Russian PM signs ordinance on Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission

Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin has signed a government ordinance to implement the agreements reached by the Russian-US Commission for Economic and Technological Cooperation, also known as the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission. The government ordinance outlines responsibilities and timelines for the implementation of proposals aimed at increased investment or cooperation in the fields of space, fuel and energy, agriculture and economics. Additionally, Russia's Atomic Energy Ministry and the other federal departments concerned should discuss with the US side the possible creation of a permanent nuclear energy committee within the commission. (Interfax, 1822 GMT, 12 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-012)

Russia signs gas deal with Turkey

Chernomyrdin ended an official visit to Turkey by signing a package of documents strengthening political and economic ties between the two countries. The largest of the agreements was perhaps one of the largest ever joint venture gas deals. Included in the agreements were the long-term program for the development of trade-economic, industrial, and scientific-technical cooperation; a memorandum on questions of cooperation in the sphere of science and high technologies; and an agreement on provision of mutual aid in civil, trade, and criminal matters. Chernomyrdin was quoted as saying, "I am convinced that Russia and Turkey can and must become strategic partners in the 21st century I believe we have done the right thing in taking the gas sector, the power industry, and the stimulation of investments as the basis for cooperation." (Rabochaya tribuna, 17 Dec 97, p. 1; FBIS-SOV-98-013)
Russia maintains "close contacts" with Iraq

The Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Valeri Nesterushkin stated on 12 January that Russia is maintaining close contacts with Iraq and partners in the UN Security Council in order to ease tensions in relations between Baghdad and the weapons inspectors of the UN. As previously, in the wake of the latest crisis, the main task is to prevent "a short circuit" in relations between Iraq and the United Nations and a slide back to a situation reminiscent of last year's crisis, Nesterushkin said. (Moscow Interfax in English 0952 GMT 13 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-013)

Primakov views 1997 foreign policy results

Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov highlighted 1997 foreign policy results in a recent article titled, "Integration processes -- main road for humanity."
Primakov believes Russia's membership in the club of the eight leading world powers was one of the main accomplishments of the foreign ministry in the past year. He also wrote "We have made headway in developing relations with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Russia is sure to be admitted soon to the Asia-Pacific Economic Community. An agreement on partnership with the European Union has come into force. Russia took part in 17 peace-keeping operations. This is also a factor showing the role played by Russia on a global level. Now not a single major development is possible in the world without Russia's direct participation." (ITAR-TASS, 0655 GMT, 13 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-013) Concerning relations with the US he wrote, "the rapprochement of our positions with those of the United States is going on the basis of equality, mutual protection and the recognition of the right of each of the parties to protect its interests, but without sliding down to confrontation." (ITAR-TASS, 0655 GMT, 13 Jan 98; and Rabochaya tribuna, 13 Jan 98, p. 3; FBIS-SOV-98-013)

Defense Minister Igor Sergeev in France
Sergeev arrived in France on 14 January to discuss European security, prospects for the development of Russia-NATO relations, the situation in Bosnia, and other conflict regions. The ministers also planned to discuss military reform, military doctrines and prospects for military, technological and industrial cooperation. (ITAR-TASS, 1731 GMT, 14 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-014)

**Ryzhkov on ties with Iran, possible Chernomyrdin visit to Tehran**

The first deputy chairman of Russian Duma, Vladimir Ryzhkov, stated, "developing comprehensive political and economic relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran figures prominently in the Russian foreign policy." (Tehran IRNA in English 1624 GMT 14 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-014) In a meeting with Iran's Ambassador to Russia, Mehdi Safari, the Duma official added that all segments of the Russian government are unanimous over the importance of developing close relations with the Islamic Republic. He further welcomed the proposed visit to Tehran by Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, adding that the State Duma would take all necessary steps to make such a trip the most fruitful. (IRNA, 1624 GMT, 14 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-014)

**Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch**

By Michael Thurman

**REGIONAL ELECTIONS**

**Russia's oil region schedules election**

The Tyumen Region in western Siberia scheduled an election for 25 legislators to its regional Duma for 14 December 1997 in an attempt to resolve a political question which has resulted from Tyumen's unique constitutional status.
The political organization of the Tyumen Region is peculiar. The Russian Constitution recognizes three subjects of the Federation on the huge territory of the Tyumen Region—the Tyumen Region proper, and within it, the Khanty-Mansi Okrug, which produces 75% of Russia’s total oil output, and the Yamal-Nenets Okrug, which accounts for 90% of Russia’s total gas output and one-third of the world’s. The southern part of the region is mostly agricultural and has no representation independent of the region as a whole. Tyumen is three times as large as France, and five times as large as Italy. The constitution vests the region and the two okrugs with equal rights. There are three legislatures and three governors acting independently in the region. The governors form an administrative council, the decisions of which are merely advisory. The predictable result has been friction between the three administrations over the construction of regional elections. In the last gubernatorial election for the entire region, the two okrugs refused to participate, despite two decrees by President Yel’tsin stating that the entire region, including citizens of the two okrugs, should elect the regional governor.

Interpreting the controversial Article 66.4 of the Russian Constitution, the Constitutional Court last July ruled that the territory and population of the two okrugs form part of the Tyumen Region’s territory and population. The 14 December elections to the Regional Duma were then an attempt to solve the impasse. Under the regional election law, the new Regional Duma will consist of 25 deputies: four deputies from the Yamal-Nenets Okrug, 10 from the Khanty-Mansi Okrug, and 11 deputies from the southern part of the region.

