

RUSSIAN ELECTION WATCH



Editor: Henry E. Hale

Associate Editor: Danielle Lussier

Vol.3, No.6, March 2004

TOP NEWS

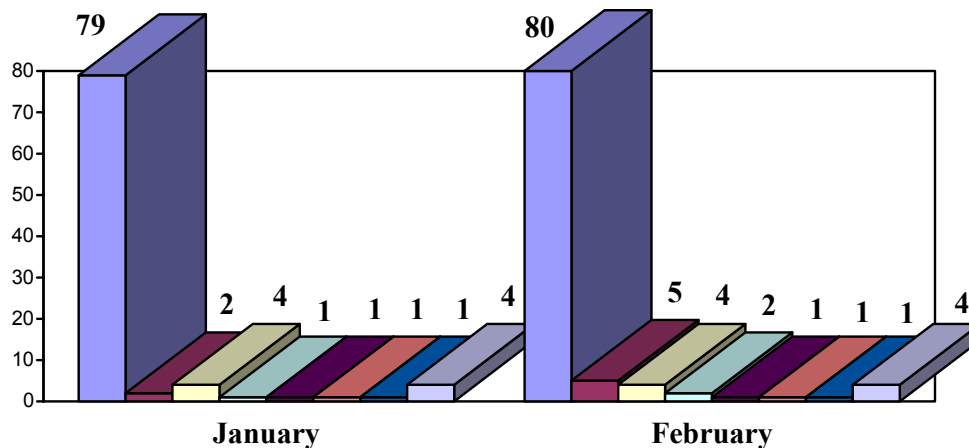
- Putin fires Kasyanov, taps Fradkov as PM
- Putin still leads presidential race with 80%
- Communist Kharitonov in second with 5%
- Glaziev is new target of Kremlin media assault
- Fradkov announces reshuffle, major cuts in Cabinet
- Economic liberals get vice-PM post, key ministries
- Little-known Fradkov has ties to “Siloviki”
- Rybkin disappears, reappears, drops out of race

SEE INSIDE

- P.2: *Theories on why Putin fired Kasyanov*
- P.2: *Biography of new PM Fradkov*
- P.3: *What do Russians think: results from a new poll*
- Pp.4-5: *TV campaign ads of Putin’s rivals*
- P.6: *Websites with election information in English*
- P.7: *Insider Information: Top Russian analysts from pro- and anti-Putin camps interpret the campaign*

TRACKING THE POLLS:

Percentage intending to vote for each presidential candidate, January-February 2004



Legend: Putin (blue), Kharitonov (red), Glaziev (yellow), Khakamada (green), Malyshkin (purple), Mironov (orange), Rybkin (dark blue), Against All (grey)

Polling agency VTsIOM-A (renamed Levada-Center in March 2004) polls 1600 people in 40 regions nationwide in the middle of each month and reports the percentage of adult citizens who, given a list of names, say they would cast their ballot for a candidate if the election were held the following Sunday, counting only those who intend to vote. The latest poll was taken February 13-16, 2004. A total of 63% said that they were likely to vote. Margin of error is 3.4%.

DATES TO REMEMBER

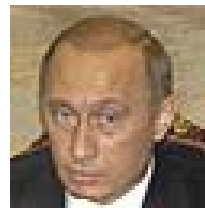
- March 12, 2004: Last day of campaigning
- March 14, 2004: Presidential election

On the Campaign Trail

FINE-TUNING A LANDSLIDE

Given that incumbent Vladimir **Putin** (right) leads Russia’s presidential contest with 80% in the polls, he and his strategists have been remarkably active. Most dramatically, less than three weeks before the voting Putin fired Prime Minister Mikhail **Kasyanov** and then shocked the establishment by tapping Russia’s little-known envoy to the European Union, Mikhail **Fradkov**, as his replacement. While continuing his “uncampaign” — disparaging political advertising and keeping far from candidate debates — Putin used public appearances to state more forcefully than ever before what his achievements have been and how he hopes to

improve on this record in his second term. Finally, Kremlin strategists are carefully calibrating state-owned media coverage to ensure that Putin’s opponents divide the electoral crumbs in the optimal way, which involves actually puffing up Communist candidate Nikolai **Kharitonov** while politically masticating erstwhile ally Sergei **Glaziev**. Thus while a table or two have turned, Putin remains seated firmly at the head.



