the thought arises that Yel'tsin may indeed be crazy like a fox. Aside from the early disappearing act, the president has also this time, as with the last, placed responsibility with a member of his administration, in this case the prime minister, whom he then quickly undermines. In this instance, Yel'tsin's choice to hold a meeting with his security chiefs, without Putin present, sparked immediate rumors of Putin's imminent dismissal.

Bolstering the rumors were comments from the Kremlin that Yel'tsin may not really view Putin as his successor. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 26 Oct 99; via nexis) This tactic, of course, allows the Kremlin to deflect attention from corruption allegations by waging a popular war (a war which is not overly identified with the president) while providing a built-in scapegoat should the war effort lose public support.

Apparat attacks

After a deliberate snub of the president, Yevgeni Primakov joined with the other leaders of Fatherland-All Russia (OVR), Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov and St. Petersburg Mayor Vladimir Yakovlev, in an appeal to Yel'tsin to reassert his political will. Primakov, who publicly refused to meet with his former boss in protest over Kremlin policy, signed a widely distributed letter calling on the president to remove members of his inner circle who "have effectively taken leadership in this country." (ASSOCIATED PRESS, 28 Oct 99; via Johnson's Russia List)

Despite Primakov's concerns, the Kremlin apparat has been remarkably inactive while the prime minister has taken the lead in the Chechen war. Likely, the corruption scandals and financial investigations have played their part in quieting the administration's activity, as the apparatchiks quietly look for cover. In any event, a former Yel'tsin confidante recently waded back into Kremlin intrigues and provided a colorful reminder of an earlier era of apparat schemes.

Former presidential bodyguard Aleksandr Korzhakov claimed at a press conference last week that financier and Family insider Boris Berezovsky repeatedly asked Korzhakov to arrange the assassination of rival businessman Vladimir Gusinsky, as well as Yuri Luzhkov and Iosif Kobzon. (KOMMERSANT-DAILY, 28 Oct 99; Russian Press Digest, via nexis) Korzhakov's revelation inevitably rebounds back on the accuser himself, leading one to wonder just what would make Berezovsky think that Korzhakov would entertain such a request?

GOVERNMENT

Mixed messages

While military operations in Chechnya show signs of careful planning, the response in Moscow to significant events suggests either an amateur attempt at misinformation or an inexperienced prime minister reacting to conflicting information. Vladimir Putin has vacillated between denying reports of Chechen civilian casualties and ascribing their origin to the Chechens themselves. Even when what little independent reporting exists in Chechnya confirms Russian responsibility for civilian deaths, the prime minister refuses to acknowledge the military's accountability, let alone remorse. Perhaps, in keeping with the logical knots that have characterized the entire Russian justification for this war, if any Chechens were killed, they must have been terrorists. In any case, the prime minister's conflicting public comments do little to inspire confidence in the current Russian government.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Chandler Rosenberger and Sarah Miller

What's good for Moscow...

Russia spent the better part of the end of October trying to show that what's good for Moscow is good for the world. Russia might object to revision of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty for its own reasons, and might be pursuing the war in Chechnya to meet its domestic ends. The line from the Russian foreign ministry, however, was that each fit into a larger international security agenda.

This line of argument had few takers in the West. On the question of Chechnya, European leaders gingerly approached the idea of punishing Russia with economic sanctions. Only the United States administration seemed so wedded to the arms control apparatus of the Cold War that it was willing to mute its criticism

of Moscow's behavior, and thus lend the Russian government the credibility it craved.

Presenting the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty -- keystone of world security

You might have thought the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, signed in 1972 between the United States and the Soviet Union, was a late and minor fillip in a postwar order. But, according to Moscow these past few weeks, you would have been wrong. In an extraordinarily energetic campaign, Russia's foreign ministry attempted to portray the Cold War relic as a critical element of the international arms control order.

As it has sought to amend the ABM Treaty, the United States has referred to one particular threat -- North Korea. The Clinton administration has wanted permission to construct an anti-missile defense to protect Japan from nuclear blackmail by the rogue state. Russia, however, refuses to acknowledge the limits of US objectives, even while attempting to stymie the specific plan for Japan.

At the United Nations General Assembly, Russian diplomats have sought a non-binding condemnation of changes to the bilateral treaty (The Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 22 Oct 99), while Russian military officials have made bellicose threats to overwhelm US missile defense with more warheads and more elusive missiles. (See the comments of first Deputy Defense Minister Nikolai Mikhailov, reported in THE WASHINGTON POST, 26 Oct 99.)

Addressing the French Senate, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov portrayed the proposed revisions as evident of the United States' unwillingness to "move to disarmament." (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 29 Oct 99)

But are the Russians really convinced that the proposed revisions would unravel global disarmament efforts? Or are they playing a rhetorical card to bring international pressure to bear on the US so as to gain concessions in other fields? The wording of Russia's resolution before the UN would suggest the

latter. The document, co-sponsored by Belarus and China, specifically complains of US efforts to extend an anti-missile shield to a third country

Russia seems aware, in other words, that the small changes the US seeks in the 1972 treaty are designed to thwart one specific threat -- that is, the danger North Korea poses to Japan. Using the language of international disarmament codified by Cold War doves, however, Russia has sought to win diplomatic chips for future negotiations on other issues. Both the American and Russian diplomats have denied a report that, in exchange for ABM revisions, the US has offered to help Russia finish a missile radar system at Mischelevka, about 60 miles northwest of Irkutsk. (THE NEW YORK TIMES and THE WASHINGTON POST, 15 Oct 99) Either the deal was never proffered, or the support was too small for the Russians, playing for bigger stakes, to accept.

Silencing criticism of the Chechnya operation?

Kommersant, the Russian political daily, suggested what the Russians were really after in exchange for silence on ABM revisions. Say nothing about the prosecution of the war in Chechnya, the Russians had offered, and we will drop our opposition to ABM revisions, and even support the peace deal you seek in the Armenian exclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. (RUSSIAN PRESS DIGEST, 28 Oct 99; RusData DiaLine, via nexis)

Whether or not such a deal was ever articulated, Russia's diplomats clearly struck a nerve in the White House as they lumped Republican rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty together with President Clinton's ideas for revising the ABM Treaty. Administration officials long enamored of the concept of arms control, such as Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, seemed desperate to mitigate Moscow's criticism -- even if it meant muting their own reaction to Moscow's adventurism in the Caucasus. In Moscow Talbott acknowledged that the Russia has the "right and duty" to protect its citizens from

"extremism and terrorism," and merely hoped the Russian government would "turn to political levers as soon as possible." (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 29 Oct 99)

By contrast, the Chechen campaign appears to have done serious damage to Russia's dreams of a greater role in Europe. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin had hoped to step confidently onto the world stage when he appeared at a 22 October meeting of European Union representatives and Russian officials. Putin, Russian officials hoped, would convince European leaders that Russia was waging an important war against terrorists in Chechnya and was fit to join a new Eurocentric security and economic system. (The Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 25 Oct 99)

The day before the summit opened, however, Russian rockets killed more than a hundred Chechens in downtown Dzhokhar (formerly Grozny), inspiring European leaders to spend the summit questioning Putin on his nation's military campaign. Although the final communique of the EU-Russia summit made references to Russian territorial integrity and condemned terrorism, Russia's hopes for the OSCE's November summit seemed dashed. Ivanov still called on the Europeans to "adopt the charter of European security and sign the adapted Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty" (ITAR-TASS, 1302 GMT, 27 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1027, via World News Connection), but there were signs that Western governments were consciously downgrading their plans for the conference in light of the Chechen war.