Although the okrugs’ right to vote in regional elections has been reaffirmed, the roles of the three legislative bodies are still unclear. One solution, vetted by Yamal-Nenets’ Governor Yuri Neyolov, proposed that the southern agricultural area be given a legislature also. The region would then be divided into three, politically equal units where the Regional Duma would coordinate issues of
common concern. The regional authorities dismissed this proposal, and thus, the situation remains in flux. (ITAR-TASS, 1520 GMT, 30 Oct 97; FBIS-SOV-97-303)

POLITICAL PARTIES
Radical opposition bloc established
The Working Russia movement, the Officers’ Union and the National Bolshevik Party have agreed to set up a radical opposition bloc in Russia.

The bloc will run a ticket in the 1999 State Duma elections. The bloc "remains open to other societal-political unions advocating the restoration of socialism and the re-creation of the USSR." The bloc will also field candidates in regional and local elections. No name was given, but it is sure to be fanciful. (Interfax, 1705 GMT, 4 Nov 97; FBIS-SOV-97-308)

FEDERAL ASSEMBLY
Duma privileges and benefits detailed
Nikolai Troshkin, head of the Duma Office of Administration, denied that the Duma basement was stockpiled with weapons, down comforters and bottles of liquor in case of another siege by the president. Toshkin noted that the administrative affairs of the Duma were controlled by the president's Administration of Affairs and that Minfin [Ministry of Finance] issues salaries. The implication is that the Duma does not have the independence to stockpile things in its basement.

According to Troshkin, various benefits accruing to Duma deputies include: Salaries. In accordance with President Yel'tsin’s April 1997 decree increasing federal salaries 1.6 fold, each deputy receives as of September 1997 (when the funds were finally released) the rather large sum of 6 million rubles ($6,000 as of 12/30/97)[it is unclear if this amount is disbursed monthly or yearly], plus 417,000 rubles ($69.50 as of 12/30/97) [again unclear if this is monthly or yearly] for unforeseen deputy expenses. It is not known if salaries were paid retroactively to
the first of April. In addition to the official salary, numerous non-cash benefits exist, such as spa vacations, foreign travel, and of course double-billing of all forms. This situation is exacerbated, if not caused, by the practice of not itemizing reimbursable expenditures and, instead, lumping both types of expenditures together—both legitimate and illegitimate—as "other expenses."

**Office Expenses**

A deputy may have as many as five staff aides, but the law does not indicate the number of nonstaff aides. A total amount of 7.2 million rubles ($1,200 as of 12/30/97) is allocated for staff aides to deputies. Nonstaff aides work without salaries. Rumor has it that many nonstaff aides represent various unofficial organizations within Russian business and society. Troshkin admits that, while this is possible, he is personally unaware of anyone who may be so considered. Additionally, the only reason Troshkin's office can deny Duma accreditation to a deputy's choice of staff-aide is if the candidate has a record of criminal time served. There are around 20,000 Duma aides, of which only 402 are officially paid. The aides also include relatives of Duma members—after all, why pay strangers?

**Housing**

Deputies of the previous session passed a law that, in the event no official space is issued to a deputy, he or she reserves the right to receive an apartment at the taxpayers' expense. Importantly, this is not an official apartment available to him or her (but usually him) solely for the duration of their tenure in office. The apartment in fact belongs to him or her in perpetuity. Such apartments cost around 300 million rubles ($5,000 as of 21/30/97) which, according to Troshkin, is cheap.

**Motor Transportation**

How many cars are at the deputies' disposal every day? After attempting to ascertain the number for three days, officials in the Duma Office of Administration
admitted that no single number existed, as the number of cars "varies." The deputies ride exclusively in Volgas, but the faction leaders and vice-speakers can use Audis. Speaker Gennadi Seleznev has a Mercedes, which belongs to the Russian Federal Protection Service. (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 29 Oct 97, pp. 1, 3; FBIS-SOV-97-325)

MEDIA

Izvestia elects new board of directors

The new board of directors of the Russian daily Izvestia consists of three representatives of the Lukoil corporation, two representatives of Unexim Bank and related groups, Izvestia president Dmitri Murzin and Editor-in-Chief Vasili Zakharko.

All seven board members were elected 4 December 1997 at an extraordinary meeting of the newspaper's shareholders. The board is elected for a one-year term. The meeting was attended by 37 shareholders owning a total of 98.9% of all company shares. It was held at the initiative of the Lukoil-Garant pension fund, which owns a 22% stake in Izvestia, because two members of the old board -- former editor-in-chief Igor Golembiovsky and analyst Otto Latsis founded a rival paper, the Novye izvestia and, presumably therefore, did not perform their duties as board members. Unexim bank owns 50.1% shares in Izvestia and could elect four out of seven board members. A top official from Unexim told Interfax that its controlling shares were used to elect two bank representatives as well as Zakharko and Murzin. (Interfax, 1654 GMT, 4 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-338)

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Lt. Col. Dwyer Dennis and CDR Curtis Stevens

