

**Boston University**

**OpenBU**

<http://open.bu.edu>

---

Institute for the Study of Conflict, Ideology and Policy

The ISCIP Analyst

---

2000-02-29

# The ISCIP Analyst, Volume V, Issue 4

---

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/11955>

*Downloaded from DSpace Repository, DSpace Institution's institutional repository*

## Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

### **Dictatorship of law**

Acting President Vladimir Putin launched his election campaign with an open letter to voters (KOMсомOL'SKAYA PRAVDA, 25 Feb 00; Russian Press Digest, via lexis-nexis), in which he defined democracy as a "dictatorship of law." While it is a rare concept of democracy that includes the term dictatorship (though not unknown in Russia), Putin's remarks are particularly troublesome when linked to the broad constitutional powers to legislate by decree enjoyed by a Russian president.

Assuming Putin is elected president in March, and given the lack of robust competition that seems a safe assumption, what would a Putin-directed Russian democracy entail? Putin's open letter did little to flush out a positive program, except to emphasize the need for a strong state to battle corruption and effectively implement the laws. His election platform and economic policies are still in development by a wide-ranging group of economists and intellectuals. On particularly divisive issues such as land reform, Putin favors the populist route of a referendum to determine policy. And why not? Putin appears to be not the big idea man, but rather an enforcer.

Putin's appointment as prime minister in August 1999 was widely regarded as an attempt by the Yel'tsin "Family" to stave off corruption investigations, crush the Chechen insurgency in Dagestan and provide a soft post-Yel'tsin transition for the "Family." It is unclear who conceived the strategy to accomplish these goals, but Putin's execution has, thus far, been nearly flawless. He has remained resolute and determined while the military leveled Chechnya, formed successful

political coalitions, granted immunity to Yel'tsin and retained popular support for the presidential elections. What the days and months following 26 March hold in store for 1999's strategists and financiers is questionable, however. It may depend as much on who controls access to the media, as who has the kompromat necessary to hold together a political conspiracy.

The sudden emergence of Putin as Yel'tsin's successor last year prompts the question of to whom he is beholden. The primary role of the popular Chechen campaign makes one answer obvious: the military. Putin has already signaled how they will be rewarded. On the one hand they will be lauded and decorated as heroes; on the other they will be scrupulously monitored by Putin's own Federal Security Services. (For further information, please see "Security Services," below.)

The other power brokers in this equation are the oligarchs and courtiers, most notably Boris Berezovsky and Anatoli Chubais, both deeply resented by the Russian population. Putin has sent mixed and ambiguous messages in his few remarks regarding the two. How secure they feel may depend on how much disruptive information they think they have on Putin. The Putin era, however, may see the end of the effectiveness of wildcat kompromat wars. The media are, for now, docile beasts and Putin has displayed a willingness to use his security services to shore up state power, if necessary.

The fallout from a Putin presidential victory on influential figures from the Yel'tsin years will likely evoke little sympathy. What, however, is the general electorate to make of Putin and his platform to date? Putin claims, "the stronger the government, the freer the individual." (KOMSOMOL'SKAYA PRAVDA, 25 Feb 00; Russian Press Digest, via lexis-nexis) His comments, along with his record thus far, suggest he wants to make the following deal with the people: Tell me what you want me to do for you, and I'll get it done. Just be careful what you wish for, and don't dare question my methods.

## **SECURITY SERVICES**

### **Watching the troops**

In many societies, military and security services compete for precious resources and prestige. In the Russian case, the shortage of cash resources is chronic, but the struggle for the institutional oversight over various troop units, such as the elite "Alpha" unit, border guards, or Ministry of the Interior (MVD) troops, remains as one of the prizes of prestige. Oftentimes, a form of oversight is granted after a particularly troubling dispute confirms that one service or commander has displayed exemplary loyalty.

In the Yel'tsin era, concerns over loyalty and responsiveness led to the inclusion of several services into the domain of the Kremlin apparat and under direct presidential control. Acting President Putin has not, as yet, done anything to offset those decisions, but has seemingly added a layer of oversight by inserting the Federal Security Services (FSB) into every military grouping. Federal Security Service "entities," controlled by the FSB leadership, have been tasked with investigating terrorist activity, espionage, smuggling, sedition and a host of other criminal activity within the Russian military. (Edict No. 318, ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 12 Feb 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0220, via World News Connection)

Perhaps most enlightening in revealing the relationship between Putin and traditional military structures, is the fact that the FSB entities have the right to put the results of their investigations before the military commanders, and these reports are "mandatory for execution to military command and control entities." Further, the FSB entities have the right to "monitor the implementation" of their reports. There is no provision in the decree for independent supervision of the FSB entities by the procuracy or parliament. They may coordinate their work with relevant bodies, but are restricted in their actions only by the constitution and laws of the Russian Federation.

Putin has been generous in promising budgetary resources for his "victorious" military in Chechnya. Following what they believe will be a successful campaign, however, Putin must have reservations about the loyalty of his generals. With this decree, promulgated barely a month after his assumption of the (acting) Russian presidency, Putin demonstrates both his concerns about and his willingness to check the influence of the military, if necessary.

While Putin may remain a political enigma, willing to let others puzzle out policy and the direction of reform, one thing is clear. He knows how to get things done, and for much of the Russian electorate, that is apparently enough.

## Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Chandler Rosenberger and Sarah Miller

The operation of the West in Kosovo and Russia's campaign in Chechnya seem, at first glance, to be mirror opposites. NATO's military strikes in the Balkans assisted a restive minority, while Russia attacked to suppress one. The Kosovo campaign was celebrated as a triumph for human rights while Russia is accused of violating them.

Given these disparities, it might seem strange that recently US President Bill Clinton and British Foreign Minister Robin Cook, champions of the Kosovo campaign, have warmly embraced a Russian president who has staked his reputation on his war in the Caucasus. The past two weeks, however, have shown how eager Moscow and the West are to put their differences behind them, in nearly complete disregard for the suffering of civilians on the battlefields each created. Are there more similarities between the two wars than meet the eye?

**Bill and Vlad make up**

In a gambit heavily criticized in the American press, Clinton made the first move to embrace his Russian counterpart. Vladimir Putin, Clinton said during an on-line interview with CNN.com, was "highly intelligent" and "highly motivated." Indeed, Clinton came close to endorsing Putin's candidacy in the upcoming 26 March elections. "Based on what I have seen so far, I think that the U.S. can do business with this man," Clinton said. (THE WASHINGTON POST, 17 Feb 00; via lexis-nexis)

Rossiyskaya gazeta, the Russian government's daily newspaper, immediately repeated Clinton's words, also trumpeting his assertion that "Russia has a right to take on the paramilitary forces who are practicing terrorist tactics." (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA 16 Feb 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0215, via World News Connection) Putin then warmly responded to Clinton's affections. In a letter carried by Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Ivanov, Putin stressed that many of the foreign policy interests of the United States and Russia coincided. Both, the letter stated, had an interest in strengthening international security and stability, promoting disarmament and non-proliferation, and defeating international terrorism and organized crime. (ITAR-TASS, 1647 GMT, 21 Feb 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0221, via World News Connection)

In fact, Clinton sometimes seemed to be more in tune with Putin than he was with his own administration. After Human Rights Watch endorsed a videotape allegedly revealing Russian atrocities in Chechnya, US State Department spokesman James Rubin said Russia had "a clear obligation to investigate the numerous credible reports of civilian killings and alleged misconduct by its soldiers." (THE GAZETTE (Montreal), 19 Feb 00; via lexis-nexis)

With the Kosovo parallel readily at hand, however, the Russian government was able to dismiss Rubin's remarks as those of the pot that "calls the kettle black. It is hardly proper," a foreign ministry statement read, "that those who harp on the suffering of the Chechens are also the ones who dropped hundreds of thousands

of bombs and missiles on the residents of Yugoslavia." (INTERFAX, 1904 GMT, 18 Feb 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0218, via World News Connection)

The Kremlin quickly had reason, however, to assume that Rubin's remarks were not in sync with broader Western moves to give Russia a pass on its behavior in Chechnya. Visiting Moscow, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook spoke effusively of expanding commercial ties to Russia and suggested that further criticism of the Chechen war would do no good. "Any tougher remarks [by the West] are unlikely to be required," Cook said, adding that "it is no less important for us to maintain good relations with Russia. That will enable us to work fruitfully on a whole series of other issues that are very important to the whole world." (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 24 Feb 00)

### **NATO goes a-courting**

In keeping with this longing for engagement at almost any price, NATO Secretary General George Robertson finally fulfilled his ambition to visit Moscow. The price, it turned out, was adoption of a joint statement that fulfills Russia's main goals.

