Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

Yeltsin vs. Primakov

Such a vote of confidence! The president has declared Primakov "useful to us," well at least for now, as Yel'tsin added "later we'll see." (THE MOSCOW TIMES, Combined Reports, 10 Apr 99) Primakov is piqued, but he can rest comfortably (his bout of sciatica notwithstanding), knowing that he has a solid, well-constructed hand to play in the current political crisis.

While Yel'tsin has recently been characterized as striking back after his latest illness, his victories may well be short-lived. Yes, he suspended Skuratov, sacked Bordyuzha and replaced Primakov with Chernomyrdin as his chief Balkan negotiator. Yel'tsin even appeared on television to assure his public (foreign and domestic) that his health problems were over. (CNN HEADLINE NEWS, 22 Apr 99) Resubmitting the Skuratov dismissal to the Federation Council, Yel'tsin seemed to signal that he had worked his magic and had the governors back on his side.

That move was apparently a bluff. On 21 April, the Federation Council voted 79 to 61 once again to reject Yel'tsin's recommendation for dismissal. (AP NEWS, 21 Apr 99, 1533 PDT; clari.net) If the first council vote signaled support for a beleaguered prosecutor, this vote suggests open defiance. The Kremlin response will determine just how intense this political struggle will get; however, the regional leaders clearly doubt that Yel'tsin can make yet another comeback. While there is a great deal of speculation on the next move, the question of Yel'tsin's ability to carry through a dismissal of his prime minister or disbandment
of the Duma would seem to curtail his options and therein lies Primakov's strength. Would Primakov succeed if he refused to be removed?

APPARAT

Is there method in this madness?

President Yel'tsin's nearly constant ill health since 1996 has forced a greater reliance on his Kremlin advisers and staff, but changes introduced to apparat policy have brought into question just who is running the Kremlin show and how did they get there. Prior to 1996, the apparat was already a secretive operation, with subtle signs of internal struggle and intrigue, but few open attacks. It was, above all, protective of the president. The 1996 elections changed all that. After the elections, Anatoli Chubais took control of the Kremlin and, despite early dodges regarding the president's health (remember his "colossal fatigue"?), came clean about the president's condition, launching both the open and the backroom campaigns to succeed Yel'tsin.

The early criteria established for leadership in the apparat cadres were "professionalism" and loyalty to Yel'tsin. The emphasis on professionalism was, in part, a means to deflect criticism from the democratic camp when former Soviet bureaucrats and hard-liners were permitted into Yel'tsin's political elite. Some were, however, quite effective managers and advisers. The loyalty requirement reflected the long-standing "us versus them" mentality, with the enemy periodically redefined as the Communists, the anti-reformers, the Khasbulatov Supreme Soviet, the red-brown coalition, and finally the Communists again.

Lately it seems that professionalism has been jettisoned in favor of loyalty, and loyalty to whom is now the central question. Chubais' stewardship of the Kremlin was marked by the turnover of personnel as many of Chubais' St. Petersburg colleagues replaced longtime Yel'tsin functionaries.
While Chubais exercised firm control throughout the course of Yel'tsin's heart surgery and recovery, his tenure -- wedded as it was to the protection of privatization and Western investment -- replaced and alienated several of the diverse groups of advisers Yel'tsin characteristically included in his circle. While that was certainly, at times, a positive result, it did force the ousters of some strong Yel'tsin loyalists. Chubais also oversaw, or perhaps simply acknowledged, the ascendancy of Tatiana Dyachenko as primary conduit of information to and from the president.

Her importance remained undiminished through the administration of Sergei Yastrzhembsky. Two key components distinguish the Chubais/Yastrzhembsky years: the continuing debilitating illness of the president and the increase in importance of the government as the protector of the reform process. The Kremlin staff, when not actively supporting the government in its reforms, served primarily to relay messages from an isolated president.

The devaluation of the ruble in August 1998 provoked a marked decline in apparat personnel policy. After a bruising battle with the Duma over the appointment of a prime minister, Yel'tsin sacked Yastrzhembsky, apparently for his support of Luzhkov as a PM candidate. Valentin Yumashev, who assisted Yel'tsin in writing his memoirs, was elevated to the post of chief of staff.

Yumashev, a longtime Yel'tsin family friend and close ally of Dyachenko, seemed remarkably ill-suited to organize the work of the powerful Kremlin bureaucracy. As a recent Moskovsky komsomolets article (6 Apr 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0406) relates, Yumashev "paid absolutely no attention to the structures directly under his subordination." The security organs in particular suffered from Yumashev's inattention as critical edicts on appointments which required "the president's urgent signature would lie around the Kremlin for three or four months."
It is unlikely that concern over Yumashev's inept management led to his dismissal (or was his resignation simply accepted?). Yel'tsin, returning to the Kremlin after another bout of illness, may have fired Yumashev just to prove he was back in charge. (See Nemtsov interview in PERSPECTIVE, January-February 99, for his comments on this.)

