Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Richard Miller

Contradictory yet pragmatic on ABM and NMD

Russia has taken a two-track approach on the related issues of the ABM Treaty and a proposed US National Missile Defense (NMD) system. On one hand, it still defends continuation of the treaty and opposes any US NMD development. It courted international support for this position during the recent G-8 meetings and indirectly through the Sino-Russian Friendship Treaty signed two weeks ago. On the other hand, in the face of apparent US determination and a successful missile intercept, signals from the Kremlin in the past few days indicate a possible opening for renewed negotiations with the US.

Building opposition with China....

Russia and China oppose any US NMD system for a variety of reasons. Russia clings to its superpower image mostly because it remains one of the two largest nuclear powers. In Moscow's eyes, any ability to lessen the relative value of such weapons further reduces Russia's sway and influence in the world. Furthermore, Beijing views any such system as a possible means of enabling Taiwan to stiffen its resistance to mainland domination. Moscow and Beijing continue to portray the ABM Treaty as a "cornerstone of strategic stability" -- a point with which at least a few of the European NATO members agree.

Moscow and Beijing appear to be seeking the moral high ground on arms control to drive a split between the US and its traditional allies on the NMD issue. Duma Speaker Gennady Seleznev noted during Chinese President Jiang Zemin's visit to Russia that "Moscow's and Beijing's firm and categorical 'no' to US plans to destroy the 1972 ABM Treaty has been met with understanding and support
basically by the entire world." (ITAR-TASS, 1934 GMT, 16 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0716, via World News Connection) Chinese opposition to any US abrogation of the ABM treaty is particularly interesting considering that China is not even a party to it. All of this comes despite the fact that serious US concerns about the global spread of nuclear and missile technologies, which drive support for NMD, are largely a result of Russian and Chinese clandestine violations of nonproliferation agreements. Both countries repeatedly insist their friendship treaty is not a new military alliance and is not directed against anyone. They make this claim so often and so vigorously, usually in the context of discussions on the proposed US NMD system, as to cast doubt on their claims. In fact, Jiang said during one of these sessions, "we believe that more active cooperation between our countries in discussing missile defenses and disarmament will enhance our efforts in building a multi-polar world and establish a fair, rational international order." (THE NEW YORK TIMES, 17 Jul 01)

Given the known opposition of both countries to US NMD plans, it seems this new treaty has an underlying thrust against the US, although not stated specifically in the text. The timing of Jiang's visit and treaty signing and the Genoa G-8 summit also was advantageous for Moscow. It allowed Putin greater standing to try and position himself as the spokesman at the summit for a larger international group disgruntled at American leadership and initiatives. At the G-8, Putin reiterated Russia's adherence to the ABM Treaty and pushed for ratification of the Kyoto environmental protocol -- also in direct opposition to the US. Just prior to his second meeting with President Bush in Genoa, Putin told a Milan paper, "In the West, everyone says we don't want new divisions in Europe, we don't want new Berlin Walls. Good. We completely agree." (THE WASHINGTON TIMES, 17 Jul 01)

**Actions speak louder than words....**

Yet, despite all of Moscow's bluster about one Europe with no lines of division and no threats requiring missile defenses, the Russians are completing work on
a new missile attack early-warning radar station in Belarus. Testing is underway and the station is expected to be on-line by the end of the year, replacing the older, and now decommissioned, station in Skrunda, Latvia. The most interesting feature of this new station is that it provides advanced monitoring of the airspace to the west and northwest of its location. (MAYAK RADIO, 0300 GMT, 17 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0717, via World News Connection) This suggests that Moscow views the Western approaches to be of concern, not the southern regions, the area of weapons proliferation regarding which Russia has voiced apprehension in the past. With very limited resources for advanced military system development, one must assume Russia is investing in such systems only where it truly perceives a threat.

**Pragmatism comes into play....**

In an approximately 30-minute period on 14 July, a US interceptor missile launched from Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands successfully found and destroyed a target ballistic missile launched from Vandenburg Air Force Base in California. The Ballistic Missile Defense Organization director, General Ron Kadish, announced, "We believe we have a successful test in all respects at this time." The success means that two of four flight tests of the antimissile system conducted since October 1999 have hit their targets and comes at a critical moment when the US Congress is debating a Bush Administration plan that could boost NMD spending by nearly 60% and accelerate testing.

Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Aleksandr Yakovenko stressed this test posed another threat to the whole "international architecture" in the field of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation centered on the 1972 ABM Treaty. (ITAR-TASS, 0945 GMT, 15 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0715, via World News Connection) In the face of this test, and indications from President Bush and National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice that the US will push ahead with NMD plans with or without the Russians, Putin's sense of pragmatism seems to have opened the door for a dialogue.
In fact, the conciliatory tone from US Secretary of State Colin Powell left a face-saving invitation open for the Russians. "We need an understanding, an agreement, a treaty, something with the Russians that allows us to move forward with our missile defense programs. Sometime in the not too distant future we're going to need relief," Powell added, for the administration to test and build missile defenses without breaking the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. He suggested a written "understanding" or "joint statement," even if it fell short of a formal treaty. (WASHINGTON POST, 14 Jul 01) While the Russians have threatened increasing their nuclear arsenal and asymmetric responses to US NMD, Putin knows he cannot afford such a course of action. Any strategic rearmament program financially kills his other plans for military reform and threatens the fragile economic development in Russia. By accepting the recent US representatives to open the discussion simultaneously on both the strategic offensive and defensive, Putin has positioned himself to make concessions on US NMD goals, reduce an offensive weapons arsenal he can no longer afford to maintain and all the while try to present the world with a Russian image of a responsible superpower.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Luba Schwartzman

