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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

PRESIDENCY

"We're really not that kind of people"

With multi-colored revolutions bursting out all over the former Soviet Union, it would seem natural to consider the possibility of Russia having its own colorful revolution. While the election of Boris Yel'tsin, the failure of the pushchists and the assertion of Russian statehood seemed like revolutionary acts, Russia's independence was won not by raucous crowds demanding that their voices, and votes, be counted, but rather by three older gentlemen of questionable sobriety meeting for the weekend at a hunting lodge in the woods west of Minsk.

The institutions supporting Russian democracy, such as they are, were weakened, perhaps corrupted, almost from the moment of their creation. Whether the Kremlin was the stalwart of democratic values, as in the early Yel'tsin years, or the Duma had the authority to check a powerful president (Putin's first year?), all such structures have been overrun: either by bureaucratic infighting (could anything be more grotesque than the scramble between apparatchik factions over Gazprom's and Rosneft's oil revenues?); or hyperextension in the executive branch's grasp for authority.

President Putin has done little to instill confidence that his regime is capable of fulfilling even its most basic promises to the Russian population: security, stability, economic growth and, well, *derzhavnost'*, seem set far aside while the Kremlin determines who will rule what region, power organ, or board of directors. With the military forces cinched in by low morale and lower expenditures, and Putin's forays on the world stage appearing as defensive efforts in anger

management, Russia's great power status totters, just like the regimes of former Soviet neighbors.

However, revolution requires passion, and Russia has been too torrid throughout the 1990s, over privatization, ideology, land reform, economics and corruption to spare any ardor for state politics. Putin landed in power with the promise to strengthen the authority of the state – to make those who would steal, or terrorize – fear the reprisal of a renewed Russian state. He failed. Western fears that the President usurps regional authority could not have the same impact in this context: why should one worry about central control over the regions, when it appears just as ineffective as true regional authority?

Still, the population is uncertain. Jitters remain from terrorist attacks in the air and at concerts and schools. The country, led by a President who is younger, more robust, but ultimately just as constrained as was Yel'tsin, is moving forward, but in what direction? According to one of Russia's leading pollsters, Yuri Levada, "People aren't certain about anything. Not certain about tomorrow, about their jobs, not certain they can earn enough, or what will happen to their children." (1)

The political array is again (still?) rife with clannish infighting: hardliners and reformers; economists and Petersburgers; westerners and siloviki. And while this crop of solons and bureaucrats tussle in a state-sponsored tug-o-war, opportunities for change evaporate.

Will concern for the future bloom into full-colored revolutionary fervor? Levada thinks not, "We don't have the leaders, and we're really not that kind of people." (2)

It is, nonetheless, disconcerting that the most cohesive political opposition in Russia currently falls along the red-brown end of the spectrum. The usual

democratic suspects have reappeared in the news of late, but there does seem to be a recognition that relying on the Yavlinsky-Nemtsov- Khakamada factions to find common ground, or a single common candidate is asking for too much. New blood might be needed to reinvigorate the democratic corps. If the democratic opposition really could unify behind one candidate, then that would be revolutionary – perhaps it would even be a revolution of a different color.

Modest reformer

CIS Affairs have a new advocate: a "political technologist" to consult on issues of foreign and cultural affairs, Modest Kolerov. (3) Kolerov has been tapped to head the newly-founded Kremlin Presidential Directorate for Interregional and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries and the CIS, which is structurally under Dmitri Medvedev's purview. The new Directorate will deal primarily with contacts among states in the post-Soviet space. (4)

Kolerov, who until this appointment ran the Regnum news agency, previously was an adviser for Uneximbank and is co-chair of a committee of political analysts for the Kremlin, along with Gleb Pavlovsky. (5)

Gleb Pavlovsky described his co-chair as an individual with "liberal, anti-fascist, and counter-revolutionary views." (6)

The timing of the creation of this Directorate, along with the appointment of Kolerov, suggests a "soft power" approach to CIS relations, as was discussed at a recent Security Council meeting (See previous NIS Observed). Kolerov described the aims of the Directorate to "promote Russian language, education, and culture abroad." In response to questions about the Directorate's political agenda, Kolerov replied, "Social problems evolve into political problems when they go unsolved. We will try to resolve social issues to avoid political problems." (7)

Source Notes:

- (1) The Financial Times, 5 Apr 05 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) Kommersant, 25 Mar 05; What the Papers Say (WPS) via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (4) The Moscow Times, 24 Mar 05 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Kommersant, 23 Mar 05; WPS via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (7) The Moscow Times, Ibid.

Russian Federation: Security Services

By Eric Beene

Pity the poor Russian security services these days. Tasked with the thankless job of "mopping-up" operations in and around Chechnya (operations that began in 1999, on the heels of the second Russian military intervention in the region) (1), they are being attacked, literally and figuratively, from all directions. March has been a particularly brutal month for them.

Within days after the Federal Security Service (FSB) scored a "victory" with its reported assassination of former Chechen leader Maskhadov, well-traveled reporter Nabi Abdullaev's exposé in the Moscow Times documented how "the heavy-handed tactics by police and security forces in Dagestan have helped Islamic extremists recruit young fighters to their cause." (2) This "cause" has coalesced fighters into a group known by the police as Jenet (Arabic for "paradise") led by known radical Rasul Makhsharipov. This group has identified itself on the Kavkaz Center website as Sharia Jamaat, or the Organization for Muslim Justice, and it has described its attacks on security forces as retribution against those who are "severely torturing people, humiliating their human dignity

and mocking their religious principles." (3) The group is said to have killed dozens of law enforcement personnel since hostilities began in the region nearly six years ago. (4) Abdullaev's lengthy article cited several specific cases of abuse by police and other security forces in the region and described the resulting backlash, casting the security services in a decidedly poor light.

In defending government forces charged with abuse, Dagestani government officials have proclaimed their methods completely legal. "This harshness is forced upon those who want to counter the growth of extremism. In fact, it was the Dagestani authorities that created the legal basis to fight religious extremism," said Dagestan's Minister of Information. (5) This "legal basis" is a controversial 1999 law that allows "law enforcement agencies to prosecute people for possessing religious literature that the Spiritual Board of Dagestani Muslims viewed as Wahhabi in nature." (6)

It would seem, then, that the Kremlin's cure for regional violence has become worse than the underlying disease itself, or so claims Human Rights Watch, which issued its own critique of Russian methods in the region in March. Releasing a report titled *Worse Than a War: "Disappearances" in Chechnya—a Crime Against Humanity*, the organization chastised the Russian government for allowing the violence in and around Chechnya. "Chechen fighters have committed unspeakable acts of terrorism in Chechnya and in other parts of Russia. In addition to enforced disappearances, Russia's federal forces, together with pro-Moscow Chechen forces, also have committed numerous other crimes against civilians, including extrajudicial executions, torture, arbitrary detention and looting." (7) The report made the following observation: "While in previous years, Russian forces were the main perpetrators of 'disappearances,' over the last year they seem to have been replaced largely by Chechen security forces . . . most of which are effectively under the command of Ramzan Kadyrov." (8) Even with a plan of Chechenization, whereby the Kremlin allows pro-Moscow Chechen forces to take control of the region's defense, Russian security services

cannot escape critique from abroad. Indeed, with the son of the slain pro-Moscow Chechen leader and the current head of internal security in Chechnya, Kadyrov in the role of Moscow's "friend" in the region, who needs enemies?

Nezavisimaya gazeta appeared to ask a similar question when Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov reported that the total number of Russian troops in the region had increased to 80,000, up from 75,000 reported in October 2003, when only 33,000 of that number were military. This, again, during a phase of "mopping-up" operations, not war. The 5,000 additional troops appear to be mainly special forces and police. Nezavisimaya gazeta speculates that federal forces in the region were strengthened not because of the need to increase pressure on the rebels, but because of a need to check the power of Kadyrov's indigenous forces.

Adding to the condemnation of the rampant violence in the region, the U.S. State Department released its own review of human rights across the globe in March. That report paints a similarly bleak picture of Russian efforts in the region.

"The [Russian] Government's record [on human rights] remained poor in Chechnya, where there were credible reports of serious violations, including numerous reports of unlawful killings and abuses of civilians by both federal security forces and Chechen government security forces. . . . Law enforcement personnel reportedly engaged in torture, violence, and other brutal or humiliating behavior, often with impunity." (9)

With a bit more balance than the Human Rights Watch report, however, the State Department report recognized the fact that rebel forces bore some responsibility for the violence in the region as well: "The United States also called on Chechen fighters to end terrorist acts and violence against civilians, repudiate terrorism, and cut all ties to Chechen and international terrorists." Extending a diplomatic olive branch to Moscow, the report reaffirmed the official U.S. stance on

Chechnya: "The United States recognizes the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation." (10) This, even though it may disagree with the methods employed in protecting that territorial integrity.