In turn, General Nikolai Bordyuzha was appointed to take charge in the Kremlin, in addition to his duties leading the Security Council. What exactly were the criteria applied to that decision? Yel'stin had been ill, so it is unlikely that he had the time to take the full measure of the general's character, work ethic or loyalty. Perhaps, in the brief honeymoon between the Kremlin and the Primakov government, Yel'tsin accepted a prime ministerial recommendation on the appointment.

Now, in the fury of the current Kremlin upheaval and general political crisis, Bordyuzha has been removed in favor of Aleksandr Voloshin. Was Bordyuzha removed for his support of Primakov, his bungling of the procurator general's resignation, or was he recognized just to be the wrong man for the job? Perhaps more importantly, should Boris Nikolaevich be wondering where Sergei Filatov or Viktor Ilyushin have gone?

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By John McDonough and Sarah Miller

Russia stays out of Yugoslav armed conflict...

A month of NATO airstrikes against Yugoslavia has proven that early Russian saber rattling was simply a combination of moral support for the Serbs and fiery rhetoric for domestic consumption. In fact, the Yel'tsin government continues to distance itself from any hint of military involvement in the Balkans and has reinvigorated attempts for a diplomatic solution with the appointment of Victor
Chernomyrdin as special envoy to Yugoslavia. (NTV, 0800 GMT, 19 Apr 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0419) While there has been some conflicting information flowing from the Yel'tsin government, the Duma and the Federation Council concerning the exact level of militancy in Moscow (most notably the "misunderstanding" about retargeting nuclear weapons at NATO countries), the Kremlin has been quick to set the record straight (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1240 GMT, 9 Apr 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0409), highlighting its dove-like approach to the crisis. Indeed official Moscow has continually emphasized its desire to remain outside the military conflict, however, the Russian government has not missed an opportunity to attack NATO and its actions in the Balkans. Although such attacks are clearly designed to weaken NATO's position and are often accompanied with warnings of a larger war in Europe, it appears as though Yel'tsin is not prepared to risk the future of Europe and all of Russia on his Balkan "ally."

**Continues diplomatic attack on NATO...**

Stating that NATO has violated the 1997 NATO-Russia accord by attacking Yugoslavia, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said that Russia will "have nothing to say to NATO... as long as the intervention against Yugoslavia continues." (AFP North European Service, 0915 GMT, 18 Apr 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0418) These anti-NATO statements from the Yel'tsin government are only the latest in an ongoing attempt to isolate and fracture the Atlantic alliance. Earlier in the month, after over a week of NATO bombings, Ivanov reiterated Moscow's call for a new security system in Europe, emphasizing an expanded role for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). (ITAR-TASS World Service, 0954 GMT, 8 Apr 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0408) It appears as though Ivanov is attempting to use the latest crisis in the Balkans to highlight NATO's ineffectiveness in resolving conflict in Europe. Ivanov's latest attack was that NATO violated the precept of the NATO-Russian accord "that neither of the parties would use force in Europe." (AFP North European Service, 0915 GMT, 18 Apr 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0418) These attacks clearly serve to strengthen Moscow's long-pursued goal to subordinate NATO to the OSCE.
...But leaves the door open, just in case
While Yeltsin and his senior ministers have continually attacked NATO, they have not completely turned their backs on the 50-year-old alliance. Russian foreign ministry statements have clearly supported a peaceful resolution to the Kosovo crisis, stating that the "actions of NATO... are a blatant violation of the UN charter." (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 1329 GMT, 21 Apr 99; nexis) but have fallen far short of calling for the destruction of the alliance. While Moscow has recalled its senior representative to NATO and has refused to attend the NATO 50th anniversary celebrations in Washington, almost the entire Russian contingent remains at NATO's headquarters in Brussels. (DEFENSE NEWS, 19 Apr 99) This provides a clear indication that Moscow has not discounted NATO's post-Kosovo role in Europe. Apart from ensuring Russia's future contact with NATO (which translates to Partnership for Peace dollars), a Russian presence in NATO's headquarters during Operation Allied Force serves Moscow by providing liaison for diplomatic solutions and as a significant source of information for the Russian intelligence services.

Planes, trains, and tanks?
Russia owes the ROK $1.47 billion -- $1 billion of which was received in cash -- from a 1991 loan. The loan should have been paid in 1998, and only nine years after Russia and the ROK established diplomatic relations, the Koreans would like their money back. While the Russians proposed to offset the debt with commodities, the economic crisis and Russia's worldwide debts have made repayment difficult, if not impossible. Negotiations have yielded little more than Russian proposals to barter themselves out of debt, and repeated Korean requests for the money. At meetings in early April, the Korean government neither accepted nor rejected a Russian proposal to make payment in military equipment, including a helicopter, tanks and infantry vehicles. However, at subsequent meetings, the Koreans grabbed the opportunity for at least partial repayment in raw materials or weapons. (YONHAP, 0026 GMT, 9 Apr 99; FBIS-
EAS-99-0408) With the 10th anniversary of Russo-Korean diplomatic relations in sight, the momentum seems to be gearing up to push through a solution, even if it means calling the $470 million a loss. Conclusion of the negotiations will facilitate anniversary celebration plans, including South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung's visit to Russia next year and the inauguration of the "new partnership" status of Russian-Korean relations. (YONHAP, 0018 GMT, 9 Apr 99; FBIS-SOV-99-0408)

