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Russian Federation: Executive Branch and Military Reform

By Susan Cavan

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Reform commission

President Vladimir Putin has signed a new decree on the reform of state administration. The decree creates a commission, to be chaired by Kremlin Chief-of-Staff Dmitri Medvedev, that includes presidential aides Viktor Ivanov and Igor Shuvalov, as well as reform-crusader Dmitri Kozak. (1) This decree appears to represent another link in the reform plan initiated in March (and strategized throughout 2003), although there is some speculation that it is a buttressing effort to address the failure of administrative reform thus far. (2)

"Administrative rent"

Commercial activity by state enterprises is coming under attack, apparently as part of the plan to curtail corruption. The businesses targeted are Federal State Establishments (FGUs) and Federal State Unitary Enterprises (FGUPs). (3) The total number of FGUs and FGUPs is estimated to be over 50,000. A commission, investigating the state-supported enterprise structure, has set about the task of reducing the number of companies receiving government money. Dmitri Kozak, Chief-of-Staff of the Government, is supervising the overall effort to cut the government flow of funds to these enterprises. (4) The first three sectors reported to be slated for reform are "land chambers," which survey and mark land, as well as set values for the parcels; security guard services, which have been embroiled in countless intra-services struggles and have intervened in

personal disputes between leading political figures; and, oddly, educational enterprises "engaged in training or retraining personnel."(5)

This attempt at reform is intriguing in that it addresses several critical issues of the intertwined political and economic transition Russia underwent in the nineties. It is certainly aimed at reducing the opportunities for corruption in the state ministries and agencies that oversee the enterprises. This reform is seen as yet another swipe at "administrative rent" - a rarified term for extortion by public officials. (6)

Those state officials who have been displaced already by administrative reform, however, are well-positioned to take advantage of the privatization of these structures. Izvestiya cites a former state official who claims that some (presumably other) former state officials "will attempt to take some revenue sources away from state control - and the state doesn't even know that these sources exist." (7)

The choice of first targets appears as an eclectic mix that may have been chosen to alleviate the concerns of competing groups within the apparat. Weaning land valuation from state control will likely set up frenzied competition throughout the regions for oversight of the process. It may come to represent the next phase of millionaire-making reform. Former officials, current insiders and well-sourced regional competitors are the likely winners in any attempt to loosen federal control.

The jettisoning of security guard services from state support may have two regime-friendly side effects: First, any officials hoping to use state resources to build a security force that could challenge centrally-controlled security services will be frustrated in their efforts. The list of entrepreneurs/political officials who have tried to immunize themselves from security service and police investigations through the contracting of private guard services is substantial.

Eliminating state support for these services will facilitate state attempts to recentralize police and guards functions, while simultaneously closing off an attractive option for quasi-private employment by current members of the security organs, further buttressing the reimposition of hierarchical central authority.

The decision to confront the state-private conflict in the sphere of education is unusual when considering the other potential areas of intervention, but less surprising given the proliferation of corrupt practices and the role of the central government in education in general. (8) From teachers' strikes, including a hunger strike for back pay that cost at least one life, to the "textbook murders" of 1998, the state's education policy and the use of selective privatization has been controversial. More so than media policy, banking, the aluminum or oil industries? Hard to say.

Rosneft protected

Speaking of state intervention in industry, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kremlin Administration Igor Sechin has been appointed as Chairman of the board of Rosneft. While it has been clear that "petro-dollars" will be a critical element of Russian economic recovery and success, Sechin's appointment also solidifies further the government's direct involvement in protecting oil revenues and its intention to "exercise greater control over investment plans for the entire industry." (9)

MILITARY REFORM

Kicking Kvashnin

Anatoli Kvashnin, former Chief of the General Staff and recently-minted Doctor of Military-Science, must be chagrined to witness how quickly his support dissipated in the face of presidential pressure for his resignation from the General Staff. (10) Despite attempts to showcase his expertise on the current state of the military and plans for its strategic development, this ultimate apparatchik-networker ran into a maze created by the Putin team, with all the life lines of bureaucratic

support dead ending in the center and exit available only at the bottom of a path requiring the ceding of authority to the new power player, Putin's own Sergei Ivanov. (11)

Kvashnin's resignation from the Genshtab, and retreat from military service in general, has let loose an apparently pent-up swell of disdain. "Most senior officers...welcome Kvashnin's resignation. (...) [They] undoubtedly remember the series of senseless organizational changes, mergers and splits...initiated by Kvashnin, who was given to using all these tactics to get rid of anyone he viewed as a rival." (12)

Previously, disgruntled Generals have left an administration's service and gone on to enter politics through the Duma, and, in one remarkable instance, to rally support, one military base at a time, for reform and full financing of the military's needs, Kvashnin has seen similar options narrow for himself with each attack in the press. He may yet have support and good will among servicemen and citizenry, but can it be sustained through the blame game that is following his departure?

"Kvashnin sent his troops into the Chechen capital, Grozny, on New Year's Eve [1994]. The attack disintegrated into a disastrous, bloody failure....He is largely to blame for the military's defeat by Chechen rebels in 1996. He was a primary instigator of the present Chechen campaign, which has devolved into a quagmire with no end in sight. The strategy of employing unlimited firepower, carrying out reprisals against the civilian population and stubbornly refusing to seek a political solution...before rebel incursions into Dagestan and terrorist bombings of apartment buildings gave the Kremlin an excuse to restart the conflict in Chechnya. The full laundry list of Kvashnin's blunder is too long to include here." (13)

Kvashnin's downfall, so roundly celebrated with even an abbreviated enunciation of his crimes and the consequent attacks on his military record (he was a "suit") has proven, at least thus far, to be an unexpectedly efficient method of delegitimizing a once-unquestioned military authority. And a much neater solution than the Rokhlin scenario. (14)

Source Notes

(1) Novye Izvestiya, 19 Jul 04; What the Papers Say(WPS) via ISI Emerging

(2) Markets database.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Izvestiya, 21 Jul 04; WPS via ISI Emerging Markets database.

(5) Ibid.

(6) Ibid.

(7) Ibid.

(8) Ibid.

(9) For an analysis of the conflicts in teaching history in the post-Soviet environment, see "Revised...again: The Politics of History," by Janet Vaillant, Perspective, Vol. XIV, No. 4 June/July 2004

(10) "A Russian Star is Born," by Chris Weafer (Chief strategist for Alfa Bank), Prime TASS, 28 Jul 04 via ISI Emerging Markets database.

(11) Nezavisimaya gazeta, 23 Jul 04, pp. 1-2; WPS via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(12) See previous NIS Observed for a discussion of Kvashnin's attempts to circumvent the presidential storm as it moved in to clean him out of office.

(13) Vremya novostei, 20 Jul 04, p.1; WPS via ISI Emerging markets Database.

(14) The Moscow Times, 20 Jul 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(15) General Lev Rokhlin, a Duma Deputy and critic of the Yel'tsin regime, was allegedly shot by his wife while he slept in their dacha outside of Moscow in July 1998. In May 2004, the court case against Rokhlin's wife was postponed

indefinitely due to the ill health of the couple's son, Igor, and of the defendant herself. (RIA-Novosti, 28 May 04 via Lexis-Nexis.)