As if such attacks from human rights groups and its greatest ally in the war on terror were not enough, Russia's own human rights ombudsman piled onto the charge. In what was described as a wide-ranging annual report, Vladimir Lukin criticized both the government forces and the rebels for human rights abuses in the region, "including killings, abductions and unauthorized arrests." Although the report was published in Rossiiskaya gazeta, it does not appear to be influential, despite the fact that it has been presented to the Russian president and prime minister on its way to the Duma. (11) Still, it could be seen as part of a disheartening trend, especially considering charges from Presidential Envoy Dmitri Kozak, who earlier this year criticized the whole anti-terror structure in the Caucasus and recommended federal forces be given the lead in anti-terror operations. (See previous NIS Observed.)

As evidence of a countervailing trend, or perhaps just to stem the tide of indignant press, Sergei Lapin, Interior Ministry OMON (special forces) officer was tried and convicted in a Grozny courthouse "of power abuse and forgery" while working with the police in Chechnya. These charges rose from the detention, beating, and the subsequent disappearance of a 22-year old Grozny man by Lapin in 2001. The victim's remains have yet to be located. Lapin's sentence was 11 years of detention in a hard labor camp. Ramzan Kadyrov hailed the verdict as a success of the rule of law in Chechnya, adding that "the republic's population enjoys the protection of the Russian constitution." Somewhat surprisingly, Itar-TASS reported that "Lapin is the first law enforcer to have been tried for abuse inside Chechnya over the years of the Chechen conflict." (12)

So, is there anything to be made of these events, or are they simply the annual lob and volley between vocal anti-Russian groups and the Kremlin's defenders?

First, Human Rights Watch has made a relevant observation, one that the Kremlin probably had made already, that atrocities in the region appear to be on the rise, especially atrocities attributable to pro-Moscow Chechen forces, those led by Kadyrov. While it is conceivable that Moscow should favor Chechens killing Chechens over Russians killing Chechens, or vice versa, Kadyrov's forces operating with the imprimatur of the Kremlin increasingly reflect poorly on Russia. Moscow cannot continue to distance itself from the pro-Moscow Chechen forces yet still claim territorial integrity as the reason for maintaining an armed presence in the region. So, President Putin and his administration are still accountable for the ever-widening arc of violence in the region. The Human Rights Watch report, along with the others, adds impetus to the case for the de-Chechenization (to which this column has referred in the past), if not a wholesale de-militarization.

Also, while polemicists on both sides of the debate are quick to point out U.S. criticism of the actions of government forces in Chechnya and surrounding regions, the State Department report presents the position the U.S. has consistently taken: While the U.S. recognizes Russia's territorial integrity, some solution needs to be found to stem the violence (coming from both sides), preferably a diplomatic solution.

Finally, despite the conviction of Sergei Lapin, there does not yet appear to be any dramatic turnaround in Moscow's perception of abuses in the region or its complicity in them. Moscow has taken note of such abuses in the past and even condemned them vigorously, but, apparently, they still occur regularly. Unless and until Moscow's security services are held to account for actions in the region, expect more bleak days in the Caucasus. And for that maybe we should pity the Chechens too.

Source Notes:

- (1) Goble, Paul, "Analysis From Washington - Deadlines Military And Journalistic," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 29 Dec 99 via (<http://www.rferl.org/features/1999/12/f.ru.991229165149.asp>).
- (2) Abdullaev, Nabi, "A Murderous Cycle of Revenge in Dagestan," The Moscow Times, 15 Mar 05, p. 1 via (<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2005/03/15/002.html>).
- (3) Ibid; and "Leaflets, Weapons of Mujahideen," 25 May 04, from Kavkaz Center via (<http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2004/05/25/2820.shtml>).
- (4) Abdullaev, and Getmanskiy, Konstantin, "Special Services Warn of Further Terrorist Acts and Try to Avert Them," Izvestiya, 18 Jan 05; FBIS-SOV-2005-0119 via World News Connection.
- (5) Abdullaev.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Press Conference announcing the release of Worse Than a War: ³Disappearances² in Chechnya—a Crime Against Humanity, Geneva, Switzerland, 21 Mar 05 via (<http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2005/03/21/russia10342.htm>).
- (8) Worse Than a War: ³Disappearances² in Chechnya—a Crime Against Humanity, Human Rights Watch, Mar 05, p. 10.
- (9) Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2004 – 2005, U.S. Department of State, 28 May 20, p. 143.
- (10) Ibid, p. 145.
- (11) Henry Meyer, "Russia's Ombudsman Denounces 'Large-Scale' Abuses In Chechnya," The Associated Press, 31 Mar 05 via Lexis-Nexis. (For more on Lukin's remarks, please see "Domestic IssuesŠ" above.)
- (12) "Russian Officer Gets Jail Time for Abuses in Chechnya," Chechnya Weekly, Vol VI, Issue 13, The Jamestown Foundation, 30 Mar 05, and "Police Officer's Trial Shows Laws Effective in Chechnya – Kadyrov," Itar-TASS, 29 Mar 05, via Lexis-Nexis.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Rebecca Mulder

Kyrgyz relations

Moscow appears resigned to Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev's fall from power, claiming that it will not cause deterioration in Russian-Kyrgyz relations. Akayev and his family are in Moscow and will remain there indefinitely, though a representative of the Kyrgyz opposition commented that Akayev's return is only a matter of time. (1) The Kremlin's handling of the Kyrgyz revolution indicates that it has learned from the events in Georgia and Ukraine and is attempting to avoid repetition of previous diplomatic mistakes. President Putin has reassured the new Kyrgyz leadership of continuing bilateral relations, received assurances regarding the future of the Russian airbase at Kant, and has at least shown a veneer of support and acceptance of the new Kyrgyz government. (2) Stabilization of the country is of primary importance, as the implications of the Kyrgyz revolution, and the potential for other revolutions in post-Soviet Central Asia, are certainly a concern to the Kremlin. Moscow's influence wanes each time a revolution occurs and Russia appears powerless to stop the forces of political.

Support for Lukashenko

President Putin recently met with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko at the Black Sea Resort of Sochi, in what has been described as a ³sign of military and strategically motivated thaw in relations.² (3) The question of the Belarus switch to the Russian ruble, agreement upon transit of natural gas, future WTO accession and joint air defense policies, were among the ³household² issues the two leaders discussed. Of equal importance were putative Putin support for Lukashenko in the 2006 election and Moscow's desire to keep Belarus in its sphere of influence. Belarus currently is the only neighboring European country primarily subject to Russian influence and not looking to NATO, though there is some domestic opposition to these positions. Russia would not welcome a ³velvet²

revolution occurring in Belarus, further undermining Russian control in the post-Soviet space, but with Belarus as a major trading partner, Moscow has no choice but to support Lukashenko, at least economically, if not militarily. (4)

The fate of the CIS

At a recent session of the Council for Foreign and Defense Policy (SVOP), several leading officials, including Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, discussed strategies designed to reverse the process of Russia's geopolitical retreat in its "backyard."² (5) Council members stressed the crisis faced by Moscow, as reflected in the recent colored revolutions in the CIS, and the general loss of leadership and influence Russia is viewed as ceding to the West. Although some CIS countries have chosen economic partnership with Russia, Russia has ceased to be politically "interesting in the long-term."² (6) Predictably, the states of the former Soviet Union will continue to turn away from Russia in coming years if these trends continue, Council members feared, and the United States, China, the European Union and other major players will gain greater influence in the CIS.

