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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

Putin-Shoigu share fruitful relationship

Emergencies Minister and Number 2 man in the poll-lucky United Russia party, Sergei Shoigu, has proven himself to be a trusted ally to President Putin. Although he was briefly considered a competitor to Putin in the Yel'tsin succession, he is now clearly on board Putin's platform as his pro-Presidential party, United Russia, coasted to victory in Sunday's election. (For election details, please see Domestic Issues below)

Shoigu, who has gained a fair measure of personal popularity through his work as the "johnny-on-the-spot" Emergencies Minister, may soon find himself with an even more substantial presidential appointment to consider, especially with all those rumors swirling about the ambitions and fate of P.M. Mikhail Kasianov.

Although Putin may claim that he felt no alarm over the voting process or results, he did admit that, because of Shoigu, he, and his whole family, was up all night on the eve of the elections. You see Shoigu gave the Putin family a puppy, Koney. The night before the elections, the Shoigu-Putin mix had puppies of its own: eight in all, six black and two pale. (THE TIMES (LONDON), 8 Dec 03 via Lexis-Nexis)

More changes to apparat structures

President Putin has created yet another commission on regional relations. The new entity, which is meant to subsume a previous commission (although, which one is not exactly clear), will be a presidential commission and will be led by the new First Deputy of the Kremlin administration, Dmitri Kozak. Kozak has been

tasked with preparing proposals for the improvement of regional-federal cooperation, to set out the powers of federal organs in relation to the regions, and, possibly, to define the limitation of powers entrusted to the President's Plenipotentiary Representatives. (ITAR-TASS. 1 Dec 03 via Lexis-Nexis) How would you like to be the leader of a region that voted heavily for the Communist Party when Kozak calls?

Speaking of which, Anatoli Chubais, in an interview prior to the parliamentary elections (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 26 Nov 03, pp. 1,8; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis), claimed that the widespread fear that the Kremlin was somehow capable of rigging elections was not, in his experience, a realistic concern.

"Almost everyone in Russia is convinced that the outcomes of elections are decided in the Kremlin, and that's where the order to count votes in a certain way comes from. That's stupid. (...) In terms of real political techniques, there is the possibility of results being manipulated at a low level, at the level of districts. But the higher the level, the more difficult it is to do that."

Good thing Putin will have his man in charge of the regions come presidential election time.

In a revealing, if somewhat bitter interview with Novaya gazeta (27 Nov 03 via JRL#7441, 28 Nov 03), Kremlin ideologue, Gleb Pavlovsky, also discussed the possibilities for electoral fraud. Again, the regional factor appears as the more likely source of tampering than the center. "The term used in the 1999 elections was the "Kalmykia model" -- when a certain result is specified in advance, before vote-counting begins. But this is impossible at most electoral commissions; there are observers, after all. No, they use more refined methods. For example, let's say certain districts produce unwelcome vote-counting results; then those results can be declared invalid...." Pavlovsky concluded that most of the "interference" in the electoral process doesn't occur during the vote-counting, "it happens before that." (Ibid.)

Chubais moved on to address the traditional election eve carping at the Government and Prime Minister Kasianov in particular, in his *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (Ibid.) interview. Attacks on Kasianov from the Deputy Prosecutor-General (Kolesnikov) would have, back in the days of the "bureaucratic traditions of what is now the old [meaning Yel'tsin] regime" resulted in either the filing of criminal charges or the "dismissal of the deputy prosecutor," Kolesnikov. To a question about the possible reformation of the government after the parliamentary elections, Chubais responded: "You'd have to ask Shoigu." (Ibid.)

Chubais is an interesting political character, who may find soon enough he has outlived his usefulness to the Kremlin. A holdover not just from the Yel'tsin era, but the "Young Turks" Yel'tsin era, Chubais must be on about his ninth political life. His recent staunch nationalism and proclamations of "liberal imperialism" may reflect an attempt to curry favor with a hard-line Putin elite. We should have a clear sense of his status in the new Putin era in this fraught time between Chubais' electoral defeat with the SPS and Putin's re-election as Russia's President. Look for new appointments to the UES Board or expanded portfolios for anti-Kasianov forces in the government as signals of Chubais' political health this winter.

End of the year review of the Kremlin's well-heeled skiers

In case you were wondering not only *kto kovo*, but *kto igraet*, President Putin and his family are avid skiers who spend much of their winter playtime on the slopes. Who joins them in the tow line? Well, according to *Rossiyskaya gazeta* (22 Nov 03; FBIS-WEU-2003-1125 via World News Connection), Anatoli Kvashnin, Chief of the General Staff, accompanies the President slope-side, as does Aluminum kingpin Oleg Deripaska and Moscow Oblast' Governor Boris Gromov. Other apparatchik skiers? Dmitri Kozak and Vladimir Kozhin, and, from the Government's team, Finance Minister Aleksei Kudrin and Procurator-General Vladimir Ustinov.

Apparently, Putin made a point to get Prime Minister Mikhail Kasianov on the slopes, giving him a gift of skis last year (the P.M. now enjoys skiing in Slovenia). This year however, Putin's ski companion at Baikalskaya in Irkutsk was the redoubtable Sergei Shoigu.

Those said to have spent a bit of time together "skiing in the hills" around Moscow? SPS heavyweights Boris Nemtsov, Irina Khakamada and Anatoli Chubais. Something tells me they may have to venture even farther afield this winter.

Russian Federation: Security Services

By Fabian Adami

Why did the FSB not prevent the Stavropol train bombing?

On Friday morning 5 December, terrorists struck at Russia's rail network for the third time in as many months. A commuter train traveling between Mineralniye Vody and Kislovodsk in the Stavropol region exploded as it pulled into Yessentuki station. Fourteen persons were thrown from the train by the blast; there were 42 fatalities and 170 other casualties, most of whom were students traveling to University. (AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, 6 Dec 03 via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Extrapolating from the variety of stories in the Russian press, the bombing seems to have been botched, resulting in a suicide attack that may not have been planned as such. According to Izvestia, FSB sapper teams working at the site of the explosion discovered the body of one of the bombers, who reportedly had several hand-grenades strapped to his legs. (IZVESTIA PRESS DIGEST, 6 Dec 03 via ISI Emerging Markets Database) The reports from other agencies such as

Agence France-Presse and Prime-Tass vary slightly, claiming that the grenades were found near, rather than on the body.

FSB Director Nikolai Patrushev has stated that the attack was carried out by three women and one man. Patrushev added that an accomplice had been filming the attack from a nearby car, and that two of the women jumped off the moving train seconds before the blast, leaving the others behind to die. FSB explosives experts have since concluded that the bomb produced an explosion roughly equivalent to between six and ten pounds of TNT. (IZVESTIA PRESS DIGEST, 6 Dec 03, via ISI Emerging Markets Database) There has been no suggestion that the FSB captured the two women who allegedly leaped from the train, nor has the accomplice, who was alleged to be recording the incident, been confirmed to be in custody. Details of how the FSB became aware of these three conspirators have not been forthcoming.

The Russian media did not question that the attack was carried out by Chechens, or that it was timed to cause maximum disruption and publicity prior to Sunday's parliamentary elections. Based on a story carried in Izvestia however, a more serious question needs to be asked: namely, did the FSB and Putin allow the explosion to happen in the hopes that it would affect Sunday's election results?

