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Russian Federation: Executive Branch and Military Reform

By Susan Cavan

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

A tribute

Paul Klebnikov, editor of the Russian edition of Forbes and author of, among other works, *Godfather of the Kremlin*, was gunned down as he left his office in Moscow Friday night. The details have been published repeatedly over the last several days, and yet the shock remains. The first western journalist killed since 1996, Klebnikov was young, had remarkable access to some of the most influential political and economic figures in contemporary Russia, and seemed to have done little to attract the ire of the Russian business community except publish the names and estimated wealth of its richest members. That, of course, is enough when such attention can attract prosecutors and tax investigators.

In the final interview granted before his death, Klebnikov discussed some of the comparisons between Russia in the 1990s and Putin's Russia. When asked specifically what has happened "since the 1990s"? Klebnikov responds, "Not that much, if you ask me. Like before, just a few men control a substantial part of the economy. Like before, these men wield influence with state policy." (1)

Later in the interview, he does hedge his comments by acknowledging the differences between powerful businessmen in the 1990s and now, in the age of Putin and Khodorkovsky:

"A lot of business tycoons improved their behavior indeed. They pay taxes, invest in domestic projects, participate in charity campaigns. They are aware of their responsibilities now."

Question: These days, they fear the president they used to control....

"Khlebnikov: That's great. That they fear, I mean. Restoration of respect the state commands in society and major businesses is to be welcomed. Unfortunately, the state is currently bullying its way into another extreme. (...)" (2)

Klebnikov has been eulogized, memorialized, well by his friends, colleagues and associates. And while his name stirs strong sentiments, favorable and not, among analysts, his writings remain to speak for him, and of him to generations of Russia-watchers. It is therefore, the indelible impression left by his prose from Godfather of the Kremlin that serves as this tribute to the writer.

"Any doubts about the first years of the Yel'tsin era being a disaster were dispelled by the demographic statistics. These numbers, even in their most general form, suggested a catastrophe without precedent in modern history — the only parallel was countries destroyed by war, genocide, or famine.

Between 1990 and 1994, male mortality rates rose 53 percent, female mortality rates 27 percent. (...) Each month thousands of Russians were dying prematurely. (...) Many premature deaths occurred among the elderly — the babushkas, church ladies, and old men — people who had seen their life savings disappear in the great inflation of 1992, who had seen their pension checks turn worthless, who did not have families to support them, and who simply could not scrape together enough money for a nutritious diet or medicine. (3)

The most pitiful victims of Russia's social and economic decline were the children. In 1992, 1.6 million children were born in Russia; that same year, 67,286 children (4 percent of all births) were abandoned by their parents. By

1997, the breakdown of parenting had grown to catastrophic levels. That year 1.3 million children were born, but 113,000 children (equivalent to 9 percent of all newborns) were abandoned. Russia had no real program of adoption or foster care, so most of these children ended up on the street." (4)

As the initial wave of shock therapy appears with disastrous effects, Klebnikov interviewed the "reformers" around Yel'tsin for their view of the situation. He found their attitudes chilling: "Many members of the Yel'tsin government often spoke about their country with such icy detachment that you thought they were describing a foreign land." (5) According to a Yel'tsin economic adviser, Yevgeni Yasin, "This country must drink the cup to the bitter end." (6) And drink they did.

Kremlin business meeting

A week before Paul Klebnikov's murder and just as Yukos was hit with another tax bill (this time for \$3.4 billion), and had its assets frozen, President Putin gathered with "representatives of the business community" in the Kremlin to discuss issues of social responsibility and economic vitality and tax collection.

Among those in attendance at the meeting were Arkadi Volsky and other delegates from the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry President, Yevgeni Primakov, P.M. Mikhail Fradkov, Kremlin Apparatus Chief Dmitri Medvedev, Oleg Deripaska (Russky Alyuminy), Andrei Kostin (Vneshtorgbank), Aleksei Miller (Chairman of the Gazprom Board), Vladimir Potanin (Interros), Mikhail Fridman (Alfa-Bank), Aleksandr Abramov (Evraz Holding), Vladimir Yevtushenko (Sistema), Boris Titov (Interkhimprom) and Aleksandr Shokhin (former Yel'tsin government member and Chairman of the Renaissance Capital Board). (7)

Anatoli Chubais, who had met earlier with the Prime Minister to discuss and debate plans for reform of the energy sector, was notably absent from this Presidential-level Kremlin get together. The participants also claimed to be

unaware of the moves made against Yukos until after the end of the meeting. According to Arkadi Volsky, if he had known about the latest round of attacks against the oil conglomerate, "we would have raised the issue." (8)

Putin apparently told the business leaders that he expected them to forego tax shelter schemes, in recognition of the state's attempts to lower social taxes and VAT. The actions taken against Yukos appeared to reinforce his message and sends a strong signal that Putin's expectations of their behavior clearly wouldn't need to rely solely on their social consciences.

MILITARY REFORM

Kvashnin down, but out? Not yet

Headlines blazed in the past few weeks with gloomy forecasts for the Chief of the General Staff, Anatoli Kvashnin ("Kvashnin will answer for Ingushetia;" "Chief of the General Staff is Doomed"). Clearly however, out isn't always out for good in this game of cat and mouse with the Kremlin.

Kvashnin's response to Duma passage of a bill meant to subordinate the General Staff to the Defense Ministry (see previous NIS Observed), was to meet with Duma Security Committee members at the General Staff headquarters.

Committee members [including an old Kvashnin friend (and liberator of the Pristina airport) Colonel-General Viktor Zavarzin] heard reports from Kvashnin, GRU Chief Anatoli Korabelnikov, Main Operations Department Head Aleksandr Rukshin and Organization and Mobilization Department Chief Vasili Smirnov. (9)

While some speculate that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss secure aspects of the defense budget for 2005, timing suggests that Kvashnin's role, and that of the General Staff as a whole, in keeping the Russian armed forces trained, equipped, supplied and armed with appropriate weapons systems, as well as strategic planning and forecasting were elucidated in full detail for the Duma committee. (10)

While it is clear that the Kremlin, and more specifically President Putin and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov, have launched a full attack on Kvashnin's General Staff, it is not entirely obvious that Kvashnin will submit to his seemingly pre-ordained fate. Despite the obvious and straightforward assaults to his command, Kvashnin maintains, "The General Staff has always been and remains the main body of operational command. Nothing has changed in the functions of the chief of the General Staff either. That is why I do not understand what the newspapers mean when they write about some "radical changes in the status of the General Staff."" (11) Denial or bravado?