I'm not coming to your house to play!
Amidst the newest squabble over the Kurile Islands negotiations, President Boris Yel'tsin has decided not to visit Japan this spring. Neither will negotiations take place in late April. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 7 Apr 99) Instead, Yel'tsin's old "friend," former Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, will travel to Moscow to hold one of the informal "no jackets" meetings that reinvigorated Russo-Japanese relations in 1997. The Russo-Japanese negotiations have been at a halt for almost a year and a half, despite the signing of the Moscow Declaration last autumn. The declaration simply created two intergovernmental committees charged with negotiating the peace treaty and territorial issue. In April 1999 the process remains stymied by the uncompromising attitude adopted by both sides at the negotiation table. Nor were these discussions expedited by the announcement of US-Japan Defense Pact implementation measures. Mr. Hashimoto's visit appears to be a last-ditch effort by the Japanese, who have pledged that the issue will be resolved by 2000.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch
By Michael Thurman

POLITICAL PARTIES
Yabloko places partition of Kosovo before Belgrade

It may never be known exactly what Prime Minister Primakov said to Yugoslav President Milosevic, but Yabloko's Grigori Yavlinsky provides a hint. Apparently Moscow has suggested that Milosevic may keep part of Kosovo. In an interview, Yavlinsky said he drafted a peace plan that began with a partition.

"We have drawn up a plan and handed it to the foreign minister, and, judging by the information available to us, some of its provisions were possibly discussed there. For example, the division of Kosovo into northern and southern Kosovo, the introduction of such troops under the auspices of the OSCE." (RUSSIA TV, 1640 GMT, 30 Mar 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts)

NATO is demanding that Milosevic withdraw from Kosovo entirely, but the statement by the liberal flank of the Moscow establishment, let alone the communists and nationalists, suggests that this might not be necessary. Russia stands ready to defend his right to some of Kosovo. And considering that by NATO's own admission Russia must be part of the negotiated endgame, Russia's position should be given serious consideration.

Simply, NATO seems to be operating under the assumption that Milosevic will surrender (more or less unconditionally, for this is the only way the alliance's rather unrealistic and contradictory series of demands makes any sense) and the country will return to the status quo ante bellum, refurbished with a few cosmetic changes. In the classic blindness to reality that often accompanies moral crusades, NATO does not realize that Yavlinsky may have done the alliance a favor. The very fact that Kosovo is more or less depopulated, and the refugees are terrified to return under the Yugoslav flag, suggests that all or part of Kosovo needs to be effectively separated from the federation, or that the regime in Belgrade has to be changed. The former is more possible.
In a shocking display of ignorance of their own history, paradoxically from the very wellspring the present action is putatively drawn, NATO members do not see that long-term peace in the Balkans cannot come from an imposed settlement devoid of on-the-ground reality. For this high-handed illusion we can thank the United States, which has never quite understood that stability at all costs can be quite unstable and that what is right and good does not always accord with what is viable and possible. Sometimes the good guy gets shot. The Europeans should know better.

So by Yavlinsky suggesting that Kosovo be split down the middle, both sides can claim victory, refugees can go home, and Russian Prime Minister Primakov can accept the Nobel Peace Prize, perhaps only minutes before he is sworn in as the next Russian president.

**Russian premier is the country's most popular politician**

In a recent poll, Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov's popularity rating moved up to 28 percent from 24 percent last November. This may be because of his recent diplomatic appearance in Belgrade. Next on the list is Gennadi Zyuganov and Grigori Yavlinsky, with 18 percent apiece. Yavlinsky is pulling high numbers because of his clean record and continuous opposition to everything and everyone in power. Zyuganov, almost always in the top three or four politicians mentioned, should theoretically poll better considering that he heads the largest, and perhaps only true political party in the nation. Zyuganov's numbers are down from 20 percent since November. Next in line is Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov at 17 percent (up 1 percent from November), and Krasnoyarsk Region Governor Aleksandr Lebed with 11 percent (down from 17 percent in November).

In the single digits, ex-Prime Minister Sergei Kirienko garnered 6 percent (3 percent in November); leader of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) Vladimir Zhirinovsky: 6 percent (unchanged); State Duma speaker Gennadi Seleznev: 5 percent (6 percent); former Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov: 4 percent
(unchanged); governor of the Kemerovo region Aman Tuleev: 3 percent (2 percent); leader of the Popular Rule party Nikolai Ryzhkov: 3 percent (2 percent); leader of Russia is Our Home (NDR) Viktor Chernomyrdin: 3 percent (unchanged); and Federation Council speaker Yegor Stroev: 2 percent. (INTERFAX, 1636 GMT, 2 Apr 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0402)

PROCURACY

Prosecutor general's saga continues

There have been three developments in the last few weeks. First, Prosecutor General Skuratov initially claimed that his raid and confiscation of papers in the Kremlin last month was conducted in conjunction with the Swiss Prosecutor General Carla del Ponte's investigation of the Swiss company Mabetex. Apparently Del Ponte has denied an investigation is underway. Why Skuratov said this is anybody's guess. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 1356 GMT, 5 Apr 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0405)

Second, President Yel'tsin, rebuffed by the Federation Council in his attempt to remove Skuratov, temporarily dismissed Skuratov due to a criminal case filed against the prosecutor for abuse of office. The Federation Council's consent is required to remove the prosecutor general pursuant to Article 102(h) of the Russian Constitution, and Yel'tsin's enemies have taken advantage of the opportunity to oppose his firing of Skuratov.