Three scenarios of CIS development were discussed at the SVOP gathering. One argued that the status quo would be maintained, with the CIS as "a convenient platform for informal dialogue amongst the leaders of the former Soviet republics."² (7) The second proposal sought to bolster a smaller CIS, concentrating efforts on one or two countries or groups; this could make the CIS a more manageable space, and could further Russian partnership with China. The merging of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) into one entity could allow for the creation of a new integrated territory from Belarus to China, providing competition with the West. (8) The third approach advocated the complete disbandment of the CIS. Some members of the group commented that "The CIS has fulfilled its mission [which was] designed specifically for the transition period² and that "after last year's Ukrainian election

fiasco, the CIS ceased to exist as a more or less coherent geopolitical space.² (9) Complete disintegration of the CIS, however, whether already in process or not, would be a worst-case scenario for Russian authority and security, and, at least according to the members of the SVOP, it would leave an even larger vacuum of influence that the West could exploit.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs chief spokesman, Aleksander Yakovenko, qualified some of the pessimism stemming from the recent discussion, saying that the CIS is by no means at the end of its life and remains necessary. (10) Moscow has asserted the idea of ³humanitarian cooperation² amongst CIS countries which includes a range of social issues to promote the rights of Russian-speaking populations, ³cultural space,² ³education space,² all of which would attempt to preserve the Russian language, mass media and influence in the region. Economic cooperation and financial ties, as seen in Moscow's relations with Belarus, remain the most likely interaction for the time being. Citing economic cooperation as a top priority, Aleksander Lebedev remarked, ³Speculative interstate constructions based on political declarations and reminiscences of former state unity have demonstrated their uselessness.² (11) The future of the CIS and the strategic confusion it has caused Russia, will no doubt remain in the forefront of Moscow's political, strategic and economic consciousness. Its ³backyard² seems to be shrinking.

Source Notes:

(1) RIA Novosti, 4 April 2005; 15:49 GMT via (<http://en.rian.ru>).

(2) Ibid.

(3) RIA Novosti, 5 April 2005; 12:40 GMT via (<http://en.rian.ru>).

(4) Ibid.

(5) Eurasia Daily Monitor, 1 Apr 05, Vol 2, issue 64, ³Russia's Political Class is Split Over How to Proceed With Integration of Post-Soviet Space² via (www.jamestown.org).

(6) Ibid.

(7) Ibid.

(8) RIA Novosti, 1 Apr 05, 13:33 GMT via (<http://en.rian.ru>).

(9) Ibid., Eurasia Daily Monitor, 1 Apr 05, Vol 2 issue 64.

(10) Eurasia Daily Monitor, 31 Mar 05, Vol 2, issue 63, ³Putin Obituary for CIS.²

(11) Ibid., Eurasia Daily Monitor, 1 Apr 05, Vol 2, issue 64.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Robyn Angley

Duma proposals for the North Caucasus

As a means of weighing in on the Beslan crisis and larger Caucasus affairs, the Duma, in the wake of the September hostage-taking, created its own Commission on the Problems of the North Caucasus. The commission's recommendations, announced on 31 March, appear less than helpful, although they fall into line with the hopes of the president's plenipotentiary representative to the Southern Federal District, Dmitri Kozak. Kozak recently convened a meeting of the district's governors as part of an attempt to promote economic development in the region. (1)

The commission's proposals ranged from reviving the practice of sheep-farming and other traditional agricultural employments in the region to the suggestion of eliminating police checkpoints and guard posts on highways. It also recommended migration to the region by Russian-speaking Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) citizens supposedly as a means of easing the area's difficult interethnic relationships. However, an influx of ethnic Russians hardly seems likely to soothe ethnic tensions. The commission also proposed an

information and propaganda center, which would work on brushing up the region's negative image. (2)

The report by the Beslan parliamentary investigation committee, headed up by the Federation Council, is expected to be ready around the end of April. Hopefully, its findings and proposals will prove more conclusive than the Duma commission's.

Human rights report

The 2004 human rights report by ombudsman Vladimir Lukin has been published finally. The report was ready on 31 January but has been withheld for the last two months. Lukin found that the state of human rights in Russia was unsatisfactory, with "the right of an individual to life and limb not guaranteed effectively." (3) Lukin, who is a founding member of Yabloko, reported that the abuse and violation of the rights of migrants and refugees by police and other law-enforcement agencies is increasing. He also assigned responsibility for the human rights violations in Chechnya to both sides of the conflict. (4)

Political parties

Speculation continues to circulate about a possible merger between the Union of Right Forces (SPS) and Yabloko parties as well as the potential teaming up of SPS, Yabloko, and another party, Committee 2008, headed by Vladimir Ryzhkov, Garry Kasparov, and Irina Khakamada. SPS announced its intentions on March 24 to continue negotiations with Yabloko and other parties about the formation of an integrated democratic party. Joining together would help these smaller parties pass the requisite threshold to take those mandates in parliament that are distributed according to proportional representation.

One issue of debate regarding a putatively united democratic party revolved around whether to build a united front on the basis of already existing parties or whether to dissolve these parties and start afresh. The emerging consensus

seems to be that building on the structure of previously existing parties will constitute the more effective approach. (5)

Committee 2008 announced recently that it is forming a panel to develop a common policy for the putative party. Agreement between SPS, Yabloko and Committee 2008 has been difficult to achieve. Yabloko and Committee 2008 hold differing positions about the prospective party's base. Yabloko staunchly opposes the inclusion of "oligarchs" in the party's structure; Committee 2008 advocates a party that derives most of its support from a strong grassroots base in the regions. (6) Clashes between the leading personalities of each party also appear likely reemerge. Given these areas of disagreement, it will be interesting to see what Committee 2008 can create as a common democratic platform.

Public Chamber

The third and final reading of the public chamber bill was passed in the Duma on 16 March and in the Federation Council on 23 March. The chamber, to be composed of members of regional and national NGOs and charged with providing recommendations about legislation to the Duma and Federation Council, will also be responsible for producing an annual report on the state of Russian civil society. The chamber will have its own 60-minute state television program, printed publication, and website. (7) None of its actions will have the force of law.

The public chamber will operate under a code of conduct drafted, according to Federation Council speaker Sergei Mironov's speculations, by the members of the chamber. In this aspect, it is worth noting that the public chamber will be subject to such a code while the bodies it is assigned to monitor operate under no such requirement. (8) The new chamber could hold its first meeting by 4 November.

Source Notes:

- (1) ³New organization to promote regional investment projects,² Itar-Tass, 28 Mar 05 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (2) ³Russian Duma's wide-ranging North Caucasus recommendations 'naive' report,² Izvestiya, 1 Apr 05 via World News Connection (WNC).
- (3) ³Human rights and media situation in Russia unsatisfactory, says ombudsman,² BBC Monitoring, 24 Mar 05 via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (4) ³Russian official paper publishes long-awaited ombudsman's report,² BBC Monitoring, 31 Mar 05 via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (5) ³SPS to go on talks on united democratic party with Yabloko,² Ria novosti, 24 Mar 05 via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (6) ³The Union of Right Forces wouldn't mind Mikhail Kasianov,² Gazeta, 28 Mar 05 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (7) ³Daily comments on expected Kremlin control of new public chamber,² Financial Times Information, 20 Mar 05 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (8) ³TV remarks by Federation Council speaker Sergei Mironov,² Podrobnosti Program, 23 Mar 05 via Lexis-Nexis.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Jeff Kubiak and Kyle Colton

INTERNAL

Rokhlin's ghost?

Discontent in the Russian arms forces, exacerbated by "benefit reforms," appears to be fertile soil for groups looking to bring a political challenge to the Kremlin and it seems that a group has stepped up to do just that. (See previous NIS Observed 31 Jan and 10 Dec 04) Led by the former head of the Defense Ministry's department for international cooperation, Colonel-General Leonid Ivashov, the Russian Military Union is working with other security-oriented private organizations to garner political support. In February, several demonstrations were held in conjunction with the gathering of more than 1,000 delegates for the

Pan-Russian Officers Congress, organized by Ivashov and his groups. (1) Building on concerns over low morale, caused by the degeneration of the socio-economic status of the armed forces and the recent monetization of benefits, the Congress built the foundation and filled the ranks of its own militia. ³The Volunteer Troops,² estimated to be more than 3,000,000 strong, now has appointed leadership (nearly all of whom are/were generals or admirals), formalized an organizational structure, and detailed its strategy. (2) They represent the combination of several different professional military groups including the Russian Military Union, the Union of Officers, and the Union of Cossacks. Some very right-wing nationalist groups, such as the Russian National Unity movement may join in. (3) The government harassed the group during its convention by locking it out of its planned venue (a large hall in the Academy of State Service), leaving them essentially to meet in the street. While viewed by some as an outlet for civil confrontation without violence, the FSB regards it as an anti-state organization. (4)

This movement has been likened by General Lev Rokhlin's group, to the Movement for Support of the Army, in the late 1990's. (5) After his murder in 1998, Rokhlin's aides disclosed his plans for a general uprising in the summer and fall of 1998, with the aim of bringing down the Yel'tsin government. (6) The movement evaporated after Rokhlin's murder, in part because of the loss of such a well-respected leader (and the murder of one leader has a deterrent effect on prospective leaders) but the discontent remained and simmered. (7)