Negotiations before Robertson's trip had centered on Russia's demands to play a greater role in NATO decision-making through the Permanent Joint Council. In advance of Robertson's trip, the notorious "hard-liner" Leonid Ivashov was quoted as demanding that Russia "participate in making decisions on important questions of European security." Other unnamed Russian sources said relations with NATO could not resume from scratch, but would have to take into account the negative legacy left by NATO's actions in Kosovo. NATO would have to pledge to fulfill the UN resolution ensuring a multiethnic Kosovo, the sources said, and adopt a new strategic concept. (ITAR-TASS, 0844 GMT, 15 Feb 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0215, via World News Connection)

When Putin appeared to push "hard-liners" in the military to one side -- even sending Ivashov to Switzerland -- the path appeared clear for Robertson's trip.

Putin was credited with winning a battle with "hard-liners" and determinedly pressing for better relations with the West.

If "hard-liners" ever seriously objected to Putin's meeting with Robertson, however, they need not have feared. The joint statement issued at the end of talks promised to use Russian-NATO relations to strengthen European security on the basis of, among other international agreements, the UN Charter. Russia and NATO, the statement said, "will work to intensify their dialogue on the Permanent Joint Council" and would "pursue a vigorous dialogue on a wide range of security issues" so as to "make their mutual cooperation a cornerstone of European security." (RUSSIA-NATO JOINT STATEMENT, 16 Feb 00; via [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int)) Russia was even allowed to deny NATO the right to restore its liaison office in Moscow, closed at the beginning of the alliance's campaign in the Balkans.

Although the statement was widely heralded in the Western press as an important diplomatic breakthrough for NATO, the Russian government made clear that its interpretation of the agreed text moved NATO-Russian relations closer to Moscow's vision. Denying that Russia sought a veto over NATO actions, Valery Manilov, first deputy chief of staff of the Russian armed forces, nonetheless said that partnership entailed "the equal participation in assessment of crisis situations and in working out and the joint realization of solutions," a program that "should be implemented in practice." (ITAR-TASS, 1104 GMT, 19 Feb 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0219, via World News Connection)

### **Cosa nostra**

As the situation in NATO-controlled Kosovo deteriorated, it became clearer why the alliance is so eager to keep Russia on board. For all their apparent differences, NATO's campaign in the Balkans and Russia's war against Chechnya are beginning to look eerily similar.



In both cases, Great Powers rushed to use force to impose their will on situations that, although complicated, might have been solved by negotiations with peaceful and elected leaders of the minorities on the ground. In both Kosovo and Chechnya, the threat of long-term civil unrest now undermines any hope of solutions as swift as the lopsided military victories. And in both cases, the powers that swept aside negotiations in favor of raw force now find themselves in need of insulation from each others' criticism.

If the current detente holds on these terms, Russia and the West will have agreed to a kind of mutual blackmail, promising to overlook each other's mistakes as each heedlessly pursues its objectives in its own spheres of influence.

Welcome to the "multipolar" world.

### **Tough talk can't hide reality: Russia scores with Japan**

The diplomatic back and forth between Russia and Japan hasn't skipped a beat despite Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov's successful Asia trip earlier in February. A week after Ivanov returned to Russia from North Korea (DPRK), Japan and Vietnam, a Japanese spokesman reiterated his country's commitment to concluding a peace treaty with Russia by 2001. The statement apparently was made in response to a more realistic assessment of the prospects for a peace treaty within the year by Japanese Ambassador to Russia Minoru Tamba. Ambassador Tamba revealed that "it doesn't mean... an end to Russian-Japanese relations just because we are not ready with the peace treaty on New Year's Day next year. (YOMURI, 21 Feb 00; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis) So, it seems that even within the Japanese government, there is some discrepancy about suitable rhetoric on the matter.

Despite the Japanese government's hard-nosed responses to Moscow's previous proposals on the Kurile Islands and peace treaty issues, it appears that Russia's diplomatic efforts to move Russo-Japanese relations along even prior to a

settlement is working. Contacts between the two countries on select security and economic matters clearly are not suffering. Only two days prior to the Japanese government's recommitment to conclude the peace treaty by 2001, Russian Navy Commander Vladimir Kuroedov met with Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Chief Kosei Fujita to plan Russo-Japanese naval exercises and to establish a permanent line of communication between the two naval forces. The latter suggestion came from the Russian side, which is clearly interested in eliminating the numerous fishing boat incidents that occur each year. (RIA NOVOSTI, 18 Feb 00; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis) Furthermore, as the US prepares to extend National Missile Defense (NMD) to Japan, Russia is looking for all the lines of communication it can find with Japan.

In an impressive development, Russia may have persuaded Japan to loosen its purse strings once again, but this time for the DPRK. (YOMURI, 21 Feb 00; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis) During his Tokyo visit, Ivanov raised the question of aid to North Korea, a suggestion that the Japanese government seems willing to consider for its security implications. A "predictable" DPRK is a better DPRK for Japan. Russia's interest in bringing the DPRK not only to the negotiating table, but also out of its isolation, has been an integral part of its policy towards the peninsula for months. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 15 Feb 00) But since Russia is in its own economic dire straits, it cannot give much-needed financial assistance to North Korea. By bringing Japan's economic might into the formula, Russia increases not only its own role in the entire process, but also the possibility that the DPRK might actually come to the negotiating table.

Russia is clearly making the most of its relations with Japan, in spite of Tokyo's strong rhetoric on the peace treaty. If Japan really wants to solve its territorial problems with Russia, it will have to do more than give press statements to that effect. Until it does, Russia will continue to milk Japan's generosity to benefit its own economic, strategic and diplomatic needs and aspirations.

# Russian Federation: Media

By Jonathan Solomon

## **The strange case of Andrei Babitsky**

Although many significant events occurred in February with regard to other aspects of freedom of the press in Russia (not to mention violations of media electoral campaign law well before the campaign even began), the single story that tells the most about the state of the Russian media, as well as the nature of the acting president and his administration, is that of Radio Liberty reporter Andrei Babitsky.

The most striking aspect of the Babitsky affair has been the apparent total lack of communication between the involved executive agencies of the Russian Federation's government. A close second has been their inability to keep their stories straight, let alone plausible, for longer than a few days.

On 31 January, Interior Minister Vladimir Rushailo announced that the prosecutor general's office had authorized Babitsky's "liberation" from detention. (INTERFAX, 0922 GMT, 31 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0131, via World News Connection) Later that day, acting Prosecutor General Vladimir Ustinov contradicted Rushailo, stating that Babitsky would be held in custody for 10 more days. Ustinov mentioned nothing about "liberating" the reporter in the near future. (INTERFAX, 1117 GMT, 31 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0131, via World News Connection) A mere three days after Ustinov spoke, Babitsky reportedly "volunteered" to be traded to the Chechens for two Russian prisoners of war. So, not only was someone's math off with regards to how long to keep Babitsky in custody, but the interior ministry also saw fit to speak for the prosecutor general, whose actual stance was the complete opposite of what Rushailo asserted it was! If the whole affair was not so sinister and frightening, it might actually be funny.

The farce continued. A videotape of Babitsky was sold to Radio Liberty on 8 February, but the interior ministry did not move to obtain a copy and examine it for clues as to Babitsky's whereabouts. (ITAR-TASS, 1313 GMT, 9 Feb 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0209, via World News Connection) Yet, on 10 February, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, Putin's spokesman on Chechnya, announced that the interior ministry was currently investigating to determine Babitsky's location. (INTERFAX, 1540 GMT, 10 Feb 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0210, via World News Connection) Six days later at an official press conference, a representative of the interior ministry, Vyacheslav Trubnikov, declared "no search for Babitsky has been initiated."(INTERFAX, 1306 GMT, 16 Feb 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0216, via World News Connection) Meanwhile, FSB Director Nikolai Patrushev entertained rumors that Babitsky had actually left Chechnya altogether and was now in Istanbul, with plans to travel first to Warsaw and then to Minsk. (INTERFAX, 1054 GMT, 14 Feb 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0214, via World News Connection) The absurdity of Patrushev even suggesting that the FSB was investigating the validity of these rumors clearly shows how much of an effort the services were making in "searching" for Babitsky. Yastrzhembsky's statement was more disturbing idea-- was Putin out of touch with his interior ministry, or was the interior ministry's public affairs arm out of touch with Yastrzhembsky?