The third development stems from, and has implications for, the workings of the prosecutor general's office. Although Skuratov was effectively placed under house arrest on 2 April, and a temporary replacement (Yuri Chaka) had been named, the prosecutor general's office managed to issue a warrant on 6 April for the two oligarchs and bankrollers of Yel'tsin's last bid for the presidency, Boris Berezovsky and Aleksandr Smolensky. Russia now enjoys the unique position of having two prosecutors general -- one appointed by Yel'tsin, but not confirmed by the Federation Council, and one rejected by Yel'tsin, but accepted by the
Federation Council. Both prosecutors, apparently, are issuing arrest warrants, each gunning for the other side's people. It might be argued that if one prosecutor general is good, two must be better. However, all that will be accomplished is only another stain on the name of the federal government and yet another reason for the regions to distance themselves from Moscow and its intrigues. (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 1322 GMT, 6 Apr 99; nexis)

Russian Federation: Armed Forces
By CDR Fred Drummond

Sailing away
The Russian Navy was the subject of a great deal of press reports during most of the month of April. Receiving the most coverage in the West were the on-again, off-again reports of Russian warships sailing towards the Adriatic in response to NATO's Operation Allied Force. Less notice was paid by the major US dailies to the numerous exercises conducted by the Russian Navy in its own home waters.

The Adriatic Sea or bust
One week into NATO's air war against Serbia, Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev stated that "one warship" from the Black Sea Fleet would sail for the Mediterranean, and as many as six other ships were being prepared to do the same. This news item led off an article in the Boston Globe that described overall Russian reaction to the events in the Balkans. (BOSTON GLOBE, 1 Apr 99) Numerous press releases from various Russian media sources then followed over the next two weeks. From the tone of the early articles, it appeared that several warships might be joining the intelligence-gathering vessel (spy ship, or AGI, in Cold War terminology) Liman, which had apparently already commenced its trip to the Adriatic. (See Editorial Digest, 5 April 99.) The Liman was reported to have arrived in theater during the first week of April.
One interesting article appeared in Komsomol'skaya pravda. In the reporter's view, the news that seven Russian warships from the Black Sea were being prepared to sail for the Adriatic caused "almost panic" amongst the NATO allies. The article closed on a more considered tone, though. It noted that the numerous Russian naval activities scheduled or underway from the North Sea to the Pacific may divert NATO "spaceborne reconnaissance forces" (spy satellites, in Cold War terminology) from concentrating primarily on the Adriatic. Whether the US rates the Russian fleet of today so high on its interest list, we cannot say. It is a good approach, though, by the Russians to try to provide some support for the Serbs by tying up valuable assets. The paper acknowledges that this is the only way Russia can help out Yugoslavia militarily. (KOMSOMOL'SKAYA PRAVDA, 2-9 Apr 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0427) Then, the waffling on any warships sailing out of area began.

By 13 April, Sergeev was quoted, through an Interfax report, that only two warships were expected to travel to the Adriatic. (ASSOCIATED PRESS, 13 Apr 99; The Washington Post On-line) In the event, it appears that warships were never really "expected" to sail to that region, as on 15 April an unnamed Russian defense ministry official stated that no Black Sea Fleet vessels were set to travel "anytime soon." (INTERFAX, 1148 GMT, 15 Apr 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0415) However, that did not mean that the Russian Navy was sitting idle in the various ports.

All of the talk of the Russian Navy presenting a presence in the war zone was, of course, taking place in the larger context of overall Russian reaction and dissatisfaction with NATO's operation. This included the brief flurry of excitement when President Boris Yel'tsin apparently threatened NATO countries with the retargeting of Russian ICBMs back to their Cold War coordinates, and comments by various Russian politicians that a NATO ground war in Yugoslavia could lead to a third world war. The naval aspect was just one side of a many-faceted Russian approach to "counter" NATO and provide support, of whatever means,
to the FRY. Sharing intelligence with Yugoslavia and having Russian warships "showing the flag" in the Adriatic are methods of supporting Yugoslavia and opposing NATO, while at the same time not taking actions so drastic that Western dollars would stop flowing into Russia.

As a reminder, some ongoing US assistance efforts to Russia include 18,000 metric tons of wheat being shipped to Vladivostok, and the continuing work of the Nunn-Lugar program to help Russians reduce their inventory of nuclear weapons. (ASSOCIATED PRESS, 17 Apr 99; The Washington Post On-line, and BOSTON GLOBE, 20 Apr 99) Also expected are further IMF loans. The saber rattling, or in our case make that anchor rattling, is somewhat understandable, and is entirely in line with the typical Russian modus operandi. This is especially true today in Russia, where no politician can afford to be regarded as too pro-Western, but no one in the government is willing to see a reduction of incoming dollars.