The leaders of the current movement also include former Defense Minister Igor Rodionov (responsible for the 1989 Tbilisi Massacre), and former head of the Armed Forces Main Combat Training Directorate, Colonel-General Alexander Skorodumov. (8) These are not poor soldiers, for whom it is a hardship now to have to pay to take the bus. They are embittered nationalists who long for the glory of the Soviet Union, a large strong army, and the greatness of Russia. They blame the Russian government's weak mismanagement for the current

state of ³illness² in their great nation. Ivashov and Skorodumov are strident in their criticism of government policies and personalities; slightly more blunt, Rodionov displays the same ill feelings towards the current and past administrations. He also explicitly states what others only suggest: ³It is also obvious that this war (in Chechnya) benefits America, which has long since implanted plenty of its agents and 'advisors' in the Kremlin, the government, the Defense Ministry, and the special services. The United States has a direct interest in keeping the embers of war in the Caucasus constantly smoldering, sapping the strength of an already-drained Russia still further: aren't the recent events in Georgia sufficient evidence of that?² (9) The leadership of this group has been individually ousted from the Kremlin for impeding efforts at reform, not only military but foreign policy as well. Although Yel'tsin and Putin have had different approaches to dealing with the West, at one time or another both administrations have claimed that Russia faces no ³great power² threat and that, while not yet an ally, the West is not the enemy either. Putin believes that the path to greatness must start with a strong economy that will eventually give Russia the capability to project hard and soft power globally. The ³rogue generals,² on the other hand, clearly only perceive the "threat" posed to Russia by NATO and the U.S., and therefore believe that the only possible path to security and great power status is to re-build the Red Army. Their concern is not with the servicemen, but rather with their perception of Russian greatness. The servicemen and pensioners are simply an available political resource to mobilize.

Thus far, Ivanov seems to have ignored reform and rearmament of the core of the Red Army. The tank divisions (there were 50,000 battle tanks in the Red Army in 1988) are all below 50% in manning and in the lowest state of readiness of any army units. (10) The powerful Air Forces of the Red Army rot on the ramp, while the pilots get a miserable 40 hours of flying time per year. Fewer than 84 of the Soviet Navy's 196 submarines remain in service and the majority of these are not combat ready. (11) Statistics like these are what upsets the rogue generals. Defense Minister Ivanov does seem to understand the connection

between military power and international influence. The government's defense budget has nearly doubled in real dollars since 1999. (12) Ivanov's strategy for expenditure has focused primarily on two areas: the Russian strategic nuclear forces; and the development of conventional capability with mobile forces, through professionalism and reequipment the airborne and peacekeeping units of the armed forces. These are the two areas where defense spending has increased most noticeably.

Although claiming that the West poses no threat to Russia, there is nearly incessant official discussion about some aspect of Russia's nuclear force. Recent weeks have been exceptionally rich with discussions about investments, improvements and capabilities of nuclear missile-launching submarines, strategic bombers, and, of course, there is the unique missile capability that President Putin mentioned back in November and that continues to stir up comments from observers. It's obvious that all of this strategic nuclear talk is not meant to influence the behavior of terrorists, but rather of foreign powers. The most recent attempt by Ivanov to increase the visibility of Russia's claim to "great power" status is the Defense Ministry's decision to resurrect two dinosaurs from the past: Ivanov has indicated that Russia will invest new money into its own missile defense system. The Soviet Union developed a missile system, created back in 1968, to protect Moscow and the industrial areas surrounding it. Although there is no plan to rebuild the whole system, it appears Russia will upgrade portions of this network of radars and high-speed missiles designed to shoot down incoming ballistic warheads with a one megaton nuclear weapon. (13)

The other relics entering discussions are the intermediate range nuclear forces (INF). In his recent visit to Washington, Ivanov reportedly told U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that Russia might back out of the INF Treaty, signed in 1987, that outlawed nuclear missiles with range capabilities between 500-5,500 km. (14) Of course, Ivanov may be planning to outfit these missiles with conventional warheads for use against terrorists in the south. This seems

unlikely considering that without GPS guidance, these missiles are not likely to have the accuracy required to make an operational difference with a conventional warhead. It is possible that Russia's reconstitution of intermediate range missiles is not meant as a threat to NATO or China. (15) However, if it is not meant as a threat, then it is most certainly a cautionary signal meant to ensure NATO and China are still paying attention to Russia.

It should have been obvious that another troop-cut was in the works late last year, when Ivanov was insisting that Russia needed a million man army and that troop cuts were over. This is the same scenario enacted for the last troop cuts, which, apparently is what is being planned for later in 2005. (16) According to a report in *Russkii kurier*, the Russian Security Council has tabled temporarily discussions regarding another major overhaul of the defense ministry which would include such reforms as moving from six military districts to four regional commands, forming a new arm that would include all special operation forces centered on the Airborne troops and, most significantly, include a cut of 250,000-300,000 troops from the armed forces. (17) These personnel cuts are apparently a part of the already approved Armed Forces Development Plan for 2010 but they have been tabled, reportedly because they represent a bigger restructuring of all security and emergency ministries than that for which the ministers can find consensus.

It is obvious that Ivanov confronts a broad range of pressures and political realities in his efforts to transform the Russian military. Although the proposed downsizing is not altogether surprising, the timing apparently is not yet right to announce the change. And while Putin bought off some political pressure from the soldiers and pensioners when he raised their salaries 20% earlier this spring, the situation is clearly not stable enough to tell a quarter of a million military personnel that they are out of work.

Source Notes:

- (1) ³Russian Officers Join Social Protests,² RFE/RL Newslines, Vol. 9, No. 34, Part I, 22 Feb 05.
- (2) ³Rogue Generals,² Julia Kalinina, Moskovskii komsomolets, 24 Mar 05; WPS-Defense and Security via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (3) ³Is the Russian Army Combat Ready?² WPS, 28 Feb 05; WPS-Defense and Security via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (4) ³Russian Officers Join Social Protests,² RFE/RL Newslines, Vol. 9, No. 34, Part I, 22 Feb 05.
- (5) ³Is the Russian Army Combat Ready?² WPS, 28 Feb 05; WPS-Defense and Security via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (6) ³General Rokhlin Was Preparing 'Legal Uprising Against the Oppressors',² Viktor Khamrayev, Vremya MN, 7 Jul 1998; WPS-Defense and Security via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (7) Gen Rokhlin was shot in the head while he slept on 3 July 1998, with his own gun. His wife, Tamara, was the only suspect and was eventually convicted of the murder in Nov 2000 and sentenced to 8 years in prison. After her lawyer made an appeal to the Court of Europe, the Russian Supreme Court agreed to hear Mrs. Rokhlin's appeal and eventually overturned her conviction in June of 2001.
- (8) ³Rogue Generals,² Julia Kalinina, Moskovskii komsomolets, Ibid.
- (9) ³This Is War,² Igor Rodionov, Rodnaya gazeta, No. 34, 3 Sep 2004; WPS - What the Papers Say via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (10) ³Russian Army – Overview,² Global Security.org, (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/russia/army-intro.htm>).
- (11) ³New Subs Will Surmount 'Crisis' in Nuclear Deterrence,² Dmitri Safonov, Gazeta.ru, 22 Mar 05 via JRL.
- (12) ³Experts Comment on CSG Baluyevskiy's Strategic Situation Forecast,² Gazeta.ru, 9 Mar 05 via JRL.

(13) ³The Defense Ministry Reanimates Anti-Missile Dinosaurs,² Vladimir Ivanov, Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie, No. 47, 04; WPS-Defense and Security via ISI Emerging Markets.

(14) ³Russia Will Use Missiles to Screen Itself from Neighbors,² Alexei Nikolsky and Vasili Kashin, Vedomosti, 10 Mar 05 via JRL.

(15) Ibid.

(16) See NIS Observed, 29 Sep 04.

(17) ³Special Reduction Forces,² Alexander Mikhailov, Russkii kurier, 30 Mar 05; WPS-Defense and Security via ISI Emerging Markets.

EXTERNAL

Russia's unauthorized amphibious exercise

On the morning of 23 March the NIKOLAI FILCHENKOV, a thirty year-old Russian Alligator type IV large landing ship commenced an unauthorized amphibious landing at the Ukrainian Mount Opuk military training area on the southeast coast of Crimea. The landing was supposed to be the main component of an annual Russian exercise normally conducted during April, but in this case the exercise never received Ukrainian approval. Whether viewed as a simple military blunder or a deliberate political test, this incident highlights the still contentious issue of the prolonged stationing of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Ukrainian territory, and the lack of coordination between the Ukrainian and Russian militaries and governments with respect to the Black Sea Fleet's activities.

