Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

Transition

Perhaps the most remarkable event of the past month was not that President Boris Yel'tsin used a constitutionally enshrined process to resign his office early and ensure the most favorable electoral conditions for his chosen successor, but rather that several insiders knew of his plans in advance and didn't leak the news. For once in the Yel'tsin presidency it seems vital negotiations on political succession and personnel changes were held close to the vest. In sharp contrast to last year's blatant horse-trading, mediated by the Primakov government, the resignation-for-immunity deal struck between Yel'tsin and Vladimir Putin was quick and quiet. While the full details, especially regarding the larger Family, are yet unclear, the basic outline is known and accepted both at home and abroad. Yel'tsin has full immunity from prosecution and Putin has fast elections at a time when his popularity is high and under circumstances that will make it difficult for a rival to mount an effective challenge.

Leaving to another time the consideration of Yel'tsin's legacy, the analysis and projection of a Putin presidency takes on a sense of urgency. The now standard view of Putin's background as somehow politically unclear because of his dual tracks as career KGB agent and St. Petersburg Mayor Anatoli Sobchak-allied reformer is misleading, primarily because of the misuse of the term "reformer." It was not unusual in the late Soviet period for KGB officers, especially those stationed in the West (as was Putin), to recognize the need for reform to the Soviet system. That does not suggest, however, that their view of reform would have been palatable to the West. Even the more economically liberal reform
ideas of Sobchak were blended with a strong sense of Russian nationalism, a fact often overlooked by Western analysts.

In any event, acting President Putin has quickly established a record as chief executive that may provide insight into the contours of his political views. Clearly, Putin's first priority is securing electoral victory in March. That priority colors many of the steps he has already taken, and is evidenced by his characterization of personnel reshuffles as "temporary." (ITAR-TASS, 1312 GMT, 10 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0110, via World News Connection)

The changes to the Kremlin staff, including the dismissal of Tatiana Dyachenko and Pavel Borodin, demonstrate a move to distance himself, at least publicly, from the much-maligned "Family," but the retention of Aleksandr Voloshin and the soft landing for Borodin, who is slated for a new job in the Belarus-Russian State Council, suggest that the Family will not be far removed from the decision-making process. (KOMSOMOL'SKAYA PRAVDA, 12 Jan 00; Russian Press Digest, via lexis-nexis)

The changes made in the government could reflect a slight shift in alliance with Boris Berezovsky, which may prove dangerous if Berezovsky feels provoked and decides to lash out through his media outlets. First Deputy prime minister Mikhail Kasayanov, rumored to be Berezovsky's candidate for prime minister in the Primakov-Stepashin reshuffle last May, has been demoted to railways minister. While he does retain control of a financially powerful ministry, he is now significantly removed from the political decision-making. Finance Minister Nikolai Kasayanov has been selected as the sole first deputy prime minister, and has been designated by Putin as "government coordinator," which would appear to mean he will assume the role of acting prime minister, temporarily, without the title. (INTERFAX, 1307 GMT, 10 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-1010, via World News Connection)
Kasayanov, who retains his post at the finance ministry, has claimed that deputy Alexei Kudrin (a Chubais ally from St. Petersburg) will serve as de facto finance minister. (INTERFAX, 1822 GMT, 11 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0111, via World News Connection) The other former first deputy prime minister, Viktor Khristenko, has been knocked down to one of several deputy prime ministers. Ilya Klebanov has also been named a deputy PM, as well as Emergencies Minister Sergei Shoigu, who apparently received the position as a reward for the remarkable Duma electoral success. (INTERFAX, 1307 GMT, 10 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000, via World News Connection)

Another deputy prime minister, Nikolai Koshman, who is also the Russian representative to Chechnya, finally addressed the questions raised about responsibility for the bombing in Russia last Fall. Denying that the security services played a role in the explosions, Koshman claimed that the Basaev-allied Commander Khattab "admitted" the bombings "were his work." (ITAR-TASS, 1151 GMT, 6 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0106, via World News Connection) Koshman also claimed to have uncovered a terrorist training camp in Urus-Martan, where they also discovered explosives like those used in the Moscow bombings

Perhaps the most alarming trend in the Putin acting presidency, however, is the revitalization of the Security Council and the decision to approve and publicize a change in the security concept that would permit the use of nuclear weapons, "where all other means to settle the crisis have been exhausted or have proved ineffective." (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 1000 PST, 14 Jan 00; via afp@clari.net)

A change in nuclear policy would be a delicate international issue at any time, but in the middle of Russia's first presidential succession, when the chosen successor is so little-known to the world, it seems a particularly dangerous signal for Putin to send. Additionally, Putin's focus on security issues was evident from
the very start of his assumption of presidential powers, as one of his initial acts on 31 December was to chair a meeting of the Security Council. The new security concept, approved at the 6 January Security Council session, is reported to strengthen substantially the role of the power organs domestically and may include the creation of a "super special service." (Attributed to Segodnya in THE GUARDIAN, 13 Jan 2000; via Johnson's Russia List)

Putin has made a point to reassure the public that he is firmly committed to principles of democracy and a market economy, but his assurances must be tempered with an understanding that his actions carry more weight. So far, he has intensified the war in Chechnya, heightened the importance of the security services and demonstrated a willingness to rely upon several of the same tainted insiders who dominated the Yel'tsin regime. So far, these actions bode well for neither Russia nor the West, but the period following the elections, when his "temporary" changes become more permanent will be far more telling.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Chandler Rosenberger and Sarah Miller

Reformer or nationalist? Or reformer-nationalist?

Yel'tsin's surprise resignation on New Year's Eve left a host of questions at the bottom of champagne flutes across the globe. What should the West make of Vladimir Putin, the ex-spy who had seized Moscow's reins? Had Putin's stint spying in Germany convinced him that Russia should adopt Western ways? Or had Putin drunk too deeply from the well of Soviet ideology ever to keep his country on a reformist course?

Putin's actions in his first two weeks -- especially his acceptance of a "new" national security doctrine -- have shown how false this prevailing dichotomy is.
Putin, it seems, is both a reformer and an anti-Western nationalist -- a man committed to strengthening Russia to give it more weight to throw around.

Looking into Putin's past for clues to his future, US administration officials found two dominant and apparently contradictory themes. On the one hand was Putin's 15 years of service, from 1975 to 1990, as a KGB agent. Putin, according to the German weekly Der Spiegel, had earned the East German Army's Bronze Order for running spy operations against West German firms. On the other hand was Putin's service, following his return to St. Petersburg in 1990, as a deputy mayor in the reformist city council -- a government that gave some reformers, including Anatoly Chubais, their first taste of power.

"Putin has two strands in his background," National Security Advisor Sandy Berger told a panel on ABC's This Week, "and I think we'll have to see which is the dominant strand, where his center of gravity is, so to speak." (USA TODAY, 3 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis)

In fact, Putin's past is more black than white. In recalling the new premier's career, administration officials neglect to mention that Putin served as head of the Federal Security Service, the domestic branch of the former KGB, from 1998 to 1999. Even in the post-Soviet era, Putin deployed Soviet tactics. He insisted, for example, that Aleksandr Nikitin, a retired naval officer turned environmentalist, be prosecuted for espionage for an unprecedented eighth time. Nikitin's crime? Using open sources to show the Russian Navy's poor environmental record. (THE NIS OBSERVED, 27 Sep 99)

This Jekyll-and-Hyde view of Putin, moreover, led the White House and many journalists to misread the first signals from Moscow. The possibility that the two dispositions -- reformist and nationalist -- fit together in the same character was never seriously considered.
START-II -- Good for me, but good for you?

