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Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Luba Schwartzman

REGIONS

Back to the future

Sergei Sobyenin, the Russian Federation president's first deputy plenipotentiary representative in the Urals Federal District, has proposed the consolidation of Russia's current regions. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 11 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0111, via World News Connection)

Pointing out that the territorial divisions, imposed by Stalin's national policy, are thus of relatively recent origin, he stresses their inefficiency in a democratic state. He suggests a gradual merging: first, by introducing an integrated legal system, then a "joint social sphere," and finally a coordinated policy, with an eye to "a scientifically justified territorial balance of the population's needs." A "common strategic planning center" would be established "to ensure objectivity," and, naturally, regional envy and arrogance would be abolished. In the meantime, coordinated financial, economic and infrastructure changes that would be desirable and achievable would be set into motion. (Mr. Sobyenin suggests, for example, such changes in the Tyumen Oblast's relations between the rich, industrial, but climatically inhospitable north, and the pleasanter, but poorer south.)

"Sobyenin's logic is simple," Rossiyskaya gazeta claims. "He is not issuing senseless directives. He is efficiently and sensibly formulating the prerequisites for integration processes... [that] will proceed of their own accord in line with

economic laws that are just as immutable as the law of gravity or the law of the conservation of energy."

However, this is remarkably reminiscent of Lenin's hopes for the dual kind of "merging" [sblizheniye and sliyaniye] of the various Soviet peoples, and it is unsettling to think that, so soon after one such 70-year-long experiment has failed totally, another one could begin.

FSB takes the reins

One not-so-successfully merged region is now being pulled a little closer to the center: In Chechnya, federal troops will be replaced by Federal Security Service (FSB) officers who will have until 15 May 2001, "to produce results... under the new chain of command"; the judicial system will be restored; and the new prime minister, Stanislav Ilyasov, will "set up in the first place a competent government, a team of people holding the same views, which will react promptly and take decisions." (AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, 22 Jan 01; via Johnson's Russia List, and ITAR-TASS, 2126 GMT, 11 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-01111, via World News Connection) Or did he, perhaps, mean "react promptly and take orders?"

POLITICAL PARTIES

Trust in Putin, but keep your party big

Back in Moscow, in response to the upcoming "consolidation" of the Duma parties, political leaders are streamlining, combining, reshuffling, renaming and generally reorganizing (some, while making a point of affirming their allegiance to Putin and support for his policies).

State Duma speaker Gennady Seleznev, for example, headed the first congress of the Rossiya movement and expressed his accord with the measures mentioned in Putin's address to the Federal Assembly -- protecting "the right of property, but not the rights of frauds and swindlers," cleansing "the banking sphere of those organizations that lack vital capacity," making "the work of

financial establishments transparent," fighting "arbitrariness of bureaucrats" and so forth. He claimed to be speaking also on behalf of the Russian People's Patriotic Union, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (with whose leaders he has had differences of opinion) and other left-wing organizations and trade unions in promising to cooperate closely. (INTERFAX, 1130 GMT, 13 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0113, via World News Connection)

Gennady Raykov, the current head of the group of independent State Duma deputies that plans to set up a political movement of the People's Deputy, for which he is the natural choice as leader, has stated that the "members of the group view themselves as a counterbalance to radical trends and as a force able to direct the legislative work in a course corresponding to the interests of the voters and the entire society." More specifically he stressed that his group views [Putin's] Unity as a strategic partner in the State Duma. (RIA, 1144 GMT, 15 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0115, via World News Connection)

The leaders of the Union of Right-Wing Forces [SPS] are also making somewhat hurried plans to form the Union into a party (most likely at the upcoming 26 May Congress). The nine organizations that make up the SPS will disband and embark on a joint mission. Unlike the other two parties' representatives, however, SPS leaders made a point of stating that "It is absolutely unacceptable as far as we are concerned to declare loyalty to president and government irrespective of what they are actually doing. Our party cannot obediently exercise the will of the executive authorities out of servility." (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 24 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0124, via the World News Connection)

JUDICIARY

To reform or not to reform?

The Russian State Duma held its first session of the year on 17 January and approved a program for the spring session: 613 legislative acts are to be considered between January and June 2001, with priority reserved for the draft

laws on political parties, the Constitutional Assembly, a Land Code and a Labor Code. (ITAR-TASS, 1401 GMT 17 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0117, via World News Connection)

One of the bills it reviewed and approved unanimously at that session was a federal law amending the Criminal Code, the Code of Criminal Practices, and the Code of Penitentiaries, with a reform meant to cut the number of prisoners and individuals under arrest by 350,000 inmates, to provide for a shorter term of punishment for minor crimes, as well as milder punishments and better prison conditions.

However, a couple of days later the draft was withdrawn. Dmitry Kozak, deputy chief of the presidential staff, explained that this was done for purely technical reasons related to a change in statistics submitted by the Supreme Court; however, Viktor Pokhmelkin, a parliamentary leader of the Union of Right Forces, mentioned that, according to the information available to the SPS, the president was influenced by the top people in the General Prosecutor's Office, the FSB, and MVD [Ministry of Internal Affairs]. "We know that General Prosecutor Vladimir Ustinov, FSB Director Nikolai Patrushev, and Internal Affairs Minister Vladimir Rushailo persuaded the president not to change the existing procedure governing the detention and arrest of people suspected of having committed crimes," the deputy said. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 23 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0124, via World News Connection)

Russian Federation: Media

By Maria Metcalf

Gusinsky arrested again

If a soap opera screenplay writer were looking for material, it would help to pay particular attention to the dramatic and surreal developments of the Gusinsky

Gazprom/Media-MOST criminal investigation and lawsuit. In the past month and a half alone, enough has transpired to inspire at least a season's worth of episodes for any network interested in boosting its ratings.