The Russian amphibious ship, based in Sevastopol, picked up the Russian based landing party in Novorossiysk, Russia on 22 March. She was underway the same day and crossed into Ukrainian territorial waters outside of Feodosiya later that night. The Russian ship appropriately notified the Ukrainian authorities prior to entering Ukrainian territorial waters, but did not provide any information regarding the landing party or military exercise. (1) The NIKOLAI FILCHENKOV then proceeded to the exercise area and began landing the personnel and

hardware of the Black Sea Fleet's 382nd marine battalion based in Temryuk, Krasnodar Krai. In all, 142 persons and 28 pieces of military equipment, mainly armored personnel carriers, were offloaded at the amphibious training range.

After the 382nd marine personnel had essentially completed its amphibious landing, Ukrainian border guards, who had not received prior notification of the exercise, confronted them. The border guards informed the Russian landing party that they were using the training range illegally. On the morning of 24 March, the 382nd and the NIKOLAI FILCHENKOV left the training area and returned to Novorossiysk.

A Ukrainian Foreign Ministry spokesperson claimed that the unauthorized landing violated the May 28, 1997 bilateral treaty on the status and conditions of the Black Sea Fleet's presence on Ukrainian territory, the associated agreement on the Russian Fleet's use of training grounds on Ukraine's territory, the Ukrainian law on the procedures regarding access of foreign military units on Ukraine's territory, as well as Ukrainian national sovereignty. (2) The basics of the 1997 Black Sea Fleet Agreements and its associated agreements include:

- 1) Russia and Ukraine split the Black Sea fleet 50-50 with Russia then buying 62 percent of Ukraine's 50 percent back with cash;
- 2) Russia leased the ports and training areas in and around Sevastopol for 20 years at \$97.75 million per year, but the Russian Black Sea Fleet's land forces based in Russia can not use Ukraine's territory for military exercises without Ukrainian parliamentary approval (the issue in this case);
- 3) Russia would credit Ukraine with \$526 million for the use of part of the fleet, as well as \$200 million for the 1992 transfer of Ukraine's nuclear arsenal to Russia. The payments would be applied toward Ukraine's \$3 billion debt to Russia; (3)
- 4) Russia recognized that Crimea (and the city of Sevastopol) is legally and territorially a sovereign part of Ukraine. (4)

Ukrainian reaction

The official Ukrainian reaction to the unauthorized military exercise was expressed via letter on 24 March to the charge d'affaires of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, Yevgeni Panteleev. The letter explained the Ukrainian position and demanded a Russian explanation for the uncoordinated military exercise.

The unofficial political reaction has been varied. The head of the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) Alexander Turchinov took a hard line stance. He commented to Ukrainian television that "the lodgment of Russian naval forces is contrary to the national interests of Ukraine." (5) While the Head of the Our Ukraine parliamentary faction, Yuri Karmazin, condemned the military exercise as an "unfriendly act of Russia with regard to Ukraine." (6) Victor Mironenko, head of the communist faction in the Ukrainian Parliament, took a more conciliatory note saying "We have to live and work together with Russia and I'd like not to fuel passions between our fraternal nations on this insignificant question." (7)

Our Ukraine Parliamentary deputy Ihor Ostash verbalized his concern over the number of "the so-called technical mistakes and inaccuracies connected with the deployment and activity of Black Sea Fleet in Crimea." (8) He called for a parliamentary inquiry into the unauthorized maneuvers of the Russian maritime infantry. The deputy also said "We have to provide an efficient control of all aspects of the Russian fleet's activity on our territory in order to avoid any misunderstandings that may worsen our bilateral relations in the future. These events remind us about the importance of national interests and the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of our state." (9)

The President and Prime Minister took a diplomatic approach. Prime Minister Yulia Timoshenko said that the Ukrainian government was committed to complying with the Black Sea Fleet accords and that no old bilateral accords

were going to be revisited. "I want Russia to take us as reliable partners," Timoshenko said, responding to the question of whether Ukraine would look to modify the existing Black Sea Fleet agreement. (10) President Viktor Yushchenko called the incident a "military oversight." He also said that the incident was not a political provocation by Russia, "We have accepted the Russians' apologies and believe that the political agreement that regulates the presence of the fleet was, in fact, violated, but, considering the statement that the Russians issued, I regard this incident as settled." (11) At the same time, President Yushchenko announced that Ukraine would conduct a review of the Russian fleet's activities in recent years. (12)

Russian reaction

The Russian Black Sea Fleet command issued a press release that stated, "The incident occurred because of uncoordinated actions by the Ukrainian authorities and the BSF command." (13) Andrei Krylov, the officer in charge of the Black Sea Fleet press office, said that the amphibious landing was carried out strictly in accordance with the plans of combat training of the Russian Navy coordinated ahead of time with the Ukrainian Naval Command. (14)

The Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Aleksandr Yakovenko, said that a Black Sea Fleet representative responded to Ukraine's letter and that the incident resulted from some technical misapprehension. He claimed that the Ukrainian side was notified beforehand about the ship's voyage to Feodosia but that notice failed to reach all Ukrainian parties. Additionally, he said that the incident should not be over-dramatized. (15) An unnamed source at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs told Izvestiya that Moscow had made no "apologies," and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs assumed that the Ukrainians had taken the press statement by the Black Sea Fleet as an apology. (16)

According to an unnamed Izvestiya source at Russia's Defense Ministry, both parties are to blame: The Russians, for only notifying the Ukrainian Naval Staff

and the Ministry of Defense; and the Ukrainians, for not notifying their border guards. (17)

Perhaps the most interesting reaction was from Russian Channel 3 TV Commentator Andrei Dobrov. While agreeing with President Yushchenko's evaluation of the event as a military blunder, he thought that the strong Ukrainian reaction was meant to remove attention from President Yushchenko's alleged indecisiveness in regard to his attendance at the Russian victory day celebrations. Additionally he said, "The story of the marines' landing was immediately blown up. They started saying again that the presence of a foreign fleet in Ukraine violates the country's sovereignty. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Borys Tarasyuk said today [28 March] that Ukraine considered the incident to be an attempt to violate the 1997 treaty on the Black Sea Fleet. Moreover, Tarasyuk stressed that there were two possible theories behind the incident: either the Russian authorities had no control over the actions of its Black Sea Fleet or they wanted to test the readiness of the new Ukrainian authorities." (18)

Conclusion

The issue of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine was settled almost a decade ago after five years of high tensions and negotiations. That agreement will remain in force for 12 more years. The fact that both the Ukrainian Navy and the Russian Black Sea Fleet operate in such propinquity, in geographic terms, requires close coordination to ensure ship safety and minimize incidents that could cause political tensions. As Ukraine continues to push toward closer ties with Europe and NATO, the coordination between the Ukrainian and Russian militaries could deteriorate. If treaty violations, such as the 23 March landing, continue the Ukrainian leadership will be less likely to accept lack of coordination, incompetence or blundering as reasonable excuses for violating national sovereignty.

Source Notes:

- (1) Ukrainian Navy Says Russia Did Not Warn About Marine Landing, KIEV INTERFAX-UKRAINE, 24 Mar 05; FBIS-SOV-2005-0324 via World News Connection.
- (2) Ukrainian Leader Considers Russian Marine Landing Incident Settled, Agentstvo voyennykh novostey, 28 Mar 05; FBIS-SOV-2005-0328 via World News Connection.
- (3) Russian Friendship Treaty Signed; Other Developments, Facts on File World News Digest, (6/5/97), p. 400 G3 via WWS Case Study 2/99, Ukraine, Russia, and the Black Sea Fleet Accords - www.wws.princeton.edu/~cases/papers/ukraine.pdf.
- (4) Russia-Ukraine Rapprochement?: The Black Sea Accords, Survival, vol. 39, no. 3. (Autumn 1997), p. 40 via WWS Case Study 2/99, Ukraine, Russia, and the Black Sea Fleet Accords - www.wws.princeton.edu/~cases/papers/ukraine.pdf.
- (5) Mosnews, Moscow, 25 Mar 05, Ukraine Outraged After Russian Marines Make Landing in Crimea, via www.ukrnow.com/content/view/3847/2/.
- (6) RIA Novosti, Moscow, 25 Mar 05, Ukrainian Parliament Overlooks Russian Landing Party Near Feodosiya, via www.ukrnow.com/content/view/3848/2/.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Our Ukraine, Kiev, 25 Mar 05, Ihor Ostash insists on legal registration of Black Sea Fleet in Crimea, via www.ukrnow.com/content/view/3849/2/.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) RIA Novosti, Moscow, 25 Mar 05, New Leadership of Ukraine Say It's Committed to Complying with Black Sea Fleet Agreements, via www.ukrnow.com/content/view/3850/2/.
- (11) Ukraine Seen Using Any Pretext To Make Life Difficult for Russian Military in Crimea Dmitri Litovkin report: "The Russian Assault Landing Force in Crimea Has Sustained a Political Defeat"; Izvestiya, 28 Mar 05; FBIS-SOV-2005-0328 via World News Connection.