The short list for Genshtab Chief replacements, should it come to that, seems to focus on current First Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Yuri Baluyevsky. Baluyevsky recently led a Russian mission to China to discuss strategic cooperation. (12)

An interesting comment from Paul Klebnikov's last interview caught my attention and should perhaps be borne in mind by those Kremlin dwellers who would attempt military reform by wrenching control from the General Staff. "[M]ajor businesses have much better lobbyist capacities nowadays than, say, the military or retirees," Klebnikov reportedly said. (13) Funny, that's just the point Pavel Felgenhauer seemed to be making when he relayed the information that "former KGB, Interior Ministry and military-connected Duma deputies are now preparing a letter to Putin on behalf of Russia's "millions of military pensioners" (not just pensioners from the military, but also the FSB and other security services), seeking exemption from property tax. (14)

In case there might be any confusion as to what the author is trying to suggest, he spells it out near the end of his piece. "Virtually everyone is telling stories of "total military decay," of Kremlin and Defense Ministry incompetence. Almost everyone is predicting dark things in the future." (15) Especially, one might

assume, if the Kremlin disabled the one structure that has lobbied effectively for the military in the past....

Source Notes:

- (1) "Pavel Khlebnikov's Last Interview," Izvestiya, 13 Jul 04; What the Papers Say (WPS) via Johnson's Russia List (JRL), #8290, 13 Jul 04.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) Klebnikov, Paul. Godfather of the Kremlin: Boris Berezovsky and the Looting of Russia. (NY: Harcourt, Inc., 2000), p.103.
- (4) Ibid., p. 108-9
- (5) Ibid., pp.103
- (6) Ibid., p. 102.
- (7) RIA-Novosti, 1 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis; Moscow Times, No. 2953, 2 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (8) Moscow Times, Ibid.
- (9) "Kvashnin will Answer for Ingushetia," Nezavisimaya gazeta, 30 Jun 04; WPS via Lexis-Nexis.
- (10) "General Staff Tries to Influence Defense Budget, RIA-Novosti, 2 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (11) Izvestiya, 6 Jul 04; WPS via Lexis-Nexis.
- (12) ITAR-TASS, 1 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (13) Izvestiya, 13 Jul 04, Ibid.
- (14) "General Discontent Rising," by Pavel Felgenhauer via (www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2004/07/06.html) .
- (15) Ibid.

Russian Federation: Security Services

By Fabian Adami

Fallout from Ingushetia incursion.

During the night of 22 June, Chechen and Ingush rebels participated in a raid on the Ingush capital, Nazran. Reaction to the raid by the authorities has been interesting, to say the least. Chechnya's new Interior Minister, Alu Alkhanov was quick to state that, in his view, the raid had been funded and organized by Shamil Basaev and Aslan Maskhadov, while Federal Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev insisted that the raid had been unsuccessful, because the rebels failed to "capture a single target." (1) This opinion surely must be viewed with some cynicism. Not only did the rebels kill the Acting Ingush Interior Minister Abukar Kostoyev, but they were also able to raid a nearby arms dump, escaping with "hundreds of guns and large quantities of other weapons," including relatively advanced Fagot anti-tank missiles, several of which were found jettisoned in the outskirts of surrounding villages. (2)

In order to understand better Nurgaliyev's defensiveness, several important issues need to be examined. First, several days after the raid, Sergei Koryakov, head of the Ingush Federal Security Services (FSB) claimed that he had received warning of the raid on 22 June. His Deputy, Andrei Konin, insisted that this warning had been transmitted immediately to the Interior Ministry. (3) Second, a member of Ingushetia's Federation Council, Issa Kostoyev, has claimed that despite calls for reinforcements to fend off the raid, no assistance arrived. (4) Without backup forces, the rebels were able to make their escape, even stopping for prayers in a nearby village.

These claims and occurrences suggest at least a botched and incompetent reaction to the raid. However, there has been some suggestion that while the raid was not planned, it was permitted to occur.

Specific accusations have been aired by the Ingush President, Murat Zyazikov. Speaking to Interfax on 26 June, he claimed that "we did not receive any information concerning imminent guerilla attacks," (5) adding that "you all know

who is supposed to come up with information of this sort." (6) When he was asked at a press conference about his view on the response to the raid, Zyazikov stated that "this is either treason, or carelessness or outright irresponsibility. I'd say all of that was present." (7) Eleven days later, on July 7, Zyazikov held another press conference, during which he expressed his conviction that "punishment is sure to follow for the security and law enforcement personnel who failed to report this."(8)

But how reliable are these statements? While Zyazikov is a former FSB officer himself, it must be noted that, for some time, his government has had difficult relations with the Federal Security Service. The FSB is widely believed to be behind the recent abduction of Ingush Prosecutor Rashid Ozoyev, who, it was believed, intended to publicize FSB violations of Ingush law during special operations. (9) Although Zyazikov has remained silent on the issue thus far, in the aftermath of the 22 June raid he attacked the FSB's use of abduction tactics: "Attempts are being made to use such tactics in Ingushetia as well, but we are resisting that...we shall not permit anyone to break the law—individuals or groups, let alone organizations." (10) Despite Zyazikov's assertions, the Russian government's reaction to the raid lends some credence to the idea that the raid was the result of massive failures, rather than a deliberate attempt to undermine the Ingush government.

On June 23, President Putin met with top security officials, including FSB Director Nikolai Patrushev, and Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev. According to reports of the meeting, the President effectively gave the FSB carte blanche in pursuing the alleged perpetrators, telling Patrushev: "You need to seek and destroy. Those who can be caught must be taken alive and tried in court." (11) The result of this meeting was a massive sweep operation conducted by FSB troops and local police officers.

According to reports aired by Russia TV, Magomed Yevloyev, one of the supposed ground commanders of the incursion, was found by the FSB in the village of Dolakovo on 28 June. The FSB claimed that Yevloyev was "immediately destroyed" because he resisted arrest. (12) Days later, the FSB apparently discovered and killed three more members of Yevloyev's gang near the infamous town of Samashki. (13)

Now, however, it has become clear that the FSB did not kill the right man. Instead, the Yevloyev killed appears to be nothing more than a namesake of the famous Chechen commander known to the government as 'Magas.' On 29 June, Kommersant stated that Chechen Interior Ministry representatives asked to identify the body had failed to do so. Further, they reportedly told Kommersant that while Yevloyev was a local crime boss, he "certainly could not have led the gunmen who attacked Nazran and Karabulak. That was out of his league." (14) If this allegation is true, why did the FSB kill this Yevloyev?