Fleets at sea
The Russian armed forces have not seen increased budgets, alleviated the increasingly harsh living conditions that its members struggle under, or received all of the outstanding back wages. Nonetheless, the Russian Navy has sent its Northern, Black Sea, Baltic, and Pacific fleets on exercises during April. The Northern Fleet finished a relatively large-scaled exercise in early April. The Pacific Fleet participated in maneuvers with ground and air forces around the same time frame. The Baltic Fleet undertook exercises mid-month, with around 40 vessels participating. (ITAR-TASS, 1 Apr 99; nexis) This is an interesting figure, though if true, is not indicative of credible combat capability. The Baltic Fleet comprises only six destroyers/frigates, around 30 patrol craft, and numerous smaller vessels. The three fleets conducted further large-scale exercises near the end of the month, with more combined land-sea-air operations and ship-borne missile firings taking place. The Black Sea Fleet's 10-day
exercise was scheduled to undertake joint maneuvers with Ukraine's navy. (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 23 Apr 99; nexis)

What does this all mean? According to the Nezavisimaya gazeta article, the naval exercises' "aim is to unambiguously warn the US and NATO authorities about Moscow's resoluteness to sternly and adequately react to possible threats and challenges to its security after the adoption of NATO's new strategic concept stipulating the expansion of its zone of responsibility to a global scale." Apart from "demonstrating" that Russia's navy is still a viable force, and one with which others may have to interact, the pertinent question is: What cost to day-to-day operations and maintainability did these exercises exact? An Associated Press report (on Russian combat aircraft procurement) put the matter in perfect context, stating "Russia remains a nuclear superpower, but its conventional forces are barely capable of feeding their troops, much less fighting a war." (ASSOCIATED PRESS, 20 Apr 99; The Washington Post On-line) Western observers are not forecasting a return to Soviet naval Cold War capabilities anytime soon, no matter how many ships, of various sizes, go to sea for short periods of time.

Newly Independent States: CIS
By Sarah Miller

Where in the world is Boris Berezovsky?
Boris Berezovsky is finally back in Moscow now that he is no longer a wanted man. Since he heard the news of his replacement, he'd been spending time in France and Kyiv. Upon his arrival in Moscow on 19 April, Berezovsky denied any wrongdoing -- he's charged with money-laundering and corruption -- denounced Primakov, and promptly went to the hospital claiming back pains. In light of the previous month's events -- being sacked from his post, denied access to the CIS Heads of State meeting, berated by Primakov, and faced with an arrest warrant -- Berezovsky's pains, whether physical or metaphorical, have been sharp.
Berezovsky remained in France until the prosecutor general's office dropped the warrant for his arrest. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 19 Apr 99)

**Berezovsky may be out, but his plan lives on**

The results of the 2 April CIS Heads of State Summit have finally become clear. Judging by Yel'tsin's closing remarks at the meeting, Berezovsky seems to have left a small but indelible mark on the CIS reorganization and integration process. Although his plans for an Executive Committee led by a strengthened executive secretary were not adopted, his streamlining suggestions were. (See Editorial Digest, 9 December 1998.) As a result, funding and personnel for the new executive committee were drastically decreased. In total, CIS central body staff was cut from 2,500 to 700. (Jamestown Foundation PRISM, 9 Apr 99) The Executive Committee, which has legally taken over the duties of the Executive Secretariat, the Interstate Economic Committee, and the nine intergovernmental committees of the commonwealth, is headed by newly appointed Chairman of the Executive Committee Yuri Yarov. Among his first acts as executive chairman, Yarov stressed that reorganization will continue with the understanding that the CIS Executive Committee shall not have supranational powers or exceed a total of 710 staff members. (ITAR-TASS, 1715 GMT, 7 Apr 99; FBIS-SOV-99-0408) The CIS Interparliamentary Assembly (IPA) -- newly joined by Ukraine -- supported the heads of state reorganization decisions at the IPA meeting in St. Petersburg only one day after the summit.

Despite their reorganization successes, the heads of state were unable to prevent the withdrawal of Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Georgia from the Collective Security Treaty, although Russia attempted to broker a last-minute deal with Georgia over Abkhazia. (INTERFAX, 0916 GMT, 19 Apr 99; FBIS-SOV-99-0419) The deal would have repatriated Georgian refugees to Abkhazia in an effort to reverse some of the Russian-sponsored expulsions of Georgians in 1993. Despite the warm welcome that Yel'tsin extended to Shevardnadze at the summit, Georgia only agreed to extend the Russian peacekeepers' presence to 2
April 1999 ex post facto and Russia signed a series of documents that simply restated Georgian sovereignty. This was not enough to make the Georgian side reconsider withdrawal.