- (12) Ukrainian TV Channel Five, 26 Mar 05 via Eurasia Daily Monitor, 29 Mar 05, Volume 2 issue 61.
- (13) Itar-Tass, March 25 via Eurasia Daily Monitor, Tuesday March 29, 2005, Volume 2 issue 61.
- (14) Ukraine Seen Using Any Pretext To Make Life Difficult for Russian Military in Crimea Dmitri Litovkin report: "The Russian Assault Landing Force in Crimea Has Sustained a Political Defeat"; Izvestiya, 28 Mar 05; FBIS-SOV-2005-0328 via World News Connection.
- (15) nrcu.gov.ua/index.php?id=148&listid=12182, Russian party explains March 23 incident, when Russian assault landing ship Mikhail Filchenkov crossed Ukraine's borderline near Feodosia (Crimea), as "technical malfunction."
- (16) Ukraine Seen Using Any Pretext To Make Life Difficult for Russian Military in Crimea Dmitri Litovkin report: "The Russian Assault Landing Force in Crimea Has Sustained a Political Defeat"; Izvestiya, 28 Mar 05; FBIS-SOV-2005-0328 via World News Connection.
- (17) Ibid.
- (18) BBC Monitoring, Russian TV slams Ukrainian leader for indecision on Victory Day visit to Moscow, Channel 3 TV, Moscow, in Russian 1530 GMT 28 Mar 05 via Johnson's Russia List, #9107, 30 Mar 05.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Elena Selyuk

BELARUS

UN report puts Belarus "close to" dictatorship

A United Nations report, which came out last week, described Belarus as a country close to becoming a dictatorship. Adrian Severin, UN special rapporteur for Belarus, stated that ³a deep reform of the political system² is needed and that ³continuous deterioration of human rights² must be halted. (1) Severin's report also claimed that Belarus posed a high threat to regional security and stability.

He emphasized the necessity of creating special international funds which would establish independent TV and radio stations that could broadcast to Belarus from abroad and suggested strengthening human rights education as a possible solution to the deteriorating human rights situation in the country.

The reaction of the Belarusian authorities to the report was predictably harsh. The report also evoked angry criticism from Belarusian representatives to the UN human rights commission, who demanded an apology from Mr. Severin for "misrepresenting" the situation in Belarus and called Severin's report "a rough and unambiguous insult of our country and its people."² (2) Belarusian representatives were backed by Russia, some African countries, Cuba and China. (3)

The report is said to be patterned on the U.S. State Department's "Support of Human Rights and Democracy 2004-2005"² document. Some Belarusian representatives to the UN office in Geneva even expressed ironic indignation about the State Department not filing a complaint for plagiarism and copy right infringement. (4) The State Department's and Severin's opinions were supported by a U.S. non-governmental organization, Freedom House, which placed Belarus number one in its list of the most repressive societies in the world ("The Worst of the Worst. The World's Most Repressive Societies 2005"). (5)

While the UN report correctly points out the deteriorating human rights situation in Belarus, even some of Belarusian opposition supporters found Severin's statements bizarre. Andrei Sannikov, the International Coordinator of the civic initiative "Khartiya'97,"² said that Severin repeated much of what he had talked about in 1999. At that time, he put a lot of effort into mending the relationship between the Belarusian government and the opposition. Since then, the regime turned into an outright dictatorship, but Severin still keeps emphasizing the dialogue between Lukashenko and the opposition and insists on educating Belarusians about human rights. "On the one hand, he talks about the

deterioration of the human rights situation in Belarus, and on the other hand, he suggests extremely ineffective ways to improve the situation,² says Sannikov. (6) Indeed, it makes no sense to create and sponsor human rights education programs in Belarus, if there are no conditions to enforce human rights observance. Despite the imperfect nature of the report, it is still to be hoped that Severin's account of the situation in Belarus would force UN Human Rights Commission to take measures towards stopping massive human rights abuses in the country.

UKRAINE

Constitutional reform

Viktor Yushchenko recently confirmed his support for political reform in Ukraine, which would shift some powers from the president to the parliament and the prime-minister either on 1 September 2005 or 1 January 2006, depending on when the changes to the constitution regarding local self-government are adopted. While Yushchenko supports the idea of reform, he expressed concerns about the way in which the constitutional changes were approved: ³Unfortunately, the changes to the constitutionŠwere botched somewhat, they were adopted with a lot of provisos, including where it concerned the various powers of the government, president and parliamentŠEven so, I think that political reform should follow its path.² (7)

Yulia Tymoshenko, prior to being elected prime-minister, held a drastically different opinion about constitutional reform. At a news conference on 15 January, Tymoshenko threatened to initiate cancellation of the constitutional reform since, according to her, it was bound to bring ³chaos into politics.² (8) Tymoshenko believed that letting the reform happen would mean usurpation of power by the owners of parliamentary factions. ³I am opposed to this. This is not the right way for Ukraine's development,² she stated. (9)

The day of adopting the necessary constitutional amendments is getting closer, but Tymoshenko has kept surprisingly quiet about the issue since January. She neither made any attempts to initiate the cancellation of the reform, nor did she comment on Yushchenko's recent statement. There have been no more emotional outbursts about her disagreement with constitutional reform since she was elected Prime-Minister. It might be, of course, that Mrs. Tymoshenko's desire to give up recently acquired power is not as strong as she previously thought.

Ukrainians mourn Pope's death

This week, thousands of Ukrainians went to churches to honor the memory of the late John Paul II. Many Ukrainians consider the Pope to be the reviver of the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic (Uniate) Church (established in 1596) after years of Soviet repressions. He often inspired the Uniate faithful during Soviet times, when followers had to practice in secret.

After WWII, following the incorporation of West Ukrainian lands into the Soviet Union, the Uniates were forced to join Russian Orthodox Church. Now, the Church accepts the authority of the Vatican, but also retains traditions of the Eastern Orthodox religion. Hundreds of priests and their families, together with thousands of church followers were arrested and deported into Soviet labor camps. Between 1946 and 1989, the Uniate church was the largest banned church in the world. It was also the largest social group in the former Soviet Union that opposed Soviet rule. During the ban and persecutions, the Church lived an underground life: A clandestine system of seminaries, monasteries and parishes existed up until the Church's legalization in the late 1980s. (10)

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, approximately 2500 Orthodox parishes in Ukraine have become Greco-Catholic parishes. The Orthodox leadership in Moscow blamed John Paul II for encouraging this development and accused him of fostering Catholic influence in traditionally Orthodox lands. This was the main

reason why Patriarch Aleksei II refused to welcome the Pope to Moscow in 2001, after his visit to Ukraine. (11)

Yushchenko acknowledged the Pope's achievements last Sunday by saying that:

³In John Paul II, we have lost a man who had devoted his whole life to the service of humanity and the Church. The Ukrainian people bow before his majestic accomplishments.² (12)

MOLDOVA

Voronin is elected President

Vladimir Voronin was reelected the President of the Republic of Moldova by the new parliament with 75 votes. His reelection was uncertain since the Communist party had only 56 mandates, with 61 needed to elect the president. Two parties, besides his own, made Voronin's victory possible—the Christian Democratic Popular Party and the Democratic Party. (13) The Christian Democrats stated earlier that they would not take part in the voting (hoping to force early elections), but apparently changed their mind. The Democratic Party – a new faction that split from the Democratic Moldova Bloc (BDM) just several days before the elections – did exactly what others predicted it would do – gave its eight votes to Voronin.

According to the Moldovan Constitution, at least two nominations for the president are needed in order for elections to take place. Vladimir Voronin was the only presidential candidate until, at the last minute, the Communist Party nominated its second candidate – George Duca, who received one vote during the 4 April presidential elections.