Sergeev continues to warn of Russian Army's dismal condition
Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev described the army's condition as "serious" during a speech in the Federation Council upper house of parliament on 1 December. Sergeev pointed to the declining standard of personnel training and the quality of armament as reasons for the ongoing crisis of the Russian armed forces. Further, the quality of recruits and their care and feeding (i.e., pay) are additional concerns. In spite of efforts this fall to pay salary in arrears, current totals are estimated above two trillion rubles. The decreased budget has also led to a curtailment of operations. For example, Russian pilots are averaging only 20-30 hours a year compared to US pilots logging over 200 hours. One wonders if the recent An-124 Ruslan cargo plane crash is indicative of the eventual outcome of such conditions. (ITAR-TASS, 1322 GMT, 1 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-335)

International cooperative arms projects may be key to Russia-NATO ties
In an extensive article by Andrei Piontkovsky, director of the Center for Strategic Studies, and Vitali Tsygichko, leading research associate of the Russian Academy of Sciences Systems Analysis Institute, an approach to proceeding beyond the signing of the Paris Founding Act is presented. The subtitle of the piece, "Common Interests Must Become Foundations of Peace in Europe," characterizes their apparent proposition that through cooperation a new European security architecture can be successful. They divide the main areas of cooperation outlined in the Founding Act into three groups: 1) ensuring a strategic balance (arms control, nuclear safety, etc.); 2) organizing consultations and collaborations between Russia and NATO (joint operations, peacekeeping, Partnership for Peace, etc.); and 3) codevelopment of military technologies. They feel that the latter forms the real basis on which to build a new security. Through these cooperative development efforts, such as a European tactical ABM defense system, common economic corporate interest will develop. A mutual trust and even strategic partnering would evolve. The authors point to the Russian-US cooperation in space as an example of the successful partnership
that can occur between former ideological enemies. (Nezavisimoye voyennoye obozreniye, 20 Nov 97; FBIS-SOV-97-334)

**Sukhoi aircraft to build to NATO standards?**
In a "planes for bread" deal, Russia has offered Poland 100 Su-39 fighter planes valued at $3 billion. Vladimir Babak, head of the Sukhoi aircraft factory has announced that the exchange for agricultural products would be over an 8- to 10-year period. He gave assurances that the aircraft would conform to NATO standards. Babak also thought that Russia was making similar proposals to the Hungarians and the Czechs. While the Su-39 may not meet Polish requirements for supersonic and multi-task capabilities, it is interesting that in the push to market their products internationally, Russia is apparently supporting NATO standards for manufacturing while politically denouncing NATO expansion. (Polskie Radio First Program Network, 1800 GMT, 17 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-351)

**Yel'tsin removes arms export restrictions on Rwanda**
Russian President Boris Yel'tsin formally ended all arms export restrictions to the Rwandan government on 17 December. In an apparent effort to show this as a responsible action, the signed instruction did maintain that "the ban will remain fully in force if the supplies are to be used by other parties than the country's government." With the current Asian economic woes, new international arms market are becoming increasingly important for Russia. It is doubtful, however, that there is substantial money to be made for the Russian defense industrial base in this area. (Interfax, 1041 GMT, 18 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-352)

**Russian-Italian cooperation in defense industry conversion**
Italy is apparently joining the ranks of nations such as France that are encouraging cooperative efforts with the Russian defense industry. At a joint working group for the conversion of the Russian military-industrial complex, heads of Russian and Italian companies gave the "go-ahead" to several projects.
An ITAR-TASS correspondent reported that the countries will co-produce a series of Yak-130AM jet trainers, various radio and radar components, and other products ranging from space equipment to urban buses. (ITAR-TASS, 1932 GMT, 1 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-335)

**New National Security Concept approved**

On 17 December President Yel'tsin approved a new National Security Concept. The new concept outlines the major threats to Russia and establishes a set of domestic and foreign policy goals aimed at improving Russia's geopolitical position. The document highlights Russia's economic problems as well as ethnic tensions as two of the most serious threats to Russian security. It also provides justification for military downsizing and reforms. And, of course, the new policy highlights once again Russian opposition to NATO enlargement. The new policy also disavows the no first-use pledge made during the Gorbachev era by stating "Russia reserves the right to use all forces and systems at its disposal, including nuclear weapons, if the unleashing of armed aggression results in a threat to the actual existence of the Russian Federation as an independent sovereign state." (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 26 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-364; Jamestown Foundation Prism, 9 Jan 98)

**Colleagues can bring greater risk than combat**

An army recruit at a military unit in Russia's southern region of Krasnodar gunned down an officer last month. The officer received four bullet wounds was in critical condition following 10 hours of surgery. A special commission was established to investigate the incident. (Agence France-Presse, 2312 PST, 8 Dec 97; c-afp@clari.net)

The number of deaths due to non-combatant situations is a matter of some controversy. The Committee of Soldiers' Mothers has rejected defense ministry statistics showing 2000 soldiers died in 1997 from hazing. The committee believes the figure is closer to 3900, with deaths the result of either assault,
suicide, accidents and even starvation. The mothers report that even in the elite Russian outfits, such as the Kremlin Guards, hazing is rampant. Defense Minister Sergeev has said that close to 50 percent of today’s conscripts have not completed high school. (Agence France-Presse, 0811 PST, 14 Dec 97; afp@clari.net)

