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PRESIDENCY

Yel'tsin illness sparks constitutional debate

As the Kremlin announcements of Yel'tsin's current health woes evolved from the flu to pneumonia, the State Duma debated the procedure for declaring the President incapacitated. Initiated by the Communist faction in the Duma, a resolution on removing the ailing president was stymied by the Duma's legal department. At issue is the vague wording of Article 92 of the Constitution, which describes the replacement of the president due to incapacitation. The Constitution does not stipulate who should determine the capability of the President to perform his duties. The Duma's resolution to remove the ailing President was evidently viewed as an attempt to amend the Constitution. The head of the Federation Council's Committee of Constitutional Legislation and Legal Issues, Vladimir Platonov, said on January 16th that a law defining the constitutional amendment process must be written before such a resolution could be considered.

While the current controversy over the president's ability to govern may soon be resolved by Yel'tsin's return to the Kremlin, the constitutional debate it has sparked is likely to haunt the executive branch. The Russian Constitution, written after the dissolution of the Supreme Soviet in 1993, highlights the role of presidential power and seems specifically designed for the current leadership. While in the past the Federation Council may have been more inclined to negotiate with the Kremlin, recent elections may embolden the regional leaders
to join with the Duma in calls for changes to the constitutional balance of branches. Once again, Yel'tsin's initiatives upon his return to work may be crucial in determining the relations between executive and legislative branches of government. Expect personnel changes.

SECURITY COUNCIL
Romancing the Cossacks

The idea of creating separate Cossack units is once again on the agenda. With the withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya and the uncertainty of upcoming elections, Cossack leaders are demanding guarantees for Russians residing in the north of the republic. Deputy Secretary of the Security Council Boris Berezovsky recently announced support for the idea of arming separate Cossack units. His comments were soon contradicted by Secretary of the Security Council Ivan Rybkin, who opposed arming Cossack units, suggesting instead that they could be integrated into the Armed Forces. Interior Minister Anatoli Kulikov also opposed the arming of Cossack units, and instead stated that if the interests of ethnic Russians living in Chechnya were not protected following the troop withdrawal, Russia could again send in troops.

Although the participants in the Security Council debate seem unaware, there is already a presidential department tasked with coordinating Cossack affairs. The Cossack Troops Main Department (CTMD) under the president was created in January 1996 in accordance with a presidential decree. Headed by Anatoli Semenov, the CTMD recently released its first news bulletin, in which it detailed its work "on the transformation of Cossack troops into military structures entitled to a state service." (TASS, 8 January 1997) Various departments in the presidential administration, the Defense Ministry, the Interior Ministry, the Federal Border Guards Service, and the Nationalities Ministry are all involved in the work of the CTMD.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations
EAST AND CENTRAL EUROPE

Anti-NATO stance taken by Rodinov, Yel'tsin, but dismissed by Primakov

Russian Defense Minster Igor Rodionov blasted NATO's plans to expand eastward after meeting with defense ministers from the 16 NATO countries on 18 December, international agencies reported. Rodionov dismissed alliance pledges not to deploy nuclear weapons in new member states, saying such promises could be revoked at any time. He renewed threats to take unspecified "countermeasures" if the alliance expands and said expansion would threaten START II. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 244, 19 Dec 96). Addressing a Moscow conference on CIS military cooperation on 25 December, Russian Defense Minster Igor Rodionov said that Washington's efforts to "make its world leadership complete" by relying on an expanded NATO may become a "military threat" to Russia and other CIS states, Russian and Western agencies reported. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 246, 30 Dec 1996).