Twice in one month? Only for Russia

Radioactive material has been the source of excitement in Russian relations with both North and South Korea. In mid-October, a metal box containing radioactive material made its way aboard the Russian cargo ship Ryazan. South Korean port officials found the box, which emitted radiation three to four times above acceptable levels, among the Ryazan's scrap metal cargo. According to Russian officials, they were able to take control of the situation quickly and schedule the

material to be unloaded and disposed of at Nakhodka. (ITAR-TASS, 0745 GMT, 18 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1018, via World News Connection) Not to be outdone, only a week later, ITAR-TASS reported that Russian officials had discovered radioactive materials aboard a North Korean train just over the Russian border. However, the South Korean paper Yonhap revealed not only that there was no radioactive material present, but that the train was actually Russian.

Russian and South Korea took these bungles in stride as they successfully negotiated a repayment schedule for Russian debts in excess of \$1.7 billion. The debt -- a holdover from a 1991 loan to the Soviet government -- and Russia's inability to repay it on schedule constituted a source of tensions between the governments. According to the new terms, Russia will repay the amount over the next 15 years, half in raw materials and half in defense materials. (KOREA TIMES, 0747 GMT, 25 Oct 1999; FBIS-SOV-1999-1025, via World News Connection) However, one important financial issue remains, since the sides did not agree on the interest rate of the loan. Still, Russian is already pushing plans to supply Korea with a diesel-powered submarine as partial repayment of its growing debt.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Michael Thurman

POLITICAL PARTIES

Goodbye Liberal Democrats, hello Zhirinovsky Bloc

It has been a roller-coaster couple of weeks for Vladimir Zhirinovsky and his Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR). The LDPR has been disqualified from running for election to the Duma, having succumbed to the scrutiny of the

Central Election Commission (CEC). It seems that, in early October, the CEC discovered irregularities in the forms listing the personal assets of numerous LDPR candidates. Crucial for the LDPR's future, as it turned out, was that two of the top three leaders of the party were affected. By law, the invalidation or resignation of just one of the top three names on the party list disqualifies the entire party from standing for election. A political party, bloc or movement will also be prevented from running if 25 percent or more of the entire list is disqualified.

The CEC denied registration to the two LDPR leaders, Krasnoyarsk businessman Anatoly Bykov and incumbent State Duma Deputy Musatov, because they neglected to include real estate and other assets on their income forms. Bykov failed to state that he owned a ramshackle house somewhere and Musatov failed to mention that he has three Mercedes. Musatov claimed that one had been stolen and the other two were sold, but he could not furnish proof. Zhirinovskiy's forms also were questioned, but he was able to prove that two cars registered to him -- a Volga and a Mercedes -- had been stolen and removed from police records.

Predictably, Zhirinovskiy announced he would appeal the CEC's decision to the courts, but he really could not if he wanted his party to be qualified to run. Because all applications had to be submitted by 6:00 p.m. Moscow time on 24 October, Zhirinovskiy did not have time to risk a legal appeal. Instead, he quickly renamed his party and replaced those dismissed on his party list. The new LDPR, now called the "Zhirinovskiy Bloc," managed to submit its application -- just under the wire. It is not clear if the LDPR has been disbanded in favor of the Zhirinovskiy Bloc, or if it is only in stasis until after the elections. (ITAR-TASS, 1713 GMT, 11 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1011, via World News Connection)

Central Election Commission continues to register parties

At present, as the CEC checks its financial documents, the Communists and YABLOKO have lost 9 candidates each, Fatherland-All Russia bloc -- 10, the Union of Right Forces -- 12, and Our Home is Russia (NDR) -- 20. NDR is in a potentially fatal position; if all 20 (that is, 25 percent of the party's list) are deemed ineligible, NDR would be disqualified from running.

The publications of the assets of the country's politicians netted some interesting results: Kemerovo Governor Aman Tuleev claims that he owns neither house, nor car, nor garage. He does not even have an apartment. Former Secretary of the Duma Privatization Committee Sergei Burkov (a member of the Fatherland-All Russia bloc), who currently works in the State Auditing Commission, did not privatize his own apartment.

But just how fair is the CEC? Sergei Stepashin listed that he owned 0.2 hectares of land, when in fact it is closer to 2 hectares. Somehow, he was allowed to admit and rectify his error without untoward effect on his eligibility. Similarly, Former Justice [!] Minister Pavel Krasheninnikov (a member of the Union of Right Forces) made a boo-boo and forgot to list one-third of his annual income. He explained that he is absentminded; certainly a characteristic any electorate would value highly in a legislator. He remained on his party's list. At the same time, the actress Yelena Drapenko, a member of the Communist Party, was expelled from her the list because she forgot to mention her only car, a beat-up Zhiguli worth less than 1,000 rubles.

The publication of this information has embarrassed many powerful denizens of the Russian political elite, and threats have been made toward the CEC and its members. In response, the government has provided bodyguards to the director of the CEC, Aleksander Veshnyakov.

Veshnyakov and his crew have 26 blocs to verify, a task which by law must be completed by 4 November. The results will be announced on 7 November. Five

blocs and associations have received registration to date: Fatherland-All Russia, Communist Party of the Russian Federation, YABLOKO, Our Home is Russia, and Union of Right Forces.

Still being checked are: the Russian Party for the Protection of Women; the Congress of Russian Communities and Yuri Boldyrev's Movement; the Conservative Movement of Russia; the Peace and Unity Party; Russian All-People's Union; Spiritual Heritage; For Civil Dignity; the Party of Pensioners; Women of Russia; the Russian Socialist Party; the Movement in Support of the Army; Zhirinovskiy's Bloc; the Movement of Patriotic Forces-Russian Cause; the Bloc of Gen. Nikolaev and Academician Fedorov; The Savior; Unity; the National Salvation Front; the Stalin Bloc-for USSR; the Socialist Party of Russia; the Peace-Labor-May association; the Communists, Working People of Russia-for the Soviet Union association; the Russian Conservative Party of Businessmen; the Nur (Light) association; the All-Russian Political Party of People; the Social Democrats; the Cedar Ecological Party of Russia. (INTERFAX, 1555 GMT, 24 Oct 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via nexis)

All hail the CEC for vigilant monitoring of candidates' assets, or not?

While it is no doubt helpful to have such a watchful group of zealous, and no doubt non-biased, public servants on the job, the information at their disposal may not be all that trustworthy. It is not too difficult, given the status of Russian jurisprudence and law enforcement, to stash, hide, or otherwise squirrel away assets in the homes and garages of loved ones so the taxman, or a CEC investigation team, will not know they exist.

Even government officials are not immune to suggestions by the powerful. It was broadcast on Russian television that Sergei Stepashin owed R13,000 in back taxes. Almost immediately, Andrei Pryanishnikov, a spokesman of the Taxes and Levies Ministry Press Service, explained that Stepashin in fact does not owe back taxes. As a member of the armed forces, he is not required to submit a tax

return. However, after claiming that Stepashin was not in arrears, Pryanishnikov went further, noting that in any case, Stepashin was credited with a fee for teaching at the State Service Academy which he never received. Amazingly enough, the fee almost matches Stepashin's supposed tax debt -- R12,500. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 21 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1022, via World News Connection)

If the elections were held today

Gennadi Zyuganov's Communist Party of Russia (KPRF) remains the largest party with 26 percent support according to a poll taken on 15-19 October; however, this does represent a drop from the party's 32 percent support in September. The Fatherland-All Russia bloc won 21 percent support, compared to 22 percent in September. YABLOKO received 11 percent as compared to 12 percent in September. Sergei Shoigu's Unity bloc showed it could win 5 percent. (INTERFAX, 1050 GMT, 22 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1022, via World News Connection)

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By LCDR James Duke Jr. and Lt. Col. Jill Skelton