Obsessed as it is with arms control regimes, the US administration looked with fondness on Putin’s promise to push the START-II Treaty through a newly amenable Duma.

The White House might have known better. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot had rushed to Moscow a day after the new parliament’s election, only to find that the Russian government had attached strings to any deal. Even the new "reformist" Duma would only pass START II, Talbot found, if the United States dropped revisions of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. (The Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 3 Jan 00)

The Putin government has promised quick ratification of the START-II Treaty, but has also kept Russia's interests in mind. Defense Minister Igor Sergeev, for example, argued that Washington would have a more difficult time amending the ABM Treaty if Russia made such a gesture of goodwill. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 12 Jan 00) If Moscow agrees to one White House initiative in order to thwart another, is this evidence of a pro-Western tilt?

The Security Concept -- (almost) the same as it ever was

If it was Dr. Jekyll that the White House saw approving its arms control treaty, then only Mr. Hyde could have crafted a security doctrine as nefarious as the one President Putin signed on 6 January. When the 21-page document was printed a week later, correspondents reacted with horror at the discovery that Russia saw international relations as a contest with the United States. Worse still, reporters found that Moscow had committed itself to reducing the influence of the United States abroad, lest a "multipolar world" give way to a "unipolar" order following Washington's lead.

"Russia has revised its defense doctrine to make it easier to press the nuclear button in an international crisis," The Independent panted, "while unequivocally
declaring the west a hostile power that must be resisted." (THE INDEPENDENT, 14 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis) The New York Times concluded that the revised language on nuclear weapons, "a subtle but unmistakable stiffening of the previous strategy," should be seen as the Kremlin "underscoring its darkening view of the West." (THE NEW YORK TIMES, 15 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis)

Is this the bad Putin all have feared, the dark regime following Boris Yel'tsin's enlightened reign? The new doctrine, to be sure, is somewhat freer in the use of nuclear weapons. Russia may now use them "to repel armed aggression, if all other measures for resolving the crisis situation have been exhausted and have proved ineffective"; the 1997 version allowed Russia to turn to its atomic arsenal only "in case of a threat to the existence of the Russian Federation." (REUTERS, 2219 GMT, 14 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis, and THE NEW YORK TIMES, 15 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis)

The change, however, appears merely to accommodate a Kosovo blowing up in Chechnya. If the West were to pummel Russian troops as it had the Serbs, the "existence of the Russian Federation" arguably would not be at stake, but Russia would nonetheless prefer the freedom to use its nukes. The doctrine's anti-Western tone, moreover, is not much different from that of the 1997 version, in which NATO expansion was alluded to as a threat to Russia's national security, and in which Russia reasserted its right to use nuclear weapons in response to a non-nuclear attack. (PERSPECTIVE, Jan-Feb 98)

As recently as October 1999, Yel'tsin's Russia reserved the right to use its atomic weapons against non-nuclear powers if they were merely allied to nuclear countries and attacked a country to which Russia had "security obligations." If Turkey attacked Syria, for example, Russia could launch. (KRASNAYA ZVEZDA, 9 Oct 99; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis)
The emphasis on nuclear weapons in both the new and old doctrines, however, does cast Moscow's suspicion of ABM Treaty revision in an ominous light. One is tempted to ask: Does Russia oppose an American antimissile defense system because its prestige in world affairs depends so heavily on its own rockets? And if so, has Russia's nuclear policy changed much in the move from Yel'tsin to Putin -- or from the breakup of the Soviet Union to the reemergence of Russia?

'Liberating' Grozny

If Western governments remained puzzled by Putin's nature, Putin must have been just as perplexed by his new colleagues on the world stage. Before Yel'tsin's exit, Western governments sometimes found the courage to criticize Russia's war in Chechnya. None, however, would stand against the new Putin regime. Some, such as US President Bill Clinton, came close to endorsing Moscow's brutal war.

Who now recalls when the members of the G-7 were willing to criticize their Russian guests? At the organization's December meeting, Germany, France and Britain were reported to have taken a hard line with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, and might have endorsed sanctions if the US had not intervened. (The Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 20 Dec 99) Since then, however, the rise of the "nationalist" Putin appears to have frightened Russia's critics away. German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, once Moscow's fiercest critic, has assured Moscow that Chechnya will play no role in upcoming tripartite talks with Italy. (ITAR-TASS, 12 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis)

The US administration had never had a noble record of restraining Moscow's dark impulses. When the White House finally cancelled a $500 million loan from the Export-Import Bank to the Russian oil industry, it meekly assured Moscow that corruption, not the wholesale slaughter of Chechens, had forced its hand. (DEUTSCHE PRESSE-AGENTUR, 2341 CET, 21 Dec 99, via lexis-nexis)
Apparently taken aback by Yeltsin's sudden resignation, however, the administration plumbed new moral depths. Russia might well continue to "liberate Grozny," Clinton wrote in a laudatory essay on Yeltsin in Time magazine; the only question was how best to avoid civilian casualties and, later, to ponder whether war was the best way to deal with "problems involving separatists and terrorists." (TIME, 1 Jan 00)

On the day Clinton's essay was published, Russian forces unleashed an exceptionally fierce air attack on the Chechen capital, dropping dozens of bombs from low-flying jets. Civilians hiding in the city's basements reported it was the worst attack they had seen in three months. (THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, 1 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis) Did fear of provoking Yeltsin's mysterious successor prompt Clinton to endorse such savagery, and to embrace Russia's definitions of the war? Did Clinton fear that, otherwise, a new "nationalist" might emerge in the Kremlin and drive the "reformers" from its halls? If so, the White House has shown how little it understood its former friend, and how little it understands Moscow's new regime. Like Yeltsin, Putin probably would like to shake off Communism but only because it has weakened the Russia he loves. Like Yeltsin, Putin is probably both a reformer and a nationalist, and one just as prone to anti-Western words and deeds.

For good or for ill, Putin is probably not that different from his old boss. He's just better at the job. Whether that's welcome news for the West remains to be seen.

**Dear Japan, Don't hold your breath but please give us money. Thanks, Russia.**

Up until the final hours of 1999, the Japanese government remained optimistic about relations with Russia. And although the peace treaty and Kurile Islands dispute were not resolved by the year 2000, the Japanese ambassador to Moscow, Minoru Tamba, hasn't give up hope for resolution of the issues within the year. (INTERFAX, 1704 GMT, 16 Dec 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1216, via World
News Connection) The immediate response by the Russian government was yet another postponement of Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov's trip to Japan until sometime in February. This delay suggests that the new Russian leadership, like the old one, will place Russo-Japanese relations behind other, more pressing international relations with Western Europe, the Middle East and China. The news of the postponement came shortly after Ivanov told European countries that Russia would "devote much of its attention to Asian countries." (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 18 Dec 99) So far, Russian attention to Japan has only taken the form of loan requests, resulting in a new $100 million loan granted on 29 December. (INTERFAX, 1220 GMT, 29 Dec 99; FBIS-EAS-1999-1229, via World News Connection)

Is Muslim criticism of Chechnya fading?
As Russia's campaign against Muslim Chechnya rages on and Russia implements new, harsher "security measures" aimed at Chechen males, Iranian National Security Council Secretary Husan Ruhani was dispatched to Moscow to discuss Iranian concerns. With no end of the war in sight, the Muslim world -- currently being represented by Iran, which leads the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) -- has again submitted its request that Russia find a quick, political end to the Chechen conflict. (INTERFAX, 11 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis) This request, first voiced in December by Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Khazzari, only persuaded the Russian government to accept OIC humanitarian assistance.