GUAM+U
On the heels of the Georgian, Azeri, and Uzbek withdrawals from the CIS Collective Security Treaty, Shevardnadze also announced that the GUAM alliance (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova) would expand to include Uzbekistan. (RFE/FL NEWSLINE, 20 Apr 99) Although its member states describe it as neither a military nor a defensive alliance, they have spent April preparing documents that redefine its "nature and objectives." GUAM has often been viewed as the anti-Russian bloc of the CIS. Meanwhile, Russia has completed the transfer of S-300 antiaircraft missile systems to Armenia and has negotiated a Russian military presence and base on Tajik territory. While both were carried out under CIS Collective Security auspices, they represent the strengthening of Russia's bilateral military ties with both countries. Uzbekistan's accession to GUAM, and Russia's new military deals with Tajikistan and Armenia may constitute the beginning of a renewed rift between GUAM+U and the Russian group including Belarus, Armenia, and Tajikistan.

Newly Independent States: Western Region
By Tammy Lynch

UKRAINE
Comrade! I've missed you!
It took eight years and the NATO bombing of Serbia to find it, but Russia and Ukraine finally have an issue on which they agree -- separatism. Or, to put it more precisely, they have agreed to oppose "the spread of separatism."
During the last week, as Viktor Chernomyrdin took the lead negotiator's role for Russia, the two countries seem to have synchronized their proposals to end the Kosovo crisis, and come much closer in the process. Until Chernomyrdin arrived on 20 April, Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma had been vigorously advancing his own "peace plan," which his administration said "differs from the position of Russia." (ITAR-TASS World Service, 9 Apr 99; nexis) In fact, on the day Chernomyrdin arrived, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Boris Tarasyuk could find nothing more to say about the Russian peace proposal than, "Our stand coincides with Russia's in that it does not matter who ensures peace in the region." (ITAR-TASS, 20 April 99; nexis) At the same time, Ukraine had condemned the NATO airstrikes, but had also condemned Yugoslavian actions.

Kuchma's three-stage plan called for "synchronous cessation" of hostilities on the part of both NATO and Yugoslav forces, an international UN- or OSCE-led peacekeeping force which would assist the refugees to return home, an expansion of the OSCE humanitarian mission, and broad autonomy for Kosovo. At that time, Kuchma's call for a synchronous halt to military operations meant that the Serbian army would withdraw "while" NATO ended its bombing. (INTERFAX, 15 April 99; nexis) The Russian plan called on NATO to stop bombing before Yugoslav forces would leave the Kosovo area. The Ukrainian plan -- as opposed to Russia's -- also clearly stated its opposition to Serbian ethnic violence against Albanians.

During Kuchma's meeting with Chernomyrdin, however, those differences were apparently removed -- at least in public. Chernomyrdin is now talking about ending "ethnic purges in Kosovo" and allowing refugees to "return to their homes." (ITAR-TASS World Service, 0847 GMT, 21 Apr 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts/nexis) Kuchma, meanwhile, continues to push for the Serbian army's withdrawal from Kosovo, but now says that his plan is identical to Russia's. "Our positions fully coincide," he said on 23 April. "The problem can be resolved only through preserving Yugoslavia's territorial integrity, granting
Kosovo broad autonomy, halting military actions, and withdrawing the Serbian army from Kosovo." (REUTERS, 23 Apr 99; Russia Today) It is unclear if Kuchma was still speaking about a "synchronized" halt to military actions, or if the newly agreed upon Russian-Ukrainian plan now calls for a halt to military actions before Serbia withdraws, as his statement would imply.

Both sides have also stepped up the rhetoric against separatism. Before NATO began airstrikes, Kuchma warned, "Separatism is a disease that is too quick to spread in the world...." (INTERFAX, 23 Mar 99; nexis) On 15 April, he called separatism "the 20th century's malaise." (INTERFAX, 1756 GMT, 15 Apr 99; FBIS-EEU-1999-0415)

Chernomyrdin responded to Kuchma's statements by letting the world know that Russia wants to solve these types of problems in the future. "It is our first-priority task jointly to develop mechanisms for settling such conflicts not only in Kosovo, but also in other parts of the world," he said. (INTERFAX, 0952 GMT, 21 Apr 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts/nexis) Chernomyrdin curiously did not specify if that included areas of ethnic conflict within Russia itself -- or within Ukraine for that matter.

Just say 'no' to NATO! And no to government cooperation, too
Parliament Speaker Oleksandr Tkachenko's calls for his fellow MPs to pull out of NATO have so far gone unheeded. Tkachenko has brought a bill that would "cancel" all legal agreements with NATO to the Ukrainian parliament floor at least three times in the last several weeks. Each time the measure fell at least 35 votes short of the necessary 226 in favor. Before the votes, President Kuchma said that even if the vote passed, "this doesn't mean that the executive power will implement it." (INTERFAX, 1614 GMT, 5 Apr 99; FBIS-EEU-1999-0405)

Comment
This statement exemplifies what has turned into a completely paralyzed government structure, with both the executive and legislative bodies unable to dislodge the other. Tkachenko has lashed out more and more frequently at the president, while Kuchma has blasted the parliament for "political bickering." Just days ago, he confirmed what observers of Ukraine have known for some time: "A tug of war between the legislative and executive power is taking place," he said. (REUTERS, 23 Apr 99; Russia Today)

Every significant measure that has taken effect in Ukraine in recent months has done so through decree. The Ukrainian parliament has become more of a populist pulpit for candidates and parties than a governing body, while Kuchma has simply begun issuing decrees without consultation.