FEDERAL ASSEMBLY

The spring session of the State Duma of the Russian Federation closed on the evening of Saturday, 14 July. At a press conference that followed, Duma Speaker Gennady Seleznev announced that, during the five-month spring session, the Duma held 44 plenary and 7 additional sittings, adopted 4 constitutional laws and 155 federal laws, ratified 27 international treaties and
agreements and considered 58 out of the 83 priority laws on the spring agenda. Seleznev also told the press that the lower house already has worked out a tentative plan of action for the autumn session, and that special attention will be given to the Labor Code, the Land Code, the Tax Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, and a number of draft law packages on judicial and pension reforms. The autumn session will be held from 10 September until 28 December. (ITAR-TASS, 1624 GMT, 14 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0714, and ITAR-TASS, 1956 GMT, 13 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0713, via World News Connection)

A few days earlier, Russian President Vladimir Putin already was praising the Duma for its work. He said that it had approved "crucial laws, including in political, economic, land and pension areas... If we bring this work to the end one can say we have considerably advanced towards the modernization of the government... It has been a long time since the Duma did such hard, responsible, and professional work." (ITAR-TASS, 1430 GMT, 12 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0712, via World News Connection)

This "professionalism" of the deputies was challenged by the row surrounding the Land Code. Emotions did not run as high on 14 July when the draft Land Code was passed in the second reading (by a vote of 253 to 152, with 6 abstentions) as they had on the day of the first reading (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 11 Jul 01), but about 100 supporters from the Communist and Agrarian parties did gather outside the State Duma Assembly, sporting signs like "Down with the Bourgeoisie!," "No to Land Trade," "We won't let them sell out Russia," and even "We'll remember each of you." Liberal-Democrat Vladimir Zhirinovsky complained that protesters threw eggs, stones and weights at him when he was entering the building Saturday morning, and suggested that protection for Duma deputies was necessary. The Moscow Committee of the Communist Party responded by accusing Zhirinovsky of provoking protesters, adding that "had the Communists really wanted to injure Zhirinovsky, they would have hit the target." (INTERFAX, 1725 GMT, 14 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0714, and ITAR-TASS, 1519 GMT, 14 Jul
The real controversy, however, still may lie ahead, when the government expresses its position on the purchase and sale of farmland.

**POLITICAL PARTIES**

**New and improved faction created**

The newly created Fatherland-Unity alliance, known officially as the All-Russian Union Unity and Fatherland, is the new-and-improved pro-government faction. At the short-and-sweet 45-minute constituent congress on 12 July (compare to the 22-hour congress at which the factions that had made up the Union of Right Forces officially became a party) representatives unanimously elected Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov and Emergencies Minister Sergei Shoigu co-chairmen, approved the union's charter, and issued a joint statement of support for the Russian presidential policy. This statement also presented the union's primary "fundamental values": patriotism, freedom and justice. The union has been expected for months (see THE NIS OBSERVED, 13 Jun 01) and far-reaching statements have been made to imply that it is a sign of the times. President Putin said that the union "shows that national interests have come to dominate over the interests of parties." Union of Right Forces Chairman Boris Nemtsov suggested that the merger "implies the authorities' drift to the left."

And while the Communists claim that they "do not fear an early election of the State Duma in fall or winter," the new union seems intent on initiating early parliamentary elections. Franz Klintsevich, the acting chairman of the Unity political council, explained that this is necessary because "the current balance of forces in the State Duma does not correspond to the actual state of affairs in Russia, where more than 70 percent of the people support the president." He also said that the Unity-Fatherland alliance could count on getting 46 percent of the votes in the next election. (INTERFAX, 1120 GMT, 16 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0716, ITAR-TASS, 1743 GMT, 10 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0710,
REGIONS
Control tightens
An interesting development in the Putin government vs. the communists equation has been the very recent gubernatorial election in the Nizhegorod oblast'. Gennady Khodyrev ran as a Communist, but suspended his membership as soon as he was proclaimed the winner (receiving 59.8 percent of the vote) on 29 July. This is the first step toward fulfilling his promise to measure his actions against those of Vladimir Putin (whose Unity membership is likewise suspended), to cooperate with the presidential plenipotentiary to the Volga federal district, Sergei Kirienko, and to choose cadres based on professional qualities rather than on political allegiances. This comes amid suspicions that Gennady Zyuganov would rule Nizhegorod through a Communist leader, possibly even moving the capital of the oblast' to Saratov. His thanks -- a Kremlin source has offered the prospect of cooperation. (NTV, 30 Jul 01; via www.ntv.ru)

Another Soviet relic under discussion has been the Kaliningrad region. President Putin called for a coordination of ministries and services in the enclave, which could "serve as a testing ground for interaction between Russia and Europe." The "concept of the region's development" was discussed at a meeting of the Russian Federation Security Council; it will not, as was rumored, be made a new, eighth, federal district. A new and complex program has, however, been developed. Viktor Cherkesov, President Putin's plenipotentiary to the Northwestern federal district, has appointed a special deputy for Kaliningrad and has said that certain cadre changes which "will allow the situation to be controlled in the future" have been made, particularly in the power and security organs. (INTERFAX, 1451 GMT, 26 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0726, via World News Connection, and ORT, 26 & 27 Jul 01; via www.ortv.ru)
Reporters' powers restricted

