RUSSIAN FEDERATION

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT

Country Information & Policy Unit
October 2000

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Scope of Document

1.1. This assessment has been produced by the Country Information & Policy Unit of the Immigration & Nationality Directorate, Home Office, from information obtained from a variety of sources.

1.2. The assessment has been prepared for background purposes, for those involved in the asylum determination process. The information it contains is not exhaustive, nor is it intended to catalogue all human rights violations. It concentrates on the issues most commonly raised in asylum claims made in the United Kingdom.

1.3. The assessment is sourced throughout. It is intended to be used by caseworkers as a signpost to the source material, which has been made available to them. The vast majority of the source material is readily available in the public domain.

1.4. It is intended to revise the assessment on a six-monthly basis while the country remains within the top 35 asylum-producing countries in the United Kingdom.

1.5. The assessment will be placed on the Internet (http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/asylum/asylum_contents02.html). An electronic copy of the assessment has been made available to the following organisations:

Amnesty International UK
Immigration Advisory Service
Immigration Appellate Authority
Immigration Law Practitioners' Association
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants
JUSTICE
Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture
Refugee Council
Refugee Legal Centre
UN High Commissioner for Refugees

II. GEOGRAPHY

A. Location and Climate

2.1. The Russian Federation (until 25 December 1991, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic of the Soviet Union) is bounded by Norway, Finland, Estonia and Latvia to the north-west and by Belarus and Ukraine to the west. The southern borders of European Russia are with the Black Sea, Georgia, Azerbaijan, the Caspian Sea and Kazakhstan. The Siberian and Far Eastern regions have southern frontiers with the People's Republic of China, Mongolia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The eastern coastline is on the Sea of Japan, the Sea of Okhotsk, the Pacific Ocean and the Barents Sea. The northern coastline is on the Arctic Ocean. The region around Kaliningrad, on the Baltic Sea, became part of the Russian Federation in 1945. It is separated from the rest of the Federation by Lithuania and Belarus.[2]

2.2. The Russian Federation covers a total area of 17,075,400 sq km (6,592,850 sq miles), making it by far the largest country in the world. Its territory consists of 89 federal units, including the cities of Moscow, the capital, and St Petersburg, the old tsarist capital.[1] Given its size, it is not surprising that the climate of Russia is extremely varied, ranging from severe Arctic conditions in northern areas and much of Siberia to generally temperate weather in the south.[2]

B. Population

2.3. The Russians are Eastern Slavs, inhabitants of the huge Eurasian land mass, which is a territory with no great natural frontiers, a fact that has made them throughout history both vulnerable to invaders and themselves inclined to migration and expansion. Many ethnic Russians live beyond the borders of the Russian Federation, forming significant minorities in neighbouring other countries of the former Soviet Union, such as Estonia, Latvia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, in addition to Moldova and the Central Asian countries.[1]

2.4. The estimated total population of the Russian Federation at 1 January 1998 was 147,100,000, making the population density just 8.6 per sq km. The majority of the population lives in European Russia, the population of Siberia and the Far East being only some 32 million in 1989, approximately 22% of the total. At the 1989 census, Russians formed the largest ethnic group in the Federation, accounting for 82.6% of the population. Other major ethnic groups include Tatars (3.6%), Ukrainians (2.7%) and Chuvash (1.2%). There were also Belarusians, Bashkirs, Mordovans, Mari, Chechens, Kazakhs and Uzbeks.[1]

C. Language and Religion

2.5. The official language is Russian, but a large number of other languages are also used. Religious adherence is varied, with many religions closely connected with particular ethnic groups. Christianity is the major religion, mostly adhered to by ethnic Russians and other Slavs, with the Russian Orthodox Church the largest denomination. The main concentrations of Muslims are among Volga Tatars, Chuvash and Bashkirs, and the peoples of northern Caucasus,

including the Chechen, Ingush, Ossetians, Kabardinians and the peoples of Dagestan. Buddhism is the main religion of the Buryats, the Tyvans and the Kalmyks. The large pre-1917 Jewish population has been depleted by war and emigration, but there remain some 700,000 Jews in the Russian Federation.[2]

III. HISTORY

A. Pre-Twentieth Century Russia

3.1. The Russians' first state was established towards the end of the ninth century, around Kiev (now in Ukraine). Kievan Rus was the forerunner not only of the 'Great' Russians, but also of the Belarusians or 'White Russians' and the Ukrainians or 'Little Russians', and was a slave-holding society, which was officially Christianised in the year 988. The state did not last for long, however, as much of its population, tired of constant enemy attacks from the south and west, gradually migrated to the north and east. By the late twelfth century, the early Russians were scattered over a large area in what is now western Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, while their territory was fragmented among a large number of usually warring principalities, the most powerful centred on the town of Vladimir.[1]

3.2. This disintegration was halted in 1237, when Mongol Tartars invaded from the east, crossing the River Volga and imposing almost 250 years of subjugation on the Russian people. From the late fourteenth century, the Mongol Empire itself began to disintegrate into smaller khanates, and in 1480 a new Russian state finally emerged, when the Muscovite prince, Ivan III, proclaimed complete independence from the Tatars. However, the new state retained many of the features of the Mongol system, including the supremacy of the state over the individual and the principle of universal compulsory service to the state. Ivan IV (the 'Terrible'), who ruled from 1533 to 1584, was the first of many a Russian Tsar (Ceasar or Emperor) to use his unquestioned rights as supreme ruler to establish a despotic regime in which terror was, effectively, an instrument of state policy. Also under his rule, for the first time the Russian Empire extended into two continents, and by 1645, under the first Tsar of the Romanov dynasty, Muscovite rule reached the Sea of Okhotsk in the Far East.[1]

3.3. Over subsequent centuries, Russia's development was marked by almost continuous expansionism and by arguments over whether to follow a Western, European model of civilisation, or to create a peculiarly Russian one, informed more by the country's geographical position on the frontier between Europe and Asia. Peter I (the 'Great'), who ruled from 1682 to 1725, combined despotic methods with a determination to modernise Russia and establish it as a great European power. To symbolise this, in 1712 he moved the capital from Moscow to a newly built city on the Baltic coast, St Petersburg (Sankt Peterburg). Under Catherine II (the 'Great'), who ruled from 1762 to 1796, the Russian Empire was expanded south to the Black Sea and west into Poland. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Tsars Alexander I and Nicholas I extended the Russian frontiers into the Caucasus and some of Central Asia, gains which were further extended in the second half of that century under Alexander II, who also conquered new territories in the Far East.[1]

B. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

3.4. Despite the attempts of Alexander II to introduce liberal reforms, the Empire remained an autocracy until 1905.[2] Meanwhile, European liberal and revolutionary ideas increasingly threatened the political stability of late nineteenth century Russia, and the last Tsar, Nicholas II, was obliged to introduce elements of parliamentary democracy, with the establishment of a

legislative assembly, the Duma, in 1906.[1] However, this and ensuing attempts at reform failed to placate the increasingly restive workers and peasants.[2] In 1917, the pressures of defeat in the First World War and growing social and economic chaos in the country at large brought two revolutions. The first, in March, overthrew the Tsar and established a provisional government, which, however, soon found itself sharing power with the new workers' councils, known as soviets. The second, the Bolshevik Revolution on 7 November, brought the Communists to power in the capital (renamed Petrograd in 1914) and, after three years of civil war, throughout most of the territory of the Russian Empire.[1]

3.5. Led by Vladimir Ulyanov (Lenin) until 1924, the Communists established the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) with Moscow as its capital in 1922, in which Russia (the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic or RSFSR) became just one of eventually fifteen national republics, itself containing 31 ethnically defined autonomous republics or regions. In the 1920s, genuine attempts were made to encourage other nationalities to develop their own identities and cultures under local leadership, but under Stalin (Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili) between 1924 and 1953, the accepted dogma was that the Soviet nations would merge, which most understood to mean the subjugation of other nations by the Russian people.[1]

3.6. Russia, together with the other republics of the USSR experienced considerable hardship under Stalin's collectivisation campaign of the early 1930s and the accompanying widespread repression that came to characterise his brutal dictatorship.[3] Under the Nazi-Soviet Treaty of Non-Aggression in 1939, the USSR annexed the Baltic states as well as other territories, and victory over Germany and Japan in the Second World War led to further territorial gains for Russia. In the west, it gained part of East Prussia, now Kaliningrad, from Germany, a small amount of territory from Estonia and those parts of Finland annexed during the Soviet-Finnish War between 1939 and 1940. In the east, it acquired the strategically important Kurile Islands from Japan. In addition, the nominally independent People's Republic of Tuva (now the Republic of Tyva), situated between the USSR and Mongolia, was annexed in 1944, and subsequently became an autonomous republic within the Russian Federation. The present territorial extent of the Russian Federation was achieved in 1954, when Crimea was ceded to the Ukrainian SSR.[2]

3.7. Despite concessions to the other nations in terms of limited cultural, linguistic and administrative rights, Russians remained the colonial masters, their Empire simply renamed the USSR.[3] Russia ensured the loyalty of non-Russian parts of the Soviet Empire by the appointment of Russian second secretaries in all republican Communist Party organisations, by establishing Russian as the language of the Soviet state, and by making the republics' economies dependent on each other and on the all-Union government in Moscow. Meanwhile, Russian migration to other republics was encouraged.[1]

3.8. Stalin died in 1953 and was succeeded by Nikita Khrushchev who began a process of cautious liberalisation, released thousands of prisoners, and admitted for the first time that there had been large-scale repressions under Stalin. However, Krushchev's attempts to reform the Soviet bureaucracy, his erratic plans for economic reform and his conduct of international relations led to his dismissal in 1964. He was replaced by Leonid Brezhnev, who until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, managed to improve relations with the West, which since the late 1940s had been generally characterised by the intense mutual hostility of the Cold War era. Upon his death in 1982, Brezhnev was succeeded by Yurii Andropov, who undertook an anti-corruption campaign and attempted very cautious economic reforms. He was succeeded upon

his death, in 1984, by Konstantin Chernenko, a former close ally of Brezhnev, who achieved little before his death in 1985.[2]

3.9. Chernenko's successor as General Secretary was Mikhail Gorbachev, who embarked upon a programme of changes, replacing many leading state and Communist party officials and appointing several reformists to the Politburo.[3] In addition, a policy of *glasnost* (openness) provided for a greater degree of freedom for the mass media and freer discussion of previously censored aspects of Soviet and Russian history, as well as more critical views of contemporary politics. Gorbachev's programme of gradual political and economic reform came to be known as *perestroika* (restructuring). In 1988, Gorbachev announced plans for comprehensive changes to the political system, with the introduction of a two-tier legislature, elected largely by competitive elections. In the subsequent elections to the new USSR Congress of People's Deputies, held in March 1989, many conservative candidates were defeated by reformist politicians, among them Boris Yeltsin, who won an overwhelming victory in the Moscow constituency. In May 1989, the Congress elected Gorbachev to the new post of executive President of the USSR.[2]

3.10. The first stage in the process of achieving Russian sovereignty from all-Union institutions was the election of the RSFSR Congress of People's Deputies in March 1990 by largely free and competitive elections. In May 1990, the Congress elected Yeltsin Chairman of the Supreme Soviet (the permanent working body of the Congress), the highest state post in the RSFSR and a position from which Yeltsin could effectively challenge the authority of Gorbachev and the all-Union institutions which he represented. In June 1990, the Congress adopted a declaration of sovereignty, asserting that the RSFSR was a sovereign republic and that the laws of the RSFSR had primacy over all-Union legislation. In mid-1990, the Russian Communist Party (RCP) was established and the political, cultural and scientific institutions that Russia had lacked began to be established. In June 1991, Yeltsin was elected President of the RSFSR, which gave him the executive power necessary to effect his policies as well as a sufficient popular mandate to challenge the jurisdiction of Gorbachev and the all-Union authorities.[2]

3.11. On 19 August 1991, a self-proclaimed State Committee for the State of Emergency (SCSE), led by the Soviet Vice-President, Gennadii Yanayev, seized power in Moscow, but within three days the attempted coup collapsed. Yeltsin's position was strengthened by his part in bringing about the collapse of the coup, and while the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and RCP were suspended, he asserted control over all-Union bodies, appointing RSFSR ministers to head central institutions. By the end of 1991, the USSR had ceased to exist. On 25 December 1991, Gorbachev resigned as its last President and the Russian Supreme Soviet formally changed the name of the RSFSR to the Russian Federation. Meanwhile, eleven former members of the USSR joined the newly established Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).[2]

C. The Russian Federation

3.12. During 1992, while Yeltsin accelerated his economic reform programme, there were increasing threats of conflict between the executive and the legislature, and his position remained precarious. By the beginning of May 1993, anti-Yeltsin demonstrations in Moscow by neo-Communist and nationalist groups had degenerated into violent clashes. Aleksandr Rutskoi, Vice-President of the Russian Federation, denounced corruption in Yeltsin's administration and

amidst arguments over proposals to amend the Constitution, Yeltsin divested Rutskoi of his official responsibilities. By September 1993, the situation had deteriorated to a point where Yeltsin suspended the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet on the grounds that they were obstructing both economic and constitutional reform. He also announced elections to a new bicameral Federal Assembly as envisaged in his draft Constitution.[2]

3.13. The Supreme Soviet responded by appointing Rutskoi as President in Yeltsin's place and this was ratified by the Congress of People's Deputies, which also voted to impeach Yeltsin. On 27 September 1993, Rutskoi and his supporters became besieged in the parliament building, while Yeltsin declared a state of emergency. On 4 October, tanks opened fire on the parliament building, forcing the surrender of the rebels, whose leaders were imprisoned and subsequently charged with inciting mass disorder. Meanwhile, Yeltsin announced that presidential elections, provisionally scheduled for mid-1994, would not take place and that he would fulfil his mandate until June 1996. In December 1993, the revised Constitution, increasing presidential power at the expense of the Federal Assembly, was endorsed by referendum held concurrently with elections to the Federal Assembly. No single party or bloc won a decisive majority of seats in the Duma, although an unexpectedly high level of support was accorded to extreme right-wing or anti-reformist elements, alarming Russian liberals and foreign governments alike.[2]

3.14. The influence of anti-liberal elements within the presidential administration became increasingly apparent in late 1994. In November, the Security Council (regarded as the major policy-making body in Russia) agreed to intervene militarily in the separatist republic of Chechnya, a move which was strongly criticised by the media and many political groups, and one which deepened the political differences between Yeltsin and his erstwhile democratic allies. In November 1991, Chechnya had declared its independence from Russia and there had been increasing unrest as the conflicting territorial claims of the Ingush, Ossetians and Chechens were pursued. In December 1994, Russian troops were sent in to Chechnya to introduce "constitutional rule". The conflict continued with varied intensity until negotiations achieved a ceasefire and Russian withdrawal in August 1996. However, despite the official cessation of hostilities in Chechnya, atrocities, including abductions and murders, continued and the political status of Chechnya remained unresolved.[2]

3.15. During 1994 and 1995, amidst continuing economic problems, the Chechen crisis, and a growing crime rate, it became clear that Yeltsin had serious health problems. This further undermined his position and in elections to the Duma in December 1995 the Communist Party emerged as the largest single party. However, Yeltsin proceeded to win the presidential elections, emerging from the second round in July 1996 with 54% of the votes cast. However, political infighting, economic problems, persistent speculation over the health of Yeltsin, and a series of financial scandals during 1997 all threatened to undermine the credibility of the government.[2] During 1998, Yeltsin dismissed the government twice, first in March and then again in August. On the first occasion, widely interpreted as an attempt to reassert his authority, he replaced Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin with Sergei Kiriyenko, who was then dismissed in August amidst financial crisis. Then Yeltsin again appointed Chernomyrdin as acting Prime Minister, but was unable to secure parliamentary approval. Eventually, in September 1998, Foreign Minister, Yevgenii Primakov was appointed as a compromise Prime Minister.[1]