Sergei Dyupkin, the journalist behind the Kommersant story, argued that the announcement of Yevloyev's death amounted to little more than a publicity stunt, designed to be mentioned at Duma Committee hearings on the incursion, to convince the Duma that the 'culprit' had been caught. (15) This is certainly a possibility, but it is not the only one. It is also possible that the second Yevloyev was an important figure in his own right, and that the FSB simply used the raid as an excuse to eliminate him, or that his death was designed as a 'message' to be sent to other Chechens linked to the Yevloyev clan.

Although President Zyazikov's claims attract attention in a region rife with conspiracy theories, based on current evidence, a more realistic interpretation is Dyupkin's: namely an operational failure, which the FSB is scrambling to cover up.

Source Notes:

- (1) Moscow Nezavisimaya gazeta, 27 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0628 via World News Connection (WNC).
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) Info-Prod Strategic Business Information, 28 Jun 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (4) Moscow Nezavisimaya gazeta, 27 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0628 via. WNC.
- (5) Info-Prod Strategic Business Information, 28 Jun 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (6) Izvestia, Jun 29 04; WPS via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (7) WPS, 29 Jun 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (8) Moskovskii Komsomolets, 7 Jul 04; WPS via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (9) Izvestia, 29 Jun 04; WPS via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (10) Moskovskii Komsomolets, 7 Jul 04; WPS via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (11) The Moscow Times, 23 Jun 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (12) Russia TV, 28 Jun 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (13) WPS-Defense and Security, 5 Jul 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (14) Kommersant, 28 Jun 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
- (15) Ibid.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Maolmordha McGowan

Twisting arms

On June 26, 2004, en route to Istanbul and the NATO Summit, U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld landed in Chisinau, Moldova. (1) He paid a visit to Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin to thank him personally for contributing (all of) 45 military specialists to the Iraq war effort. (2)

Since the Secretary did not plan to visit to Albania or Macedonia, whose troop contributions of 70 and 39, respectively, might deserve similar kudos, it is safe to assume that he had other goals in travelling to Moldova.

Rumsfeld revealed a major concern in the last sentence of his statement at a joint news conference with Moldovan Defense Minister Victor Gaiciuc. After thanking Moldova for its support in Iraq [as well as its commitment to send another contribution to the coalition: 12 de-mining specialists], (3) the Secretary emphasized the West's insistence that Russian troops be removed from Moldovan territory (Transdniestr), stating "it is certainly the belief of NATO and the countries of the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] that commitments made in Istanbul some five years ago need to be fulfilled." (4)

Russia has supported the breakaway province of "Transdniestr" since it seceded after Moldova itself gained independence in 1991. Russia's political support for the secessionists belies its claims of impartiality, since Moscow asserts that Russian troops are needed there to prevent another civil war. In an interview last month, Major General Boris Sergeyev, commander of the Russian 14th Army (in Transdniestr) revealed that his task force still numbered 1500 men. (5)

While the U.S. has called for Russian withdrawal before, this personal appearance by a high level American representative was meant to underline Washington's commitment to the resolution of this issue. While Russia would like to believe that it can impose its will on its former clients, America wishes to see that impulse contained. That the Defense Secretary is the highest-ranking American official ever to visit Moldova should help to get the point across.

Forget what we said — What we meant was...

Moldovan President Voronin might have hoped to ride American coattails to Istanbul for the 28-29 June NATO summit, so as to witness the Moldovan and American delegations confront the Russian side over the Transdniestr issue.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov represented Russia, since President Putin declined an invitation to attend the NATO summit. (6) In fact, NATO did urge Russia to fulfill the pledge it made at the 1999 OSCE summit in Istanbul that it would withdraw its troops from Moldova, a commitment that NATO consequently accuses Russia of ignoring. Lavrov, however, simply asserted that "we have met the Istanbul commitments." (8)

Perhaps the Russian Foreign Minister should familiarize himself with the text of the Istanbul Summit Declaration, Section 19, Paragraph 1 of which reads: "we reiterate our expectation of early, orderly, and complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Moldova." (9) Lavrov continued that "the arrangements regarding Georgia and Moldova are political arrangements with no deadlines set." (10) Actually, Section 19, Paragraph 2 of the Declaration reads: "We welcome the commitment by the Russian Federation to complete withdrawal of the Russian forces from the territory of Moldova by the end of 2002." (11)

In the face of Lavrov's determined revisionism, NATO leaders continued to press for the removal of Russian troops from both Moldova and Georgia, and they maintained their longstanding refusal to ratify the modified Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty until after the withdrawals. (12) Lavrov reiterated Russia's insistence that the bilateral withdrawal negotiations should have no bearing on ratification of the CFE. (13) While the revised CFE text notes Russia's commitment to withdraw from Moldova according to the Istanbul declaration, and lays the foundation for the removal of the Russian presence in Georgia. However, it does not specifically link ratification to withdrawal. (14)

The proceedings of the NATO summit make it quite clear why President Putin felt unable to attend. After adding former Soviet republics and satellites to its ranks, NATO continues to press Russia to fulfill its commitments. With Georgia and now Moldova lying on the borders of NATO states, the Western alliance can continue to press of their sovereignty and territorial integrity, which Russia sees fit to

interpret as intrusions into its "sphere." Sending in Lavrov may have seemed to be a more attractive option for Putin, who has little interest in playing a losing hand in person. By the end of his final press conference in Istanbul, Sergei Lavrov was reiterating that in regard to Moldova and Georgia, Russia would be guided "not by the conditions set by NATO countries but by its national interests."
(15)

Source Notes:

- (1) Tass, 26 Jun 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (2) American Forces Press Service, 26 Jun 04 via http://www.dod.mil/news/Jun2004/n06262004_2004062602.html .
- (3) Tass, 26 Jun 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (4) American Forces Press Service, (Ibid).
- (5) RIA Novosti, 11 Jun 04 via Lexis-Nexis. See NIS Observed, 26 Jun 04.
- (6) RIA Novosti, 30 Jun 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (7) Tass, 29 Jun 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (8) Istanbul Summit Declaration, Istanbul OSCE Summit, 1999 via <http://www.osce.org/docs/english/1990-1999/summits/istaddecl99e.htm> .
- (9) RIA Novosti, 30 Jun 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (10) Istanbul Summit Declaration, (Ibid).
- (11) Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie, No. 25, 9-15, Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (12) Tass, 28 Jun 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (13) Final Act of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, 1999 via <http://www.osce.org/docs/english/1990-1999/cfe/cfe/inact99e.htm#Anchor-Statemen-61870> .
- (14) Tass, 29 Jun 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Kate Martin

JUDICIARY

Russia launches appellate courts while notable trials continue

The prosecutorial system in Russia remains underdeveloped. The news is bad (but the admission is noteworthy): Russian Federation Human Rights Commissioner Vladimir Lukin admitted publicly that "one of the main problems we have to deal with is the human rights situation in the law-enforcement bodies.... Illegal searches are held, innocent people are detained in rooms for detainees.... And very often to extract confessions, the victims are beaten up and even tortured. So, many people just admit to misdemeanors that had not committed under duress.... [Moreover, in some Interior Ministry and police departments,] they often refuse to register the detained and can keep them in custody longer than allowed by the law...." (1) Lukin added his department has begun to launch surprise visits to such departments, and representatives are working on breaking through the stalling tactics that they encounter when trying to investigate conditions.