That the month of August means trouble for Russia, has become a sad but true cliché. In Chechnya, one precautionary measure has been a restriction imposed on reporters' traveling outside the military bases of federal troops. As of 26 July, journalists have to be accompanied everywhere by press service officers. It is unlikely that there will be enough of these officials to go around. According to military spokespersons, journalists had been seen with representatives of either the Chechen special police forces or the local Chechen police, and hence the new rule. An NTV journalist has found that the attitude towards reporters was formulated best by the chief of the General Staff, Anatoly Kvashnin, who said: "I just don't understand why you're trying to get out with the military operations all the time. I'll repeat this one more time: a military operation in the army is when you and I are here, and the enemy is over there -- just sitting there, not leaving. Do you understand me? If the bandit doesn't go away, one has to destroy him there. You are not working correctly... You're working for war, we are working for peace. That's how it is." (ITAR-TASS, 1054 GMT, 26 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0726, via World News Connection, and NTV, 26 Jul 01; via www.ntv.ru) This comes a week after the military took away the diesel generator on which all of the television channels depend (except NTV, which has its own generator, one that is not strong enough to be able to provide power for the other channels).

At least there seems to be some level of resolution at Ekho Moskvy radio station: A controversial 9.5% stake in the radio station -- owned originally by Gusinsky, transferred to the journalists of Ekho Moskvy but intercepted and appropriated by Gazprom, then promised to SPS leader Boris Nemtsov -- in the end, has been slated to be given to Yevgeny Yasin, former economics minister and rector of the Higher School of Economics, as well as a frequent contributor to Ekho-Moskvy. (INTERFAX, 1523 GMT, 17 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0717, via World News Connection)
JUDICIARY

Damned if you do, damned if you don't

Vladimir Zhbankov, the deputy chief of the justice ministry's Moscow department, declared that "the Salvation Army has displayed a total disrespect for Russian laws when trying to avoid them and registered as a religious organization when it is not one." More precisely, the Salvation Army is in trouble: When the application for re-registration it filed six months ahead of the December 1999 deadline was denied because "the constituent documents were juridically incorrect," it did not obediently make the changes but appealed to higher courts. The latest (third) appeal was scheduled for 9 July, but has been delayed until 11 September. (INTERFAX, 0906 GMT, 9 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0709, via World News Connection) There are rumors, however, that it is precisely because the Salvation Army is a religious organization that the Moscow authorities are making the process difficult. The Russian Orthodox Church, which "enjoys a conspicuously close relationship with Yuri Luzhkov, the Mayor of Moscow, is behind the campaign to shut it down," writes The Times Moscow correspondent. None of the other Russian cities in which the Salvation Army is registered has denied the charitable organization a work permit. (THE TIMES, 9 Jul 01; via www.thetimes.com)

In response, Yelena Speranskaya, the spokeswoman for the Moscow Patriarchate, denied that the Russian Orthodox Church initiated the process, but admitted that, while the charity efforts of the Salvation Army deserve "great respect," the Orthodox Church does not approve of the accompanying missionary activities, and regards them as proselytism, or "an attempt to win over believers." (INTERFAX, 0917 GMT, 9 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0709, via World News Connection)

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Richard Miller
Criminal prosecutions stem from Chechen operations: Professional reform?
A presidential aide, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, announced on 19 July that 82 criminal cases have been initiated against servicemen for crimes against civilians since operations in Chechnya resumed in October 1999. (INTERFAX, 0725 GMT, 19 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0719, via World News Connection)
Furthermore, six servicemen have been detained for possible criminal charges based on the Russian prosecutors' investigation into "special" operations conducted against three Chechen villages in early July. (INTERFAX, 0755 GMT, 19 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0719, via World News Connection)

If this is the beginning of a true attempt to impose discipline and standards on the military forces, then it marks a positive step in the drive for professional reform. However, the announcement has the air of a public relations gimmick coming on the heels of further international outcry over Russian atrocities and the fact that statements given by Yastrzhembsky's office literally do not add up. In the statement cited above, supposedly 30 of the 82 cases are in connection with murders. Further numbers were given for different types of crimes. However, in another Interfax article, the numbers from Yastrzhembsky's office and the military prosecutor differed. The military prosecutor indicated only 7 murder cases were under consideration; moreover, the breakdown of the various crimes given did not match the 82 mentioned by Yastrzhembsky's office. (INTERFAX, 0752 GMT, 19 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0719, via World News Connection) Given the volume of reports from independent sources concerning atrocities committed by Russian troops, either 7 or even 30 seem to be paltry numbers of prosecutions for murder cases if there is serious interest in proper discipline in the Russian armed forces. Combined with recent further restrictions on travel by journalists, the main source of reports on human rights violations by Russian troops, it is doubtful that the six recent arrests are more than a token effort.
Friendship Treaty: Not a military alliance, but accompanied by lots of weapons

China signed a contract with the Komsomolsk-on-Amur Aviation Production Association worth $2 billion for Su-30 MKK ground-attack planes. The total number of planes to be transferred under this agreement is approximately 40. The Military News Agency, AVN, said the new contract would support nearly 5,000 workers at the factory. These aircraft complement the 1999 deal for 40 Su-30 planes of which it is believed about a dozen actually have been delivered. The MKK model of the Su-30 provides advanced ground-attack capability. Coupled with the air superiority of Su-27 fighters which China purchased in the early 1990s, these aircraft strengthen China's ability to threaten cross-strait action against Taiwan. The announcement of this new contract came shortly after Presidents Putin and Jiang signed the new friendship accord. Further coordination between the two countries is expected in maintenance and support of the aircraft. Whether there will be co-production of the new Su-30s, as in the case of the Su-27s, remains to be seen.