After meeting with Yel'tsin on 4 January, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl admitted that "some differences" divide Bonn and Moscow on NATO enlargement, but he expressed the hope that a mutually acceptable compromise solution would be found this year. Yel'tsin's spokesman, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, later said that the Russian president had laid out Russian objections to enlargement "fairly toughly." (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 3, 6 Jan 97) Two days later Yel'tsin directed Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov to devise a flexible "action plan" of various measures which Russia might take if the alliance accepts new Eastern European members. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 4, 7 Jan 97)

But German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel on 8 January interpreted the latest Russian denunciations of the alliance's expansion plans as bargaining ploys, saying "Russia knows that it cannot prevent NATO expansion and wants to obtain a good price for it." (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 5, 8 Jan 97)
At a meeting of the Russian government the next day, Primakov appeared to justify Kinkel's assessment. Primakov cited the December 1996 NATO statement that the alliance has no intention of deploying nuclear weapons in new East European members as evidence that firm Russian opposition to NATO expansion was delivering results. He described the pledge as "insufficient," however, adding that Russia would use NATO's approach to planned talks on revising the 1990 Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty to evaluate whether the alliance was serious about negotiating a substantive Russia-NATO charter. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 6, 9 Jan 97)

**But does Russia want Belarus or the Baltics in exchange?**

Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov told a meeting of the Russian government on 9 January that Moscow "should not be afraid to use economic sanctions" to defend the human rights of Russians living in the Baltic states, Russian and Western agencies reported. In order to pressure Estonia into halting what he claimed are discriminatory policies toward its Russian minority, for example, he said that Moscow will refuse to sign a border treaty with Tallinn until the issue was resolved. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 7, 10 Jan 97).

Belarusian President Lukashenka hailed Yel'tsin's move [to integrate Belarus into the Russia], as did Russian communist politicians. Lukashenka said accelerated integration "is our baby, mine and the Russian president's." CIS Affairs Minister Aman Tuleev, the only opposition representative in Yel'tsin's cabinet, called Yel'tsin's move "the only real step to counter NATO" yet taken by Moscow. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 9, 14 Jan 97).

**Who are Russia's enemies? What are her interests?**

Addressing a Moscow conference on CIS military cooperation on 25 December, Russian Defense Minster Igor Rodionov said that Washington's efforts to "make its world leadership complete" by relying on an expanded NATO may become a
"military threat" to Russia and other CIS states, Russian and Western agencies reported. Rodionov added that Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Japan, China, and other unnamed Asian countries also pose potential military threats. He urged the formation of joint CIS military forces and the bolstering of Russian strategic nuclear forces in response. The Russian Foreign Ministry quickly moved to downplay Rodionov's remarks, labeling his list of potential adversaries "purely hypothetical." (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 246, 30 Dec 1996).

In an interview with ITAR-TASS on 8 January marking his first year as foreign minister, Yevgeni Primakov said Moscow aims for "equal partnership" with its partners around the globe, and he emphasized that he wanted to steer a middle course between the extremes of Soviet-style anti-Westernism and what he termed the romantic pro-Western approach of his predecessor, Andrei Kozyrev. Using a favorite theme, he said the emerging multipolar world order gave Russian diplomacy room for maneuver, and he lauded Russian successes during 1996 in building ties with China and pushing forward with CIS integration. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 6, 9 Jan 97).

**Comment**

There seems to be a substantial split between the defense and foreign ministries on who Russia's enemies are. While ideologues such as Rodionov may instinctively object to the expansion of NATO, the (more dangerous) pragmatists such as Primakov seem to be playing the NATO expansion game for other prizes, such as:

- increased arms trading to China, and others
- sanction of Russian involvement in Iran's nuclear industry
- a larger number of troops Russia would like to place near the Baltics.

Should the West instead accept integration of Belarus as a chit in negotiations, the Russians would end up agreeing to expansion in exchange for the 'right' to carry a state that is in any case collapsing into its arms. Other concessions would
simply allow Russia to continue to use what Primakov himself has admitted is nothing more than a bargaining chip, one that expands with every Western capitulation.

FAR EAST
Li Peng in Moscow: another chit in NATO negotiations?
China's Li Peng met President Yel'tsin and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin during his 26-28 December official visit. The two countries issued a joint communiqué hailing the "huge potential" of bilateral cooperation and pledging to build an "equal and reliable partnership." Several bilateral agreements were also signed, covering nuclear-power-plant construction, central-bank cooperation, and finalizing the sale of SU-27 fighters and related production technology to China. Segodnya on 28 December noted that warming Russian-Chinese ties were intended as Moscow's "answer to the United States" in response to such Western policies as NATO enlargement. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 246, 30 Dec 1996).