The outcome of the latest meeting in Moscow suggests that, despite Moscow's dubious aims in Chechnya, Iran is not willing to criticize substantively Russia's operation just yet. Iranian concerns, it seems, are predictably focused on finalizing current arms sales and energy cooperation deals. The Iranian press, however, not only has questioned Russia's real intentions in the Caucasus, but also has pointed out the strain that Russia's "imperialist" and "expansionist" policies will have on its multipolar policy. (KAYHAN, 21 Dec 99; FBIS-NES-1999-1221, via World News Connection)
FEDERAL ASSEMBLY

Communists come in first, Unity second

There are 450 seats in the Duma, half of which are selected by proportional representation by national party lists, and half are selected by first-past-the-post single-member districts. Six parties overcame the minimum five percent hurdle needed to enter the Duma on party lists. Results are as follows:

1. Communist Party of the Russian Federation, 24.29 percent, received 67 seats
2. Unity Interregional Movement (Medved), 23.32 percent, received 64 seats
3. Fatherland-All Russia, 13.33 percent, received 37 seats
4. Union of Right Wing Forces, 8.52 percent, received 24 seats
5. Zhirinovsky Bloc, 5.98 percent, received 17 seats
6. YABLOKO, 5.93 percent, received 16 seats

(ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 31 Dec 99; FBIS-SOV-2000-0104, via World News Connection)

Presently, nine single-member district seats remain open, eight through the invalidation of each district's particular election results, and one seat for Chechnya which will remain vacant for the time being. A Duma by-election was originally suggested for 19 March, but that was before President Yel'tsin resigned and the date for the presidential elections moved to 26 March. Discussion is still underway as to whether to combine both the presidential and Duma by-elections. CEC Chairman Aleksandr Veshnyakov has come out in opposition to the idea, but his reasons are unclear.
The two surprises were the strong showing by Yel'tsin/Putin's electoral bloc Unity, and the poor showing of Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov and former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov's electoral alliance Fatherland-All Russia.

**Thirteen members of election lists blocs decline to enter the Third Duma**

Not for the first time, some members of elected blocs have refused the honor. After the 1995 Duma elections, then-Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, movie director Nikita Mikhalkov, and General Lev Rokhlin -- the three leaders of Our Home is Russia -- refused to take their Duma seats.

While not widely known, current election law states that if only one of the top three names on a federal party list refuses to sit in the Duma after an election, the entire party is prevented from sitting, unless the refusal is based on the party member's wish to retain another official position or he/she is in poor health.

In the wake of the Third Duma election, 13 persons have refused to take their seats. These include: Sergei Shoigu, head of Unity, who wishes to remain emergency situations minister; seven members of Fatherland-All Russia, including two of its three leaders, Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, and St. Petersburg Governor Vladimir Yakovlev; the Zhirinovsky Bloc's Stanislav Zhebrovsky; and four members of the Communist Party -- including the governors of the Tula and Kemerovo regions, Vasily Starodubtsev and Aman Tuleev. However, there has been no indication that any of these parties will be prevented from sitting as a result of these decisions.

Former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, the other Fatherland-All Russia leader, has decided to take his Duma seat, as has former Duma speaker Gennady Seleznov, a Communist who lost a narrow race for governor of the Moscow region. (THE MOSCOW TIMES, 11 Jan 00; via www.moscowtimes.ru)
Single-member district MPs form group in Duma

It seems that the country's regions are well represented in Moscow, what with the Federation Council (whose members are either the governors or leaders of parliament from the country's 89 regions) and All Russia's rumored split with Fatherland in the Duma. (ITAR-TASS, 1834 GMT, 23 Dec 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1223, via World News Connection) Before its electoral alliance with Fatherland, All Russia was a regional association and may revert to one again.

Now, Duma deputy Gennady Raikov says that around 50 Duma deputies chosen by single-member districts have voiced interest in organizing a group to defend the interests of the regions. Maybe they should think about defending their own interests in the Duma. (ITAR-TASS, 0932 GMT, 5 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0105, via World News Connection)

The potential importance of district deputies in the Duma, as opposed to party deputies, is not often discussed. The Russian Duma is chosen in two ways, and the institutional loyalty of its 450 members may be similarly bifurcated. Party list members who sit in the Duma at the pleasure of their respective parties may owe their allegiance to that party, much as European parliamentary systems operate. Deputies who won their seats in single-member districts, as happens in the United States, might have different motivating factors.

If these prior assumptions are true, and much more research is required to know for sure, there should be more evidence of party jumping and cross-party voting for district deputies. As their power base is in the home district, it might be expected that their conduct is more fluid because they seek to please the voters at home. Party deputies, conversely, might be expected to evince greater party discipline in voting, and be less likely to change party affiliation. An interesting possibility would be that district deputies may wield more influence than their individual numbers may warrant. During periods of coalition building for particular
articles of legislation, for example, Duma faction leaders may reach out to swing
district deputies, who may demand certain policy changes for their support.

All of this is speculation and needs further study. The ability of parties to control
their members, the personal avarice of district deputies, or perhaps a kleptocratic
parliamentary culture may negate the assumptions made above. Whatever the
result, it is clearly true that if the Duma is to be better understood, analysts must
look not only at party numbers, but also at the relationship between district and
party deputies.

REGIONS
Finally, Vladivostok adopts a city charter
The last city to do so, Vladivostok finally has a democratically elected city
charter. This means that for the first time a mayor can be elected, a city council
chosen, and pressing municipal issues addressed. In the past there have been
serious disagreements between city and regional authorities, with the latter
usually ending up the victor. The city has often been run directly by the regional
government. Now, the relationship between the two levels of authority can be
clarified and, one hopes, the city's notorious reputation for lawlessness can be
reigned in somewhat. (ITAR-TASS, 0730 GMT 23 Dec 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-
1223, via World News Connection)

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

Nikitin acquitted
Aleksandr Nikitin, the former Russian naval officer turned environmentalist, was
acquitted of high treason charges 29 December by a St. Petersburg military
tribunal. (AFP, 1511 GMT, 29 Dec 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1229, via World News
Connection) Judge Sergei Golets' unexpected verdict shocked Nikitin, his
defense counsel, and the prosecution. The verdict is a significant victory for Nikitin. Since his February 1996 arrest, he has endured a four-year struggle against an unrelenting opponent: the notorious Federal Security Service (FSB). The FSB faced its first setback in the Fall of 1998, when Judge Golets stopped Nikitin's first trial partway and ordered a "re-investigation," a relic from the Soviet era when judges avoided acquitting an obviously innocent person. (THE NIS OBSERVED, 17 Sep 99, 7 Oct 98) In his stunning 29 December verdict, Judge Golets ruled that the Russian constitution forbids charges based on secret or retroactively applied law, and provisions of the constitution which forbid declaring environmental hazards "secret" also applied to nuclear submarines. Nikitin's legal victory last month was a complete rebuke of the FSB's entire case. (THE OTTAWA CITIZEN, 30 Dec 99; via lexis-nexis)

Nikitin's acquittal is even more amazing given the nationalistic, anti-Western sentiment fanned by former FSB head, prime minister and now acting President Vladimir Putin. Following his appointment as FSB director in August 1998, Putin oversaw an organization which retained its KGB-style secretive and bullying tactics. (THE ECONOMIST, 8 Jan 2000; via lexis-nexis) After promoting anti-Western hostility during the NATO bombing campaign in Kosovo, the FSB mounted a campaign to vilify Nikitin, making the ridiculous assertion that Nikitin emboldened the West and started the war. (THE OTTAWA CITIZEN, 30 Dec 99; via lexis-nexis) There is little reason to believe Putin will champion civil liberties in the near future.