The degree to which prominent figures in the government were willing to dismiss the Babitsky case was not darkly amusing, however. It was downright alarming. Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov felt that the whole affair was "a minor issue," and that it "cannot be elevated to the rank of national policy or relations between countries." He particularly criticized those in the West who attempted to use the Babitsky case "to open a new propaganda front in order to distort the tasks and objectives the federal government advances and achieves." (INTERFAX, 1103 GMT, 8 Feb 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0208, via World News Connection) When a country proclaiming itself to be a democracy willingly exchanges one of its nationals for servicemen being held as prisoners of war, it is no minor issue, and

it should invite stern questions from the international community. Additionally, most countries expect their servicemen to be willing to endure enormous hardships and make great sacrifices, including giving their lives. That a country would willingly trade a non-combatant civilian to the enemy for soldiers flies in the face of logic.

The foreign ministry continued to dismiss international inquiry into Babitsky's fate. On 10 February, the ministry announced that it had "taken into consideration" a request from the US State Department for explanations, and would "respond to it in due time." It then marginalized the significance of the request, saying "such inquiries from Washington can probably be regarded as official."(INTERFAX, 1056 GMT, 10 Feb 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0210, via World News Connection) The degree of aloofness in this statement is obvious. What is more significant is that the Putin government knew it could get away with such a condescending remark directed at the Americans, and it did.

As for Putin himself, it took him until 9 February to comment publicly on Babitsky. In an interview, Putin pretended to know little about the affair: "As to the disappearance of Babitsky, as far as I know, today, as I've been told by one of my assistants, a videocassette has supposedly surfaced on one of the TV stations where Babitsky says that everything with him is OK." After three weeks of outcries by many in the international and domestic media, human rights groups, and several foreign governments, Putin tried to play off that he was vaguely aware of the whole situation. Upon further questioning, he asserted that Babitsky "voluntarily took this decision, and he did not go to people to whom he feels hostility and who feel hostility to him." (MOSCOW TIMES, 11 Feb 00; via lexis-nexis)

Yet, according to sources at Radio Liberty, Putin had a closed-door meeting with the editors of seven unidentified national newspapers shortly after the exchange. At the meeting, into which the editors were only allowed after they had sworn not

to publicize Putin's comments, he allegedly told them that it had made sense to trade Babitsky for the reporters, and that he would now "feel fear" while in the custody of the Chechens. A spokesperson for the president had "no information" about this meeting when the Moscow Times followed up on it. (MOSCOW TIMES, 11 Feb 00; via lexis-nexis) If what Putin said was true, it contradicted his subordinates' constant reaffirmation that the reporter was in the hands of "his beloved Chechens," let alone by his own consent.

### **Lines in the sand**

The turning point in the Babitsky case may have come on 16 February. That day, much of the Russian print media banded together to print a special edition of Obshchaya gazeta, and distributed it for free on the streets of Moscow. 300,000 copies were printed, and the issue was in such high demand that an extra 200,000 were printed for a second day of distribution.

The issue opened with a statement by the leaders of the Russian Union of Journalists: "A threat to freedom of speech in Russia has for the first time in the last several years transformed into its open and regular suppression." It cited the creation in 1999 of the press ministry to oversee the media, the restrictions on reporting in Chechnya, and the "information wars" of the Duma election as further evidence. Echoing the French Dreyfus affair, many popular columnists wrote their opinions on the case under the headline "I Accuse."

Perhaps most importantly, this issue of Obshchaya gazeta tells us exactly where the media are divided with regards to Putin. Participating in or supporting the edition were the Glasnost Defense Fund and its allies, the liberal papers Novaya gazeta and Moskovskie novosti, Communist newspaper Sovetskaya Rossiya, all outlets in the Gusinsky empire -- including NTV -- and all outlets allied with Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov. Those not participating of significance were Izvestia, Trud, the allegedly Central Bank-backed Vremya MN, and Boris

Berezovsky's Kommersant and Nezavisimaya gazeta. (MOSCOW TIMES, 17 Feb 00; via [www.moscowtimes.ru](http://www.moscowtimes.ru))

The interesting thing about the participants in this Obshchaya gazeta is their diversity. It would seem that only the liberal papers and the Glasnost Defense Fund are involved out of principle. The others are genuinely afraid of losing freedom of the press, but more so because their power and influence are waning; if press freedoms are curtailed, they lose their voice completely and vanish. For them, the Babitsky case and the associated questions of freedom of speech are more political than idealistic.

### **The saga continues**

In any case, after eight more days of relative silence on the Babitsky case from the "power agencies," and only a passing remark by Putin to British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook that the reporter was "staying with peaceful residents in the Chechen mountains," Babitsky finally emerged in Dagestan on 26 February. After speaking to him briefly by phone for the first time since mid-January, his wife, Liudmilla, quoted him as saying that he was "fit and normal, but not entirely free." Indeed, in the three days since Putin's statement, Babitsky had suddenly been transported from an isolated "mountain" location, through a war zone, to a telephone in the interior ministry's office in Dagestan's capital. Even then, Liudmilla noted that during the conversation, interior ministry officers were constantly "urging" Babitsky to finish up and get off the phone. (MOSCOW TIMES, 26 Feb 00; via [www.moscowtimes.ru](http://www.moscowtimes.ru))

The fact that the reporter was allowed to contact his wife at all suggests that Putin was becoming uncomfortable with the domestic and foreign outcries over the case, especially since the Communists and the Union of Right Wing Forces had both issued statements demanding disclosure in the affair. Chances are, Babitsky was brought to Dagestan and allowed to speak in order to give these

groups a token gesture, and prove that he was still alive in a way that no videotape ever could.

Babitsky is a man who has seen too much. His reporting elicited images of the war that the Russian government did not want anyone to see. His detention revealed facts about Putin's administration and its practices that the acting president cannot afford anyone to know. If Putin desires to "free" Babitsky after so much foot-dragging, then he must politically maneuver to distance himself from his own subordinates and suggest that they were acting irresponsibly. If Babitsky is allowed to speak openly, so long as the true story of his disappearance does not implicate Putin, the acting president may try and suggest that officials such as Rushailo were acting independently and incorrectly, and then reprimand them to save face. Perhaps in the eyes of the West, Putin can even spin himself to appear to be Babitsky's savior! The fact that Babitsky is talking to his wife and friends again indicates that Putin feels he can afford to let Babitsky say what he has to say. Indeed, no matter what Babitsky says, it is unlikely that it will sway Russian public opinion against the war or move Western governments to voice criticism. Yet, the simple fact that it took so long to bring Babitsky out of the darkness is frightening news indeed for the future of the independent press in Russia.

## Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Michael Thurman

YABLOKO, the Union of Rightist Forces, and Fatherland-All Russia returned to the Duma on 9 February, after walking out of the inaugural session of the Third Duma on 16 January in protest over an apparent collusive deal between the Communists and Unity to divide up Duma appointments following the recent



election. Things seem to be on the mend, however, because Vladimir Lukin from YABLOKO and Boris Nemtsov of the Union of Rightist Forces have both been made vice speakers. (DEUTSCHE PRESSE-AGENTUR, 0823 CET, 16 Feb 00; via lexis-nexis)

This entire row was brought on by the less than transparent dealings of the Kremlin's surrogate, Unity, and the Communists. The three parties which stormed out in protest last month were right in being angry, and a little free publicity is never a bad thing anyway. Because any parliament is as effective as it is trustworthy, backroom negotiating should not be the preferred way of doing business. However, YABLOKO, the Union of Rightist Forces, and Fatherland-All Russia also must accept that they are in the minority with regard to the Communist-Unity alliance. As such, they are right to point to the improper method of negotiating the important positions of the new Duma with the hopes that this will not happen again. Let's hope it works.

## **POLITICAL PARTIES**

### **CEC publishes the names of the presidential candidates**

The CEC has finally approved a list of 11 presidential candidates. In order to qualify, a candidate must submit a petition of 500,000 signatures along with a financial statement detailing the income and net worth of the candidate and the candidate's immediate family. The final list is as follows:

- Stanislav Govorukhin, State Duma deputy;
- Umar Dzhabrayilov, co-owner of Radisson-Slavjanskaya Hotel;
- Gennady Zyuganov, leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation;
- Ella Pamfilova, leader of civic and political movement For Civil Dignity;
- Aleksei Podberyozkin, leader of civic and political movement Spiritual Heritage;
- Vladimir Putin, chairman of RF government, acting president;
- Yevgeny Savostyanov, chairman of the board of the Moscow Fund of Presidential Programs;

- Yury Skuratov, suspended prosecutor general;
- Konstantin Titov, governor of Samara Region;
- Aman-geldy Tuleev, head of administration of Kemerovo Region;
- Grigory Yavlinsky, YABLOKO leader.