NOT-QUITE-PRIME-TIME MINISTER?

Putin’s dismissal of the prime minister was both expected and unexpected. Few observers thought Kasyanov would last much beyond the presidential election. Not only did he oppose the high-profile arrest of “oligarch” Mikhail **Khodorkovsky** in late 2003 that Putin clearly supported, but

over the previous year he had become something of a whipping boy for pro-Putin United Russia, which was obviously eyeing more government posts for its own members after the landslide it anticipated (and got) in the Duma elections. Almost everyone, however, expected Kasyanov to go only after the presidential contest was over, especially since Russian law requires that any PM appointed and confirmed by the Duma prior to the election be reappointed and reconfirmed after the start of the new presidential term.

But on February 24, Putin nonplussed everyone by announcing Kasyanov's dismissal. While pundits have offered numerous other explanations (see box below),



Putin himself told voters that the move had two main goals: first, to let them know before election day what to expect from his second term; second, to accelerate a structural reform of the government, which he said Kasyanov's team had been slow to carry out. A whirlwind of speculation ensued over who would replace him, with almost every A-level pro-Kremlin politician in Russia making someone's short list.

When Putin announced his choice on March 1, even those predicting a surprise were taken aback by the scale of this one; not a single published prognosticator appears to have so much as named Mikhail Fradkov (above with Putin) among the set of possibilities. While Fradkov had enjoyed a long career at the top levels of government (see box above right), most recently serving as Putin's trade minister in 1999-2000 and as chief of the tax police in 2001-03, he was responsible for a scandal that helped result in the elimination of the latter agency in March 2003, whereupon he was appointed to distant Brussels as Russia's envoy to the European Union. Although he retained ministerial rank, he was no longer considered a key player in Russian politics.

When Putin announced his choice on March 1, even those predicting a surprise were taken aback by the scale of this one; not a single published prognosticator appears to have so much as named Mikhail Fradkov (above with Putin) among the set of possibilities. While Fradkov had enjoyed a long career at the top levels of government (see box above right), most recently serving as Putin's trade minister in 1999-2000 and as chief of the tax police in 2001-03, he was responsible for a scandal that helped result in the elimination of the latter agency in March 2003, whereupon he was appointed to distant Brussels as Russia's envoy to the European Union. Although he retained ministerial rank, he was no longer considered a key player in Russian politics.

Mikhail Yefimovich Fradkov

1950	Born in Samara Oblast
1972	Graduated Moscow Instrument Building Institute
1973-75	Economic counselor with the Soviet Embassy to India
1975-84	Worked at the Tiazpromexport foreign trade company
1985-91	Positions at the Ministry for Foreign Economic Relations
1991-92	Senior Counselor of the Russian mission at the UN organization in Geneva; Russia's representative at the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
1992-93	Deputy Minister of Foreign Economic Relations
1993-97	First Deputy Minister of Foreign Economic Relations
1997-98	Minister of Foreign Economic Relations
1999-00	Minister of Trade
2000-01	First Deputy Secretary of the Russian Security Council
2001-03	Director of the Federal Tax Police
2003-04	Russian Presidential Envoy to the European Union
March 5, 2004	Confirmed as Prime Minister of Russian Federation