Despite the victory, Nikitin's ordeal is not over yet. The prosecution has ordered an appeal to the Supreme Court. In addition, Nikitin may face administrative harassment if he tries to leave Russia and visit his wife and daughter, who now live in Canada. Finally, little has been done to dismantle safely Russia's rusting fleet of nuclear submarines. Optimists hope Nikitin's legal victory will help move Russia towards a country ruled by law instead of raw power. However, Putin's vision of a strong state does not presage an equally strong judicial system.
**Russia becoming blind to ballistic missiles**

Russia's early warning system is so decrepit that it can no longer detect intercontinental ballistic missiles at least seven hours a day and is completely blind to submarine-launched missiles. Russia's problems are due to the Kremlin's inability to finance replacement of aging satellites designed to detect ballistic missile launches. Analysts believe only 4 of 21 early warning satellites are working. This is as much a problem for the United States as it is for Russia. Russia's newly promulgated national security doctrine expands the first-strike role for nuclear weapons. In addition, the logic of nuclear deterrence requires both sides to launch their missiles before a surprise attack obliterates them. In the heat of a crisis, analysts fear Russia may misread a nonthreatening rocket launch or unambiguous data as a nuclear first strike and launch a salvo at the US and Western Europe. (OMAHA WORLD HERALD, 10 Jan 00)

US-initiated efforts to prevent such an incident have met with limited success. After repeated US prodding, Russia agreed to allow US and Russian officers to sit together over New Year's Eve at the ad hoc Center for Y2K Strategic Stability at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, CO, monitoring for any false indications of attack caused by the Y2K computer bug. Russia retreated from an earlier proposal to allow US officers into Moscow's early warning centers, and subsequent reports indicate the Russian defense ministry has no desire to participate in a permanent joint early warning center. (The Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 6 Jan 00) Russia's refusal to discuss any US-led solutions to this problem gives more justification for the US to build a National Missile Defense system to guard against an accidental or unauthorized intercontinental ballistic missile launch from Russia.

**Exports maintain Russian arms industry on life support**

On the eve of 2000, China's navy formally accepted the first of two Russian-built Soveremenny-class destroyers. The ship, with its new Chinese crew, was visiting
the Baltic port of Baltiisk before departing for China. (ITAR-TASS, 1115 GMT, 5 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0105, via World News Connection) China bought the two ships for the bargain price of $800 million. In comparison, one US Arleigh Burke-class destroyer costs about $900 million. The ships' most formidable weapon is the supersonic Moskit antiship cruise missile, also known in the West as the SS-N-22 "Sunburn." Russia is scheduled to deliver the missiles to China by late 2000, the first foreign sale of this type of missile. Beijing has also purchased from Russia four Kilo-class diesel-electric submarines.

In the absence of robust Russian weapons procurement, the export market has kept Russia's arms industry on life support. In 1999 Russia expects a $3 billion dollar profit from arms exports. Of the $3 billion, $1 billion is attributed to Chinese purchases. (MEGAPOLIS-KONTINENT, Dec 99; Agency WPS, via lexis-nexis) The exports have helped to offset Russia's feeble defense procurement over the past eight years. For example, in 1990 the Soviet Union bought 1,600 main battle tanks, 500 self-propelled artillery pieces, and 430 tactical aircraft. However, in 1998 Russia bought only 15 main battle tanks, 10 self-propelled artillery pieces, 40 tactical aircraft. China, India, and Iran are Russia's biggest customers. The ruble's 1998 devaluation also sparked sales to less affluent buyers, particularly those in conflict-prone regions of Africa. (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, STRATEGIC BALANCE 1999/2000, Oct 99) The Duma has also legislated new laws to prevent bankruptcies and privatization of the Russian military-industrial complex's flagship organizations, a move many experts believe is intended to strengthen the state's grip of this key industry. (DEFENSE NEWS, 20 Dec 99) Acting President Putin's signature on the legislation would halt any privatization of Russia's military-industrial complex.

**Russian navy seeks respect**

In an effort to remake its image from a bygone naval power, Admiral Victor Kravchenko, head of the Russian navy's main staff, intends to deploy ships to "all important waters, including the Mediterranean Sea." (RIA NEWS AGENCY, 1425
GMT, 17 Dec 99; BBC, via lexis-nexis) This plan supports acting President Vladimir Putin's policy advocating a strong military. The government is expected to fund deployment to the Mediterranean of Russia's only aircraft carrier, the Admiral Kuznetsov, along with a destroyer, frigate, and tanker. Forward bases in Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam and Tartus, Syria may also receive repair funds. (JANE'S DEFENSE WEEKLY, 1 Dec 99) Given the infirm state of Russia's navy, a Mediterranean deployment would be a departure from recent operating patterns. Except for isolated cases, Russia's naval fleets have confined themselves to their home waters. Other than showing the flag, the planned deployment will probably be of little strategic significance to the region.

**Senior commanders replaced**

It was announced on 7 January that the two senior field commanders in Chechnya, Lt Gen Gennady Troshev and Maj Gen Vladimir Shamanov, were to be replaced by their deputies, General Sergei Markarov and General Aleksei Verbitsky. (The Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 10 Jan 00) The two general officers were the commanders of the eastern and western federal groupings in Chechnya, respectively. Sources in the defense ministry were quick to assure the Russian public that the generals were not being "fired" but were merely being rotated to allow other commanders to gain combat experience. Acting President Putin reaffirmed this, stating that "Russia does not cast aside such generals." To support this explanation a group of senior officers from the Russian General Staff and from remote military districts were to arrive in the Chechen combat zone in the near future for the purpose of gaining on-site exposure to combat operations. Military spokesmen say that, to date, more than 20 generals have gained practical combat experience during combat operations in Chechnya. (INTERFAX, 1724 GMT, 7 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0107; and ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 10 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0110, via World News Connection)

Generals Troshev and Shamanov will return to their former duties. Maj Gen Shamanov was commander of the 58th Army of the North Caucasian Military
District and Lt Gen Troshev was deputy commander of the North Caucasian Military District.

Despite these reassurances, the removal of the two senior field commanders in Chechnya at this particular point in time is odd and should raise eyebrows. Their replacement comes at a time when combat operations are stalling -- the siege of Dzhokhar has lasted for several weeks despite repetitive official announcements that Chechen operations are going well. Combat soldiers are becoming more vocal in their dissatisfaction with command decisions and the media have begun to report more openly on the dire conditions and increasing casualty numbers of the Russian forces. It should also be remembered that it was Shamanov who, back in October 99, threatened possible "civil war" if Russian officials halted military operations in Chechnya. At the time, few doubted the general had sufficient support to back his threat.