In addition to electing the president of the Federation, Duma by-elections will be held in eight districts, and the elections of the chief executive and legislative bodies in seven regions will also take place. (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 22 Feb 00; Russian Press Digest, via lexis-nexis)

One of the more curious developments was the CEC's barring of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's candidacy. The reason, apparently, was that Zhirinovskiy forgot to list his son's asset of a 38 square meter apartment in Moscow. Oddly, the CEC did not see fit to prevent the son from running for the State Duma even though his own financial documents submitted to the CEC neglected to list that very apartment. Some observers are suggesting that the apartment's existence was held in reserve for an opportune moment to stop Zhirinovskiy. The implication is that this was the work of Putin and his men. Zhirinovskiy has, of course, appealed the CEC's decision to the Supreme Court for review. (KOMMERSANT, 18 Feb 00; Russian Press Digest, via lexis-nexis) In his absence, Zhirinovskiy supporters are likely to vote for Putin.

Nikolai Petrov, a political analyst with the Moscow-based Carnegie Endowment, has come up with a new spin for the pre-election season. He says that, paradoxically, Putin's undisputed status as favorite might give Russia truly democratic elections because, this time, cheating and mud-slinging are unnecessary. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 22 Feb 00)

## **JUDICIARY**

### **New appointment to the Constitutional Court**

Acting President Vladimir Putin has appointed law professor Nikolai Bondar to Russia's Constitutional Court. The upper house of the Russian parliament, the Federal Assembly, approved Bondar with a vote of 115 to 6 with 4 abstentions. Bondar will be taking the seat of Nikolai Vedernikov who was forced to resign because he had reached the maximum age allowable for a Constitutional Court justice under the Russian Constitution. Bondar was born in the Voroshilovgrad region in eastern Ukraine in 1950 and was graduated from Rostov State University (RGU) in southern Russia in 1973. (ITAR-TASS, 1002 GMT, 16 Feb 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0216, via World News Connection)

## Russian Federation: Armed Forces

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

### **Someone is watching you**

Acting Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on 13 February which increases Federal Security Service (FSB) oversight of Russia's armed forces. Some observers believe the decree is a step towards re-instituting the Soviet-era practice of placing "political commissars" inside Russian military units. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 14 Feb 00)

Since 1991 military counterintelligence officers have not been required to perform the function of political surveillance; in 1993, former Russian President Boris Yel'tsin officially disbanded the "special departments." (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 16 Feb 00) Prior to the decree, military counterintelligence officers monitored the armed forces for espionage, crime, terrorism, stolen weapons, and "implementation of the law." However, the new decree broadens the FSB's responsibilities. Additional duties are to "prevent and suspend activities of individuals damaging the security of the Russian Federation." Neither the armed forces command, the police, nor the prosecutor's office are allowed to interfere with the FSB. The phrase "damaging the security" is very broad and could easily

place anybody on the unwanted end of attention. (IZVESTIA, 14 Feb 00; Agency WPS, via lexis-nexis) FSB spokesman Aleksandr Zdanovich downplayed the decree's impact, claiming security organs are not receiving any additional power, and that their power is based on federal law. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 14 Feb 00)

Putin's decree appears to be part of his broader effort to increase authority of the Russian intelligence establishment throughout the government and re-establish ideology control over society. Examples include reinstated military training at state-run schools, strict media regulation in the Chechen War, and consistent statements by Putin advocating strong, central government. Although military support has been key to Putin's rising political star, it is rumored that he will institute a shake-up of the military establishment following the 26 March presidential elections. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 15 Feb 00) In addition, inability to follow through on pledges of higher defense budgets, an extended, costly guerrilla war in Chechnya, and any efforts to engage the West will further strain Putin's relationship with the military. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 22 Feb 00) Unlike the Soviet era, Putin cannot provide unlimited defense budgets in return for support from the military establishment. The new decree will enable Putin to maintain control of the military in preparation for any future decisions and policies which will be unpopular with the military leadership.

### **Russian reactor conversion plan runs aground**

The plan to convert Russia's remaining military atomic reactors from plutonium production and energy to civilian use has run aground due to bureaucratic delays, cost overruns, and concerns of another Chernobyl-type disaster. The 1997 agreement, negotiated by US Vice President Al Gore and former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, committed Russia to ending production of weapons-grade plutonium by the end of 2000. This commitment is no longer realistic, so Russia has proposed shutting down the reactors instead of converting them and using conventional energy sources to provide heating and

lighting needs to the Siberian cities of Seversk and Zheleznogorsk. Even if Russia's new proposal is approved, Russian plutonium production would end no earlier than 2004. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 14 Feb 00) The plan's purpose was to halt Russian production of weapons-grade plutonium. Russia produces 2.5 tons of military and civilian plutonium per year, which many experts believe is enough to produce 625 nuclear weapons. (THE WASHINGTON POST, 13 Feb 00)

The reactor conversion plan's demise follows a similar pattern of failures to dismantle Soviet-era production facilities for nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. Russia's vast network of germ warfare plants still remains barred to Western inspectors. The long-standing agreements to end secrecy "have foundered and are in abeyance." (THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, 19 Feb 00) Agreements to destroy the huge stockpiles of chemical weapons with Western assistance have also failed due to cost overruns and Russian stonewalling. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 27 Sep 99) The prolific assistance Russian businesses provide countries seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction illustrates the overall failure of these agreements. The Central Intelligence Agency reports Russian assistance to Iran has been most extensive in biotechnology, chemicals, and supplying missile-related components. (AVIATION WEEK AND SPACE TECHNOLOGY, 14 Feb 00)

The track record of agreements to halt or curb production of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons in Russia leaves little reason to be optimistic on current anti-proliferation measures. Russia will continue to be a source of knowledge and material for countries seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

### **Russian Navy to show support for Iraq**

The Russian Navy has announced plans to send the Black Sea fleet reconnaissance ship Kilden to the eastern Mediterranean to report on activities of NATO and US ships in the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf. The ship performed a similar mission last summer during the NATO bombing campaign in Kosovo.

(KOMMERSANT, 8 Feb 00; Agency WPS, via lexis-nexis) Russian media boldly stated the Navy is out to defend Russia's national interests and to deter anyone from detaining Russian merchant ships. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 17 Feb 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0217, via World News Connection)

"Detaining Russian merchant ships" obviously refers to the recent US Navy's seizure of a Russian-flagged oil tanker brazenly transporting Iraqi oil in violation of UN sanctions. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 15 Feb 00) The seizure and inability of the Russian Navy to demonstrate any resistance was probably another blow to the Navy's prestige. The Kilden will demonstrate, albeit in a very limited way, Russia's continued support for Iraq.

### **War is never pretty ... but the war in Chechnya is particularly ugly**

As the scale of combat operations declines in Chechnya, horrifying tales of civilian atrocities are emerging at an increasing rate. Most damning to date was the much-publicized video supplied last week by a German television station, N24, and aired by both European and Russian television. The video showed Russian soldiers disposing of the dead bodies of Chechen men, mutilated and bound in barbed wire, into a mass grave. It also showed soldiers pushing an unidentified body off the back of an armored personnel carrier and footage of a military truck dragging yet another body across a field. The narrator describes the footage as clear evidence of Russian torture and cruelty against Chechen civilians. There has been much controversy surrounding the explanation of the video. The Russians claim it is just another example of Chechen propaganda and the bodies in the mass grave were actually Chechen fighters killed in battle who could not be identified by local civilians. A spokesman for Russia's interior ministry, Oleg Aksyonov, attempted to dismiss the video by applying very simple reasoning: "elementary logic suggests that if a crime were committed, video recording was unlikely to be permitted." (AP, 25 Feb 00) Which means, "if we were really doing something wrong, do you think we would have let someone take our picture while we did it?" How can anybody possibly argue with that?

Okay, even without the video, there remains a compelling amount of evidence detailing a clear picture of Russian atrocities. These atrocities can be grouped into three categories: the bombing of civilian-populated areas using prohibited and highly destructive weapons; the establishment of "filtration" camps where civilians are subjected to systematic and routine beatings, torture and rape; and finally, numerous reported acts of army units and individual soldiers involving the looting, rape and execution of Chechen civilians.