From his statements to the press, it appears as if Kuchma believed that the measure to "cancel" NATO agreements (agreements put into effect by his presidential decrees) would pass. One of the main reasons for the surprising failure of the measure could have easily been the low number of deputies who came to vote: Over 100 deputies in the left-controlled parliament did not show up at "work" that day.

However, during the same week, parliament passed a law that would have increased pensions paid by the government, thus increasing expenditures by over 10 billion hryvnyas. Kuchma vetoed the bill, noting that this would do nothing but increase arrears by 10 billion hryvnyas. Meanwhile, the IMF and World Bank continue to wait for the parliament to take action on privatization proposals.

It appears they, and everyone else, may have to wait until 31 October, the date of the next presidential election. Given the recent swell of support for the leftist parties, there seem to be two choices for what the government will look like after that election. Ukraine will either see more of the same tug of war between the
left-controlled parliament and the center-right president, or the country will witness the removal of the pull to the right entirely.

In the meantime, Kuchma has refused to heed parliament suggestions to boycott the NATO 50th Anniversary Jubilee, and arrived as scheduled in New York on 22 April to meet with Western leaders.

**BELARUS**

**Nothing but a dictator**

As opposition activity continues to mount, President Alyaksandr Lukashenka and his Belarusian KGB appear to have given up all pretense of democracy. The government has begun a systematic crackdown on all opposition figures, parties and movements. Perhaps most concerning is the complete lack of attention Lukashenka's actions are getting from Western countries. Although the attacks on individuals are difficult to quantify, particularly because of the difficult conditions under which the media in the country operate, Lukashenka/KGB operations in the last few weeks have ranged from arresting the leading opposition candidate for president to destroying files on computers at newspaper offices to arresting a youth opposition leader for handing out pamphlets.

In early April, former Prime Minister Alyaksandr Chihir and several other members of the Belarusian "shadow parliament" were arrested -- many for the third or fourth time. Chihir is a candidate for president in the alternative presidential election being held on 16 May by the disbanded parliament. He was held in jail for several days, until he was finally charged with embezzlement. The arrest was condemned by a group of liberal Russian Duma deputies, who wrote, "The restriction of freedom of assembly, introduction of censorship in the mass media, liquidation of the legitimately-elected parliament -- all this indicates the establishment of a totalitarian state in Belarus." They continued, "Representatives of the ruling regime have not found courage to bring a political charge against him, inventing the false ground of financial wrongdoing.... We
demand immediate freeing of A. Chihiir and other political prisoners in Belarus."
(ITAR-TASS World Service, 5 Apr 99; nexis)

Meanwhile, KGB officials recently "questioned" Aleh Hruzdzilovich, a correspondent at the Naviny newspaper, after he published an internal government memo detailing KGB plans to derail the opposition. Hruzdzilovich said the memo listed "prevention and deterrence measures" against the shadow parliament members, which should be used to "cripple and compromise the opposition structures." The plan included arrests, stemming financing sources and cutting off support from Western diplomats in the area. (BELORUSSKAYA DELOVAYA GAZETA, 9 Apr 99, p. 3; FBIS-SOV-1999-0416) Hruzdzilovich included a denial from the National Security Council that the document was real in his report, but that was apparently not enough.

Around the same time, former Interior Minister Yuri Zakharenko, who is also now a leading opposition member, was forced into hiding when an arrest warrant was issued for him. The prosecutor’s office has charged Zakharenko with obstruction of justice for reportedly "forming a union of anti-Lukashenka police and army officers." (INTERFAX, 15 Apr 99; nexis)

Meanwhile, the head of the opposition central election committee, Viktor Honchar, was forced to postpone a press conference about the upcoming election when, according to Belapan, "the police sealed off the building where the news conference was to be held. The electricity supply to the building was cut off allegedly for power grid repairs." (BELAPAN, 0930 GMT, 15 Apr 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0415)

And finally, Yawhen Skochka, a 22-year-old organizer of a youth opposition group, was arrested and charged with "organization of or participation in group actions disturbing the peace." His crime: visiting 10 embassies in Minsk to deliver pamphlets titled "Belarus into Europe." If convicted, as expected, he could be
given a three-year prison term. (BELAPAN, 1320 GMT, 18 Apr 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-0418)

These activities follow mass arrests of opposition members in March, and repeated, systematic harassment of media in the country. However, these activities do not seem to have caused major concern in Western countries, which apparently are content to wait and see what happens, and let the opposition struggle forward alone.