**Soldiers and sailors still waiting for pay**

On 16 December Defense Minister Sergeev said the government would clear a 12.4 trillion ruble debt in wages and social benefits to the army by the end of the year. On 9 January 1998 defense ministry spokesmen were trying to explain why many soldiers had yet to be paid. Some ministry officials blamed the change to the new denomination rubles while others cited insufficient funding of the defense ministry or blamed the finance ministry for not allocating funds in time to pay back wages. Meanwhile, First Deputy Finance Minister Aleksei Kudrin stated the government would use part of the latest loan installment from the IMF to pay for debts in the defense industry. (ITAR-TASS, 1312 GMT, 16 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-350, ITAR-TASS, 0923 GMT, 9 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-009, and RFE/RL Newsline, 12 Jan 98)

**Pacific Fleet journalist charged with treason**

Captain Second Rank (Commander) Grigori Pasko, senior editor of the Pacific Fleet's newspaper, has been arrested and charged with treason. Pasko has been a critic of the Navy's handling of nuclear waste and decommissioned nuclear submarines. In 1993 he was fined after making a video for a Japanese television network that showed a Russian naval auxiliary dumping radioactive waste into the Sea of Japan. Pasko was arrested on his return from a five-day trip to Japan. His visit to Japan was paid for by the Vladivostok mayor's office. Pasko is the second navy officer charged with high treason. Retired Captain Aleksandr Nikitin still faces a similar charge after he provided details about accidents on Russian nuclear submarines to western environmental groups. (Jamestown Foundation Monitor, 1 Dec 97)
**Alpha module completed; military satellite launched**

The first module of the international space station Alpha has been completed and will be transported to the Baikonur launch site in Kazakhstan sometime in January. The module was built in Moscow with financing from Boeing. This first module for the international space station will be used to store fuel and equipment and is designed to have a life span of 15 years. (Agence France-Presse, 1405 PST, 15 Dec 97; c-afp@clari.net)

On 15 December the Strategic Rocket Forces launched a military satellite from the Plesetsk facility. The satellite belongs to the Yantar subseries of the Kosmos series. Fitted with photographic equipment, Yantars are used to monitor arms control treaties. The satellite will remain in orbit for nearly two months. This is only the sixth photographic satellite launched by the Russians since 1994. (Interfax, 1753 GMT, 15 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-349)

**Newly Independent States: CIS**

By Mark Jones

**A month of meetings**

In early December one of the newest CIS bureaucratic organizations held a meeting. The CIS Coordination Council of Prosecutors General, Council of Ministers of Internal Affairs, Council of Heads of Security Agencies and Special Services, Council of Border Troop Commanders, Council of Heads of Customs Services, and tax police heads (unfortunately, no acronym exists for this council) met to discuss crime in the Commonwealth. CIS Executive Secretary Ivan Korotchenya attended the meeting and read a greeting from President Yel'tsin (Delovoy mir, 3 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-339). The council was able to hammer out a draft agreement for cooperation in law enforcement and crime fighting
The CIS Interparliamentary Assembly also held a meeting in early December. This was the 10th plenary session of the assembly; 14 of the 17 draft laws submitted by a working committee were adopted. The laws deal with the banking and financial spheres, education, ecology, and charity (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1305 GMT, 6 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-341).

A third committee to hold a meeting in December was the CIS Interstate Economic Committee. This organization was severely criticized by President Yel'tsin and other CIS leaders at the October summit for its lack of effectiveness. Rabochaya tribuna (6 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-006) reported that the main agenda item was "On Increasing the Effectiveness and Improving Mechanisms of Economic Integration in the CIS Member States." The committee recommended that state economic councils transfer their functions to the IEC, enhance the status of collegium members, and give those members the right to make independent decisions. No word yet on how these proposals were received by the member states.

Another meeting, this time of a working group in the Executive Secretariat, failed to obtain a consensus on the status of CIS officials and procedures for filling vacancies in CIS interstate organizations. An agreement would have outlined who should be regarded as "officials of CIS international agencies" and what rights, duties, privileges and immunity those officials would have (Belapan, 12 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-346).

There is, however, one CIS meeting that will not happen. The Emergency Heads of State Summit scheduled for 23 January has been canceled by President Yel'tsin. Officially, the reason for the cancellation is that documents addressing the problems raised at the last Heads of State meeting would not be ready for the
summit. Some have suggested, however, that Yel'tsin canceled the meeting because of his health or because of the unfavorable responses he received from his colleagues after he sent them a questionnaire asking for their views on several major issues (Interfax, 6 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-006).

New chief of CIS Military Coordinating Staff appointed
General Anatoli Kvashnin, chief of the Russian Armed Forces General Staff, helped General Viktor Prudnikov exchange his insignia as head of the Russian and CIS Air Defense System for those of chief of the CIS Military Coordination Staff. Kvashnin expressed his gratitude to General Viktor Samsonov, who occupied the post for five years (Rossiyskiye vesti, 29 Nov 97; FBIS-UMA-97-335). Soon after assuming his new post, Prudnikov announced that he intends to increase the number of staff members at his new headquarters by 20 percent to 250 people (ITAR-TASS, 24 Dec 97; FBIS-UMA-97-358).