The Russians have conducted an unceasing bombing campaign against Chechen population centers since the initiation of combat operations in October 1999. As the war in Chechnya dragged on, the battle for Dzhokhar began to look more and more like an unending stalemate and the Chechen rebels moved into the highly defensible, difficult southern mountain region, the Russians turned to more destructive and more indiscriminate weapons. Two of these are the TOS-1 rocket and the Tochka-U ballistic missile. The TOS-1 rocket is fired from multiple rocket launchers and is filled with flammable liquid which causes an aerial explosion on impact, killing people, destroying property and igniting fires in a large destructive footprint. There have been reports that the TOS-1 was used in the bombing of Dzhokhar, Gekhi-Chu, and other Chechen towns and villages. There has also been much speculation of the use of this type of weapons technology against rebel fortifications (caves, etc.) in the southern Chechen mountains. The Tochka-U ballistic missile, used against Dzhokhar, Shali, Alkhan-Kala and other Chechen towns, upon impact covers an area of seven hectares with deadly cluster shrapnel, ripping apart everything in its path. The use of the TOS-1 specifically violates the third protocol of the 1980 Geneva Convention, signed and ratified by Russia, which forbids the use of "air-delivered incendiary weapons." (MOSCOW TIMES, 17 Feb 00; via lexis-nexis) Another charge levied at Russia's bombing campaign is the methodical and systematic destruction of Chechen medical structures, internationally agreed upon "safe havens." (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 23 Feb 00; via lexis-nexis)

Even more disturbing are the many reports coming from international human rights organizations, based on eyewitness accounts, of the systematic beatings, torture and rape of Chechen men, women and children in deplorable Russian "filtration" camps. These camps were established in and near Chechnya by Russian forces to "sort out" rebel fighters from civilians. The most publicized of these camps is Chernokozovo, the site of a former Soviet prison in northern Chechnya. According to numerous eyewitness reports from former Chechen inmates and a Russian soldier stationed at Chernokozovo, inmates upon arrival are stripped and placed in specially refrigerated rooms. Inmates are routinely beaten with truncheons, rifle butts and hammers, and men and girls as young as 13 are raped by masked Russian soldiers. (THE INDEPENDENT (London), 17 Feb 00; via lexis-nexis) The official investigator at Chernokozovo is reported to have said the purpose of the camp was to "cripple for the rest of their lives" those Chechens who were able to survive the treatment they received while interned. Russian soldiers at checkpoints and in house-to-house searches arrest most inmates, seemingly on a whim. Very few are actually believed to be rebel fighters. Release from these filtration camps is contingent on bribes to Russian officials or in prisoner trades for captured Russian soldiers. Russia has refused numerous requests to allow UN or Red Cross observers to examine conditions at these camps. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 18 Feb 00; via lexis-nexis)

Finally, are the repeated reports of atrocities committed against civilians by Russian troops. Again, many of these reports have been validated by numerous human rights organizations including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. Human Rights Watch has provided particularly disturbing details of one such incident involving the massacre of 62 civilians between 5-6 February in the village of Aldy on the outskirts of Dzhokhar. A spokesman for Human Rights Watch describes the actions of Russian soldiers: "The soldiers went into the houses. They shot at the people. Sometimes they asked for money. When people didn't give them any money, they killed them. There were also cases of



rape... there really is a practice of organized violence regarding the civilian population, and it is clear to us that we are really getting to the level of war crimes and crimes against humanity...." (FRANCE INTER RADIO, 1200 GMT, 23 Feb 00; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis)

There it is -- "war crimes and crimes against humanity," that indictable phrase that causes international politicians to go into nervous twitters. How did the Russians get to this point? There are several answers that involve politics, ethnic hatred, revenge and an undisciplined military. From the beginning, acting President Putin has pushed the military to achieve a quick, decisive victory in Chechnya and has given the services a blank check to achieve that objective. He must win. His popularity is tied to victory in Chechnya and the Russian public has shown it really doesn't care about the means. The summer "terrorist" bombings in Russia which have been attributed by officials to Chechen rebels and the general stereotype of Chechens as a lawless, threatening, and inferior people allow Putin and the military to conduct operations without fear of public or international outcry. And yet, one of the most basic tenets of warfare is the recognition of civilians as noncombatants who, therefore, must be safeguarded.

Sergei Kovalev, in his talk at Harvard University's Davis Center, on 23 February, hinted that the most horrible phase of the conflict is just beginning, by saying "you can't win a partisan war without genocide." The military believes it has a score to settle for its humiliating defeat in the last Chechen war in 1994-96. The last two major conflicts which color the decisions of senior military leaders are the previous Chechen war and the war in Afghanistan; both bloody, ugly and treacherous defeats. The majority of Russian soldiers on the ground in Chechnya fall into two major categories: the young, untrained conscripts and the hard, experienced "kontrakniki" -- professional soldiers hired by the Russian military to fight in Chechnya. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 24 Feb 00) The conscripts are composed primarily of tired, hungry, abused young men with little military training. They are keeping their heads down and trying to stay alive with

little support from the military structure. They complain of the lack of food and shelter, and many argue the Russian public and their military leaders have forsaken them. The target of their frustration, in many reported cases, have been fellow soldiers and civilians. The other group, the kontrakniki, are hired "thugs" given a mission to destroy the Chechen fighters and their ability to wage war. They are not bound by the same standards of acceptable warfare at least superficially assigned to the formal military structure. They are guns for hire, in it for the pay and any other gain they may find. Most of the reports of civilian atrocities have been attributed to the kontrakniki.

It is clear that war atrocities are occurring. Will demands to charge Russian officials with these "war crimes and crimes against humanity" ever be forthcoming? UN Human Rights Commissioner Mary Robinson's suggestion on 20 February to prosecute Russian generals for overseeing "executions, tortures and rapes" in Chechnya (THE WASHINGTON TIMES, 21 Feb 00; via lexis-nexis) may never become more than a suggestion. Western governments have clearly shown an unwillingness to go past the "we are very upset about this" political statements. The bottom line is that, when all is said and done, historically the "victors" are not tried for war crimes -- only the vanquished are -- and the Russians are the victors... at least for the time being.

## Newly Independent States: CIS

By Sarah Miller

### **Same old games...**

During the run-up to the 26 March elections, Russia remains the unknown factor in CIS relations. For the time being, all is quiet on the CIS front and a "business as usual" atmosphere pervades CIS relations, but the outcome of the March election represents an unknown quotient in CIS affairs. Although Putin's success in the election is practically a given, and his performance at the CIS Summit in

January seemed to hint at strong Russian leadership to come, there has been no visible change in Russia's CIS policy -- yet.

With economic issues on hold -- Russia has made it clear that economic issues should be addressed at the bilateral level -- only military cooperation remains, and in this sphere, CIS members are still playing the same old games. In what is now becoming a semi-annual tradition, Russia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan are planning their "Shield-2000" live-fire exercises for March. (ITAR-TASS, 1705 GMT, 16 Feb 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0216, via World News Connection) In addition, the same participants just completed a seven-day war game in February.

Military "cooperation" is the one area in which Russia has maintained the upper hand in the CIS, and Central Asian states have been particularly interested in cultivating such relations with Russia. With Putin in power, their interest hasn't waned. For Central Asian states, Putin's leadership in the CIS will mean more "anti-terrorist war games" that will not only equip their countries with Russian hardware and train their soldiers, but also will get relations off on the right foot with Putin's new, stronger Russia. However, what may be good for some isn't necessarily good for all. For some CIS member states, especially those in the Caucasus, Russian-led war games aimed at "destroying bandit groups" and "combating international terrorism" don't speak well for what is yet to come, especially as Russia wages a war against "terrorists" on their borders. (ITAR-TASS, 0912 GMT, 18 Feb 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0218, via World News Connection)

In many respects, Russia is just falling back on old devices. Moscow has always liked to use military "war games" to make its point, and the new Russian leadership isn't changing its strategy. For the time being, Russian posturing hasn't meant much in the CIS, but as long as the Russian leadership remains the unknown factor, CIS members shouldn't get too comfortable.

# Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Tammy Lynch

## **UKRAINE**

### **The Great Wall of the EU**

On 10 September 1999, President Leonid Kuchma spoke about his fear that Ukraine would become isolated from its Western neighbors as, one by one, those neighbors began the process of accession to the European Union. "Figuratively speaking," he said, "there is a real threat that instead of the past iron curtain, a far more humane but no less dangerous paper curtain may appear." (INTERFAX, 1653 GMT, 10 Sep 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0910, via World News Connection) He, therefore, asked that the EU consider including Ukraine in some way at some time in the long-term future. His request was roundly dismissed. Guenther Verheugen, the EU Commissioner for Enlargement, explained, "I think it is irresponsible to talk about Ukraine and Russia as if they are potential candidates for membership. I think anybody who thinks Ukraine should be taken into the EU... should perhaps come along with the argument that Mexico should be taken into the US." (REUTERS, 25 Nov 99; via Russia Today) Apparently, to Verheugen, Ukraine equals Russia and Russia equals Ukraine. It is unfortunate that Ukrainians don't see it that way; it would make things so much simpler!

This month, Kuchma's "paper curtain" became a reality, as his country's Western neighbors, the Visegrad Four, announced plans to rescind "visa-free" agreements with Ukraine, and in the case of the Czech Republic, begin large-scale deportations of persons found to be illegal aliens.

Given the recent decline in trade between the Visegrad countries and Ukraine, the impact of the new visa requirements may be more psychological than economic. But that psychological impact will likely be immense. As Slovakia, the

Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland begin integrating further into the EU social and trade structures, Ukraine could be pushed further to the side, and further toward Russia. Ukraine's natural ethnocentric ties -- with significant numbers of Ukrainians living outside Ukraine's borders, and large numbers of Hungarians, Slovaks and Poles living inside those borders -- effectively are being severed. Ukraine is, by default, being categorized as a second-class country, as Central Europe is split into two tiers. The prime minister of Slovakia, Mikulas Dzurinda, seemed to recognize this and resisted imposing visas on Ukrainian citizens. He finally acquiesced, however. "If we are serious about our plans for Slovakia to be a European Union member state...", he explained, "it is obvious that its border with Ukraine will soon be a Schengen border and this requires certain standards and concrete measures which we have made and will have to make." (CTK, 1527 GMT, 19 Feb 00; FBIS-SOV-1999-0219, via World News Connection)

Of course, it is true that there must be standards. And of course, there must also be some type of concrete visa requirement between EU and non-EU countries. But, it is unfortunate that Ukraine was not given hope that the EU might some day accept it, which would have made this new wall temporary and perhaps more porous. This possibility would have strengthened Ukraine's resolve to resist pressure to return to a "Little Russian" status. It would also have helped as the Kuchma administration attempts to undertake its most difficult reforms ever. Most of all, it is unfortunate that Ukraine -- the second largest country on the continent -- could not be seen as a counterweight to Russian dominance in Eastern Europe, as opposed to an extension of that dominance.

In the last month, Russia has once again begun to pressure its neighbor about what it sees as the inequity of making Ukrainian the state language of Ukraine. It has also strongly hinted that it will accept shares in soon-to-be-privatized Ukrainian state companies in lieu of cash payments to reduce Ukraine's energy debts. This "concession" on Russia's part could be important to Ukraine, particularly since the IMF has still not released the next tranche of its Extended

Fund Facility loan. (BLOOMBERG NEWS, 1306 GMT, 12 Feb 00; via America Online) Without that IMF money, Ukraine has little hope of paying its foreign debts, even if its restructuring plan is a success. So, Russia's offer gives Ukraine a sliver of a way out. It also gives Russia another foot in the door.

Ukraine, the borderland, is now left in the middle again: On one side is an EU that has slammed the door for the foreseeable future and an IMF that has decided to implement its toughest "tough love"; on the other side, Russia -- a neighbor that is always ready and eager to help.

## **BELARUS**

### **That old familiar feeling**

Here we go again. Last year, the Belarusian opposition staged its largest protest to date -- the March for Freedom on 17 October. At that time, up to 20,000 protesters participated in the march, which ended in clashes with police and dozens of arrests. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 1 Nov 99)

Now, the opposition has announced that a series of demonstrations will begin on 15 March, to protest Alyaksandr Lukashenka's flouting of his agreement with the OSCE to negotiate with opposition members in advance of this Fall's parliamentary elections.

Lukashenka's administration announced on 24 February that it had set new terms for political dialogue with the opposition; terms that, if accepted, would gut the very core of the opposition's case. First, the Belarusian Popular Front, the largest opposition group, would be excluded. Second, in order simply to talk with a Lukashenka representative, opposition members would have to recognize the internationally discredited 1996 referendum that disbanded the elected parliament and extended the president's term. (REUTERS, 1919 GMT, 24 Feb 00; via America Online) Any bets on if that will happen?

Given the severity of the police response last year, it would generally be questionable whether protesters would turn out in such high numbers on 15 March. The Belarusian opposition continues to defy naysayers, however, and seems once again to be gaining strength, particularly based on the deteriorating economy. Even street traders have now begun gathering to protest worsening conditions. (REUTERS, 1428 GMT, 2 Feb 00; via America Online)

Meanwhile, Belarusian opposition figures have spent large amounts of time courting support in the West in recent months, from a much-heralded meeting between Semyon Sharetsky and US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, to a visit to Washington DC by 10 Belarusian lawyers/activists representing dissidents. (American Bar Association, PR NEWSWIRE, 25 Jan 00; via America Online) It is clear that pronouncements of the death of the Belarusian opposition have been premature. In fact, it is a credit to opposition leaders and those who follow them that the opposition has been able to maintain cohesiveness and effectiveness after so much administration pressure, and often limited Western support.

There are faint signs that the opposition's recent Western meetings have increased the strength of Western support for their cause. It will likely become apparent if those signs are realistic on 16 March, the day after the opposition's second major stand.

## Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Miriam Lansky

### **CHECHNYA**

#### **Who's running this war?**

Several important episodes of the war bear the pawprint of the FSB and provide some indication of the direction in which Russian society will develop if acting

President Vladimir Putin succeeds in expanding the role of the security services in the Russian military and society at large. On the whole the picture is deeply troubling, but the sheer incompetence of these services gives some room for hope.

At a 1 March press conference, Andrei Babitsky, the Radio Liberty reporter who was released earlier this week suggested that that his detainment was an "act of revenge" by the FSB (INTERFAX, 1 Mar 00; via lexis-nexis) Indeed his account suggests that the FSB, and the government by extension, held him captive for political reasons and managed the twists and turns of his bizarre ordeal.

Although many of the details of the month-long saga of Babitsky's disappearance, arrest, "exchange" and eventual release remain sketchy, it seems that he was in the hands of the FSB or its clients for a substantial portion of that time. Babitsky was detained while trying to leave Dzhokhar on 16 January. Although he presented his passport and accreditation card, he was still held in a filtration camp, Chernokozovo, until "very definite officials began to appear" there. (NTV, 29 Feb 00; via lexis-nexis) Officials of the Procuracy and others persuaded him to consent to a trade by which he would be transferred to Chechen commander Turpal Atgeriev in return for Russian servicemen. When the Russian captors reneged on several elements of the agreement, Babitsky -- who had been reluctant all along -- protested and refused to be traded. Ultimately, the trade was coerced and Babitsky was forced to go at gunpoint. When the videotaped exchange occurred on 2 February, Babitsky was handed over not to Atgeriev but to members of a pro-Moscow Chechen group, Adamalla, which has "close ties" to the security services. According to Kommersant, the leader of the movement, Adam Deniev, has taken part in special operations in Chechnya under the former MVD minister Anatoli Kulikov and likes to call himself "FSB Colonel." (KOMMERSANT, 2 Mar 00; via lexis-nexis) He was held by these persons until 23 February when an attempt was made to smuggle him into Azerbaijan under a false passport. On that occasion the officer accompanying



him identified himself as an FSB agent. Babitsky was returned to Makhachkala and was able to contact his editor at Radio Liberty, who together with Babitsky's lawyers and family eventually secured his release.

Babitsky himself is perplexed by the story: "I link everything that is happening with some horrendous, terrible story that I cannot unravel. And I am deeply convinced that the authorities, including the Interior Ministry that is supposedly trying to help me now, are very, very, seriously involved in this confusing situation. " (NTV) Indeed, from his account it seems that from the time of his arrest until his release over a month later Babitsky was always held captive by officials of the Russian security services or their agents. The fact that even Babitsky cannot be sure (or is afraid to be too blunt) about which agency held him at particular times or what objective it was pursuing is not surprising -- special operations are supposed to be secret. The special services are not going to reveal all the tricks of the trade to the victim or the press. But there is plenty that smells foul and some ideas about motivations can be broached.