On 12 December, Gusinsky was arrested at his villa in Spain after the Kremlin reopened fraud allegations against him. The media oligarch was arrested first in June of last year on different charges, accused of bribing Russkoye Video Company's general director, Dmitry Roshdestvensky, to allow his MOST to acquire 70% of the television company's shares for only \$5,000. Shortly thereafter, the charges mysteriously were dropped following a secret agreement in which Gusinsky would sell his media empire to the state-dominated gas monopoly Gazprom, in return for Gazprom securing his debts. Gusinsky backed off his agreement with Gazprom and fled to Spain. Prosecutors have now launched a new criminal case against him, charging fraud. Moscow has been pressing Spain aggressively in efforts to extradite him. The Spanish government handed over Moscow's request for extradition to a court on 19 January. The fact that the Gusinsky-controlled NTV was highly critical of President Putin's actions probably accounts for the harshness of Moscow's pursuit.

Full court press

Anton Titov, the chief financial officer of Media-MOST, was detained in connection with Gusinsky's case (which prevented him from meeting with possible Western investors in London). Media-MOST group's first deputy chief, Andrei Tsimailo, fled to London and is seeking medical attention after being questioned in connection with Media-MOST fraud allegations. On 25 January, the first deputy chairman of the Media-MOST board, Igor Malashenko, was summoned by the prosecutor general. The same day, NTV anchorwoman Tatyana Mitkova also was called in for questioning. Already, there have been several raids on the Media-MOST headquarters and company offices. Law enforcement sources told INTERFAX that there would be more searches and arrests in the Gusinsky case involving Media-MOST.

The re-opening of the Gusinsky case in Russia is an appropriate accompaniment to a long series of events that continually have clouded the concept of press freedoms in Russia. On 16 December, Oleg Luriye, a reporter for the independent newspaper Novaya gazeta, had his face slashed by four men with straight razors in front of his home. The attackers did not rob him, and there was no other apparent reason for the attack other than to serve as a warning for articles Luriye had written about corruption among government officials, especially in the Kremlin. (WASHINGTON POST, 28 Dec 00; via www.cdi.org/russia) Luriye said that the officers who came to investigate the crime left the hat of one of his attackers lying in the snow and performed none of the routine investigative procedures such as dusting the garage door handle for fingerprints. Luriye is only one among many reporters who has been attacked and/or killed for no apparent reason other than that he had worked on journalistic cases that in some way or another "embarrassed" the government. According to the Glasnost Foundation, last year 35 cases of overt censorship were recorded, as were 73 attacks on journalists, while 26 criminal cases were instituted against journalists.

There is no indication that the situation will improve in the year 2001.

Putin officially backs foreign investor for NTV

Despite reports last week that on 25 January a court seized the 19-percent share in NTV that had been owned by Media-MOST, and that Gazprom-Media gained a controlling stake in the NTV television company, President Vladimir Putin has said that "he welcomes CNN founder Ted Turner's proposal to invest in Russian media and that he would like NTV to remain as a non-government channel free to criticize the Kremlin." (MOSCOW TIMES, 29 Jan 2001; via www.themoscowtimes.com) Only a few days ago, Gazprom-Media chief Alfred Kokh announced that he would reshuffle the company's board of directors but that President Putin, as the "guarantor of the constitution and the securer of the

unconditional observation of freedom of speech," "did not want the journalists or the management touched." Only a few days ago, Alexei Volin, an aide to the prime minister, said, "The state has no right to create special conditions for any separate market player...An agreement with Turner's proposals would be an example of state protectionism and a violation of the principles of free competition." (MOSCOW TIMES, 22 Jan 2001; via www.themoscowtimes.com) So why this change in position in the past few days? Simply, it is a change in Putin's public relations strategy which has always included smoke and mirrors... now the Kremlin has merely placed these illusory devices in different positions. Notice that Putin still has not agreed to Ted Turner's request for confirmation that the Kremlin will leave NTV alone once it is debt free. Neither has the transaction taken place yet whereby Turner (along with George Soros and other Western investors) would gain a 25-percent stake in NTV, allowing Gazprom-Media to lose its recently acquired controlling stake and therefore protecting NTV's independence.

All evidence points to the probability that the government, in the end, will spoil the renewed optimism that is sparked by Putin's "shared conviction with Turner that media must be honest and balanced in helping to create a civil society." The secret is in the omissions from Putin's statements and their clash with his actions. One hopes that this skepticism may prove incorrect. Time will show.

Ironic official holidays in Russia

The "good news" is that there is a "Day of the Press" in Russia, which was celebrated on 7 January by President Vladimir Putin addressing 32 top media editors and reporters and assuring them that "reports that freedom of the press in Russia is dead have been quite exaggerated." According to The Guardian newspaper, Putin went on to say, "Many of you in different ways interpret what is happening in the country, and our foreign policy initiatives and steps... You do this sometimes, even quite often, in a very sharp and critical way... The state swallows this and, even more, I must tell you that this is useful for government at

any level as it makes us react to the mistakes the state sometimes makes." (REUTERS, 13 Jan 01; via www.cdi.org/russia). But, he added, "Its unshakeability [sic] depends not only on correct laws but on the demands the journalist places on himself, on his responsibility to his country and to society.... With each article and word, you have again and again to show your right to the trust of the people. Indeed, authority and trust are not given at once and forever." The bad news is that Putin concluded by noting that while some journalists died in the course of their work, they are, after all, in one of the most dangerous professions.

