



Russia and Eurasia REPORT

FROM THE CSIS RUSSIA AND EURASIA PROGRAM | VOLUME 1 | NUMBER 3 | MARCH / APRIL 2004

RUSSIA AND EURASIA EVENTS

Assessing the War on Terror in Central Asia

May 3, 2:00 - 5:15 p.m.
CSIS, B1 Level Conference Center

This seminar will feature two panels. In the first panel Dr. Najia Badykova of The George Washington University, Daniel Kimmage of RFE/RL and Dr. Kathleen Collins from the University of Notre Dame will explore Islam and extremist groups in Central Asia.

In the second panel, Dr. Kimberly Marten of Barnard College, Columbia University and Adolat Najimova of RFE/RL will examine the U.S. presence in Central Asia and its impact on Islam.

Turkey at the Crossroads

May 6, 10:00-11:30 a.m.
CSIS, 4th floor conference room

Cüneyt Ülsever, journalist for "Hurriyet" will look at the future of Turkey through its reaction to the formation of the Kurdish state at its southern border, membership in the EU, and the integration of Islam and democracy.

For information on this seminar, please contact Nancy Lord at nlord@csis.org

Islam and the Caucasus: A Look at Chechnya

May 10, 4:00-5:30 p.m.
CSIS, B1 Level Conference Center

Aslan Doukaev of RFE/RL, Dr. Fiona Hill of the Brookings Institution, and Michael Morrow of the Department of State will review U.S. policy toward Russia as related to Chechnya and evaluate the impact of the conflict on Islamic movements in the region.

For more information on this seminar, please contact John Geis at jgeis@csis.org

ARMENIA'S TRAGEDY

Cory Welt

Compared to the successful November 2003 demonstrations in Georgia, or even the unsuccessful October 2003 protests in Azerbaijan, the violent dispersal of Armenian protestors on the night of April 12-13 has gone relatively unnoticed outside of the region. At approximately 2AM in the morning, riot police used truncheons, stun grenades, and water cannons to disperse a crowd of 2-3,000, the remnant of a larger march the day before. The protest was organized by a united opposition to demand the resignation of President Robert Kocharian. The crackdown was accompanied by the arrests of protestors and opposition leaders, the beating of journalists by police, and the raiding of opposition party offices.

The standoff between the opposition and the government is Armenia's fourth major political crisis in eight years. In 1996, Kocharian's predecessor, Levon Ter-Petrosian, was accused of rigging a presidential election, sparking riotous protests that were put down by force and mass arrests. Ter-Petrosian was forced to resign in 1998 after losing the support of his defense and interior ministers as well as Kocharian, then prime minister. The following year, Kocharian's new prime minister (the former defense minister) and Armenia's parliamentary chairman, ex-Communist Karen Demirchian (father of opposition leader Stepan Demirchian), were gunned down in the halls of parliament.

This latest crisis began in 2003, as demonstrators responded with mass protests to Kocharian's failed attempt to rig a first-round victory in February presidential elections. The victory of Kocharian in the second round led to further protests. The Constitutional Court, ruling on the opposition's complaints, upheld the result of the election but recommended holding a referendum that would serve as a vote of confidence against the authorities. Subsequent parliamentary elections were also flawed, if not as egregiously as the presidential election. After opposition deputies failed to get parliament to approve of the recommended referendum, they boycotted parliament, where they hold 20 percent of the seats, and prepared to take their struggle to the streets.

To date, Kocharian stands strong. While bitter infighting among the three parties that make up the government is common, the coalition has not broken apart. Parliamentary chairman Artur Bagdasaryan, often critical of the executive branch, has maintained his "good cop" approach, condemning political arrests and raids against opposition headquarters, while appealing to the opposition to negotiate a resolution to the crisis. Kocharian retains strong control over the apparatus of repression. In addition to the state's security forces, the state has relied upon hired

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PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

Trafficking in Persons

Evidence has been mounting for some time that trafficking—especially the enslavement of women and girls for prostitution—follows market demand, and in post-conflict situations, that often means international peacekeepers. Human trafficking is the movement of persons either through coercion, fraud, deception, or force, for the express purposes of enslavement. Sex trafficking is therefore not “just about prostitution.” Rather, it is about people being sold as chattel, stripped of their passports and forced to pay off a bogus “debt” to their traffickers. In the Balkans, literally thousands of women and girls have been trafficked in the last several years. At least 10 percent of them are minors.