Izvestia has claimed that "FSB officers who were working at the site of the tragedy did not hide the fact that they had received operational information at the end of last week about terrorist acts being planned in southern Russia." (BBC MONITORING, 6 Dec 03 via www.bbc.co.uk/news)

Similar allegations have been made previously against Putin and the FSB. In 2001, Lieutenant Colonel Aleksandr Litvinenko, an FSB defector to Britain, published a book alleging that the FSB had carried out the 1999 apartment bombings in Moscow in order to provide Putin with a pretext for launching war in Chechnya, enhancing his electoral chances in 2000. (See *The NIS Observed*,

Vol. VI, No. 14, 12 Sept 01) Although these allegations have been neither proved nor disproved, the apparent ease with which the Chechen groups have been able to strike raises serious questions regarding the effectiveness or complicity of Russia's Security Services.

Former FSB Director on Georgia revolution

On 30 November, an interview with Nikolai Kovalyov, former head of the FSB and current deputy chairman of the Security Committee of the Duma, was aired by Russia Channel in its weekly news program, Vesti Nedeli. Kovalyov stated during the interview that he saw clear parallels between the toppling last month of President Shevardnadze, and the overthrow of the Milosevic government in Yugoslavia three years ago. Specifically, Kovalyov alleged that "promising politicians who could help bring about the scenario of a velvet revolution were singled out," and that they were taken to U.S.-funded training camps, 70 kilometers from Belgrade, where training was provided. Kovalyov further asserted that it was known to his committee that Mikhail Saakashvili spent six months in Yugoslavia after Milosevic's removal, and that he visited the training camps. (RTR RUSSIA TV, 30 Nov 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Kovalyov claimed that his allegations were based on a deep investigation into the events in Georgia carried out by the Security Committee. The evidence provided however, is circumstantial at best: Kovalyov credits what is little more than his suspicion that law enforcement officials in Tblisi had withdrawn from the demonstrations "as if under orders, even though they had been given the strictest instructions from the Georgian President to restore order." (Ibid.) Secondly, Kovalyov cited his belief that the appointment of the new U.S. Ambassador to Tblisi, Richard Miles, was no coincidence. Miles was Ambassador to Yugoslavia at the time of Milosevic's removal, and prior to that "worked in Azerbaijan during the 1992 coup." (Ibid.)

Kovalyov's fears regarding covert U.S. involvement in the Georgian situation are worrisome in and of themselves. But they are made even more so by comments made at the end of the interview: Kovalyov alleges that "politicians from other CIS States" were trained in Yugoslavia, and that these "representatives from Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, and Azerbaijan" participated in Georgia's revolution. The fact that these countries have been singled out specifically by a man of Kovalyov's importance provides an insight into the "liberal imperial" (or not so "liberal") mindset penetrating the uppermost levels of the Russian establishment.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Scott Dullea

Moscow moves to shape Georgia's future

Moscow has been one of the most visible outside players in the recent events in Tblisi, Georgia. Although Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov has declared that Russia's task in Georgia was "to prevent violence," it is clear Moscow is more concerned with enhancing its influence in the former Soviet republic. The "velvet revolution" may have brought a temporary closure to the tensions, but with elections scheduled for 4 January to decide on the permanent new leadership in Georgia, internal and external maneuvering to shape the outcome is fully underway.

As the demonstrations against former President Eduard Shevardnadze were gaining momentum in late November, Igor Ivanov arrived in Tblisi for talks with him. Shortly thereafter, Shevardnadze resigned, and Moscow immediately began sending signals to remind Tblisi of the importance of its relationship with its northern neighbor. The first of them came when Russian President Vladimir Putin stated, "According to approximate figures from Georgian experts, the total value of money flowing from Russia to Georgia, both officially and unofficially, is about 2bn dollars a year. This is much greater than the total volume of foreign aid the

country receives." (CHANNEL ONE TV, 24 Nov 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

The Kremlin presumably is concerned that opposition figure Mikhail Saakashvili, who is also the leading candidate in the upcoming elections, is not submissive to Russia. Therefore, Moscow appears to have begun applying pressure to Georgia. One of the levers the Kremlin has pulled involves its influence in Georgia's three secessionist regions of Abkhazia, Adjara and South Ossetia. Between 26 and 28 November, representatives from the three regions met in Moscow with the Russian foreign minister. The meetings did not go unnoticed by acting Georgian President Nino Burjanadze, who expressed her concern that Russia would hold such potentially destabilizing meetings without first informing Georgian officials. (NEW YORK TIMES, 1 Dec 03 via Johnson's Russia List (JRL) #7445, 1 Dec 03)

Intensifying Moscow's rhetoric was Ivanov's statement on 29 November that any attempt by the new Georgian leadership against Abkhazia could "pose a real threat to the territorial integrity of the country." Although Ivanov in the same statement reiterated Moscow's recognition that Abkhazia is part of Georgia, he reminded Tblisi of the Kremlin's concern for the many Russian citizens living there. (ITAR-TASS, 29 Nov 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database) In the last Soviet census, 1989, only 91,000 ethnic Abkhaz, and only 74,000 Russians were in Abkhazia, as compared with 242,000 ethnic Georgians, almost all of whom are now refugees. Moreover, there was a motion in the Russian parliament to begin a debate about annexing Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which, this time, was quickly voted down. (WWW.EURASIANET.ORG, 1 Dec 03; JRL # 7448, 2 Dec 03) If the message wasn't clear enough, Interfax quoted a senior member of the Russian General Staff who restated Russia's position that the withdrawal of its approximately 5,000 troops from Georgia would still take ten more years. (AFP, 26 Nov 03; JRL #7438, 26 Nov 03)

Shortly after the change of power in Tblisi, the new leadership requested emergency energy aid from Moscow. The Russian suppliers, which have a monopoly on energy imports to Georgia, reportedly have the capability to double those supplies. They are, however, unwilling to increase the supply until Georgia settles its unpaid energy debts. (ITAR-TASS, 29 Nov 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database) But according to Moscow, Georgia never specified its special energy request, and on 29 November the Russian foreign ministry declared energy issues "almost completely resolved." (ITAR-TASS, 29 Nov 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database) On the same day, Russian energy suppliers cut off electricity to half of Georgia for 12 hours, citing necessary repairs. Such a controlled blackout was no doubt taken by the Georgians as a not-so-friendly reminder from Moscow of the leverage at its disposal. (WWW.GAZETA.RU; www.eurasianet.org via JRL #7448, 1 Dec 03)

The Guardian reported (1 Dec 03; JRL #7445, 1 Dec 03) that Russia's military counterintelligence unit, the GRU, is working on a plan to sabotage the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline running through Georgia. Such a report, in and of itself, regardless of the veracity of the story, can have a significant impact on the new authorities in Tblisi as they consider Georgia's future course. [For more on the Georgian elections, see the "Caucasus" below]

While Moscow has been jockeying for position in Georgia, it has been simultaneously active in the whole southern Caucasus region. On 26 November, First Deputy Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Trubnikov (formerly of the SVR Foreign Intelligence Service) visited Baku to discuss the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and issues of Russo-Azeri economic and energy cooperation. Earlier in the month, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov had suggested the establishment of a joint group of Russian and Armenian forces to be stationed in Armenia as part of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. (MEDIAMAX, 23 Nov 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Azerbaijan, fresh from the

instability of its recent elections, is likely to understand the warnings inherent in the Russian maneuvers.

Primakov and Ivanov double-team Warsaw

Moscow continues to try to set the conditions for its relations with the soon-to-be European Union (E.U.) members. After recently suggesting separate standards for Baltic countries despite their impending E.U. accession. (See The NIS Observed, Vol. VIII, No. 19, 21 Nov 03) Russia seems to be attempting similar measures with Poland.