Even supposing that evidence is collected legally, a further hurdle awaits plaintiffs and defendants. Supreme Court Chairman Vyacheslav Lebedev has identified yet another snag in the creation of a functioning judicial system — the severe lack of qualified judges. There are close to 5,000 judicial slots that need to be filled, according to Lebedev. Judicial applicants however, are often disqualified after background investigations. "Candidates don't just pass exams, their previous activities are carefully checked, because a judge's past has to be clean," he said. (2)

The lack of justices may affect another potential breakthrough (depending, of course, on how cases are treated): the introduction of appellate courts. The first two appellate courts of Russia, inexplicably titled the ninth appellate court (chairman: Aleksander Yevstifeyev) and tenth appellate court (chairman: Artur Absalyamov) opened in Moscow on 9 July. A total of 20 such courts for the country is expected to be created by December 2006, with a further 10 "seats of judgment," that is, offices of appellate courts in remote regions, are planned also. (3)

Meanwhile, as the many kinks in the logistics of the judicial system are worked out (or not, as the case may be), in the real world of courts today in Russia, the jury on justice is still out. Case in point: Artists who exhibited at the Andrei Sakharov Museum face charges of inciting religious hatred because they were the victims of vandalism. The exhibit, titled "Caution, Religion," opened in January 2003 and was intended, according to the museum's chairman of the board, Anatoli Shabad, to warn of the dangers of fanaticism. Museum director Yuri Samodurov, employee Lyudmila Vasilovskaya and artist Anna Mikhalkchuk have been accused, at Moscow's Tagansky District Court, of creating and exhibiting blasphemous iconographic images which so incensed some patrons, purportedly spurred on by Orthodox clergymen, that they spray-painted the art. (4) The six patrons, self-professed "ardent Orthodox Christians," were acquitted of the vandalism charges; (5) however, that very act of vandalism is being used as evidence that religious hatred had, indeed, been incited. (6)

POLITICAL PARTIES

Zyuganov loses his appeal

It seems that Gennadi Zyuganov, the long-time head of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), finally managed to annoy enough KPRF members that the party ousted him as its congress began. Then again, maybe not.

More than half of the remaining members (after earlier schisms) of the party's central committee (92 out of 158) (7) voted to remove Zyuganov on the eve of the party congress, showing that anti-Zyuganov sentiment is on the rise in the central committee. A month earlier, only 40 members had supported a request that the chairman quit his post, blaming him for the party's abysmal showing in the December 2003 parliamentary elections and accusing him of the dreaded "having ties with oligarchs." (8)

The growing anti-Zyuganov camp held a plenum on 1 July that voted out Zyuganov and replaced him with Ivanovo Governor Vladimir Tikhonov. (9) Yet Zyuganov continues to retain support among the rank-and-file who showed up at KPRF congresses. Unlikely to be accused of moving with the times, the loyalists held one congress while elsewhere in the city the opposition held its own. The congress supporting Zyuganov reportedly registered 247 delegates, with one addition proposed during the proceedings: Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. (10) While many present spoke heartily of their support for Zyuganov, not a word was heard from Mr. Lenin.

The vote by the anti-Zyuganov camp spurred the party's chairman to call on loyalists to beware. "Communists must be vigilant in the face of provocative attempts to change the party leadership," Zyuganov said, accusing his opponents of trying to "put 'Kremlin puppets' in charge" of the party. (11) These are the same charges Zyuganov leveled when businessman Gennady Semigin had tried recently to wrest control of the party from the chairman's hands. Semigin, who was removed from the party in May, has not been defeated just yet — an organizer of the alternate plenum and supporter of Tikhonov, he sought Zyuganov's ouster from the chairmanship of the People's Patriotic Union. On 2 July the Union's coordinating council announced that Zyuganov was out; Zyuganov, characteristically, denied that the council had even met, much less voted to remove him. (12)

And yet, all this activity may be moot, since few persons outside the party leadership seem to care what happens to the party that once was so dominant. According to a recent poll by the Russian Center for Public Opinion Research (VTsIOM), a large percentage of the Russian electorate see the popularity of the party itself as dwindling, based not on Zyuganov's personality, but rather on "aging communist ideology." Over three-quarters of persons polled were pessimistic about the future of the party (including, notably, persons aged 25-44, as well as those over 60), even before the intraparty coup occurred. (13)

Source Notes:

- (1) RIA Novosti, 16 Jun 04, Federal News Service (Official Kremlin Int'l News Broadcast) via Lexis-Nexis.
- (2) RIA-Novosti, 0809 GMT, 28 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0628 via World News Connection.
- (3) Interfax, 1224 GMT, 5 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0705 via World News Connection.
- (4) Moscow Times, 16 Jun 04 via Johnson's Russia List #8255, 16 Jun 04.
- (5) Pravda, 25 Dec 03 via english.pravda.ru/printed.html?news_id=11641.
- (6) Moscow Times, 16 Jun 04 via Johnson's Russia List #8255, 16 Jun 04.
- (7) Pravda, 5 Jul 04 via (english.pravda.ru/printed.html?news_id013280).
- (8) ITAR-TASS, 1652 GMT, 2 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0602 via World News Connection.
- (9) Agence France-Presse, 3 Jul 04 via Johnson's Russia List #8280, 3 Jul 04.
- (10) RIA Novosti, 3 Jul 04 via Johnson's Russia List #8280, 3 Jul 04.
- (11) RIA-Novosti, 1044 GMT, 2 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0702 via World News Connection.
- (12) Interfax, 1236 GMT, 2 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0702 via World News Connection.
- (13) RosBusiness Consulting, 1 Jul 04 via Johnson's Russia List #8278, 2 Jul 04.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Elena Selyuk

BELARUS

Anniversaries, new laws...