In addition to being a gross violation of human rights, this form of modern day slavery has security implications for peacekeepers that to date have been largely overlooked. Networks that traffic in humans often also traffic in guns and narcotics. These all provide revenue for extremists who undermine the rule of law. Trafficking prolongs the deployment of forces abroad, especially when peacekeepers unwittingly put money in the hands of traffickers. Cutting the links between peacekeeping and trafficking should be a central international strategy for combating trafficking, fighting organized crime as well as for advancing stability in post-conflict regions.

Over the past year at CSIS, Russia and Eurasia Program senior fellow, Dr. Sarah E. Mendelson, has led a project advancing this goal. With a grant from the U.S. Department of State, we are conducting research that has shaped our efforts. We have consolidated a Transatlantic Task Force made up of experts from governmental, nongovernmental, and international organizations on this issue and have worked especially closely with NATO to develop policy. In early March, we co-hosted, with the U.S. and the Norwegian missions, the first ever NATO conference on trafficking in humans. We have worked steadily with NATO on the development of their policy, which we expect to be “rolled out” at the Istanbul summit in June

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thugs, reportedly the personal bodyguards of influential businessmen, to intimidate journalists and protestors.

The president argues that the opposition represents less than 1 percent of the Armenian population. Taking advantage of perceptions that opposition leaders have no serious agenda and are themselves incapable of ruling, the government has insisted that the appropriate way out of the crisis is dialogue and that opposition party members ought to return to their parliamentary work. The opposition is, according to Kocharian, an “obstinate child” that refuses to eat the food offered to it.

The international reaction has been muted. The United States has refused to take a stance on the government’s legitimacy and has called upon both sides to “exercise restraint in how they go about carrying out what each believes to be its functions.” The Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly has produced a sterner resolution demanding that the government end restrictions on peaceful rallies and release political prisoners. An earlier, publicized draft of the resolution, however, called upon the opposition to forget about trying to overturn the 2003 election results. Before the resolution was passed, Council of Europe head Walter Schwimmer also called upon the opposition to “return to parliament from the streets.”

If Armenians were fed up with their government prior to the crackdown in mid-April, they are certainly no less disillusioned and angry now. The opposition itself insists resistance will continue. On April 21, they held another rally that the government permitted, although it was preceded by the beating of a number of opposition figures and followed by more arrests. The government’s heavy-handed reaction, however, appears to have had the desired effect. Armenians may be upset, but they do not believe that street protests will lead to political change.

One may always expect the unexpected. But in Armenia’s case, few outside the opposition’s leadership believe a “revolution of roses” like the one in Georgia is possible now in Armenia. The sad truth is that for all that Armenians may hope for good governance and democracy, Armenia’s domestic fate—like that of Azerbaijan—remains caught up in the knot over Karabagh. President Kocharian is not only a former resident of Karabagh; he used to be the breakaway region’s president. His powerful defense minister, Serzh Sarkisyan, also hails from Karabagh. The opposition regularly rails at the “Karabagh clan” they claim has usurped power in Armenia. Even if parliamentary chairman Bagdasaryan took his party out of the ruling coalition, Kocharian’s other junior partner is the nationalist Dashnaksutiun, which can be expected to continue supporting a government that insists the discord sown by the opposition plays into the hands of Armenia’s enemies.

The one thing keeping more Armenians from flowing out onto the streets—if not their dismal calculations for effecting political change—may very well be the fear that destabilization will critically weaken Armenia’s position in its confrontation with Azerbaijan. If that is true, the possibility for real political change in Armenia remains tantalizingly out of reach.

Cory Welt is a Visiting Fellow in the Russia and Eurasia Program

THE EVOLVING NATURE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Iva Savic

Trafficking in persons, a modern-day form of slavery involving victims who are forced through fraud or coercion into sexual and/or labor exploitation, has become one of the most lucrative illicit industries in the world. Despite trafficking's global scope, the international community has been slow to recognize the gravity of the problem and only in the last few years has begun concerted efforts to eliminate it in all forms. While the international community tries to determine how best to fight this booming business, hundreds of thousands of women, children, and men from all over the world are disappearing each year at the hands of traffickers who, like any other businessperson, are quickly adapting to the new environment, honing their business skills, and often staying two steps ahead of the authorities.