SOUTH WEST AND SOUTH ASIA
Russia in Iran's nuclear industry?
Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov met with his Iranian counterpart, Ali Akbar Velayati, and Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani during his two-day visit to Tehran on 22-23 December, international agencies reported. After signing a memorandum of understanding on nuclear export control with Velayati, Primakov said the two countries adhere to "internationally accepted norms," and that "no one can condemn" their cooperation in this area, which includes plans to finish an incomplete nuclear power station at Bushehr in southern Iran. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 246, 30 Dec 1996)

Russia sells Greek Cypriots air defense systems
Cypriot officials and a Rosvooruzhenie delegation concluded a contract for the delivery of S-300 air defense missile systems on 4 January, international
agencies reported. The number of missiles involved and the exact value of the deal was not revealed by either side, nor has a delivery date been specified. Unconfirmed Cypriot sources suggest Nicosia has purchased 20 missile systems for $660 million.

**Russian Federation: Regional Elections and Legislative Branch**

By Michael Thurman

**REGIONAL ELECTIONS**

**Head of KomiPermyak district administration reelected**

About 70% of the voters who took part in the elections on 18 November 1996 for the head of Komi Permyak autonomous district administration, in the Urals, supported the incumbent leader Nikolay Poluyanov.

**Communist elected in Stavropol**

Aleksandr Chernogorov, a Communist member of the State Duma, was elected governor of Stavropol territory, southern Russia. 55.06% of voters cast their ballots for Chernogorov in the second round of voting. His rival, the incumbent governor Petr Marchenko representing Our Home is Russia movement was backed by 40.14%.

**Incumbent wins in Komi**

On 18 November 1996 incumbent Governor Nikolay Poluyanov won provincial elections in the Komi Permyatsk autonomous area with some 70% of the vote. His main rival, chairman of the Constitutional Party Anatoli Fedoseyev got only 17 percent of votes.

**First woman elected in Koryak**
Jurist Valentina Broniyevich, a 40-year-old native of the Koryak Autonomous Okrug and former chairman of the okrug executive committee, has become the first woman who will head the administration of this autonomous territory in the north of the Kamchatka Peninsula. According to preliminary data, she secured more than 46 percent of the votes.

**FEDERAL ASSEMBLY**

**Duma recommends moratorium on capital punishment**

Russian State Duma recommended to the Federation Council a moratorium on capital punishment. The authors of the bill reiterated Russia's intention to impose a moratorium on carrying out executions when it joined the Council of Europe. The lawmakers proposed to suspend all death penalties until the adoption of a law on capital punishment. According to a report read at the debate, a total of 238 people were sentenced to death in Russia last year. Of those, 40 were executed.

**Russian Federation: Chechnya**

By Miriam Lanskoy

**Polling places for refugees from Chechnya**

Those who have been displaced by the war number 350,000 and constitute more than 50% of Chechnya's electorate. The arrangements by which they would be allowed to vote have been a source of contention between Moscow (which favored setting up polling places throughout the country including Moscow, St. Petersburg, Volgograd and other Russian cities where Chechens reside), and Grozny (which sought to accommodate the refugees by busing them to their former homes). At their meeting in December, Rybkin and Maskhadov agreed to allow displaced people who have been forced to flee Chechnya to vote in districts of Dagestan, Ingushetia and Stavropol that border Chechnya (TASS, 26 Dec 1996). However, the final arrangement as described by Tim Guldimann, the head of the OSCE mission in Chechnya which is monitoring the elections, are as the
Chechens originally intended; returning voters are to register in their home districts. (Interfax, 10 Jan 1997) This procedure is certain to attract fewer of the displaced people than allowing them to vote in Russia would have, and (unless a candidate that Moscow favors is elected) may leave the election open to claims of unfairness.