New military doctrine codifies first use of nuclear weapons

Details of Russia's new military doctrine have emerged. Russia's defense ministry leadership approved the draft doctrine on 29 September and forwarded it to the Russian Security Council and President Boris Yel'tsin for consideration. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 22 Oct 99) This is the first substantial revision of Russia's military doctrine since 1993. The 1993 doctrine was Russia's first post-Soviet single source official military doctrine; it acknowledged an end to the Cold War, named nuclear weapons as a key deterrent force, and cited nationalist and religious wars as primary sources of potential conflict. Those

conflicts within the "immediate vicinity" of Russia's borders were considered a threat to the federation. (The NIS Observed, 2 Jun 99)

NATO's intervention within the internationally recognized borders of a sovereign country, with the airstrikes against Kosovo, has been cited as the motivation behind Russia's revision of its military doctrine. NATO's eastward expansion and the conflict in the Caucasus have provided additional incentives. Finally, although unsaid, upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections are driving politicians to proclaim their positions on national security. The authors of the revision perceive US world domination as the biggest threat to Russia's security. The doctrine lists a wide range of threats to the Russian Federation, from local and regional conflicts to a large-scale attack, presumably US-led, from the West. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 12 Oct 99)

Knowing their conventional forces are ill-equipped to counter US forces, Russia believes nuclear weapons are a relatively inexpensive way to maintain military parity and its associated political clout against the US. The new doctrine states that Russia "retains the right to use nuclear weapons in response to ... large scale aggression with the use of conventional weapons in situations which are critical for the national security of the Russian Federation and its allies." (KRASNAYA ZVEZDA, 9 Oct 99, and DEFENSE AND SECURITY, 15 Oct 99; via nexis) This statement codifies past rhetoric on first use of nuclear weapons. Russia may resort to nuclear weapons in response to a conventional attack or any situation which they deem to jeopardize their national interests.

However, Russia's nuclear weapons are aging and will require replacement by 2007 just to maintain warhead levels at the Russian-proposed START-III level of 1,500 -- well below the 7,274 nuclear warheads Russia declared on 1 July 1999 under the START-I treaty. (INTERFAX, 1252 GMT, 28 Sep 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0928, via World News Connection, and FACT SHEET, 1 Jul 99, Bureau of Arms Control and International Security Affairs, US State Department) Russia is

producing one new Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM), the formidable single warhead Topol-M (designated SS-27 by the Pentagon). The Topol-M can carry a 550-kiloton warhead, equivalent to 22 Hiroshima-sized bombs, to a range of 12,000 kilometers. (DEFENSE AND SECURITY, 20 Oct 1999; via nexis) The missile may be silo- or mobile launcher-based, and there are also plans to develop a submarine-launched version. Two regiments representing a total of 20 Topol-M missiles are scheduled to be deployed by December 1999. (INTERFAX, 0942 GMT, 8 Oct 99; via nexis) Procurement of enough Topol-M missiles over the next decade to replace its aging arsenal and maintain nuclear warheads at proposed START-III levels will be a daunting task. For example, assuming 35-45 Topol-M missiles are produced annually at a cost of \$40 million each, the annual cost of missile procurement alone would be \$1.4 billion - \$1.8 billion. (The NIS Observed, 31 Oct 98) If Russia's year 2000 defense budget allocates 3.5 percent GDP for defense (about \$5.6 billion), then Topol-M missile procurement would account for 21 to 32 percent of Russia's defense budget, a huge commitment. (ITAR-TASS, 1151 GMT, 15 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1015, via World News Connection) Even under conservative estimates, procurement and maintenance of its strategic forces (missiles, bombers, and submarines) will account for at least 25 percent of Russia's defense budget, a very large percentage considering the decrepit state of its conventional forces.

Russia's increased reliance on nuclear weapons also explains its visceral rejection of any US proposal modifying the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty. The US proposed to amend the ABM treaty in preparation for building a National Missile Defense (NMD) system designed to counter the proliferation of ballistic missile technology in rogue nations. In an unprecedented act, the US reportedly even offered Russia assistance to complete an early warning radar station and to share radar technology in exchange for modifying the ABM treaty. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 21 Oct 99) Russia clearly views NMD as a direct threat of its few remaining sources of military and political clout. Russia has threatened to deploy additional warheads mounted on independently targeted re-

entry vehicles, to institute countermeasures, and to renounce all arms control treaties. Russia claims the Topol-M is invincible to the proposed US missile defense system. The Topol-M's engine design uses a slower burn rate during the boost phase, placing the rocket in a lower trajectory which evades space-based radar tracking systems. (DEFENSE AND SECURITY, 20 Oct 99; via nexis) Russia also boasts it will mix dummy re-entry vehicles with valid nuclear warhead-carrying vehicles, challenging US capabilities to identify and track incoming missiles. (THE WASHINGTON POST, 26 Oct 99) Finally, Russia may operate missiles past their planned service lives. To demonstrate this strategy's feasibility, Russia successfully tested a 25-year-old SS-19 ICBM. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 21 Oct 99) However, every Russian threat in retaliation for the US development of a National Missile Defense system will require additional funds for strategic forces which are already siphoning funds from poorly maintained and paid conventional forces fighting a war in the Caucasus.

The new military doctrine is related to Russia's new national security concept, which states that a US-dominated "unipolar" world is the "fundamental international threat" to Russian national security. Russia advocates a more "multipolar" world, the catch phrase that has become a key military and diplomatic policy goal. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 12 Oct 99) In light of budgetary constraints it will be interesting to monitor how well Russia follows through on its rhetoric. However, Russia's growing partnership with China shows it is already using diplomacy in an effort to turn world opinion against the US. The military doctrine's nuclear weapons policy demonstrates Russia's intoxication with being a player in international affairs and its determination to use whatever means necessary to achieve its national security agenda.

A busy month for Russian weapons salesmen

In an effort to keep Russia's debt-ridden military-industrial complex afloat, Russian officials continue to pursue aggressively any and all opportunities for potential weapons sales. The goal is to meet the urgent need for a ready and

continuous flow of cash to keep weapons manufacturers afloat and, by accomplishing this, ultimately to provide up-to-date armaments to the country's armed forces. Russian arms dealers are beating the bushes hard. For example:

-- Falling in line with recent public acknowledgments of warming Russian-Chinese relations, Russia is expected to sign a contract for the sale of up to 20 Su-27UB trainer aircraft to China at a cost of \$30-35 million apiece. The Chinese will use these aircraft as trainers for the Su-27SK and Su-30MKK fighters, also of Russian origin. The Su-27SK fighter jets were purchased from Russia with an agreement that China would be allowed to manufacture these aircraft under a Russian license. A contract for Su-30MKK multi-functional fighter aircraft was signed during an August session of a bilateral economic cooperation commission in Beijing. Russia is expected to begin delivery of Su-30MKK to China in 2000. Unlike the Su-27SK aircraft contract, the Su-30MKK contract does not include a manufacturing license. It is estimated that a total of 40 Su-30MKK aircraft will be delivered to China. (INTERFAX, 1253 GMT and 1614 GMT, 19 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1019, via World News Connection)

-- Deputy Prime Minister Ilya Klebanov reiterated at a press conference on 19 October Russia's intent to remain Libya's chief partner in military and technical cooperation. A Russian delegation traveled to Libya to discuss, as part of a bilateral military and technical cooperation commission, the comprehensive reform and re-armament of the Libyan army and the upgrade of Soviet-era aircraft. Libya delegates also discussed their interest in overhauling Libya's anti-aircraft systems. According to Klebanov, serious negotiations related to weapons sales are expected to begin after Libya determines its further military development. The Russian-Libyan commission will convene its next meeting in Moscow in mid-November. (INTERFAX, 1640 GMT, 22 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1022, via World News Connection)