The situation in the Balkans offers a compelling example of the evolution of trafficking. The trade developed with the arrival of a willing and very well paid international clientele after the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo. UN and NATO peacekeepers, personnel from other IOs and NGOs, and civilian contractors created the "demand" side. In turn, the region quickly became a destination point for many women and girls trafficked from all over the former Communist bloc. Thousands of women and girls from Moldova, Romania, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Russia and the region itself, were, and still are, desperately looking for a way out of poverty and hopelessness of their everyday lives. Often the only opportunities they encounter are jobs advertising for waitresses, nannies, or cleaners in Western Europe, offered through illegal channels. Instead of working legitimate if illegal jobs in the West, many of them ended up in the Balkans, being tricked and/or forced into working as strippers and prostitutes in hundreds of bars sprinkled all over Kosovo and Bosnia. Initially these women and girls were horrifically brutalized physically, sexually, and psychologically. They were viciously beaten, raped, underfed, drugged, locked up and chained and sold from one owner to the other in what was a blatant form of slave trade. They had no freedom of movement, no right to protect themselves from sexually-transmitted and other diseases, and the vast majority of them never received any compensation.

Slowly and without much experience to rely on, the international and, later, the local community began to engage the enemy. The UN organized Special Trafficking Operations Program (STOP) teams, which conducted raids of hundred of bars "rescuing" trafficked females. Once these women and girls were rescued, however, there was no system set up to deal with them. After suffering the depravities of being trafficked, the victims were usually treated as illegal aliens and criminals, and were quickly deported. Traffickers, if prosecuted at all, were charged with minor crimes and were quickly released, only to continue with their previous endeavors.

In 2000, the United States passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, not only setting a good example but also putting some pressure on governments around the world to face the problem of trafficking within their borders. At least in part because of this pressure, most of the Eastern European states are now developing legal tools to fight the criminal networks that engage in trafficking. Unfortunately, these states vary greatly in their levels of political will and effectiveness. Corruption is endemic,

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2004. We are also working closely with the UN/DPKO. Next, we hope to work with American defense contractors helping them become compliant with NATO, UN, and the recent U.S. Department of Defense policy on trafficking in humans.

The next twelve months will be a critical time in advancing the campaign to cut the links between trafficking in persons and peacekeeping operations.

For more information on this project, please contact Iva Savic at ISavic@csis.org

RECENT PUBLICATIONS FROM THE RUSSIA AND EURASIA PROGRAM

PONARS Policy Memo 325

"The Challenge of Terrorism in Post-Saddam Iraq: A View from Russia"

by Ekaterina Stepanova

This policy memo can be accessed on the CSIS website at: http://csis.org/ruseura/ponars/policymemos/pm_index.cfm

On the Agenda: Election Watch Series

"Georgia: Consolidating the Revolution" *by Cory Welt*

This publication can be accessed on the CSIS website at: http://csis.org/ruseura/pubs/Agenda/040406_welt.pdf

and change slow in coming. Nevertheless, more attention is being paid to the problem and traffickers are occasionally being arrested and prosecuted. The treatment of victims has, with time, improved slightly. Very few services and very little financial help, however, are offered to young women and girls who have been trafficked. In addition, most authorities rarely offer witness protection or third country repatriation, and when they do, it is done on an ad hoc basis. This makes it extremely difficult for women to testify against their traffickers and return to their home countries.

A few years after the first attempts were made to address trafficking, we can begin to assess how successful these policies have been at stifling trade in humans. Trade has been impacted, but unfortunately this impact is not one of declining numbers or successful repatriation. Trafficking has evolved or, perhaps more aptly, mutated to a more resistant form.

During the slow reaction period of international and local authorities, traffickers managed to develop a substantial local clientele. According to studies by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), while it was the presence of international “customers” and the revenue they created that initially led to the growth of trafficking in the Balkans, a majority of those who visit bars and clubs run by the traffickers now are local men. With this expansion, the traffickers have secured for themselves a permanent place of business in the region. In addition, as a result of the STOP team actions, the brothels moved underground, into private houses, making it much harder for the authorities to locate and fight the traffickers.