On 3 June, Lukashenko spoke at a military parade in Minsk dedicated to Belarus' Independence Day and the 60th anniversary of its liberation from Nazi occupation. In his speech, Lukashenko called his country "a formidable military force, capable of waging a modern war," as more than forty military helicopters and fighter jets were in the air performing demonstration flights. (1) He stressed that despite its fierce military capability, Belarus "seeks to achieve its foreign political ends by peaceful means only." (2) Lukashenko also stated that the union with Russia would multiply Belarus' defense capacity.

While worrying about Belarusian military strength to protect himself from external adversaries, Lukashenko is making sure that his domestic "enemies" are kept under control. Just three days before the parade, on 30 June, the House of Representatives of the Belarusian National Assembly approved the first reading of amendments that would make it possible for the government to close Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) for just one violation of the law governing the use of non-returnable foreign aid. In addition, a further article will be added to the already existing law on street demonstrations (permitting an NGO to be outlawed for just one violation). Now, said Justice Minister Viktor Halavanaw, relations between the government and NGOs would be "democratized," since courts would be able to suspend an NGO for a period of up to six month for violating the law on street demonstrations instead of being simply liquidated (3) - a supposed step forward. In reality, however, suspending an NGO's activities for up to half a year is practically equivalent to liquidation, since it is unreasonable to expect its employees to forgo alternative employment while waiting for a lengthy suspension to run out. Factors such as abandoned projects and the loss of

potential partners are likely also to make it more difficult for an NGO to start over again.

Lukashenko is also actively occupying himself with his other "enemy" - political parties. The law on political parties which was approved in its first reading on 30 June is said to prevent mushrooming of small parties and to encourage the creation of larger organizations, which could, presumably, become the backbone of a stronger opposition movement. Lukashenko is planning to achieve this result by making each political party "have a branch in Minsk and additional branches in at least four of the six regions of Belarus." (4) The only problem is that, at the moment, most of the opposition resembles grass-root democratic movements rather than thriving political parties (even though, lately, the united Five-Plus coalition of opposition parties is heard from more and more). These movements are unlikely to have the organizational ability to sustain regional branches, especially given that the bill bars political parties from accepting money and property from such entities as foreign private individuals, companies or organizations, as well as religious organizations, anonymous contributors and legal entities registered within a year before the contribution was made. (5) The chances are considerable, therefore, that the bill will silence further the already faint voices of Belarusian citizens.

MOLDOVA

Voronin initiative

Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin has launched a new initiative called "the guarantee of democratic processes and mass media freedom." The goal of the initiative, according to the presidential press service, is to solve problems of functioning democratic institutions and to promote their further improvement in order to create true independent and objective mass media. (6) Apparently this is a reaction to the mass media's sharp criticism of Voronin and his party. The media often express pessimism, particularly when speculating about the possibility of fair conduct of the upcoming 2005 parliamentary elections. There

are frequent reports on the possibility that the Communists will attempt to falsify the election results.

Voronin has described such reportage as "a provocation" and accused the mass media of intentionally compromising him and of demonstrating Moldova's inability to function according to modern European standards. (7) While the Moldovan press might not be a perfect example of impartial and objective journalism, it is also true that journalists in Moldova often work under the threat of prosecution. A provision in the Civil Code, for example, which does not limit the size of fines for libel, still exists and presents a very real danger to journalists who often have to spend their time and effort battling frivolous libel cases brought against them. (see NIS Observed Volume IX, No. 6) If the President really wanted to guarantee a "free press," he should work for the passage of a proposal that would lower journalists' exposure to libel suits.

The suspension of the licenses of Antenna C radio station and EuroTV's Chisinau TV channel — two pro-opposition media institutions — by the Audio Visual Council (a media licensing agency) in February 2004 stands as a clear warning. The Council is completely subordinated to the Moldovan authorities, and many seem to assume that the closure of these media organizations was the authorities' way of settling accounts with the opposition and pro-opposition media. (see NIS Observed Volume IX, No. 3) Yet again, in this situation, what was at stake was not so much the freedom of the media to report as they saw fit, but rather the essential question of its very existence

And while the pro-opposition media sources surely have their own agendas, and tarnishing Voronin's reputation appears to be their aim at times, there needs to be greater acceptance by the government of criticism, fair or not, in order to stop persecution of the media. This is essential before one can even hope of attaining objective and fair election coverage.

UKRAINE

The case of Georgiy Gongadze.

Recently, The Independent, a British newspaper, published an article titled "How a Headless Corpse and a Dead Witness Came Back to Haunt the Leader of Ukraine." The article returned to the case of murdered journalist Georgiy Gongadze and offered further material to enhance speculation that President Leonid Kuchma was involved in the brutal murder of Gongadze.

A journalist for The Independent obtained over 200 pages of documents from senior law enforcement officials who claimed that the investigation of Gongadze's case was suppressed. "The documents show that the prosecutor-general's office had evidence that a secret police team from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVS) had mounted a surveillance operation against Mr. Gongadze from July 2000 until the day of his disappearance," says the article. (8) "...Ihor Honcharov, a former MVS officer [who died last August while in the custody of MVS]...claimed [that] General Oleksiy Pukach, an MVS police commander, arranged to hand the journalist over to criminals, who murdered him...the general was following orders from Yuri Kravchenko, who [in turn] was following orders from Mr. Kuchma," continues the article. "Mr. Honcharov's death was attributed to illness, but the autopsy showed he was murdered [by a lethal injection of Thiopental]." (9)

The article again raises uncomfortable questions, which are likely to remain of public interest through this fall's presidential elections. It would have been almost naïve to expect for this matter to stay buried while Kuchma decides whether or not to keep himself in power.

Kuchma for president.

The Ukrainian Christian Movement has nominated Leonid Kuchma to run for president in October 2004. This decision was taken at the fifth party congress on 11 July, 2004. In case Kuchma refuses to run, the party will nominate its leader Tamara Zvyahintseva to run from the party. (10) Meanwhile, Kuchma has

reiterated numerous times his intention not to run for a third term. The election campaign, which started last week, apparently has not changed his mind.

The Constitution of Ukraine, which was adopted in 1996 prohibits a person from running for president more than twice. However, a recent decision of the Ukrainian Constitutional Court, allows Kuchma to run again, since the old constitution was in effect when Kuchma won election for the first time in 1994.

Source Notes:

(1) RIA Novosti, 03 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Belapan news agency, 1130 GMT, 30 Jun 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

(4) Belapan news agency, 1155 GMT, 30 Jun 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

(5) Ibid.