-- Finally, according to the Russian ambassador to Syria, Russia stands ready to offer Syria "any kind of modern weapon it might want." Ambassador Robert Markaryan, speaking at a press conference in Damascus on 19 October, said Russia was ready to offer Syria anything it needed in the category of military technology. This includes modernization of old Soviet-era military equipment and the provision of new defensive weapons. It is estimated that approximately 90 percent of Syrian military equipment was Soviet-produced. (ITAR-TASS, 0727 GMT, 20 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1020, via World News Connection)

Duma takes a stance after repeated reports of crime in the military

Hearings were held on 21 October in the State Duma on increasing reports of criminal activity in the Russian armed forces. Representatives to the hearings included deputies and officials from the defense ministry, the Main Military Prosecutor's Office, and a number of other departments. After hearing the facts, participants described the crime level in the Russian military as "alarming and in need of emergency measures." (ITAR-TASS, 0821 GMT, 21 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1021, via World News Connection) It is clear that the proportion of crimes committed by the military has increased, particularly in the army. Further, much of the crime statistics are never reported to state officials. Chief among the types of crime include weapons black-marketing, stealing, and assault/abuse (primarily related to conscript hazing). Other crimes unique to the military include desertion and insubordination.

After the discussions, members of the Duma stated that the most important action to be taken at this point was to strengthen state support and improve social and legal protection of servicemen and their families. They stressed the need to improve the law "On military duty and army service," particularly the parts relating to the recruitment of men unsuitable for military service; those with health problems and criminal records. In particular, representatives stated the need to provide appropriate funding for the armed forces. It was further recommended that the Russian prosecutor general should at least once a year

verify that state and local bodies are complying with the federal law "On the status of servicemen" and that the Main Military Prosecutor's Office should check up on compliance with servicemen's legal rights.

The recent reports of increasing crime rates within the Russian armed forces is really not new or surprising. Most servicemen, enlisted and officers, are not paid for months at a time and have had to resort to alternate sources of income to provide for themselves and their families. Some find second jobs; others who are more desperate resort to criminal activities. High on this list are stealing and selling of weapons to black market arms merchants and others. It is believed that at least one source of weapons for the Chechen rebels is, in fact, soldiers at various Russian army units. It is also easy to understand the increasing crime rates in the context of recent military drafts. Enlistment figures are down and as a result the parameters for eligibility have been opened wider. Recruitment boards have been accused of drafting men with criminal records, psychological and health problems, and low education. (The NIS Observed, 27 Sep 99) This amounts to a recipe for serious degradation of the Russian armed forces. Increasing criminal activity by soldiers is a sure indicator of the breakdown of discipline within the army. Unpaid servicemen must place their focus elsewhere to maintain minimum living standards, resulting in divided loyalties. Combine this with the reduction in training, adequate housing and benefits, and the Russian leadership has a real problem on its hands and will need to take some very tangible, aggressive action beyond the passive recommendations adopted by the recent Duma hearings.

Newly Independent States: CIS

By Sarah Miller

CIS "anti-terrorism and free trade zone month"

If the CIS should choose themes for the month of October, "anti-terrorism and free trade month" would take the prize.

With the war in Chechnya raging, "anti-terrorism" rhetoric was in abundance at CIS meetings in October. At its St. Petersburg meeting, the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly Council made the unsurprising decision to support the international Convention Against Terrorism. (ITAR-TASS, 2009 GMT, 15 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1016, via World News Connection) A week later, the Interparliamentary Assembly (IPA) adopted an anti-terrorism document echoing the joint resolve expressed at Yalta and Kyiv earlier in October. (The NIS Observed, 18 Oct 99) But, without a CIS structure to implement its calls for "joint efforts to counter organized crime, international terrorism and aggressive separatism," the IPA's suggestions probably will never be implemented.

Elsewhere in the CIS, members of the CIS Customs Union (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan) also voiced their unanimous support of "anti-terrorism" measures. Meeting in Moscow, the members attached a final section to their "Moscow Declaration" condemning "international terrorism and political and religious extremism." (ITAR-TASS, 1022 GMT, 26 Oct 99; via nexis)

Just as "multipolarism" has been the catchword in Russian foreign policy, "anti-terrorism" has become the battle cry behind Russia's dubious efforts in Chechnya and possibly elsewhere. CIS members have been quick to jump on the anti-terrorism bandwagon, as the statements out of Yalta, Kyiv, St. Petersburg, and Moscow reflect, but substantive suggestions for implementation have been predictably few in number.

The substantive issue that simultaneously consumed the CIS in October was free trade. Despite some agreements on the Free Trade Zone (FTZ) signed in Yalta, and further measures adopted by the Interparliamentary Assembly, the FTZ is still stymied by Russian unwillingness to implement some of the economic

measures adopted in April. (The NIS Observed, 18 Oct 99) Financial strain on the Russian economy is part of the problem. According to the Russian Customs Committee, Russia will lose around \$800 million if it ratifies the 1994 Free Trade Agreement and the 1999 protocol on the agreement. Thus, Russia remains the major obstacle to a Free Trade Zone document that some, including Yegor Stroeve, chairman of the IPA and the Russian Federation Council, think will be a "durable international legal basis for forming a multilateral free trade regime and ensuring that it works." (ITAR-TASS, 0725 GMT, 16 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1016, via World News Connection)

For now, the Russian government seems content to rely on the CIS Customs Union -- a grouping in which Russia enjoys supremacy -- to carry out its economic initiatives. However, even within this group, at least one nation, Kyrgyzstan, has pursued its own interests over Russia's by joining the WTO. The longer that Russia blocks CIS economic initiatives, the more incentive CIS members will have to look for independent solutions to their economic problems, thereby circumventing the CIS and Russia's dominance within it.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Tammy Lynch

UKRAINE

Natalya, Natalya, where art thou Natalya?

Despite being touted as President Leonid Kuchma's main rival since the beginning of the presidential campaign, Progressive Socialist Party head Natalya Vitrenko finished fourth in the presidential poll held on 31 October, behind Kuchma, Communist Party leader Petro Symonenko and Socialist Party head Oleksandr Moroz. The disappointing finish follows a major erosion of Vitrenko's support in the final week of the campaign -- an erosion which curiously followed the attempt on her life.

While the disconnect between previous polls and the election outcome could be attributed to some sort of reaction to that event, as well as to Vitrenko's vitriolic statements afterward, the finish is more likely the result of voters' unwillingness to admit their plans to vote for the Communist Party. Symonenko's finish also demonstrates the successful campaigning done by the Communists in the Donbas region during the week before the election.

Kuchma undoubtedly gave a sigh of relief when he saw that Symonenko will be his second-round opponent. A Communist challenger virtually guarantees that all of Western Ukraine, and much of the rest, will vote for Kuchma. Kuchma must be pleased that the Kaniv 4 was unable to unite behind Oleksandr Moroz, the only candidate who probably had any chance to beat Kuchma in the second round. Moroz's third-place finish shows, however, that if the Kaniv 4 had aggressively supported him in the last week, he may have beaten Symonenko. However, since the alliance -- not surprisingly nor unexpectedly -- self-destructed, we will never know.

BELARUS

Western media ignore quashing of protests

If a massive protest is held in a foreign country, but no one reports on it, did it happen? To the dozens of individuals who received injuries inflicted by police officers and security agents during the March for Freedom in Belarus on 17 October, the protest was real. Of course, the almost 200 people arrested for daring to march toward President Lukashenka's residence know that the protest happened. And, the 20,000 people who gathered in Minsk -- the most in at least one year -- to chant anti-Lukashenka slogans realize that the protest was important. But, what about the United States?

A colleague of this writer chastised recently, "You expect too much from the media. They can't report on everything. When something big happens, they cover it."