Stage one of a Russian foreign ministry visit to Warsaw began on 24 November with a meeting between Yevgeni Primakov, former Director of the SVR, then Foreign Minister, now the president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation (CCI) and his Polish counterpart. The negotiations resulted in an agreement between the two chambers on several technical business matters and business information sharing. The CCI's official news website referred to improving Russian-Polish trade figure totals: 2001-\$5.1 billion, 2002-\$5.7 billion, first eight months of 2003-\$4.3 billion. It acknowledged, however, Polish disappointment that the trade was so imbalanced in favor of Russian exports to Poland. (eng.tpprf.ru/ru/main/news)

For stage two, on 25 November, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov arrived in Warsaw where he met with his Polish counterpart Foreign Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz. Though neither media reports nor the CCI website officially connected the Primakov visit with that of his successor in the Foreign Ministry, the economic nature of the talks and the mere 24 hours of separation suggest the visits were coordinated. Ivanov, prior to his visit, stated his concern that when Poland joins the E.U. in May 2004, there will be a sort of "legal vacuum" in Polish-Russian trade and economic relations. In this regard the Russian foreign minister said he planned to propose a "transitory period" for Poland before it

"joined the mechanism of the joint E.U.-Russia cooperation council." (PAP, 25 Nov 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Warsaw, however, wants an immediate start to E.U. accession and, therefore, has already informed Moscow that it will renounce the Russian-Polish agreement on trade and economic cooperation as of 30 April 2004. Poland still has some requests of Russia, as it is apparently not yet completely ready to abandon the relationship: Warsaw has suggested it would prefer to maintain its Polish-owned supermarkets in Russia and would like to continue the work of the joint Russian-Polish commission on economic affairs. (PAP, 25 Nov 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Another Russian concern raised at the talks was the possibility of moving United States military bases into Poland. Although Cimoszewicz said Poland had not so far received such a request from Washington, he did not rule out the possibility. In response, Ivanov simply said he expects Russia's security concerns to be considered in the matter. (PAP, 26 Nov 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database) This reminder by Ivanov may be a sign that Moscow realizes that such moves among NATO allies are inevitable.

At the conclusion of the visit, both ministers expressed dissatisfaction with the progress of the talks: The main stumbling blocks were historical issues for which the so-called Polish-Russian Group for the Difficult Issues was created. This group, formed in 2001 explores historical disputes between Warsaw and Moscow, including the issue of Poles who were deported to Siberia during the Stalin era. (POLISH RADIO 1, 26 Nov 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Poland appears unwilling to bow to Russia's requests for a gradual transformation from a bilateral economic relationship to one subordinate to the E.U.-Russian council. Though Moscow may have stopped fighting against NATO

expansion, it is likely to continue to use all the diplomatic and economic tools it has available to establish special bilateral economic relationships with the upcoming E.U. members before it's too late.

Kyoto—more mixed messages

In late November at a meeting between Russian and Japanese deputy ministers, Tokyo, recognizing that Russia still holds the key to the survival of the climate treaty, urged Russia quickly to ratify the Kyoto protocol. (KYODO, 21 Nov 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database) The United Nations climate talks, which got underway in Milan on 1 December, were shrouded in an atmosphere of gloom considering Russia's apparent abandonment of the treaty evident in remarks by Russian President Vladimir Putin in October (See *The NIS Observed*, Vol. VIII, No. 16, 10 Oct 03), compounded by the recent statements by Putin's top advisor on Kyoto, Andrei Illarionov, that "Russia [would not] ratify the Kyoto protocol in its present form." (RTR, 2 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

However, new hope was born when Russian Deputy Economic Minister Mukhamed Tsikhanov announced at the Milan talks that Russia was "moving towards ratification" of the protocol. Illarionov however, quickly dismissed the deputy economic minister's statement as derived from old information. (REUTERS, 4 Dec 03; JRL #7452, 4 Dec 03)

Officially, only the Russian Duma can reject the Kyoto protocol (THE ECONOMIST GLOBAL AGENDA, 3 Dec 03; JRL #7450, 3 Dec 03), and until that happens, Kyoto supporters may continue to believe that their work is not in vain. If Kyoto truly is dead, then why hasn't Moscow formally finished it off? Moreover, the wording of Illarionov's statements indicates that Moscow believes that Kyoto could still be modified to suit Russia. The mixed signals might be a sign of poor coordination between government offices or between the government and the president; it could also mean that Moscow is using Kyoto as a bargaining chip,

testing the waters for other possible concessions before abandoning the protocol for good.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Kate Martin

ELECTIONS

Polling upset for YABLOKO, SPS ... and democracy

Preliminary results indicate, to little surprise, that the 7 December elections were slanted to encourage the rise of one party in the State Duma that will guarantee President Vladimir Putin as easy a time as possible to pass legislation. The administration's role in the elections, in fact, earned criticism from the United States and Europe. Nevertheless, United Russia, often referred to as "Putin's party," now can officially change its sobriquet to the "party of power." United Russia polled 31.7 percent in the parliamentary elections, with 98 percent of the returns received, giving the party a clear victory over its challengers for Duma seats. Candidates from the Communist Party (KPRF), Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's ultranationalist Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), and the Rodina (Motherland) election bloc led by Sergei Glazyev and Dmitri Rogozin, will fill the rest of the 225 party list seats up for grabs, with 12.7%, 11.6% and 9.1% of the votes, respectively. (BBC NEWS, 2149 GMT, 8 Dec 03 via news.bbc.co.uk)

It appears as though the two parties that consistently teetered on the verge of the five-percent requirement to obtain party list seats—YABLOKO, led by Grigori Yavlinsky, and the Union of Right Forces (SPS), led by Boris Nemtsov—could not overcome the hurdle; neither could their leaders surmount their personal animosity long enough to create an election bloc that might have catapulted them

over the minimum-vote obstacle. (TRUD, 22 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1124 via World News Connection)

United Russia's blazing success was expected by all candidates, including several who charged that the Putin administration, and state-controlled media, had given unfair preference to the party. (See, for example, ITAR-TASS, 24 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1124, and Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 25 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1125 via World News Connection) Central Election Commission chairman Aleksandr Veshnyakov admitted that certain parties were mentioned more often than others, but this was a result, he implied, of an underdeveloped democratic "culture" rather than intentional intervention in the campaign. (ITAR-TASS, 1545 GMT, 28 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1128 via World News Connection) All in all, Veshnyakov reported that he was pleased with how the media handled the electoral process.

Administrative partiality could not be denied. Certainly, Putin did what he could, including praising United Russia in a nationally televised interview a week before the election. "I am very certain that as we discuss the balance of political forces in the current State Duma that made it possible to achieve certain results in parliament's work, we must be aware that the balance is largely owed to the centrist parties, in the first place, United Russia," Putin said. (Legally, members of the executive branch are prohibited from intervening in legislature elections by word or deed.) The president added that the party was the political force he had relied on for the past four years, although he himself was not a member of the party. (ITAR-TASS, 1336 GMT, 28 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1128 via World News Connection) [Not surprisingly, United Russia's leader, Boris Gryzlov, announced on 25 November that the party would nominate Putin in the 14 March 2004 presidential elections. (ITAR-TASS, 1129 GMT, 25 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1125 via World News Connection)]

In addition to such blatant campaigning (and mutual backscratching), one newspaper reported that the Federal Government Communications and Information Agency (FAPSI) had conducted a poll in the Urals region which demonstrated a low level of support for United Russia, compared with the Communist Party. (NOVAYA GAZETA, 13 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1117 via World News Connection) Interestingly, discussion in the article centered on possible reasons for the party's poor showing; apparently few were alarmed that a government agency (descended from the former KGB and still greatly occupied with "security issues") would be so involved in pre-election polling.