3.16. In August 1999, Vladimir Putin was appointed Prime Minister.[2] Subsequently, a total of 26 parties and blocs contested the Duma elections on 19 December 1999.[36] On 31 December

1999, Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned as President and Putin became acting President until elections in March 2000, which saw him confirmed in the position with over 52% of the vote. These changes took place in the context of another war in Chechnya. A 1997 accord had established an uneasy peace there, but in early August 1999 the status quo was broken when Chechen-backed Islamist guerrillas carried out an insurgent raid on neighbouring Dagestan. They withdrew after Russian troops were dispatched to the region, but there were renewed incursions and fighting in September. Subsequent fatal terrorist bombings throughout Russia, allegedly the work of Chechens, led the government to launch a full-scale attack on Chechnya, in an attempt to reassert federal control there. This began in September 1999 and resulted in heavy casualties on both sides and the displacement of a large proportion of the Chechen population. In early February 2000, Putin announced victory when federal troops recaptured the Chechen capital, Grozny, but the rebels claimed that their withdrawal from the capital had been tactical and warned of a long guerrilla war.[2]

D. Economy

3.17. Following the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, a programme of economic reforms was initiated to effect the transition from a centrally-planned economy to a market-orientated system. Prices were liberalised, precipitating high inflation, while a programme of mass privatisation was inaugurated, and proposals were made to reduce central government expenditure.[2]

3.18. The economy performed better than expected following the August 1998 financial crisis and the sharp devaluation of the rouble. Industrial production reached its 1997 level again in March 1999 and continues to grow. Gross domestic product (GDP) growth during 1999 was estimated at 1.5%, substantially higher than previously expected. The inflation rate for the first eleven months of 1999 was 34.8% and was not expected to exceed 40% by the year's end. However, greatly reduced domestic demand limits the scope of economic recovery. Real incomes shrank significantly during 1999, and wage arrears continued to increase. Lack of investment also inhibits sustained economic growth, while the ailing bank system hampers domestic investment.[14]

3.19. The government statistics office estimates that the informal economy, that is, hidden commercial activity designed to avoid heavy tax and regulatory burdens, accounts for 24% of GDP. However, other authoritative sources believe it to be much higher. Corruption continues to be a dominant negative factor in the development of commercial relations. Meanwhile, official unemployment was estimated at 11.7% in October 1999, although actual unemployment is believed to be approximately 23%, with significant regional variation.[14]

3.20. More than 51 million people, one third of the Russian population, are estimated to be living below the poverty line. Since the economic crash of August 1998, the percentage of the population whose income has fallen below the minimum subsistence level of £22 a month has leapt from 22% to 35%. Meanwhile, many of those living above the poverty line are little better off than those below, with half the population earning just £26 a month, although there is believed to be a substantial gap between real and reported, and thus taxable, income.[23]

3.21. Poverty is particularly bad in Russia's Arctic and Far Eastern regions, where 80,000 people were said to be facing starvation in early 1999, when severe shortages of food and medical supplies were reported in the regions of Chukotka, Magadan and Kamchatka. The

northern regions suffer unique problems in Russia. In Soviet times, people were offered good wages for work in what was otherwise an unattractive region. However, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, those settled there have become the country's poorest people. Unlike central Russians, they cannot rely on kitchen gardens for food and there are even fewer jobs available. Meanwhile, mines and factories are deserted and relocation would be economically impossible.[25]

IV. INSTRUMENTS OF THE STATE

A. Constitution

4.1. The current Constitution of the Russian Federation came into force on 12 December 1993, following its approval by the majority of participants in a nation-wide plebiscite. It replaced the Constitution originally passed on 12 April 1978 but amended many times after 1990. The new Constitution declares that the Russian Federation (Russia) is a democratic, federative, law-based state, with a republican form of government. State power in the Russian Federation is divided between the legislative, executive and judicial branches, which are independent of one another. Ideological pluralism and a multi-party political system are recognised.[2]

4.2. The Constitution also states that the basic human rights and freedoms of the Russian citizen are guaranteed, regardless of sex, race, nationality or religion. It declares the right to life and to freedom and personal inviolability. The principles of freedom of movement, expression and conscience are upheld. Censorship is prohibited. Citizens are guaranteed the right to vote and stand in state and local elections and to participate in referendums. Individuals are to have equal access to state employment, and the establishment of trade unions and public associations is permitted. The Constitution commits the state to protection of motherhood and childhood and to granting social security, state pensions and social benefits. Each person has the right to housing. Health care and education are free of charge. Basic general education is compulsory. Citizens are guaranteed the right to receive qualified legal assistance. Payment of statutory taxes and levies is obligatory, as is military service.[2]

B. Government

4.3. The 1993 Constitution establishes a government with three branches: executive, legislative and judicial. It provides for a strong executive branch, which consists of an elected president and a government headed by a prime minister. There is a bicameral legislature (Federal Assembly), consisting of the 450-member State Duma (the lower chamber) and the 178-member Federation Council, comprising the 89 chief executives of the regional administrations and the 89 chairpersons of their legislatures. Both the President and the legislature have been selected in competitive elections judged to be largely free and fair, with a broad range of political parties and movements contesting offices.[14] Under a presidential decree of May 2000, the 89 regions were grouped into seven federal districts.[2]

4.4. Politically, economically and socially, Russia continues to be in a state of transition, and while constitutional structures are well-defined and democratic in conception, democratic institution-building continues to face serious challenges, often due to significant limitations on the state's financial resources.[14] Furthermore, the Russian Federation's 89 regions include 21 largely ethnic-based republics, some of which are looking for greater political autonomy. Power has ebbed away from the centre in recent years, allowing the regions to exercise greater control over their own affairs.[7a] Of the 21 regions that have drawn up their own Constitutions, 19 infringe the Federal Constitution.[31]

C. Security

4.5. The Soviet Union was generally regarded as a police state where law existed for the benefit of the state, and instead of protecting the rights of the individual, internal security agencies were designed above all to uphold the Communist Party's monopoly on political power. Since the failed coup attempt of August 1991, there has been much change, with the KGB disbanded in October that year and replaced by a number of new agencies.[9c]

4.6. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Procuracy, and the Federal Tax Police are responsible for law enforcement at all levels of government throughout the Russian Federation. The FSB has broad law enforcement functions, including fighting crime and corruption, in addition to its core responsibilities of security, counter-intelligence and counter-terrorism. The FSB operates with only limited oversight by the Procuracy and the courts. The military's primary mission is national defence, although it has been employed in local conflicts, for which it was prepared inadequately, and is available to control civil disturbances. More recently, internal security threats in parts of the Russian Federation have been dealt with by militarised elements of the security services. These same organisations are tasked with domestic law enforcement. Many members of the security forces, particularly within the internal affairs apparatus, are responsible for human rights abuses.[14]

4.7. Arbitrary arrest and detention remain particular problems. There are credible reports that police throughout the country detain persons without observing mandated procedures, and fail to issue proper protocols of arrest or for confiscated property. Furthermore, reports indicate the use of physical abuse by officers during such arrests. Institutions such as the MVD have begun to educate officers about safeguarding human rights during law enforcement activities through training provided by other countries, but they remain largely unreformed and have not yet adopted practices fully consistent with law enforcement in a democratic society. While the President and government have supported human rights and democratic practice in statements and policy initiatives, they have not institutionalised the rule of law required to protect them. Most abuses occur at lower levels and not by central direction, but government officials do not investigate the majority of cases of abuse and rarely dismiss or discipline the perpetrators.[14]

4.8. Even prior to the 1999 outbreak of war in Chechnya, the security situation there and in the wider Caucasus area remained precarious. Kidnappings, motivated usually by ransom but in some cases by political reasons, had become frequent, with both journalists and humanitarian aid workers being targeted. In February 1999, Chechen President, Aslan Maskhadov, announced the suspension of constitutional law and declared a state of Islamic Shari'a law in the region. According to press reports, a Shura (Council) of prominent figures also came into being at that time, to help oversee Shari'a law, and, in the process, the Maskhadov government stripped the region's legislature of most of its responsibilities.[14]

D. Judiciary

4.9. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, but while its development continues and there are signs of limited independence, the judiciary does not yet act as an effective counterweight to other branches of government. A 1996 law separated the courts of general jurisdiction from the Ministry of Justice and placed them under a separate agency, the

Judicial Department, which is under the supervision of the Supreme Court. The judiciary is divided into three branches: the courts of general jurisdiction, subordinated to the Supreme Court; the arbitration court system, under the High Court of Arbitration; and the Constitutional Court. Over 90% of all civil and criminal cases are heard by the municipal courts, the lowest level of the general jurisdiction courts. Meanwhile, jury trials have been introduced in only nine of the 89 regions and, where they have not been introduced, criminal procedures are weighted heavily in favour of the procurator.[14]

4.10. Judges remain subject to influence from the executive, military and security forces, especially in high profile or political cases. Burdened by large case backlogs and trial delays, the judiciary also lacks resources and is subject to corruption. Low salaries and scant prestige make it difficult to attract talented new judges and contribute to the vulnerability of existing judges to bribery, corruption and, in some cases, murder. As judges generally bear responsibility both for reaching a verdict and handing down a sentence, they are logical targets for intimidation. Reports indicate that the constitutionally mandated presumption of innocence is often disregarded, and judges are known to return poorly developed cases to the prosecution for additional investigation rather than risk confrontation with powerful prosecutors. Furthermore, the heads of several lawyers' associations have reported that during 1999 defence lawyers were increasingly the targets of police harassment, including beatings and arrests, and such abuses are believed to be increasing throughout the country. There were also instances in which the right to due process and a fair trial were violated.[14]

4.11. The Criminal Procedure Code specifies that only two months should elapse between the date an investigation is initiated and the date the file is transferred to the procurator so that he can file formal charges against the suspect in court. However, investigations are seldom completed that quickly, and some suspects spend 18 months or longer in detention under harsh conditions while the criminal investigation is conducted. There are reports that terms of pre-trial detention can be extended to three years, with the average ranging from seven to ten months. In some extreme cases, detention periods can be extended to five years, due to financial difficulties and poor investigative and court work. The Code provides that a prosecutor may extend the period of criminal investigation to six months in "complex" cases, and if more time is required in "exceptional" cases, the Procurator General can personally extend the period up to 18 months. Extensions of the investigation period are often issued without explanation to the detainee and, until the investigation is completed, the suspect is under the jurisdiction of the Procurator's office and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. There is no procedure for a suspect to plead guilty during the investigative period, although if a suspect informs the investigator that he is guilty, the period of the investigation is usually shorter than if he maintains his innocence. Suspects frequently fear exercising their rights to request judicial review of their detention out of fear of angering the investigating officer.[14]

4.12. There have also been credible reports that persons have been detained far in excess of the permissible periods for administrative offences, in some cases so that police officials can extort money from friends or relatives. The situation has improved somewhat since a decree was issued in the summer of 1997 that annulled a previous decree that had allowed for 30-day detentions. However, the practice of detaining individuals in excess of permissible periods is still not uncommon, and this is often done for the purpose of extorting money. The use of bail is rare, even if suspects are not flight risks or have not been charged with violent crimes. This aggravates overcrowding in pre-trial detention and, due to delays in bringing cases to trial, results

in many suspects remaining in pre-trial detention for longer than the maximum penalty they might face if convicted.[14]

4.13. Delays also plague the trial stage. Although the Criminal Procedure Code requires court consideration to begin no more than 14 days after the judge issues the order designating the location of the trial, congestion in the court system frequently leads to long postponements. Some suspects actually serve the length of their sentences while awaiting trial. Judges often do not dismiss cases involving improper investigations or indictments, particularly if the procurator's case has political support or the case is controversial. Instead, such cases are often returned to the procurator for further investigation. Some authorities have taken advantage of the system's procedural weaknesses to arrest persons on false pretexts for expressing views critical of the government.[14]

E. Prisons/Detention Centres

4.14. Conditions for detainees and prisoners in most government facilities remain extremely harsh and even life-threatening, particularly in pre-trial detention facilities (SIZOs) where overcrowding is rampant and the authorities frequently employ physical abuse and torture to coerce confessions. Prisons also remain extremely overcrowded. By May 1999, there was a total prison population of 1,038,000 persons, including 285,600 in pre-trial detention. Severe overcrowding, together with poor ventilation, and low health, nutrition and sanitation standards have led to serious health problems among prisoners, over ten thousand of whom are estimated to die each year. In January 1999, there were believed to be 92,000 tuberculosis sufferers within the prison population.[14]

4.15. There are five types of detention facilities overseen by the Ministry of Justice: SIZOs hold those awaiting the completion of criminal investigation, trial, sentencing or appeal. Correctional labour colonies (ITKs) hold the bulk of convicts. "Prisons" are penitentiary institutions for those who repeatedly violate the relatively lax rules in effect in the ITKs. Educational labour colonies for juveniles (VTKs) are prisons for juveniles of 14 to 20 years of age, where conditions are significantly better than in ITKs, but where torture, beatings and rape still occur. Finally, there are the police detention centres, where conditions vary considerably but are generally harsh. In most cases, detainees are not fed and have no bedding, sleeping place, running water or toilet. Russian human rights groups have estimated that between 10,000 and 20,000 detainees and prisoners die each year in penitentiary facilities. Some die due to beatings, but most as a result of overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions or lack of medical care. Violence among inmates, including beatings and rape, is common.[14]

4.16. In recognition of the inhuman conditions present in detention facilities, in June 1999 the Duma passed an amnesty bill, intended to free an estimated 94,000 prisoners held for minor crimes and for first-time offenders, specifically veterans of military service in defence of the Motherland, pregnant women or women with children, invalids, tuberculosis-infected prisoners, minors and senior citizens. Prison activists and officials have said that the amnesty would not fully resolve the ongoing prison overcrowding crisis. Moscow-based human rights groups make frequent visits to prisons in the Moscow area, but they have neither the resources nor a national network to investigate conditions in all 89 regions.[14]

V. HUMAN RIGHTS

A. General Assessment

5.1. Russia's accession to Council of Europe in 1996 prompted the government to take some promising steps to improve its human rights record. The Council of Europe continues to monitor and investigate abuses of human rights carried out in Russia and engages the Russian government in implementing required improvements. Nonetheless, the Council has been concerned by the slow pace of reform,[8c] and, in April 2000, threatened to suspend Russia in protest at human rights abuses in Chechnya.[22] During 1999, long-standing problems of police torture and appalling prison conditions, together with significant restrictions on political, religious and ethnic freedoms continued.[8a]

5.2. Russia's ratification of the European Convention on Human Rights in 1998 enables citizens to file appeals to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) about alleged human rights violations. However, only alleged violations committed after Russia's formal accession to the Convention can be addressed to the ECHR. In addition, prospective complainants must first exhaust all appeals in Russian courts before they can turn to the European Court. Government human rights institutions are still weak and lack independence, but are becoming more active. Although the Human Rights Ombudsman, Oleg Mironov, was not known previously for any expertise in human rights, he has taken an increasingly active and public role in promoting human rights. Mironov has established an office with 150 members of staff, who are responsible for investigating human rights complaints and promoting human rights education. Meanwhile, many domestic and international human rights groups operate freely, although some have experienced harassment from local officials. Non-governmental organisations have largely withdrawn from Chechnya, because of the risk of kidnapping and other criminal attacks.[14]