So, was the March for Freedom, attended by 20,000 protesters, resulting in up to 200 arrests, with dozens of injuries reportedly caused by police, following up on the disappearances of several prominent opposition figures, in a country that will likely border NATO, and dealing with a proposed union involving Russia, "big"? Apparently not.

After researching coverage of the event, one thing is abundantly clear -- in terms of most of the United States, the protest did not happen, the tree did not fall. Or, if it did, it landed so softly that it was barely audible.

Consider the following:

-- A search of North American television and radio news broadcast transcripts covering the time frame from 17 October to 27 October reveals just four mentions of Belarus. Three of those mentions came on National Public Radio, but only two of the four dealt with opposition activities. The search, conducted via lexis-nexis, included ABC, NBC, Fox, CBC, Canada AM, CNBC, CNN, Newshour with Jim Lehrer, Burelle's and local United States stations through the Video Monitoring Services of America, among many others. The last mention of Belarus on CNN appears to have been on 9 July, and dealt with Chernobyl.

-- An examination of North American newspaper sources located just 11 mentions of Belarus between 17 October and 27 October. However, only one story -- in The Montreal Gazette -- dealt with either the March for Freedom, or the desperate times facing opponents of Lukashenka. All other stories dealt with either Chernobyl, the ABM treaty or Lukashenka's proposal to unite with Russia (which was often implied to be a new development). The New York Times did, however, discuss the crackdown on opposition members in an editorial that

appeared to run in European editions only, while The Washington Post ran a very small blurb in its world news round-up.

-- A search of wire service output around this event located a number of excellent stories about opposition activities from AP Worldstream. These stories seem to have been largely ignored, however, by the newspapers that reprint them for their readers.

This lack of coverage was mirrored by European news sources, although the quantity of European coverage was considerably higher, particularly regarding wire services. There were over 100 mentions of Belarusian opposition activities between 17 October and 27 October in the European news, a majority of those coming from Deutsche Press-Agentur and the BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, which reprinted Interfax and ITAR-TASS. Much of the non-wire European coverage, in fact, actually came from Russian sources, which displayed outrage at the events in Minsk. Nezavisimaya gazeta responded to this outrage by criticizing Russian television stations for their open "support" of those at the march. (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 20 Oct 99; Russian Press Digest, via nexis)

Grigori Yavlinsky, head of YABLOKO, responded to both the events in Minsk and the attention focused on them in Russia by denouncing Russia's proposed union with Belarus, and boycotting Lukashenka's 27 October speech before the Duma. "There is no elected president [in Belarus]," Yavlinsky said. "This is a person who has usurped this status as a result of an illegal referendum. However, the use of force is unacceptable. Talks are needed between the opposition and Lukashenka to arrange elections and hold them. Only after that is it possible to discuss relations between Russia and Belarus." (RUSSIAN TELEVISION, 1600 GMT, 24 Oct 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via nexis)

Although Yavlinsky's reaction is the minority sentiment in Russia, his response to pressure from the media demonstrates what is truly possible, if only the world would notice. What if, for example, the world had seen CNN pictures of protesters being beaten? Would the tree have fallen any more loudly? Undoubtedly, yes. This is not a Russian response couched in terms of "terrorism," after all. It is clearly the trampling of freedom, reminiscent of Warsaw or Prague. Don't think, either, that Lukashenka did not notice the response of Russian television. His head of administration criticized Russian television for its "negative role" in the protest aftermath, while his hand-picked House speaker bluntly stated, "These events are having an impact on the republic's image. We should think of how to avert such events." (ITAR-TASS, 0625 GMT, 18 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1018, and ITAR-TASS, 1657 GMT, 20 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1020, via World News Connection) Clearly, Lukashenka is at least partially vulnerable to foreign media response, if the media would give any.

Chadwick Gore, spokesman for the US government's Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, said, "The lack of coverage of events in Belarus was predictable. It just wasn't covered." Gore's commission (better known as the Helsinki Commission) released one of the most critical and strongly worded statements about the situation. Gore called it "extremely frustrating," but pointed out that coverage is generally lacking in America for this type of event "unless you hand them [the press] a victim." (Chadwick Gore interview with Tammy Lynch, 29 Oct 99) The Helsinki Commission press release and letter to Lukashenka are available at <<http://www.house.gov/csce/pressrel1.htm>>.

That's it! The next time 20,000 people protest, the Belarusian opposition will simply have to make sure more victims are available. That would be "big," wouldn't it?

MOLDOVA

Score one for Bulgaria and peace

Moldova avoided yet another dispute with one of its minorities this week, when it succumbed to Bulgarian demands to leave a county populated largely by Bulgars intact. The parliament had announced intentions to restructure its local governments by dissolving a number of smaller counties into larger, more manageable ones. Although the plan received high marks from international organizations for its streamlining effect, it also created high tensions with Bulgaria. As reported last year (The NIS Observed, 4 Nov 98), the plan would have dissolved the overwhelmingly Bulgarian Taraclia County into the larger Cahul, eliminating the Bulgarian majority and with it the influence Bulgarians have enjoyed over the region.

This week, the parliament agreed to allow Taraclia County to continue existing, raising the number of proposed new counties from 10 to 11. The decision eliminates the protests occurring both from within and without Taraclia; the Bulgarian ambassador to Moldova was quoted as saying that "human rights" are not "an internal issue," and that if the legislature dissolves Taraclia, the Bulgars wish to be placed "under Transdnestr or Gagauzian jurisdiction." (BASAPRESS, 1700 GMT, 20 Oct 98; FBIS-SOV-98-293, via World News Connection) Seems that common sense prevailed on this one.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Miriam Lansky

CHECHNYA

Women and children first

A report released last week by the leading Russian human rights organization, Memorial, shows that Chechen women and children are the primary "beneficiaries" of the Russian offensive. Relying on the testimony of indigenous witnesses and Memorial observers on the ground in Chechnya and Ingushetia, the group documents an unfolding humanitarian catastrophe. (www.hro.org/war)

On 7 October, the Russian air force bombed the village Elistazhi. A. N. Mironov, the Memorial representative who visited the area on 9-11 October, could not identify any buildings or installations that may have been perceived as military in character. However, he did find 34 new graves, and while visiting local hospitals, spoke with 20 wounded -- only one of whom was an adult male.

Refugees from a Dzhokhar suburb recount a bombardment that demolished two buildings and damaged several others on 27 September. When the neighbors were able to access the basement, they found six dead bodies: one adult male, Ramazan Temirsultanov (33 years old), his mother, his daughter, his friend Liza Hadzhinova (21 years old and pregnant) with two children (ages 1.5 and 3).

There has been a profound scarcity of accurate information coming out of Chechnya. This is due to the destruction of television stations and other media during the early stages of the bombings and the limitations imposed on travel by the Russian military command, which has effectively barred humanitarian aid workers and journalists from the republic. In this situation we cannot but assume the worst: that during a month of bombardment, the Russian air force has claimed thousands of casualties, the vast majority of them women and children.

The bombings have prompted at least 200,000 Chechens to flee the republic. Not wishing to see them get away, General Shamanov imposed a blockade on 29 September. The checkpoints along the borders with Dagestan, North Ossetia and Stavropol were closed, leaving Ingushetia as the only region accepting refugees. (The only other way out of Chechnya is on foot the over snowy mountain passes to Georgia. For the strong that route will always be open -- in effect if not in law.) In the last week of October the road to Ingushetia was closed as well. At this writing, a humanitarian corridor has been opened into Ingushetia, but it admits a trickle and will only be open for six days. Although the window was opened a little more widely on November 3, it still seems unlikely that the corridor

will be able to accommodate the 16 kilometer-long line of people waiting to leave. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 1 Nov 99)

Ingushetia's resources were overwhelmed quickly. By the end of October new arrivals were living in the open with no shelter, sanitation or health facilities of any kind.