The campaign process did manage to alarm international observers, however. The elections results were deemed "overwhelmingly distorted," indicating a "regression in the democratization of this country" by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which had hundreds of observers in Russia for the polling. (BBC NEWS, 1242 GMT, 8 Dec 03 via news.bbc.co.uk) The White House said the U.S. shared concerns about the election. (BBC NEWS, 2149 GMT, 8 Dec 03 via news.bbc.co.uk)

The OSCE had sent both long-term advisors into the country to follow the entire election campaign and shorter-term visitors to monitor polling stations, according to OSCE deputy chairman Rita Suessmuth. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 2 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1202 via World News Connection) Suessmuth praised the professional preparation for the elections by Veshnyakov's office, but warned that there remained a need for vigilance. "The elections to the Duma are special, since we at the OSCE believe that they are actually the prologue to the future presidential elections in March 2004. Consequently, we are working in close contact with all political forces without exception. We are attentively listening to their problems and complaints at all levels," she said. Yet OSCE officials were unwilling at that point to note too many specific problems, aside from "feeble interest" on the part of voters, skepticism regarding the results and an obvious bias by state media. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 3 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1203

via World News Connection) That reticence ended, however, when the results came in.

Meanwhile, as international observers traveled to Russia for the parliamentary elections, the CEC was sending out observers of its own. Two working groups were directed, to Bashkortostan and Tatarstan, to supervise the preparation for, as well as the actual conduct of, elections in those regions. While Bashkortostan's elections have warranted extra CEC attention, not to mention direct intervention in the registration process for parliamentary and presidential candidates, CEC working groups also were sent to St. Petersburg, and the Leningrad, Volgograd and Vologda regions, as well as Krasnodar Territory and Chuvashia, Veshnyakov said. (ITAR-TASS, 2032 GMT, 18 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1118 via World News Connection)

These observers were not meant to be focusing exclusively on the State Duma contests, as other elections were held in many areas simultaneously with the parliamentary polling. Gubernatorial elections were scheduled for Vologda, Kirov, Moscow, Novosibirsk, Orenburg, Sakhalin, Tver, Tambov, and Yaroslavl Oblasts; regional assembly elections were held in Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Kalmykia, Mordovia, and Volgograd, Vologda, and Ulyanovsk Oblasts. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 27 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1128 via World News Connection) Final results on those contests, as well as the State Duma's single-seat constituencies, will be available later in the week.

Aside from United Russia's success, other election results were somewhat unexpected. To be sure, SPS remained on the brink of the minimum vote limit throughout the campaign. And YABLOKO's downfall was foreseen by at least one newspaper, which attributed the party's loss of support during the election campaign to several factors, including internal bickering and the near-constant personality battles with Nemtsov that helped to prevent the two parties from merging into a viable election bloc. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 22 Nov 03; FBIS-

SOV-2003-1125 via World News Connection) Yet YABLOKO's longevity, and pre-election polling around the five-percent mark, were assumed by many to be strong enough factors to bring the party into the next Duma.

Rodina's triumph certainly exceeded all expectations. The party, led by Putin's envoy to Kaliningrad, Federation Council chairman Rogozin, and former KPRF deputy Glazyev, had been perceived as a Kremlin-backed attempt to peel away support from the KPRF. (THE NIS OBSERVED, 12 Sep 03) And, indeed, if it was such an attempt, then it worked, although it had looked, for much of the campaign, as if it would not. Surveys taken midway in the election campaign consistently placed the bloc behind United Russia, the KPRF, the LDPR, SPS, and YABLOKO. (ITAR-TASS, 20 Nov 03; FBIS- SOV-2003-1120, TRIBUNA, 22 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1124, IZVESTIYA, 25 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1125, and ITAR-TASS, 1928 GMT, 28 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1128 via World News Connection)

Kremlin backing did appear to be a primary factor in electoral success. United Russia's decision against participating in election debates clearly had no adverse effect on its level of support, although that decision garnered a lot of criticism from other parties as well as from Central Election Commission chairman Aleksandr Veshnyakov. Gryzlov had said the Russian people were tired of hearing about politics, and that may be the biggest reason behind United Russia's alleged success at the polls. Some surveys supported Gryzlov's contentions, indicating that many respondents would not have been swayed by candidate debates into changing their party vote. (ITAR-TASS, 0122 GMT, 22 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1122 via World News Connection)

Other, earlier surveys also had indicated that many Russians had little faith in their government, particularly the Duma. Those poll results hinted that many voters would select the "none of the above option," or not show up at all. (THE NIS OBSERVED, 12 Sep 03) Yet turnout, reportedly at about 56 percent, far

exceeded the 25 percent necessary to validate the results. Only 4.7 percent voted against all parties. (BBC NEWS, 2149 GMT, 8 Dec 03 via news.bbc.co.uk) So now the big question is, did voters choose because they were happy with the path President Putin and his party are taking, or because they think that the election process doesn't matter anyway? That's the question that will determine how far democracy goes in Russia.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Lt. Col. Kris Beasley and Paul Lyons

There's always a market for mini-vans...

While the United States is still the world's leading arms exporter, Russia's exports of \$4.6-\$4.7 billion in 2003 award it second place. According to Sergei Chemezov, deputy director of Rosoboronexport, the main Russian arms export enterprise, "Technical and electronic characteristics of our products are not as advanced as the American equivalent, but our machinery is easy to operate, more reliable and requires less maintenance." Chemezov, attending the Dubai Air Show 2003, went on to say that Russia participates in all the regional arms exhibitions in the Middle East because "...the Arab market is our most promising." Russian's order book, worth \$12 billion over the next three to four years, gives it a promising start to the second half of the decade. As has been the case since the Khrushchev era, Russia is using the sale of its weapons to help leverage its foreign policy in an area it continues to consider of significant strategic importance. However, there are two key differences between today's Russian arms sales and those of the Soviet past. First, Russian weapons sales today are usually cash deals at something approximating market price (although, as before, R&D costs are not included in the calculation, making Russian weapons appear significantly cheaper), because the Russian Federation relies on arms sales to augment its oil and natural resources sales for its hard currency and government revenues. (However, some of the recipients continue to run up

debts that Moscow occasionally writes off -- Ed.) Second, much like France in the 1960's and 1970's, Russia today is seen as a legitimate alternative around the world to U.S. dominance in the weapons arena, open for business to almost any country, regardless of ideology—although clearly, strategic interests still obtain. So, while American weapons may still be the best in the world in most categories, many states, for political as well as financial reasons, may choose to walk past the expensive, frill-laden American SUV and kick the tires on a stripped-down Russian mini-van. (RIA NOVOSTI, 8 Dec 03; <http://en.rian.ru/rian/>)

United Russia may have won, but Space Forces opened and closed the polls

Much of the news out of Russia this week has focused on the apparent electoral triumph of the United Russia party, strongly supported by President Vladimir Putin. Lost in the news are interesting data concerning the efforts of the Russian government to ensure that the military is involved in the process, including a reach for the stars that made the earth-bound portion of the Russian Space Forces both the first and last to vote in this 2003 Duma election.