Another major CIS personnel shake-up
CIS and Russian Federal Border Service Director Andrei Nikolaev apparently pushed his luck once too often. To protest Russia's decision to retract a border post on the Georgian border, Nikolaev submitted his resignation. To Nikolaev's surprise, President Yel'tsin accepted it. The resignation set off a chain of events and aroused speculation. Vladimir Zhirinovsky, believing that the resignation was engineered by the Georgian Mafia, demand that the State Duma ask the president to reconsider Nikolaev's dismissal (Interfax, 19 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-353). Others believed that the border chief got what was coming to him. They described Nikolaev's recent behavior as Bonapartism and charged he was grabbing too much power for himself. Military sources told ITAR-TASS (20 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-354) that Nikolaev was trying to "fashion a super security service of the stamp of the KGB of the 1970-1980s," and was attempting to establish motorized units, air and naval power, strategic intelligence, counterintelligence, academies, hospitals and logistic supply systems.
The announcement that Yel'tsin accepted the resignation came as a shock to many observers. Several noted that Nikolaev has tendered his resignation several times before, but the president did not act on those requests. Several commentators noted that Nikolaev has been a close family friend for many years and virtually all believe the two men share a similar view of Russia's place in the CIS. Some see a sinister coincidence between the timing of the acceptance and Yel'tsin's recent illness. There were some accusations that Nikolaev's enemies moved against him when Yel'tsin was too weak to oppose the action. These writers may be proven correct if, as Nezavisimoye voyennoye obozreniye (9 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-009) reports, Nikolaev now is being considered for another position in the Russian government. The paper asserts that the former chief is being eyed to take over as Security Council secretary or leader of the Russian Federation President's State Committee, which directly implements military reform and oversees all federal structures involved in ensuring state security. The paper also reports that Nikolaev and Yel'tsin met at least once in early January.

No one has been appointed to take Nikolaev's place as chief of the Russian Border Service, and there is some ambiguity as to the leadership of the CIS Border Service. Nikolaev only officially resigned from his Russian post, but indications are that he has ceased work at the CIS post also. All recent pronouncements from the CIS service have come from the deputy director's office.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Tracy Gerstle

MOLDOVA

Chief of General Staff Dontul sacked for corruption
General Vladimir Dontul was dismissed following a national audit of the republic's army sites and barracks. The Defense Ministry Council first called for his dismissal last month after he was charged with stealing army property, but President Lucinschi resisted until more concrete charges came to the fore in the beginning of January. Among the charges against the general is the illegal sale of 850 kilometers of fiber optic cables worth $300,000 and apartments intended for military staff. The investigation into the illegal sales is continuing and several sources report that other high-ranking officers may have been involved. (RFE/RL Newsline, 6 Jan 98, and BBC News, 26 Dec 97; http://news.bbc.co.uk)

Upcoming parliamentary elections set for March 22nd
As President Lucinschi celebrates the end of his first year in office, Moldova's political parties are stepping into the media spotlight to publicize their platforms. Both old and new faces are coming to the fore as the scramble for votes begins. Mircea Snegur, the republic's former president, was one of the first to publicize his candidacy and his party the Democratic Convention of Moldova (CDM). He attacked the current government as "totally left-wing authorities...who have instituted a neo-communist rule." (Infotag, 1734 GMT, 12 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-012)

Also notable was the Party of Communists of Moldova's (PKM) pledge to support the president's electoral platform and the party's campaign promise for closer integration inside the CIS at all levels. (Interfax, 1615 GMT, 13 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-013) However, this wish on the part of the PKM for closer integration into the CIS was rebutted shortly thereafter by President Lucinschi, who announced his upcoming proposal for a free trade union within the barriers of the former USSR. He discouraged closer links to the organization "in order to avoid the impression that we are getting back to the Soviet Union." (ITAR-TASS, 1321 GMT, 15 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-015)

BELARUS
Trial of ORT journalists resumes, much to the dismay of the prosecution
The trial of ORT journalists Pavel Sharamet and Dimitri Zavadskiy, charged with illegally crossing the Belarusian-Lithuanian border, resumed on 8 January. Coverage of the first day of the reconvened trial by the Russian television station NTV revealed that the two journalists had possessed identity cards which should have permitted them to work in the contested area. The program also revealed that Belarusian border guard investigators had crossed over into Lithuania illegally to arrest the defendants and confiscate their video-camera. (NTV, 1600 GMT, 10 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-012)

"Charter 97" open for business in Brussels
Reminiscent of the Czechoslovak dissident group Charter 77, 100 prominent members of the antigovernment opposition calling themselves Charter 97 signed a letter of protest warning against Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka's human rights infringements in November of last year. (BBC News, 11 Nov 97; http://news.bbc.co.uk) Since its founding two months ago the group has already collected some 40,000 signatures calling for Lukashenka's ouster (RFE/RL Report, 9 Jan 98). This month Charter 97 opened its first office abroad, in Brussels. Andrei Sannikau, a former deputy prime minister, will serve as the group's representative there.

A week later the state-funded Belarusian television program "Resonance" announced that the opposition was plotting a coup d'etat and was seeking Western funding in the amount of $32 million. Lukashenka said that he was "in shock" and that he suspected that the "Americans, the CIA, or some other intelligence agency" were involved. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1453 GMT, 15 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-015).