5.3. The conflict between government forces and separatist elements in Chechnya, which began in September 1999, resulted in widespread civilian casualties and the displacement of around 200,000. Estimates range from between several hundred to several thousand for the total number of civilian casualties caused by bombs and artillery used by government forces. Government officials have argued that they are employing high precision tactics against separatist and terrorist targets in Chechnya, but Russia has been criticised for relying on low precision weapons, which have caused massive destruction, most notably during the battle for the Chechen capital, Grozny. Government troops have also been accused of extrajudicial killings, rape and looting in Chechnya. Chechen separatists are similarly accused of human rights abuses, including the torture and killing of a number of civilians. They have also used civilians as human shields, forcing some to dig fortifications, and have prevented civilians from fleeing Chechnya.[14] Village elders who have tried to prevent Chechen fighters from entering their villages have been shot or severely beaten, while captured Russian soldiers have been executed.[10]

5.4. While the Constitution prohibits torture, violence, and other brutal or humiliating treatment or punishment, there are credible reports that law enforcement personnel regularly use torture to coerce confessions from suspects and that the government does not hold most of them accountable for these actions. Human rights groups have documented numerous cases in which law enforcement and correctional officials tortured and beat detainees and suspects, and an

advisory presidential committee, the Permanent Human Rights Chamber, has concluded that torture is widespread and systematic, particularly in the pre-trial stages of law enforcement.[14] In a 1997 report, Amnesty International refers to several methods of torture used by law enforcement officials either to gain confessions or simply to control or abuse prisoners.[5d] A Human Rights Watch report, released in November 1999, appears to support the conclusions reached by Amnesty International, and refers to beatings, asphyxiation using gas masks or bags, electric shocks, and suspension by the wrists. Amnesty International also refers to the "press-camera" method, whereby violent prisoners are co-opted by guards and used to control or punish other prisoners. The co-opted prisoners are permitted to torture prisoners (sometimes to gain confessions) or deal with "difficult" prisoners. Another method of torture used is known as the "crucifixion of Christ" and involves the victim being secured in a spread-eagle position to either a metal cot or prison bars, to which powerful electric shocks are applied. These allegations have been corroborated by other credible sources.[14]

5.5. During 1999, significant progress was made towards abolishing the death penalty. In February, the Constitutional Court issued a ruling prohibiting all courts from passing death sentences. While the court did not find the death penalty itself unconstitutional, it argued that violations of the guaranteed right to a jury trial required that courts be banned from passing death sentences. Under Russia's Constitution, all those facing a possible death sentence have the right to have their cases examined by a jury, but as jury trials have not been introduced in the majority of Russia's regions, only a small percentage of such defendants could exercise this constitutional right.[8a] In Chechnya, executions have continued to be carried out under the provisions of the Chechen Shari'a courts.[5a]

B. Political Opinion

5.6. The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government, and citizens exercise this right in practice. A democratic presidential election took place in 1996 for the first time in the history of Russia as an independent state. Yeltsin was re-elected in what was considered a generally free and fair election,[14] and Vladimir Putin succeeded him by winning the presidential election on 26 March 2000, which was also deemed to be free of any significant fraud.[28] Notwithstanding reports of biased media coverage of the election campaign, parliamentary elections in December 1999 were also judged by international observers to be largely free and fair. However, elections to local and regional offices continue to be marred in some cases by interference from federal authorities and less than democratic practices by incumbent governors.[14]

5.7. In March 1999, President Yeltsin signed the law On Basic Guarantees of Electoral Rights and the Right of Citizens to Participate in a Referendum (Voting Rights Act) and the federal law on public associations. These amendments clarify which political public associations may participate in elections; add restrictions on preferential media coverage, donations, and financial or material support from foreign entities for campaign-related activities; introduce measures to reduce the number of non-competitive political parties and candidates on the ballot, such as financial deposits and other financial penalties alongside signature-collection provisions; increase the level of information available to voters about candidates' financial and criminal history; introduce provisions allowing multi-candidate constituencies; and add other provisions affecting federal-level and regional-level elections and referendums.[14]

5.8. The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press. However, while the government generally respects these provisions, reports of government pressure on the media continue, particularly when coverage deals with corruption or criticism of the authorities. Federal, regional and local governments continue to exert pressure on journalists by depriving them of access to information and filming opportunities, demanding the right to clear certain stories prior to publication, withholding financial support from government media operations that exercise independent editorial judgement, attempting to influence unduly the appointment of senior editors at regional and local newspapers and broadcast media organisations, removing reporters from their jobs, and bringing libel suits against journalists. An estimated 300 lawsuits and other legal actions were brought by the government against journalists and journalistic organisations during 1999, the majority of them in response to unfavourable coverage of government policy or operations, and the high government success rate in such cases reinforced the tendency among journalists towards self-censorship. Not infrequently, journalists, in particular those who pursued investigative stories on corruption and organised crime, have been attacked physically and even murdered.[14]

5.9. The financial dependence of most major media organisations on the government, or one or more of several major financial-industrial groups, continues to undermine editorial independence and journalistic integrity in both the print and broadcast media. In a number of key respects, private media organisations across the country, including print, radio and television, also remain dependent on the government, which has sought to exert economic pressure on those viewed as a threat to its authority.[14] In July 1999, editors from four of Russia's leading news outlets accused the government of ordering the tax police to open criminal cases against them on any pretext, amid an increasingly venomous struggle for control of the Russian media in the approach to the forthcoming elections. The creation of a new ministry to oversee the media caused further fear that freedom of the media would be sacrificed to the interests of the state.[26] Many observers pointed to problems with biased media coverage of the 1999 election campaign. Russian media coverage of events in Chechnya during 1999 was also criticised as uneven.[14]

5.10. The Constitution provides citizens with the right to assemble freely, and the government respects this right in practice. Organisations must obtain permits in order to hold public meetings, and the application process must begin between five and ten days before the scheduled event. Citizens have freely and actively protested government decisions and actions. Permits to demonstrate have been readily granted to both opponents and supporters of the government. The Constitution also provides for freedom of association and the government respects this right in practice. Public organisations must register their bylaws and the names of their leaders with the Ministry of Justice, and political parties must also present 5,000 signatures and pay a fee to register. The Constitution and the Law on Elections ban the participation in elections of those organisations that profess anti-constitutional themes or activities.[14] In August 1999, the Ministry of Justice announced that 139 associations had met the 19 December 1998 deadline imposed for those wishing to participate in the parliamentary elections of 19 December 1999.[33] **(For details of main political organisations, see Annex B)**

C. Religion

5.11. The Constitution provides for freedom of religion,[6] and the government generally respects this right in practice. However, although the Constitution also provides for the equality of all religions before the law and the separation of church and state, in practice the government does not always respect the provision for equality of religions. In December 1990, the Soviet government adopted a law on religious freedom designed to place all religions on an equal footing, and after the break-up of the Soviet Union this law became part of the Russian Federation's legal code. During the early and mid-1990s, the sharp increase in the activities of well-financed foreign missionaries disturbed many sectors of society, particularly nationalists and many members of the Russian Orthodox Church, some of whom advocated limiting the activities of what they termed "non-traditional" religious groups and what were sometimes regarded as dangerous or totalitarian sects.[14]

5.12. In October 1997, the government enacted a new, restrictive and potentially discriminatory law on religion, which ostensibly targeted the so-called totalitarian sects or dangerous religious cults, and which replaced the 1990 law on religion that had helped to facilitate a revival of religious activity. Under the new law on religion, representative offices of foreign religious organisations are required to register with state authorities, and are barred from conducting liturgical and other religious activity unless they have acquired the status of a group or organisation. Although the law officially requires all foreign religious organisations to register, in practice some foreign religious representatives' offices have opened without registering or have been accredited to a registered Russian religious organisation. However, these representative offices cannot carry out religious activities or have the status of a religious organisation.[14]

5.13. The 1997 law is very complex, with many ambiguous and contradictory provisions. It creates various categories of religious communities, with differing levels of legal status and privileges. It draws distinctions between religious "groups" and "organisations" and creates two categories of organisation: "regional" and "centralised." A religious group is a congregation of worshippers that does not have the legal status of a juridical person, meaning that it cannot open a bank account, own property, issue invitations to foreign guests or publish literature, among other things. However, groups are permitted to rent public spaces and hold services, and the rights of individual members of a group are unaffected. For example, a member of a religious group could buy property for the group's use, invite personal guests to engage in religious instruction, and import religious material. In this case, however, the group would not enjoy tax benefits and other privileges extended to religious organisations, such as proselytising.[14]

5.14. The most controversial provisions are those that limit the rights, activities and status of religious groups that have been in existence in Russia for less than fifteen years. Groups that have been in existence for fifteen years have the right to obtain the status of "local religious organisations." Organisations, both local and centralised, enjoy tax exemptions, and are permitted to proselytise, establish religious schools, host foreign religious workers and publish religious literature. A "centralised religious organisation" can be founded by a confession that has three functioning "local organisations" in different regions, and has the right to establish affiliated local organisations without adhering to the fifteen-year rule.[14] Other religious groups failing to comply with the fifteen-year rule are obliged to register annually for fifteen years, before being permitted to publish literature, hold public services or invite foreign preachers into

Russia. An extension of the 1997 law, announced in August 1998, decreed that foreign religious workers were permitted to remain in Russia for a maximum of three months per visit.[1]
In November 1999, the Constitutional Court ruled that religious organisations which were registered before the passage of the 1997 law are not required to prove fifteen years' existence in the country in order to be registered.[14]

5.15. International and well-funded Russian religious organisations in particular began the re-registration process under the 1997 law soon after the publication of the regulations governing re-registration in 1998. Russian Pentecostal groups, which have a solid and growing network of churches throughout the country, sought guidance from the Ministry of Justice as early as November 1997. One of the larger organisations, the Russian Unified Fellowship of Christians of the Evangelical Faith, re-registered as a centralised religious organisation in March 1998, and has since incorporated many smaller, newer Pentecostal groups within its structure. According to the Ministry of Justice, by the end of 1999, approximately 80% or 320 out of 400 religious organisations were re-registered on the federal level, representing 40% of the total number requiring re-registration. Also by that time, the Ministry estimated that about half of the 16,850 religious organisations were still not re-registered on the local level. However, several religious groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses, reported that local registrations were going more smoothly during 1999.[14]

5.16. The delay in registration is due in part to the slow pace at which the Ministry of Justice has disseminated the regulations and guidelines to local authorities, and also because smaller, minority confessions sometimes fear the registration process. Many of the 89 regions' laws and decrees on religion contradict federal law, and presumably would have to be changed. In the meantime, many local religious organisations continue to seek means of affiliating themselves with centralised organisations or confessions that can meet the fifteen-year rule and provide a protective legal cover. However, some individual local churches and religious orders, citing their theological and administrative independence, are reluctant to make themselves part of a larger organisation. Under the new system, such religious communities face considerable legal disadvantages.[14]

5.17. President Yeltsin and other high-ranking Russian officials have stated consistently that the law would be applied in a liberal, tolerant manner, thereby preserving religious freedom and the equality of confessions. They insist that no mainstream religion already operating in Russia would see its activities curtailed as a result of the new law, and by the end of 1999 no religious organisation had ceased operating as a result of the law.[14]

5.18. Despite the federal government's efforts to implement the law liberally and to provide assurances that religious freedom would be observed, restrictions continue at the local level.[14] At least 26 regions have adopted laws which are even more restrictive than the 1997 law, as a result of which the treatment of religious groups varies significantly from region to region, depending also on traditional tolerance in the area.[10] Meanwhile, the vagueness of the 1997 law and its regulations, the contradictions between federal and local law, and varying interpretations, provide regional officials with a pretext to restrict the activities of religious minorities. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow continue to be refused registration, despite the precedent set by the Ministry of Justice's April 1999 decision to re-register Jehovah's Witnesses on the federal level.[14]

5.19. Discriminatory practices at the local level are attributable to the increased decentralisation of power, as well as to government inaction and discriminatory attitudes that are widely held in society. Since 1994, 22 out of 89 regional governments have passed restrictive laws and decrees intended to limit the activities of religious groups, and there are reports that some local governments have prevented religious groups from using venues such as cinemas, suitable for large gatherings. As a result, in some instances denominations that do not have their own property have sometimes effectively been denied the opportunity to practise their faith in large groups.[14] The denial of access to buildings has been cited as the most widespread violation of religious freedom.[6] Property disputes remain some of the most frequent complaints cited by religious groups. For the most part, synagogues, churches and mosques have been returned to communities to be used for religious services, although there continue to be reports of religious property that has not been returned.[14]

5.20. Some local executive authorities continue to cite the new law or local laws to obstruct the activities of religious groups or to rescind their existing local registrations. Reports also continue of harassment and punishment for religious belief or activity, including societal violence. In addition, religious figures have been kidnapped, tortured and killed in the northern Caucasus area. The federal authorities have been criticised for failing to take sufficient action to reverse discriminatory actions taken at local level, or to discipline those officials responsible. Many groups also fear the consequences of the new law's provisions limiting the actions of foreign religious missionaries. Representatives of some religions, such as the Mormons and some Pentecostal and Charismatic Christian groups, have said that their activities in Russia could be halted under the new law. Meanwhile, human rights activists contend that only 15% of actual violations of religious freedom are reported, and that most citizens, particularly those living in the regions, are sceptical about religious freedom and reluctant to make public complaints due to fear of retaliation.[14]

Christianity

5.21. The **Russian Orthodox Church** is the dominant religious denomination in the Russian Federation, with an estimated 75 million adherents.[1] However, the Russian Orthodox Church was not without its own problems during the Soviet era,[3] and, like other Churches in Russia, is seeking to rebuild religious life after years of persecution, totalitarian atheism and indoctrination. Over 200,000 Russian Orthodox priests, monks and nuns were killed in the Communist purges of the 1920s and 1930s. Most of the priests were shot or hanged, while others were crucified on their church doors.[24] Between 1988 and 1997, more than 11,000 churches were returned to religious use, and by early 1997, there were 124 dioceses, some 18,000 Orthodox communities and 390 monasteries. There were also five theological academies and 21 seminaries. The Church's jurisdiction is challenged by the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which was established during the Soviet period and rejects the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate.[1]

5.22. The Russian Orthodox Church was actively involved in the development of the 1997 law on religion and has special arrangements with government agencies to conduct religious education. In its preamble, the 1997 law on religion recognises the "special contribution of Orthodoxy to the history of Russia and to the establishment and development of Russia's spirituality and culture." While the law accords respect to Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and certain other religions, as an inseparable part of the country's historical heritage, Russian Orthodoxy is regarded in conservative nationalist circles as the de facto official religion of the Russian Federation. Many Russians firmly believe that at least nominal adherence to the Russian Orthodox Church is at the heart of what it means to be Russian. Meanwhile, the

traditional view that Russian soil is an exclusively Orthodox domain has led to criticism of foreign religious groups that proselytise in the country, some of which have been characterised as dangerous and destructive sects.[14]

5.23. Although the Russian Orthodox Church is the dominant church in Russia, there are several independent Orthodox Churches. The **Old Believers** broke away from the Russian Orthodox Church in the late seventeenth century, in protest against the changes to the liturgy. Some Old Believers have an ordained priesthood, while others function without clergy. Despite concessions made to the Old Believers by Tsar Peter III, they suffered persecution from both the tsarist and Communist authorities. They are thought to number several million. The **Church of True Orthodox Believers (or Catacomb Church)**, which rejected the Russian Orthodox Church's accommodation with the Soviet authorities, was driven underground in 1927. After religious restrictions were eased in the early 1990s, it surfaced and was formally registered as a Church in February 1996. Another influential Orthodox community is the **Free Orthodox Church**, whose headquarters are in Suzdal and whose spiritual leader is Archbishop Valentin. Like those of the Church of True Orthodox Believers, the members of the Free Orthodox Church are few in number, but active.[7b]