During his four-day Russian trip to sign the Friendship Treaty, President Jiang also visited a weapons production facility in Volgograd that is producing the Stil Air Defense Missile systems. The Stil complex will be installed in Chinese destroyers previously purchased from Russia. Probably it was no coincidence that Jiang's official Russian escort for his Volgograd visit was Deputy Prime Minister Klebanov -- Moscow's point man in initiating overseas military sales. (ITAR-TASS, 1119 GMT, 17 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0717, via World News Connection)

Newly Independent States: Western Region
By Tammy Lynch

UKRAINE
House vs. Senate: How to deal with Ukraine?

During the work of the US Congress on the foreign operations budget for FY2002, one aspect has become abundantly clear -- the House and Senate (or more precisely, key members of the House and Senate) are pursuing very different policies toward Ukraine. On the one hand, there is the apparent belief that aid to Ukraine must be slashed in order to send a message to President Leonid Kuchma about his less-than-satisfactory human rights record. On the other hand, the view was stressed that only continued support of Ukraine will allow the country to overcome its current problems. Based on recent Congressional debates, it is the latter argument that clearly is supported most by human rights workers. Unfortunately, the former has carried the day in Congress so far.

The House of Representatives approved its version of the Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill on 24 July. The bill contains a one-third decrease in funding to Ukraine, from $170 million in FY2001 to a proposed $125 million this coming year. Even more importantly, the bill appears technically to allow for the possibility that funding could be cut further. Whereas last year's law read that "not less than $170,000,000 should be made available for assistance for Ukraine," this proposed version suggests a sum "not to exceed $125,000,000 may be made available." (PUBLIC LAW NO. 106-429/H.R. 5526 and CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, 24 Jul 01, H4493) This cut and change of wording, according to one lobbyist watching the Ukrainian funding issue, "was carried out quietly and quickly," and when news of the impending cut became known "it was too late" to organize against the move. (KYIV POST, 26 Jul 01)

Representative Jim Kolbe (R-AZ), chairman of the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs, was reportedly the architect of the cut. His committee's report explains the action as a protest against the delay in "completion of long-term projects in nuclear safety, the continuing setbacks to needed reform, and the unresolved deaths of prominent
dissidents and journalists in Ukraine." (CONGRESSIONAL RECORD -- HOUSE, 24 Jul 01, H4495)

In that debate on the House floor, however, opponents of Kolbe’s Ukrainian strategy attempted to undo his change of wording -- replacing his "may be made available" with "should be made available" -- thus guaranteeing that Ukraine would receive the full $125 million allocated to it. Representative Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) introduced the amendment and led the debate. "Let me remind our colleagues," she said, "Ukraine has had major accomplishments over the last decade.... Ukraine refused to sell turbines to Iran giving up an economic sale in excess of over $100 million. The current President of Ukraine personally invited Pope John Paul II for an historic visit to Ukraine.... I might say to the chairman of the full subcommittee ... last week you spoke eloquently of not isolating China .... I can tell you China arrests Catholic Bishops.... So I would say do not treat Ukraine in a manner any worse than you would treat China."

Kaptur also introduced a letter from the assistant deputy administrator of the National Nuclear Safety Administration suggesting that he "saw impressive progress due to State/AID assistance" at the Chernobyl plant, and warning that "cutbacks may endanger the progress made to date." She responded to Rep. Kolbe's comments about the disappearance of journalists with a note from Georgiy Gongadze's widow. "My husband," Myroslava Gongadze wrote, "sought the development of a free and independent media, of non-governmental and of local organizations to build a civil society in Ukraine -- these entities are the ones that desperately need America's help. The assistance provided in your bill goes to such programs to help the very people who need and should have American money and counsel, good people who will be isolated and alone without US support." She concluded by asking Congress, "please, do not reduce the aid to Ukraine that is so important in the building of a normal, democratic society."
Despite this debate, the Appropriations Bill passed with the wording and funding level suggested by Rep. Kolbe, who responded to Rep. Kaptur by voicing support for democratic initiatives in Ukraine but suggesting that sometimes "a stick" is more effective than "a carrot."

Within a few days, however, the Senate Committee on Appropriations, chaired by Robert Byrd (D-WV), had placed itself in direct opposition to the House by approving an increase in funding for Ukraine. The committee has proposed $180 million in US aid for FY2002. (PRESS RELEASE, Senate Committee on Appropriations, 26 Jul 01) Therefore, while the debate in the House of Representatives may not have altered the size or shape of the aid package proposed for Ukraine by that chamber, it appears to have affected senators examining the same problem. And if, as expected, the full Senate approves the funding proposed for Ukraine, an interesting debate should ensue when the two bills are consolidated in conference committee.

One can only hope that Congress, like the president, will continue to support the (admittedly slow) progress Ukraine is making in many areas, especially since it has begun to do so with a self-sufficiency that bodes well for the future. The country, after all, made significant strides forward in the past year with very limited Western financial support. International Monetary Fund lending was stopped, World Bank involvement was more limited than it had been previously, and, even though European Union and G-8 leaders promised significant funding to offset the effects of Chernobyl's closure, little was actually received.

Of course, President Kuchma must continue to be pressured aggressively to improve his human rights record; attacks on the press and opposition politicians must be condemned. But signaling that the United States is disengaging from Ukraine can serve only to isolate Kuchma further, pushing him -- and his country -- into the arms of big brother Russia. At the same time, independent organizations dependent on US funds will be weakened, and pan-Slavists will be
emboldened. This is clearly a scenario that no one in the US would welcome, and that the conference committee must work to avoid.