Most observers interpreted Putin's decision as a move to establish his own personal control over the government since Fradkov (below), to the extent he is characterized at all, is usually called an effective technocrat and not a man of vision. The new PM wasted little time in imposing Putin's plans. On March 9, just four days after his confirmation, he announced a new government that included over a third fewer ministries than before, shifting some major figures like Foreign Minister Igor **Ivanov** (replaced by Russia's former UN envoy Sergei **Lavrov**) out of their posts, but



retaining Western business favorites like German **Gref** in Economic Development and Trade and Aleksei **Kudrin** in Finance and naming the reputedly pro-market Aleksandr **Zhukov** deputy PM. Russia's long-

est serving minister, the popular Sergei **Shoigu**, stays on as Emergencies Minister. Fradkov and Putin even managed to find a more potent poison chalice for former Putin nemesis Vladimir **Yakovlev**, the ex-governor of St. Petersburg whom Putin regards as having stabbed him in the back by defeating his own and Putin's political mentor, Anatoly **Sobchak**, to gain his gubernatorial post. Yakovlev, who last year had been given the post of deputy prime minister for the seemingly hopeless housing and utilities sector as a way to dislodge him from St. Petersburg, was packed off to head the Southern Federal District of Putin's administration, where he will have to cope with the problem of Chechnya.

Analysts were quick to scrutinize not only Fradkov's actions but also his biography in their efforts to discern the meaning of his appointment. Many noted his close ties to Defense Minister and Putin friend Sergei **Ivanov** (right), for whom Fradkov once worked in the Security Council. This links Fradkov to the "Siloviki" grouping of Kremlin officials, associated with force-wielding structures such as the FSB and military. The Internet publication *Polit.Ru*, generally friendly to big business, pointed out that the "scandal" that helped bring down the tax police was Fradkov's aggressive move not only to investigate tax evaders but to take active measures against those considered ca-



WHY FIRE KASYANOV NOW?

Pundits and politicians have advanced a wide range of theories. Some of the most interesting are summarized here.

- *Oligarchs might have assassinated Putin to make their friend Kasyanov, who as PM was first in the line of succession, president (Argumenty i Fakty)*
- *Kick-start reforms stalled by Kasyanov (Nikonov, p.10)*
- *Show freedom from Yeltsin "Family" (Michaleva, p.8)*
- *Inform voters for presidential choice (Putin)*
- *Raise interest in elections, increase turnout (Nikonov)*
- *Remove unwanted government figures taken aboard in political deals, such as former St. Petersburg governor Yakovlev (Polit.Ru)*
- *Draw attention to Putin, away from rivals (Nikonov)*

pable of evasion, including pressuring them via co-workers and even relatives. The publication also noted that he was implicated in a corruption case in the early 1990s but that the case was ultimately dismissed and the evidence destroyed in a reportedly accidental fire.

Other pro-business politicians, such as noted economist Yevgeny Yasin and Unified Energy Systems chief Anatoly Chubais, praised Fradkov in *RFE/RL Newslines* as a market-oriented liberal with a proven record of accomplishment in the trade ministry. Yasin roundly denied that Fradkov could be considered a Silovik by disposition and orientation. If one views Fradkov above all as a loyal technocrat, however, one would indeed expect him to effectively carry out his bosses' policies, whether they are market-oriented foreign trade measures or tough tax-policing steps to promote law and order.

PUTIN'S PUBLIC VISION

The transition from Kasyanov to Fradkov, dominating the news in the last three weeks of the campaign, is a central element of Putin's uncampaign strategy, which is predicated above all on "being presidential" and subtly denigrating those who stoop to the level of actual campaigning. Bypassing all televised candidate debates and foregoing the state-provided opportunity for each candidate to air campaign advertisements for free on certain television and radio channels, the President's team instead orchestrates highly positive television coverage of his activities as a "newsmaker" (the three biggest networks are state-controlled).



With fawning media broadcasting seemingly every word as news, Putin has begun to inventory his achievements and outline his plans more vigorously than before. In a key speech given at Moscow State University on February 12 and broadcast live

on television, a speech that some political analysts consider one of the most important of Putin's career (see *Nikonov, p.10*), the incumbent made a clean rhetorical break with the Yeltsin era, lambasting the legacy of economic instability, corruption, and state weakness he inherited from his predecessor. Apologizing to voters for appearing to "advertise" himself but citing the need to present them with his vision, he claimed the restoration of order and stability in the country as his most important achievement. This, he argued, has helped him facilitate economic growth on the order of 30% since 1999, a drop in inflation by nearly two-thirds, and concomitant improvements in pensions and wages.