Prominent members of the opposition, such as Leonid Bershchewski, head of the Belarusian People's Front, denied the charges, which he called "fantasy." (NTV, 1525 GMT, 12 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-O12) Others noticed how conveniently the charges coincided with the visit of the OSCE Mission head, Hans-Georg Wieck,
who had come for talks about opening a Minsk office in February. (RFE/RL Report, 13 Jan 98)

Another member of the opposition, Syamyon Sharetski, chairman of the 13th Belarusian Supreme Soviet, met with Vytautas Landsbergis, speaker of Lithuania's Seimas, to discuss their respective political realities. The two agreed to encourage contacts between their countries' parliaments and hold official meetings in the near future. (Belapan, 111 GMT, 12 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-012).

Belarus-Russia Higher Council scheduled to meet 22 January
As the two countries move towards what has been hailed as full integration, but what in reality seems to be still little more than a paper trail, Belarusian Deputy Foreign Minister Nikolai Buzo said that Belarus does not want Russian troops on its territory. Instead Buzo encouraged Moscow to "make full use of Belarus's military potential." (RFE/RL Report, 9 Jan 98) This issue and other terms of the union will be discussed when the two governments meet in Moscow next week.

UKRAINE
Chernobyl's sarcophagus showing visible cracks
One Ukrainian news agency reported last week that the tomb surrounding the plant's fourth reactor was close to collapse. However Artur Korneyev, deputy director of operations at the reactor, reported that although the state of the reactor's foundations worsen every year, there has been "no serious deterioration."

Ukrainian officials still intend to shut down the reactor in 2000, but they will not be able to do so if they do not receive foreign funding for the two new reactors that will replace the old one's generating capacity. ( REUTERS, 1654 EST, 8 Jan 98 www.yahoo.com/headlines)

Kiev ratifies treaty with Russia
305 of the 336 deputies in the Ukrainian Parliament who voted were in favor of ratifying the treaty on friendship and cooperation signed by Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma and Russian President Boris Yeltsin last May. The treaty had been delayed for years as the two countries argued over the territorial status of the Crimea, Ukraine's borders and the breakup of the Black Sea Fleet.
(Nezavisimaya gazeta, 15 Jan 98; www.russiatoday.com)

**Russia threatens to halt gas exports**
Currently Ukraine's United Energy Systems owes over $700 million to the Russian defense ministry in exchange for the gas Russia has been pumping to the republic since 1996. (Interfax, 1559 GMT, 29 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-364)
With the demise of the country's existing nuclear reactors and increasing demands for electricity, First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Golubchenko described the "situation in the Ukrainian electricity industry as tense." Currently the government is looking to coal imports to fill the gap and is negotiating with Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin as to future natural gas imports.

**Newly Independent States: Central Asia**

By Monika Shepherd

**TAJKISTAN**

**UTO suspends work of National Reconciliation Commission**
On 15 January 1998, United Tajik Opposition (UTO) Chairman Said Abdullo Nuri announced that, due to the government's continued refusal to implement certain aspects of the peace process, the UTO delegates had decided to suspend their participation in the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC). Since the UTO delegates make up half of the NRC's membership and Nuri is the commission's chairman, this effectively brings the NRC's work to a halt (Interfax, 0853 GMT, 15 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-015).
Two of the most important issues which still need to be resolved are the terms of the military protocol which President Rahmonov signed as part of the General Peace Agreement in June 1997, and the allocation of 30% of top government posts to UTO representatives. The NRC submitted a list of UTO nominees for government positions in mid-December and, although President Rahmonov gave the list his informal approval, he has yet to announce it officially (Interfax, 0853 GMT, 15 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-015).

President Rahmonov's reluctance to announce formally the roster of ministries to be ceded to UTO nominees is delaying Ali Akbar Turajonzoda's return to Tajikistan. Turajonzoda is a leading member of the UTO and commands a large following. More than one UTO commander has refused to disarm until Turajonzoda returns to the country. While in Tehran for the December session of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), President Rahmonov offered Turajonzoda the position of First Deputy Prime Minister, and Turajonzoda reportedly accepted, however thus far, this appears to be only a verbal agreement which President Rahmonov has chosen to ignore since returning to Tajikistan (RFE/RL Newsline, 15 December 1997). Furthermore, no mention has been made of Turajonzoda's appointment to this position in the Tajik press.

The second pressing issue which must soon be resolved is the full implementation of the military protocol. The terms of this protocol call for the registration and disarming of all UTO troops on Tajik territory and their subsequent integration into Tajikistan's national armed forces. Nearly all UTO units have complied with the orders to turn in their weapons and register with the government, but no preparations have been made to retrain them and integrate them into regular army units. The military protocol also specifies that those UTO troops remaining in Afghanistan must be allowed to return home (Interfax, 0853 GMT, 15 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-015), provided that they disarm at border checkpoints. At least 260 UTO troops have been waiting to cross into Tajikistan from northern Afghanistan since last fall. The troops lack proper housing and
sufficient medical and food supplies, however, the Tajik government has repeatedly delayed their return, citing the inclement weather and "technical difficulties" as reasons (see last Editorial Digest on Central Asia for details).