According to Vyacheslav Davidenko, Chief of the Russian Space Forces press service, about 80,000 officers, their family members and civil personnel, were expected to vote at 106 polling stations, 12 of which are located in the former Soviet republics of Belarus, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. Russian troops in Ust-Kamchatskoye, the most remote northeastern settlement of Russia, started the voting at 2300 Moscow Time, Saturday, 6 December. Space Force service members in the westernmost Russian military facility, the recently activated Volga radar station, at Baranovichi, Belarus (See *The NIS Observed*, Vol. VIII, No. 16, 10 Oct 03) ended the voting one hour after the end of elections on Russian territory. At the main Russian space launch complex, Baikonaur Cosmodrome, located in Kazakhstan and leased by Russia, and in the nearby city of the same name, about 20,000 Russian citizens were expected to vote for Duma deputies, including troops of the Russian Space Forces and their families,

as well as civil personnel and employees of Rosaviakosmos, the main Russian space enterprise. According to a representative of the Baikonaur election commission, these citizens voted as though they were residents of the Odintsovo election district of the Moscow region. (RIA NOVOSTI, 6 Dec 03 via <http://en.rian.ru/rian/>)

Russian cosmonaut Aleksandr Kalery, aboard the International Space Station since October 20 as the Expedition 8 Flight Engineer (See *The NIS Observed*, Vol. VIII No. 17, 24 Oct 03), also was able to vote in the parliamentary elections. Unlike in the Soviet days, when the Salyut and later, Mir, crews voted openly in a special TV broadcast to the nation, Kalery was able to cast his vote "secretly" by proxy, through a person on the ground empowered to act on his behalf. According to Valeri Lyndin, an official spokesman of Russian Mission Control, "It is a tradition carried on since the time when the Russian Mir space station was in service." But as Lyndin wryly noted about the monolithic political past, "...there was a one-party political system in the country at that time, and all spacemen unanimously voted for the Communist Party." In a sign of better times, Kalery could cast his vote for whichever party appealed to him. (RIA NOVOSTI, 6 Dec 03 via <http://en.rian.ru/rian/>)

American citizens, including all service members stationed away from their homes, have been able to vote via absentee ballots for decades, and the U.S. Department of Defense is working with several states and counties to test internet-based, real-time voting for deployed troops to make voting even easier. But in Russia, these are new efforts to involve members of the armed forces in the process.

Transformation is in the eye of the beholder

In one of its last acts before adjourning for the elections, the Russian State Duma approved the draft 2004 federal budget in its third reading. Defense appropriations, at 20.33% of the entire budget or about 411.5 billion rubles,

exceed all other appropriations (an amount exceeding the 2003 appropriations by 66.947 million rubles). The open part of the defense budget constitutes only 2.69% of a (comparatively) small Russian GDP. (RIA NOVOSTI, 26 Nov 03 via CDI Russia Weekly, #284) So, Russia continues to attempt to equip, supply and train well over 1.1 million military (not including the hundreds of thousands of security service) troops without sufficient funds. President Putin recently chastised the Ministry of Defense and the military leadership, ordering them to get ready for a 21st century military campaign. (The RUSSIA JOURNAL, 18 Nov 03 via www.russiajournal.com) The huge anchor of the present force however, will prevent that scale of modernization for the next decade or two. As noted defense analyst Pavel Felgenhauer said recently, Russia either needs to expand its defense budget fourfold (unlikely) or reduce the number of troops to one-quarter of the current number (even more unlikely), in order to prevent the slow stagnation of the military. (The Moscow Times, 9 Dec 03 via www.themoscowtimes.com). It is this same conundrum that U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has been trying to solve since he took office. However, in my opinion, the key difference between the Russian and American efforts to transform is that the U.S. forces have already completed two of the key events needed to transform successfully to a 21st century force. First, we have already evolved from conscription to a fully professional, all-volunteer force that is manned by technically competent people (although, of course, even higher technical competency is needed now). And second, we have already reduced our force level to a point where we can sustain that force (feed, equip, train it and support the families) and still have money to develop and buy network-centric weapons and information systems. Russia still has a long way to go in both those areas.

The thoughts and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Dept. of Defense or the United States government.

NAVY

VELVET II

The latest rendition of a "Velvet Revolution," as the bloodless ouster of President Shevardnadze from power has been dubbed, creates diplomatic and foreign policy problems, as well as opportunities, for Russia. Moscow's press releases claim that Russia's military presence in Georgia and Moldova is intended to promote regional stability and bilateral benefit for both Georgia and Russia. Yet, given the Russian imperialistic undercurrents and competition from NATO and the U.S., among others, it remains to be seen how Russia will parlay the events in Georgia to its advantage.

At the center of the dispute between President Putin's neo-imperialist aims and the U.S./NATO stance rests the entrenchment of Russian forces within the former republics—and their role in regional security affairs and cooperation. With recent pronouncements by Secretary of State Powell at Brussels during the Russia-NATO Council and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's visit to Tblisi, the U.S. has sent a clear message of support to Georgia's new administration within Georgia and to the Moldovan government's attempts to oust Russian forces from the Transdnestr portion of the republic. The discord over the continued presence of Russian troops in Georgia and Moldova may be nearing its denouement.

The OSCE meeting in Maastrich provided a forum in which "Moscow essentially objected to having the OSCE play the go-between in a Trans-Dniester settlement. It insisted on its own settlement plan involving a continuation of the Russian military presence in the region. The document was turned down by Moldova at the last possible moment [at the bequest of] 'external forces'." (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 05 Dec 03; What the Paper's Say via ISI Emerging Markets Database) In addition, Secretary of State Powell voiced a largely uncontested concern on the part of the foreign ministers gathered in Maastricht that "obligations concerning withdrawal of the Russian troops from Moldova and

Georgia were not being fulfilled." (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 05 Dec 03; What the Paper's Say via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

Paralleling the Russian foreign ministry's reference to the "external" influences at work in the Moldova accords, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov claimed that discussions over the withdrawal of forces from the two military bases in Batumi and Akhalkalaki, Georgia, constitute an issue "to be decided within the framework of the bilateral relations between Russia and Georgia [and] given the political instability in Tbilisi, it was not the right time for starting such negotiations." (ITAR-TASS, 01 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1201 via World News Connection) Yet, leaving nothing to chance, acting Georgian President Nino Burjanadze commented that Secretary Rumsfeld's visit to Tbilisi is "an indication of the significance the United States attaches to developing relations with Georgia." She stated further that the "Georgian leadership still believes that strategic cooperation with the United States and integration with Euro-Atlantic structures is a priority for the country." (XINHUA NEWS AGENCY, 05 Dec 03 via Lexis-Nexis) Clearly, the issue of Russian troops in Georgia and Moldova continues to exacerbate the tension between Russia and the U.S. The new Georgian administration's statement and the Moldovan government's decision to craft its own framework for Russian troop withdrawal are flares designed to signal the West and warn off Russia. With Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Slovenia set to join the NATO ranks and some in Armenia and the Ukraine sharing this aspiration, Russia continues all the more to press for continuing its military presence within both Georgia and Moldova in violation of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty of 1999.

Adding to the military and diplomatic dynamic is U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's recent trip to Baku to bolster cooperation between the U.S. and Azerbaijan. Central to this effort is negotiation of agreements to establish an U.S. presence in Azerbaijan. Russian sources allege that this is part of a plan to relocate "troops from Germany and Japan to more strategically important regions

of the world. The U.S. military will be deployed in Bulgaria and Romania which will let the U.S. control the Balkans...[in addition] the U.S. created military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan last year. To all appearances, at present the U.S. seeks to advance to the Caucasus." (KOMMERSANT, 04 Dec 03; What the Paper's Say via ISI Emerging Markets Database)

After K-159: The nuclear dismantling dilemma

The potential threat of aging nuclear reactors is beyond debate. The recent K-159 tragedy provided a vivid example of the state of former Russian submarines that have long languished, given over to the elements and disrepair. As a reminder to the world community of the risk that this aging fleet poses to the whole globe and not just Russia, Moscow, on 04 December, asked for increased international financial support to staunch the nuclear risk of its retired submarine fleet.