In this same month, Moscow commemorated another official holiday: "Prosecutor's Day." Putin spoke on this occasion, addressing almost 4,000 prosecutors. He called their "vast functions and strong supervisory powers," which have remained unchanged since the Soviet era, a "compensation" for the lack of law and order in Russia. (WASHINGTON POST, 20 Jan 01; via www.cdi.org/russia)

While the functions of the office have remained unchanged, the powers have decreased lately. According to Boris Uvarov, a veteran top investigator forced into retirement last year, "there was more political interference in investigations today than there had been during the Soviet period." (Jamestown Foundation FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW, 19 Jan 01) A most recent example of political interference in the prosecutor's investigations came when the prosecutor general office chose to close the Mabetex case, which implicated Pavel Borodin (Putin's former boss and current Russia-Belarus union state secretary at the president's recommendation) for allegedly accepting a large sum in kickbacks as a government official from the Swiss engineering construction firm in exchange for lucrative contracts to refurbish Russian government buildings. Borodin was arrested on 20 January in the United States and is facing extradition to Switzerland where he can be tried by the Swiss courts. The contradiction between the government's protection of Borodin when accused of accepting

kickbacks and the government's relentless pursuit of Gusinsky and all aspects of his media empire when he was accused initially of giving kickbacks, testifies to the government's level of commitment to universal application of the rule, or "dictatorship of law."

Which official holiday and corresponding speech is more alarming? Should one look to the holiday that pays only lip service to the existence of a free press in Russia, yet has been preceded by countless violations of press freedom? Or should one view the cynical statement to the effect that journalism comes with inherent dangers? Or should one note the irony of the fact that all of this coincided with the month in which Gazprom-Media sued for a controlling stake in the only independent television station in Russia, and when it is still entirely unclear whether foreign investors will be allowed to prevent this eventuality? Or should one focus on the startling fact that while the president has stated repeatedly that he will restore the "dictatorship of the law," it seems that what he might really mean is that he will use the law and the prosecutor's office to politicize the law when he deems it in the country's "security interests," and will disregard the law when it jeopardizes one of his old friends and a member of the political elite?

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Sarah Miller

Kaliningrad or Koenigsberg?

Will German economic interests in Kaliningrad result in the enclave assuming its ancient Prussian character or is Russia simply seeking improved economic relations with Germany across the board? The usually overlooked Russian oblast' Kaliningrad appeared in the headlines this month, becoming the subject of foreign press rumors about its economic fate. (ITAR-TASS, 2157 GMT, 22 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0122, via World News Connection) Situated between

Poland and Lithuania, the enclave is in dire straits economically, despite providing a conduit for much of Russia's European imports, including narcotics. An intriguing report emerged in the 21 January London Sunday Times, alleging a "secret" Russian-German agreement that would give German entrepreneurs what the paper termed "economic privileges" in exchange for writing off some of Russia's debts. (LONDON TIMES, 21 Jan 01; via lexis-nexis)

While Russia certainly could benefit from a German cancellation of its \$20 billion debt, both the German and Russian governments are denying the existence of such an agreement. (INTERFAX, 1545 GMT, 6 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-0106, via World News Connection) The German embassy in Moscow stated that the report had been "plucked completely out of thin air." (ITAR-TASS, 2157 GMT, 22 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0122, via World News Connection), while Vladimir Yegorov, governor of Kaliningrad, denied that he had received orders from Moscow to grant most favored nation status to German entrepreneurs. (ITAR-TASS, 2022 GMT, 22 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0122, via World News Connection)

However, it is true that Russian-German relations are improving at both the personal and governmental levels. German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's "personal" Moscow visit to share Orthodox Christmas with German-speaking Russian President Vladimir Putin and his family not only included festivities, but also continued the Russian-German dialogue over debt issues and cooperation. In this manner, Russia's diplomacy vis-à-vis Germany is following a fairly pragmatic course towards improving relations. Even if the rumor concerning Kaliningrad does not reflect reality, it does highlight Russia's ongoing economic morass and its general attempts to harness diplomatic relations to economic rewards, whether this means selling military hardware to its former rival, as in the Chinese case, or breaking agreements with the United States over Iran in order to reap the benefits of the Iranian market. That Russia is pursuing this strategy with Germany is only logical since the strong German economy holds out potential benefits for Russia.

Kono: No more Mr. Nice

As barbs replace the positive rhetoric, tensions in Russo-Japanese relations increase over prospective summit dates, debt repayment and the territorial issue. Unfortunately, high-level meetings in Moscow have only worsened the situation.

Over the past month, Japan's usually cordial tone has turned to impatience as the Russian government continues to delay the presidential summit to be held in Irkutsk. While meant to ease tensions, the Moscow foreign ministers meeting held early in January appears to have increased them. After the Moscow meeting, Japan announced that the summit date had been set for 25-26 February. (SANKEI SHIMBUN, 18 Jan 01; FBIS-EAS-2001-0118, via World News Connection) Only days later, the Russian government denied that any such date had been set, citing Putin's already-booked schedule. (INTERFAX, 1725 GMT, 19 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0119 via World News Connection) That schedule, however, includes an Asian tour that will exclude Japan, to Tokyo's irritation.

As news of the perceived snub reached Tokyo, the Japanese government replaced its cordial veneer with acerbity. Demanding that the Kremlin keep its word and agree to a new date for the Russo-Japanese summit (late February), Foreign Minister Yohei Kono berated his Russian counterpart Igor Ivanov in a 20-minute phone call on 19 January. (AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, 1126 GMT, 19 Jan 01; via lexis-nexis) The next day, Russia proposed a yet later date (25-26 March). Over the last six months, Russia has set three dates, but has backed out each time.