It is likely that these officers have come to represent liabilities, particularly to acting President Putin, whose popularity going into the March 2000 presidential elections is said to depend so heavily on success in Chechnya. Either they have proven unwilling or unable to take on the next, more aggressive steps required to break the deadlock in Chechnya and/or they represent potential roadblocks should Russian officials decide to approach diplomatic/political resolutions in the near future. Either way they are out and the road is now open to resolve the Chechen issue before negative press can begin to harm Putin’s popularity.

**Now the gloves come off**

No sooner had Lt Gen Troshev and Maj Gen Shamanov been replaced then the heat was turned up on Chechen operations. Chechen militant forces began aggressive, significant offensives against several Russian-held areas. The cities of Argun, Gudermes and Shali came under surprise attack by Chechen forces, with serious Russian casualties reported. Russian defense forces blamed interior troops, saying they did not appropriately secure the Russian-held cities. Chechen
forces also were holding their positions despite reported heavy fighting in the city of Vedeno, the largest remaining town still in Chechen hands. Looking across the spectrum of Chechen operations it is clear, as of last week, that Russian operations in Chechnya were in trouble. Defense Minister Igor Sergeev confirmed this when he stated publicly that "the situation in Chechnya has seriously changed of late. An enlargement of the safe zones requires a new style and method of command." General Viktor Kazantsev, military commander for the Caucasus, blamed the setback on Russian forces being too "tenderhearted." (THE ECONOMIST (UK), 15-21 Jan 00; via Johnson's Russia List, and THE WASHINGTON POST, 14 Jan 00)

The Russian answer has been a harsh crackdown on the Chechen population and a restart of aggressive military operations. On 11 January it was announced that all Chechen males between 10 and 60 would be detained and interrogated to insure they were not "fighters." Also, Chechen males were no longer allowed to exit Chechnya as refugees. This action has raised the specter of the "filtration" camps established by the Russians during the previous Chechen war. Individuals in these camps reportedly were subject to lengthy detention, frequent torture, and in some cases summary execution. The Russian information campaign is also in full swing, with reports that sites have been discovered in Urus-Martan housing the identical bomb materials used in this summer's terrorist bombings in Russia. In addition, the Russian general prosecutor's office is reporting the discovery of mass graves in the "liberated" areas of Chechnya. These gravesites supposedly contain the bodies of Russian-speaking civilians killed by former Chechen authorities. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 6 Jan 00, and ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 6 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0106, via World News Connection) What better news releases to feed the flames of smoldering Russian public outrage!

Interior forces are being replaced or reinforced in Russian-controlled areas with front-line defense forces -- soldiers and armor. It is expected there will be a major offensive by Russian forces, following a supposed holiday cease-fire, against
Dzhokhar in an attempt to seize the city once and for all. It also appears that Russians are stepping up their operations in the southern mountains, particularly the Argun Gorge, to secure the border with Georgia, take Chechen strongholds and cut supply routes. Russia is dropping in its most combat-ready forces to seize key checkpoints and there are reports that Russian forces are using "high-yield" munitions to blow the Chechens out of the mountains and caves where they have constructed very effective defenses. (INTERFAX, 1022 GMT, 11 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0111, via World News Connection)

The prognosis for Russian operations in Chechnya is no end in sight for the foreseeable future if Russia continues its objective to wipe out all militants. The war is solidifying into the much-expected protracted and costly guerrilla war. That the Russians will eventually take Dzhokhar is a given. That the Chechen militants will become increasingly overwhelmed as their finite numbers in manpower and munitions continue to drop in the war of attrition is also expected. The wild card is acting President Putin. How far will he allow the protracted, costly and messy operations to continue in the face of increasing negative press? What is an imaginable end-state given the verbalized Russian objectives and the lack of an identifiable Chechen governing structure?

Newly Independent States: CIS

By Sarah Miller

What will a new, stronger Russian leadership mean for the frail CIS? What changes will a new year and a new Russian acting president bring to the old difficulties that plague the CIS? On 25 January, the CIS Heads of State will convene in Moscow for the first time since April 1999 to discuss bilateral and multilateral difficulties -- both old and new -- in the CIS. (ITAR-TASS, 1235 GMT, 7 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0107, via lexis-nexis) The upcoming meeting will be
an important indicator of how CIS relations will progress under the new Russian leadership. For the time being, all signals point to more of the same.

1 January 2000 came and went in the CIS but the Free Trade Zone (FTZ) remains an unresolved issue. The FTZ was slated to begin formally on 1 January, but it was not implemented. Since last spring, the issue has been at an impasse since some member states fear that the current FTZ treaty language either abrogates their current WTO status or jeopardizes future WTO status. The issue at hand isn't whether the FTZ is advisable, but what standards should apply, and Russia isn't budging. In the past, the FTZ issue has been a summit-breaker, perpetuating bad feelings between the pro-Russian clique in the CIS and those who support WTO standards. (THE NIS OBSERVED, 23 Jun 99)

With the meeting just days away, it is unclear if Georgia, a new WTO member, will attend the summit at which the FTZ will be discussed. If Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze does decide to attend, he will be forced to introduce further changes to the FTZ document or risk his country's new WTO membership. Kyrgyzstan is in a similar situation. Thus, the outcome of this summit's FTZ debate will provide an indication of how economic relations will shape up in the months to come. For now, the sides seem poised for another indecisive debate pitting Russia against Georgia.

The FTZ struggle is only complicated by Russia's operation in Chechnya and acting President Vladimir Putin's imposition of a "temporary" visa regime with CIS states. In Putin's recent statements on the CIS -- made while he was still prime minister -- he said that only a strong Russia could be attractive to commonwealth members and that cooperation was good only if it was in accordance with Russia's interests. (IZVESTIA, 17 Dec 99; via lexis-nexis) Putin's comments seem to demonstrate his desire to strengthen Russian leadership within the commonwealth. Clearly, Putin has an interest in bolstering Russia's strength and pursuing Russia's interests in the months leading up to the Russian presidential
elections on 26 March. And although these statements were made prior to his appointment as acting president, they still don't bode well for the upcoming summit, only two months prior to the election. For the CIS in 2000, the question is how much a stronger Russian leadership will serve to rattle the already fragile CIS structure.

Newly Independent States: Western Region
By Tammy Lynch

UKRAINE
Lights, camera, referendum!
President Leonid Kuchma has done what he has been threatening to do since his re-election. On 15 January, Kuchma called an All-Ukraine referendum asking voters for permission to dissolve the parliament, change its format from unicameral to bicameral, limit the immunity of deputies, and cut the number of deputies from 450 to 300. There seems to be only one major problem with the questions being asked of the people by Kuchma: According to the country's constitution, they can't be decided by referendum. Therefore, unless Ukraine is planning to follow Russia's lead and contort the constitution to fit the whims of the presidential administration, all decisions made by voters in this referendum will be legally moot. They will not, however, be politically moot, and that, perhaps, is the point. Currently in Ukraine, there is no question that Kuchma is riding high, while the parliament is struggling simply to stay above water. The result has been Kuchma's ability to introduce more reforms in the two months since his election than he did in the previous several years.

Perhaps Kuchma's reelection has energized him and his administration. Perhaps the country has finally hit the proverbial "rock bottom," and is now beginning to realize what must be done to climb out of the situation. Perhaps the influx of new, professional ministers is providing a needed boost to the cabinet. Or, perhaps
there is simply no choice left. Regardless of the reason, Ukraine appears to be tackling its problems with previously unseen speed and candor. Its energy situation is the best example.