Russian Federation: Security Services

By Fabian Adami

Incompetence theory

A month ago, Chechen rebels carried out a successful raid into Ingushetia. (1) Despite allegations of foul play, made by Ingush President Murat Zyazikov, the indications in the days and weeks that followed were that the incursion was made possible by sheer incompetence and intelligence failures on the part of the Interior Ministry and the Federal Security Service. The incompetence theory was lent further credence by a Kommersant story, which revealed that the FSB's "seek and destroy" squads had killed the wrong individual in retribution for the raid, possibly in order to cover up the agency's failings. (2)

Since the raid, there has been a flurry of activity relating to changes in the security apparatus. The Russian press has been quick to paint these changes as fallout from the Nazran incident, and to state that they have come about because President Putin experienced "enlightenment" during a recent visit to Ingushetia. (3) The one Western media outlet which has covered the story, The Economist, has been similarly quick to praise Putin's actions, arguing that they herald a much-needed reform of Russia's security and military services, returning security functions to civilian control. (4) But do the changes being made substantiate The Economist's argument?

FSB "reforms"

On 14 July, President Putin decreed changes in the FSB. One of Nikolai Patrushev's deputies, Anatoli Yezhkov, who was in charge of the North Caucasus region, was removed from his post. The decree also ordered

Patrushev to reduce the number of his deputies from twelve to four. (5) Most importantly, the decree granted the FSB full Ministry status, giving Patrushev and his deputies equivalent salaries, social benefits and healthcare as other ministers. (6) Finally, the decree allowed the FSB to reform itself. Patrushev will be required to submit reform proposals to President Putin in 90 days time. (7) However, these are the only portions of the decree that have been released by the President's Press Service. Most of the decree remains highly classified. The secrecy surrounding the FSB's "reform" has fuelled speculation as to what will happen to the security service by the end of this year.

According to the Center for Current Political Research, by year's end the FSB will begin to subsume and take over the functions of the SVR (Foreign Intelligence Service) and the FSO (Federal Guards Service), Russia's equivalent of the US Secret Service. (8) Gazeta, supporting this forecast, states that according to its sources the new agency will be called MGB (Ministry for State Security), a name that is reminiscent of Stalinist terminology. (9) Such speculation has been rife for some time, as witnessed by articles in Versiya and Yezhenedelnyi Zhurnal in April and May 2004, (10) and the idea of a coming 'super ministry' is lent more credibility by the report, carried by Itogi, but ignored by the mainstream press, that the FSB already has absorbed some sections, if not all, of the Federal Agency for Government Communications (FAPSI). (11) The idea that one ministry is being created is validated further by contrasting the secrecy surrounding the FSB's "reform" with the transparency given to the reforms in the Interior Ministry.

MVD reforms

The Interior Ministry has been threatened with reform for some time. On 26 March this year, Putin addressed MVD officers, warning that the Ministry had to change or face forced change. (12) At the time, it was unclear whether the MVD would be disbanded and subsumed into the FSB, or whether the Ministry would remain, albeit considerably weakened. It now appears that the MVD's time to

change has run out, and that reforms will be imposed from above. Two MVD Generals, Vyacheslav Tikhomirov and Mikhail Labulets, respectively Commander-in-Chief of MVD Troops and North Caucasus Commander were removed from their posts. (13) Then on 19 & 20 July, as he had done earlier with the FSB, President Putin signed into effect decrees enforcing major changes. Thus, the Federal Migration Service will be removed from the MVD's portfolio, and established as a stand-alone organization headed by Andrei Chernenko, who until now has been a deputy to Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev. (14) Moreover, the decree, in a move that had been anticipated, (15) removes investigative functions from the MVD, and establishes a Federal Investigation Service, whose Director has not yet been selected. The Ministry also will lose 10 percent of its personnel, and half its directorates will be cut. Meanwhile crime-fighting will be moved from the Federal to the local level: the directorates will no longer carry out field-work, but will be reorganized to perform administrative and managerial tasks. (16) Finally, in line with reforms in other power ministries, Nurgaliyev is to reduce the number of his deputies to only four. (17) These changes indicate that a decision has been made at the highest level to leave the MVD as a weakened Ministry rather than incorporating it fully into the FSB.

Conclusions reached both by The Economist and Novaya gazeta reporters, that Putin has experienced "enlightenment", or that "civilian" control of the FSB means improvement for Russian democracy should be viewed with extreme skepticism. They ignore the reality that the siloviki are close to the President, as staffers, advisers, and, apparently, friends as well as the ever broadening sphere of authority granted to the FSB as an organization. Moreover the idea that these "reforms" are the result of the Nazran incursion ignores preexisting evidence of Putin's desire to consolidate the power of the security services.

The creation of a "super agency" would be a step back towards Soviet times, when massive power was concentrated in the hands of one secretive agency. Whether a Ministry for State Security emerges as an organization or is only

conjured by fears of such a return, its possible creation must surely be observed with consternation.

Source Notes:

(1) See NIS Observed: An Analytical Review Volume IX, Number 11 (15 Jul 04).

(2) Ibid.

(3) Novaya gazeta, 22 Jul 04; WPS-Defense and Security via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(4) The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 23 Jul 04; EIU Politics-News Analyst via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(5) Argumenty i fakty, 21 Jul 04; WPS-What the Papers Say via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(6) Rossiiskie vesti, 22 Jul 04; WPS-What the Papers Say via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(7) Prime-TASS, 14 Jul 04; Prime-TASS Newswire via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(8) Center for Current Political Research, 25 Jul 04; CCPR Russia Federal Politics via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(9) Gazeta, 14 Jul 04; WPS-Russian Political Monitor via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(10) See NIS Observed: An Analytical Review Volume IX, Number 8 (12 May 04).

(11) Itogi, 20 Jul 04; WPS-Defense and Security via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(12) See NIS Observed: An Analytical Review Volume IX, Number 6 (8 Apr 04).

(13) Novaya gazeta, 22 Jul 04; WPS-Defense and Security via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(14) Center for Current Political Research, 25 Jul 04; CCPR Russia Federal Politics via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(15) Ibid.

(16) The Moscow Times, 19 Jul 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.

(17) Ibid.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Maolmordha McGowan

An Exercise in Semantics

On Friday, 30 July, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution threatening possible punitive measures against the Islamic government of Sudan if it does not take action to disarm and prosecute Arab militias within 30 days. (1) The militias (janjaweed, meaning, "a man on a horse with a gun") have been supported by the government, at least tacitly, as they push black Sudanese off their lands, killing perhaps 50,000 and displacing over a million in the western region of Darfur. This resolution was designed to strengthen a 3 July Joint Communique, signed by the Sudanese government and U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, in which Sudan committed to cracking down on the janjaweed within 90 days. (2)

The resolution, passed 13 — 0 (Pakistan and China abstaining), was weaker than one originally sought by the United States and the European members of the Council, who wanted to threaten Sudan with specific political and economic sanctions should it ignore the call to disarm the militias.

During initial negotiations on the new resolution, Russia expressed disapproval of a specific threat of sanctions. (3) After the U.S. draft resolution had been circulated at the U.N. for over a week, Russian Assistant Foreign Minister Yuri Fedotov publicly declared Moscow's opposition, characterizing it as redundant, hence unnecessary. "We are proposing that the Sudanese government should be given a short but sufficient time to carry out its commitments," he said, referring to a 90 day deadline, which would give Sudan until November to

comply. Fedotov considered the sanctions issue irrelevant, since threatening definite consequences "should be put off until after it becomes clear how the agreements between General Secretary Kofi Annan and the Sudan government are being carried out." (4) The word "sanctions" was eventually replaced by a reference to Article 41 of the U.N. Charter which outlines the possible actions available to the Security Council should a resolution go unfulfilled, which, of course, includes sanctions. (5)

The Sudanese cabinet, naturally, sought to capitalize on the disagreement within the Security Council by using Russia's reasoning to reject the Security Council resolution in favor of the 90 day commitment. (6) But why would Russia spend a week stalling and debating semantics while threatening to veto the resolution if it contained the threat of sanctions?