From the Japanese perspective the territorial question is of great concern, but Russia's actions belie its ostensible commitment to resolving the issue. The Japanese are right to note that the Russians are dragging their feet on the matter, but as long as trade with the Japanese rises -- up 20% in 2000 -- there is

no incentive for the Russians to relinquish their control of the four Kurile islands. (ITAR-TASS, 1128 GMT, 17 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0117, via World News Connection) In a recent statement, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov all but admitted that the Russians are purposely delaying an agreement, saying that, "The conclusion of the peace treaty is being hampered by the border issue," but "the islands are our national territory." (INTERFAX, 0301 GMT, 13 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001 0113, via World News Connection)

Meanwhile, there is at least one voice in Tokyo that seems to understand the futility of Japan's current negotiating strategy: Ryutaro Hashimoto, Japan's former prime minister (who cut the 1997 deal with former Russian President Boris Yel'tsin to resolve the territorial issue once and for all). "[The Russians] were always like this in the past, I don't think they've changed," Hashimoto said in a recent interview. (SANKEI SHIMBUN, 18 Jan 01; FBIS-EAS-2001-0118, via World News Connection) While Japan might settle for the 1997 interim agreement for two of the four islands to be returned by Russia, its only real leverage is to ratchet up the economic pressure on Russia, by demanding debt repayment and hampering trade with Russia's eastern regions. Otherwise, there is little incentive for Russia to take Japan any more seriously than it has since 1997.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Richard Miller

Russia -- North, South, East and West

The past three months have witnessed a remarkable resurgence of Russian military activities and international initiatives in all directions of the compass. This resurgent activism constitutes a considerable change from a military organization that only this past summer was mired in internal dissent over restructuring, arms

industry reforms and difficulties concerning Chechnya operations, and was reeling from the 12 August Kursk submarine disaster.

Coupled with Putin's outreach initiatives on other fronts with former Soviet republics, this militarily forged, leading edge of the current Russian foreign policy sword looks strikingly similar to the doctrine and activities pursued by the Soviet Union in the 1970s. The following is but a brief summary of a few recent significant developments:

NORTH

--Despite the absence of contiguous neighbors or immediate threats to the north, Russia continues with temporary forward basing of long-range bombers in the far north for Arctic training missions. Started early in December, these flights appear to be developing into a regular pattern, both in intent as stated by the Russian Air Force and in practice. Such arctic flights to probe Western air defenses were common in the Soviet period, but why in the current world does this training need to become "regular"? Russia's answer probably lies in its perception of the biggest threat to strategic stability -- US fielding of a limited National Missile Defense (NMD) system. Caught between aging nuclear forces they cannot afford to maintain over the long-term and a potential US missile shield (the first proposed component being a radar site in Alaska), the arctic flights may constitute a "virtual" military option that the Kremlin feels it can exercise. (See The NIS Observed, 13 Dec 00, for further discussion.)

SOUTH

--Following President Putin's visit to Azerbaijan, efforts were undertaken to draft military technical cooperation documents between the two countries. The two governments already have concluded an agreement to train Azeri military personnel in Russian military academies and schools. (ITAR-TASS, 1822 GMT, 12 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0112, via World News Connection)

--Agreement has been reached on partial payment for the leasing of military testing grounds in Kazakhstan through weapons exports and training programs for Kazakh forces. (ITAR-TASS, 1035 GMT, 12 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0112, via World News Connection)

--The largest single arms contract between India and Russia has been concluded for licensed production of tactical aircraft and associated jet engines.

--Broad-ranging cooperation on a variety of military issues has been extended to Iran, including potentially large and diverse arms sales. (See The NIS Observed, 17 Jan 01, for further discussion.)

EAST

--Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev met with the Japanese Vice Defense Minister, Ken Sato, to develop bilateral cooperation programs in 2001. One initial result is a planned joint naval rescue exercise. Follow-on visits by the various Russian military service chiefs to Tokyo may lead to further collaboration this year. (ITAR-TASS, 1800 GMT, 16 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0116, via World News Connection)

--Although publicly denying any attempt to sign a defense treaty with China, nonetheless, senior defense officials from the two countries met toward the end of 2000 and several major arms deals were concluded which will result in the transfer of ships, airplanes, and other weapon systems to China. (INTERFAX, 1409 GMT, 15 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0115, via World News Connection)

WEST

--Sergeev recently also held talks with French Defense Minister Alain Richard on extending bilateral military cooperation. Sergeev hinted that Franco-Russian military relations probably would move faster than Russian-NATO engagement. (INTERFAX, 1547 GMT, 17 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0117, via World News Connection) This may include joint work on a MiG training aircraft. (INTERFAX, 1007 GMT, 17 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0117, via World News Connection) France's firm Thomson would provide the modern electronic equipment for the

cockpits and these aircraft probably would be tailored for the export markets to third-party countries. (ITAR-TASS, 1119 GMT, 17 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0117, via World News Connection) Additionally, the two countries agreed to pursue further several space and satellite programs.

--Details are yet unknown, but more Sergeev talks are to take place with German and Macedonian counterparts: Expected to be high on the agenda for these discussions are the current situation in the Balkans, future bilateral cooperation and potential Russian arms sales. (ITAR-TASS, 0642 GMT, 23 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0123, via World News Connection)

--Agreement has been reached on joint exercises with Moldova and cooperation with the two general staffs and scientific institutions. (ITAR-TASS, 1454 GMT, 16 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0116, via World News Connection)

--A 52-point military cooperation plan has been signed, further integrating all aspects of the military relationship, with Ukraine. (ITAR-TASS, 1642 GMT, 18 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0118, via World News Connection) Also discussed were three planned exercises in 2001 and the possibility of increasing the Russian Naval presence in the Black Sea by amending the previously agreed upon force levels in the Crimea. (INTERFAX, 1409 GMT, 20 Jan 01, and ITAR-TASS, 1426 GMT, 20 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0120, via World News Connection)

--Completion is planned this spring of a joint Russian-Belarus Military Doctrine, with the goal of agreeing to protect the territorial integrity of the two countries "within the framework of a single military organization." (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 23 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0123, via World News Connection)

One may ask what has been the point of this surge in military "activism" around the compass. In addition to the obvious furtherance of military-to-military relations, several common themes are emerging from these new Russian visits and initiatives around the world:

Opposition to ABM Treaty modifications intended to accommodate a US National Missile Defense (NMD) system. In virtually every discussion with foreign

representatives, both in Europe and Asia, Russian military officials repeatedly stressed their opposition to US NMD plans. They also manipulated the discussions in an attempt to sway the various countries to bring similar pressure against the United States. From the Russian perspective, the more weight and consensus they can put behind NMD opposition the better.