5.24. There are an estimated 330,000 **Roman Catholics** in European Russia and a further 1,000,000 in Siberia.[1] During the Soviet era, most of the millions of Roman Catholics were to be found in the Baltic states and Ukraine.[7b] Between 1917 and the late 1930s, the Catholic Church in Russia lost around 1,000 priests and most of its 614 churches. Today, in European Russia, there are 80 priests serving 86 parishes, and there are 18 churches and 21 small chapels currently available to the Catholic community for worship. In Asian Russia, there are 67 priests serving 80 registered parishes.[24] The Vatican has recently established new dioceses in the country, including Moscow and Novosibirsk, where there had never before been Roman Catholic bishops.[7b] However, the work of the Catholic Church in Siberia and the Russian Far East has been hindered by the new three-month visa restriction which, given the Catholic Church's dependence on non-Russian clergy due to the lack of opportunity for a seminary education within Russia, threatens its future in these regions. They have also faced sharp rent increases on land where they once owned churches that were confiscated and in certain cases demolished by the Soviet regime.[6] The Russian Orthodox Church is in favour of equal rights, good fraternal relations and co-operation with all traditional denominations in Russia. On the initiative of the Roman Catholic charity, Aid to the Church in Need, Russia's first religious radio station was inaugurated in June 1995. The Christian Radio Channel, which draws its programmes from both Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox sources "in an ecumenical spirit", broadcasts for sixteen hours daily to the Moscow region.[7b]

5.25. During the Communist era, the **All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians/Baptists** was officially registered and recognised. A parallel group, the **Council of the Evangelical Christian/Baptist Churches**, founded in 1965, functioned underground. Other Protestants traditionally resident in Russia were **Lutherans**, **Mennonites** and **Seventh Day Adventists**. In June 1995, members of the German Lutheran Community in Perm, mainly descendants of Germans invited to work in the Demidov factories during the reign of Peter the Great, were allowed to re-open their church after a gap of nearly sixty years. Similarly, the **Anglican** Church of St Andrew in Moscow, which like other places of worship was confiscated in the early years of the Soviet Union, was returned for religious worship in 1996. There are also the **Molokans**, a Christian sect that originated in Russia in the late eighteenth century and whose teaching is based

on a spiritual interpretation of selected biblical texts. Their numbers have declined dramatically, but some active groups remain, especially in the Transcaucasus.[7b]

Judaism

5.26. At the beginning of the twentieth century, approximately half of the world's Jews lived in Russia. Although many Jews emigrated from the USSR in the 1970s and 1980s, there is still a significant Jewish population in Russia (between 600,000 and 700,000, comprising around 0.5% of the population[14]), most of whom live in the larger cities.[1] Over 90% of Russian Jews are Ashkenaz, but there are communities of Sephardic Jews in Dagestan and other parts of the Caucasus.[7b] In addition, there are a small number of Jews in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast in the Far East of the Russian Federation.[1]

5.27. Jews continue to encounter societal discrimination, and the government has been criticised for insufficient action to counter it. There were several reports of major crimes or acts of intimidation linked to anti-Semitic groups or motives during 1999, for example, bomb attacks on two Moscow synagogues in May. In addition, Jewish graves have been desecrated and anti-Semitic themes continue to figure prominently in hundreds of extremist publications. Some Russian Jews believe that public anti-Semitic remarks made by politicians may have contributed to increased societal anti-Semitism. In 1998, Communist Duma members made anti-Semitic statements, calling for quotas limiting the number of Jews in public office, and subsequently blocked a Duma motion to censure anti-Semitic remarks.[14]

5.28. Although Jews continue to encounter prejudice and societal discrimination, they have not generally been inhibited by the government in the free practice of their religion. Furthermore, government reaction to anti-Semitic statements has been strong and immediate, in particular from the administration of President Yeltsin, who has spoken out repeatedly against anti-Semitic and extremist attitudes. The President's administration, the government and the media reacted immediately to the Communist Party's expressions of anti-Semitism in 1998.[14] The 1990s saw a Jewish revival in Russia, as Jewish communities worked to re-establish religious, social and cultural life, and to provide for the education and welfare of their people. The focal point of the Jewish renaissance has been Moscow, where almost all international Jewish organisations, numbering over 100, are represented, and where numerous religious, academic and social events and programmes have been organised, including Jewish schools, kindergartens and institutes of higher education. The Jewish cultural, religious and social revival has been accompanied by a political renaissance: there were more Jews in high government positions in 1997 than there had been since 1917.[9a]

5.29. In January 1996, there was warm official support for the Russian Jewish Congress, a non-political public organisation designed to consolidate the Jewish community in Russia, when the Mayor of Moscow stated that Jews must be given a standard of living that would encourage them to stay in Russia, regretted that Moscow was losing some of its best intellects through Jewish emigration, and expressed a desire for co-operation between his administration and the Congress.[7b] Furthermore, anti-Semitic publications are against the law in Russia, although critics have claimed that legislation designed to protect minority rights has not been strictly enforced, and that the police have failed to respond adequately to reports of anti-Semitic actions.[9a] While the Jewish community has met with some success on communal property restitution, it faces the same obstacles as other religious communities and has concerns about the return of Torah Scrolls, many of which are in state museum collections.[14]

Islam

5.30. Muslims, who comprise approximately 10% of Russia's population, continue to encounter societal discrimination and antagonism in some areas where they are a minority, but they have not generally been inhibited by the government in the free practice of their religion.[14] Like other religious communities, Muslims were persecuted during the Soviet period,[3] when half of all Muslim places of worship were destroyed.[7b] However, Islam is currently the second largest faith in Russia and, like the Russian Orthodox Church, is accepted as one of the country's traditional religions. In 1997, there were estimated to be between 15 and 22 million Muslims in Russia,[1] and there are some 2,500 Islamic organisations registered with the Ministry of Justice. Although 90% of Russian Muslims are Sunni, there is a Shi'a minority in the north Caucasus, especially in Dagestan.[7b] There, the federal and local authorities stepped up pressure on what they call the republic's *Wahhabi* Muslim community, following the incursion into Dagestan, in August 1999, by Chechen-backed Islamist guerrillas. In September 1999, Wahhabist and other groups perceived as extremist were outlawed by Dagestan's parliament, which led to the suppression of several local conservative Islamic communities.[14] The other main concentrations of Muslims in the Russian Federation are among Volga Tatars, Chuvash and Bashkirs, and the peoples of northern Caucasus, including the Chechen, Ingush, Ossetians and Kabardinians.[2]

5.31. In 1995, two new Islamic organisations emerged: Nur ("Light"), which has cells in 47 out of the 89 regions of the Russian Federation, is a cultural and educational foundation, which concentrates on human rights, equality for all religions and strictly Islamic issues such as access to religious education and creating conditions for the observance of Muslim customs and rituals. The Union of Muslims of Russia (SMR), which has over 50 branches, is a political organisation committed to the defence of the political, spiritual, economic and social interests of Muslims. Nur and the SMR had been preceded by the Islamic Renaissance Party (IPV), which existed between 1990 and 1994, and which aimed at a rebirth of Islam and the political awakening of all Muslims in the Soviet Union. The party had between 30,000 and 100,000 members, mostly in Russia, including 5,000 in the north Caucasus. In 1996, Nur and the SMR, by then Russia's two largest Muslim organisations, formed an association, open to all Islamic movements, under the chairmanship of Mukhaddas Birbarsov. It was intended to elaborate a single Muslim position on the future presidential elections in Russia, and was registered as the All-Russian Public Political Movement of Muslims of Russia (Muslims of Russia Movement). Meanwhile, the Central Spiritual Council of Muslims (TsDUM) is active in building mosques and madrasahs (Islamic religious academies) for its 1,411 communities. Islamic mores are a factor influencing legislation in a number of Russian republics. In 1997, the President of Ingushetia banned sales of alcohol in the republic during Ramadan (January-February).[7b]

Cults and Sects

5.32. According to some reports, up to five million Russians belong to cults, although such estimates probably include Christian fundamentalists and minor religious sects. The strength of cults in Russia can be attributed to a longstanding fascination with faith healing and the paranormal, to the spiritual and moral vacuum inflicted on the country during the Soviet era, and to the peoples' suspicion that the Russian Orthodox Church had links with the security service. Local cults include the Church of the New Holy Russia, the Church of the Last Precept, and the White Brotherhood.[7b]

5.33. The **Church of the New Holy Russia** (or Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God, formerly known as the Mother of God Centre) founded by Ioann Bereslavskiy in secret during the Soviet years, believes that at Judgement Day the Virgin Mary will separate the pure from the

impure world. The **Church of the Last Precept**, based in Minusinsk, Siberia, was founded by Vissarion (formerly a policeman called Sergey Tropp) who claims to be Jesus Christ, married to Mary Magdalene. His followers, mainly of middle class urban origin and reported to number 70,000, live in poverty, in wooden houses in the Siberian forest. The **White Brotherhood**, founded by Yuriy Krivonogov and Marina Tsvigun in Kiev in 1990, is reported to have 10,000 followers, and believes that God became incarnate in the form of Mariya Devi Khristos, who took over Tsvigun's body in April 1990. Having mistakenly predicted the end of the world in November 1993, both Krivonogov and Tsvigun were arrested during a riot in Kiev's St Sophia Cathedral. They were charged with inciting mass unrest, infringing personal and civic rights under the guise of performing religious rituals, and the premeditated infliction of serious bodily injuries. Both were sentenced to a term of imprisonment, although Tsvigun was released under an amnesty in August 1997.[7b]

5.34. Foreign cults and religious groups include the **Jehovah's Witnesses**, thought to have 60,000 followers; the US-based **Church of Christ**; the **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons)**; **Hare Krishnas**, who have a radio station in Moscow; the **Unification Church**, which has operated since 1990 when its founder, Rev Sun Myung Moon, met President Gorbachev; the Japanese **Aum Shinrikyo** sect, which although now banned is believed to have 50,000 followers; L Ron Hubbard's **Church of Scientology**, whose recruiting structure, featuring dianetic centres, has been active since 1992, and which has financed the refurbishment of a reading room at Moscow State University; and the New Age Movement.[7b]

Other Religions

5.35. Other religions, including **Buddhism** and **Shamanism,** are practised in specific localities where they are rooted in local traditions.[14] Buddhism, established as an official religion in Russia in 1741, is most widespread in the Republic of Buryatiya, where the Central Spiritual Department of Buddhists of Russia has its seat, the Republics of Kalmykiya and Tyva and in some districts of the Irkutsk and Chita Oblasts. There are also newly established communities in Moscow and St Petersburg. Before 1917, there were more than 40 datsans (monasteries) in Buryatiya, but by 1990 only two of these remained in use. There were believed to be 1 million Buddhists in Russia in 1997.[1] Within Buryatiya, Buddhism is enjoying a revival, both among the Buryats and among ethnic Russian residents.[7b]

D. Ethnic Minorities

5.36. The disintegration of the Soviet order, coupled with the radical political, economic and social reforms instituted in Russia since the late 1980s, has exacerbated inter-ethnic tensions and highlighted the complex ethno-political inheritance from the Russo-Soviet imperial order. By the end of the nineteenth century, the expansion of the Russian Empire had brought several hundred different ethnic communities under Russian control.[4] Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, ethnic discrimination in the Russian Federation has persisted, and there is also believed to have been a rise in xenophobia, particularly in the south. This can be explained partly as a reaction to Soviet policy on nationalities,[8b] which facilitated the domination of ethnic Slavs and resulted in grievances and resentment among the other peoples.[3] Communist ideology stifled the question of ethnicity and nationalism, and while ethnic minorities in the former Soviet Union were allowed a limited level of linguistic and cultural autonomy, they had no real political power. Tensions that resulted from the treatment of nationality issues during the Soviet era erupted as

violence during the *perestroika* period of political liberalisation ushered in by the appointment of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985.[8b]

5.37. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, negotiating the process of building a new multi-ethnic, multi-cultural Russia has generated a wide variety of problems and, on occasion, violence.[4] Acts of violence, whether politically motivated or not, have served as a catalyst for xenophobic outbreaks, and the failure of high-ranking state officials to condemn xenophobia has exacerbated the problem. A negative image of ethnic Caucasians has been born in the minds of many Slavs, who often equate all Caucasians with bandits, drugs and arms dealers, or ethnic terrorists, and the media, which often demonises ethnic Caucasians, has been a part of this process. The media was able to exploit the outbreak of several wars in the former Soviet Union, between 1987 and 1994. Fighting erupted in Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan), South Ossetia (Georgia), Abkhazia (Georgia), Ingushetia (Russia), the Prigorodny region (North Ossetia), and Chechnya (Russia). Meanwhile, the neighbouring Krasnodar and Stavropol regions became magnets for refugees, and also, subsequently, two of the most ethnically discriminating provinces of the Russian Federation, where xenophobia is particularly apparent.[8b]

5.38. In July 1998, the presidential Human Rights Commission issued an official statement noting that "the increase in the threat of fascism" was "taking on visible and ominous features," and that incitements of national, racial, and religious enmity was "taking on an increasingly organised nature." It noted the increasing number of extremist groups that advocated racial supremacy and "national xenophobia," and commented that such groups were moving with increasing frequency from combat training (under the guise of sports training) to "acts of direct terror, hoodlum attacks on persons of 'unwelcome' nationality, the desecration of cemeteries, and explosions of monuments." The report also warned that the legalisation of the activity of extremists on the part of a number of local authorities and law enforcement agencies under the pretext of "providing assistance in restoring law and order" and in "the patriotic indoctrination of youth," had become a "new and dangerous phenomenon." However, a presidential statement delivered to the Duma in December 1998 declared that "any attempt to insult ethnic groups, to limit the rights of citizens on the basis of origin, will be stopped in accordance with the Constitution and the laws of the Russian Federation."[14] This had been preceded by Russia's ratification in August 1998 of the European Convention on the Protection of National Minorities, which binds ratifying nations to combat discrimination against ethnic minorities within their borders and guarantee their freedom of association, expression and peaceful assembly. The Convention also obliges states to allow their national minorities to use their languages in public and provide opportunities for minorities to pursue courses in school in their own languages.[38] The Ministry of Regional and Ethnic Policy has nonetheless admitted that its attempts to eliminate the flaws in ethnic policy of previous years and existing contradictions have been largely inadequate and that there is still much work to be done.[29]

5.39. Since the early 1990s, the struggle for power between the federal authorities and the ethno-territorial units has gradually transformed the Russian Federation from a unitary empire into something that resembles a federation. Of the Russian Federation's 89 regions, 21 are ethnically defined republics, which enjoy considerable degrees of autonomy codified through treaties with Moscow. Those minorities with their own officially recognised territory usually have significant advantages over other minority populations in the Russian Federation, although in some autonomous areas with high concentrations of Slavic settlers, the minority groups face problems similar to those of minorities lacking a formal homeland. Minorities that have been granted territorial recognition can be broadly divided into two categories: religious and linguistic

minorities. This distinction does not reflect any official division between groups, based on religion or language, but rather the primary element around which group self-identity is formed in each case. Religiously defined groups form the largest set of minorities and include Buddhists, comprising Buryats, Kalmyks, and Tuvans; Muslims, comprising Middle Volga Tatars and Bashkirs, and the peoples of the north Caucasus, including Chechens, Ingush, Karachai and Cherkess, Kabards and Balkars, Adygei and Dagestanis; Christians, comprising Chuvash and Ossetians; and Shamanists, comprising Altai, Khakass, Yakuts, and native peoples of the north, Siberia and the Far East, including Nenets and Dolgan, Evenk, Chukchi and Koriaks. Linguistically defined groups form the second main category of minorities and include the Finno-Ugrian peoples, Karelians, Mari, Udmurts, Mordovans, Komi, Komi-Permiaks, Khants and Mansi. Meanwhile, leading minorities which lack an officially recognised homeland within the Russian Federation include, Jews, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Kazakhs, Russian or Volga Germans,[4] Meskhetians[10] or Meskhetian Turks, Roma, Cossacks and native peoples of the north, Siberia and the Far East.[4]