Now would be a good time

Perhaps because Russia's state-controlled military aircraft supplier MiG still had two MiG-29 Fulcrum fighters to send to Sudan to fulfill a 12 aircraft, \$200 million contract. The agreement was signed by the Sudanese government in 2001 and was due for complete delivery by December 2004. (7) The Russian media reported that the Sudanese government had asked to receive the warplanes before the 50th anniversary celebration of the People's Armed Forces on 14 August, and MiG was more than happy to oblige. (8)

Consequently, U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher, noting Sudan's inclusion on the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism and its role in the ongoing violence in Darfur, declared that the U.S. views the matter with "great concern...the United States opposes all arms transfers to Sudan." Furthermore, he stated that any arms transfers "to a state sponsor of terrorism is sanctionable under U.S. laws." (9)

Further criticism followed from human rights groups, such as Amnesty International, which expressed concern that the MiGs might be used against civilians, since "militia members may be integrated into government forces," (10) and that there have been reports of government forces bombing native villages in Darfur. (11)

Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs was left to deal with the ensuing public relations debacle. Spokesman Aleksander Yakovenko said that the delivery "is in no way linked to the recent events in and around Sudan," since the agreement was signed in 2001, before the violence in Darfur erupted. Russian officials and defense experts argued that the MiGs would not be useful against either the Darfur civilians or against a Western humanitarian intervention. (12)

Russia's argument on this matter is half-convincing. Amnesty International's concern that the warplanes might be used against civilians in the Darfur region is questionable. While the MiG-29 can carry air-to-surface munitions, it has a low munitions load capacity and would be of little use in the sort of carpet bombing that might be used against the villages in Darfur. Its primary function is as an air superiority fighter, used to clear the skies of enemy fighters and pave the way for slower, more vulnerable bombing aircraft. (13) These fighters would be of more use against, say, Egypt, with which Sudan has fought border skirmishes (14) and which also has over 100 U.S.-made F-16s, a comparable air superiority fighter. (15) Thus, the Foreign Ministry can argue that the equipment was not intended for use against Darfur civilians.

It is much less convincing that delivery was rushed so the fighters would be available for a military parade. At the time of the delivery, the U.S. House of Representatives was quickly pushing through a resolution describing the situation in Darfur as genocide and urging the administration to take action, using multilateral or unilateral force to end the violence if necessary. The final two MiG-29s were delivered a day before that resolution was passed unanimously, and

two days before the U.S. administration drafted the U.N. Security Council Resolution threatening sanctions. (16) Sudan has threatened to defend itself if the West were to intervene, and the MiG-29s would be quite useful for defending against bombers. Sudan wanted the aircraft to arrive before any arms sanctions, and MiG wanted Sudan's payment to anticipate economic sanctions.

The MFA could have been spared this problem, had recently-appointed MiG Director General Valeri Toryanin simply shuttled the planes to Sudan quietly. Instead, Toryanin chose to ring in the occasion with fanfare and full media coverage, calling a public meeting, tour and press conference at the Lukhovitsy MiG factory with the Sudanese ambassador. He proudly stated out that the early delivery "might lead to other agreements." Ambassador Chol Deng Alaq was quite receptive, noting Sudan "needs Russian aircraft... moreover, we can pay." (17)

Toryanin seized the opportunity to boast that MiG's foreign arms deals equaled over \$1.4 billion, and had the potential to reach \$2.0 billion for the year, saying Sudan was "the 29th country to which the MiG aircraft have been supplied...and we're not stopping there." (18) Perhaps Toryanin was trying to move up on Putin's list of favorite bureaucrats, since the Russian president has criticized Russian arms exporters for falling short of revenue targets. Toryanin may have been itching also to point out that, since his appointment to head MiG last year, MiG's noted under-performance has been turned around. Before signing the \$200 million contract with Sudan, MiG was suffering through a difficult period when only 25% of its export goals were met (19) as it struggled to sell off 200 MiG-29s warehoused since the fall of the Soviet Union. (20)

Though the MFA certainly would have preferred Toryanin finish the delivery discretely, the Kremlin repeatedly has demonstrated its willingness to accept momentary headaches in the interest of long-term profits. Delivering on a contract despite facing an inevitable conflict with the U.S., Europe, U.N. and

human rights groups says something about Russia's and MiG's reliability vis-à-vis the kind of governments [read China, Myanmar and Yemen (21)] in the market for Russian hardware, especially as MiG attempts to close a 50-craft deal with Algeria. (22)

Whether due to ignorance or indifference, Russia's foreign policy and its diplomats at the MFA probably were the last thing on Toryanin's mind when he gloated about an action that defied the international community. However, if the Kremlin continues to run effective interference for its arms exporters, his assertion that "today we can deliver any number of aircraft to any country" will continue to ring true, leaving the MFA to handle damage control. (24)

Source Notes:

(1) U.N. News Centre, 30 Jul 04 via

(<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=11507&Cr=sudan&Cr1=>).

(2) The Economist, 31 Jun 04 via

(http://www.economist.com/agenda/displaystory.cfm?story_id=S%27%298H%2AP1%3F%26%200%20%2C%0A).

(3) Agence France-Presse, 28 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

(4) Agence France-Presse, in *ibid*.

(5) The Economist, in *ibid*.

(6) Reuters, 1 Aug 04 via

(<http://www.reuters.co.uk/newsPackageArticle.jhtml?type=worldNews&storyID=557465§ion=news>).

(7) Interfax, 21 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

(8) Vremya novostei, 22 Jul 04; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis.

(9) U.S. State Department Press Release, 22 July 04 via

(<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2004/34628.htm#sudan>).

(10) Amnesty International Press Release, 30 Jul 04 via

(<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAFR540922004?open&of=ENG-SDN>).

- (11) Agence France-Presse, 16 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (12) St. Petersburg Times, 27 Jul 04 via
(http://www.sptimesrussia.com/archive/times/989/news/b_13129.htm).
- (13) Global Security Defense Information Database via
(<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/russia/mig-29.htm>).
- (14) Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 7 Aug 95 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (15) Global Security Defense Information Database via
(<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/aircraft/f-16.html>).
- (16) Reuters, 23 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (27) Vremya novosti, in *ibid*.
- (18) RTR TV, 1300 GMT, 21 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (19) Vremaya novosti, in *ibid*.
- (20) Moscow Times, 27 Jul 04 via
(<http://www.moscowtimes.ru/stories/2004/07/27/008.html>).
- (21) Moscow Times, 2 Jun 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (22) Moscow Times; 22 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (23) Moscow Times, 27 Jul 04 in *ibid*.
- (24) RIA Novosti, 22 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Kate Martin

LEGISLATURE

Reform vs. revolution

The State Duma has been busy of late amending, and re-amending, government-proposed legislation that would provide monetary payments instead of social benefits to a population that clearly is unprepared for a substantial level

of governmental and societal reform. After weeks of debate and protest, the government resigned itself to making meaningful revisions.

Reaction across the board was loud after the revolutionary compensations bill passed the first reading on 2 July, reminding legislators that reform is wanted, provided it doesn't impinge on anyone's notion of entitlements. By 14 July, Duma committees had staked out joint positions of support for 14 amendments to the compensations bill. (1) The following week, the chairman of the Duma's committee on labor and social policy declared that the legislation would be "socialized considerably" for the second and third readings, scheduled for the first week in August. (2) Indeed, a member of the Duma's public relations department explained that over 1,200 amendments had been proposed. (3)

Eventually, the government had to admit that its attempt at what could have been drastic social reform was less than a blazing success. The trade unions, regional leaders and the Federation Council were particularly vocal in opposition, noting, for example, the additional burden expected to be placed on already-sagging regional budgets. The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Health and Social Development, therefore, reportedly reshaped the legislation substantially before the second reading. (4) Much of that remodeling involves concessions to long-held expectations of government handouts. Health and Social Development Minister Mikhail Zurabov explained that, in the revised version, an increase in the guaranteed social package — which includes free health care, spa visits and transportation — would be mandatory for everyone receiving in-kind benefits through 2005, whereupon they would be able to choose between in-kind benefits and monetary compensation. (5)

POLITICAL PARTIES

Zyuganov emerges, again

Gennadi Zyuganov has proven once more that he is the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), overcoming opposition to his rule, and

exacting retribution in a somewhat reserved manner — at least for those persons he still needs. Last month Zyuganov faced a major challenge from within his party on the eve of the KPRF Congress, as opponents, led by Ivanovo Oblast' Governor Vladimir Tikhonov, gathered and held a rival Congress at the same time. This schism looked serious for a time, but Zyuganov has emerged victorious, while most of Tikhonov's leading supporters have been removed from positions where they could pose a further threat.