With many countries, including Germany, Britain and the United States, already providing foreign aid to the submarine scrapping effort, Russia nonetheless claims that the amount of support falls far short of the money required. Prime Minister Mikhail Kasianov alleges that "the Nuclear Ministry needs around ten years and \$4 billion in order to scrap 113 nuclear submarines and rehabilitate contaminated territory. Only foreign aid can speed up this process." (VREMYA NOVOSTEI, 05 Dec 03; What the Paper's Say via ISI Emerging Markets Database) Specifically, VREMYA NOVOSTEI (Ibid.), lists the alleged shortfalls in foreign aid: it claims that the U.K. has only provided \$48 million of the promised \$100 million, Germany has allocated only \$50 out of \$300 million, Canada only \$40 out of \$200 million, Italy, none of its pledged \$360 million, and the U.S. only \$10 million of \$1 billion.

Even though Russia has increased its budget allocation to over 2 billion rubles for dismantling efforts, this sum can only achieve the scrappings of approximately 10 to 12 submarines out of the nearly 113 awaiting disposal.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Elena Selyuk

BELARUS

Back to the Future.

With political and economic debates occupying the majority of the headlines about Belarus in the West, a crucial area of social life—education—is overlooked constantly. A simple inquiry on the internet search engine or a look through the "transition" literature reveals that the number of meaningful pieces about the state of education in the country is minuscule. In the meantime, Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko is trying to control the educational sphere as much as he is controlling the rest of the country. On November 21, he accused Alyaksandr Kazulin, the former rector of the Belarussian State University, of "failing to restore 'traditional, classical' education at this institution." (MINSK BELAPAN, 21 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1121 via World News Connection) The President also stated that the aim of the current government was to recreate the Soviet-type educational system in Belarus, which, according to him, was the best and most powerful in the world. Lukashenko also stressed his success to date, namely, prevention of the "erosion" of the national educational system.

Well, if President Lukashenko classifies independent thought and action in the education system (civics classes, open political debates, etc.) as an "erosion," then he certainly was successful in preventing it. If he considers international educational organizations, which give opportunities to students to travel abroad and learn about other cultures, as constituting a threat to the education system, then, definitely, he has something to be proud of. If he thinks that suppressing the majority (!) language in schools is an advancement, then he can credit himself with advancing the education system.

Last month, for example, Lukashenko decided that textbooks on the basics of the Belarussian state's ideology should be published by the start of 2004. This subject would be mandatory and would be introduced in all higher education institutions. (BELAPAN NEWS AGENCY, 14 Nov 2003; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis) Dozens of university professors are being trained to teach the new course. These people are acclaimed philosophers, historians, political scientists, sociologists and economists. Any resemblance to Stalin era Marxism-Leninism mandatory teaching is strictly intentional.

This past summer, the Washington-based International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) was denied an extension of accreditation and was forced to close its Minsk office. IREX is a non-profit group, which specializes in higher education, independent media and civil-society programs. Belarussian cabinet ministers crossed IREX off their list of government approved U.S. assistance programs, without any explanation to the organization. (GLOBAL NEWS WIRE 13 July 03, via Lexis-Nexis). Yet again, a bitter reminder of the Soviet days of isolation.

Lukashenko managed also to repress the Belarussian language in Belarussian schools. Here he even outdid his communist colleagues in the Soviet times, who were very adroit at suppressing minority languages in the republics. In the last year, the authorities closed 152 schools that taught subjects in Belarussian. The most recent and more publicized example concerns the Yakub Kolas National Humanities Lyceum, the last remaining Belarussian-language school, which was closed on June 25 of this year. (BELAPAN NEWS AGENCY, 18 Sep 03; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis) In addition to attempting to give instruction in the Belarussian language, the lyceum also allowed discussion on such subjects as notions of democracy and civil society, which led the President to condemn it as a "nest of opposition." (THE TIMES, 9 Sep 03 via Lexis-Nexis)

Precisely because of such considerations, Lukashenko (perhaps for the first time) has kept his word and is well on the way to returning the Belarussian education system to the Soviet track. While some elements of the Soviet educational system deserve a fair amount of credit and many are nostalgic about the previous methods of learning, returning to it also means authoritarian-type teachers, intimidated students, the promotion of state ideology, inflexibility, outdated ways of learning (in our day and age, rote memorization is not considered as important as the ability to manage and analyze data) and, most importantly, not limiting students' opportunity to become independent thinkers, capable of forming a strong civil society and standing up for their interests. That is exactly what Lukashenko is trying to prevent.

MOLDOVA

What is Russia up to now?

Russia recently proposed a federalization plan to Moldova as a way to solve the Transdnestr conflict. According to the Russian proposal, Moldova will have several constituent parts, the Dniestr region and the Gagauz (Christian Tartar) autonomy, with the remaining territory being ruled directly by federal authorities. It is intended that the federation will be asymmetrical with governance divided into federal, joint and separate authorities of the constituent parts. The constituent parts will have their own legislative and executive bodies, their own constitution and laws and their own state symbols along with other attributes of state status. The head of state will be the President, elected in direct and general elections for a period of five years. (MOSCOW ITAR-TASS, 18 Nov 03; FBIS - SOV-2003-1118 via World News Connection) The federalization plan has evoked many reactions: from Moldovan President Voronin being generally in favor, to the opposition and general population vigorously opposing the plan. The latter have organized massive protests in the center of Chisinau.

The question arises, why is Russia proposing this plan? An obvious answer may be that Russia genuinely wants to solve this protracted problem and to assure

the well-being of the Russians in Transdnestr, a promise given to all 25 million Russians who found themselves outside of the Russian Federation borders after the fall of the Soviet Union. Politics however is rarely a clean and noble business. What about those Russian citizens in Turkmenistan, whose fate Putin jeopardized in exchange for Turkmen gas? Putin did not hesitate to betray them. It is clear that while the well-being of ethnic Russians abroad is on the agenda, it is certainly not the first item on it. Rather, it is a convenient pretext for other political benefits.

Can it be that the federalization plan proposed to Moldova is yet another step in expanding the Russian "liberal empire"? Can Russia be trying to keep Moldova in its sphere of influence by limiting its chances to integrate into the Western community? The chairman of the Christian Democratic Party (PPCD), Iurie Rosca, certainly thinks so: "the document is still a manifestation of a growing expansionist policy of the Russian President and his team," he says. Rosca believes that the memorandum seeks to strengthen the Russian military presence in Moldova (Transdnestr) on the one hand and to maintain political control on the other, in order to guarantee that Moldova never joins the European Union or NATO. He believes that implementing this plan will transform Moldova into a buffer zone on NATO's borders. (CHISINAU BASAPRESS, 19 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1118 via World News Connection) SDPM chairman Oazu Nantoi is convinced that "with such an organization...the future of the statehood of the Republic of Moldova is questionable," since, according to the Russian plan, "Dniestr and Gagauzia will have their own governance organs, whereas the rest of the country territory will be governed by (federal) organs, in which Dniestr and Gagauzian representatives will dominate." (CHISINAU INFOTAG, 19 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1118 via World News Connection)

Western authorities may also be following the same line of thought, as many have expressed their concerns about the document. The cancellation of Putin's trip to Chisinau was due allegedly to interference by Western authorities. Indeed,

when Romania becomes an E.U. member, the Union will have borders with Moldova. And if the proposed federalization puts Moldovan sovereignty at stake, no European country will agree to jeopardize its own security.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Ariela Shapiro

GEORGIA

In the wake of former President Eduard Shevardnadze's resignation, the Georgian interim government, comprised of Nino Burjanadze, Zurab Zhvania and Mikheil Saakashvili, struggles to solidify its power base while the country again finds itself buffeted by centrifugal forces that raise fears about further separatist conflict. The tension between Tbilisi and the country's autonomous republics stands also to complicate already harried efforts to organize new presidential and parliamentary elections, the former of which is scheduled for 4 January. Additionally, the region is caught up in the diplomatic maneuvering of Russia and the United States as they attempt to solidify their influence in the new geopolitical environment.