A second provocatsia on election eve?
Chechen First Vice Premier Udugov accused General Shevtsov, ataman of the Cossacks, of plotting the deaths of ethnic Russian families which would be blamed on the Chechens to substantiate Cossack initiatives for separating the Naurskiy and Shelkovskiy rayons from Chechnya. (Komsomolskaya Pravda, 14 Jan 1997) This comes on the heels of the departure of the last Russian detachment on 5 January, 1997 and the renewal of calls for arming Cossack civilians, (TASS, 13 Jan 1997) forming Cossack detachments (See Security Council above) and an earlier murder of humanitarian personnel working in Grozny for the Red Cross. Suspects held in connection with that grisly affair, which was intended to keep international observers away from the polls in Chechnya, are members of the Confederation of the Peoples of the North Caucasus, a group led by Yusup Soslambekov, a presidential candidate in the Chechen election. (OMRI, 31 Dec 1996)

Recognition in sight?
The Chechen information centers which were organized during the war, particularly the ones in Krakow and Warsaw, have prompted angry outburst from Russian politicians. On 26 December, the Polish Ambassador Andrej Zalucki, told Primakov that the Polish authorities dissociate themselves from the decisions of the city councils to permit the operation of the centers. He also told Primakov that the centers would not be transformed into embassies of an independent Chechnya. (Interfax, 26 December 1996) Although no country has yet recognized Chechnya, Primakov warned the Security Council on January 9 that it is possible that "Chechnya, de-facto and de-jure, will secede from Russia,"
and "the main task facing the Russian government now is to place shock absorbers on this path in advance." (Interfax, 9 January 1997)

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By CDR John G. Steele

Russian military woes continue
Rodionov continues to warn of Army's impoverishment. Proposed reductions to a manning level of 1 million (from current level of 1.5 million) are described as "totally unrealistic" and the 1997 budget is inadequate to support proposed (but ill-defined) reform efforts.

Moscow military procurators have filed suit against the Defense Ministry for wage arrears. Sources put the current wage backlog at about 6 trillion rubles.

The latest in a series of fatal plane crashes (attributed to poor maintenance and lack of funding) claimed the lives of seventeen, including the commander of the Leningrad Military district and his wife.

The Russians have agreed to sell S-300 (a very capable surface to air missile system) to the Greek Cypriot government. The deal is reportedly worth $400 million. The Turks are (to put it mildly) not happy about it.

Georgia apologizes for ship seizure by Russians
Georgia apologized to the Ukraine for the actions of Russian naval forces based in Georgia. Shevardnadze stated the Russian seizure of the Ukrainian ship "amounted to piracy."

Black Sea Fleet base status examined
The Federation Council called upon Yel'tsin to halt any agreements concerning the status of Sevastopol until a special commission determines the status of the main naval base in the city.

**Charges against Nikitin are dropped**
The Russian prosecutor general followed up on the earlier release of Nikitin, and dropped the charges of treason against him, though Kovalev (head of FSB) maintains the opinion that Nikitin actually conducted espionage. In January Nikitin's wife suffered some harassment at the hands of Russian border officials when she traveled to and from Norway.

**INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

**NATO expansion discussed**
Yel'tsin and Kohl discussed NATO enlargement, and NATO chief Solana traveled to Russia and spoke to Primakov on the same topic. The Russians are increasingly adamant that NATO expansion be halted or that they be afforded an increased role in the alliance. The Russians and Chinese signed an agreement to allow the Chinese to produce the SU-27 jet fighters. The Russians stipulated that aircraft eventually produced under the deal are not to be exported to third parties. The two countries also signed an agreement to limit border troops on their frontier.

**Russian troops leave Chechnya**
On 5 January the Russians announced officially that all Russian forces had left Chechnya.

**Newly Independent States: Western Region**

By Chandler Rosenberger

**BELARUS**

Belarus suspended from Council of Europe
The Council of Europe suspended Belarus's special guest status in the organization on 13 January, international agencies reported. Council President Leni Fischer said the new Belarusian constitution does not respect human rights. The Council will also refuse to recognize the new Belarusian parliament, which was convened after president Lukashenka forced through passage of the new constitution. (OMRI Daily Digest II, No. 9, 14 Jan 97)

**Belarus' president cleans house**

President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has appointed Piotr Prakapovich first deputy prime minister, Belarusian radio reported. Prakapovich, an economist, is considered a moderate. He will be responsible for implementing the government's socio-economic development program until the year 2000. (OMRI Daily Digest II, No. 2, 3 Jan 1997)

Lukashenka also issued a decree dismissing Uladzimir Syanko from the post of foreign minister, and appointing Ivan Antonovich in his place, international agencies reported on 11 January. The same day, Lukashenka confirmed acting Defense Minister Alyaksandr Chumakau in his post. Chumakau replaced Leanid Maltseu last year after Maltseu was unceremoniously dismissed for appearing drunk at a banquet. (OMRI Daily Digest II, No. 8, 13 Jan 97)

**Comment**

While President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has taken some heat from foreign governments for his crackdown on the Parliament, his new administration seems composed on the basis of loyalty rather than ideology.