State Duma Deputy (and first secretary of the Moscow city committee of the party) Aleksandr Kuvayev was an early casualty, released from his party post in a plenary meeting attended by Zyuganov himself; notably the meeting did not, however, accede to the demand to remove him from the party altogether. (6) Three of the heads of regional branches identified with the opposition, Vladislav Yurchik (Krasnoyarsk), Alevtina Aparina (Volgograd) and Vasili Kislitsyn (Kurgan) were, in effect, pardoned for admitting their mistake. Bryansk Governor Yuri Lodkin also apparently saw the error of his ways and has gone back into the fold. Two others, Kamchatka Governor Mikhail Mashkovtsev and Nikolai Benediktov (Nizhni Novgorod) resigned. (7) Most of the others had only a short wait to learn their fate: The following weekend, the first and second secretaries of the Smolensk party committee were ousted; two deputies of Tatar Republic Party First Secretary Aleksandr Saliy followed him out of the door; and Kaliningrad City Party Committee leader Vladimir Shevchenko was ejected. (8)

At this point, it is clearly a rebellion that failed. Tikhonov's party has suspended active operations, and is seeking rapprochement with Zyuganov's side. Zyuganov has not indicated in any way that he's feeling merciful, however.

ELECTIONS

The farce that wasn't funny: 'Against All' narrowly loses

It was a bad day for Viktor Cherepkov, and a worse day for democracy in Vladivostok: After a near-successful assassination attempt, (which landed

Cherepkov, the main rival to front-runner Vladimir Nikolayev, in the hospital with a concussion and heart problems); rampant allegations of intimidation and other nefarious tactics; and a recommendation from Central Election Commission Chairman Aleksandr Veshnyakov that voters should consider supporting "Against All" in the polling, Nikolayev was declared the winner of the Vladivostok mayoral elections held on 18 July.

The race was bloody, both literally and figuratively. As Cherepkov was leaving his election headquarters on the night of 10 July, a grenade exploded; he ended up in the intensive care unit of Pacific Fleet hospital, suffering from a concussion, and heart attack, and loss of hearing. According to Andrei Selyutin from Cherepkov's headquarters, the grenade attack was related to the impending second round of elections in which Cherepkov was due to face off against Nikolayev, who had garnered 26.8 percent of the vote, just 0.4 percent more than Cherepkov, in the first round. "Cherepkov has been intimidated verbally before, and now physical intimidation has begun," Selyutin charged. (9)

While Cherepkov was in the hospital, Vladivostok's Leninsky district court annulled his registration for the election on the basis of charges that he had abused his office as State Duma Deputy in running his campaign. (10) Yet the court's decision was controversial, as well. A doctor from the hospital where Cherepkov was being treated had testified that he was able to attend the proceedings two days after the blast, an assertion that was subsequently denied by the head of the hospital, who said it would be days before the deputy could be questioned about the blast, much less defend himself in court. (11) The court accepted the first doctor's testimony, however, and issued a decision before Cherepkov could appear.

The court's actions were no less suspect than those of the police, who instituted criminal proceedings based on the assumption of hooliganism. (12) No suspects have been identified as yet in the grenade explosion.

The court's decision evoked a strong reaction by Veshnyakov, who called it "an abuse by law." He warned that the "ruling may insult the voters and thwart the election," and noted that the campaign would have to start again if the majority of voters rejected all candidates. His suggestion was seconded by the incumbent mayor, Yuri Kopylov, who had finished third in the first runoff and so was in line to replace Cherepkov in the second round. Kopylov refused to participate, protesting Cherepkov's exclusion and urging his supporters to vote "against all candidates." (14) Kray Deputy Aleksandr Perednya, the fourth-place finisher in the first round, also refused to run. (15) Both alleged regional authorities' involvement in campaign irregularities in favor of Nikolayev, a businessman who was amnestied after being convicted of assault and attempted murder. (16) "My decision to become head of Vladivostok City remains in force. But the only way of achieving this democratically is to put an end to the election farce and then to hold an election with a truly free expression of city inhabitants' will," Perednya said. (17) Yet a challenger was found, in the form of fifth-place finisher Nikolai Markovtsev. And that ensured that elections would be held.

When all was said and done, though, Veshnyakov and others were bound by the election laws they touted: A turnout of roughly 38 percent surpassed the minimum required, Nikolayev received the majority of the vote (more than 50 percent) against his challenger, and no official complaints about the execution of the elections were received. (18) Still, "against all" had a fairly good showing, with 38 percent of the vote.

The media response was immediate, with many decrying what they called a victory for the "criminal world" and charging the kray administration with orchestration of Nikolayev's election win. (19) Allegations were made that more voters selected "against all" than was apparent in the official results, but these could not be proved. (20) In the end, the results remained the same. "The will of citizens was expressed very clearly in these elections," Veshnyakov said, adding

that voters could have chosen an alternative candidate or "against all." (21) He added that he might seek introduction of legislation that would mandate the reporting even of cancelled convictions by election candidates in the future.

In the meantime, democracy is in shaky hands. The increase in the popularity of "against all candidates" has one positive note, in that voters at least appear to feel that their voices can be heard. But that one positive note is outweighed by the ever-growing realization that no one is listening.

Source Notes:

(1) ITAR-TASS, 1607 GMT, 14 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0714 via World News Connection.

(2) ITAR-TASS, 1425 GMT, 21 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0721 via World News Connection.

(3) ITAR-TASS, 1955 GMT, 20 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0720 via World News Connection.

(4) Nezavisimaya gazeta, 21 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0721 via World News Connection.

(5) ITAR-TASS, 1900 GMT, 26 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0726 via World News Connection.

(6) Interfax, 1744 GMT, 13 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0713 via World News Connection.

(7) Nezavisimaya gazeta, 15 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0715, and Nezavisimaya gazeta, 19 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0719 via World News Connection.

(8) Nezavisimaya gazeta, 19 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0719 via World News Connection.

(9) ITAR-TASS, 2106 GMT, 9 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0709 via World News Connection.

(10) Interfax, 1028 GMT, 12 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0712 via World News Connection.