On 23 November, President Eduard Shevardnadze officially resigned his post after weeks of rallies and protests, which were generated over the validity of the 2 November parliamentary elections and culminated in protestors storming the Georgian Parliamentary building on 22 November. After Shevardnadze's resignation, Nino Burjanadze, speaker of the parliament and one of the leaders of the Burjanadze-Democrat oppositional party, quickly assumed the position of acting interim president while setting 4 January as the date for presidential elections. Despite party and interest group divisions, the key leaders of the coup against Shevardnadze: Burjanadze, Zurab Zhvania and Mikheil Saakashvili, appointed Saakashvili, on 26 November, as their joint candidate in the presidential elections. (BBC Monitoring, 26 Nov 03)

At present, the immediate task for the Burjanadze-Zhvania-Saakashvili triumvirate is consolidating their own authority in the capital. While Burjanadze has stated that she had "no intention of making personnel changes in government my main objective," the resignation of Interior Minister Koba Narchemashvili and State Minister Avtandil Jorbenadze, former members of Shevardnadze's cabinet, would indicate otherwise. In addition, other local and regional Shevardnadze allies and appointees, including Tbilisi Mayor Vano Zodelava, have quit.

The most significant personnel changes planned by the provisional authority will concern the country's Central Election Commission (CEC), which oversaw the tainted 2 November vote and sanctioned the fraudulent results. In addition to reorganizing the CEC, the provisional government will be hard-pressed to hold free presidential and parliamentary elections, within the constitutionally mandated timeframe of 45 days following the President's resignation. As indicated by CEC chairwoman Nana Devdariani, without sufficient time to correct existing problems, such as faulty voter lists, the new elections would be flawed. (Kavkasia Press, 8 Dec , 03; via BBC Monitoring)

As the interim government prepares for new elections, separatist tensions are high within the three breakaway regions of Abkhazia, Adjara and South Ossetia for fear that the new Tbilisi government will attempt to restore authority over all of Georgia's sovereign territory. During the 1990's South Ossetia and Abkhazia, governed by Eduard Kokoita, and Raul Khadzhimba, seceded and continued to operate independently. Adjara under Aslan Abashidze became essentially a feudal barony although it did not secede nominally from Georgia. Accordingly, as order returns to Tbilisi, the three regions have gone into crisis mode, as evidenced by all three placing their local security forces on high alert (www.eurasianet.org/resource/georgia/hypermail/news/0016.shtml), Adjara sealing its borders with Georgia proper (Interfax, 7 Dec 03; via BBC Monitoring),

and incendiary statements emanating from all three break-away regions; these statements include South Ossetian officials reaffirming a desire to join with North Ossetia (a part of the Russian Federation). (ITAR-TASS, 27 Nov 03; via Lexis-Nexis) Aslan Abashidze, an opponent of Saakashvili, whose National Movement supporters clashed with Adjarian law enforcement officials in Batumi, has stated his intention to break off relations with the Burjanadze-Zhvania-Saakashvili interim government, and indicated that his republic will boycott the upcoming Georgian presidential and parliamentary elections unless both ballots are postponed. (Interfax, 3 Dec 03 via ISI Emerging Databases) He has also threatened violence in the event that Tbilisi attempts to project power over the entire country. (Interfax, 8 Dec 03; via ISI Emerging Databases)

On 27 November, in the midst of these tensions, Raul Khadzhimba, Eduard Kokoity and Aslan Abazhidze sought the protection of their traditional Russian benefactor and went to Moscow at the invitation of Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov for trilateral meetings (Nezavisimaya gazeta, 27 Nov 03 via Lexis-Nexis) to discuss the potential construction of a federal system in Georgia. Although these talks yielded no immediate results, the meeting indicates Moscow support of secessionists, as further demonstrated by Abashidze's agreement to a simplified visa regime with Russia and his subsequent statements, on 28 November, to the effect that he depends on the servicemen of the 12th Russian Military Base, stationed in Batumi, in case of a negative turn in relations between Tbilisi and Batumi. (Nezavisimaya gazeta, 1 Dec 03 via BBC Monitoring)

Russia's desire to influence events in Georgia, a country with vast natural resources, sitting astride the lines of communication from Europe to Asia, is being preempted by Washington. Although Russia and the United States appeared aligned in pressing Shevardnadze to resign, both governments have considerable present, as well as potential, interests in Georgia and are not willing to yield any ground. As for the United States, its support for the opposition became clear with State Dept. spokesman Richard Boucher's statement on 19

November that the U.S. would not mediate but rather encourage developments that would culminate in peace. (BBC Monitoring, 19 Nov 03) Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov arrived in Tbilisi on 21 November to play a role in last minute negotiation attempts between the opposition and Shevardnadze, and maintained contact with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and UN Secretary General Kofi Anan, while Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin pressured Shevardnadze via telephone on 22 November and 23 November. Indeed, the U.S., as it has sought to present Georgia's transition as an exportable democratic model, had been pressuring the Shevardnadze government for months to ensure peaceful, fair elections. In July, the White House sent former Secretary of State James Baker to Georgia to contact Shevardnadze, while in the tumultuous week of 17 November-22 November, Baker tried to call Shevardnadze to discuss developments, calls Shevardnadze refused twice.

However, shortly after Nino Burjanadze's installment as interim President, the United States began reasserting its influence over Georgia in competition with Russia. On 24 November, the U.S. pledged \$2.4 million for the new Georgian parliamentary and presidential elections (Interfax, 24 Nov 03 via ISI Emerging Databases), while Colin Powell, in addressing the OSCE Ministerial Council in Maastricht on 2 December, urged the international community to "do everything to support Georgia's territorial integrity" in the present and future (Washingtonpost.com, 3 Dec 03), a direct message to Moscow and the three breakaway regions of Abkhazia, Adjara and South Ossetia. In a side meeting with Burjanadze, Powell expressed U.S. support for the new Georgian government (Interfax, 3 Dec 03 via BBC Monitoring), a sentiment echoed in a visit to Tbilisi by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on 5 December, when he met with Burjanadze and Saakashvili, and further recommended Russian military withdrawal from Georgian territory. (BBC Monitoring, 5 Dec 03) Additionally, Rumsfeld agreed to continue funding the joint U.S.-Georgian \$64 million program to train and arm Georgian special forces. (Interfax, 5 Dec 03 via

ISI Emerging Databases) These U.S. diplomatic steps, and the interests they reflect, conflict with Moscow's hegemonial pressures on Georgia.