BELARUS
Silence abounds
Following the recent G-8 summit in Genoa, many were quick to point to Russian President Vladimir Putin's success at staving off criticism regarding Chechnya. Despite the possibility that his government is condoning what many view as war crimes, he was scarcely questioned on the topic by other leaders. There is another issue, however, that received even less attention from leaders and journalists at the summit -- Putin's tacit support for the regime of Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

One month before the summit, two former investigators in the Belarusian Prosecutor's Office released information suggesting Lukashenka's complicity in a number of high-profile disappearances. These disappearances were arranged, according to Dmitry Petrashkevich and Oleg Sluchek, by a state-sponsored "death squad." In a letter sent to major mass media outlets and human rights organizations, the former investigators wrote, "There was a group created that attracted at different periods of time present-day suspects in the abductions and murders of Ignatovich, Guz, Malik, Saushkin, and another 5 or 6 persons, unidentified by the investigators.... They were ordered to elaborate the scheme of abducting [persons] and burning corpses. The scheme had to ensure that the bodies would never be found. In other words, the task was to create a plan for an 'ideal murder.'" (LETTER FROM PETRASHKEVICH AND SLUCHEK, 7 Jun 01; via Charter97.org)

The authors apparently followed up this statement by providing US State Department officials with detailed accounts of the murders of Belarusian journalists and opposition politicians. Following their questioning, State Department Deputy Spokesman Phillip Reeker called the statements "credible"
and called on Belarusian authorities to "conduct a thorough and transparent investigation" into the disappearances of the people concerned. (US Department of State DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, 18 Jul 01) Those persons include former Interior Minister Yuri Zakharenko, former prime minister and opposition activist Viktor Gonchar, Gonchar colleague Anatoly Krasovksy and Russian ORT television cameraman Dmitri Zavadsky, who had once worked for Lukashenka.

These revelations prompted numerous human rights watch groups to issue urgent appeals to world leaders to pressure not only Lukashenka for information, but also Putin, who is linked to the Belarusian leader through the Russia-Belarus Union. Simply put, Russia’s support has been essential for Lukashenka’s survival, as his dictatorial ways have isolated him from the West. Russian leaders not only continually speak of Belarus as Russia’s partner, but also heavily subsidize the country. Food, energy, supplies and currency are readily supplied, in exchange for the country remaining within the Russian orbit, and most importantly, providing concessions to the Russian military and border guards.

The co-chairman of the US Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission), therefore, publicly urged President Bush to "raise concerns about the critical state of human rights and democracy in Belarus" with President Putin. In a letter dated 18 July, Representative Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ) continued, "We call upon you to encourage our G-8 partners, including President Putin, to press the Belarusian authorities to conduct a complete and transparent investigation of the disappearances, to release political prisoners, and to take the necessary steps to ensure free, fair and transparent presidential elections [scheduled for 9 September]."

Despite this and other calls to press Putin on the issue, however, it appears that the situation in Belarus was given little, if any, attention. In fact, with the exception of a flurry of wire stories directly following the "death squad" revelations, there has been little attention paid by journalists or politicians to the
crisis in Belarus. True, a press conference organized by the Helsinki Commission and the International League for Human Rights, which featured four wives of "disappeared" men, garnered a bit of attention. But, it appears that the fate of a little country beside Russia is of little concern in the times of NMD, Middle East troubles, Chechnya and Tetovo. This is particularly unfortunate given the upcoming presidential elections in Belarus. Now is the time when changes could be made -- if pressure were applied in the right places by the right people. It seems, however, that the will to do this simply is missing.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Miriam Lanskoy

CHECHNYA

July pogroms continue
Alkhan-Kala, a suburb of Grozny, has been blockaded since 4 July: No one has come out of the area and little is known about the fate of the inhabitants. On 23 July Amnesty International issued an urgent appeal to its members to send letters to Russian leaders calling on them to protect the residents of Alkhan-Kala and the other villages that have undergone "cleansings" this month, including Assinovskaya, Sernovodsk, Chernorechye, Kuchaloy, and Serzhen-Yurt. (http://www.amnestyusa.org/urgent/) Far from heeding such calls, the Russian government imposed new restrictions on 26 July which keep journalists reporting from the main Russian military base in Khankala under military supervision even when they leave the base. This conceals the atrocities and cleansings in the area.

Alkhan-Kala screams for help
What little is know about Alkhan-Kala comes from a note that was smuggled out of the village and passed to the Information Center of Russian-Chechen Friendship Society. (http://friendly.narod.ru/)
"Since 13 July Alkhan Kala has been subject to cleansing (zachistka) under the pretext of checking the passport regime. The village has been blockaded since 4 July. Inside the village there are control posts every 150-200 meters. People are forbidden to walk about the village, they are not to go beyond their yards. All the roads in the village have been mined. Cattle in the village is getting blown up."

"Ramzan Gasaev, the head of the village administration, was killed on 6 July after 2100 hrs (9 p.m.). He was shot by a Russian subunit for demanding a stop to the abuses against the people."

"At night they burst into the houses and demand vodka, food, and women. There is marauding. Day and night they take everything out on Urals (trucks). Whatever they don't take they destroy. On 13 July a group of officers and contract soldiers called together the elders of the village and told them the following: 'Give us your virgins (devushki) and young women. Regardless, they will just wind up with the old men. We have a directive to completely destroy all the young people and we will fulfill this directive.' "("U nas ustanovka polnost'u unichtozhit molodezh i etu ustatovvy my vypolnim." )

"A large number of young men has been detained and taken away to an unknown destination. We have no news about them."