The final point which Nuri cited in his summary of the main issues which are hindering the implementation of the peace process is the general amnesty for all POWs held by government and UTO forces. He stated that the UTO has so far complied with the amnesty by releasing 1,153 prisoners, but that the government has been much slower in carrying out the amnesty, releasing only 70 of the 1,644 opposition members who were known to be in custody (Interfax, 0853 GMT, 15 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-015).

Nuri stressed that he is a firm supporter of the peace process and that he will reconvene the NRC as soon as the Tajik government indicates that it is willing to address concretely the issues outlined above (Interfax, 0853 GMT, 15 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-015).

Newly Independent States: Caucasus and Chechnya

By Miriam Lanskoy

AZERBAIJAN

Sectoral division of the Caspian proceeding on a bilateral basis

Azerbaijan may have discovered the strategy by which the sectoral division of the Caspian can gain a clear legal definition despite Russian objections. Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan have already defined the line that delimits their sectors. Now the Azeri and the Turkmenistani presidents have established a commission to define the limits of their sectors with respect to each other. During the summer of 1997 Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan entered into a dispute over the ownership of the Kyapaz oil well that lies on the border between their sectors. If the commission is able to reach a compromise and complete its work, the status of the disputed
well will be determined, paving the way to its development; more importantly, the
three participating Caspian states will have recent bilateral treaties that establish
a longitudinal line that gives legal authority to the extent of their sector vis-a-vis
each other. Thus far Iran and Russia continue to oppose the sectoral division of
the sea and the latitudinal demarcation line remains undefined. (Turan, 9 Dec 97;
FBIS-SOV-97-343)

**Renewed tension with Iran?**
The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) passed three resolutions
favoring Azerbaijan during its December summit in Tehran. The first resolution
condemned Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan and called for the
immediate withdrawal of Armenian forces from occupied areas of Azerbaijan.
The second resolution concerned economic aid to Azerbaijan, and the third
document decreed the convocation of an international symposium on the
Caucasus to be held in Baku in October 1998. (Turan, 8 Dec 97; FBIS-NES-97-343)

Azeri commentators are aware that these measures could not have been placed
on the agenda, much less approved by the body, without Iranian support. Yet,
many Azeri analysts remain very wary of any Iranian involvement in the
resolution of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. One prominent Azeri weekly
has commented that Iran's offer to mediate has had a positive response in
Armenia and that an Iranian "shuttle" could become a real alternative to the
OSCE process. The paper concludes that this outcome can only hurt Azerbaijan
by negating the advantages it had gained from the OSCE's Lisbon Declaration.
(Zerkalo, 6 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-340) That document recognized Azerbaijan's
territorial integrity and led to the adoption of the two-step process by which
Azerbaijan is likely to retain formal control over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Azerbaijan's refusal to accept Iranian mediation can aggravate relations that are
already strained by disagreements over Caspian oil exploration rights and the
continued activism by the Azeri opposition parties on behalf of the Azeri minority in Iran. On several recent occasions, Azeri politicians, including the former president, Abulfaz Elchibey, have voiced support for the Azeri population of northern Iran that has been forbidden to use the Azeri language. (Turan, 12 Dec 97; FBIS-97-SOV-346) Early this year, the Democratic Congress, an alliance of Azeri opposition parties, passed a resolution calling for unification with southern Azerbaijan. (Turan, 3 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-004)

CHECHNYA

Will anyone be held accountable for starting the war?
By a margin of 305 to 9 the Duma passed a resolution demanding that the Russian politicians responsible for setting up illegal armed groups in Chechnya be held legally accountable for their actions. The resolution charges the prosecutor general with reporting to the Duma on the legal issues involved in the clandestine use of Russian military resources in the failed attempt to unseat the former Chechen President Dzhokar Dudaev in the fall of 1994. (RIA, 3 Dec 97; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 5 Dec 97 via NEXIS)

Lev Rokhlin, the Chairman of the Duma Defense Committee and the leader of the Movement in Support of the Army, the Defense Industry, and Military Science (DPA), which seeks to impeach President Yel'tsin, introduced a draft resolution that would hold the Kremlin leaders who unleashed the war responsible for violations of Russian law. In a speech to the Duma, Rokhlin accused the Kremlin leadership of inciting the conflict in Chechnya by supplying persons opposed to General Dudaev with weapons and military personnel during the summer and fall of 1994, that is before the Russian invasion of December 1994.

Citing General Staff directives that contained detailed accounts of these transfers, Rokhlin identified the late Nikolai Yegorov, former RF Minister for Nationalities and Regional Policy, Sergei Stepashin, former director of the Federal Counterintelligence Service, and Sergei Filatov, former chief of the
Presidential Administration, as the persons in charge of the clandestine operation to remove Dudaev. Yevgeni Sevostyanov, deputy director of the Federal Counterintelligence Service for Moscow city and Moscow oblast, and Aleksandr Kotenkov, deputy minister for nationalities affairs, organized the combat operations.

When the November 1994 covert action to remove Dudaev failed miserably, members of the presidential administration put forth the argument that the federal center had to intervene in Chechnya to impose order and disarm illegal armed formations. General Rokhlin's speech suggest that Yegorov, Stepashin, and Filatov created the illegal armed formations to provoke a conflict and create the opportunity for federal intervention.