Heavy emphasis on Russian arms sales abroad to bolster the domestic arms industry. While 2000 saw the strongest Russian overseas arms sales performance in almost a decade, further growth in the export market is required to help pay for government debt to defense companies and generate cash to help finance the planned 43% increase in defense research and development expenditures in 2001. (ITAR-TASS, 1825 GMT, 15 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0115, via World News Connection) While some of the increase will be offset by a small decrease in Russian domestic purchases of weapons, the defense budget alone will be hard-pressed to support the research and development increase without profits from overseas sales. The long-range vision for this reshaping of the procurement program is to spend the next six to eight years focused on R&D, with procurement of new types of modern weapon systems in the 2008-2015 time frame. (INTERFAX, 1303 GMT, 16 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0116, via World News Connection) In addition to stepping up arms transfers to historic partners, Moscow has made initial probes to potential new markets and is anxiously awaiting the day when sanctions against the former Yugoslavia and Iraq are lifted so it can resume official transfer to these countries as well.

Opposition to NATO eastward expansion -- re-exert influence/domination of portions of the 'Near Abroad.' Sergeev bluntly stated Russia's position on this topic in the negotiations with Ukrainian officials: "Russia's position on NATO expansion east is well-known and has not undergone any changes: Russia categorically objects to NATO expansion east, taking into account that there are no other military alliances in Europe The danger emanates from the south, while NATO is moving eastwards -- this is what confuses and worries Russia."

(INTERFAX, 1640 GMT, 18 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0118, via World News Connection) Indeed, the manner and method of the actual and proposed negotiations with Ukraine and Belarus appear as thinly veiled attempts by Moscow to exert greater control over these countries than afforded normally by purely military cooperation agreements.

Military visits are the leading edge of foreign policy. Defense Minister Sergeev and other senior Russian officials have been actively traveling and receiving delegations in a variety of military visits. These visits and meetings appear to be the cementing foundation to follow-on negotiations and cooperation. In fact, in both the French and Iranian talks, it was indicated that they constituted a prelude to upcoming summit visits later this year.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Tammy Lynch

UKRAINE

The ties that bind

The events of the past two weeks have made one fact abundantly clear: It may be a decade since the demise of the Soviet Union, but Moscow's elites still understand how to keep control of what they consider their "zone of influence." As the Ukrainian government has sunk into turmoil, Russia's leaders, from both the public and private sectors, have increased the pressure for concessions from their "little Russian" neighbor. From military to economic interests, to language and media, to religion, varied Russian interests have made their voices heard loudly and clearly. In at least two spheres -- the military and religion -- this pressure has the clear potential to impede significantly Ukraine's long-term ability to maintain a stable, cohesive state.

Since its independence, Ukraine steadfastly has refused all requests for "joint military control" of the Black Sea area. In fact, the country's insistence on separate, independent bases in Sevastopol was one of the major points of contention between Russia and Ukraine during negotiations of the Black Sea Fleet agreements. Ukraine also steadfastly has refused to provide Russia with any advance notice of foreign troop exercises in the Black Sea, providing an important buffer between NATO and Russia. These two achievements, however, now appear to be in doubt.

On 20 January, Russia and Ukraine ended a meeting between their defense ministers by announcing "a plan for military cooperation" in 2001. Although that "plan" actually seemed to amount to a series of "understandings," it nevertheless signaled a softening of Ukraine's position. According to Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksandr Kuzmuk, the two sides established a "cooperation list" containing 52 items, including the creation of a joint observation post in Sevastopol. In addition, Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev noted that Ukraine had agreed to take part in an upcoming Sea Breeze naval exercise -- something the country had always refused to do -- and that Russia "from the start" would be involved "in planning all multinational exercises taking place on Ukraine's territory." (INTERFAX, 1409 GMT, 20 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0120, and ITAR-TASS, 1642 GMT, 18 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0118, via World News Connection) This last item no doubt was greeted with concern in NATO headquarters, as planning for upcoming Partnership for Peace exercises continues. How great the concern should be will depend on the level of implementation of these agreements. But clearly, following difficult dealings with the European Union, Council of Europe, and international lending organizations, Ukraine has felt it necessary to return to closer military ties with its longtime -- albeit not chosen -- partner.

Meanwhile, as Defense Minister Sergeev was dealing with the military issue, Russian Orthodox Patriarch Aleksey II was doing his best to convince Pope John

Paul II to reverse his decision to visit Ukraine. By doing so, he no doubt hoped to blunt the growing Catholic presence in the country. The patriarch has often stated his objection to attempts by Ukrainian (Greek and Roman) Catholics to establish parishes in previously state-mandated all-Orthodox areas. "If they consider Orthodoxy to be just as beneficial and capable of salvation as Catholicism," he recently asked, "then what is the sense of this constant effort to draw people into their faith?" (REUTERS, 15 Jan 01; via America Online) The Vatican, which is attempting to minister to a religion that was outlawed during Soviet times, appears to have ignored his statements. In fact, while in Ukraine, the pope may meet with representatives from the two Ukrainian Orthodox Church branches that split from Moscow's control following Ukraine's independence.