After months of denial, Ukraine last week announced that Russia's accusations against it were true: The Ukrainian gas company Naftogaz has indeed been siphoning off gas as it is piped through Ukraine on its way from Russia to Turkey. "Naftogaz Ukrayiny is taking about 130 million cubic meters of gas a day and that is not anticipated by existing contracts," Yulia Timoshenko, the new deputy prime minister for the energy industries, said. "This means that our debt for gas is growing about $10 million a day." (BLOOMBERG, 0118 EST, 13 Jan 00; via America Online) Timoshenko also suggested that Ukraine's debt to Russia for gas received under previous contracts is well over $2 billion. Previously, the government had admitted only one-half of that debt.

At the same time, Timoshenko announced a three-month state of emergency in the energy sector, in order to speed implementation of a new reform program called "Clean Energy." The program is intended to decrease the use of domestic barter to pay for gas, improve management, and cut down on both "corruption and theft" which, according to Timoshenko, "are flourishing." She told reporters that law-enforcement agencies have recently found almost 500 "large-scale" crimes in the energy sector, but gave no further details. (ITAR-TASS, 12 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis, and DEUTSCHE PRESSE-AGENTUR, 1615 CET, 12 Jan 00; via lexis-nexis) There are signals, however, that the reform program may include the government taking back several energy companies privatized under questionable circumstances years ago.

It should be noted that Timoshenko is very likely using this situation to attack her former rival, Ihor Bakay, the head of Naftogaz Ukrayiny. Timoshenko spent years heading another gas company, Unified Energy Systems, which was favored over Naftogaz under the previous parliament head, Pavel Lazarenko. She was
dismissed from her position by Kuchma in 1998, as Naftogaz then became the favored corporation. (RFE/RL POLAND, BELARUS, AND UKRAINE REPORT, 18 Jan 00) Regardless of the motive, however, Timoshenko's statements at least represent some desperately needed movement on the issue. In addition, given the absence of his response to them, they seem to be supported by Kuchma.

As Timoshenko was developing her agenda for dealing with the energy crisis, President Kuchma was continuing to issue decrees in rapid succession. Last month, he decreed that the agricultural sector would be reformed, and appointed a new, more experienced minister of agriculture. The reform plan centers on the privatization of many of the country's collective farms by mid-2000. Kuchma then announced that the speed of state property privatization would be increased. According to Kuchma, as many as 2,200 properties will be privatized this year, compared to 435 in 1999, generating revenues of $500 million by the end of the year. (INTERFAX, 1707 GMT, 29 Dec 99; FBIS-SOV-1999-1229, via World News Connection)

The rejuvenated president then created an anti-corruption/anti-mafia committee led by Prosecutor General Mikhail Potebenko, and decreed changes in tax and custom laws, in order to answer some of the concerns of the IMF. Finally, he found the time to encourage his supporters to gather signatures to register the aforementioned referendum. Within just a few weeks, his minions had fanned out throughout Ukraine's regions, quickly obtaining the necessary 3 million signatures.

All of this presidential action has left the parliament -- which succeeded in blocking many presidential reforms last year -- seemingly helpless. For one shining moment, it even seemed that Kuchma had succeeded in creating the unimaginable -- a pro-presidential parliamentary majority. On 13 January, a group of deputies announced that they had created an 11-faction alliance. "We the people's deputies...recognizing our responsibility to voters for the current
situation in society..., announce the formation of a parliamentary majority," the coalition announced. (REUTERS, 1537 GMT, 13 Jan 00; via America Online)

Unfortunately, the coalition, which did not include the majority Communist Party, quickly proved unable to complete its most important pro-presidential task. On the same day that the coalition was announced, Kuchma’s budget for 2000 was rejected by the legislature. Deputies sharply objected to cuts in funding for regional administrations. (REUTERS, 0947 GMT, 13 Jan 00; via America Online)

This is the second rejection of the proposed 2000 budget; the first came in November of 1999. It further delays resumption of the IMF and World Bank lending packages, and presumably stalls at least some of the newly announced reforms.

The rejection no doubt guaranteed that Kuchma would announce his referendum. As the country faces debt default and energy and grain shortages, the parliament's inaction simply gave the president no choice.

But what will Kuchma achieve by this announcement? Perhaps, passage of his budget. Or perhaps, his coronation. President Kuchma may simply be using this referendum as a bargaining chip, as in the past when he threatened to hold similar referenda. Or, Kuchma may believe that he will never be politically stronger, and now is the time to slay his parliamentary dragon. Whether it is legally binding, this referendum campaign will be bloody for those in parliament, and takes place halfway through their current terms as many are preparing for their next election. Conversely, it promises to be a gentle battle for Kuchma, after a difficult presidential election. Either way, it will be painful for the voters, and a major disruption to the political process.

So, does Kuchma want to be king, or does he just need a budget? No doubt, the members of parliament are asking themselves the same thing today.
BELARUS

Presenting: Alyaksandr and the Treaty, Chapter 1432

Welcome, gentle readers. Although you undoubtedly thought you had read one of the final chapters in our ongoing saga, you were wrong. So, let us continue the Tale of the Treaty. It isn't pretty. But it almost was.

Alyaksandr and Boris signed the outline, then they signed the outline again and called it a "treaty." Everyone was happy -- until Boris got his immunity and decided to spend his time taking the cure and getting some sun. "I've lost a very strong politician..., the politician I could always count on, who always supported me and the Belarusian people," lamented Alyaksandr. (ITAR-TASS, 0005 GMT, 6 Jan 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0106, via World News Connection)

Now, the "treaty" has been ratified, but nobody cares, and Alyaksandr is lonely. He's waiting for Vladimir. He's apparently going to have a long wait. "Everything that was agreed with Yeltsin has been frozen," said parliamentary deputy Valery Drako. He was unable to provide details on what "was agreed" in the first place. (REUTERS, 1312 GMT, 13 Jan 00; via America Online)

So, Alyaksandr sits, and sits, and sits. And waits, and waits, and waits. There is, after all, no government to run; it's in shambles. There are no statements from his opponents to answer; they're all in jail, hiding or "missing." There is no wife to talk to; she's not allowed to disturb him in Minsk. There is no time, you see. Alyaksandr is waiting. Alyaksandr is waiting for Vladimir...

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Miriam Lanskoy

CHECHNYA

How did the war start?
Many have questioned the validity of the official story -- that Russia attacked Chechnya to protect itself against the bandits and terrorists who staged raids into Dagestan and set explosions in Moscow. However, over the last three weeks some specific evidence pointing towards a very different scenario has emerged.

In a 14 January interview with Nezavisimaya gazeta, former Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin related the origins of the present conflict:

"In regard to Chechnya, I can say the following. Plans for active measures in this republic were developed starting in March. And we planned to approach the Terek in August-September. So this would have happened even in the absence of explosions in Moscow. I worked actively to bolster the borders with Chechnya, and prepared for an active offensive. So, in this regard, Vladimir Putin did not invent anything new. You can ask him about this. At the time he was the director of the FSB and had all the information at his disposal. I always supported forceful and cruel policies (sil'noi I zhestokoi politike) in Chechnya. But I would think carefully before crossing the Terek and going further south."