Additionally, we now see a more subtle form of slavery being practiced. Women and girls are still being tricked or forced into sexual slavery, but they are now treated better, have more freedom of movement, and, most importantly, are given a small portion of their earnings. Through these “improvements”, traffickers effectively removed much of the incentive their victims had to cooperate with the authorities, while continuing to make enormous profits. For instance, a young Moldovan woman, when rescued from a brothel, has the following choices. First, she could testify against her trafficker, stay at a shelter for a short period of time and then, with approximately \$150 in hand, return to Moldova. At home she will most likely be shunned by her family and traditional rural society for what happened to her. Since she has no new capital or skill, she will be in the same desperate situation from which she originally fled, or perhaps even worse off than before. Given that the Moldovan Ministry of Labor estimates the unemployment rate to be at 73 percent and, according to IOM figures, a large majority of already scarce legal jobs abroad offered to Moldovan citizens are available to men only, to earn any income she will once again be forced to rely on illicit emigration routes. In addition, as authorities offer her no protection, her traffickers are likely to find her, threaten her family and demand either money or further services as a payment of her “debt”. It is thus no surprise that 30 percent of repatriated Moldovan victims end up being re-trafficked (according to IOM). Her other choice is to stay with the trafficker and, she believes, make a small amount of money with which she will be able to support her family at home or secure a decent living conditions for herself later on. However horrific it might seem to us, more and more often, the victims choose the second option over what institutions fighting trafficking have to offer. If the anti-trafficking community is to be successful in its endeavors, our hypothetical, but all too real, Moldovan trafficking victim must have a third, better choice.

The trafficking business is quickly adapting and continuing to flourish... As traffickers perfect their skills it becomes more difficult to uproot their business.

The trafficking business is quickly adapting and continuing to flourish while banking on the desperation of the most vulnerable members of Eastern European societies. As traffickers perfect their skills it becomes more difficult to uproot their business. And as their incentives are counted in billions of dollars each year, they do and will continue to represent a very tough enemy. For this reason, the countries of origin, transit, and destination as well as the international community trying to fight this heinous industry can no longer put in a half hearted or ill conceived effort in order to achieve results. They must quickly and comprehensively mobilize to ensure the protection of the victims, prosecution of the traffickers, and, most importantly, create a reason for women and girls in Eastern Europe to go home and stay home.

Iva Savic is a Research Assistant in the Russia and Eurasia Program.

RUSSIA AND EURASIA IN REVIEW

ARMENIA

The Armenian opposition failed in achieving its mid-April deadline for ousting President Robert Kocharian. The opposition attempted a "Carnation Revolution" as non-violent protests raged through Armenia in an attempt to mirror the "Revolution of the Roses" in neighboring Georgia. Police and special service personnel dispersed the opposition rallies violently, according to some reports, as journalists were beaten and opposition activists were detained and arrested.

AZERBAIJAN

A high level U.S. delegation visited Baku in an attempt to persuade the Azerbaijani government to adhere to international human rights norms; the delegation also discussed the prospects of resolving the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Under international pressure, the Azeri government has released or promised to re-try all individuals considered to be political prisoners by the Council of Europe. The government is proceeding with plans, however, to turn a mosque headed by a vocal critic of Ilham Aliyev, into a carpet museum.

BELARUS

It was a bad couple of months for the Belarusian opposition. Opposition leader Anatol Lyabedzka is facing criminal proceedings for defaming the president for, among other insults, claiming Lukashenka's economic policies were shortsighted and for accusing him of covering up political disappearances. He faces 5 years in prison if convicted. Another opposition politician, Mikhail Marynich, was arrested by the KGB, while the head of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee has been banned from traveling abroad as she has been targeted in a tax-evasion case. Two NGOs that undertook independent analysis of Belarusian politics were shuttered by the Justice Ministry. The Parliamentary Assembly of Europe is recommending punitive measures against Belarus unless or until the government launches a credible investigation into the disappearance of four high profile opposition figures.

ESTONIA

Estonia joined NATO in April and will join the EU on May 1. Some Estonian politicians have loudly denounced what they see as concessions to Russia by the EU to get Russia to extend the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement to the new member states. Foreign Minister Kristiina Ojuland criticized the EU's Foreign Ministers for allowing Russia to tie the PCA extension to 14 issues it wanted addressed. Along with economic concerns, Russia again raised the issue of the Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia and Latvia, requesting that the EU ensure that citizenship requirements are eased, that retired Soviet military personnel be eligible for citizenship, that the states fund Russian-language schools, and that Russian be given the status of an official language in regions with large Russian minorities (which would be the major cities in Estonia and Latvia).

GEORGIA

Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili unsuccessfully attempted to enter the autonomous republic of Ajara prior to the national parliamentary elections held on March 28, 2004. The situation escalated to a blockade of the Ajara region, which ended when an agreement was reached between Saakashvili and the leader of the autonomous republic, Aslan Abashidze. The agreement gave assurances that democratic elections would be held in Ajara.