That suggestion has been met with anger by the leader of the Kyiv branch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Volodymyr. He explained his feelings in a letter to the pope. "If, during your visit," he wrote, "a meeting takes place between Your Holiness and any of the dissident leaders [refusing to swear allegiance to the Moscow Patriarchate]... it would mean that the Roman Catholic Church ignores the principles for canonical relations between churches and grossly interferes in our internal affairs, using its influence to support the dissenters. This may lead to unfavorable consequences in relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox." (INTERFAX, 22 Jan 01; via lexis-nexis)

Moscow Patriarch Aleksey put it more bluntly. "If during your visit there is a meeting between Your Holiness and any one of the schismatic leaders... it would mean the practical end of relations between our churches," he said in a statement. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 23 Jan 01)

Unfortunately, the continuing assault on the newly reborn Catholic and independent Ukrainian Orthodox faiths makes for no less potential damage to long-term Ukrainian state viability than the possibility that the country's military

will undertake joint operations with Russia. Ukraine's ability to build a separate religious identity is key to it building a separate national identity, which is, in turn, key to it building a stable independent state. Perhaps knowing this, the pope has refused to yield to the patriarch's statements, instead suggesting, "I have great hopes for my trips to Syria and Ukraine. It's my desire that they will contribute to reconciliation and peace among Christians." Moreover, "We shouldn't minimize the differences between us," he noted. "The struggle is not to ignore them, but to overcome them." (AP WORLDSTREAM, 25 Jan 01; via lexis-nexis) The leader of the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine was not so conciliatory, however. "Suggesting that a man of the Holy Father's age and health should 'postpone' such a trip is sheer cynicism and unworthy of Christian writing," said Father Serge Keleher.

And Russian Orthodox leaders in Moscow have continued to attack. "The letter [to the pope] was just aimed at making clear our position," a spokesperson for Patriarch Aleksey suggested. "But we don't guarantee that people won't protest and that there won't be demonstrations and banner-waving." (REUTERS, 23 Jan 01; via America Online)

Clearly, the pope's visit, scheduled for 23-25 June, is set to release a storm of religious feeling in Ukraine. On one hand, Ukraine's Catholics -- and even independent Orthodox Christians -- look forward to the legitimacy a visit by the pope will give their beliefs, and their new state. On the other, the Moscow patriarchate continues to cling desperately to dreams of one reunited Russian Orthodox community. Unfortunately, as nationalist fervor rises in Western Ukraine, the government grows closer to Russia and discontent over the work of the government spreads through Central Ukraine, the pope has landed squarely in the center of a deep debate about the future of the country. It appears the only thing certain about Pope John Paul II's upcoming visit to Ukraine is that he will enter a country in turmoil and transition. Perhaps his visit will truly add to a

feeling of reconciliation in the country. While that seems unlikely, who knows? Miracles have been known to happen.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Miriam Lansky

CHECHNYA

Erratum: President Aslan Maskhadov was elected for a five-year term in January 1997, which expires on 27 January 2002. In the previous issue of *The NIS Observed*, this was reported erroneously as an extension of his term.

KGB: greater than the sum of its parts?

On 22 January, Putin transferred command for operations in Chechnya from the armed forces to the FSB. The same decree created a new body, the Operational Headquarters for the Command and Control of Counterterrorist Operations on the Territory of the Russian Federation's North Caucasus Region. This new bureaucracy brings together not just the agencies that succeeded the KGB (such as FAPSI, FSB, Border Guards) but also the MVD and the justice ministry that were separate entities for most of Soviet history. This move follows months of rumors and speculation about a possible reconstitution of the successor "power ministries" into a single "superpower" ministry. For the time being this ominous trend is confined geographically to the North Caucasus region, but there is no telling where the tendency toward such a merger will end.

The old/new structure brings together the following under the direction of the FSB:

The Russian Federation president's plenipotentiary representative in the Southern Federal District; the Russian Federation minister of internal affairs; the Russian Federation minister for affairs of civil defense, emergency situations and elimination of natural disasters; the Russian Federation minister of justice; the

general director of the Russian Federation president's Federal Government Communications and Information Agency; the director of the Russian Federation Federal Border Guard Service; the chief of the Russian Federation Armed Forces General Staff/Russian Federation first deputy minister of defense; the first deputy director of the Russian Federation Federal Security Service; the director of the Russian Federation Federal Railway Troops Service/commander of the Russian Federation Railway Troops; and the chief of the Russian Federation Armed Forces General Staff Main Intelligence Directorate/deputy chief of the Russian Federation Armed Forces General Staff. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 23 Jan 01, BBC Monitoring, via Turkistan Newsletter)

Maskhadov: 'All wars end in negotiations'

The general rule holds for the particular, as Maskhadov commented in a recent interview, "This war will also end in negotiations with Maskhadov." He reiterated the consistent Chechen position that talks can begin immediately without preconditions. "The Chechen side is ready to a maximal compromise with the Russian side. I also assert that the only indisputable issue is the safety guarantee to my people," he said. Maskhadov has appointed a special representative, Education Minister Kurzhakhmet Irekhanov, to conduct talks with Russian officials. (www.grani.ru, 29 Jan 01) In distributing the text of the interview, an independent Chechen website (www.ichkeria.org) commented that all Russian television stations have failed to broadcast the video of the interview due to "censorship in the Russian media."

Tougher line at State gets Ivanov's attention

In his 24 January briefing, State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher spoke far more bluntly about the war in Chechnya than under the previous administration. He characterized the present situation as a "stalemate," called for negotiations and a political settlement, and exhibited skepticism as to whether recent announcements represent a real changes in policy.