The Russian government has been quite successful in controlling the war reporting coming from Chechnya. Most journalists, including those working for Western agencies, write their stories from Mozdok or Nazran. The few who go to Chechnya do so with the capable guidance of the Russian military and MVD officers. Babitsky's independent, professional and courageous reporting from Chechen-controlled areas was very different . At the time of his "exchange," the government intimated that he went willingly to the Chechen commander and charged that as an employee of Radio Liberty (read CIA agent) he was a collaborator of the Chechen resistance. With this rhetoric, Babitsky's arrest and "exchange" could serve three objectives: 1) to silence Babitsky; 2) to cower other journalists; 3) to suggest that the US sponsors the Chechens. But why was he released? That's a tougher question to answer. Did the news that Radio Liberty was considering starting a new Chechen service guarantee the failure of the operation regardless of Babitsky's fate? Did the services give up because they

had failed to smuggle him to Azerbaijan? Or did they become weary of the public outcry over Babitsky's fate?

While the Babitsky episode has attracted mass publicity, two other turning points of this war bear the same security services pawprints but have received less attention. On 2 February the Russian military did complete its occupation of Dzhokhar, but the Russian command was denied the kind of victory it had sought. Indeed, taking the rubble only after the fighters had abandoned it hardly represents a military triumph. The military claims that the fall of the city was the result of a "brilliant" special operation. According to General Victor Shamanov, the Chechens were approached by an agent provocateur from the FSB who promised to provide safe passage in return for a \$100,000 bribe. In this way, the Chechens were lured into taking a particular route out of the city, which led them into a minefield in which four top commanders -- Lecha Dudaev, Khunkarpasha Israpilov, Turpal Atgeriev and Aslambek Ismailov -- and 400 men perished, while the commanders Shamil Basaev and Akhmed Zakaev suffered serious wounds. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 7 Feb 00)

Russian generals Sergeev and Shamanov claim that this represented a highly successful operation which seriously impaired the Chechen command. Others point out that 75% of the Chechen fighters came out unscathed and the wounded were treated in a town supposedly occupied by the federal forces. Andrei Matyash suggests that the withdrawal represented a deal by which the generals got their "victory" and the Chechens got more-or-less safe passage out of the city. (IWPR CAUCASUS REPORTING SERVICE, 4 Feb 00) Certainly the decision to trick (or allow) the resistance fighters out of the city betrays very low confidence on the Russian side: As a result of their "brilliant" operation, Russian generals let out most of the fighters, knowing full well that they would only regroup in the mountains. (They also consider the story of bribing an official for safe passage as an entirely plausible ploy!) Matyash points out that, if the Russians knew that the Chechens would flee to Alkhan-kala, why didn't they

ambush them there? Giles Whittell suggests that most fighters fled the surrounding area well in advance of the federal force's arrival. Why did the federal forces let them escape? (THE TIMES (London), 5 Feb 00; via lexis-nexis) Possibly, this strange story represented another partially bungled operation.

The bombings of apartment buildings in Moscow, Buinansk and Volgograd represent the third tale of mystery and intrigue. The bombings were immediately blamed on the Chechens and became the pretext for going to war, but no evidence tying any Chechen to the bombings ever surfaced. What we have instead is what celebrated Russian human rights activist, Sergei Kovalev dubbed "indirect evidence" of FSB involvement. As he related the story at the Davis Center on 23 February, in the Russian city of Ryazan local residents called the police fearing they had discovered explosives in the basement. They were evacuated from the building and spent the night outdoors. First the authorities said that the substance found in the basement was sugar. Then they said there were explosives and the sugar was there to facilitate the reaction. Then they identified the suspects. Then they said it was all a training exercise for the local police and MVD. The nation shuddered at this test of vigilance but, ultimately, believed the story.

Chechen Foreign Minister Ilyas Akhmadov related the story in similar terms but added a few revealing details at a 25 January appearance at the Davis Center. Neither the Ryazan police chief nor the Ryazan civil defense chief were aware of this "exercise." The MVD went to work in earnest looking for the culprit -- and arrested an FSB agent. At that point there emerged the need to concoct the story of the vigilance exercise.

Could it be that all three of these very strange episodes represent special operations that succeeded in part and failed in part? Clearly there is a great deal that we do not know but the very lack of credible and reasonable explanation points towards the conclusion that there is a great deal of such subterranean

activity and that these shadowy operations may play a very large role in determining the course of events.

## Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Monika Shepherd

### **KYRGYZSTAN**

#### **Parliamentary elections receive mixed reviews**

Kyrgyzstan's 20 February parliamentary elections have thus far received both praise and condemnation from election observers. On 23 February during a joint press conference with the chairman of Kyrgyzstan's Central Election Commission (CEC), OSCE observer mission chairman Mark Stevens told journalists that in his opinion, the Kyrgyz parliamentary elections had been both "fair and open." (KYRGYZ RADIO FIRST PROGRAMME, 1400 GMT, 23 Feb 00; BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit, via lexis-nexis) His statement contrasts rather sharply with OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Vice President Igor Ostash's comments on the Kyrgyz election process just days earlier, in which Ostash criticized Kyrgyzstan's administration for openly showing favoritism toward pro-government parties, while refusing to register many opposition candidates. (INTERFAX, 21 Feb 00; via lexis-nexis) Furthermore, in its official evaluation of the parliamentary elections which was released on 22 February, the OSCE declared that the election process did not fully meet its standards, due to the use of bribes and coercion to obtain votes, campaign interference by the Kyrgyz prosecutor's office, instances of ballot box stuffing, and the outright exclusion of the most prominent opposition parties. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 23 Feb 00)

However, despite the criticism evident in the OSCE's official report, as well as reports by numerous opposition activists that candidates from the top two parties (the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan and the pro-government bloc, the Union of Democratic Forces) achieved their electoral victories through the use of various

unscrupulous methods, CEC Chairman Sulayman Imanbaev blamed the inadequacies of the balloting process on the election observers themselves. According to Imanbaev, many of the approximately 5,000 election observers (including 200 international observers) actually proved to be more of a hindrance at the polling stations than anything else. He estimated that there were as many as 60 observers present at some of the polling areas (a total of 2,057 voting sites were set up), when according to Kyrgyz electoral law there should only be one observer and one person representing each candidate and NGO present at a single voting station. Imanbaev further stated that there were reports of voters being intimidated by the noise and confusion created by the observers as they jockeyed for position in their efforts to film and photograph the proceedings. He accused the observers of producing so much mayhem in one electoral precinct that no one came to vote at all. (KYRGYZ TELEVISION FIRST CHANNEL, 0900 GMT, 21 Feb 00; BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit, via lexis-nexis)

Although Imanbaev's accusations may bear some merit and may help explain the relatively low voter turnout (64.51% of eligible voters went to the polls) (KYRGYZ RADIO FIRST PROGRAMME, 1400 GMT, 24 Feb 00; BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit, via lexis-nexis), the election observers' poor behavior cannot be blamed for the fact that most of Kyrgyzstan's opposition parties were not included on the election ballots. Furthermore, the eyewitnesses who have thus far reported incidents of vote-buying, of voters being urged to cast more than one ballot, and of local election officials altering their precincts' ballot counts have not charged any of the election observers with taking part in these violations. Nonetheless, President Akaev characterized the 20 February elections as fair and democratic, even praising the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan because it had conducted its campaign with little fuss and did not file any complaints with the international observers. (THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, 21 Feb 00; via lexis-nexis) President Akaev failed to point out, however, that the Communist Party candidates encountered no trouble registering with the CEC or in getting their names on the ballot.

## **TURKMENISTAN**

### **Niazov takes tough line with US, Turkey over Trans-Caspian pipeline**

President Saparmyrat Niazov has thus far refused to give in to either US or Turkish pressure on the proposal to permit both Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan to export equal amounts of gas through the Trans-Caspian pipeline once its construction has been completed. Despite a letter from President Clinton in which he asked the Turkmen government for more flexibility on the issue (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 14 Feb 00), as well as recent visits from both Turkish and US officials, the Turkmen president has remained firm in his decision. (TURKMEN RADIO FIRST PROGRAMME, 1700 GMT, 25 Feb 00; BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit, via lexis-nexis)

During his 25 February meeting with Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Mithat Balkan and US special presidential advisor John Wolf, President Niazov informed the two men that the pipeline will not be profitable for his country if Azerbaijan receives an equal share. In fact, the Turkmen president went so far as to say that the pipeline project itself will be of no use to Turkmenistan if Azerbaijan is ceded a 50% share. President Niazov went on to inform his guests that, if the Trans-Caspian pipeline project does not fulfill his country's economic interests, the Turkmen government has the right to look for other methods of exporting its energy resources. President Niazov exhorted his guests to urge their own governments into action on the Trans-Caspian pipeline project. (TURKMEN TELEVISION FIRST CHANNEL, 1000 GMT, 25 Feb 00; BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit, via lexis-nexis)

Turkmenistan is already in the process of finding alternative ways to increase its fuel exports, and has been negotiating this issue with both Russia and Iran, a fact which the Turkmen president has not hidden. In fact, President Niazov has made no secret of the fact that he favors the concept of multiple pipelines for transporting Turkmen gas to the international market. By now it should also be

clear to both the US and Turkey that political considerations have little effect on the Turkmen president's decisions regarding energy sales, whence President Niazov's willingness to mediate fuel export deals with Taliban-controlled Afghanistan and Iran, both of which are seen as rogue states by the US.