CHECHNYA

On 7 December, Chechnya elected Akhmar Zavgayev as its lone representative to the Russian State Duma amid questionable electoral methods and tight Russian security. Although praised by the Chechen Electoral Commission's chairman Abdul-Kerim Arsakhanov as "a success" (BBC Monitoring, 8 Dec; via ISI Emerging Markets), the results are currently under review as Akhmar Zavgayev, a candidate allied with Akhmad Kadyrov and backed by the Kremlin, reportedly received anywhere from 100 percent, as claimed late on 7 December, (MOSCOW TIMES, 8 Dec 03 via ISI Emerging Databases) to 77.37 percent (BBC Monitoring, 8 Dec 03 via ISI Emerging Databases) to 57.7 percent (ITAR-TASS, 7 Dec 03 via Lexis-Nexis) of the vote. International observers and journalists have reported fraudulent electoral methods such as ballot stuffing, identity fraud and voter intimidation. (MOSCOW TIMES, 8 Dec 03 via ISI Emerging Databases; AGENCE-PRESSE-FRANCE, 8 Dec 03 via Lexis-Nexis) Although an estimated 70.2 percent of registered Chechen voters participated in the elections (AGENCE-PRESSE-FRANCE, 7 Dec 03 via ISI Emerging Databases), such figures are dubious considering both the tight Russian security on 7 December (ostensibly due to a bomb blast of a Russian commuter train on 5 December) and the considerable apathy of the Chechen populace vis-à-vis any electoral process initiated and approved by both Kadyrov and Moscow.

Zaygayev's appointment is an attempt, by Kadyrov and Moscow, to display Kadyrov's ability to centralize power into an organized government apparatus while simultaneously leading Chechnya along the path to socioeconomic and political reconstruction. However, the Kadyrov regime's instability and lack of control is evident by the on-going violence between Russian and Chechen forces, the continual disappearances, a phenomenon attributed to Kadyrov's Chechen Police, as well as the all-too-prevalent acts of random violence. The

most recent clash between Russian soldiers and Chechen rebels occurred on 8 December in the Southern Urus-Martan district (Agence-France Press; 8 Dec 03 via ISI Emerging Databases), while the number of missing persons, according to the Memorial Human Rights Center, is somewhere between 4,000-5,000, with 431 disappearing between January November 2003 alone. (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 5 Dec 03;What the Papers Say via ISI Emerging Databases) The use by the Interior Ministry of illegal prisons for "suspected terrorists" continues unabated. (Official Kremlin Int'l News Broadcast, 3 Dec 03 via Lexis-Nexis) A stable, centralized government has no need to resort to torture, extreme violence and kidnappings to govern its populace, and these events portray more clearly than any rhetoric emanating from Moscow or Kadyrov that the situation in Chechnya has changed in only one regard, the increasing level of hatred and violence.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By David Montgomery

The Wake of Georgia

The November 23rd bloodless revolution in Georgia, which led to President Eduard Shevardnadze's removal from office, has left leaders in Central Asia wondering about the implications of the coup d'état for their own rule. The public response has been predictable: Turkmenistan was silent; Tajikistan and Uzbekistan attempted to ignore it; Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan tried to suggest that the weaknesses of Shevardnadze and Georgia actually were strengths of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz governments. Popular revolution is a concern for the governments of Central Asia, especially over the next two years, as parliamentary elections will take place in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan (2004), and Tajikistan (2005) with presidential elections scheduled in 2005 for Kyrgyzstan. (RFE/RL CENTRAL ASIA REPORT, 28 Nov 03 via www.rferl.org)

The most immediate response is likely to be increased vigilance concerning threats of political opposition. A year after the assassination attempt against Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov, Turkmenistan has staunchly quieted opposition figures. At the same time, the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization [CSTO (ODKB)] has brought Central Asia's leaders closer together and led some to advocate that regional cooperation should move beyond military bounds and toward the creation of a single Central Asian market. Any successes of the CSTO, however, do not purport satisfaction with the ruling forces, and thereby allow the Georgian coup to represent a model for expressing unrest through popular action.

November 25th marked the first anniversary of the assassination attempt on President Niyazov. (See *The NIS Observed*, 4 Dec 02) Numerous reports—from the U.N., human rights groups, foreign embassies, opposition leaders-in-exile and other dissidents — suggest that Niyazov has seized the occasion of the assassination attempt to crack down on opposition leaders and silence those who might challenge his control of power. He has reinstated exit-visa requirements to control the movement of Turkmen citizens and a law implemented after the attempt on his life equates public criticism of the president with treason. (EURASIANET, Turkmenistan Project, Nov 03 via www.eurasianet.org; RFE/RL, 30 Nov 03 via www.rferl.org; ITAR-TASS, 1503 GMT, 27 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1127 via World News Connection)

Were it not for a rich supply of oil and gas, Turkmenistan probably would sink into deep obscurity. Even as the United States and Russia speak out against the human rights situation in Turkmenistan, both countries are anxious to benefit from Turkmenistan's exploitation of its oil and gas deposits. The American company, Parker Drilling, and the Turkish-American alliance of Carik Energy, are further developing oil and gas deposits in Korpedzhe, in the southwestern part of the country. The production from Korpedzhe will allow Turkmenistan significantly to increase fuel exports to Iran and beyond. (ITAR-TASS, 0808 GMT and 1421

GMT, 18 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1118 via World News Connection) Russia, for its part, has announced that, beginning in 2004, it will enter a strategic partnership in the gas sector, which Russian Ambassador to Turkmenistan, Andrei Molochkov, said would "facilitate [the] economic security of both Russia and Turkmenistan." (ITAR-TASS, 1819 GMT, 1 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1201 via World News Connection)

Security drives many of the agreements in Central Asia and while Turkmenistan stands outside most of the military cooperatives, opting for a position of neutrality and military non-engagement, the role of the CSTO continues to expand and draw its member countries—Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan—closer together. Talbak Nazarov, Tajik Foreign Minister, described the CSTO as an organization "designed to curb international terrorism and the most dangerous manifestations of this evil in Central Asia and the Caucasus." (ITAR-TASS, 1303 GMT, 19 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1119 via World News Connection) A primary concern of the CSTO is Afghanistan, which has not stabilized to the extent CSTO members or the U.S. had hoped. (ITAR-TASS, 1254 GMT, 20 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1120 via World News Connection) Nazarov went on to add that because "annually \$2 billion worth of narcotic substances are produced in this country [Afghanistan] we do not rule out that part of these funds are spent on supporting extremist structures" and thus combating drug trafficking must be part of the CSTO mandate. (ITAR-TASS, 1434 GMT, 19 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1119 via World News Connection) The CSTO sees NATO as an ally in the Afghan situation, and seeks to cooperate with both NATO and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) — comprised of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. (KABAR, 1410 GMT; ITAR-TASS, 1137 GMT, 19 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1119; ITAR-TASS, 1310 GMT, 18 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1118; 1254 GMT, 20 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1120 via World News Connection)

As Turkmenistan continues to isolate itself for reasons of "security," other countries of Central Asia have entered collective agreements to cooperate on issues of security. Taking the level of cooperation one step further, Kyrgyz Deputy Prime Minister Dzhoomart Otorbayev recently spoke in support of establishing a single Central Asian market. (KABAR, 1700 GMT, 2 Dec 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1202 via World News Connection) Already, Kazakhstan has joined Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine in trying to reach agreement on the development of a Common Economic Space that would integrate more closely the economies of the four member countries. (ITAR-TASS, 0322 GMT, 30 Nov 03; FBIS-SOV-2003-1130 via World News Connection) If successful, it follows that economic and trade benefits would be derived from membership in the CSTO and the SCO (which does include trade incentives). But despite the tendency to integrate security and trade interests, the Georgian revolution serves as a not-so-subtle reminder to the leaders of Central Asia that authoritarian (in their case) and unpopular rule can be successfully contested.

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