The federal government refused to register internally displaced persons (IDPs); the one office where they may register is closed. If they are not officially counted as IDPs, the government does not have to provide humanitarian assistance or find the requisite funds in its budget. In the third week of October, the most fortunate among the IDPs were getting rations of bread, flour, and sugar. In some regions only 10-20 percent receive any rations at all. Meanwhile the temperature has fallen to 3 degrees and the electricity has been turned off.

Genocide? You decide.

The legal definition of genocide holds that there must be the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group as such" by a) killing members of the group; b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part" [The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), in Malcolm N. Shaw, INTERNATIONAL LAW (Cambridge, UK: 1991), p. 197]

If the Russian political and military leaders wished to destroy "terrorists" or combatants but preserve the civilian population, why aren't they letting the people out of Chechnya? To reiterate, Russian soldiers on the "administrative border" are barring the way of a civilian mass stretching over 16 kilometers. If Chechnya is part of the Russian Federation, why are Chechens forbidden the right of free passage on the territory of their state? The Russian authorities cannot be bothered to distinguish between "terrorist," combatant, and civilian. The Chechen

people are targeted for bombing as a nation, they are denied services as a nation, and they are deported from Russian cities as a nation.

Speaking at the annual conference of the US-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce on 26 October, Zbigniew Brzezinski described the Russian policies as posing the "possibility of genocide." According to the 1989 census, the Ingush and Chechens numbered 1.25 million. The Chechens numbered 735,000. At the rate of reproduction documented in the 1989 census, there should be 883,000 Chechens now.

According to the RFE/RL Watchlist (November 4) about 400,000 Chechens are left in Chechnya and about 200,000 are refugees. That amounts to a total of 600,000. Between 80,000 and 100,000 are estimated to have been killed in the first Chechen war and about another 3,000 have been killed to date. (It is to be assumed that most of the refugees of the first Chechen war returned home when Chechnya regained self-government.) That would bring the total up to 703,000 at most. Therefore approximately 180,000 are unaccounted for.

These results are reminiscent of Stalin's effort in 1944 to deport the entire Chechen nation to Central Asia. Most historians estimate that, as a result of Stalin's deportation policy, the Chechen population declined by 23 percent. [See the discussion in John B. Dunlop, *RUSSIA CONFRONTS CHECHNYA* (Cambridge, UK: 1998), pp 70-71.]

What can the US do?

1) Cut funding to Russia. IMF funding is one obvious place to cut, but the World Bank, USAID, and the Export-Import Bank should not escape attention. (In this regard, why is the EBRD funding the bypass oil pipeline, after Russia bombed the existing pipeline in Chechnya? Is this the best message to send right now?)

2) Treat Russian violation of the CFE treaty as abrogation of the treaty. Russia has exceeded the number of troops, tanks, etc. according to the (already upwardly revised) limits permitted in Chechnya, Georgia and other parts of the southern flank area. The US may announce comparable increases in the number of NATO personnel and armaments.

3) Reinterpret the status of Chechnya. Checheno-Ingushetia was part of the RSFSR. Chechnya declared independence before the Soviet Union collapsed and the current Russian Federation was formally recognized. Ingushetia peacefully divorced from Chechnya. The result: It is inaccurate to say that Chechnya seceded from the Russian Federation -- it has never been a part of the RF. Moreover, the ambiguity of its status was recognized in the Khasavyurt treaty, which specifies that " The agreement on the fundamentals of relations between Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic being determined in accordance with generally recognized norms of international law shall be reached prior to December 31, 2001." (IZVESTIA, 3 Sep 96; via ISCIP database)

4) Reiterate US support for the independence of the states of the South Caucasus and expand existing military aid within the PfP program and on a bilateral basis.

ARMENIA

Apolitical assassination?

On 27 October five gunmen led by Nairi Hunanian walked into a session of the Armenian parliament and shot dead Prime Minister Vazgen Sarkisian and Parliament Speaker Karen Demirchian along with one minister and five deputies of the ruling Unity (Miasnutun) party. (RFE/RL CAUCASUS REPORT, 28 Oct 99) The killers gave contradictory and incoherent statements to explain the motivations for their actions. At first they claimed it was a coup d'etat. Then they

said it was meant to punish the "bloodsucker" Sarkisian, and later explained that the killings were a protest against the government's economic policies.

Some have concluded that the attackers were crazy and acted without a political motive. That does not seem likely. The gunmen knew exactly whom they would kill, they just can't explain why they did so. Their demeanor during over 24 hours of crisis was not irrational. They allowed the wounded to be evacuated and let journalists leave. They calmly negotiated with the president and members of his staff. Finally, they and all of their hostages left the building alive.

If they were not crazy, there must have been a political motive. The effect of the assassination is to behead the ruling Unity party, actually a coalition of two parties. As a result of the assassination the major force in Armenian politics is much weakened. This has ominous implications for the peace agreement, which the US has been brokering very aggressively. President Kocharian lacks a political party capable of presenting an agreement to the public. So the peace process is at least temporarily an indirect victim of the assassination. At present, this is all that can be said with any degree of certainty, although there is no shortage of possible explanations:

1) From 1991 to 1994, Hunanian was a youth organizer with the Dashnak party, which has been linked to terrorist acts in the past. The party has denied any current affiliation with him, much less any connection to the assassination. Nevertheless, elements from this party, known for its radical stance on Nagorno-Karabakh, may have wanted to hold out for an even better settlement -- one that would make Nagorno-Karabakh independent outright or would not commit Armenia to withdrawing from the other occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

2) Some have posed the possibility of Russian intervention to block the resolution of the war over Nagorno-Karabakh and the construction of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. An Israeli commentator, Gideon Remez, suggested the assassination

was connected "with Nagorno-Karabkh and with Russian petro-geo-politics." (ISRAEL RADIO, 27 Oct 99; via the Turkistan Newsletter) He also noted the arrival of four additional MiG-29 planes in Armenia. Similarly, Azerbaijani First Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov does not "exclude the possibility that this was initiated by outside forces." (REUTERS, 27 Oct 99; via Eurasia Geopolitics) In its statement, the Armenian defense ministry charged that "The internal and external security of the state is in danger." (IWPR CAUCASUS REPORTING SERVICE, 29 Oct 99)

3) A reporter in Yerevan, Mikael Danialian, suggested that the assassins may have been acting on behalf of the president, Robert Kocharian, and/or the Security Minister, Serj Sarkisian. He went on to speculate that there may have been internal collusion. Apparently, to enter the chamber it is not sufficient to show a press pass, there must be an additional pass. Only Hunanian, who once worked as a journalist, could have had such papers. As Danialian asks, why were the others admitted? And why didn't the guards check for guns under their long trenchcoats? When they finally surrendered on Thursday, they "reportedly did not hand over their pistols until they reached the investigation centre." (IWPR CAUCASUS REPORTING SERVICE, 29 Oct 99) Kocharian and Serj Sarkisian are members of the so-called "Karabakh clan" who may have felt threatened by the growing power and prestige of the prime minister. These events are not entirely new for Armenian politics. As the Jamestown Foundation Monitor recounted on 1 November, there have been several high profile political killings which "were linked to the shadow economy and/or political intrigues."

AZERBAIJAN

Under pressure...

In recent weeks the government of Azerbaijan has come under tremendous pressure from at least four sources. To navigate safely between these conflicting forces will require every bit of political savvy the government can muster.