But, Putin averred, much remains to be done, including the modernization of industry and infrastructure, the reduction and simplification of taxes, the introduction of

WHAT DO RUSSIANS THINK?

Shortly after the Duma election in December 2003, Timothy Colton, Henry Hale, and Michael McFaul organized a public opinion survey asking a representative sample of Russian citizens about their political views. Here are some preliminary findings as to the percentages responding that:

- Russia's economy is in good or great shape: 5%
- Own economic situation has improved in last year: 21%
- Russia's economy has improved in last year: 36%
- Own economic situation has worsened in last year: 24%
- Russia's economy has worsened in last year: 17%
- Russia should continue and deepen market reforms: 54%
- Russia should return to a socialist system: 26%
- Democracy is more or less suitable for Russia: 58%
- Western democracy is the system best suited to Russia: 7%

full convertibility for the ruble, and the state-led development of mortgage markets so that ordinary citizens can afford to buy housing. Striking a favorite chord, he called for more "transparency" in relations between the state and firms exploiting Russia's natural resources and, notably, higher taxes on "superprofits" from sectors like the oil industry. He also repeatedly stressed the importance of personal liberty, asserting that only free individuals can form the basis of a vibrant economy. Elsewhere, he has sought to allay fears that he seeks a presidency-for-life, demonstratively rejecting a Duma initiative in early February to extend the presidential term to seven years.

Analysts debate the extent to which policies are at the root of Putin's popularity (for one view, see *Peshkov, p.11*). On one hand, there is evidence that a majority supports the kind of market-oriented reforms that Putin has pushed and that more people think the economy is improving than worsening. On the other hand, the same research reveals that hardly anyone thinks Russia's economy is in good shape, and most Russians feel their own economic situation is either getting worse or staying the same (see box above). Whatever the answer, the President has undoubtedly cultivated an extraordinarily broad base of mass support. In fact, a poll designed by Timothy Colton, Henry Hale, and Michael McFaul found that, as of late December 2003, Putin even had the support of 40% of those who had voted Communist in the Duma election and a solid majority of Russians who had cast ballots for each of the other major parties and blocs (the LDPR, Motherland, SPS, United Russia, and Yabloko).

MICROMANAGING THE ELECTION

While one might think that an election team leading its nearest rival by a margin of 80% to 5% could afford to risk a free and fair one-month campaign period, the Kremlin is thinking long-term and taking no chances (*Is accelerated autocratization inevitable? Read Michaleva, p.8*). It has three main concerns. First, of course, its occupants want to be absolutely sure that no candidate gains a last-minute spurt of support that could force Putin into a runoff, which would be necessary if no candidate wins 50% on March 14. The only candidate even remotely capable of such a surge, most observers believe, is Glaziev (above), whose Motherland bloc



PUTIN'S RIVALS: TV CAMPAIGN ADS



SERGEI GLAZIEV

Party: Motherland

Nomination: Independent

Slogans: "We'll take Russia back";
"There is a choice"

Sample Ad: *Glaziev appears, declaring that Russia needs a president who fulfills all promises, taking responsibility for his every word. Feel-good images of Soviet industrial progress and oil pumping fill the screen as Glaziev promises to restore Russia's economic might and even repay citizen-investors who lost savings during the 1990s. The clip then turns to a short series of faux news broadcasts from the near future, each called "Good News." A female anchor leads off each "news" program with the words "President Glaziev today signed a decree..." In one clip, the decree is on "natural resource rents," forcing big oil and gas companies to share more of their profits with the state, enabling President Glaziev to raise student stipends and double pensions. A smiling pensioner receiving a big stack of rubles is shown. (Aired on TV Center, March 5, 2004)*



NIKOLAI KHARITONOV

Party: Agro-Industrial Union of Russia

Nomination: Communist Party

Slogan: "For the native land and the popular will"