It would seem from the above that the decision to wage war against Chechnya was made in March 1999 or earlier. Were the August 1999 raid in Dagestan and the bombings in Russian cities coincidences that the Kremlin exploited? Or were they orchestrated by Russian security services to provide a pretext for the brutal campaign against Chechnya?

Two articles by Helen Womak in The Independent point to the latter possibility. On 6 January she published an article based on the film footage brought out of Dzhokhar in December. In the film, a Military Intelligence (GRU) officer, Alexei Galtin, says: "I did not take apart in the explosions of the buildings in Moscow and Dagestan but I have information about it. I know who is responsible for the bombings in Moscow (and Dagestan). It is the FSB (Russian Security Service), in
cooperation with the GRU, that is responsible for the explosions in Volgodonsk and Moscow."

The second story published on 9 January suggests that Basaev was lured into Dagestan. He was given disinformation to suggest that the Dagestanis would revolt if he staged an outing to the region. A member of Putin's "Medved" party, Grigory Amnouel, told Womak that "They thought it would be easy but it was a trap."

Putin's 21 January statement, that "The danger of terrorist acts in Russia is growing," must be seen in this context. (UPI, 21 Jan 00; via chechnya-sl-@egroups.com) As the Russian offensive stalls and the casualties mount, the FSB and GRU may again resort to bombings to bolster lagging public enthusiasm for the war effort.

How will it end?
It has been observed frequently that acting President Vladimir Putin's popularity depends on his management of the war in Chechnya. Now that even the official information channels must admit that Russian troops are sustaining very heavy casualties and still failing to secure key Chechen cities, will the perception of the war and Putin change drastically? And how would that affect the presidential elections scheduled for 26 March?

Putin is under a great deal of pressure to wind up the hostilities quickly. The war helped his party in the Duma elections, but by March the electorate may want peace, particularly if the Chechen counteroffensive holds. That means negotiating a face-saving agreement with President Aslan Maskhadov, a solution Putin has avoided steadfastly, or intensifying the war effort by inflicting ever more deadly policies and weapons on the Chechen population.
Recent Chechen gains have severely undermined Russian morale, prompting a reshuffling of the military command, a temporary halt in the operations against Dzhokhar and new pessimism in the Russian press.

On 12 January, for the first time since the start of the war, a major Russian paper, Nezavisimaya gazeta, suggested that the present conflict may end in the same vein of ignominious failure as the last one. This paper is owned by Boris Berezovsky, who has fallen out with Putin and has called repeatedly for negotiations. However, the same pessimistic mood appeared in other Russian media as well. Whereas during the fall only Radio Liberty and Novaya gazeta (closely allied with the YABLOKO party) consistently championed the victims, now NTV, Obshchaya gazeta, Moskovsky komsomolets, and Segodnya have all registered their disapproval of the conduct of the war. (IWPR Caucasus Reporting Service, 15 Jan 00)

The shift in reporting followed several weeks of serious setbacks for Russian forces. After months of shelling Dzhokhar and over three weeks of concerted assault against the city, the Russian command halted the effort temporarily in the face of formidable Chechen resistance. Presently the Russian forces are mired in precisely the kind of street-by-street fighting that cost them so dearly in the last war.

The Chechen counteroffensive was launched after the Russian side refused President Aslan Maskhadov's offer of a three-day cease-fire on 8 January. The Chechen command then announced it was switching to guerrilla tactics. Indeed, small, highly mobile Chechen detachments operating behind Russian lines reopened the front in three cities that had fallen to the Russians weeks earlier: Shali, Gudermes, and Argun. Although the Russian side has claimed to have again captured those areas and the mountain village Vedeno, it is clear that this war is still far from over.
Not for the 'tender-hearted'
These defeats prompted the Russian leadership to reappraise its tactics. After meeting with key military and security advisers, Putin approved a new set of measures on 12 January. The military had undergone careful analysis of the present situation, examined all the evidence and identified the mistakes committed in Chechnya: "They include tender-heartedness and frequent absolutely groundless trust" towards Chechen civilians, Colonel General Viktor Kazantsev told reporters. (THE GUARDIAN, 12 Jan 00; via Johnson's Russia List) To remedy this fault, all Chechen males between the ages of 10 and 60 are now systematically "interrogated" -- possibly in "filtration" camps.

Such camps, created ostensibly to separate the fighters from the civilian refugees, operated during the last war. Then, apart from those detained on the border, Chechen males were rounded up from villages and towns that had fallen to the Russians. At this point, there is no telling how many are detained presently and whether this policy is being applied throughout the republic.

In fact, we may discover that this war has been even more terrible than the most sensational reporting has portrayed it. For instance, there have been numerous unproved allegations about the use of chemical weapons in Dzhokhar. Similarly, Chechen sources made public a Russian Security Council memorandum adopting a deportation policy. As the election nears and the position of the Russian forces becomes more desperate, these and other gruesome practices may well be confirmed.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia
By Monika Shepherd

UZBEKISTAN
Incumbent president receives 91.9% of vote, including that of his opponent
According to official results, on 9 January Islom Abdughanievich Karimov was handily reelected with 91.9% of the vote. Only 4.17% of eligible voters chose to cast their ballots in favor of the incumbent president's sole opponent in the race, Abdulhafiz Jalolov, a professor of Marxist philosophy. Prof. Jalolov was running as a candidate of the People's Democracy Party (President Karimov's previous party and also the Uzbek branch of the now defunct Communist Party of the Soviet Union), which is most notable for its staunch support of President Karimov and his policies. During the campaign, Prof. Jalolov publicly declared that he intended to vote for the incumbent president and that he had decided to register as a presidential candidate himself in order to give the elections a more democratic appearance. (TURKISTAN NEWSLETTER, 13 Jan 00) Uzbekistan's two main opposition parties, Erk (Free Will) and Birlik (Unity), were not permitted to participate in the 9 January elections and their leaders continue to live in exile.

Approximately 100 foreign observers were present during the elections; however, the OSCE refused to send even a small observer mission to monitor the polls (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 10 Jan 00) and the US State Department condemned the election process as "neither free nor fair." (TURKISTAN NEWSLETTER, 13 Jan 00) In a radio interview, Erk Party Chairman Muhammad Solih also deemed the Uzbek presidential elections completely undemocratic and called Prof. Jalolov's candidacy a sham. (VOICE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, 1500 GMT, 11 Jan 00; FBIS-NES-2000-0111, via World News Connection)

President Karimov's second term in office will last until 2005, when, according to Uzbekistan's constitution, he must stand down and permit his party to nominate a new candidate for the presidency. Many political analysts already may be questioning whether the current Uzbek president will allow anyone to replace him as the country's leader five years from now, since public questioning of his authority generally meets with harsh punishment. Open criticism of the Uzbek government or its policies is tolerated even less. In fact, it could be said that the degree of political repression in Uzbekistan today rivals that of Soviet times. A
few brief examples: In 1999 university department chairs were ordered to submit to the Uzbek Department of Higher Education lists of their faculty and staff in which they described each person's attitude toward national independence. University department chairpersons are now also required to pass examinations on President Karimov's written works in order to retain their positions. Doctoral candidates must pass a similar examination before receiving permission to defend their dissertations. No one is permitted to publish any written work until it has been approved by the state censors and discussion in the media of current government policy is virtually nonexistent; editors and news programmers prefer to focus on the accomplishments of officially approved Uzbek scholars and heroes from previous centuries.