Africans, Asians, Roma, Caucasians and Central Asians

5.40. During 1998, there were a number of well-publicised incidents, including several racially motivated attacks on members of minorities, particularly Africans and Asians. Attacks generally appeared to be random, inspired by racial hatred, and carried out by individuals or small groups, some of whom were known to law enforcement authorities for their racial intolerance or criminal records. Meanwhile, Roma (gypsies) from the Caucasus and Central Asia continue to face widespread societal discrimination, which is often reflected in official attitudes and actions. In addition, since 1993, discrimination against people from the Caucasus and Central Asia has increased concurrently with new measures at both the federal and local levels to combat crime. Law enforcement authorities targeted persons with dark complexions for harassment, arrest, and deportation from urban centres, particularly after the Moscow bombings of September 1999, when the authorities detained some 2,000 people and deported more than 500. Police and other security forces in various parts of the country have continued their practice of targeting citizens from the Caucasus and darker-skinned persons in general for arbitrary searches and detention, on the pretext of fighting crime and enforcing residential registration requirements. In Moscow, such persons, including refugees from Africa as well as darker-skinned citizens from the north Caucasus, are subjected to far more frequent document checks than others, and are frequently detained or fined in excess of permissible penalties, often without formal documents recording the infraction being drawn up and presented by police. Reports also suggest a pattern, at least tacitly supported by city authorities, of extortion and beatings by law enforcement officials. In addition, during 1999, members of ethnic minorities were the victims of beatings, extortion and harassment by "skinheads" and members of other racist and extremist groups, who are seldom arrested.[14]

Indigenous People

5.41. In September 1998, the functions of the State Committee for the Development of the North, which had been charged with representing and advocating the interests of indigenous people, were transferred to the new Ministry for Regional Affairs and Nationalities. In March 1999, the Duma approved a bill on indigenous ethnic communities, providing them with support, permitting the creation of self-government bodies, and permitting them to seek compensation if economic development threatens their lands. Local communities have organised in some areas to study and make recommendations regarding the preservation of the culture of indigenous people. People such as the Buryats in Siberia; the Tartar and Bashkiri in the Urals; the people of the north, including the Enver, Talfarli, and Chukchi; and others have worked actively to

preserve and defend their cultures, as well as the economic resources of their regions. In this context, some groups in the Far Eastern part of the country have criticised the federal government for not developing an overall concept for the development of indigenous people. Most believe that they are treated equally with ethnic Russians, although some groups believe that they are unrepresented in regional governments. The principal problems for indigenous people centre on distribution of necessary supplies and services, particularly in the winter months for those who live in the far north.[14]

Cossacks

5.42. The nationalism of Soviet minorities, openly and often violently expressed during *perestroika*, gave rise to a counter-nationalism among Russians. One manifestation has been the rebirth of the Cossack movement, which has provoked a rise in anti-Caucasian tensions. Originally runaway serfs who dispersed to the border regions of the expanding Russian empire, the state authorities later organised them into border guard detachments, and armed Cossack settlements were developed to help guard Russia's new frontier. As a result of their 1917 alliance with the White Armies against the Bolsheviks, the latter subsequently disbanded Cossack units, took away their land and killed or exiled many. During *perestroika*, many descendants of Cossacks started to rediscover their heritage and organise, sometimes into armed Cossack detachments which demanded the restoration of the rights and privileges they enjoyed before the revolution. The 1991 Law on the Repressed Peoples, which envisioned giving territorial and other compensation to ethnic groups repressed under Communism, also covered the Cossacks, who describe themselves as "a unique ethnic community and a cultural nation," and whose agenda includes opposition to the immigration of non-Slavs, which often translates into general hostility towards them. In the Krasnodar region, Cossack paramilitary formations are authorised to conduct passport checks in markets, private homes, and other locations,[8b] and the local government there has been criticised for encouraging radical nationalist groups, including the Cossacks, and indirectly inciting them to violence against ethnic minority groups in the area.[14]

E. Women

5.43. Domestic violence remains a major problem, as victims rarely have recourse to protection from the authorities. Police are frequently reluctant or even unwilling to involve themselves in what they see as purely domestic disputes. Many women are deterred from reporting such crimes because of this and because the housing system makes it difficult either to find housing outside the family dwelling or to expel an abusive spouse, even after a final divorce action. The government has estimated that almost 11,000 women reported rape or attempted rape in 1996, while 14,000 women are believed to be killed by husbands or family members each year. The government has been criticised for failing to afford victims of violence the protection of the law, as have law enforcement officials for not effectively ensuring that incidents of violence against women are investigated and prosecuted, and for sometimes obstructing their investigation and prosecution. By the end of 1999, there were about 40 women's crisis centres in the country and their number is growing. Another positive development was a 1998 international conference on domestic violence, co-sponsored by the Russian government, the first of its kind in the country.[14]

5.44. There is credible evidence that women encounter considerable discrimination in employment. There is concern that women form a disproportionately high percentage of the officially registered unemployed, that women are discriminated against in hiring and dismissing,

that the differences between the salaries of men and women have increased sharply, and that few women attain senior positions. The government has been accused of participating in discriminatory actions against women by seldom enforcing employment laws concerning women. Particularly because of a lack of adequate employment opportunities, a significant number of women are victims of international trafficking for sexual exploitation.[14]

F. Children

5.45. The Constitution assigns the government some responsibility for safeguarding the rights of children, and the state endeavours to provide, within its limited means, for the welfare of children. A new family code regulating children's rights came into effect in 1996, but although the President has stated that government policies to improve the situation of children were a top priority, progress has been slow. However, many Moscow charitable organisations have established productive relations with the city government to address the needs of disabled children, as well as other vulnerable groups. The position of many children has deteriorated since the collapse of Communism because of falling living standards, an increase in the number of broken homes and domestic violence. According to press reports, 40% of all children live below the poverty line. In 1995, 2 million children under 14 years of age were estimated to suffer from physical or mental abuse, with as many as 200,000 dying each year from injuries received at home, usually from parental abuse or neglect. About 50,000 children run away from home each year and 2,000 commit suicide. Meanwhile, children on the street, estimated at between 1 and 4 million, including some 60,000 each in Moscow and St Petersburg, often become dependent on illegal narcotics, or caught up in trafficking. To combat the growing number of children being abducted, police organisations are establishing programmes to protect children.[14]

5.46. The most vulnerable groups of children in society are orphans and the mentally disabled, who are often given up by their parents to state-run institutions.[14] There are believed to be about 200,000 children living in state institutions, where they are exposed to cruelty and neglect.[8a] Human rights activists claim that children in state institutions are poorly provided for, often because funds are lacking, and in some cases are physically abused by staff. Reports indicate that children emerge from the orphanage system under-educated, physically under-developed, inadequately socialised and unprepared for life outside an institution. Being disabled is still a serious social stigma in Russia, an attitude that profoundly influences how institutionalised children are treated. Many physically or mentally disabled children are considered ineducable, even those with only minor birth defects. Disabled children tend to be given only minimal care by low-paid unskilled workers in extremely poor conditions.[14]

G. Homosexuals

5.47. In April 1993, Article 121 of the Criminal Code was amended, thus decriminalising sexual relationships between males in Russia. Male homosexuality had been a criminal offence in the Soviet Union since 1933, soon after which all the republics followed suit. This provision survived in Russia until 29 April 1993, when President Yeltsin signed a law on amendments to the Criminal Code, including a change to the language of Article 121. This had previously contained two parts and now only contains one, referring to criminal responsibility for sexual acts between males involving the use of violence, threats or taking advantage of the helpless or

dependent state of a victim, also with regard to minors, which carries a penalty of up to 7 years' imprisonment.[37]

5.48. Article 115 of the Criminal Code provides for a jail sentence for endangering or infecting a partner with venereal diseases or the HIV virus. This article carries a maximum jail sentence of 8 years, which could result in someone who has the HIV virus dying in prison. In 1992, a Russian man was prosecuted for unwittingly infecting a male partner. He was indicted under Article 115, but was not imprisoned due to an amnesty and also because he was an invalid.[37]

5.49. Three months after the decriminalisation of homosexuality, Russian homosexuals announced the creation of an advocacy group, Triangle, through which they seek equality for gay men and lesbians. The group also acts as an information centre for homosexuality and AIDS, and is involved in political activities. According to activists, treatment of homosexuals has improved since the law against male homosexuality was repealed. There are reportedly now hundreds of homosexual groups across the country, along with openly gay bars and cafes. People are said to be increasingly willing to be tested for AIDS because they no longer have to worry about being arrested. Nonetheless, homosexuals still fear social censure and discrimination in the workplace.[27]

VI. OTHER ISSUES

A. Military Service

6.1. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, with its armed forces of more than 4 million, the Russian army has been reduced[9c] to about 1.2 million persons. Military service is compulsory for male citizens of between 18 and 27 years of age and lasts for two years, one year in the case of university and college graduates. Certain categories of women, for example the medically qualified, are also liable for military service, although in practice there have been no cases of women being called up. Postponement may be allowed for students, and exemption for medical or domestic reasons. Those with criminal records, members of the police or security forces, individuals working abroad, university or college graduates working for the state or graduate programmes, and teachers or doctors working in small villages may also be granted exemption. The armed forces have difficulty in getting the requisite number of recruits. Only about 20% of liable conscripts are actually enlisted, while the remaining 80% are granted either postponement or exemption, or else have not responded to call-up.[15]

6.2. While the Constitution provides for the right to alternative civilian service, the government has not yet passed enabling legislation or amended the Criminal Code to make alternative service possible, and young men continue to risk imprisonment for refusing military service on conscientious grounds.[9c] Although some regional authorities are attempting to introduce alternative service programmes, the national legislation necessary to implement the constitutional right to alternative service has yet to be passed by the Duma.[14] The federal law on alternative civilian service, the draft of which was adopted by the Duma at first reading in December 1994, was rejected at second reading in October 1998 and has still not been approved. The absence of a legal procedure for granting alternative service for conscientious objectors contravenes an obligation assumed by the Russian Federation on joining the Council of Europe in 1996. While the exact number of conscientious objectors in Russia is unknown, there were over a thousand formal declarations of conscientious objection at the end of 1997.[12a] Even though there is no legal system in place regarding alternative service, there have been instances where cases have been brought to court invoking the Constitution. However, while some have been accepted, the majority have lost their cases, and been convicted and sentenced to up to seven years' imprisonment. There is a Constitutional provision for exemption from military service on religious grounds,[5c] although a member of a religious group not legally recognised may not benefit from that provision.[5a] There are believed to be thousands of conscripts who are unaware of their constitutional right to conscientious objection.[15]

6.3. Draft evasion is common and sometimes involves the purchase of unwarranted medical deferments by potential conscripts otherwise ineligible for one of the categories of legal deferment.[14] Sources suggest that there are around 20 grounds for legal deferment, which result in high numbers of potential recruits delaying conscription.[9c] Many families, fearful of brutality in the ranks, pay huge illegal bribes to avoid conscription of their sons, sometimes paying for forged medical certificates alleging fatal or incapacitating diseases, while other potential conscripts resort to self-injury. Such desperation is encouraged by the army's notorious reputation for bullying, including torture and rape, particularly of new conscripts.[21] Meanwhile, the Military Procuracy continues its anti-draft evasion efforts which, in January and February 1999, resulted in the detention of 1,633 servicemen absent without leave. Those who turn

themselves in voluntarily and have a "good reason" for being absent without leave are given reduced sentences, with the assistance of the military procurator's office.[14] Draft evasion is punishable by one to three years' imprisonment, five years in aggravated circumstances.[15]

6.4. Military desertion is punishable by three to seven years' imprisonment, five to seven years or execution in wartime. Like draft evasion, military desertion is widespread and can be attributed to bad conditions and human rights abuses in the armed forces, as well as to a fear of being sent to conflict zones such as Chechnya. Refusing to bear arms in combat or quitting from the battlefield without permission is punishable by fifteen years' imprisonment or execution.[15] During the conflict in Chechnya between 1994 and 1996, many conscripts deserted their units, sometimes on conscientious grounds, and went into hiding either to avoid further participation in the fighting or to avoid being sent to Chechnya. At that time, there were reports of mass extrajudicial executions of groups of deserters by the Russian military authorities. A 1997 amnesty law relating to the armed conflict in Chechnya excluded persons charged with treason, espionage and terrorism, which has raised concern over the position of servicemen who evaded or deserted military service during the conflict.[5c] Up to 140,000 Russian military and security personnel have been involved in the current conflict in Chechnya, far more than in the previous one.[14]

6.5. In June 1998, the Duma passed a resolution amnestying army deserters, including those who have committed minor crimes during their absence from military service.[34] However, the term of the amnesty expired in January 1999, by which time one-third of the previously estimated 6,000 deserters had given themselves up. At that time, Russia's chief military prosecutor announced that an operation to arrest remaining deserters and draft evaders would continue on a permanent basis throughout the country. Many of those offenders are believed to have fled their units because of intolerable conditions and bullying.[39] The Criminal Code also criminalises acts such as "incitement for desertion from military service and providing refuge to a deserter," punishable by up to five years' imprisonment.[5c]

6.6. Various abuses against military servicemen continued during 1999. Such abuses include the practice of "dedovshchina," which involves the violent, sometimes fatal, bullying of new junior military recruits, and often the extortion of money or material goods in the face of the threat of increased bullying or actual beatings. This type of treatment has resulted in permanent injuries and deaths among servicemen, and soldiers are reluctant to report bullying to officers due to fear of reprisals, since officers sometimes tolerate or even encourage such behaviour as a means of controlling their units. There are reports that officers sometimes use beatings to discipline soldiers whom they judge to be inattentive to their duties, in addition to numerous reports of other physical violence and humiliation of junior conscripts. There are also reports of military officers and units sending soldiers to the front lines in Chechnya as punishment, instead of using the military justice system.[14]

6.7. In 1998, 50% of conscripts expressed concern that their lives, health or sanity would be threatened by such incidents during their military service. One positive factor is that the main Military Procuracy continues to co-operate with the non-governmental Soldiers' Mothers Committee to investigate allegations of abuse and has recently established telephone and postal "hotlines" to receive reports directly from soldiers, although the Soldiers' Mothers Committee believes that the majority of abuses are not reported due to fear of reprisals, indifference of commanders, and deliberate efforts to cover up such activity. In 1997, the Soldiers' Mothers Committee reported that in 60% of cases brought to the attention of the military or civilian

authorities, there was an official finding that abuse had taken place, and that some disciplinary action was taken as a result. However, the government has made little progress in combating abuses committed by soldiers, and military justice systems consistent with democratic practices remain largely underdeveloped. Existing laws on military courts, military service, and the rights of service members often contradict the Constitution, federal laws, and presidential decrees, elevating arbitrary judgements of unit commanders over the rule of law. Meanwhile, the military leadership has made only superficial efforts to implement substantive reforms in training, education, and administration programmes within units to combat abuse, at least partly due to lack of funding and the leadership's preoccupation with urgent re-organisational issues and the conflict in Chechnya.[14]