Sample Ad: *Trumpets blare as the KPRF symbol appears on the screen with a decidedly low-budget feel. Cut to Kharitonov, who declares that Gaidar and Yeltsin robbed the Russian people in January 1992, that Putin is now paying a debt to the West, and that millions of dollars are going abroad each month. Trumpets again sound, heralding the KPRF logo. Kharitonov appears again, lamenting how capitalism has rendered education unaffordable and vowing to provide a free education for every child. More trumpets, followed by the candidate, glancing down at notes, calling for discipline and order in the military. The above-mentioned slogan appears, followed by a few more iterations of the brass and Kharitonov. A former collective farm chief, the candidate concludes by calling for the restoration of Russian agriculture. (Aired on TV Center, March 5, 2004)*

rocketed from near-zero to 9% in the last days of December's Duma campaign. Second, the Kremlin wants to avoid a strong showing by someone who might then prove a troublesome rival in future elections, most notably Glaziev (*on why this is the case, see Kolmakov, p.7*). Finally, Putin's team wants to get as many people to the polls as possible; if turnout dips below 50% of registered voters, the elections are ruled invalid and must be held again. With Putin so far ahead, there is a real danger people will not see a need to come to the polls. (Contrary to some incorrect reports, all candidates on the ballot in a low-turnout election are free to run again in the repeat

contest, so the prospect of insufficient turnout is more of a nuisance for the Kremlin than an imperative.)

These three goals have driven Kremlin election managers to undertake what would otherwise seem to be some strikingly inconsistent measures. For one, Kharitonov, whose Communist Party (KPRF) was mercilessly hammered by negative coverage in the fall 2003 campaign, now finds ample time to expound upon Lenin's virtues and make what are becoming trademark anti-Semitic insinuations. This is because the Kremlin does not perceive the little-known and uncharismatic Kharitonov as a long- or short-term vote-getting threat. Indeed, while he is strongly backed by KPRF leader Gennady **Zyuganov** (right), who regularly appears on his behalf in campaign ads, another of the Party's major factions, led by Gennady **Semigin**, is unenthusiastic at best and has previously been more sympathetic to Glaziev, who has long held ambitions of effectively taking over the left wing of Russian politics, including the Communist Party. As a result, the Kremlin prefers to have Kharitonov in the race in order both to raise turnout and weaken Glaziev. Thus after Kharitonov threatened to withdraw from the contest if he did not receive live coverage of one of his speeches just as Putin did for his Moscow State University address, the RTR television network actually conceded the point and reported live from a speech he gave to supporters in Tula on March 4.



Instead of the Communists, it is Glaziev who now finds himself squarely in the Kremlin's crosshairs. Firing one of the first rounds, Dmitry **Rogozin** (right), who was Glaziev's co-leader of the Motherland bloc in the December 2003 Duma election but who has backed Putin for president, orchestrated something of a coup within Motherland. First, an organization that he controlled and that was only one component of the Motherland bloc suddenly claimed the sole right to run under the name "Motherland" in future parliamentary elections, a move which was quickly confirmed by the Russian Ministry of Justice. Rogozin then set his sights on the Motherland Duma fraction, twisting the arms of a majority of Motherland deputies to strip Glaziev of his status as fraction leader, a post Rogozin then assumed. Surprisingly, another leading Motherland figure, Sergei **Baburin** (above), who just days earlier had endorsed Glaziev's bid for Russia's highest office, suddenly went along with Rogozin and then took up Rogozin's former position as deputy speaker of the Duma.