"[W]e have seen announcements of troop withdrawals from Chechnya before. But, frankly, Russia's presence in Chechnya remains massive. Fighting has continued and there are continuing and credible reports of humanitarian abuses against the civilian population by Russian troops. Thus, it remains to be seen whether this announcement represents a change in Russian strategy that could resolve the stalemate in Chechnya," he said. (www.state.gov)

The Russian foreign minister, Igor Ivanov, reacted swiftly, expressing hopes for direct talks with the new US administration to clarify Russia's position on Chechnya. (LONDON TIMES, 26 Jan 01) Should it materialize, a dialogue of that nature would give the Bush administration an opportunity to press for a political resolution to the conflict.

Does PACE believe in the tooth fairy?

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) restored Russia's voting privileges last week. When those voting rights were suspended in April 2000, the group called on Russia to make "substantial, accelerating and demonstrable progress" towards eradicating human rights abuses and called for a cease-fire in Chechnya. The assembly also directed member nations to bring war crimes charges against Russia in the European Court for Human Rights. (REUTERS, 6 Apr 00; via lexis-nexis) It's quite clear that Russian policy falls substantially below that standard. Instead of holding Russia to the requirements the assembly itself had set, the parliamentarians seemed satisfied with far less.

In the weeks preceding the PACE vote, Putin had laid out a misleading and manipulative program on Chechnya that gave the appearance of a less bellicose policy that is, in fact, little different from the murder and plunder that preceded it. Putin created the appearance of setting up a civilian Chechen-run administration by upgrading Akhmed Kadyrov's title to acting president, appointing Stanislav Alyasov as prime minister, and announcing new funding for a reconstruction program to be administered by these authorities. (AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE,

25 Jan 01; via lexis-nexis) Kadyrov remains an appointee of Putin within a Russian bureaucracy in which he is subordinate to Russian General Viktor Kazantsev. Neither can Kadyrov be regarded as representative of Chechnya nor his government as a form of local administration -- a colonial administration employing ethnic cadres should not be confused with regional autonomy. The reconstruction program leaves little room for expecting improvement since such projects have been elaborated repeatedly in the past but, partly due to disorganization and corruption, have never been implemented.

As for the military withdrawal, it became apparent immediately that the army is no hurry to leave. (www.polit.ru, 31 Jan 01) If it did leave there is no reason to suppose that the FSB would behave better in its absence. In fact, with journalists and human rights workers barred from the republic, and the military withdrawn, the FSB could act with even greater impunity. The repeated instances of cooperation between the FSB and known hostage takers suggest that the FSB may simply co-rule and divide the spoils with the ugliest elements of Chechen society. Another possibility is a repeat of the worst abuses of Stalin's reign. Pavel Felgenhauer, a very well-informed and highly regarded analyst, has drawn parallels between the Putin's "new" approach of garrisoning troops under FSB command in Chechen villages and similar arrangements employed by Stalin and Beria. He also warned of the possibility that rather than seek a political solution, Russian authorities may copy "Stalin's bloody endgame" -- which was genocidal and went unpunished. (MOSCOW TIMES, 25 Jan 01)

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Lt. Col. James DeTemple

Central Asian leaders review regional security

The Central Asian presidents met in Kazakhstan's commercial hub, Almaty, on 5 January to discuss regional security and cooperation. Once again, stated

concerns over the Taliban have moved to the forefront of relations between the Central Asian states and other countries in the region. The Central Asians are beset by such security concerns as a repetition of Taliban-inspired incursions into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan as well as the situation along the Tajik-Afghan border.

The Central Asian summit, chaired by Tajikistan, included Presidents Nursultan Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan, Askar Akaev of Kyrgyzstan, Imomali Rakhmanov of Tajikistan and Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan, as well as Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Trubnikov (former head of the Foreign Intelligence Service). Turkmenistan, which has established a dialogue with Afghanistan's ruling Taliban regime, did not send any representatives. (JANE'S DEFENCE WEEKLY, 17 Jan 01) At the start, Uzbek President Karimov stated, "stability in one state today means stability in all other members in the community," and called on the Central Asian states to make a concerted effort to defend themselves against regional threats, especially Afghanistan-based Islamic insurgencies. (INTERFAX, 1625 GMT, 5 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0105, via World News Connection)

Indeed, the Central Asian states are anticipating a new summer offensive by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in 2001. "We do not have the right to allow the scenario of bandit formations invading Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 1999-2000 to repeat itself in 2001," Karimov said. (INTERFAX, 1625 GMT, 5 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0105, via World News Connection) The IMU raided Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and staged several incursions into a remote mountainous region bordering southern Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan from bases in Afghanistan and Tajikistan in August 2000. (See *The NIS Observed*, 27 Sep 00.) Another round of IMU attacks coupled with other non-traditional security threats such as drug trafficking and arms smuggling may further destabilize Central Asia.

Speaking after the summit, President Rakhmanov stressed that, despite harsh winter conditions facing the estimated 10,000 Afghans on the Tajik-Afghan

border, "not a single refugee from Afghan territory will be allowed into Tajik territory." (BBC NEWS, 6 Jan 01) "There are several hundred men armed to the teeth," Rakhmanov claimed, indicating that "extremists and terrorists" have banded together with Afghan refugees. (INTERFAX, 1339 GMT, 5 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0105, via World News Connection) Tajikistan, after a five-year civil war and sustained incursions from other Central Asian states, lacks the resources to deal with the growing refugee crisis.

Tajikistan also opposes Pakistan joining the Shanghai-5, because of Islamabad's unyielding political and military support for the Taliban government in Afghanistan. The Shanghai-5 was created in 1996 to discuss border security and consists of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. The regional forum's security agenda was expanded at the Bishkek summit in 1999 to include measures against international terrorism, drug trafficking and arms smuggling. (JANE'S DEFENCE WEEKLY, 3 Jan 01) In contrast, Kazakhstan's president recommended serious consideration of Pakistan's application for membership in the forum. (INTERFAX, 1632 GMT, 5 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0105, via World News Connection) Currently only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates recognize the Taliban government. The UN Security Council imposed new sanctions, including an arms embargo, against the Taliban on 19 December.