In his speech to the parliament, Voronin stated that this was his ³second and last mandate.² He added that he would work even harder for the good of the country in the next four years. (14)

Source Notes:

- (1) Agence France Press, 30 Mar 05 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (2) ITAR-TASS New Agency, 29 Mar 05 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (3) Belarusian television, 29 Mar 05; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Khartiya¹⁹⁷ website, 1 Apr 05 via (<http://www.charter97.org/rus/news/2005/04/01/free>).
- (6) Khartiya¹⁹⁷ website, 30 Mar 05 via (<http://www.charter97.org/rus/news/>).
- (7) Global News Wire, 29 Mar 05; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (8) UNIAN news agency, 15 Jan 05 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) UGCC in Underground² via (<http://www.ugcc.org.ua>).
- (11) Agence France Press, 3 April 05 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (12) Agence France Press, 3 April 05 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (13) RIA Novosti, 4 Apr 05 via (www.rian.ru/politics/cis/20050404/39617133.html).
- (14) Ibid.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Tammy Lynch

NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Forward to the status quo

Over the last several years, observers have come to call the Karabakh conflict ³frozen,³ as negotiators have made no progress toward a peace settlement and both sides have remained dug in at the ceasefire line of 1994.

However, for fourteen families in Azerbaijan and Armenia, the conflict is far from static – each of these families lost sons in front-line ceasefire breaches during

the last month. (1) These breaches have become steadily more frequent, with both sides suggesting the other is responsible. Whatever the reason, less than four months into 2005, ceasefire violations have killed more than double those lost in front-line clashes throughout all of 2004. (2) This violence has been matched by increasing anger, appeals to international organizations for assistance, and militaristic rhetoric.

In mid-February, Azeri President Ilham Aliyev warned that ³the patience of the Azerbaijani people is not inexhaustible,² and that the country¹s leaders are ³strengthening our armed forces.² He continued, ³The funds we spent on defense exceed those spent by Armenia two times, and we will further expand this potential. Armenia will not last long compared to Azerbaijan in terms of armament tempo.² (3) Armenia¹s Defense Minister responded by suggesting that ³if hostilities resume, we will win.² (4) Similarly, Karabakh¹s former defense minister said, ³Is Azerbaijan really ready for a war? Simply, they seem to be ready. Armenia¹s and Karabakh¹s task is to have an army and economy that would discourage the enemy from taking such steps.² (5)

This escalation of activity led both Armenia and Azerbaijan to appeal to the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for assistance. In response, the OSCE sent an ³emergency monitoring mission² to the contact line in Terter District. The observers noted no ceasefire violations during their one day of monitoring. But the mission was only one of several international activities focusing on Nagorno-Karabakh in recent months.

The majority of these activities were initiated at Azerbaijan¹s request and seemed to be an attempt to generate international support for the country¹s peace plan. This plan envisions a multi-step process that would begin with the withdrawal of ³foreign² troops from Azeri soil and end with negotiations on the official status of the republic.

To begin this process, Azerbaijan would like the international community to force the removal of Armenian and Karabakh troops from the occupied districts bordering Karabakh. The country also would like support for its attempts to have ethnic Armenian ³settlers² removed from those same districts. But negotiators for Armenia and Karabakh are insisting that Karabakh¹'s status be determined before any troops or settlers can be withdrawn. Armenian officials suggest that the withdrawal of bordering troops would remove the buffer around Karabakh, thus allowing Azerbaijan better access for military operations. Armenia also suggests that the individuals settled in the occupied zones are not there at the request of either itself or Karabakh.

The subject of the ³settlers² has been a hot one of late in Azerbaijan, as the country has accused Armenia of forcibly settling Armenian citizens in Karabakh and its bordering districts while hampering the return of Azeri refugees to these same areas.

In January, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) passed a resolution expressing concern over the refugee issue. A report attached to the resolution decried ³the creation of mono-ethnic areas which resemble the terrible concept of ethnic cleansing.³ While the resolution does not suggest that either Armenia or Azerbaijan engaged in ethnic cleansing, the document criticizes Armenia and Karabakh for their occupation of the districts around Karabakh and calls for troops to be removed. The report also calls for the return of all displaced refugees to their homes – in particular the hundreds of thousands of Azeris displaced from Karabakh during fighting in the early 1990s.

During the debate over the resolution, the point of view of the delegates was clear, and there was little doubt that the majority of support was on Azerbaijan¹'s ³side.² Bulgarian parliamentarian Evgeni Kirilov said, ³We should be clear once and for all, and I think we are all behind this idea – there cannot be territories

occupied by force, or there cannot be any prospect of joining any territories by force to any country.² (6)

Armenia responded quickly by suggesting that Azerbaijan would attempt to use the PACE report and resolution as a pretext to reinstate military action in the districts surrounding Karabakh. However, because the report also urged Azerbaijan to avoid the use of force to retake territory, as well as to initiate talks with Karabakh representatives – a step the country has fiercely resisted as a matter of national pride – Azerbaijan's reaction to the resolution has been surprisingly muted.

Instead, the country has intensified its attempts to find support for a U.N. General Assembly resolution expressing concern over Armenian settlements in its occupied territories. Before entertaining this request, UN representatives asked the OSCE Minsk Group – representatives from Russia, the United States and France who have been tasked by the OSCE with mediation of the conflict – to organize a fact-finding mission to the territories in question. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan supported the mission's work.

In February, ten OSCE representatives from Finland, Italy, Sweden and Germany spent a week examining Azerbaijan's claims, concentrating on the districts surrounding Karabakh. In mid-March, the fact-finding mission released its report. This time, Armenian representatives had reason to celebrate – the mission did not substantiate the majority of Azerbaijan's claims. Although the presence of ethnic Armenia settlers was found in the seven districts visited,³The Fact-Finding Mission concluded that the overwhelming majority of settlers are displaced persons from various parts of Azerbaijan, notably, from Subhuman (Goranboy), Get ashen (Chaikent) – now under Azerbaijani control – and Sumgait and Baku.² The mission also stated, ³There is no clear organized resettlement, no non-voluntary resettlement, no recruitment,² although the Karabakh authorities did admit to assisting some of the settlers. The mission

placed the number of settlers at approximately 16,000 as opposed to the 25,000-35,000 currently claimed by Azerbaijan. And, most important, ³most settlers interviewed by the Fact-Finding mission expressed a desire to return to areas from which they fled Š .² (7) The mission also noted the difficult humanitarian conditions of all refugees from the conflict – many of whom continue to live in tents, abandoned rail cars and dilapidated buildings. This issue, as well as a prevalence of malnutrition among refugees, was also noted in the PACE report.

So where does this leave Azerbaijan and Armenia? Exactly where they were six months ago, which is exactly where they were 10 years ago. Despite the attempts by Azerbaijan to generate interest in the Karabakh conflict, and to receive support for its desire to retake control of at least some districts surrounding Karabakh, the OSCE Minsk Group Fact-Finding Report will help Armenia claim legitimacy for its control of seven districts bordering Karabakh. This claimed legitimacy then will contribute to a continued political stalemate, and the seeming belief of some – perhaps even within the Minsk Group – that the status quo is the best option currently available .

Azerbaijan has not helped its case with regular suggestions of increased military spending and the possible use of force. Azeri leaders must understand that this rhetoric can only strengthen the resolve of Armenia and Karabakh to maintain as much territory as possible. But perhaps that is part of the point. While the country's leaders would have been pleased to have the international community force Armenia to back down in some way, and while they favor the appearance of action, they are not prepared to move a millimeter toward compromise themselves. In a year that will see difficult parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan, and the possibility of a strong challenge from the opposition, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the one real unifying factor available to the government.

Azeri leaders undoubtedly would have loved to see Armenia condemned for illegal settlements in occupied territories, but the alternative – their continued ability to demonstrate ³strength² by loudly threatening a hated enemy – may be just as welcome. It is questionable, however, whether the fourteen families mourning their sons this month, and the future families who may have to do the same, would agree.

Source Notes:

(1) Jamestown Foundation's Eurasia Daily Monitor, 16 Mar 05 via (www.Jamestown.org).

(2) Agence France Press (AFP) reported that six people were killed in ceasefire breaches in 2004. AFP, 12:23 GMT, 18 Mar 05 via (www.bakutoday.net).

(3) Nezavisimaya gazeta, 14 Feb 05; Global News Wire - Asia Africa Intelligence Wire, via Lexis-Nexis.

(4) RFE/RL, 31 Mar 05 via (www.bakutoday.net).

(5) Arovot, 29 Mar 05 BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

(6) RFE/RL, 25 Jan 05 via (www.rferl.org).