Rokhlin called on his fellow legislators to summon Stepashin, Filatov, Sevostyanov, Kotenkov, as well as Yuri Skuratov, the Russian prosecutor-general to the Duma, to establish whether this use of military personnel and weaponry was lawful and whether the president had authorized it. (Sovetskaya Rossiya, 4 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-338)

In retrospect, even fewer Russians support the Chechen war
Rokhlin's condemnation of the war closely approximates public sentiment on the topic. Recent public opinion polls indicate that public disapproval of the war has only grown more pronounced since the end of hostilities.

In a recent poll of 1,600 Russian citizens conducted by the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion, only 11% of Russian citizens supported the government's December 1994 decision to wage war against Chechnya. Forty-one percent of the respondents expressed the belief that Moscow committed a fundamental error by invading the region because the question of independence should not be resolved by force. Another forty percent said the government did not appraise the situation accurately and should not have risked the lives of so
many Russian citizens and soldiers. (Mayak Radio Network, 2 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-336)

During the war, there was little popular enthusiasm on behalf of the war effort and its approval ratings were in continuous decline. In December 1995 the proportion of those opposed to the war (81%) was one-third greater than that of a year earlier (61%). (Radio Russia, 11 Dec 95; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts December 12, 1995 via NEXIS)

Newly Independent States: Baltic States
By Kate Martin

US, Russia words meant to alleviate Baltic anxieties

While their US representatives accurately termed the document as purely political (ITAR-TASS, 0350 GMT, 13 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-013), the three Baltic presidents traveled to Washington, DC last week to sign the US-Baltic Charter with President Bill Clinton.

While providing no security guarantees, the charter did serve as a declaration by the four parties that "their shared goal is the full integration of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into European and transatlantic political, economic, security, and defense institutions." Moreover, the charter reiterated the Baltics' "inherent right to individual and collective self-defense as well as the right freely to choose [their] own security arrangements, including treaties of alliance"--a clear response to Russian saber-rattling over NATO expansion discussions. The charter also included the hopeful claim that "[n]o non-NATO country has a veto over Alliance decisions." (http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur)

In an surprisingly forthright manner, a Russian foreign ministry representative recently acknowledged that Baltic concerns of threats from the east may have
had merit, while he reassured them that the alleviation of such worries were the motivation behind Russia's proposed security guarantees. While Russian President Boris Yeltsin earlier had assured the Baltics that any country thinking of posing a threat to the republics would first have to deal with Russia if that country's proposal was accepted (Helsingen Sanomat, 6 Nov 97; FBIS-WEU-97-346), Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksei Avdeev was less disingenuous. Avdeev told reporters that the guarantees—meant to supplant security alliances Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have been seeking through western alliances—were in fact "guarantees first of all against ourselves, that Russia will be so careful, tactful and civilized in its activities and its actions, especially in the security sector... . We guarantee that the risk and the threat will not come from us." (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1400 GMT, 22 Dec 97)

LITHUANIA

Election, debate focus on the "who" and "how" of leadership

The election period in Lithuania focused attention upon not only who would be the country's next president, but also what powers the presidential post would encompass.

Former prosecutor general Arturas Paulauskas led in the first round of voting on 21 December with 44.73 percent of the votes, but did not command a sufficient lead to win decisively over Valdas Adamkus (27.56 percent), a former administrator for the US Environmental Protection Agency who holds dual citizenship. (ELTA, 0920 GMT, 27 Dec 97; FBIS-SOV-97-361) Voter turnout topped 70 percent. Seimas chairman Vytautas Landsbergis, never able to rekindle the support he held in the republic's early days of independence, garnered approximately 16 percent of the vote—insufficient to enter the second round. The remaining four candidates performed significantly less well, each obtaining less than 6 percent of the votes. (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1100 GMT, 22 Dec 97)
Results of the second round were close enough for a recount, as Paulauskas and Adamkus faced off on 4 January. In the end, the smaller field worked to Adamkus' advantage, as did the substantial voter turnout (73.8 percent). (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1100 GMT, 5 Jan 98) Final results were 968,031 votes (50.37 percent) for Adamkus, 953,775 votes (49.63 percent) for Paulauskas. (ELTA, 1128 GMT, 9 Jan 98; FBIS-SOV-98-009)

The main discussion on presidential powers centered on who--president or parliament--decides the fate of the Cabinet following a presidential election. The topic had not sparked controversy after the election of Algirdas Brazauskas, since his supporters held the majority in parliament at the time, and more than likely the recent discussion could be filed away under the category of election campaign rhetoric. During his election campaign, Paulauskas spoke out for increased presidential powers, arguing that the restrictions to such powers as provided for in the constitution were being tightened even more through legislation and practice. Member of parliament Povilas Gylys then weighed in with his description of statements--by such personalities as PM Gediminas Vagnoroius and the chairman of the Seimas' legal committee, no less--that parliament determines whether the Cabinet's authorizations will be extended or revoked, as "nonsensical." (Baltic News Service Daily Report, 1400 GMT, 12 Dec 97)

According to the constitution, while the president nominates candidates for prime minister and asks nominees to form a government, it is the parliament that approves the candidature of prime minister and the proposed government, as well as supervising the activities of the government. The president may appoint or remove the prime minister from office, upon the approval of parliament, however, the constitution does not include a provision mandating a government change upon the election of a new president.
Adamkus is scheduled to take the oath of office for his five-year term on 25 February.