**UKRAINE**

**Sevastopol new launchpad to the Russian Presidency?**

The Russian Federation Council called on President Boris Yel'tsin on 26 December to impose a moratorium on agreements on the Black Sea Fleet until a special commission examines the status of the main base, Sevastopol, NTV
reported. The following day, Moscow Mayor Yuri Lushkov informed Ukraine's Foreign Ministry that he intends to visit the city in January, despite the ministry's threats to declare him persona non grata to prevent such a visit, Rossiskaya gazeta reported. (OMRI Daily Digest II, No. 246, 30 Dec 1996).

**Ukraine budget deficit twice as high as forecast -- corruption a factor?**

Ukraine's budget deficit in 1996 totaled 8.6 billion hryvnias ($4.57 billion), Reuters reported on 31 December. That is double the figure forecast when the budget was drawn up. Prime Minister Pavlo Lazarenko said that GDP fell for the fifth consecutive year and that, according to the most optimistic forecasts, it is not expected to reach the 1990 level for another 11 years. (OMRI Daily Digest II, No. 1, 2 Jan 1997) Meanwhile, World Bank President James Wolfenson sent a letter to President Leonid Kuchma at the beginning of the year criticizing corruption within the Ukrainian government, Ukrainian Radio reported on 8 January. Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Pynzenyk admitted that the problem of government corruption exists, noting that international criticism has begun because of increased foreign investment in the country. (OMRI Daily Digest II, No. 6, 9 Jan 97)

**Splits in Moldova cause of worry over splits in Ukraine?**

The eastern region of Kharkiv voted to give the Russian language equal status with Ukrainian as of the beginning of the year, ITAR-TASS reported on 7 January. At the same time, the administration in the predominantly Russian-speaking eastern region of Donetsk took the opposite position, deciding that the official language in the region's administration and business would be solely Ukrainian. (OMRI Daily Digest II, No. 5, 8 Jan 97)

Meanwhile, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Hennady Udovenko on 6 January said that Ukraine "takes the Moldovan side" on the issue of settling the conflict between Moldova and its breakaway Dniester region, Western agencies reported. The comment was made one day after Moldovan President-elect Petru
Lucinschi met Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma in Odessa. (OMRI Daily Digest II, No. 4, 7 Jan 97)

Comment
Five years ago Gen. Alexander Lebed taught all Russian politicians that defense of an "embattled" Russian minority beyond the nation's borders made good TV clips at home. Moscow Mayor Yuri Lushkov, second only to Lebed in recent opinion polls as Russians' choice for Yel'tsin's replacement, seems to have picked Ukraine's Crimean Russians to be his stage for a similarly enticing road show. Wary of the precedent, Ukraine appears to be strengthening its defense of a sovereign Moldova within its borders. Too bad Kiev seems less interested in resolving the economic crisis that may well push the Russian-speaking East to action.

MOLDOVA
Lucinschi has trouble finding a successor
Infotag reported on 19 December that Ion Cebuc, the current chairman of the State Accounting Chamber, is the candidate most likely to be designated the country's next prime minister. Citing Agrarian Democratic Party of Moldova (PDAM) leader Dumitru Motpan, the agency reported that Cebuc's nomination was discussed at a recent meeting between President-elect Petru Lucinschi and the PDAM leadership. Motpan added that Cebuc has "vast experience" in politics and managing the economy, having served at different times as the head of Moldova's representation in Moscow, deputy foreign minister, and deputy minister of the economy. (OMRI Daily Digest II, No. 245, 20 Dec 96)