"We are not afraid of death. We are afraid of shame.
Save us in the name of Allah!
The residents of Alkhan-Kala"

Bonner: Moral imperative to stop genocide
"I think that to stop the genocide should be the moral imperative for the Congress," Yelena Bonner advised members of the US House of Representatives at a luncheon on 25 July.
She compared the international silence regarding Moscow's war in Chechnya to that concerning the Holocaust -- a silence which she remembers well, having served as a nurse in WWII. She recounted a "cleansing" operation in a Chechen village where "in 30-35 degree Celsius heat, villagers were taken to a field, their papers were checked, then people were ordered to strip and stand on corrugated iron sheets -- like a frying pan. Many people died right there in the field."

"Years ago when people were being taken by the Nazis to (camps) and word came back of what was happening there, the reaction was complete disbelief. And I understand when I talk about Chechnya, it is the same," she said. (AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE, 25 Jul 01; via lexis-nexis)

This time, however, no one in the US government can say that he did not know. In fact, it was Bonner who told them nearly two years ago in her testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "This is genocide. This not just another routine violation of human rights, this is a crime against humanity. And this can no longer be exclusively the internal affair of Russia...." (FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, 4 Nov 01; via lexis-nexis)

**UCSJ reports persecution of Chechens in all parts of Russia**

"Ethnic persecution of Chechens in the Russian Federation," a special report published by the Union of Council for Soviet Jews, documents widespread cases of discrimination against ethnic Chechens in the Russian Federation. The report shows that Russia's systematic atrocities and human rights abuses in Chechnya have bred a climate of impunity for hate groups throughout Russia. Moreover, "official grass-roots discrimination and mistreatment of Chechens (and others from the Caucasus) occur throughout the country." There is widespread and frequent official tolerance of discrimination, harassment, and violence against Chechens and in some cases incitement of ethnic hatred by government officials. Many kinds of incidents were reported from 26 regions. Some were
administrative measures, such as refusals to grant permission to build a mosque, arbitrary passport checks, and quotas on numbers of Chechen residents. Other forms of intimidation included violent repressions, such as evictions and deportations, beatings, and pogroms in outdoor markets.

The report finds that the "dangerous implications for other unpopular ethnic and religious minority groups are obvious -- the Russian state, in alliance with grassroots hate groups, has set a precedent vis-à-vis the Chechens, thus increasing the probability that other groups, including Jews, may face similar persecution in the future." Further indications that the racial violence of the present won't fade are the findings that these attitudes are inculcated in the military to draftees. Another troubling indicator, a poll in St. Petersburg, showed that racist attitudes were nearly twice as likely to occur among young persons ages 18-25 than among persons over 59 years.

(www.fsumonitor.com/stories/chechen_report.htm)

**Sergei Kovalev points to authoritarian trends ...**

Sergei Kovalev, parliamentarian and human rights champion, published a very sophisticated analysis of Putin's policies in the 9 August issue of The New York Review of Books. Leaving aside the Chechen war, which he characterizes as "criminal, bloody, hopeless, and ... cynical," Kovalev turns to the main directions of Putin's policies: solidifying control over the regional governments and the mass media. The law on political parties and the "reform" of the Federation Council have disenfranchised the citizens of the regions: the former by disbarring regional parties from national, regional, and municipal elections, and the latter by making membership in the Federation Council an appointed rather than elected office.

Against the media, Putin has employed the ideology of derzhavnost "the view of the state as a highly valuable mystical being that every citizen and society must serve." A government not accountable to the voter acts as though it needs
protection against criticism from the press and public. This logic follows not from Communist doctrine but from the Soviet past, and resembles the justifications for the Soviet suppression of dissidents. In fact, "there have been indications that Russia's fledgling civil society is next -- in particular, human rights organizations." A campaign against the "destructive struggle" waged by such independent groups, Memorial chief among them, began in June.

Additional facts that bolster Kovalev's case but were not included in the article perhaps appeared after the New York Review went to print. First, the Yaroslavl regional branch of Memorial was dissolved ostensibly due to problems with its registrations. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 12 Jul 01)

... But underestimates Putin's record
Second, Putin, it appears, is no novice at political repression. Whereas Kovalev conjectures that "Putin apparently was not involved in such persecution" [of the dissidents], new evidence suggests that the Russian president had been involved personally. Revelations that appeared in Italy on 11 July, based on interviews with sources in the FSB and the St. Petersburg municipal administration, indicate that Putin received training in the Fifth Main Directorate, responsible for hunting dissidents. (A summary of the original 11 July reporting by La Republicca appeared in Kommersant, 12 Jul 01; via WPS agency)

In January 2000, J. Michael Waller suggested as much in the pages of Perspective. Citing interviews with Victor Yasmann, now of the American Foreign Policy Council, Waller -- whose newest venture is the online news service, Global Security News (www.GlobalSecurityNews.com) -- reported:

"Victor Yasmann raises the possibility that Putin was an officer in the Fifth Chief Directorate, the KGB division that served as the political police, ideological enforcement and domestic spying unit. Though the Fifth was almost purely an internal operation -- it ran the informant networks and psychiatric prisons,
maintained the secret political dossiers on individuals, persecuted dissidents and religious believers, and served as the backbone of the latter-day Soviet police state -- it did maintain a foreign presence to watch Soviet citizens abroad and to liaise with the political police sections in satellite regimes like East Germany. (http://www.bu.edu/iscip/vol10/Waller.html)

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Fabian Adami

Press censorship and human rights abuses reach new levels
In the wake of German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer's recent tour of Central Asia, Uzbek President Islam Karimov and Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev both have made high-profile statements regarding their countries' economies and political systems.