(6) InfoMarket, 6 Jul 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(7) Infotag-Daily news bulletin, 6 Jul 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(8) "How a Headless Corpse and a Dead Witness Came Back to Haunt the Leader of Ukraine," The Independent via Ukrainskaya Pravda website on 26 Jun 04 (www2.pravda.com/ua/ru/archive/2004/june/26/1.shtml).

(9) Ibid.

(10) Interfax-Ukraine news agency, 11 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Ariela Shapiro

Ingushetia raid

On 22 June, Chechen rebels led a raid into Ingushetia, targeting principally Russian military and police installations. This incursion, in marked contrast to previous Chechen terrorist tactics such as suicide bombings, had the appearance of a conventional military operation as opposed to a terrorist attack. The planners of this operation seem to have realized that terrorist atrocities deliberately aimed at civilians are self-defeating and liable to generate international condemnation rather than sympathy. As noted in a 25 June Izvestia editorial, (1) in the aftermath of the Nord-Orst episode the Russian populace is far more willing to pardon the authorities for causing serious losses among hostages in the course of ending a terrorist raid. Therefore, in keeping with the qualitative shift in Russian popular feeling, the Chechen rebels avoided seizing hostages or targeting Ingush civilians.

As of 27 June, according to the official figures given by Ingushetia's pro-Moscow administration, (2) the casualties from the latest incident total 98 killed and 104 wounded.. In addition to Ingushetia's acting Interior Minister Abukar Kostoyev, among those killed were the city of Nazran's Chief Prosecutor Mukharbek Buzurtanov, the district of Nazran's Chief Prosecutor Belan Oziev, and the Ingush investigator for major criminal cases, Timur Detogazov. The simultaneous attacks targeted the Interior Ministry headquarters in Nazran, the base of an FSB border-guard unit in Nazran, and also arms depots, municipal police and OMON headquarters in Karabulak and Sleptovskaya. (3)

Among the dead were five FSB officers, including three commandos from the elite Vypmel unit. (4) In a closed hearing on 28 June, Deputy Prosecutor General Sergei Fridinsky placed the number of raiders at about 200 and added that most of the attackers were residents of Ingushetia. (5) Fridinsky's admission contrasts with earlier claims by some officials that the attackers were mostly Chechens and Arabs.

A 25 June Izvestia article agreed that "well trained, well-informed and well-armed" local Ingush guerillas played a major role in the incursion and were as well-equipped as federal troops with standard uniforms, helmets and bullet-proof vests. (6) In addition to demonstrating considerable military expertise, according to a 7 July Turkish Milliyet article, one of the raid's more unexpected features concerned the participation of large numbers of ethnic Ingush along with Chechen rebels. The article also notes the surprisingly smooth coordination among the raiders' various ethnic groups and the obvious synchronization of attacks. (7) Altogether, the recent events indicate a gradual integration of Chechen and Ingush military forces following the escalation of the Chechen conflict into neighboring republics.

Ultimately, the guerrillas humiliated the federal forces by carrying out a bold raid into central Ingushetia almost without incurring casualties of their own. For example, the estimated 15-20 raiders succeeded in neutralizing the estimated 500 Russian troops stationed 20 km outside Nazran simply by mounting a diversionary attack and blockading the road to the city. The federal troops managed to reach Nazran only at 4 a.m., after the battle was over. (8)

Insight into the tactics used by the guerilla raiders came from an accidental eyewitness, apparently a civilian, who related his observations in the above mentioned 25 June Izvestia article. The eyewitness told Izvestia that he was stopped on his way home by masked gunmen who introduced themselves as federal military intelligence operatives and demanded to see his identification papers. As soon as they saw his documents, they released him. He continued for another 100 yards, then suddenly heard gunshots and turned around to see the same men who had detained him firing into an automobile. The eyewitness informed Izvestia that the guerillas knew that the Ingush police and Russian federal troops always show identification at checkpoints and entrances to towns. By pretending to be federal troops at designated checkpoints, the raiders were able to weed out their targets more efficiently.

On 23 June, Putin ordered an increase in the size of Russia's security forces in the North Caucasus, (9) specifically that a new regiment of interior troops would be stationed in Ingushetia and that the Russian army units there would also be strengthened. However, Moscow seems to be experiencing an all too familiar episode of cognitive dissonance, with Putin ordering reinforcements while his own top officials offered reassuring words just a day or two earlier. The presidential representative in the Southern Federal District, Vladimir Yakovlev, had said that Ingushetia President, Murat Zyazikov, "has the situation under control" and that "the republic has all the security forces it needs to repel the guerillas." (10) Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov stated that "there is no necessity for regular troops to commence operations in Ingushetia" (11) while General Anatoli Kvashnin had said that he would not enlarge the contingent of federal forces deployed in the North Caucasus. Especially noteworthy were the words of State Duma Speaker Boris Gryzlov, head of the pro-Putin United Russia Party and former Interior Minister, who called the federal and Ingush security forces' reaction to the raid "successful." (12)

Alu Alkhanov, both Moscow's and the Kadyrov clan's choice to fill the vacant presidential spot of the pro-Moscow administration in Grozny, continued to insist after Putin's 24 June statement that no fundamental changes were needed. In a 26 June press conference, Alkhanov defended the military strategies adopted by the former Kadyrov government while maintaining that a "strengthened" anti-terrorist policy would significantly disrupt further guerilla activity. (13)

While this Russian political bombastic contrasts sharply with the Chechen-Ingush guerillas successful raid and escape, no politician has dared to mention the long-term sociopolitical and military ramifications of an united Chechen-Ingush rebel force. The "normalization" of life in the North Caucasus is totally illusory and Moscow's attempt to sustain the mirage has reached such an extreme that the Kremlin portrays the failure of security organs in Ingushetia as a success.