- (11) ITAR-TASS, 0548 GMT, 13 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0713 via World News Connection.
- (12) ITAR-TASS, 0548 GMT, 13 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0713 via World News Connection.
- (13) Interfax, 0747 GMT, 15 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0715 via World News Connection.
- (14) RIA-Novosti, 2020 GMT, 12 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0712 via World News Connection.
- (15) Nezavisimaya gazeta, 15 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0715 via World News Connection.
- (16) Nezavisimaya gazeta, 20 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0720 via World News Connection.
- (17) Nezavisimaya gazeta, 15 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0715 via World News Connection.
- (18) ITAR-TASS, 0322 GMT, 21 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0721 via World News Connection.
- (19) Lenta.Ru, 19 Jul 04, Politkom.ru, 15 Jul 04, Izvestiya, 20 Jul 04, Nezavisimaya gazeta, 20 Jul 04, Moskovskiy komsomolets, 20 Jul 04, Vremya novostey, 20 Jul 04, and Trud, 20 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0723 via World News Connection.
- (20) Izvestiya, 19 Jul 04, Ekho Moskvyy, 19 Jul 04, and Gazeta.ru, 19 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0723 via World News Connection.
- (21) ITAR-TASS, 1451 GMT, 19 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0719 via World News Connection.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Elena Selyuk

BELARUS

Lukashenko's ten years in office

July 20, 2004 marked the 10th anniversary of Lukashenko's inauguration. The Belarusian president held a four-hour question and answer session, which was broadcast live on Belarusian national radio. Lukashenko considers "a peaceful Belarus" to be his main achievement of the past ten years, which is apparently sufficient to change the constitution and run for a third term. When asked by a BBC correspondent about his plans to run for president again, Lukashenko assured him that he would ask the permission of the nation before doing that. "...We will need a referendum," he said, "and at that referendum, the people will need to say Yes, Lukashenko, we allow you to stand in these presidential elections. Everything will be according to the Constitution, everything will be honest and orderly. It will be beautiful. I guarantee you that," continued Lukashenko. (1) The president also added rather confidently that the nation needs not to worry, as the necessary legislation could be produced quickly.

The day of Lukashenko's 10th anniversary in office was marked by opposition protests, which, according to different sources, attracted anywhere from 150 to 5,000 persons. A correspondent from the RTR Russia channel Dmitry Petrov reported that between 2,000 and 5,000 persons participated in the anti-presidential rally, which was the largest of the year (2) — a statement to which the Belarusian authorities reacted sharply, claiming that the correspondent was transmitting false information about events in Belarus. The Belarusian authorities say that the opposition protest rally was "a failed event" and had not attracted more than 150 persons. (3) The "biased information" offended Lukashenko so deeply that he decided to close the RTR Russian station in Belarus, which provoked a harsh reaction from the Russian side. Russian Foreign Minister, Aleksandr Yakovenko, said that the coverage of the events in Belarus could not be considered as serious grounds for closure of the channel's news bureau in Minsk. (4)

Meanwhile, the Belarusian authorities seem to be unable to keep their count of the rally's participants straight. Right after the rally, the Belarusian Interior

Ministry announced that around 800 persons had taken part in the event in Minsk — a number substantially higher than 150. It appears that the Interior Ministry had not obtained the information about the "correct" number of participants in time and made a hasty judgment, but, apparently, the estimate was still not low enough for the authorities. An independent Belarusian news agency Belapan estimated that around 4,000 persons took part in the anti-presidential rally. (5)

This is not the first time, that a Russian media source has been closed. A year ago, the Russian NTV station was closed in Minsk due to its critical coverage of local politics.

MOLDOVA

"A political dimension of the humanitarian issue"

It has been three weeks since the beginning of a political and humanitarian battle between Tiraspol authorities and several Moldovan-language schools in Transdnistr. The administration of Igor Smirnov ordered the closure by September of all Moldovan-language schools in Transdnistr that use Latin script. In order to reopen, these schools will have to register with the Transdnistr authorities and switch from Latin script to Cyrillic. (6)

As a reaction to the demands of the Dniestr authorities, teachers, students and parents barricaded themselves inside the schools and refused to leave the buildings in order to avoid the school property being seized. The schools have had their water, gas and electrical services cut off and energy providers have cancelled their contracts with them. There are 1,600 students enrolled and 80 teachers employed in Alexandru cel Bun lyceum in Tighina. The school administration said that Dniestr authorities have cancelled the 10-year rent contract with the school, and the children have nowhere to go. (7) On 26 July, 30 Dniestr policemen rushed into the facilities of the Moldovan boarding school for orphans in Bender, while 320 children were in summer camps. It is not clear where these children will live when they return from their vacation. (8)

Six schools teaching in Moldovan with Latin script were closed. None of these schools is registered, accredited or licensed in the Dniestr region. The schools are completely subordinated to Moldovan authorities and are accused by Tiraspol of receiving salary in foreign currency — Moldovan lei. The Dniestr region's Education Minister Yelena Bomeshko stated that the Dniestr law permits education in any language, which fully applies to ethnic Moldovans. "We do not forbid children to study in the Romanian language. It is not a question of language, but that of the content of education that has to comply with the standards of the Dniestr region," she said. (9) She did not make any comments, however, about the unfairness of these standards (in order to register, Moldovan schools will have to give up Latin script).

As a reaction to Transdniestr separatists closing Moldovan schools, Chisinau started blocking the movement of goods out of the breakaway region. Moldovan authorities said the economic sanctions would be lifted only when Transdniestr revokes its decision to close the schools. "This is not an economic blockade, we are simply restoring order in this country," stated Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin. The European Union also threatened economic sanctions on Friday against Transdniestr authorities. Javier Solana appealed to the Russian Federation to intervene with the Tiraspol authorities. (10)

Leaders in the Dniestr region consider schools that teach in Moldovan as active supporters of Chisinau's policies and thus sees these school as islands of potential rebellion. One thing is clear: There may not be a solution to the Dniestr problem for decades, and when the schoolchildren who are now barricaded in their schools grow up, they will surely remember that they were denied a basic right, to study in their mother tongue.

UKRAINE

A new political structure in support of Yanukovich

Twenty five political parties and 81 NGOs have united in support of the presidential candidate and current Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich. The goal of this political structure, which might be named "Ukraine for Yanukovich," is to fight for Yanukovich's honest victory in the upcoming presidential elections. (11) Yanukovich seems to be rather confident in his presidential victory and has, according to the announcement of the chief of his election team Sergei Tigipko, gathered over two million signatures in support of his candidacy (500,000 is the minimum requirement). Curiously enough, two days after the announcement, about 100 residents of Odessa picketed the city's health directorate demanding a halt to a pressure on medical staff to sign and collect other signatures in support of Yanukovich. "Many medical staff members are being threatened with dismissal if they refuse to collect signatures...People are being misinformed, as they are told that they can give their support signatures only to one candidate. We are observing mass violation of the law 'On Ukrainian presidential elections,'" said the leader of the Civic Executive Committee. (12) Other violations of a similar kind were noted all over Ukraine. On 28 July, Yanukovich received a statement from the head of the Verkhovna Rada's Committee for Freedom of Speech and Information, Mykola Tomenko, informing him of incidents deemed to violate freedom of speech. The statement said that Yanukovich's government exerted pressure on the media. An example of "negotiations" with cable operators to remove Channel 5 from cable networks has been cited. (13) It seems that with his hands in every part of Ukrainian life, starting with hospitals and ending with the media, Yanukovich might have a good chance for a "victory" in the October election.

Odessa-Brody pipeline to flow in the reverse direction

Due to the absence of Western investors, Ukraine has decided to revise the Odessa-Brody pipeline — to transport Russian oil. The pipeline was constructed in 2002 and has the capacity to transport 14 million tons of oil per year, but it remains idle. There are plans to sign a deal with Russian oil companies. The decision might turn out to be permanent and will seal the fate of the pipeline, as

transport experts agree that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to reverse the flow of the pipeline — to transport Caspian Sea oil to Europe via the Black Sea. (14)

Change in Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic course?

Leonid Kuchma has removed the goal of NATO and E.U. membership from the nation's defense doctrine. The development has triggered a lot of speculation about the country's Euro-Atlantic course. The defense Minister Yevhen Marchuk downplayed the significance of the development, however, saying that the doctrine is a medium term document, which reflects the reality of the next 10 years. Marchuk referred to the statement of Romano Prodi, where he made it clear that Ukraine could not become an E.U. member in the next 10 years. As for NATO, during the June 2004 NATO summit in Istanbul, Ukraine received clear signals that relations between Ukraine and NATO were to remain at the same level in the near future.