6.8. Approximately 45% of those committing or attempting suicide were driven to it either by physical abuse or the often inhuman conditions of military service. Non-payment of wages was also a factor, particularly in cases of suicide among officers. Degrading and substandard living conditions persist throughout the military, principally due to insufficient funding. The deteriorating quality of the armed forces, cited as the main reason for the breakdown in discipline, is aggravated by the negligence of selection committees during the conscription process. A high percentage of conscripts are believed to have physical or psychological health problems that should have exempted them from military service, and the rise in the number of conscripts unfit for service is believed to be contributing to the increasing crime rate within the armed forces.[14]

B. Organised Crime

6.9. There is an extensive network of organised crime in Russia, which the security forces admit they are unable to control. The authorities have confessed that organised crime has penetrated every aspect of government, including the police and judiciary. Official figures estimate that the number of crimes committed by the Russian mafia jumped 94% in the five years following the collapse of the Soviet Union. There are an estimated 9,000 criminal groups employing around 100,000 people, and organised criminals have effectively preserved their positions in the most profitable branches of the economy.[20] It has been estimated that as much as 40% of the economy is controlled by criminal gangs. Meanwhile, contract murders are a routine way of settling disputes and protection rackets are rife.[18] A number of government officials were murdered in 1999, the majority linked to private financial or commercial dealings. A number of law enforcement officials were also killed as a result of their efforts to stem crime.[14]

6.10. By early 1999, corruption was said to have reached an unprecedented scale, particularly within the civil service, making it one of the world's ten most corrupt countries. Acting Prosecutor-General, Yuri Chayka, said at the time that corruption had become the most destructive factor in Russia, and that more than 2,000 officials had been jailed for corruption in 1998.[30] In response to the worsening situation, the government approved a corruption-fighting programme, designed to retain control over the criminal situation in Russia, and to last until 2001.[32] Drugs-related crime is of particular concern, with police seizing only around 12% of all drugs smuggled into Russia, 80% of which are destined for Moscow where 10,000 related crimes were committed in 1998, compared with 1,500 in 1993. Drug addiction and related crimes are feared to be spreading not only among young people, but also schoolchildren. Hard drugs, such as cocaine and heroin, mostly arrive through channels in the Asian region, such as Afghanistan,

Pakistan and Tajikistan, but also from Nigeria and Latin America, while soft drugs come from Central Asia, Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan.[35]

6.11. Kidnapping is frequently used by criminal groups in the northern Caucasus, some of which may have links to elements of the former insurgent forces. The main motivation seems to be ransom, although some cases have political or religious overtones. A number of journalists have been seized, as have government officials and humanitarian aid workers, many of whom have been held in Chechnya. In August 1999, the Chechen interior ministry had registered 76 kidnapping cases in the first half of the year, but the real number was believed to be much higher. There were also reports that Chechen separatists tortured and killed a number of civilians during 1999.[14]

C. Citizenship

6.12. Matters relating to citizenship in the Russian Federation are governed by the Russian Federation Citizenship Act, which came into force in 1992. A citizen of the Russian Federation may be allowed, upon application, simultaneously to have the citizenship of another state, provided that there is a corresponding bilateral treaty with that state.[12b] All citizens of the former USSR who were permanently resident in Russia on the day the Citizenship Act took effect (6 February 1992) are considered Russian citizens, apart from those who, within a year of that date, declared that they did not wish to become Russian citizens (Article 13.1). Individuals born on or after 30 December 1922 (the date on which the USSR was founded), who have ceased to be citizens of the former USSR are granted Russian citizenship if they were born in Russia, or if, at the time of birth, one of the applicant's parents was a citizen of the former USSR permanently resident in Russia (Article 13.2).[17]

6.13. A child whose parents at the time of birth are Russian citizens is a Russian citizen, irrespective of the place of birth (Article 14). If one of the parents of a child at the time of birth is Russian and the other stateless, the child is a Russian citizen, irrespective of the place of birth.(Article 15.1) A child, one of whose parents is a Russian citizen and the other a citizen of another country, would be considered a Russian citizen provided the parents come to a written agreement that the child should be regarded as a Russian, irrespective of the place of birth. Where no such agreement exists, the child would become a Russian citizen if born in Russia, or if otherwise it would be stateless (Article 15.2). A child residing in Russia, but of unknown parentage, is considered a Russian citizen (Article 16). A child of parents with citizenship of other states is considered a Russian citizen if those states do not extend citizenship to the child. A child born in Russia of stateless parents is considered a Russian citizen (Article 17).[17]

6.14. An application for Russian citizenship can be made by anyone with a spouse or immediate relative who is a Russian citizen; by persons who at birth became citizens of another state but at least one of whose parents was a Russian citizen at the time of the birth; by children born after their parents relinquished citizenship of the former USSR; by former citizens of the USSR who reside on the territory of other states that were within the former USSR, provided they declare their intention to acquire Russian citizenship by 31 December 2000; stateless persons permanently residing in Russia on 6 February 1992, or other republics of the former USSR as of 1 September 1991, who within one year of the 1992 Act declared their intention to acquire Russian Federation citizenship; and foreign citizens and stateless persons, irrespective of

their place of residence, if they or an immediate relative are Russian by birth, and who within one year of the 1992 Act declared their intention to acquire Russian citizenship (Article 18).[17]

6.15. Any adult who is not a Russian citizen, irrespective of their origin, can apply for Russian citizenship. The usual condition for qualification is permanent residence in Russia (three years without interruption or a total of five years for foreigners, and half that for refugees). Those criteria facilitating qualification for Russian citizenship include past citizenship of the former USSR; adoption of a child with Russian citizenship; achievements in scientific, technological and cultural fields, or possession of a profession or qualification of interest to Russia; services to Russia; and refugee status in Russia. Applications for citizenship are denied persons who advocate violent political change in Russia, who are members of organisations or parties whose activities are incompatible with the constitutional principles of Russia, or who have been convicted of acts prosecuted under Russian laws (Article 19).[17]

D. Internal and Foreign Travel

6.16. Despite constitutional protections for freedom of movement, the government places some limits on this right, and some regional authorities, most notably the city of Moscow, restrict movement through residence registration mechanisms. These restrictions, though successfully challenged in court, remain largely in force and are tolerated by the federal government. The presence of these restrictions, which increased following the terrorist bombings in September 1999, demonstrated the continuing obstacles to the enforcement of judicial rulings. Although new rules introduced in 1996 were touted as a notification device rather than a control system, their application has produced many of the same results as the Soviet era "propiska" (pass) regulations.[14] While the new rules were meant to replace the propiska system, federal and local authorities sought merely to preserve it under another name.[8b] Although citizens are free to travel within Russia, the government also imposes registration requirements on domestic travel. All adults are issued with internal passports, which they must carry while travelling and use to register with local authorities for visits of more than three days (in Moscow it is 24 hours). However, travellers not staying in hotels usually ignore this requirement.[14]

6.17. Citizens must register to live and work in a specific area within seven days of moving there. Russian citizens changing residence in Russia, as well as citizens of former Soviet republics who decide to move to Russia, often face enormous difficulties or are simply not permitted to register in some cities.[14] There is no uniform procedure on the registration of residence in Russia; each region and republic has its own regulations, the application of which is often arbitrary or racially motivated.[10] The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and refugee rights non-governmental organisations have cited Stavropol, Krasnodar, Moscow, and St Petersburg as being the least open to migrants. The UNHCR reports that the cost of registration is no longer prohibitive. Temporary registration is available for periods ranging from 45 days to six months. While federal law provides for education for all children in the Russian Federation, regional authorities frequently deny access to schools to the children of unregistered persons, asylum seekers and migrants. Similarly, while the Moscow procurator's office has upheld the right of migrants to receive publicly available medical care, unregistered persons, migrants and asylum seekers are frequently denied these services. Meanwhile, the government and residents of Moscow and other large cities defend registration as necessary in order to control crime, to keep crowded urban areas from attracting even more inhabitants, and to gain revenue.[14] However, another major factor has been a desire to shield themselves from the

wave of refugees and internally displaced persons fleeing the numerous ethnic conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union.[8b]

6.18. The city of Moscow is frequently cited for violating the rights of non-residents and ethnic minorities as well as the rights of those legitimately seeking asylum. Moscow Mayor Yurii Luzhkov has been quoted in the past as calling for the expulsion from Moscow of Chechens and other persons from the Caucasus, while Moscow police conduct frequent document checks, particularly of persons who are dark-skinned and therefore appear to be from the Caucasus or elsewhere. There are credible reports that police have fined persons without registration documents in excess of legal requirements and have not provided proper documentation of the fine. In 1996, Luzhkov signed a resolution ordering the deportation of all unregistered persons living in Moscow back to the place where they were last registered to live, and the city authorities have admitted that some 20,000 to 25,000 persons a year are deported against their will. In March 1998, Luzhkov refused to implement a constitutional court ruling that declared illegal the most restrictive aspects of the propiska system, and instructed the city police to continue to enforce the old registration regulations. Following the bombings in August and September 1999, which Moscow officials attributed to terrorists from the northern Caucasus, Luzhkov issued an ordinance on 13 September requiring all temporary residents in Moscow since 1 January 1999 to re-register within three days with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Reportedly, 74,000 temporary residents sought re-registration, of whom approximately 15,500 people were refused. In order to re-register, residents had to demonstrate a legitimate place of work, payment of city taxes and a legal place of residence. The Moscow authorities also restricted the arrival of new residents to the city and increased road checks and checks in train stations and marketplaces for these new arrivals. Human rights groups claim that some 2,000 people were detained and some 500 expelled from Moscow as a result of the operation.[14]

6.19. The Constitution provides all citizens with the right to emigrate. The government imposes nominal emigration taxes, fees and duties. On average, it takes three months to process a passport application, although it can take much longer if documentation is needed from elsewhere in the former Soviet Union. Some liberal principles regarding emigration procedures were formally codified in the August 1996 law on exit from and entry into the Russian Federation. This law abolished the old Soviet requirement that, in order to emigrate, citizens must receive a stamp permitting "permanent residence abroad" ("PMZh"), essentially a propiska for those living outside Russia. The law required the Ministry of Internal Affairs, through its Office of Visas and Registration (OVIR), to establish regulations for eliminating this practice within six months of the passage of the law. However, by September 1999, implementation of the law was still incomplete, and border guards continue to require a PMZh-like stamp of all emigrants, and the passport control agency (OVIR) continues to use it. Emigrants who have permanently resettled abroad have been able to visit or repatriate without hindrance. However, visiting emigrants who departed without first obtaining a "PMZh" stamp have been stopped at the border and prevented from departing Russia (though they may enter without difficulty), as they could present neither a non-immigrant visa to another country nor evidence of permission to reside legally abroad.[14]

6.20. Another feature of the law is the codification of the legal grounds for denying foreign travel documents to citizens who had access to state secrets. Under the new law, access to such classified material can only occur with the consent of the citizen, established in the form of a written contract that states that the signatory understands that he has been given access to state secrets and that his ability to travel abroad may be restricted. The law envisions a maximum

period of delay under normal circumstances of five years, and it grants the inter-agency Commission on Secrecy the right to add an additional five-year term to the period of delay if the Commission finds that a person had access to particularly sensitive materials. This latter provision has raised serious concerns among human rights advocates concerned about arbitrary and excessive powers on the part of the government to restrict foreign travel. However, there were no reports that the provision had been restrictive in practice during 1999.[14]

6.21. If a citizen had access to classified material, police and FSB clearances are necessary to receive an external passport. Persons denied travel documents on secrecy grounds can appeal the decision to an inter-agency commission chaired by First Deputy Foreign Minister, which cannot rule on whether the material should or should not be classified, but can rule on the legality of travel restrictions imposed and on whether or not the traveller actually had access to materials requiring a travel restriction. Since it was established in 1994, the Commission has granted travel permission to approximately 90% of appellants. Other grounds for denial of the right to travel abroad are military conscription or assignment to civilian alternative service, being under investigation for or serving a sentence for a crime, evasion of a court-ordered obligation, or providing false information on a passport application. The requirement that citizens satisfy obligations to immediate relatives, such as material support for parents, has been eliminated except for court-ordered obligations, such as alimony payments.[14]

E. Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

6.22. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian Federation has experienced a dramatic increase in refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people. Nearly 1.2 million persons from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), eastern and central Europe, the Baltic states and the periphery of the Russian Federation are registered as refugees or internally displaced people. The primary concentration of the latter is in the northern Caucasus region, due to intercommunal conflict and civil war in north Ossetia and Chechnya.[11] In February 1993, the Russian Federation acceded to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, but has been criticised since for failing to meet its obligations under this instrument, by routinely denying access to asylum procedures, thereby putting asylum seekers at risk of harassment, detention, or removal to their country of origin (*refoulement)*.[5b]

6.23. The federal law Concerning Making Changes and Additions to the Law of the Russian Federation Concerning Refugees came into effect in July 1997.[16] This law offers substantially fewer benefits to refugees than the original 1993 law it replaced. The earlier law's fairly generous commitments of resettlement support for refugees had been cited by some observers as discouraging the Federal Migration Service (FMS), which has few resources to meet this obligation, from adjudicating the cases of asylum seekers. With the passage of the new law, the FMS had been expected to expedite its procedures for adjudicating asylum claims, but in the first eight months of 1999, the FMS granted refugee status to only 68 persons from outside the former Soviet Union, all but two of them from Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) claims that the FMS is still declining to grant refugee status to qualified individuals, and along with many other non-governmental organisations, consider the FMS decision-making process to be flawed. The UNHCR is particularly concerned about the situation of asylum seekers at Moscow's Sheremetyevo-2 Airport, from where improperly documented passengers are deported systematically.[14] The UNHCR advises, in

principle, not to apply the "safe third country" notion to asylum seekers who have stayed in or transited through Russia, due to the serious risk of *refoulement* and the difficulties in obtaining access to the refugee status determination procedure.[13a]

6.24. The government nonetheless co-operates to a limited extent with the UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Both organisations assist the government in developing a humane migration management system, which includes effective and fair refugee status determination procedures. The UNHCR recognises some 36,000 asylum seekers who originate from outside the territories of the former Soviet Union. By September 1999, the government had granted asylum in only 491 cases since 1993 to persons from outside the former Soviet Union (including the Baltic states), all but seventeen of them from Afghanistan. By contrast, the comparable figure for former citizens of the Soviet Union (mainly ethnic Russians) granted refugee status by the FMS was 98,188, demonstrating that the government acts more expeditiously for the latter group, to whom it applies a more lenient standard.[14] Nonetheless, many refugees from these countries are not permanently registered and cannot therefore obtain Russian citizenship. The lack of registration also results in discrimination, including housing evictions and lack of access to employment, social benefits or pensions. Meanwhile, during the pre-registration period, asylum seekers have no legal right of abode in the Russian Federation, and receive no documents.[13b]

6.25. Despite some progress in adjudicating non-former Soviet Union asylum claims by the regional branches of the FMS, there are still major concerns about the ability and willingness of the Moscow office to process asylum seekers from outside the former Soviet Union. Human rights organisations claim that this lack of progress is part of intentional efforts by the authorities to rid the city of foreign asylum seekers. Local legislation in Moscow, St Petersburg, Rostov, and other major population centres prohibits the settlement of refugees within these cities. The UNHCR and Amnesty International are working with the FMS and border officials to ensure that interviews of potential refugees are conducted in a timely fashion, that the UNHCR is allowed access to potential refugees in airport transit lounges, and that deportations of potential refugees are delayed until cases are adjudicated. Part of the problem is widespread ignorance of refugee law. To remedy this problem, FMS officials, lawyers and judges are participating in training sponsored by the UNHCR, the European Union's Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States programme, and the Council of Europe. However, according to the UNHCR, the government lacks the political will to grant refugee status and provide a durable solution for asylum seekers.[14] Other constraints to the work of UNHCR in the Russian Federation are the country's vastness and security problems, particularly in the northern Caucasus.[13b]