The final official result of the parliamentary elections show the National Movement-Democrats receiving the largest share of the vote with 67.02 percent and, to the surprise of many, the New-Rights-Industrialists received 7.62 percent, thus clearing the 7 percent hurdle to secure their place in parliament. The Democratic Revival Union (Abashidze's party) received only 6.02% failing to get the votes needed to enter parliament

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KAZAKHSTAN

The legislature passed a new election law formally aimed at increasing the transparency of elections by allowing election observers, candidates' representatives, and journalists to be present at all stages of the electoral process. A media law was also passed that critics contend will limit even further Kazakhstan's already constrained media by making the registration process more arduous and limiting issues on which the media could report. Significant international and even domestic criticism (including from the party headed by Nazarbayev's daughter) may have prompted Nazarbayev to send the law to the Constitutional Court for review. After the Court ruled the bill unconstitutional, Nazarbayev vetoed it.

President Nazarbayev visited the Kremlin for bilateral talks with Vladimir Putin. Discussion topics of the mid-April meeting included terrorism, bilateral cooperation, trade, and the use of Baikonur cosmodrome, which Russia is leasing from Kazakhstan until 2050.

KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyzstan continues to host military forces of both the United States and Russia. U.S. forces are training small numbers of Kyrgyz military personnel, and Russia is increasing the quality of its military aid, promising to send the latest weaponry in a technical-military aid package worth about \$2 million. The European Union's External Relations Commissioner, Christopher Patten, visited Kyrgyzstan in a tour that included Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan (notably absent from the tour was Turkmenistan). It was the first visit to the region by an EU Commissioner in 8 years. Patten expressed the EU's interest in the region, while pressing for market reforms and human rights.

LATVIA

The president of Latvia, Vaira Vike-Freiberga, greeted the country's accession to NATO with appreciation for the security guarantees that NATO membership entails—security guarantees that she pointed out were lacking between the two World Wars, when Latvia, along with Estonia and Lithuania, lost their independence and were incorporated into the Soviet Union. President Bush's comments at the accession ceremony that the new members were once "captive to an empire" likely did little to ease Russian concerns over NATO expansion. The Latvia-Russia relationship was further strained by the expulsion of a Russian diplomat accused of espionage. Russia has also expressed concern over the treatment of ethnic Russians in Latvia, who, according to Russia, are being discriminated against because they must be taught in Latvian (except for courses relating to Russian culture and language). The situation worsened in April when thousands of ethnic Russians and school children protested outside schools and parliament to oppose the impending reforms. Vike-Freiberga called on Latvia's ethnic groups to respect each other.

LITHUANIA

The Lithuanian parliament impeached President Rolandas Paksas April 6th after the Constitutional Court ruled that he had violated his oath and the constitution. As impeachment proceedings were underway, Paksas refused to resign under considerable parliamentary pressure. His Liberal Democratic Party has asked him to run again. It is not yet clear whether the Main Elections Commission will clear Paksas to run even if his application and signature requirements are met. Presidential elections have been scheduled to coincide with the elections to the European Parliament on June 13th. Such an important dispute comes at an awkward time for Lithuania as it joins NATO and the EU. In light of NATO membership, the country continues to assure Russia that NATO military aircraft patrolling its airspace do not represent a lack of interest in cooperation.

MOLDOVA

The Moldovan government was busy responding to the comments or visits of prominent international organizations, including the NATO parliamentary assembly, the OSCE, the IMF, and the EU. The IMF criticized Moldovan economic policies, especially the slow rate of structural reforms; the OSCE mission was decried as involving itself in Moldovan internal affairs after the chief of mission commented that if Moldovan rightist opposition parties banded together they could win a sizeable percentage of the vote in the 2005 parliamentary election; Transdneister leader Igor Smirnov dismissed OSCE concerns over weapons production and trading in the region while the OSCE confirmed the year's first withdrawal of Russian armaments;

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and the European Commissions envoy to Moldova said that Moldova needed to undertake concrete steps that matched its declared intention of integration with the EU.

RUSSIA

Russians overwhelmingly reelected President Vladimir Putin on March 14. The elections were criticized by the OSCE, which stated the elections "lacked elements of a genuine democratic contest."

With the accession of the Baltic states into NATO, NATO now reaches Russia's borders. Signaling their continuing displeasure with NATO expansion and the presence of NATO forces in the Baltics (4 Belgian aircraft, based in Lithuania, are patrolling Baltic airspace), Minister of Defense Sergei Ivanov said that Russia might revise its defense policy if NATO continues with its "offensive" military doctrine. State Duma member Andrei Kokoshin stated that NATO's expansion is "leading to weakening of joint efforts in combating terrorism, as well as in the non-proliferation of mass destruction weapons." On March 31 the Duma passed a resolution calling on NATO to take Russian interests into account, recommending that the government revise Russian defense policy, including reassessing continued Russian participation in arms control treaties, if NATO does not cooperate, and to deploy additional troops in Russian regions bordering NATO states.