A tragic accident

As a result of the explosion on 19 July in Krasnolimanskaya mine in Donetsk, 34 miners died when a mixture of methane gas and coal-dust unexpectedly detonated. There were 48 miners underground when the explosion went off. Twelve of them escaped to the surface. (15) This is the country's deadliest mine explosion in two years. The opposition is demanding that the president dismiss Deputy Prime Minister for Fuel and Energy Andriy Klyuyev for not paying enough attention to the safety of miners.

Ukraine is considered one of the deadliest places in the world to be a coal-miner. Since Ukraine's independence in 2001, 3,700 miners lost their lives as a result of mine accidents. 75% of all mine pits are considered dangerous. A combination of old equipment, neglect for safety procedures and high concentration of methane gas makes death traps out of numerous mines in Ukraine. Many miners are so poor and eager to obtain at least some income that they disable their methane

gas detectors so that they are not stopped from working as a result of safety checks. (16)

Source Notes:

- (1) Belarusian Radio, 20 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis Nexis.
- (2) RTR Russia, 21 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (3) Belarusian television, 21 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (4) Agence France Press, 24 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (5) Interfax news agency, 22 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (6) Basapress news agency, 17 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets.
- (7) ITAR-TASS, 19 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (8) Moldova One TV, 26 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (9) Olivia-press web site, 19 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (10) Agence France Press, 1 Aug 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (11) One Plus One TV, 24 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (12) UNIAN, 28 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (13) RFE/RL, Vol. 8, No. 143, Part II, 29 July 2004.
- (14) European report, 28 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (15) UT1, 28 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (16) The Independent, 21 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Ariela Shapiro

GEORGIA

A new peacekeeping mandate needed in South Ossetia:

Until recently, Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili has used country-wide anti-smuggling operations and social service rebuilding campaigns as a method

of slowly restoring Georgian control in South Ossetia. However, since the beginning of July the Georgian government has sought direct action to implement Saakashvili's political initiative that is intended to bring back secessionist South Ossetia as a part of Georgia, to "reclaim our territory, our Tskhinvali" as he recently told a Tel Aviv audience on a state visit to Israel (1). Under international law, as recognized by Russia in 1991, South Ossetia constitutes a part of Georgia's territorial integrity.

Originally, Saakashvili tried to use the Joint Control Commission (JCC), the committee tasked with monitoring the situation in the conflict zone, as the platform for regaining a greater military and peacekeeping presence in South Ossetia. At the 14 July JCC meeting in Moscow, Georgian National Security Council Secretary, Gela Bezhuashvili, and Georgian Minister for Conflict Resolution, Giorgi Khaindrava, proposed total demilitarization of South Ossetia, joint monitoring of the Russian border and military cargoes by Russian and Georgian peacekeepers and withdrawal of the 2000 foreign mercenaries who have infiltrated South Ossetia. (2) The result of the meeting, which was planned originally to resolve the growing tensions between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali, was an ambiguous protocol in which both Georgia and South Ossetia agreed "to take steps to ease the tensions" and withdraw all military forces, with the exception of peacekeepers, from the conflict zone. (3) However, the protocol did not incorporate the Georgian demand to be allowed to monitor all cargoes entering South Ossetia from Russia via the Roki tunnel. (4) The Georgian government has attempted to confiscate military shipments and convoys being sent illegally from Russia to South Ossetia. On 18 July, Georgian forces impounded a private car transporting an antitank gun and three shells near Tskhinvali and a car carrying the portable Fagot anti-tank system. (5) Despite Georgian watchfulness, Russia sent an additional 40 armored vehicles to predominantly Russian peacekeepers on 21 July, while claiming that the military shipments are part of the routine rotation of weapons and materials to South Ossetian and Russian peacekeepers. (6)

Georgian frustration with its inability to control the permeability of the South Ossetian-Russian border was communicated during Saakashvili's 20 July address to the Adjarian Supreme Council. Saakashvili informed legislators that he is ready to "withdraw from agreements" which prevent Georgia from "raising the national flag" in South Ossetia. (7) As Georgia senses itself stymied within the JCC, an organization dominated by Moscow, it has turned a hopeful eye on the OSCE to resolve the South Ossetian crisis. In the aftermath of the 26 July meeting of former Bulgarian president Zhelyu Zhelev with President Saakashvili and other Georgian Ministers, Giorgi Khaindrava expressed a desire for the OSCE to assume a broader and more active role in South Ossetia. (8) Russia opposes Georgia's quest for an enlarged OSCE contingent, and Moscow proceeded to take aim at the OSCE's role in the crisis. The Kremlin claimed that the OSCE was biased in favor of Georgia. (9)

The OSCE has done little with its peacekeeping mandate thus far, except to call for resumption of a dialogue between South Ossetia and Georgia. (10) However, several instances in the past ten days have provided a break in tensions which could catalyze a renewal of exchanges between Tskhinvali and Tbilisi. On 24 July Georgia returned to Russia 160 unguided missiles that were seized by Georgian Interior Ministry forces on 7 July. Seizure of the shipment, allegedly intended for Russian peacekeepers, prompted South Ossetian fighters to take roughly 38 Georgian peacekeepers hostage, all but 3 of whom have been released. (11) Additionally, the clash over peacekeeping troops has lately centered on Major General Svyatoslav Nabdzorov, the head of peacekeeping forces in South Ossetia. Georgia has an aggressive government and media campaign for Nabdzorov's removal, arguing that he had turned South Ossetia into a Russian fiefdom. Russia is replacing Nabdzorov in August with Maj. Gen. Marat Kulakhmetov, commander of the 19th division stationed in South Ossetia. (12)

However, an exchange of small arms and heavy artillery fire between Georgian and South Ossetian troops on 30 July threatened to heighten tensions again. Both South Ossetian and Georgian officials denied starting the skirmish, which occurred outside the Georgian populated village of Tamarasheni. The South Ossetian leader, Eduard Kokoity, proceeded to charge Georgia with "aggression" while the commander of the Georgian peacekeeping contingent, Gini Gututsidze, stated that Georgian opened fire in retaliation after the South Ossetian side targeted Georgian civilians in Tamarsheni. (13)

The Georgian Minister for Conflict Resolution Giorgi Khaindrava is insisting that Tbilisi does not intend to use force to restore its control over the breakaway republic of South Ossetia. (14) The Georgian government believes that the use of military force would damage Georgian's hopes of EU integration and jeopardize potential aid packages.

Privatization plans arouse interest

The announcement by Kakha Bendukidze of the privatization of Georgia's economy has given the Georgian political opposition fodder with which to attack Saakashvili's government as well as putatively providing Russia with greater access to Georgia's energy sector.

On 22 July, the deputy chief of Russia's national power utility UES, Andrei Rappoport, held a meeting with Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania, Economic Minister Bendukidze, and Fuel and Energy Minister Nika Gilauri. Rappoport said that UES wanted to see the privatization of Georgia's Inguri Hydro, the country's largest hydro power plant which accounts for 45% of Georgia's electricity production. (15) The significance of Rappoport statement, and the underlying Russian desire to control Georgia's energy supply, came into focus on 23 July when Gazprom halted gas supplies to Tbilgazi, the Georgian state gas company, forcing the shut-off of gas to four Tbilisi districts with outstanding gas bills. (16)

Although Moscow is pleased with the opening of the Georgian economy, some groups protested the new privatization plans. On 21 July, Georgian Interior Ministry Spetsnaz troops dispersed a protest involving about 75 persons outside the Economic Ministry. (17) Zviadists, supporters of the late Zviad Gamsakhurdia, and followers of Georgia's Labor opposition party comprised the protesters. (18) After detaining three persons, including a 16 year-old boy, for their "outrageous and immoral" behavior, Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania tasked the State Security Ministry with determining who had organized the protests, adding that the organizers were embezzling Georgian national property as well. (19) Prime Minister Zhvania's protective stance towards Bendukidze and his new economic policy, underlined by his statement that "someone with complaints against Bendukidze is someone against the authorities, (20)" demonstrates the hope that Georgia's political elites place on Bendukidze's ability to resurrect the country's economy. Prime Minister Zhvania's aggressive use of state security facilities to investigate and control protests also displays a worrying tendency within the new Georgian political establishment to use force when confronted.