6.26. Armenians evacuated from Baku in the wake of the late 1980s ethnic violence are recognised as refugees, although their credentials require annual renewal. The vast majority of those evacuated have either emigrated from Russia or found some way to live in Russia. However, a group of about 1,400-2,000 are still housed in the "temporary quarters" assigned after the evacuation, usually in Moscow hotels or workers' dormitories in the greater Moscow area. They are unable to return to Azerbaijan and are not accepted by Armenia. Since they lack residency permits for Moscow, they cannot legally apply for work and are effectively denied the ability to register their children for public schooling. They have declined offers of Russian citizenship on the grounds that this would not improve their situation materially, although such a step would allow them to establish legal residence, seek work, and apply for benefits such as foreign travel passports. They have also rejected offers of relocation to other regions of Russia

because they allege that the alternative residences they are offered are often not habitable, are still occupied by others, or simply do not exist. Their situation remains precarious as the formerly state-owned hotels in which many reside are privatised, and the new owners exert financial and other pressure on them to depart. A number of eviction orders have already been served in such cases. The courts are legally required to appoint a new residence, but have been uneven in meeting this requirement.[14]

6.27. The conflict in Chechnya, which began in September 1999, resulted in widespread civilian casualties and the displacement of around 200,000 people, the vast majority of whom sought refuge in the neighbouring Russian republic of Ingushetia,[14] whose total population was thus increased by some 50%. Many of the displaced found accommodation with host families, while others were housed temporarily in tents, railway cars and public buildings. In an attempt to ease the congestion in Ingushetia, the federal authorities sought to resettle some of the displaced in other parts of the Russian Federation. Since 1996, the UNHCR has actively supported an increase in the capacity of federal and regional governments to address the broad range of problems inherent in facilitating the integration of involuntarily relocated persons into Russia's many regions.[13b] By the end of 1999, the government, with the assistance of international organisations, appeared to have provided for most of the basic needs of the internally displaced from the renewed Chechen conflict. However, at various stages during the conflict, the authorities restricted the movement of those fleeing Chechnya, and by December 1999 there were reports that the federal and local authorities were pressuring displaced people to return from Ingushetia to areas under Russian control in Chechnya. Government officials subsequently said that they would not compel anyone to return to Chechnya, but have consistently announced their determination to repatriate all the displaced back to Chechnya as soon as possible. Involuntarily displaced persons and asylum seekers are reported to suffer the greatest difficulties in cities with restrictive registration regulations. Their migrant registration documents are not generally recognised by the officials who control registration, and they are often subject to harassment, unauthorised detention and the extortion of bribes.[14]

ANNEX A

CHRONOLOGY OF MAIN EVENTS, 1917-2000

1917: The pressures of defeat in the First World War and growing social and economic chaos in the country at large brought two revolutions. The first, in March, overthrew the Tsar and established a provisional government, which, however, soon found itself sharing power with the new workers' councils, known as soviets. The second, the Bolshevik Revolution on 7 November, brought the Communists to power in the capital (renamed Petrograd in 1914) and, after three years of civil war, throughout most of the territory of the Russian Empire.[1]

1922: The Communists established the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) with Moscow as its capital, in which Russia (the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic or RSFSR) became just one of eventually fifteen national republics, itself containing 31 ethnically defined autonomous republics or regions.[1]

1920s: Genuine attempts were made to encourage other nationalities to develop their own identities and cultures under local leadership, but under Stalin, who succeeded Lenin upon his death in 1924, the accepted dogma was that the Soviet nations would merge, which most understood to mean the subjugation of other nations by the Russian people.[1]

1930s: Russia, together with the other republics of the USSR, experienced considerable hardship under Stalin's collectivisation campaign of the early 1930s and the accompanying widespread repression that came to characterise his brutal dictatorship.[2]

1939: Under the Nazi-Soviet Treaty of Non-Aggression, the USSR annexed the Baltic states, as well as other territories.[2]

1941: In June, Germany invaded the USSR.[1]

1945: Victory over Germany and Japan in the Second World War led to further territorial gains for Russia. In the west, it gained part of East Prussia, now Kaliningrad, from Germany, a small amount of territory from Estonia and those parts of Finland annexed during the Soviet-Finnish War between 1939 and 1940. In the east, it acquired the strategically important Kurile Islands from Japan.[2]

1953: Stalin died and was succeeded by Nikita Khrushchev who began a process of cautious liberalisation, released thousands of prisoners, and admitted for the first time that there had been large-scale repressions under Stalin.[2]

1954: The present territorial extent of the Russian Federation was achieved, when Crimea was ceded to the Ukrainian SSR.[2]

1955: The Warsaw Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance was signed by Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic (GDR - East Germany), Hungary, Poland, Romania and the USSR. The Treaty established a military alliance between these countries, known as the Warsaw Treaty Organisation or the Warsaw Pact.[1]

1956: In November, Soviet forces invaded Hungary to overthrow the reformist government of Imre Nagy.[1]

1964: Krushchev was dismissed and replaced by Leonid Brezhnev, who until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, managed to improve relations with the West, which since the late 1940s had been generally characterised by the intense mutual hostility of the Cold War era.[2]

1968: Soviet and other Warsaw Pact forces invaded Czechoslovakia to overthrow the reformist government of Alexander Dubcek..[1]

1979: Soviet forces invaded Afghanistan, where their troops were to remain until 1989.[1]

1982: Brezhnev died and was succeeded by Yurii Andropov, who undertook an anti-corruption campaign and attempted very cautious economic reforms.[2]

1984: Andropov died and was succeeded by Konstantin Chernenko, a former close ally of Brezhnev, who achieved little before his death in 1985.[2]

1985: Chernenko's successor as General Secretary was Mikhail Gorbachev, who embarked upon a programme of changes, replacing many leading state and Communist party officials and appointing several reformists to the Politburo.[2]

1988: Gorbachev announced plans for comprehensive changes to the political system, with the introduction of a two-tier legislature, elected largely by competitive elections.[2]

1989: In elections to the new USSR Congress of People's Deputies in March, many conservative candidates were defeated by reformist politicians, among them Boris Yeltsin, who won an overwhelming victory in the Moscow constituency. In May, the Congress elected Gorbachev to the new post of executive President of the USSR.[2]

1990: The first stage in the process of achieving Russian sovereignty from all-Union institutions was the election of the RSFSR Congress of People's Deputies in March by largely free and competitive elections. In May, the Congress elected Yeltsin Chairman of the Supreme Soviet (the permanent working body of the Congress), the highest state post in the RSFSR and a position from which Yeltsin could effectively challenge the authority of Gorbachev and the all-Union institutions which he represented. In June, the Congress adopted a declaration of sovereignty, asserting that the RSFSR was a sovereign republic and that the laws of the RSFSR had primacy over all-Union legislation.[2]

1991: In June, Yeltsin was elected President of the RSFSR. On 19 August, a self-proclaimed State Committee for the State of Emergency (SCSE) seized power in Moscow, but within three days the attempted coup collapsed. Yeltsin was subsequently able to assert control over all-Union bodies, appointing RSFSR ministers to head central institutions. By the end of the year, the USSR had ceased to exist. On 25 December, Gorbachev resigned as its last President and the Russian Supreme Soviet formally changed the name of the RSFSR to the Russian Federation. Meanwhile, eleven former members of the USSR joined the newly established Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In November, Chechnya declared its independence from the Russian Federation.[2]

1992: Yeltsin accelerated his economic reform programme, amid increasing threats of conflict between the executive and the legislature, rendering his position precarious.[2]

1993: In September, Yeltsin suspended the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet on the grounds that they were obstructing both economic and constitutional reform, and the Supreme Soviet responded by appointing former Vice-President Rutskoi as President in Yeltsin's place. On 27 September, Rutskoi and his supporters became besieged in the parliament building, while Yeltsin declared a state of emergency. On 4 October, tanks opened fire on the parliament building, forcing the surrender of the rebels, whose leaders were imprisoned and subsequently charged with inciting mass disorder. No single party or bloc won a decisive majority of seats in the Duma elections in December, although an unexpectedly high level of support was accorded to extreme right-wing or anti-reformist elements.[2]

1994: The influence of anti-liberal elements within the presidential administration became increasingly apparent as the year drew to a close. In November, the Security Council (regarded as the major policy-making body in Russia) agreed to intervene militarily in the separatist republic of Chechnya, where in December, Russian troops were sent to introduce "constitutional rule".[2]

1995: In elections to the Duma in December, the Communist Party emerged as the largest single party.[2]

1996: Yeltsin proceeded to win the presidential elections emerging from the second round in July, with 54% of the votes cast. Meanwhile, the conflict in Chechnya continued with varied intensity until negotiations achieved a ceasefire and Russian withdrawal in August.[2]

1997: Political infighting, economic problems, persistent speculation over the health of Yeltsin, and a series of financial scandals all threatened to undermine the credibility of the government.[2] On 12 May, Yeltsin and Chechen President, Aslan Maskhadov, signed a peace agreement in which both sides agreed to settle the dispute by peaceful means.[14]

1998: Yeltsin dismissed the government twice, first in March and then again in August. On the first occasion, widely interpreted as an attempt to reassert his authority, he replaced Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin with Sergei Kiriyenko, who was then dismissed in August amidst financial crisis. Then Yeltsin again appointed Chernomyrdin as acting Prime Minister, but was unable to secure parliamentary approval. Eventually, in September, Foreign Minister, Yevgenii Primakov was appointed as a compromise Prime Minister.[1]

1999: In August, Vladimir Putin was appointed Prime Minister. Also in August, Chechen-backed Islamist guerrillas carried out an insurgent raid on neighbouring Dagestan. They withdrew after Russian troops were dispatched to the region, but there were renewed incursions and fighting in September. Subsequent fatal terrorist bombings throughout Russia, allegedly the work of Chechens, led the government to launch a full-scale attack on Chechnya, in an attempt to reassert federal control there.[2] A total of 26 parties and blocs contested the Duma elections on 19 December.[36] On 31 December, Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned as President and Putin became acting President.[2]

2000: In early February, Putin announced victory in Chechnya when federal troops recaptured the capital, Grozny, but the rebels warned of a long guerrilla war. Presidential elections in March confirmed Putin in the position, with over 52% of the vote.[2]

ANNEX B

MAIN POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS

In 1999, numerous political parties and movements were formed, in anticipation of the elections to the Duma in December of that year,[2] for which the Central Electoral Commission approved a list of 26 electoral associations and blocs.[36] Each electoral association was based on one registered political party or movement, while each electoral bloc represented an alliance of two or more parties or movements. All presented federal lists of candidates. In July 1996, there were 86 legally registered nation-wide political parties. There were also many regional political organisations.[2] In August 1999, the Ministry of Justice announced that 139 organisations had met the 19 December 1998 deadline imposed for those wishing to participate in the parliamentary elections of 19 December 1999.[33]

AGRARIAN PARTY *(Agrarnaya Partiya Rossii)*
Leader: Mikhail Lapshin. Founded in 1993; left-wing; supports agricultural sector;[1] strongly opposed to private ownership of agricultural land; in favour of restoration of popular government through soviets (councils), and voluntary restoration of the Soviet Union. Referred to as "rural wing" of the Communist Party; won 20 seats in 1995 parliamentary elections, when it was allied with the latter; in 1999, announced it was joining centre-left Fatherland-All Russia bloc, following failure to reach agreement with the Communist Party; membership around 300,000.[7c]

COMMON CAUSE *(Obshchee Delo)*
Leader: Irina Khakamada. Founded in 1995; democratic, liberal.[1] (also see JUST CAUSE)

COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION *(Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii - KPRF)*
Leader: Gennady Zyuganov. Successor to the Russian Communist Party, which was banned in 1991.[1] Formally registered in March 1993; largest parliamentary group, winning 157 seats in the 1995 elections; between 550,000 and 600,000 members; largest political party in Russia which presents itself as the main opposition party. Advocates constitutional reform to reduce powers of president and give majority party or coalition in Duma the right to form the government; favours voluntary re-unification of republics of the former Soviet Union; opposed to Russia's financial reliance on international bodies such as the IMF and World Bank, and critical of NATO enlargement; has proposed an alliance of Russia, China and India, among others, to act as a counterweight.[7c] Won 113 seats in the December 1999 elections, remaining the largest parliamentary group.[2]

CONGRESS OF RUSSIAN COMMUNITIES *(Kongress Russkikh Obshchin)*
Leader: Yurii Skokov. Founded in 1995; alliance of nationalist and conservative groups.[1]

DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF RUSSIA
Leader: Viktor Petrov. Founded in 1990; liberal-conservative.[1]

DERZHAVA (Power)
Leader: Alexander Rutskoi. Founded in 1994; alliance of right-wing parties; affiliated groups include National Republican Party, Russian Christian-Democratic Movement, Soyuz, State Renaissance Party, Social Democratic People's Party.[1] (also see FATHERLAND)

FATHERLAND *(Otechestvo)*
Leader: Yurii Luzhkov. Founded by Luzhkov in December1998; has joined forces with All Russia regional movement to form electoral bloc for December 1999 elections; aims to fill space on the left between the Communist Party and Our Home is Russia; membership numbers not available, but collective members include Derzhava, the Union of Young Social Democrats, the Union of People's Power and Labour, and, since August 1999, Spiritual Heritage. Proposes reducing presidential powers, enhancing those of parliament, and re-defining the relationship between Moscow and the regions, bringing the rights of the regions into line with those of the republics, and promoting co-operation rather than confrontation; is disappointed with Western policy regarding Russia; favours strengthening links with other CIS states, and with India, China and Arab states.[7c] As part of the **Fatherland-All Russia** alliance in the December 1999 parliamentary elections, won 67 seats.[2]

FORWARD, RUSSIA! *(Vpered Rossiya!)*
Leader: Boris Fedorov. Founded in 1995 on basis of 12 December Liberal Democratic Union; democratic party.[1]

JUST CAUSE *(Pravoe Delo)*
Leaders: Anatoly Chubais, Sergei Kirienko, Yegor Gaidar, Boris Nemtsov, Irina Khakamada. Founded in December 1998 as a liberal-right reformist coalition movement, aimed at preventing a split in the "democratic vote"; based around Gaidar's Russia's Democratic Choice party, it includes other high-profile reformers, such as those named above and their embryonic parties; contested the December 1999 parliamentary elections under the name, **Union of Right Forces**,[7c] and won 29 seats.[2]

KEDR - CONSTRUCTIVE ECOLOGICAL PARTY *(Ekologicheskaya Partiya 'Kedr')*
Leader: Anatoly Panfilov. Founded in 1992; officially registered as a party in 1994; advocates the resolution of social issues, and in particular protection of the family and the environment; between 10,000 and 12,000 members.[7c]

LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF RUSSIA *(Liberalno-Demokraticheskaya Partiya Rossii - LDPR)*
Leader: Vladimir Zhirinovsky. Formally registered in 1992, although has been in existence (originally as the Liberal Democratic Party of the Soviet Union) since 1988; membership between 150,000 and 200,000; in favour of tougher laws on organised crime and corruption; highly nationalistic; advocates the establishment of a unitary state structure and the restoration of a Russian state within the borders of the former USSR; also in favour of restoring Russia to great-power status, and the establishment of an eastern military bloc to counterbalance NATO.[7c] Won 17 seats in the December 1999 parliamentary elections.[2]