Thus far, there is no reason to assume that President Karimov will change his policies in favor of allowing a more open society to develop. His main goals for the next five years center around Uzbekistan's economy and have little to do with improving the country's political life. In the absence of even moderate political reforms, it is difficult to envision the development of a viable mechanism which would allow Uzbekistan's political leadership to change without a violent struggle for succession. In fact, it is not unlikely that over the course of the next five years, President Karimov will find a way to change the electoral laws set out by the constitution so that he may extend his reign for another five years, or perhaps even indefinitely.

TURKMENISTAN
With a show of reluctance, President Niyazov agrees to reign for life
Turkmenistan's President Saparmyrat Niyazov (Turkmenbashi) rejected a proposal by the People's Council (parliament) on 27 December that he be appointed president for life and countered it with a bill of his own which bans smoking in all public places. The goal of this ban is to extend average life expectancy in Turkmenistan by ten years. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 28 Dec 99)
President Niyazov himself is no longer permitted to smoke, due to a recent heart operation.

However, just one day later, the Turkmen president apparently experienced a change of heart and accepted the parliament's proposal that he continue to occupy the presidency for the rest of his life. Perhaps emboldened by his new job security, President Niyazov then informed the People's Council on 29 December that, for the next decade, Turkmenistan will be ruled by only one political party, his Democratic Party. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 30 Dec 99)

Now it only remains for President Niyazov to abolish his country's constitution and openly proclaim rule by presidential decree, in order to realize fully his role as dictator for life.

**Newly Independent States: Baltic States**

By Kate Martin

**Difficulty in finding happy media in region**

Baltic area media experienced a bit of juggling in the past month, with job changes, dismissals, and outlet sales.

The Estonian Broadcasting Council fired Toomas Lepp, the general director of the country's public television channel Eesti Televisioon (ETV), reportedly due to Lepp's inability to deal with ETV's persistent financial problems. The dismissal was not a complete surprise, since Lepp had overcome a lack of confidence by most members of the ETV board in June with the promise that he would carry out reforms within the workplace. Lepp told reporters the dismissal was illegal and he intends to protest the move. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1700 GMT, 13 Dec 99) The council also announced that ETV must base its operations on an austerity budget beginning 1 January 2000; the channel faces a cut of 14-
24 million kroons (approximately US$898,000-1,540,000). Hand in hand with the budget announcement came the people effect: 130 staff members were told to expect notice of dismissal, as program production is cut by one-third. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1700 GMT, 21 Dec 99)

Latvian Independent Television (Latvijas Neatkariga Televisija, or LNT) acquired 49 percent of shares in the Estonian television company TV1 in December, according to Andrejs Ekis, the director general of LNT. Ekis also announced that the Estonian television company had acquired the right to retransmit Russia's ORT television. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1700 GMT, 20 Dec 99)

Meanwhile, buyers of the news agency ETA received some holiday cheer from the Estonian government, which ruled that repayment of the firm's tax debt of 3.7 million kroons (roughly US$237,000) could be staggered. Rose Marketing, which submitted the winning bid for the news agency last Fall, had undertaken to assume all the ETA's debts, liabilities and pending lawsuits. ETA ended the first three quarters of the year with a loss of over 8 million kroons. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1700 GMT, 21 Dec 99)

Also happily reporting was Lithuanian MP Rimantas Pleikys, a coordinator of the somewhat controversial Baltic Waves Radio, who voiced satisfaction with the first working days of the non-governmental radio station. "Our expectations have been totally justified," Pleikys said. "The broadcasts can be heard very well." The station, which began operations on 1 January, is broadcast over central and eastern Lithuania, as well as a large part of western Belarus. Pleikys reported that the radio station has heard from listeners in Minsk and neighboring districts. With support from West European foundations, the non-governmental Baltic Waves Radio airs a one-half hour program in Belarusian. Future plans include broadcasts from Radio Free Europe from Prague and a 10-minute news program
Survey says...
Several Baltic residents managed to have their voices heard, as pollsters went on a survey spree toward the end of the year. Sometimes, the results were surprising; at other times, answers could get downright unnerving. For example, nearly two-thirds of Estonian residents distrust the police so much they would prefer to take the law into their own hands, according to a Saar Poll taken between October 17 and November 1 among 1,020 Estonian residents. While the respondents who declared their belief that citizens should take some responsibility for keeping crime in check (26 percent) may be shouldering the burden of living in a civil society, a further 37 percent said they were ready to take their own initiative. Nearly one-third of the persons polled said they or their family members had been victims of crime within the past year. Of those who had turned to the police, an astounding 76 percent said the crime detection abilities of the police were poor. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1700 GMT, 13 Dec 99)

While many Estonians are ready to fight crime, they also appear ready to fight for their country. Persons concerned about integration of non-citizens can find some comfort in another Saar Poll, which revealed that nearly one-half of the country's non-Estonian-speaking population expressed a willingness to take up arms against a foreign invasion of Estonia. Eighteen percent of the poll's non-Estonian respondents replied they were ready to defend the country against an enemy, while 31 percent said they would probably do so. Of the Estonian speakers responding, 37 percent announced a readiness to take up arms, while 26 percent said they probably would fight. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1900 GMT, 13 Dec 99)
For many Lithuanians, the crime is in the government, or at least in government actions. Over 70 percent of participants in a recent poll held by the Vilmorus company believe that the sale of Mazeikiai Oil to the US-based Williams International company was against the law. Of the 1,002 citizens polled, 71.4 percent said they thought the transaction was illegal, 19.1 percent did not know, and only 6.8 percent believed the move was legal. A majority of persons responding, 55.9 percent, said they believed the ruling Conservatives had financial interest in the US company. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1900 GMT, 16 Dec 99)

Take our money -- please
The International Monetary Fund (IMF) followed the carrot-and-stick approach to fiscal happiness with each of the Baltic states. Offers of money (or the promise to offer money) invariably came with advice on straightening each government's fiscal house. Adalbert Knobl, the IMF's representative in Estonia, said that talks over the new economic policy memorandum being developed in Tallinn were concluding with a positive result for Estonia. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1700 GMT, 20 Dec 99) That almost-effusive report can only be explained by a surfeit of holiday punch.

In Latvia, the IMF announced the establishment of a 16-month credit of approximately US$45 million, to support the government's 2000 economic program. The government has said it does not intend to use the stand-by credit, and will treat it as a precautionary reserve. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1800 GMT, 11 Dec 99) Riga was less insistent on frugality with funds from the European Union's PHARE program. The EU granted 16.5 million euros for the implementation of three projects aimed at improving water treatment facilities, infrastructure support for improving water supply and sewer systems, and facilitating the pre-accession process by focusing on labor relations, the energy sector, and corruption. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1700 GMT, 22 Dec 99)
Lithuania also received some nice financial news, or at least the promise of good news. The IMF and World Bank pledged to extend approximately US$180 million in financial assistance if the country carries out reforms. The IMF, which is dangling the promise of an $80 million stand-by credit, expects Lithuania to trim its fiscal deficit and improve the outlook of the national and social insurance budgets. The World Bank wants the government to gain control over budget expenditures, carry out reforms in the energy and agricultural sectors and regarding pensions, and improve the private business environment. (BALTIC NEWS SERVICE DAILY REPORT, 1700 GMT, 13 Dec 99)