President Karimov chaired a cabinet meeting on 17 July during which he attacked his country's Soviet past and aired his conviction that it is vitally important that private business be developed in the country. Uzbekistan, he argued, must change the structure of her economy, for "Uzbekistan will not survive, if it produces only raw materials and semi-finished goods." (EURASIA INSIGHT, 18 Jul 01; via Eurasianet, Uzbekistan Daily Digest)

While such statements are promising if viewed in isolation, it is clear that they are intended for Western ears, and are made with the aim of ensuring that aid continues to flow. Both Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan continue to have appalling human rights records. A report published on 18 July by the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights details their abuses.

It is especially ironic, given President Karimov's anti-Soviet views, that his government is resorting to increasingly Stalinist methods to silence dissent. The
IHF report outlines two specific cases: those of Yelena Urlaeva and Ruslan Sharipov. Urlaeva, according to the report, was arrested while leading a demonstration. Since her arrest, she has been held in various psychiatric hospitals, and has been forcibly "treated" with strong psycho-pharmaceutical drugs. When members of the IHF mission interviewed her, she was adamant that there are others like her who are being "neutralized through mental confinement."

[INTERNATIONAL HELSINKI FEDERATION MISSION TO CENTRAL ASIA REPORT (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan), 18 Jul 01] At the same time, Ruslan Sharipov, a leading member of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, said that he has been the subject of overt police intimidation, including threats to his mother and sister.

Most notable about this report is that it specifically addresses the Uzbek government's claim that such measures are necessary, due to the threat posed by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU): "While the IHF acknowledges that the existence of the IMU is a threat, it concludes that the current fight against terrorism serves mainly as a pretext for repressive measures. The situation in Kyrgyzstan clearly is similar, although the IHF does not mention specific cases in its Kyrgyz report. The Kyrgyz prosecutor, for example, has decided to press new charges against former opposition leader Feliks Kulov, who is already serving a seven-year sentence on politically motivated charges. (EURASIA INSIGHT, 18 Jul 01; via Eurasianet, Kyrgyzstan Daily Digest)

Just as disconcerting as the human rights abuses is the recent crackdown on the press in both countries. In Bishkek, Kyrgyz journalists were forbidden from meeting with Topchubek Turgunaliyev, leader of the Erkindik Party opposed to President Akaev's rule, who, like Kulov, is serving a sentence on political charges. (EURASIA INSIGHT, 18 Jul 01; via Eurasianet, Kyrgyzstan Daily Digest)
The most blatant censorship action occurred in June 2001. The independent newspaper ResPublika, planned to print in its Kyrgyz-language edition an article from UK newspaper The Guardian which alleged that President Akaev's wife had received illegal stocks in the newly built Hyatt Regency Hotel in Bishkek. The state secretary of the Kyrgyz Republic asked the newspaper's editor to withhold the article. The next day, Bishkek's only printing house, Ushkun (which is 95% government-owned), received a telephone call from the National Security Service, ordering that the newspaper should not be printed. (IHF MISSION TO CENTRAL ASIA REPORT, 18 Jul 01)

In Tashkent, coercion of the press has been just as notable, and the tactics just as direct. President Karimov recently involved himself in the issue, making a speech late in June which called for journalists to improve the quality of their writing. On 6 July, the government acted, when a Russian-language newspaper, Tashkentskaya pravda, opened an exhibition titled "Without Censorship," in which articles banned by the Uzbek authorities were posted. The editor of the newspaper, Alo Hodjaev, was ousted when regional authorities announced that his newspaper would merge with its Uzbek-language partner, Toshkent Haquqati, and one editor would control both. According to other journalists who participated in the exhibition, Hodjaev's ouster is the coup de grace for freedom of expression in Uzbekistan. (EURASIA INSIGHT, 18 Jul 01; via Eurasianet, Uzbekistan Daily Digest) Although these examples do not paint a complete picture of the situation in Central Asia, they serve as an illustration that statements on reform from the leaders of these countries should be taken not as genuine, but rather as deliberate attempts to curry favor with, and secure the flow of aid from, Western countries.

Newly Independent States: Baltic States

By Maria Metcalf
In the past, whenever Russia warned the international community that the border of former Soviet states marked the 'red line' for NATO enlargement, such declarations caused Western apprehension regarding potential Baltic NATO membership. However, while Russia continues to reiterate the hackneyed 'red line' threat, of late less and less account is being taken. As far as the US and its NATO allies are concerned, offering security to the Baltic republics has superseded the tendency to appease Moscow. In fact, it seems that Russia itself, while still going through the motions, is beginning to realize that the train is leaving the station.

In an interview with Burkhard Bischof of Die Presse, Estonian Prime Minister Mart Laar confirmed that Estonia isn't overawed by Russian objections to Baltic NATO membership. Laar said, "Estonia itself has long been oriented entirely toward the west, so Russia's position toward us has no overriding importance anymore... Russian resistance will pass, just as it vanished during the admission processes for Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary." Laar made the usual ceremonial bow, saying that Estonia wants a good relationship with Russia and is committed to supporting Russia "along its path toward democracy and the market economy." (DIE PRESSE, 16 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0716, via World News Connection)

In February, Dmitri Rogozin, chairman of the Duma's Committee on International Affairs, had warned that, in the event of Baltic NATO membership, relations between the Baltic states and Russia would be wrecked. (See THE NIS OBSERVED, 28 Feb 01) Rogozin threatened that, "Nonstrategic missiles and long-distance artillery would be targeted on Estonia. All strategic NATO sites -- bridges, airfields, power plants, ports, administrative buildings -- would become targets for them. Would these measure by the Russian military add anything positive to our relations? I'm not convinced of it." (BNS, 1354 GMT, 16 Feb 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0216, via World News Connection) Rogozin made similar
statements in Kaliningrad at a 12 July meeting of legislators from Russia, Lithuania, Poland and the European Parliament. He said, "If the process of the expansion of military blocs is expanded in Europe, Russia, quite naturally, will find it expedient to take reply measures of the same sort, because NATO is a military organization." However, that statement was vaguer than the 'red line' threats of February. The Kaliningrad statement seems more like going through the motions.