(7) Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia on the Results of the OSCE Minsk Group Fact-Finding Mission, 17 Mar 05 via (www.armeniaemb.org); and Azerbaijani Space TV, 18 Mar 05 BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Fabian Adami

"Tulip" revolution: what next?

Two weeks ago, second-round voting took place in Kyrgyzstan's parliamentary elections. Protests had been occurring throughout the electoral process, but in the wake of a heavy defeat for the opposition in the second round, they

intensified. Although the numbers involved were significant, the demonstrations were largely centered in the southern part of the country, specifically the cities of Osh and Jalalabad. Bishkek and the northern part of the country remained largely unaffected. (1)

President Askar Akaev and his government had been threatening to use force to ensure 'stability' since the start of the election period, and on 20 March, that threat was made good when OMON troops stormed several buildings in the aforementioned cities. The crackdown did not have the desired effect as the protests simply moved onto other locations, including airports and city suburbs. (2)

On March 22, President Akaev announced his willingness to negotiate with the opposition. It seemed evident that the offer was rooted in two beliefs: first, that dialogue could prevent the northward spread of protests; and secondly, that he could capitalize on the disconnected structure of the various opposition factions in the country.

If this was indeed the President's calculation, then it was in part mistaken. On March 24, huge protests erupted in Bishkek. Demonstrators, meeting almost no resistance from Security Forces, stormed the government compound, taking over the White House (President Akaev's residence), as well as one of the country's major state-run media outlets, KyrgyzTV. (3) President Akaev's location was unclear at the time, although it was later confirmed that he had fled to Moscow. (4)

What was immediately clear was that the protests in Bishkek were not organized, but rather were a spontaneous outburst of anger at the regime. There was no evidence of centralized leadership, and the protests were not peaceful. Pitched battles occurred between pro-and anti-presidential mobs on the streets of Bishkek, and there was widespread looting in the city for several days. (5)

Hours after the White House was stormed, Kyrgyzstan's outgoing Parliament met in Bishkek to appoint an interim leadership. After several hours of voting, Kurmanbek Bakiev, former Prime Minister and leader of the People's Movement of Kyrgyzstan was appointed interim Prime Minister and President, while Feliks Kulov, the former vice-President (released from prison the same day), was appointed to head the country's law enforcement and security bodies. Roza Otunbayeva was made interim Foreign Minister. (6)

The first order of business for the new government was to attempt to restore order. To that end, Kulov and Bakiev made television appearances requesting calm, and insisting that vandals and looters would be prosecuted if arrested. (7) On the 25th, the government apparently announced a curfew designed to clear the streets, and there were reports that a large police presence was visible again in the city. (8) The curfew was apparently a successful tactic, since by the end of the weekend the capital reportedly was calm again. (9)

Having restored order, the Interim government was faced with the question of legitimacy. According to the Kyrgyz Constitution, new Presidential or Parliamentary elections cannot be held or viewed as legitimate until the incumbent President resigns officially. (10) Akaev, residing as a "guest" of President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, stated that the protests in Bishkek amounted to little more than an "anticonstitutional coup," and insisted that that he remained the country's sole legitimate leader. (11) Akaev's statement was clearly little more than bravado—realistically, there is no chance that his return to office would be countenanced in Kyrgyzstan. But Akaev's statement presented the Interim government with a problem, since Presidential elections had already been scheduled by Bakiev and the legislature for 26 June. (12) If new elections were to be legitimate, a resolution would have to be reached quickly.

A few days later, Akaev changed his position. Speaking in an interview on Ort TV in Russia, the ousted President announced that he was prepared to resign, if given "appropriate guarantees," (13) including "my personal safety and compliance with the law on guarantees of presidential activity." (14) During the same interview, Akaev made clear that he would not negotiate with Bakiev or Kulov, but only with delegates from the newly elected Parliament, led by Speaker Omurbek Tekebayev. (15)

A delegation led by Tekebayev departed for Moscow to negotiate with Akaev; after three hours of talks at the Kyrgyz Embassy in Moscow, Akaev announced that he and Tekebayev had agreed upon a formal, "good and historic" document for his resignation, which became effective on April 4. (16) Officially at least, Akaev is now able to return to Kyrgyzstan as a private citizen, but it seems unlikely that he will do so given the likelihood of "mass unrest" should he return. (17)

Campaigning for the Presidential election to be held in June has already begun. The race is widely believed to come down to two candidates: Bakiev and Kulov. While Bakiev already has announced his candidacy (18), Kulov must wait for a Supreme Court judgment before he can announce his candidacy. In 2001, Kulov, in what was viewed as a political case, was convicted and imprisoned for economic crimes. Under Kyrgyz law, he cannot run for office until cleared. His lawyers have appealed the Supreme Court. As yet, no ruling has been given. (19)

If his name is cleared and he decides to run, a presidential campaign between Kulov and Bakiev is likely to be unpleasant and fractious, since Kulov draws most of his support from the North, while Bakiev's power center is the South. (20) Additionally, there are professional differences between the two opposition leaders: on 30 March Kulov, stating that stability had been restored, resigned from his post at the head of law enforcement agencies. (21) The real reason

behind Kulov's resignation apparently lies in serious disagreements with Bakiev over appointments in the interim government. (22)

In spite of these professional differences, Bakiev is striving to ensure that presidential elections are as democratic as possible. Two days after Kulov's resignation, Roza Otunbayeva announced that Bakiev had signed into effect the creation of a State Commission for the "political rehabilitation of Feliks Kulov," because he had been widely viewed as a political prisoner of the Akaev administration. (23)

The situation in Kyrgyzstan remains extremely tenuous. If a two-horse race between Kulov and Bakiev does emerge, there is the potential of a serious North-South split in the country. But the potential for a more serious "resolution" to Kyrgyzstan's leadership battle is also open: During Akaev's Presidency, Kulov served as Interior Minister (1991-1992), and Head of the National Security Service (1997-1998), successor agency to the KGB, (24) and he reportedly commands their loyalty. (25) At this point in time, the possibility that these agencies could intervene on Kulov's behalf cannot be discounted, but it must be stated that such an intervention would probably open the country to civil war.

It seems unlikely that Bakiev or Kulov are willing to risk a divided country. It is possible therefore that some form of power-sharing agreement between the two candidates will be negotiated, whereby the loser in an election receives the Prime Ministerial post, while the other receives the Presidency.

Uzbek opposition takes heart from Kyrgyz events.

Three months after parliamentary elections in which no opposition candidates or parties were allowed to participate, (26) a leading opposition figure has spoken out about conditions in Uzbekistan, and the lessons being drawn from Kyrgyzstan's "Tulip revolution." Speaking at an undisclosed location in Tashkent, Nigora Hidoyatova, leader of Ozod Dehqonlar (Free Peasants Party) stated that

she believed that revolutions would have a ripple effect, spreading to other Central Asian countries. (27) Hidoyatova's party is viewed as a serious threat by President Islam Karimov's government because it represents a sector of the population which is extremely critical of Karimov, namely the farmers. Hidoyatova recently claimed that agriculture in the country represented little more than "feudal slavery." (28) In recent weeks, the government has cracked down on farmers, because they were planning to meet near Tashkent to form a National Association of Farmers to operate in conjunction with the Free Peasants Party. (29) What is bound to give the regime more food for thought is the revelation that Ozod Dehqonlar apparently received a delegation from Vitkor Yushchenko's Our Ukraine Party last November, which provided them with "training" and "technical support" designed to help with future campaigns. (30)

It has been suggested by some sources that there is to be a serious crackdown in Uzbekistan for the next year in advance of Presidential election slated for 2007. (31) If this is true, Ozod Dehqonlar's leadership is likely to be one of the first groups targeted for arrest by the National Security Service.

Source Notes:

(1) See NIS Observed: An Analytical Review, Volume X, Number 4 (25 Mar 05).

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.

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- (9) Ibid.
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- (20) TCA-Kyrgyzstan, 1 Apr 05; The Times of Central Asia via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (21) AKIpress News, 30 Mar 05; AKIpress News Agency via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

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(24) Feliks Kulov biography, via RFE/RL;
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(25) "Two Leaders of 'Tulip Revolution' Cannot Share Power in Kyrgyzstan", Izvestiya, 30 Mar 05, FBIS-SOV-2005-0330 via World News Connection.

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(27) TCA-Uzbekistan, 28 Mar 05, The Times of Central Asia via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(28) Delovaya nedelya Website, Almaty in Russian, 25 Mar 05; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(29) Ibid.

(30) Weekday Magazine-Uzbekistan, 17 Mar 05; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(31) Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in Uzbek, 18 Mar 05; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

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