1) Since the start of hostilities in Chechnya, Russia has intensified its pressure on Azerbaijan. Russian military and political spokespersons have repeatedly charged Azerbaijan with aiding and abetting terrorists without producing a shred of evidence. The Russian ambassador, Aleksander Blokhin, publicly chastised the Azeri cleric, Allahshukur Pashazade, who had protested vehemently and publicly against the Russian policies in Chechnya. Blokhin is also widely seen as responsible for the resignation of Vafa Guluzade, a key former foreign policy aide who in the Spring called publicly for Azerbaijan's accession to NATO. (AZERBAIJAN BULLETIN, 26 Oct 99) Many interpret Guluzade's resignation as a sign that President Geidar Aliev wished to distance himself from the most outspoken critic of Russia to placate growing Russian demands.

2) The United States launched a new bout of shuttle diplomacy to reach a framework agreement on Nagorno-Karabakh by the Istanbul summit of the OSCE -- or in two weeks time. Previous to the Talbott, Sestanovich, and Cavanaugh mission which descended on Baku on 26 October, Madeleine Albright had written to Aliev to specify that the representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh must be permitted to participate as a side to the negotiations. Azerbaijan has resisted making this concession for several years and prefers to negotiate with one Armenian party, rather than two.

Although the terms of the agreement are secret, some details have leaked to the media. While defending the plan in a debate with a Dashnak representative, the Armenian foreign minister, Vartan Oskanian, let slip that under the deal "Nagorno-Karabakh is not fixed as part of Azerbaijan." The enclave would have certain features of an independent state including an army, currency and constitution. (RFE/RL PRESS REVIEW, 27 Oct 99; via Turkistan Newsletter) At a 24 October meeting, on the eve of the arrival of the high-level US state department delegation, two members of the Azerbaijani Security Council tendered their resignations. Foreign Minister Tofiq Zulfugarov and Nagorno-

Karabakh aide Eldar Namazov resigned, citing their opposition to the Karabakh settlement. (AZERBAIJAN BULLETIN, 26 Oct 99)

3) Aliev's domestic opposition has protested the US-brokered Karabakh initiative with vigor, summoning the largest ever demonstrations in the capital. The opposition, composed of several political parties, has proposed an entirely unrealistic set of guidelines for the Karabakh talks and has touted the idea of setting up a popular resistance movement. (Jamestown Foundation FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW, 22 Oct 99)

4) Since the Summer, Iran has been promoting Mahir Javadov, a former member of the Azerbaijani interior ministry who fled the country after an unsuccessful coup attempt in 1995. (AZERBAIJAN DEMOCRACY MONITOR, Oct 99) With Aliev's health declining, Iran fears that the president may be replaced by members of the opposition, such as Abulfaz Elchibey, who openly advocate an aggressive approach to "reunion" with the Azeris living on the Iranian side of the border. Hence, Iran is creating a military bloc and a puppet it can insert if the situation in Azerbaijan worsens.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Monika Shepherd

KAZAKHSTAN

Parliamentary elections fail to meet OSCE standards

The 1999-2000 election season in Central Asia, which began when Kazakh voters went to the polls in October to elect a new parliament, is off to a less than auspicious start. Candidates from Kazakhstan's opposition parties complained that the government hindered their campaigns and made it difficult for them to publicize their platforms. Opposition members also accused the government of perpetrating voter fraud and the OSCE reported that poll results in both rounds of

parliamentary elections were marred by local officials' meddling in the vote count. A handful of opposition candidates did manage to gain positions in the Mazhlis (Kazakhstan's lower parliamentary house), but otherwise the Otan Party, whose members support President Nursultan Nazarbaev, swept up nearly all of the 47 seats which were in contention. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 26 Oct 99) In spite of the poor rating which the 865 OSCE observers gave the recent Kazakh elections, the CIS observers reported no "irregularities" whatsoever in the vote-counting process. (INTERFAX, 0734 GMT, 11 Oct 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1011, via World News Connection)

The OSCE and the CIS observers' evaluation of the parliamentary elections closely parallel their appraisal of last January's presidential poll in Kazakhstan, which President Nazarbaev won in a landslide after refusing to allow any prominent opposition members to challenge his claim to the presidency. The parliamentary elections followed a similar pattern; Aqezhan Qazhegeldyn, leader of the People's Republican Party, was not permitted to register as a candidate for the Mazhlis and other opposition members were also kept from running. Thus, not surprisingly, the two parties which won the lion's share of parliament seats were Otan and the Civic Party, both of which support the president and his programs (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 27 Oct 99) and will presumably preserve the status quo, a state of affairs which the CIS obviously favors in Central Asia. Nearly all of the current Central Asian presidents were members of the old Communist Party nomenklatura, and all enjoy both CIS and Russian support, regardless of the authoritarian measures they use to ensure their victory at the polls.

TAJIKISTAN

Opposition's unity unraveling amid pre-election day tensions

Serious rifts have developed within the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), brought on by a disagreement between three of its top leaders over how to handle the Tajik government's obvious reluctance to conduct free, fair and open presidential

elections on 6 November. Government officials apparently prevented the opposition's presidential nominees from obtaining enough voter signatures to register their candidacy officially. The registration deadline was extended twice in order to allow the opposition candidates additional time to collect the required number of signatures (145,000) but, due to alleged harassment by local officials, their efforts to qualify as candidates nonetheless fell short. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 13 Oct 99) Consequently, on 10 October the UTO leadership announced that its representatives on the Central Electoral and Referendum Commission (CERC) were being withdrawn, due to the commission's inability to ensure a fair campaign for all the candidates. The following day, the three opposition candidates, Dawlat Usmon (currently Tajikistan's Minister for Economics and Foreign Economic Relations and member of the Islamic Renaissance Party), Sulton Kuvvatov (member of the Iran-based Democratic Party of Tajikistan), and Saiffidin Turaev (the Justice Party's candidate) called for the elections to be postponed. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 12 Oct 99) On 12 October, in response to the CERC's refusal to register their candidacy, the three opposition nominees held a news conference during which they called on Tajikistan's voters, as well as on representatives of the international community, to boycott the 6 November presidential elections. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 13 Oct 99)

Over the course of the next five days it became apparent that the UTO's top two leaders, Haji Akbar Turajonzoda (deputy leader of the UTO and First Deputy Prime Minister of Tajikistan) and Said Abdullo Nuri (chairman of the UTO and of the National Reconciliation Commission) held opposite views on how to resolve the situation. On 16 October, Mr. Turajonzoda told reporters that, in his opinion, postponing the presidential elections could undermine the next president's legitimacy. He also stated that the majority of those who sit on the UTO's presidium do not support the opposition nominees' demand that the elections be rescheduled. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 18 Oct 99) Nonetheless, on 18 October the UTO leadership announced that it was withdrawing its representatives to the

National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) and suspending its participation in that body, to protest the Tajik government's refusal to even discuss the opposition's demands. These demands were made public on 15 October and they include: granting all of the presidential candidates' parties equal representation on the CERC, 75 percent of whose seats are currently occupied by President Rahmonov's supporters; replacing the government's representatives on the CERC, on the grounds that many of them openly favor President Rahmonov over the other presidential candidates; instructing local officials to allow the opposition nominees to carry out the process of collecting signatures in order to register their candidacy; and finally, calling an emergency session of parliament to approve the opposition's proposal that the presidential elections be rescheduled. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 19 Oct 99)

On 18 October, the leaders of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) ousted Haji Akbar Turajonzoda from his post as the party's co-chairman and revoked his membership on the grounds that he had publicly contradicted the IRPT leaders' decisions and was not acting in accordance with party policy. Meanwhile, Mr. Turajonzoda resigned from his posts as UTO deputy chairman and as first deputy prime minister of Tajikistan in order to protest the fact that neither he nor other UTO leaders had been consulted in the opposition's decisions to withdraw from both the CERC and NRC, as well as to call for a postponement of the elections. Mr. Turajonzoda has the support of at least two other leading UTO members, Mahmadrusi Iskandarov and Habib Sanginov. These three men take the position that the UTO had an at least tacit agreement not to present any serious challenges to President Rahmonov's re-election, in order to avoid destabilizing Tajikistan's already precarious hold on political stability. Mr. Turajonzoda also publicly stated that whether or not the UTO's charges against the CERC were valid, opposition leaders should have addressed the issue of changing the commission's membership prior to setting a date for the presidential elections. Regardless of the opposition's protests, it appears as if the elections will take place as scheduled. The Tajik government has made no efforts

to address UTO leaders demands, no doubt at least partially due to the rifts which have developed within the UTO leadership itself. The UTO can no longer present a united front, which significantly lessens its bargaining power with the government and also gives President Rahmonov and his supporters the opportunity to play the two opposition factions against each other. President Rahmonov may also reason that as long as he has some form of support from Haji Akbar Turajonzoda, who is arguably one of the most charismatic UTO leaders and who commands considerable popular support, he can ignore the other UTO leaders' protests.