And yet for the third time in less than a week, the parliament has failed to elect a new speaker, Infotag reported on 14 January. The main contenders to replace Petru Lucinschi in that post are Dumitru Motpan, chairman of the ruling Agrarian Democratic Party, and Deputy Speaker Dumitru Diacov, a close associate of Lucinschi. (OMRI Daily Digest II, No. 10, 15 Jan 97)
Smirnov re-elected in Trans-Dniestria

Igor Smirnov has been re-elected president of the Transdniester breakaway region, Infotag reported. He won 71.94% of the vote in elections held on 22 December. Vladimir Malakhov, the only other candidate, polled 19.84%. At 57.1%, turnout was the lowest for either elections or referenda held in the separatist republic since the proclamation of independence in September 1990. Smirnov said he intends to continue working to strengthen Trans-dniestrian statehood and wants to keep Russian troops in the region until Tiraspol receives "firm guarantees" that the Transdniestrian problem will not be solved by force. (OMRI Daily Digest II, No. 246, 30 Dec 1996)

At his inauguration Smirnov was congratulated by Tiraspol officials and blessed by the local Orthodox bishop and stated at the ceremony that the creation of the secessionist republic has made it more difficult for "Romania to incorporate Moldova." He stressed that the future relationship between Chisinau and Tiraspol should be based on treaties and that Moldova should "view the Dniester region as a [separate] state." (OMRI Daily Digest II, No. 8, 13 Jan 97)

Comment

Maybe it is possible to have too many friends. With so many would-be successors from his own left-leaning alliance to pick from, Lucinschi, Moldova's newly-elected president, seems not to be able to convince his colleagues to choose one. Will he be able to impose discipline on the parliament in future negotiations with the trans-Dniestrians?

REGIONS

Cossacks as a wedge in Chechnya?

The Russian government has proven very Cossack-friendly. Boris Yel'tsin has signed a decree establishing a Main Directorate on Cossack Units in the presidential administration, which will be responsible for working out policy on the
revival of Russia's Cossacks and coordinating the activities of all registered Cossack organizations, ITAR-TASS reported on 18 December. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 244, 19 Dec 96) The president's Main Department for Cossack Troops (GUKV) published the first issue of its information bulletin, marking the Cossacks' official return to state service, ITAR-TASS reported on 8 January. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 5, 8 Jan 97)

Later Cossacks began to demand land from Chechnya. Stavropol Krai Cossacks rallied on 10 January in several cities to demand the return of territory transferred to the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic in 1957 and now part of Chechnya, Russian media reported. The area in question includes Naurski and Shelkovski raions. Ataman Yuri Churekov said the Cossack Atamans' Council of the Russian South supports the territorial demand and is ready to mobilize 100,000 armed men to protect Russian-speakers in Chechnya. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 9, 14 Jan 97)

On the surface Cossack demands seem not to have the president's support. Addressing a meeting of southern Russian Cossack leaders in Stavropol Krai, Deputy Security Council Secretary Boris Berezovskii said that "crude military means" could not be used to resolve the Chechen crisis, ITAR-TASS reported. He also rejected demands by some Cossack leaders that federal troops occupy three northern districts of Chechnya which were transferred to the republic in 1957, and had large ethnic Russian populations before fighting began in 1994. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 11, 16 Jan 97)

**Further strengthening of center against regions**
The Duma passed in the third and final reading a draft law regulating relations between krais, oblasts, and the autonomous okrugs subordinated to them, ITAR-TASS reported on 18 December. Nine krais and oblasts of the Russian Federation contain autonomous okrugs. The bill would make okrugs subject to the laws of the corresponding oblast or krai. It stresses that elections to a krai's
or oblast's legislative and executive bodies are held throughout all their territories without any exception. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 244, 19 Dec 96).

Meanwhile a new commission has been created under First Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Potanin to oversee the allocation of federal funds to the regions, Segodnya reported on 19 December. Government decree no. 1450 grants the commission broad powers to coordinate all federal economic policies that affect the regions. (OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 245, 19 Dec 96).

Comment
The Russian presidency seems to be building up the Cossacks to be a stick with which to beat the Chechens. First the presidency takes a much deeper interest in controlling then Cossack military and press then calls for cooler heads when the Cossacks demand land back from Chechnya. Can Russian 'peace-keepers' be far behind?

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