ARMENIA

Armenia strives to move outside the box

On 20 July, Iran began constructing its part of a gas-pipeline to export Iranian gas to Armenia. The developing Iranian-Armenian ties offer Armenia an alternative ally to Russia while also giving the land-locked country a physical outlet to the world.

The deepening ties between them seem to have disturbed Moscow more than Washington, lending credence to speculation to the effect that the two powers have divided the Caucasus into zones of interests, with the US taking Georgia and leaving Armenia to Russia. Thus far, the sole statement on the situation by the US Ambassador to Armenia, John Ordway, revealed little real concern over an Armenian-Iranian political link, but rather focused on denying that the US

embassy had engaged in any anti-Iranian activity in the past two weeks. (21) In contrast, during a meeting with Chairman of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Hasan Roukhani, the Secretary of Russia's Security Council, Igor Ivanov, stated that pipelines from Iran to Armenia are the "most important strategic projects in the region." (22) Indeed, on 19 July, the Vice-Chairman of the national Russian gas company, Gazprom, Aleksander Ryazanov, stated that the construction of the Armenian side of the gas-pipeline will be partially funded with the aid of the Russian government or Gazprom. (23)

CHECHNYA

Another day, another election

On 22 July, an election official of Chechnya's pro-Moscow administration formally rejected the registration of Malik Saidullaev as a candidate in the republic's presidential election scheduled for the end of August. (24) The pro-Moscow authorities thus removed from contention the one serious competitor to the Kremlin-backed candidate, Alu Alkhanov.

The Secretary of the CEC (Chechen Election Committee), Ela Vakhitov, stated that reason behind excluding Saidullaev from the presidential race was that his passport was ruled invalid. (25) However, as the journalist Anna Politkovskaya observed, it is "strange" that the election officials did not note this "irregularity" when Saidullaev filed as a candidate for the republic's presidential election last autumn. In Politkovskaya's opinion the exclusion of Saidullaev is only "one step from the horrible to the ridiculous," especially when it is noted that the passport was issued by the Balashinkhinsky Internal Affairs Directorate of the Moscow Oblast, which is an official state agency. (26)

Following the CEC's decision, Saidullaev stated that the Chechen election authorities had been obeying "an order from the Kremlin," while adding that he still plans to run again for president of an "independent Chechnya." (27) In an interview with the Associated Press, Saidullaev stressed that Moscow's decision

has further delegitimized the August 29 presidential election, while giving Maskhadov increased credibility, adding that Putin will have to deal with Maskhadov at some point. (28)

The Chechen Election Commission also rejected candidate applicants Yaragi Mamodaev, Adam Edilov, and Zura Magomadova, most likely as a tactic to make Saidullaev's exclusion seem less arbitrary. Only six other candidates remain to give the presidential election a semblance of genuine competition: Umar Abuev, Magomed Aidomirov, Mukhmud-Khasan Asakov, Abdul Bugaev, Movsar Khamidov and Vakha Visaev. (29) In an article, Politkovskaya described Abuev, Aidamirov, Asakov, and Visaev as "simply doubles" for Alkhanov who will barely campaign themselves. Khamidov, a veteran FSB officer, will promote his candidacy, but she predicts that he will not exert any influence over the outcome of the election since the FSB is taking its lead from Putin and supporting Alkhanov. (30)

The putative outcome of the August 29 Chechen presidential election has been invalidated further by a recent International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights report cautioning the Russian government against holding elections in such an opaque political environment. (31) The Executive Director of the IHF, Aaron Rhodes, added that the Russian authorities are "apparently not interested in running a free and fair ballot in Chechnya" but rather are seeking to "railroad" the election of a favored candidate in a one-person race. According to the IHF and the Moscow Helsinki Group, the minimal conditions for the holding of free and fair elections in Chechnya must include: A recognized cessation of hostilities by both sides to the conflict; a plurality of candidates; free operation of the media, guaranteed exercise of freedom of expression by all and the agreement of the international community, including the OSCE and the Council of Europe, to send observers (32).

It is highly unlikely that the IHF's suggestions will be met by any real consideration, since Russia has done everything in its power to prevent them from being implemented. Thus, the August 29 Chechen presidential elections will yield yet another Moscow supported strong-man who will perpetuate the cycle of violence.

Source Notes:

- (1) Imedi TV, 30 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (2) Izvestiya, 16 Jul 04; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis.
- (3) Interfax, 16 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (4) Itar-Tass, 16 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (5) Vremya Novostei, 20 Jul 04; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis.
- (6) Associated Press, 23 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (7) Kommersant, 21 Jul 04; What the Papers Say, 23 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (8) Ria Novosti, 27 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (9) Associated Press, 30 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (10) Itar-Tass, Tbilisi 28 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (11) Channel One TV Moscow, 24 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (12) Nezavisimaya gazeta, 30 Jul 04; Russica Izvestia Information RusData Dialine via Lexis-Nexis.
- (13) Agence France Press, 30 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis; Itar-Tass, Tbilisi, 30 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (14) Nezavisimaya gazeta, 30 Jul 04; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis.
- (15) Itar-Tass, 22 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (16) Ria Novosti, 22 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (17) Ria Novosti, 21 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (18) Rustavi-2 TV, Tbilisi, 21 Jul 04; Financial Times; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (19) Rustavi-2 TV, Tbilisi, 21 Jul 04; via Financial Times via BBC Monitoring, via Lexis-Nexis.

- (20) Ibid.
- (21) Financial Times, 22 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (22) Golos Rossii Radio, 5 Jul 04; Arminfo, 6 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (23) Arminfo, 19 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (24) Moscow Times, 26 Jul 04 www.moscowtime.ru/stories/2004/07/26/012-print.html .
- (25) Reuters, 22 Jul 04 (www.reuters.com) .
- (26) Novaya gazeta, 26 Jul 04; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis.
- (27) Moscow Times, 23 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (28) Associated Press, 24 Jul 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (29) Moscow Times, 26 Jul 04, (www.moscowtimes.ru).
- (30) Novaya gazeta, 26 Jul 04; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis.
- (31) (www.ihf-hr.org).
- (32) "IHF Condemns Killing of Chechen President, Conditions Must be Created for Free and Fair Elections," 10 May, 2004; (www.ihf-hr.org).

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By David Montgomery

Suicide bombings in Uzbekistan; Human Rights and elections in Kazakhstan

On 30 July 2004, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, three suicide bombers attacked the U.S. Embassy, the Israeli Embassy, and the Uzbek prosecutor-general's office. The bombings came four days after the start of the trial for fifteen accused of being connected with the 28 March-1 April bombings in Uzbekistan. (1) It seems plausible that the late March violence in Uzbekistan was related to popular dissatisfaction with widespread human rights abuses and religious persecution and equally plausible that the recent bombings are an attempt to connect the oppressive nature of Uzbek President Islam Karimov's government to the support it receives from both the United States and Israel. How this will affect the region

as a whole immediately remains to be seen, but as Kazakhstan prepares for parliamentary elections scheduled for 19 September, the issue of human rights is gaining importance in the campaigns of opposition candidates.