Pakistan wants to join the Shanghai-5 because of its geographic proximity to Central Asia and its interest in Central Asia's vast energy resources. Pakistan also seeks to work more closely with Russia, a strategic partner of rival India. Islamabad's conciliatory tone may indicate its readiness to review its Afghanistan policy. The "Afghanistan problem" and Pakistan's request for membership in the Shanghai-5 are likely to be at the top of the security agenda at the next Central Asian summit in Tashkent in April or May 2001.

Newly Independent States: Baltic States

By Kate Martin

LATVIA

CE gives thumbs up for treatment of minorities...

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) gave the Latvian government fairly high marks for its treatment of ethnic minorities -- despite yet another push by Russia for condemnation of the Baltic state's efforts -- and voted to end its monitoring of Latvia during its meeting in Strasbourg on 23 January. While noting the continued slow pace of naturalization, representatives from Great Britain, the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Turkey in general noted Latvia's achievements with regard to minorities. The final PACE report praised the lifting of naturalization "windows," the passage of a program for the integration of minorities, and the adoption of the state language law. The assembly encouraged noncitizens to learn the Latvian language and avail themselves of every opportunity to acquire citizenship in order to become involved in the country's political, economic, social and cultural life. (BNS, 1155 GMT, 23 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0123, via World News Connection)

At the Strasbourg meeting, President Vaira Vike-Freiberga promised the assembly that Latvia would ratify the convention on the protection of national minorities, although no concrete date had been set. (BNS, 1319 GMT, 23 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0123, via World News Connection)

Indeed, only Russia seemed unsatisfied with Latvia's treatments of persons living in the country. In an interesting twist, the assembly looked at Latvia for a report of how Russia is treating persons living in its country. Latvian Foreign Minister Indulis Berzins, who serves as chairman of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, was tasked with reporting on the introduction of human rights, law and democracy in Chechnya as PACE members discussed restoring the Russian delegation's voting rights in the assembly. (BNS, 1524 GMT, 22 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0122, via World News Connection) Berzins told reporters he saw

some progress -- marked by the involvement of some Chechens in militia and local administration (without delving too deeply into the nature of their collaboration) -- although investigations and legal proceedings were noticeably slow.

...thumbs down for corruption control efforts

While Latvia's treatment of minorities earned it praise, recently released research by the Council of Europe (CE) indicates that the country has made insufficient efforts to combat money laundering. The report pointed to a growing crime rate in Latvia, especially in terms of drug-related and economic crimes, and panned investigative procedures for being too bureaucratic. (BNS, 1836 GMT, 22 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0123, via World News Connection)

LITHUANIA

Conflict over oil supplies heats up

Lithuanian efforts to control the country's crude oil supply have been less than successful for years, in large part due to a refusal by the Russian supplier LUKoil to reach agreement, or honor contracts, concerning provisions. Now it appears that the inclusion of the US-based Williams Company -- a longtime irritant to Russian oil interests that had sought control of Lithuania's oil industry -- may provide the spark that ignites the volatile relationship between supplier and refinery.

Discussions between Williams International, which operates the oil refinery at Mazeikiai, and LUKoil to maintain an even flow have continued for over a year, with no agreement in sight. So, at the behest of John Bumgarner, president of Williams International, Lithuanian Economics Minister Eugenijus Maldeikis recently traveled to Moscow to discuss a long-term oil supply deal between LUKoil and Mazeikiai Oil. The minister had no success. "[LUKoil representatives] see no possibilities for the time being," Maldeikis reported upon his return to Vilnius. (BNS, 1337 GMT, 16 JAN 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0116, via

World News Connection) Moreover, in subsequent discussions between LUKoil-Baltija CEO Ivan Paleychik and Arturas Paulaskas, chairman of the Lithuanian parliament, Paleychik warned that Russia -- reportedly unhappy about LUKoil's inferior role in the negotiations -- may cut down oil supplies to Lithuania. This is in line with the tenor of the negotiations ever since Lithuania first discussed selling an interest in the oil industry. However, the response from Mazeikiai to this latest round of threats was a volley of counterthreats: According to a company statement, Mazeikiai Oil not only will stop supplying petroleum products to LUKoil-subsiaries, but also will demand that the subsidiaries be deprived of all licenses for supplying petroleum products from any other supplier to Lithuania. (INTERFAX, 1717 GMT, 19 Jan 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0121, via World News Connection)

Can, and should, Mazeikiai make good on those threats? Perhaps. LUKoil representatives have played fast and loose with earlier agreements to supply crude oil on a regular basis, causing numerous shutdowns of the refinery and affecting Lithuania's economy and comfort levels. And, since the government retains a vested interest in the oil concern, further involvement in the negotiations would not be ill-considered. However, the government of Rolandas Paksas has indicated that the state may review its agreement with Williams, so the American company is not assured of Lithuania's unreserved support. (Moreover, Maldeikis' Moscow trip helped lead to the minister's forced resignation.)

At the moment, no agreements have been reached with other suppliers, although the courtship phase has begun with a region that is coming into its own in terms of controlling petroleum supplies: Central Asia. According to Ikram Adyrbekov, the ambassador to Vilnius, Kazakhstan plans to increase the flow of cargo through the Lithuanian port Klaipeda fourfold this year. Moreover, the ambassador said, with a recent increase in petroleum production, Kazakhstan is looking for the best deal to export petroleum to the West, and Lithuania is considered to be a favorable partner for this endeavor. (BNS, 0715 GMT, 17 Jan

01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0-117, via World News Connection) Of course, there remains a large hurdle to such plans: getting the oil from Kazakhstan to Lithuania.

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