

Future of common wealth still unclear

After summit, organization remains foggy

MOSCOW (AP) — Nine weeks after the Commonwealth of Independent States was born, the question remains: What is it?

Last week's summit meeting of commonwealth leaders mainly helped to clarify what it is NOT.

It is not a country, or a government. Nor is it a single military bloc. It may become an economic union, but even that is uncertain.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin pushed for a united military but was unable to sway his colleagues, even with threats that if other republics insisted on their own armies, Russia might, too.

The heads of at least four former Soviet republics — Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaijan and Moldova — said they would go ahead with plans to create separate armies, ensuring the commonwealth would not have a united military.

True, leaders of the 11 member states reaffirmed their commitment to keep the Soviet Union's immense

nuclear arsenal under strict, unified control.

Ukraine and Belarus reaffirmed that they intend to eliminate all nuclear weapons on their territory. When that process ends sometime in the mid-1990s, they will be free of the commonwealth militarily, their leaders said.

The meeting in Minsk, the commonwealth's nominal capital as well as capital of Belarus, kept to the established pattern of papering over deep divisions with a flurry of agreements short on substance and detail.

"I must tell you frankly, I cannot call the documents adopted during this meeting too comforting," Kazakhstan's president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, said on Sunday.

The three Slavic republics of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine formed the commonwealth on Dec. 8 with a vague agreement that left uncertain what the entity was to be.

Since then, three contentious summits have whittled down the possibilities.

The first, on Dec. 21, showed it was not to be a "Slavic commonwealth." Eight other republics joined, turning it into a loose association of Asian and European states intent on reviving disparate cultures and languages.



They promised not to interfere in each other's internal affairs and stressed the commonwealth was "neither a state nor a super-state." It would not have a government or a unified foreign policy.

The second summit, on Dec. 30,

was overshadowed by bickering between Russia and Ukraine over the Black Sea fleet.

Many people in the former Soviet Union still hope that, in time, the republics will come together again in something resembling a country, with a single economy.

Former Soviet states compete for U.S. approval

WASHINGTON (AP) — Mircea Snegur is coming to see George Bush. Can Ayaz Mutalibov be far behind?

Their names are hardly on a par with Boris N. Yeltsin or Mikhail S. Gorbachev.

But Snegur, of Moldova, and Mutalibov, from Azerbaijan, are presidents of nations emerging from the old Soviet Union and a trip to America — capped by a meeting with Bush — is the prize offered for promises to be good democrats respectful of human rights, free enterprise and their neighbors' borders.

It's easier to get an invitation if you have nuclear weapons.

Thus, Presidents Leonid Kravchuk of Ukraine, Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and Stanislav Shushkevich of Belarus need only work out a mutually convenient date. Their missiles assured them of an invitation.

In the eyes of the presidents of former Soviet republics the Washington visit "is what makes you legitimate," said Mark Lowenthal, a foreign policy specialist at the Library of Congress.

"You have to wonder what the cutoff line is," he said. "Not every third-rate potentate in the world. This is like the Roman Empire where all the princes would come to Rome and

see the emperor."

Secretary of State James A. Baker III paid his first visit this week to six of the newly independent states.

During a stop in Kishinev, Moldova, on Tuesday, Baker met with Snegur and said he received "complete and full" assurances of the president's commitment to political and economic reforms.

That received, Baker said Snegur would probably visit Washington next week for a meeting with Bush.

Then, it was on to Azerbaijan, a touchier situation given the state's record of human rights abuses and

armed conflict with neighboring Armenia.

But Mutalibov promised to respect human rights and Baker said he had "no reason to believe the assurances will not be followed through." Baker said he would recommend the administration drop its reluctance to grant diplomatic recognition to Azerbaijan.

There also is an element of inter-republic rivalry in the competition for notice from Washington.

Ukrainian officials are particularly concerned that Kravchuk get the same sort of treatment from Bush that Yeltsin received when he visited Feb. 1.

Dahmer jurors believe murderer instead of mental health experts

MILWAUKEE (AP) — In the end, jurors who decided Jeffrey Dahmer was sane when he killed and dismembered 15 young men and boys cast aside the opinions of medical experts and listened to one person: the serial killer himself.

Dahmer told police he killed "for my own warped, selfish desires for self-gratification," and the jury concurred.

His confession, as recited by two police detectives, came through more clearly during his three-week sanity trial than descriptions like "paraphiliac disorder not otherwise specified," some jurors said.

"The professional words were confusing," juror Karl Stahle said after the verdicts were read Saturday.

"(But) his whole conduct showed he was a con artist. . . . He had just one thing on his mind — to satisfy his ego and to satisfy himself," Stahle said.

The jury's decision that Dahmer was not insane means he faces mandatory life sentences. A hearing was set for Monday, when relatives of his victims planned to speak in court.

Dahmer didn't take the stand during 12 days of testimony. His lawyer, Gerald Boyle, made good on a promise to have Dahmer speak through his lengthy confession.

Dahmer told police he seduced victims, drugged and strangled them, then had sex with

the corpses. He later mutilated bodies, saved skulls and ate a heart, bicep and thigh.

Wisconsin law required the jury to determine whether the former chocolate factory worker had a mental disease or defect when he killed. If he did, jurors had to decide whether he knew right from wrong or couldn't control himself.

"We never got past the first question," said Russell Fenstermaker, one of two jurors who dissented and said Dahmer was mentally ill. The unusual trial required that 10 of the jurors agree.

"We all agreed there was a problem," Fenstermaker said.

"Whether we interpreted it as a disorder or a disease is what separated us."

Throughout the testimony, it seemed the factor that would determine whether Dahmer would be sent to prison or to a mental institution was his measure of control, or, legally speaking, his ability to "conform his conduct to the requirements of the law."

Boyle and District Attorney E. Michael McCann assured jurors they would have to wrestle with the issue of control.

The lawyers relied largely on testimony from seven psychiatrists and psychologists, five of whom agreed either willingly or under cross-examination that Dahmer suffered a mental disease.

Most commonly, the mental health professionals classified the disease as necrophilia, a sexual attraction to corpses.



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