Suicide bombings in Uzbekistan

Three separate suicide bombs were detonated in afternoon attacks in Tashkent, claiming the lives of at least three, in addition to the attackers, and injuring at least nine others. Two Uzbek security guards were killed in the bombing at the Israeli Embassy and a third individual was killed at the prosecutor-general's office. There were no fatalities at the U.S. Embassy though two Uzbeks were injured in that blast. In a statement made on an Al-Qaeda linked website, a previously unknown group, calling itself the Islamic Jihad Group in Uzbekistan (IJG), claimed responsibility. (2)

At this point, the motives for the bombings are unclear, but they do coincide with the ongoing trial of those accused of participating in the March 2004 bombing. Ranging in age from 22 to 40, 13 men and two women are being tried before the Uzbek Supreme Court, charged under 17 articles of the Uzbek criminal code, including: "terrorism, religious extremism, attempting to change the constitutional system of the country by violent methods, creating well-established organized crime groups, disseminating banned literature that is against the state system of Uzbekistan, and attempting to set up an Islamic caliphate in Central Asia." (3)

The 15 defendants allegedly were members of Jamoat, an extremist cell believed to be connected with Al-Qaeda. (4) At the time of the attacks, it was claimed that the terrorists received training in South Waziristan, Pakistan, where Deputy Prosecutor Murod Solihov alleges that the defendants learned bomb making skills. The attackers are believed to have gathered in South Waziristan from Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Iran and Pakistan. (5) The relationship between Jamoat and IJG is not yet known, but it is assumed that members of both groups received similar training outside of Uzbekistan. It is further assumed that

Karimov's disregard for human rights and his continued pressure on religious conservatives was at least one of the reasons for the attacks.

Human Rights

Since the tragedies of 11 September 2001, Uzbekistan has become a strategic ally of the U.S., supporting the U.S.-led military offensive in Afghanistan and continuing its aggressive crackdown on Islamic extremists. Serving as host to a U.S. military air base and important in the "fight against terrorism," Uzbekistan seemed (temporarily, at least) immune from criticism on human rights abuses. In mid-July, however, the U.S. State Department informed the Uzbek government that because of its failure to meet the terms of the 2002 Strategic Partnership Framework agreement (SPF), up to \$18 million in military and economic aid for the year 2004, would be withheld until further progress is made on the human rights and democracy fronts. (6) While the U.S. attempted to strike a conciliatory tone claiming that there had been "encouraging progress over the past year" in the sphere of human rights, the authoritative nature of the Karimov government made it difficult for the U.S. State Department to certify the SPF, which mandates "substantial and continuing progress" towards democratization. (7)

Uzbekistan has been especially draconian in addressing what are perceived as Islamic activists wanting reform in the state; Human Rights Watch estimates that over 7,000 Muslims have been improperly imprisoned. (8) Uzbek prisons are notorious for a disregard of prisoners' rights and while such concerns have largely been the focus of human rights groups rather than government officials; in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan the issue of prisoners' rights is being discussed in the public sphere. In Kyrgyzstan, Ombudsman Tursunbay Bakir uulu reported that female prisoners in correctional colony No. 2 (in Stepnoy) and remand center No. 1 (in Bishkek) had been sexually harassed and raped. (9)

In Kazakhstan, the issue of prisoners' rights has become even more public. In Arkalyk (in the northern Kostanay Region), four former wardens were convicted

of beating prisoners and sentenced to between five and six years in prison. (10) One prison, correctional institution GM 172/7, is being closed due to an investigation which made public its inhumane living conditions (11) and human rights activists claim that human rights violations are on the rise in Kazakhstani courts and among police. (12) The issue of prisoners' rights has become so well recognized that some opposition politicians have suggested the formation of a special committee for the protection of prisoners' rights. (13)

Preparing for Elections in Kazakhstan

Part of the platform of Kazakh opposition parties concerns human rights, as affecting the rights of prisoners. What is likely to continue to dominate local media sources until the 19 September 2004 parliamentary elections are the political parties in Kazakhstan, as they select candidates and organize in hopes of gaining power. Many of the parties — including Ruhaniyat, Asar, Party of Patriots for Kazakhstan (PPK), Aul Social Democratic Party of Kazakhstan, Civic Party of Kazakhstan, and the Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan — have submitted their party lists and selected and endorsed their candidates for the September elections. (14) Opposition parties have expressed their willingness to cooperate whereas pro-presidential parties such as Asar — headed by the president's daughter, Dariga Nazarbayeva — are seen as having the clear advantage in the upcoming elections. (15) Nonetheless, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev has asked influential business tycoons to stay out of the political debates and called for fair elections, which would allow equitable media presentation of information about political parties and candidates. (16)

Elsewhere, the Uzbek Central Electoral Commission has set 26 December 2004 as the date for parliamentary elections. (17) Tajikistan's Islamic Rebirth Party has criticized the country's new election laws which it sees as preventing 80 percent of the population from serving in elected positions. (18) And while Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev insists that he is not running for re-election, the leading

opposition figure, Felix Kulov, is slated to remain in jail until after the 2005 presidential elections. (19)

Source Notes:

- (1) For more on the 28 March-1 April bombings in Uzbekistan, see NIS Observed, 8 Apr 04; 28 Apr 04 via www.bu.edu/iscip. Officially, 47 were killed in the bombings: 33 alleged terrorists, 10 police officers, and four civilians.
- (2) Associated Press, 0149 EST, 30 Jul 04 via www.nytimes.com; CNN, 30 Jul 04 via www.cnn.com; RFE/RL, 30 Jul 04 via www.rferl.org .
- (3) ITAR-TASS, 0802 GMT, 26 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0726 via WNC; RFE/RL, 27 Jul 04 via www.rferl.org .
- (4) Interfax, 0829 GMT, 24 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0724 via WNC.
- (5) Interfax-Kazakhstan (Almaty), 1327 GMT, 26 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0726 via WNC.
- (6) Eurasianet, 14 Jul 04 via www.eurasianet.org; RFE/RL Central Asia Report, 21 Jul 04; 28 Jul 04 via www.rferl.org .
- (7) Eurasianet, 14 Jul 04 via www.eurasianet.org .
- (8) See Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org).
- (9) AKIpress (Bishkek), 1048 GMT, 19 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0719 via WNC.
- (10) Interfax-Kazakhstan (Almaty), 1439 GMT, 16 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0716 via WNC.
- (11) Ekspress-K (Almaty), 24 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0725 via WNC.
- (12) Interfax, 1107 GMT, 19 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0719 via WNC.
- (13) Interfax, 0918 GMT, 22 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0722 via WNC.
- (14) Interfax-Kazakhstan (Almaty), 0802 GMT; 0724 GMT, 26 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0726; 0408 GMT, 24 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0724; 1132 GMT; 1122 GMT, 23 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0723; 1238 GMT, 22 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0722 via WNC.
- (15) Interfax-Kazakhstan (Almaty), 0733 GMT, 21 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0721; 0919 GMT, 26 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0726 via WNC.

(16) ITAR-TASS, 1554 GMT, 21 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0721; Interfax-Kazakhstan (Almaty), 1142 GMT, 20 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0720; 0701 GMT, 23 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0723 via WNC.

(17) Pravda Vostoka (Tashkent), 0001 GMT, 20 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0720 via WNC.

(18) According to IRP party leadership, "The entry fee for a candidate equals 200 minimum wages (\$500), and in general does not allow 80 percent of the population to use their right to be elected." U.S. officials, however, view the new law as a step towards more fair and transparent elections. Interfax, 1338 GMT, 20 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0720 via WNC.

(19) AKIpress (Bishkek), 1250 GMT, 23 Jul 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0723 via WNC.

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