On 9 July, the Lithuanian Navy's frigate, the Zemaitis, joined the international "Cooperative Ocean 2001" military exercise in the Baltic Sea. In addition to the Zemaitis, the exercise included frigates (some with helicopters) from seven NATO countries, a British tanker and a Norwegian submarine. The flotilla conducted exercises in Lithuania's territorial waters, 6-12 July, before continuing the exercise in Poland's territorial waters. As an indication of progress toward ensuring the compatibility of the Baltic military elements with each other and with their NATO counterparts, their joint naval unit, Baltron, received favorable ratings from its officers and from NATO naval advisors. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 13 Jul 01) The commander-in-chief of NATO Regional Headquarters, Allied Forces North Europe, General Sir Jack Deverell, visited Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on 10-12 July. Deverell gave good marks to the joint Baltic decision to focus on training a professional military. (BNS, 1353 GMT, 12 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0712, via World News Connection)

Probably not coincidentally, for the first time in 10 years, Russia's Baltic Fleet conducted a war game in the country's westernmost region -- Kaliningrad. The Russian Baltic Fleet trained command and staff on a large scale, including naval, ground, air force, and air defense personnel, as well as border troops. Monitor reported that the scenario of the exercise "envisaged that Russian forces stop and destroy two NATO brigades that supposedly cross into that Russian exclave from Poland." (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 13 Jul 01) Additionally, on 26 July the members of the Russian Security Council discussed the situation in
Kaliningrad. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 26 Jul 01; via FBIS-SOV-2001-0726, via World News Connection) On the table at the meeting was whether to increase the number of troops and military hardware in the Kaliningrad exclave. The decision was made not to increase their size for the time being. The commander of the Russian Baltic fleet, Vice Admiral Vladimir Valuev, stated that the development of the fleet would depend above all on relations with the neighboring countries and NATO. (BNS, 1050 GMT, 26 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0726, via World News Connection)

With rapidly increasing support from NATO allies for Baltic membership, Russia appears to be making a last-ditch effort at least to rekindle a mostly exhausted enlargement debate in the West. This is taking the form of an appeal to the solidarity of a Europe that wants someday to be "free of US bullying." This is likely to be Russia's last stand against the seeming inevitability of a NATO membership invitation to the Baltic States. It will not work, but it may be Putin's stunt to induce the Europeans at least to compensate Russia and to avoid isolating it.

LATVIA

Five steps forward, one step back?

Latvia definitely seems to be on the hot track to EU membership, but a controversial essay contest has generated Russian demands that international organizations assess the "Russophobic" and "chauvinistic" content of the essay topic. (BNS, 1249 GMT, 26 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0726, via World News Connection) On 20 July, European Commissioner for Enlargement Guenter Verheugen and Latvian Foreign Minister Indulis Berzins agreed that Latvia's acceptance into the European Union is virtually a reality already. Yet, while Verheugen was commending Latvia's achievements toward joining the European Union, and Latvia was closing the difficult social charter (16th of 31 chapters) of membership talks (LETA, 0948 GMT, 20 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0720, via World
News Connection), Latvian officials had to defend their country's commitment to pursuing the course of social integration, human rights and justice.

On 12 June the obscure Vieda publishing house produced a book containing 75 essays from the contest "We Will Not Give Latvia to Anyone," which focused (among other topics) on the need to drive Russians away from Latvia, stressed anti-EU sentiment opposed selling of Latvian property to foreigners, and spouted extreme nationalism. (BNS, 1640 GMT, 11 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0711, via World News Connection) Vieda's publishing director, Social Democrat Janis Leja, is also a member of the Latvian parliament. The Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the essay contest represented "the efforts of a small group to attract attention in a time when Latvia's European and transatlantic integration is strengthening, with no support for such efforts in the Latvian society." (BNS, 1640 GMT, 11 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0711, via World News Connection) The Russian foreign ministry called the essay contest "full of racist and fascist remarks which lay grounds for future ethnic cleansing in young souls." (BNS, 1037 GMT, 11 Jul 01; FBIS-SOV-2001-0711, via World News Connection) During Verheugen's visit to Latvia, Leja handed the EU enlargement commissioner a letter in which the Social Democrat threatened civil war. Latvian Prime Minister Andris Berzins asked the security police to investigate Leja's threat.

Latvia's Bureau for the Protection of the Constitution, the top national security agency, announced that there was no legal basis for opening a criminal case against the Vieda publishing house and declared that, while the contest and book were intended to incite national hatred, Vieda was protected by the freedom of views and speech guaranteed by the Latvian constitution. The positive side of the controversial essay contest was that, through the scandal, Latvia has reaffirmed its commitment to defending the rights protected by its constitution, while in Russia, constitutional freedom of speech and opposing political values is
generally disregarded... as can be seen in the ongoing attack on the independence of the media.

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