Russia's new foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, signed a renewed Partnership and Cooperation Accord with the EU. The EU had insisted that the PCA be automatically extended to the new EU states, which include the former Soviet republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The Russian government had initially resisted extending the PCA, citing questions that needed to be resolved first. Russia's main dispute with the EU regarded transit of goods to the Kaliningrad enclave, loss of traditional markets, and the Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia and Latvia. The EU agreed to cushion Russia from the loss of traditional markets and drop customs duties on goods in transit between Kaliningrad and Russia. A Russia-EU statement on the protection of national minorities was issued, although no specific states were mentioned after Russia apparently dropped its bid for specific reference to the Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia and Latvia and the "social integration" of these minorities. Lavrov later noted, however, that the Agreement still had to be signed by the Duma and tied the ratification of the PCA to further EU action on the social integration of the Russian minorities in Estonia and Latvia.

TAJIKISTAN

An Uzbek citizen was arrested in Dushanbe in March with 3 grams of plutonium (black market value of approximately \$20,000). Officials claim the plutonium is insufficient to produce a nuclear weapon. The detainee apparently planned to sell the plutonium in Afghanistan or Pakistan. The container in which the plutonium was found is believed to have originated in Russia. Potentially adding to Russian concerns over the U.S. presence in Central Asia, Tajikistan has received military vehicles and uniforms from the United States, as well as aid from the EU in order to improve border security.

Jordan's Queen Noor visited Tajikistan as a Goodwill Ambassador of the UN Development program in hopes of raising world awareness of the small country. During her 4 day tour, the Queen met with President Rahmonov to discuss issues such as AIDS, human rights, water supply, and landmines.

TURKMENISTAN

After stating that there is freedom of religion in Turkmenistan, Niyazov declared that no more mosques should be built in Turkmenistan, that mosque finances should be subject to careful scrutiny, and that only approved mullahs should be able to lead prayers.

Plans are afoot to build an artificial river through Ashgabat because most leading cities "are situated on rivers." Other plans include the construction of a 'Disneyland-style theme park,' which is reportedly causing approximately 800 families to be forced out of their homes without compensation. Turkmenbashi also noted his distaste for gold teeth in young people. Soon after, universities were turning away students with gold teeth. And when school begins in the fall, schoolchildren and officials will be required to wear a badge portraying Niyazov's profile.

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The UN Commission on Human Rights issued a blistering resolution condemning human rights practices in Turkmenistan, urging the government to respect human rights, 'especially the right to express opinion.' 11 countries, including Ukraine, voted against the resolution, while 17, notably Armenia and Russia, abstained.

UKRAINE

The date of Ukraine's presidential election has been set for October 31, 2004. Recent polling data show opposition politician Viktor Yushchenko leading the field of potential presidential contenders with between 22 and 24 percent support. Current prime minister Viktor Yanukovich attracts 9 to 14 percent support. Only 4 percent of Ukrainians expect the elections to be fair, with 23 percent convinced the election results will be fabricated and 61 percent expecting violations of some kind during the election. The Verkhovna Rada initially approved by a simple majority a bill diluting the powers of the presidency in favor of the prime minister and parliament. After being vetted by the Constitutional Court, the bill was returned to the Rada for a final vote, requiring a two-thirds majority for final passage. The bill fell six votes short.

Minister of Defense Yevhen Marchuk acknowledged that Ukraine is missing several hundred missiles from its arsenal, although he argued that they were not a threat because the missiles "could not fly". The missiles are believed to have been decommissioned, possibly without the proper accounting.

UZBEKISTAN

March ended with 4 straight days of violence in Tashkent, with 37 people killed. Uzbek officials were quick to point to Islamic extremist groups such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and/or foreign extremists. Hizb-ut-Tahrir issued a statement denying its involvement. According to the Uzbek Prosecutor General, 33 alleged terrorists, 10 policemen, and 4 civilians were killed, with 19 people under arrest in connection with the attacks.

The Uzbek government began a crack down on NGOs in April when it refused to renew registration for the Soros' funded Open Society Institute's branch office in Uzbekistan.

Compiled by Jacqueline Miller and Kristin Padgett, with George Anjaparidze and Nathan Puffer.

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