OUR HOME IS RUSSIA *(Nash dom-Rossiya - NDR)*
Leader: Viktor Chernomyrdin. Founded in 1995 when it came third in parliamentary elections, behind the Communists and LDPR; membership around 250,000; advocates political reform,

privatisation, and a strong Russian state, but opposed to nationalism and extremism.[7c] Won 7 seats in the December 1999 parliamentary elections.[2]

PARTY OF ECONOMIC FREEDOM *(Partiya Ekonomicheskoi Svobody)*
Leaders: Konstantin Borovoi, Sergei Fedorov. Founded in 1992; advocates economic liberalism; 100,000 members.[1]

PARTY OF RUSSIAN UNITY AND ACCORD *(Partiya Rossiiskogo Edinstvai Soglasiya)*
Leader**:** Sergei Shakhrai. Founded in 1993; democratic bloc.[1]

PARTY OF WORKING PEOPLE'S SELF-GOVERNMENT *(Partiya Samoupravlenyia Trudyashchikhsya - PST)*
Leader: Syvatoslav Fedorov. Founded in 1995; centrist, liberal.[1]

POWER TO THE PEOPLE *(Vlast Narodu)*
Leader: Nikolai Ryzhkov. Founded in 1995; left-wing, nationalist.[1]

REPUBLICAN PARTY *(Respublikansakaya Partiya)*
Leader: Vladimir Lysenko. Founded in 1990 by former members of the Democratic Platform in the CPSU; advocates a mixed economy, defence of the sovereignty of Russia; 7,000 members.[1]

RUSSIAN ALL-PEOPLE'S UNION
Leader: Sergei Baburin. Founded as a party in 1994; right-wing, nationalist.[1]

RUSSIAN CHRISTIAN-DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT
Leader: Viktor Aksyuchits. Founded in 1990; alliance of groups advocating application of Christian principles to society; conservative-nationalist; 6,000 members.[1]

RUSSIAN COMMUNIST WORKERS' PARTY *(Rossiiskaya Kommunisticheskaya Rabochaya Partiya)*
Leader: Viktor Tyulkin. Advocates restoration of a planned socialist economy; contested 1995 elections as Communists-Working Russia-For the Soviet Union.[1]

RUSSIAN NATIONAL UNITY *(Russkoe Natsionalnoe Edinstvo - RNE)*
Leader: Aleksandr Barkashov. Founded in 1990; banned in 1993; re-emerged in 1994 when ban was lifted.[7c] Extremist neo-Nazi, ultra-nationalist paramilitary organisation;[14] anti-Semitism a major feature;[7c] claims 100,000 members and 64 branches, but press reports estimate membership of 12,000 and official registration is in only 22 regions; may have support of 3% of population; banned from convening a congress in 1998 as not a legally registered public organisation, but still active as an unofficial organisation.[14] Due to non-registration, cannot contest parliamentary elections on its own party list, but in 1999 formed "National Bloc" with two smaller registered groups, Saviour and Renaissance.[7c]

RUSSIAN PEOPLE'S REPUBLICAN PARTY *(Rossiiskaya Narodnaya Respublikanskaya Partiy)*
Leader: Aleksandr Lebed. Founded in 1997; supports tax reforms, strong leadership with considerable executive powers, but opposed to forcing Russia's regions to obey federal laws; membership between 10,000 and 15,000.[7c]

RUSSIA'S DEMOCRATIC CHOICE *(Demokratichesky Vybor Rossii - DVR)*
Leader: Yegor Gaidar. Founded in 1993 as a democratic electoral bloc, Russia's Choice; re-constituted as a political party in 1994; contested 1995 elections as Russia's Democratic Choice-United Democrats.[1] (also see JUST CAUSE)

SOCIALIST PARTY OF RUSSIA *(Sotsialisticheskaya Partiya Rossii)*
Leader: Ivan Rybkin. Founded in 1996 on basis of Ivan Rybkin bloc; left-centre party.[1]

STALINIST BLOC FOR THE USSR (SB)
Leader: Viktor Anpilov. Founded in January 1999, specifically to fight the December 1999 parliamentary elections. Combines several far-left organisations: Working Russia, led by Anpilov, the Union of Russian Youth and the Officers' Union. Also has the support of Stalin's grandson, Colonal Evgeny Dzhugashvili; registered for 1999 elections as The Stalin Bloc: Working Russia, Officers for the USSR; aims to restore the USSR and communism, and abolish the office of president by non-violent means.[7c]

TRANSFORMATION OF THE FATHERLAND *(Preobrazheniye Otechestva)*
Leader: Eduard Rossel. Advocates greater economic and political independence for Russia's regions.[1]

UNITY
Leader: Sergei Shoigu. Set up in September 1999, Unity, known as "Bear" in Russia,[19] is aligned with the presidential administration and endorsed by Vladimir Putin; came second in the December 1999 parliamentary elections, winning 72 seats.[2]

WOMEN OF RUSSIA POLITICAL MOVEMENT (WOR)
Leader: Ekaterina Lakhova. Founded in 1993, as successor to the Soviet-era Union of Soviet Women; constituent parts are the Russian Women's Union, the Female Entrepreneurs' Association and the Union of Women Serving in the Navy; predominantly concerned with social issues; centrist; encourages equal opportunities for women; supports a strong family and the rights of children, including education.[7c]

YABLOKO *(Federalnoe Obshchestvenno-Politicheskoe Dvizhenie "Yabloko")*
Leader: Grigory Yavlinsky. Founded in 1993; remained a loose coalition until March 1999, when officially registered as a party;[7c] democratic-centrist;[1] Russia's strongest liberal movement; particularly concerned with economic matters; also advocates strong international role for Russia.[7c] Won 21 seats in the December 1999 parliamentary elections.[2]

ANNEX C

PROMINENT PEOPLE

VIKTOR ANPILOV

Anpilov set up the Working Russia movement in 1996 after he was expelled from the far-left Russian Communist Workers' Party. He has ensured that the radical left, while on the margins of Russian politics as far as official representation is concerned, has maintained a high public profile. He has led numerous public demonstrations, which have occasionally resulted in his arrest. He was prominent in his support of parliament when Yeltsin suspended it in October 1993, and spent several months in detention. Anpilov was detained again in June 1998, for attempting to organise a rally in support of striking miners. He is currently leader of the Stalinist Bloc for the USSR.[7c]

ALEKSANDR BARKASHOV

Barkashov is an electrician by training, and became involved in extreme nationalist politics when he joined Pamyat in the mid-1980s. He left that organisation in the belief that more direct action was needed. He supported the 1991 attempted coup, surviving an assassination attempt in the process, and spent a couple of months in prison subsequently. He is now leader of the extremist Russian National Unity party.[7c]

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN

Chernomyrdin spent most of his pre-politics career in the gas industry. He was USSR minister for the gas industry between 1985 and 1990, in which capacity he launched the privatisation of the industry and the creation of the gas giant, Gazprom. He was first elected to the USSR parliament in 1987, became deputy prime minister in May 1992, and prime minister as a compromise candidate in December 1992, after the reformist, Gaidar, had been rejected by parliament. Following Chernomyrdin's 1998 dismissal as prime minister, there were calls for his resignation as leader of Our Home is Russia, of which, however, he has remained leader.[7c]

ANATOLY CHUBAIS

Chubais is an economist by training, and was the driving force behind Russia's 1992-1994 privatisation programme. He also masterminded Yeltsin's 1996 re-election campaign and was brought back into government by Yeltsin as first deputy prime minister and finance minister in charge of economic reform in March 1997. Chubais pushed forward an ambitious programme of structural reform that provoked the wrath of the Duma and other powerful groups. His influence gradually waned and he lost the finance portfolio in November 1997, and then saw some of his responsibilities redistributed in January 1998. He was removed from the government in March 1998 and became chairman of the country's electricity monopoly, Russian Unified Energy Systems. He is currently one of the leaders of the Just Cause political movement.[7c]

YEGOR GAIDAR

Gaidar is an academic economist best known for introducing the "shock therapy" economic reform programme of 1992, during his tenure as acting prime minister which lasted barely a year. In response to the opposition his programme aroused, Gaidar set up Russia's Choice, which did well in the 1993 parliamentary election, becoming the second largest party in the Duma.

However, it won only nine seats in the 1995 election, when Giadar himself failed to win a seat. He is currently one of the leaders of the Just Cause political movement.[7c]

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

Gorbachev, who became General Secretary of the Communist Party and leader of the Soviet Union in 1985, embarked upon a programme of sweeping changes. A policy of *glasnost* (openness) provided for a greater degree of freedom for the mass media and freer discussion of previously censored aspects of Soviet and Russian history, as well as more critical views of contemporary politics. Gorbachev's programme of gradual political and economic reform came to be known as *perestroika* (restructuring). In 1988, Gorbachev announced plans for comprehensive changes to the political system, with the introduction of a two-tier legislature, elected largely by competitive elections. Following these, the Congress elected Gorbachev to the new post of executive President of the USSR in May 1989. By the end of 1991, following Russia's assertion of sovereignty, the USSR had ceased to exist. On 25 December 1991, Gorbachev resigned as its last President and the Russian Supreme Soviet formally changed the name of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) to the Russian Federation.[2]

IRINA KHAKAMADA

Khakamada is a well-respected political reformer, who was first elected to the Duma in 1993. She has led the Common Cause movement since 1995. She does not currently hold a Duma seat, as she gave it up to serve in the government as head of the State Commission for Supporting and Developing Small Businesses from 1997 until the commission was abolished in autumn 1998. She is a champion of small business and a vocal campaigner for tax, economic and governmental reform. She is also currently one of the leaders of the Just Cause political movement.[7c]

SERGEI KIRIYENKO

Kiriyenko is a ship-builder by training. He graduated from the Academy of the National Economy in 1993, and became chairman of the board of "Garantia," a Nizhny Novgorod bank, in 1994 when his association with Nemtsov began. In 1997, he became president of the local NORSI oil refinery, and Nemtsov made Kiriyenko his deputy at the ministry of fuel and energy later that year. Prime minister for four months in 1998, Kiriyenko attempted to continue the programme of economic reform, but in August 1998 was dismissed by Yeltsin for failing to solve the financial crisis. He is currently one of the leaders of the Just Cause political movement.[7c]

EKATERINA LAKHOVA

Lakhova is a paediatrician by profession. Before entering politics, she was deputy head of Sverdlovsk health authority, and was elected to the Russian Supreme Soviet in 1990. She served as Yeltsin's adviser on issues concerning the family, motherhood and children until she was elected to the Duma in 1993. She was re-elected in 1995 and is currently leader of the Women of Russia Political Movement.[7c]

MIKHAIL LAPSHIN

Formerly a state farm director, Lapshin was first elected to the RSFSR parliament in 1990. He was re-elected to its successor, the Duma, in 1993, the year he was also elected chairman of the Agrarian Party, which he currently leads.[7c]

ALEKSANDR LEBED

Retired Major-General Lebed gained national fame as commander of the 14th Army Regiment in Moldova's breakaway Transdniestr region in the early 1990s. He was first elected to the Duma in December 1995, but gave up his seat in summer 1996, when Yeltsin made him Secretary of the Russian Security Council. In that capacity, Lebed in autumn 1996 negotiated an agreement with Chechnya that put an end to Russia's two-year war against the breakaway province. He was removed from his post after only three months, however, following clashes with the government and president. He was elected governor of Krasnoyarsk Krai in 1998, and is also leader of the Russian People's Republican Party.[7c]

YURII LUZHKOV

Luzhkov spent most of his career in the oil and gas industry. He was appointed deputy mayor of Moscow in 1991, and was promoted to mayor in 1992, when the first incumbent resigned. In 1996, almost 90% of voters supported him in a direct ballot. His efforts to modernise Moscow have made him extremely popular in the city. In December 1998, he founded the Fatherland movement, of which he has been leader since.[7c] Luzhkov has been criticised for imposing harsh registration regulations in Moscow, which breach constitutional provisions regarding freedom of movement.[14]

BORIS NEMTSOV

One of the leaders of the Just Cause political movement. Nemtsov trained as a radiophysicist and graduated from Gorky (now Nizhny Novgorod) University in 1981. He subsequently held various positions at the USSR Academy of Sciences. In 1991, he joined in the defence of the Russian parliament during the August attempted coup. He was rewarded with his appointment first as Yeltsin's special representative, and then as governor of Nizhny Novgorod between 1991 and 1997. Having supported Yeltsin in the 1996 presidential election, Nemtsov was appointed first deputy prime minister and minister for fuel and energy in March 1997. He lost office when Kiriyenko, his close associate, was sacked from his post as prime minister following the August 1998 financial crisis.[7c]

VLADIMIR PUTIN

Former head of the Federal Security Service and Secretary of the Security Council, whose firm stance on Russia's military campaign in Chechnya helped to raise his initially low profile as Prime Minister, the post to which he was appointed in August 1999. On President Yeltsin's resignation on 31 December 1999, Putin was appointed acting President, and was confirmed in the position in the presidential election of 26 March 2000, which he won with 52% of the vote.[7a]

SERGEI SHOIGU

Emergencies Minister who became leader of the Kremlin-backed Unity bloc, created in September 1999 to contest the December 1999 elections. Nine times world wrestling champion, he has built up a good reputation, but his control over members of his party is thought to be weak.[19]

GRIGORY YAVLINSKY

Born in Ukraine, Yavlinsky studied at the Institute of the National Economy in Moscow. He came to prominence in 1990 as a co-author of the radical "500 Days" economic reform programme that Gorbachev and Yeltsin briefly supported. He was deputy prime minister in the last USSR government, and has since refused offers of government office. Yavlinsky stood for the presidency in 1996, receiving 7% of the vote in the first round. He is currently leader of the Yabloko party.[7c]

BORIS YELTSIN

Yeltsin, who won an overwhelming victory in the Moscow constituency during the March 1989 elections to the new USSR Congress of People's Deputies, was subsequently elected Chairman of the Supreme Soviet (the permanent working body of the Congress), the highest state post in the RSFSR, in May 1990. In June 1990, the Congress adopted a declaration of sovereignty, asserting that the RSFSR was a sovereign republic and that the laws of the RSFSR had primacy over all-Union legislation. In June 1991, Yeltsin was elected President of the RSFSR, which gave him the executive power necessary to effect his policies as well as a sufficient popular mandate to challenge the jurisdiction of Gorbachev and the all-Union authorities. Yeltsin's position was strengthened by his part in bringing about the collapse of the August 1991 attempted coup, and while the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and Russian Communist Party (RCP) were suspended, he asserted control over all-Union bodies, appointing RSFSR ministers to head central institutions. By the end of 1991, the USSR had ceased to exist. On 25 December 1991, Gorbachev resigned as its last President and the Russian Supreme Soviet formally changed the name of the RSFSR to the Russian Federation,[2] of which Yeltsin was President until his resignation on 31 December 1999.[7a]

VLADIMIR ZHIRINOVSKY

Zhirinovsky has proved himself to be a durable figure in Russian politics. He is leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, over which he wields total control, having been elected chairman with unrestricted power for ten years in 1994. He failed in his 1999 attempt to win a provincial governorship.[7c]

GENNADY ZYUGANOV

Zyuganov is a lifelong communist. Having been a member of the Communist Party's youth wing, he joined the Party's apparatus first in his native region (Orel) and then in Moscow, where he built a career in the propaganda department of the CPSU Central Committee, ending up as its deputy head. Once the Communist Party of the RSFSR emerged, he quickly became one of its leaders, and was elected chairman of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation in 1993, a position he has since retained.[7c]

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