The international community has thus far given the president little incentive to change his tactics; US spokesmen and OSCE officials have urged the UTO and the government to resolve their differences and to take steps to ensure free and fair elections, but have not defined what the consequences will be if the two sides refuse to settle their differences. OSCE officials did state that if the situation does not improve, they may reconsider their plans to send a full-scale election monitoring team to Tajikistan. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 20 Oct 99) This would seem to play right into President Rahmonov's hands. The fairness and legitimacy of Tajikistan's first post-war presidential election process is already in grave question, fraught with numerous accusations of campaign violations and the Tajik government's obvious reluctance to permit a genuine competition to take place. If the OSCE does not send a full team of election monitors, President Rahmonov's supporters will have unrestrained freedom not only to obstruct the opposition's election campaign, but to rig the vote itself. Furthermore, the international community's refusal thus far to unequivocally condemn what has become an almost farcical election process in Tajikistan and to spell out what President Rahmonov's government stands to lose, should the conflict with the opposition not be resolved, virtually guarantees that this election will be neither fair nor free.

Newly Independent States: Baltic States

By Kate Martin

ESTONIA

Vodka for votes

Some Kohtla-Jarve residents who lined up to vote in the local elections last month received more than the warm glow inherent to participation in the democratic process -- many also received a half-liter bottle labeled Finlandia Vodka. Onlookers told the Pohjarannik newspaper that on the first day of polling a red Lada car drove to a polling station and Russian-speaking young men distributed slips of paper with the name of one of the candidates, Svetlana Korotkova of the Center Party. After polling, voters received the bottles of vodka from the same car. Candidate Korotkova denied any connection with the spirited campaign strategy, and termed it "an obvious provocation." (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 13 Oct 99) The tactic proved more time-consuming than effective, regardless of the origination. The electoral commission of the northeastern Ida-Virumaa county annulled the results of the preliminary balloting in two Kohtla-Jarve electoral districts; almost 700 people were thus required to return to the polling stations to vote. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 16 Oct 99)

While Center Party members proclaimed the vodka for votes ploy an intentional move to discredit the party, there is some evidence that voters in the northeast may not look askance at such questionable behavior: They elected a former KGB officer to represent their interests. Vladimir Tomilov, who changed his name to Valter Lants shortly before the election, won a seat on the Narva city council. Tomilov reportedly was expelled from the Center Party once news of his KGB connection came to light, but he was already on the party's ticket. While voters could have known about the name change and the KGB connection, they apparently were as unbothered by those facts as by reports Tomilov presented false data when filing his candidacy: State law requires election candidates to avow that they had not collaborated with the security bodies of countries which

occupied Estonia. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 21 Oct 99)

LITHUANIA

Popular PM resigns over oil deal; Kubilius asked to form government

The same day that the government signed the agreement with Williams International concerning the privatization of the Mazeikiai Oil refinery, President Valdas Adamkus asked MP Andrius Kubilius (deputy speaker of parliament) to form a government. (FINANCIAL TIMES, 30 Oct 99; via nexis) Negotiations with Williams had led to the departure of the highly popular PM Rolandas Paksas, who announced his refusal to sign agreements with Williams during a nationally televised speech on 18 October. The following day, after a majority of the government voted to approve the agreement, Social Security and Labor Minister Irena Degutiene reported that the government had decided to continue negotiations. "[W]e have to bargain for the best possible terms for Lithuania," she said. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1300 GMT, 19 Oct 99) Three members of the government voted against the agreement -- Paksas, Economics Minister Eugenijus Maldeikis, and Finance Minister Jonas Lionginas. While Maldeikis and Lionginas submitted their resignations, Paksas said initially that he would not stay. "I am not against Williams, I am not against privatisation, I am for beneficial terms," Paksas explained. (FINANCIAL TIMES, 20 Oct 99; via nexis) Within days he would change his mind -- he submitted his resignation last week.

Although the government had passed all legislation required by the agreement (The NIS Observed, 27 Sep 99), a new stumbling block appeared: Mazeikiai's existing debts. Williams has demanded that the state spend US\$400 million to finance the refinery's debts and supplement its working capital. Williams President John Bumgarner seems confused as to the problem facing the government, saying his company is not asking for any money from Lithuania. In fact, Bumgarner said, according to the investment contract both the Lithuanian government and his company must loan Mazeikiai Oil funds in order to keep it in

operation and for modernization. "Mazeikiai Oil will pay back these loans, and with interest," he said through his press secretary. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 21 Oct 99) The real issue is that the two parties are approaching the negotiations from vastly different points of departure; Bumgarner seems unable to grasp Lithuania's current economic health. While he issues assurances that the loans will be repaid, he apparently doesn't comprehend that obtaining the money to make the loans in the first place is what worries many in parliament and those government officials, intimately aware of the country's fiscal standing, who resigned. This will not be the last time that leaders of a former Soviet republic, understanding the need to privatize sectors of the economy, run into conflict between Western business practices and post-Soviet economic realities.

Concern over what effect the debt assumption would have on Lithuania's economic standing is not limited to the domestic arena. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is pressing the country to reduce its fiscal deficit to 2 percent (from the current 5.8 percent), a goal the country will be unable to reach if it covers the shortfall of the refinery. According to the Baltic News Service (1300 GMT, 18 Oct 99), Bumgarner met with IMF officials in Washington in an attempt to persuade them to change their position regarding Lithuania's debt. IMF support is critical on many levels, not least of which would be to obtain additional funding -- the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which is expected to contribute nearly one-third to a syndicate loan for the complex, may withdraw if Lithuanian fails to meet IMF requirements. Moreover, according to EBRD spokesman Rimantas Purtulis, such a failure would also block access to other international lending institutions.

Meanwhile, the Mazeikiai Oil refinery continued to suffer the vagaries of dependence upon Russia for oil supplies, facing another shutdown in mid-October due to a lack of crude oil. The stoppage of supplies, according to then-director general of the oil complex, Vidmantas Macevicius, was LUKoil's reaction

to being precluded from obtaining a large share in Lithuania's oil industry. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1600 GMT, 11 Oct 99) An executive of LUKoil, Yuri Storozhev, met with Paksas to discuss the supply issue, and promised improved deliveries if the oil refinery were to agree to better prices and terms. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1300 GMT, 15 Oct 99) Mazeikiai Oil is also suffering the vagaries of personnel actions -- Macevicius was temporarily suspended from duty for "unsatisfactory work coordination" on 12 October, only two months after he filled the position; he was replaced by Vita Petrosiene, the economic and financial director the refinery, who was appointed acting director general. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1000 GMT, 14 Oct 99)

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