MOLDOVA

No way to treat a neighbor

Relations between Ukraine and Moldova took a downturn recently after Ukraine cut all electricity supplies to its neighbor. That decision, which came after Moldova had built up $40 million in debt, left 60 percent of the country with no electricity. The situation was compounded when Romania also suspended power supplies because of $9 million in debts. Moldova had been rationing power for months, with some users only having electricity for a few hours each day. However, the decision to cut off power completely appears to have taken the Moldovan government by surprise, and there does not seem to be any way that the debts can be paid, leaving President Lucinschi to request that Ukraine restore power for humanitarian reasons. So far, those requests have gone unanswered. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 7 Apr 99; nexis)

Meanwhile, the Moldovan authorities have stopped a Ukrainian cargo plane in Chisinau, for suspected arms smuggling. The plane was traveling from Hungary to Yemen. It is the second time in one month that a Ukrainian plane has been stopped in Moldova on arms charges. (ITAR-TASS World Service, 9 Apr 99; nexis)
By Monika Shepherd

TAJIKISTAN

Russian troops to occupy Tajikistan for 10 more years

Perhaps much to their own surprise, United Tajik Opposition (UTO) Chairman Said Abdullo Nuri, Uzbek President Islom Karimov, and the leaders of Afghanistan's Taliban have found themselves to be political allies in regard to Russia's latest military agreement with Tajikistan. Despite these leaders' vehement protests, the Russian and Tajik defense ministers signed a treaty on 16 April which grants Russia's military the right to establish a base on Tajik territory and to quarter troops from the 201st Motorized Rifle Division at that base for the next 10 years. Russian defense ministry spokesmen stressed that the agreement does not provide for the quartering of additional troops in Tajikistan, but merely for the construction of more permanent headquarters for the 6,000-7,000 units already deployed there. In fact, Russian defense ministry officials stated that they would like to reduce those numbers somewhat, in order to decrease maintenance costs. (NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 17 Apr 99, pp. 1, 5; Defense and Security/nexis)

Whether or not the Russian government decides to deploy additional troops in Tajikistan, the fact that Russia's military occupation of Tajik territory has been extended for another 10 years, regardless of continued progress in the inter-Tajik peace process or of changes in regional political stability, has drawn loud objections from the Tajik opposition, as well as from Uzbek and Afghan Taliban leaders. UTO Chairman Said Abdullo Nuri told journalists on 19 April that the new Russian-Tajik military treaty threatens Tajikistan's independence and undermines the development of the country's own armed forces. (VOICE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, 1600 GMT, 19 Apr 99; BBC Worldwide Monitoring/nexis)
Uzbekistan's president objected to the fact that he had not been consulted beforehand as to the treaty's necessity. He stated that the establishment of a more permanent Russian military base in Tajikistan will only help to destabilize the region even further and threatens the security of Central Asia as a whole. President Karimov expressed his concern that once the base has been set up, the Russian defense ministry will equip it with heavier and more modern weapons systems, which could provoke a violent reaction from the Taliban.

(VOICE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, 1530 GMT, 18 Apr 99; BBC Worldwide Monitoring/nexis, and SEGODNYA, 17 Apr 99, p. 2; What the Papers Say/nexis)

The bulk of Russia's troops in Tajikistan are stationed near Dushanbe, Qurghanteppa (close to the Uzbek border), and Kulob (near the Afghan border). Russian defense ministry sources have said that the new base will most likely be built somewhere between these three cities. (INTERFAX, 0915 GMT, 15 Apr 99; BBC Worldwide Monitoring/nexis) Thus, it is not surprising that both the Uzbek and Taliban leaders are uneasy, faced with the prospect of a permanent Russian troop presence less than 60 miles from their borders. The Taliban's foreign ministry issued a statement accusing the Russian government of establishing the base in order to facilitate its intervention in Afghanistan's domestic affairs and appealed to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to prevent further Russian meddling. The fact that Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev met with General Ahmad Shah Mas'ud (leader of the main anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan) during his trip to Dushanbe in early April probably did little to reassure Taliban leaders of the peaceful, purely defensive nature of the recently signed Russian-Tajik military treaty. (INTER-PRESS SERVICE, 22 Apr 99; nexis)

The agreement to keep Russian troops in Tajikistan for an additional 10 years has dealt a severe blow to the Tajik government's credibility in the inter-Tajik peace process. The goal of this process is to establish a stable, independent, popularly elected government in Tajikistan which will be able to manage its own
affairs and provide for its own security. This is not likely to happen as long as the Tajik armed forces are so heavily dependent on Russian assistance for equipment, training, and the defense of their own borders. Furthermore, despite the Moscow government's repeated assertions that the units stationed in Tajikistan are neutral and under strict orders not to interfere in Tajikistan's internal affairs, the events of the past several years have made it clear that the troops are there to support President Rahmonov and his administration. This could make it very difficult for the UTO to force the current Tajik government to fulfill the remaining terms of the peace agreement's political protocol, not to mention what might ensue if President Rahmonov and his supporters lose in the elections scheduled for late 1999.

The Tajik peace process could also be brought to a halt if the Uzbek government begins to intensify its interference in Tajik affairs, in what President Karimov may consider a justifiable response to the threat of a strengthened Tajik-Russian military alliance. In the past, the Uzbek government has used military, political, and economic means to exert pressure on President Rahmonov to include more Leninobodi (from Tajikistan's northernmost province) officials in the national government, as well as to lend more support to Uzbekistan's struggle to assume a leadership position in Central Asia. The prospect of a long-term Russian military presence in Tajikistan will no doubt greatly undermine Uzbekistan's efforts to control events in neighboring countries. Therefore it is not at all unlikely that the Uzbek government will undertake some type of retaliatory action, which could further destabilize not only Tajikistan, but perhaps other countries in the region.