President wants to step down by 2007

Just months after his apparently grateful and more than slightly fawning parliament voted him president for life, Niazov announced that, in order to ensure a smooth transition of power and make room for a new generation of politicians, he will voluntarily give up the presidency in another five or six years. (INTERFAX, 18 Feb 00; via lexis-nexis) The Turkmen president plans to groom a successor prior to resigning in order to prevent a succession struggle or power vacuum from developing. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 21 Feb 00)

Choosing a successor without provoking jealousy and malice among the rest of his supporters will no doubt be a difficult task for the Turkmen president. However, the most important question may be whether President Niazov plans to hand over his dictatorship unchanged, or whether he intends to begin establishing a state structure which will be stable enough to survive him. He has made vague promises to introduce political reforms once he feels that his country's citizens have been adequately prepared, but thus far he has done little or nothing to prepare them for a more liberal, open political system.

## Newly Independent States: Baltic States

By Kate Martin

### **All for one? I don't think so**

There has been very little collegial atmosphere among the Baltic states lately, as both Latvia and Lithuania have been seen as working a little too actively towards their own state interests, to the possible detriment of regional cooperation. Two

flaps occurred -- one new, one ongoing -- involving the Baltic states' attempts to enter larger alliances.

Certainly the most surprising was Latvia's accusation that Lithuania's bid for early admission to NATO was counterproductive and dangerous to the region's security. Latvian Foreign Minister Indulis Berzins told an academic conference that inclusion of one Baltic country in NATO without the other two would isolate Estonia and Latvia as well as send mixed signals to Russia. "I would not be criticising Lithuania if this was just a matter of Baltic unity. But this is an entirely different matter, that of a common security policy in the region," Berzins said. "As long as we compete to be as good as all the rest it is very good, but as soon as it turns into lifting oneself at the expense of pushing another aside, it becomes negative and even dangerous," he added. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1700 GMT, 4 Feb 00)

The Lithuanian foreign ministry expressed astonishment over Berzins' statement, and credited Latvia's stand to a misunderstanding of the situation. Lithuanian Deputy Foreign Minister Vygaudas Usackas said that, while seeking membership in both the European Union (EU) and NATO on an individual basis, Lithuania continues to speak in support of the acceptance of all three Baltic states into the alliances. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1100 GMT, 7 Feb 00) Estonia's reaction was a bit stronger: Foreign Minister Toomas Hendrik Ilves reminded reporters that Latvia had used a similar attack against his country in 1997. Such attacks are counterproductive, he said. "The notion that someone is doing something too well and should not push ahead is one of the weakest parts of this so-called Baltic unity. This would mean we'd be lagging behind and waiting for those behind us to catch up," he said. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1700 GMT, 9 Feb 00)

Ironically, while Latvia was calling for stronger alignments of policy on the international scene, it continued to impose additional tariffs on imports, a move



decried by Estonia, Lithuania, and the European Union. At this point, however, the continued bad feelings about Latvia's protectionist move haven't had an adverse effect on Latvia's application to join the European alliance. When European Commission President Romano Prodi and EU Enlargement Commissioner Guenther Verheugen visited Riga this month, Verheugen was quick to point to the trip as a political signal of support for Latvia's inclusion in the union, despite the tariff dispute. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1100 GMT, 9 Feb 00)

### **Good news and bad vibes**

While relations among the Baltic states were tumultuous, relations between the states and other members of the international community were ... confusing.

US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott gladdened the hearts of many when he stated that the accession of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to NATO is a national interest of the United States, and that support for such accession would most likely continue with the next presidential administration. Speaking at an international conference on "The US-Baltic Charter after Two Years: Achievements, Problems and Prospects," Talbott commended the progress made and outlined the tasks still needing attention. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1400 GMT, 11 Feb 00) He expressed his hope that eventually Russia would realize the benefits of NATO membership for the Baltic countries, while reiterating the lack of veto power the Baltics' neighbor holds.

Russia's attitude toward the Baltic countries was uppermost on the mind of Estonian President Lennart Meri, who took a combative stance in an interview with a French newspaper. "In case of an aggression, we are ready to wage a long guerrilla war in the woods. Moscow knows this and it is up to it to choose either imperialist policies or good-neighborly cooperation with the Baltic countries," Meri told the paper *Politique Internationale*. (BALTIC NEWS

SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1700 GMT, 14 Feb 00) Meri added that he had no doubts, however, that Russia would become a democratic country.

Certainly statements by the Russian embassy in Tallinn were designed to convince the world that Russia had already made its choice and was working to foster good-neighborly relations. The Russian embassy press service confirmed the country's sincerely peace-loving policy vis-a-vis Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and suggested that Meri's statements to the French newspaper were in fact caused by a need to find additional arguments to support accession to NATO. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1900 GMT, 16 Feb 00)

Regardless of the sincerity of such statements by Russia, Baltic leaders such as Meri must keep in mind the tendency toward resurgent nationalism in their neighboring countries. The leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, Gennady Zyuganov, stated his belief that an Estonian-Russian union could be anticipated within 15 years. Ignoring the reality of history and the importance of obtaining the consent of the governed, Zyuganov spoke of Estonian's changing geopolitical orientation "after World War I, in 1940 and after 1991." "We regard disintegration of the Soviet Union as the worst tragedy for all the peoples involved, and so we are going to make our best effort to strengthen integration policy with former Soviet territories," Zyuganov announced. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1700 GMT, 17 Feb 00)

Meanwhile, Oleg Morozov, a leader of the officially unregistered Tallinn Union of Russian Citizens, issued threats of retaliation against Baltic countries from Russia once that country regained its strength. Morozov declared that Estonia only managed to get the Tartu Peace Treaty of 1920 signed because Russia had been weakened in wars, and that the deportations of Estonians in 1941 were Russia's response to the temerity of the Estonians once it had recovered its strength. Such retaliation should be expected once again, he warned. "There will come a time when those seeking to take advantage of our difficult situation will

have to pay their bills," he declared. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1700 GMT, 7 Feb 00) Perhaps guerrilla training is a good idea after all.

### **Prosecution of war criminals remains unresolved**

The situation concerning crimes against humanity continued to garner attention and spur activity. Prior to an international conference on Baltic prosecution of such crimes, members of the United States delegation meeting privately with government officials in Riga expressed their doubt of Latvia's enthusiasm to investigate war crimes. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1100 GMT, 16 Feb 00) The conference, which convened experts from the US, Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Australia, Israel and Latvia to discuss how to improve attempts to prosecute such criminals, was propelled in large part by the lack of resolution concerning the case of Konrads Kalejs, an Australian citizen who has been publicly, if not legally, accused of war crimes in Latvia. At the meeting, officials from Latvia and Australia agreed to speed up extradition talks. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1900 GMT, 17 Feb 00)

US representatives were just as quick to condemn Lithuanian efforts to prosecute war criminals, but not very quick to provide assistance. While continuing to assert that Aleksandras Lileikis has been shamming illness to avoid trial on charges of war crimes, the US Department of Justice has refused to provide information as to the source of its publicly stated conviction that the former US resident is healthy enough to face prosecution. The justice department explained its refusal by saying Lithuanian authorities were unable to guard secrets, according to a Lithuanian Appeals Court judge. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1900 GMT, 14 Feb 00) Meanwhile, perhaps to show that its heart is in the right place, the Lithuanian parliament amended the country's criminal code to allow genocide cases to proceed without the presence of defendants who are too ill to attend the court hearings. The new code will allow for the prosecution of several dozens of cases of war crimes committed during World War II and the Soviet era. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1900 GMT, 15 Feb 00)

Copyright Boston University Trustees 2000

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

*Analyst*. This article was originally published at

<http://www.bu.edu/iscip/digest/vol5/ed0504.html>.