Saakashvili victory in Adjara

On 20 June, the Saakashvili-Victorious Adjara Party won 77% of the Adjarian pre-term parliamentary elections, thus cementing Saakashvili position in the autonomous republic after his ouster last month of pro-Moscow leader Aslan Abashidze. (14) Only one of the 17 other parties competing on the ballot, Berdzenishvili-Republican Party, cleared the seven percent hurdle required to win seats in parliament. As a result, 28 of the 30 seats in Adjara's parliament will be held by Saakashvili's party, with the remaining two going to the Republicans. (15) However, despite winning two seats, the Republicans chose to break with their ally Saakashvili, when Republican Party leader David Berdzenishvili proclaimed his party to be in opposition. In light of their oppositional status, Republican leaders labeled the election results as "banditry," charging Saakashvili's party with widespread vote-rigging. (16) One Republican leader, Otar Zoide, accused Saakashvili of merging the "vote-rigging techniques" of Shevardnadze and Abashidze in order to win the elections, while Irakli Chkhetia, the chairman of one of the electoral commissions in Adjara said that activists from Saakashvili's National Movement had asked him directly to rig the vote in their favor. (17) Saakashvili scornfully rejected the charges at a press conference on 22 June and attributed the accusations to the sulking of jealous and defeated politicians. (18)

Despite concerns broached by Republican leaders, however, local non-governmental organizations generally approved of the conduct of the elections, as did a small monitoring mission sent by the Council of Europe. In a statement on 22 June, the monitors said that the elections had been conducted better than under Abashidze and were "an important step towards regional democracy" but that Adjara still lacked a "legal base" to function efficiently. (19) However, the sheer scale of Saakashvili's victory worries some ordinary Adjarians. The president's slogan "All the best for Adjarians," which he declared after the removal of Abashidze, initially helped his popularity ratings soar. But the

euphoria fell away after Tbilisi officials were appointed to leading posts in Adjara and there was uncertainty about the fate of Abashidze's property, worth millions of dollars.

There is also concern about the number of arrests of persons associated with Abashidze's administration. Adjara's Interior Minister David Glonti claims that more than 100 persons have been detained in the last month and a half, but many more remain behind bars. (20) Akaki Tsinsadze, chief of Adjara's security department admitted that some of the detainees are "collaborating with the law enforcement authorities" so their personal information is not being publicized, (21) while the reasons behind their arrests are sketchy at best. These arrests and their procedural mishaps follow a pattern set in Tbilisi since Saakashvili was elected in January and increase popular Adjarian apprehension toward the Tbilisi government. Additionally, the case opened on 5 July by the Georgian Prosecutor General's office to investigate the alleged torture of Sul Khan Molashvili, a former chairman of the Audit Chamber, will not ease relations between Tbilisi and Batumi. (22)

On 1 July, the Georgian parliament passed the constitutional law on the autonomous status of Adjara, despite a boycott by the Republican opposition party. According to the law, the administration in Adjara is responsible for adopting and amending the Adjarian constitution, holding elections of the Adjarian supreme council, and defining the powers, structure and operational procedures of the Adjarian government. (23) However, two caveats of the constitution are sure to raise the shackles of Adjarians uneasy about Tbilisi's true intentions: 1) the Adjarian supreme council may approve the local government only after the Georgian president nominates the head of the government; 2) the Georgian president also retains the right to repeal acts adopted by the Adjarian government if they contravene the Georgian constitution. (24)

These events demonstrate that the normalization of relations, social and political, between the Georgian center and Adjara is still tenuous, and depends on Tbilisi's ability to construct a fair, open and honest political relationship with Batumi.

Source Notes:

- (1) Izvestia 25 Jun 04; What the Papers Say (WPS); BBC Monitoring 26 Jun 04 via Lexis-Nexis 27 Jun 04.
- (2) Itar-Tass 27 Jun 04 via Lexis-Nexis, 28 Jun 04.
- (3) Ekho Moskvyy Radio, Moscow 7 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (4) Vremya novostei 25 Jun 04; WPS via Lexis-Nexis; Russica Izvestia Info, 24 Jun 04; RusData Dialine via Lexis-Nexis.
- (5) Agence France Presse 28 Jun 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (6) Izvestia 25 Jun 04; WPS via BBC Monitoring 26 Jun 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (7) Milliyet, 7 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Databases.
- (8) RTR Russia TV, Moscow 22 Jun 04; Financial Times; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis; Vremya Novostei 25 Jun 04; WPS via Lexis-Nexis.
- (9) Associated Press BC Cycle 23 Jun 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (10) RIA Novosti 22 Jun 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (11) Itar-Tass 22 Jun 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (12) Novye Izvestia 23 Jun 04; WPS via Lexis-Nexis.
- (13) NTV Mir, Moscow 26 Jun 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis; Reuters 26 Jun 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Databases.
- (14) Imedi TV, Tbilisi 20 Jun 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (15) Prime-News news agency, Tbilisi 21 Jun 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (16) Imedi TV, Tbilisi 20 Jun 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (17) Itar-Tass, 21 Jun 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (18) Rustavi TV, Tbilisi, 22 Jun 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Databases.
- (19) Financial Times, 20 Jun 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

(20) Kavkasia Press, 24 Jun 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

(21) Ibid.

(22) Georgian State Television Channel 1, 5 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

(23) Prime-News news agency, Tbilisi, 1 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

(24) Ibid.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By David Montgomery

Security and politics

Concerns over security and politics retain a prominent place in the regional news coverage in Central Asia: The partial withdrawal of Russian border troops in Tajikistan and its implications for security, trafficking, and, more broadly, the role of Russia in Central Asia; the continued threat of terrorism, which though it is unlikely to subside in the near future, consists of the familiar arrests of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) members and agreements amongst various governments to cooperate in combating Islamism; and the activity of "accepted" political opposition movements.

Implications of the partial withdrawal of Russian border guards from Tajikistan (1)

Since the end of the Tajik civil war and in accordance with earlier agreements, the Russian border detachment has transferred full authority over the Tajik-Chinese border and 73 km of the Tajik-Afghan border to Tajik border troops. (2) The time frame for the transfer of control over the entire 1,340 km of the Tajik-Afghan border to the Tajik border service, which was to be implemented in phases beginning in July and ending by early 2005, has been postponed to late August and 2006 respectively. (3) The reason for the delay was a claim by the Russian border detachment that the Tajiks were not yet ready to assume

responsibility for the border. Lieutenant-General Abdurakhmon Azimov, commander of the Tajik border guard troops, however, expressed confidence that "the negotiations on the deployment of Russian border guards in Tajikistan are proceeding according to plan and the hand over of the Pamir sector of the border to Tajik frontier guards may begin already at the end of August." (4)

The issue of Tajikistan's readiness to monitor its own border has broader implications for the region as a whole and concerns extend beyond troop training and personnel. The Russian border troops are seen as far more effective in patrolling the Tajik-Afghan border, but they also receive substantially higher payment than the Tajik military troops. Ethnicity clearly is not the issue, as it is estimated that upward of 90 percent of the troops in the Russian border detachment are Tajik nationals. (5) There is significant concern, however, that, when the Russian border service withdraws, Tajik troops will remain inadequately compensated and thereby more vulnerable to the lure of corruption. The implications for this include a potential increase in the trafficking of people, arms, and drugs. (6)

Terrorist threats.

HT remains the organization about which security services most frequently express concern because of its extremist message and indications that suggest membership is on the rise throughout the region. According to Tokon Mamytov, Deputy Chairman of the Kyrgyz National Security Service, the "secret services think that drug profits are being used to finance Hizb ut-Tahrir." (7) In a call to coordinate better the efforts of "law-enforcement agencies, local administrations and non-government organizations to coordinate efforts to counter the threat of the spread of religious extremism," Kyrgyz Prime Minister Nikolai Tanayev noted that "neighboring Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are taking serious precautions against religious extremism, but such efforts are not organized in Kyrgyzstan even though this is a matter of the nation's very existence." (8)

The Kyrgyz Interior Ministry puts the number of officially registered members of HT at 1,532, (9) but the Kyrgyz National Security Service puts the number at close to 3,000. (10) There are reports weekly of HT members being sentenced to jail (11) and, over the last eighteen months in Tajikistan alone, over 140 alleged members of HT have received jail sentences for possessing or distributing HT literature and/or participating in activities found subversive to the state. (12) The general concern of terrorism has been ascribed largely to more conservative expressions of Islam (13) and efforts to present a moderate (state-sponsored) form of Islam are encouraged increasingly. The Spiritual Department of Kyrgyzstan's Muslims, for example, has set up a web site to better inform the Kyrgyz population on Islamic values. (14)

Activity of opposition movements.

While the nature of Islam has a political dimension, the legacy of Soviet rule has been one that is unreceptive to opposition, especially outside of government structures. And with elections throughout the region looming in the near future, the activity of opposition political parties is increasing.

The Central Electoral Commission in Kazakhstan recently set the date for elections to the Mazhilis (lower chamber of parliament) for 19 September 2004. (15) Otan (Fatherland), the pro-president party, hopes to gain 50 percent of the seats (its members currently comprise around one-third of the 77 deputies) (16) and while a new communist party — the Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan — was registered, making it one of twelve registered parties vying for influence, (17) Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev has referred to the September elections as a "'test' of the country's 'political maturity'." (18)

While Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev has denied that he would seek another term in office, the Kyrgyz Constitutional Court, according to Court Chairman Cholpon Bayekova, will "consider an inquiry by the People's Representatives Assembly (the upper house of the Kyrgyz parliament) as regards Akayev's third

term in office." (19) The first relatively cohesive opposition movement in Kyrgyzstan — the Union for Fair Elections (UFE) — was established on 20 May 2004, though some observers already have questioned the "opposition" nature of the organization, since it is believed to be influenced largely by the inner circle of Akayev. (20) Former Kyrgyz Security Council secretary Misir Ashirkulov, head of the bloc For Honest Elections, recently fled the country because of safety concerns (21) and the Ar-Namys (Honor) political party recently issued a statement accusing authorities of persecuting party members. (22)

Elsewhere the democratic expression of opposition is even more restricted. Opposition parties in Tajikistan have expressed concern that the absence of their voice could turn the country into a one-party authoritarian regime (23) and even though Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov has recently taken steps to curtail his personality cult, (24) political opposition remains absent or, much like in Uzbekistan, emasculated.

Source Notes:

(1) For more background, see NIS Observed, 23 Jan 04; 12 May 04 via www.bu.edu.iscip .

(2) Interfax, 1338 GMT, 29 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0629 via WNC.

(3) The Pamir section is scheduled to be transferred by the end of August; the section patrolled by the Moskovsky unit in 2005; and the section patrolled by the Pyandzh unit in 2006. Agentstvo voyennykh novostei (Moscow), 0624 GMT, 1 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0701 via WNC.

(4) ITAR-TASS, 0927 GMT, 1 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0701 via WNC.

(5) Walker, Justine. Central Asia — Caucasus Analyst, 30 Jun 04 via www.cacianalyst.org

(6) The Tajik-Afghan border is main routes by which high quality white heroin leaves Afghanistan for Russia and Europe. See Walker, Justine. Central Asia — Caucasus Analyst, 30 Jun 04, via www.cacianalyst.org . For more on the seizure

- of drugs, weapons and the problem of human trafficking, see, Kabar (Bishkek), 1271 GMT, 21 Jun 04, FBIS-SOV-2004-0621; Interfax, 1155 GMT; ITAR-TASS, 1135 GMT, 30 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0630 via WNC.
- (7) Interfax, 1237 GMT, 28 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0628 via WNC.
- (8) Interfax, 1237 GMT, 28 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0628 via WNC.
- (9) 2003 figures; Interfax, 1237 GMT, 28 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0628 via WNC.
- (10) Interfax, 1003 GMT, 21 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0621 via WNC.
- (11) For recent cases in Kazakhstan see for example, Interfax, 0821 GMT, 1 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0701 via WNC; in Tajikistan see ITAR-TASS, 0850 GMT, 1 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0701 via WNC.
- (12) ITAR-TASS, 1047 GMT, 21 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0621 via WNC.
- (13) In February 2003, the Kuwaiti Social Reform Society (Jam'iyat al-Islah al-Ijtima'i), which helps with humanitarian aid and the construction of mosques, was declared a terrorist organization by the Russian state. In Kyrgyzstan, according to Haji Yusur Loma, head of the Spiritual Department of Kyrgyzstan's Muslims, it "has been registered at the Kyrgyzstani Justice Ministry, and is acting legally", though it is closely monitored by authorities. AKIpress (Bishkek), 24 Jun 04; (14) FBIS-SOV-2004-0624 via WNC.
- (14) The web site (<http://dumk.host.net.kg>) was set up in part by an U.S. State Department internet training program. AKIpress (Bishkek), 24 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0624 via WNC.
- (15) Interfax-Kazakhstan (Almaty), 0444 GMT, 23 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0623 via WNC.
- (16) Interfax-Kazakhstan (Almaty), 1221 GMT, 28 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0628 via WNC.
- (17) Interfax, 0741 GMT, 21 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0621 via WNC.
- (18) Eurasianet, 23 Jun 04 via www.eurasianet.org .
- (19) Interfax, 1030 GMT, 25 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0625 via WNC.
- (20) Eurasianet, 24 Jun 04 via www.eurasianet.org .
- (21) Interfax, 1221 GMT, 21 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0621 via WNC.
- (22) AKIpress (Bishkek), 0810 GMT, 24 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0624 via WNC.

(23) Interfax, 1352 GMT, 26 Jun 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0626 via WNC.

(24) See RFE/RL Central Asia Report, 29 Jun 04 via www.rferl.org .

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