As election day approaches, television news regularly reports Glaziev's woes and rarely gives him an opportunity to respond, much less to elaborate his platform. Sometimes he is completely omitted from major-network newscasts. For

example on March 5, the 1st Channel's *Vremya*, the flagship news program of Russia's largest television network, covered Putin and then each of the other presidential candidates except for Glaziev, who got nary a word. When he has drawn news coverage recently, it has often been highly negative. Glaziev, who acknowledged that the Kremlin had boosted Motherland during the 2003 Duma campaign in order to weaken the Communists, used much of his officially allocated advertising time to argue that the Kremlin had now turned on him. He added that provincial bosses were also persecuting him, in one case by evacuating the building during a Glaziev press conference on the pretext of a bomb threat. Rogozin returned fire with fire, however, claiming that the Kremlin was in fact supporting Glaziev's campaign in order to raise voter turnout.

Two other candidates received token coverage, neither particularly positive nor negative, on the network news. Irina **Khakamada** was the more outspoken, blasting what she called an unfair election. In one instance, like Kharitonov, she demanded equal time in response to the major-network live broadcast of Putin's Moscow State University appearance. While one



channel did give her (also like Kharitonov) some "live" coverage in response, it still managed to omit a particularly Putin-critical question, citing a technical glitch, reported *Polit.Ru*. She also protested a Central Election Commission (CEC) get-out-the-vote ad that showed children drawing images of their ideal president, who was without exception depicted as male — this ad was then withdrawn. On March 9, implying she may leave her current party, SPS, she announced plans to form a new party ("Free Russia") to oppose autocratic tendencies in Russia. She has largely refrained, however, from



the highly negative attack on Putin with which she began her campaign. Oleg **Malyshkin**, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) nominee, attempted to register party leader Vladimir **Zhirinovskiy** as an official campaign representative, a status that would have allowed the charismatic nationalist do most of the talking for the gruff bodyguard, but the CEC disallowed this request (the two are pictured together above, Zhirinovskiy at left).

While all current candidates, including Glaziev, have been receiving officially allocated television time on the major channels, these "debates" and "advertising blocks" have often been assigned to odd hours, sometimes starting before 8am (the 1st Channel's election graphic shown top left). One network, NTV, declared that it would not broadcast candidate debates or even advertising blocks at all during prime time because without



IRINA KHAKAMADA

Party: SPS

Nomination: Independent

Slogan: "Irina Khakamada: Our Voice"

Sample Ad: Khakamada is shown reading, by a dim light in a dark room, letters from ordinary Russians whose voices are heard asking for her help.

Facing the camera, she declares "I am running for president so that President Putin will listen to us." The camera cuts to a nondescript backdrop, against which the candidate explains that she is running for a Russia where each individual is secure, where the police actually protect people, and where bureaucrats serve the citizenry. Today Russians pay, but do not get anything, such as medical care, in return. The candidate calls for equal access to education, without bribes. The special services, she declares, should answer to the citizens. Russia should not create its own enemies but live in a civilized world. She reiterates, "I am running for president not to become president right now...I am running for president so that President Putin will listen to us." (Aired on TV Center, March 5, 2004)



SERGEI MIRONOV

Party: Party of Life

Nomination: Independent

Slogan: "Justice and Responsibility"

Sample Ad: Mironov is sitting in a dark-wood-paneled office, a colorful map of Russia's regions behind him. Lightly pulsating electronic music, graphic images, a

voiceover giving pertinent facts simultaneously summarized on screen — all these punctuate Mironov's methodical listing of key problems and the solutions he proposes. A better life for the provinces: firms should pay taxes where they actually work. Freedom from narcotics: life imprisonment for drug lords. End corruption: convicted bureaucrats should be jailed and banned from state service. And more. He is for Russia's being a "great power," he concludes. (Aired on 1st Channel, March 5, 2004)



OLEG MALYSHKIN

Party: LDPR

Nomination: LDPR

Slogan: "Vote for the LDPR presidential candidate, Oleg Malyshkin"

Sample Ad: High-energy, rave-style electronic music, the kind that LDPR leader Zhirinovskiy used in many of his 2003

Duma campaign commercials, accompanies the camera moving across the letters "LDPR" embedded in a boxy virtual-reality landscape. The camera cuts to a pumped-up Malyshkin, looking earnest and flashing teeth with plenty of metal fillings, who calls to revive collective physical exercise in the workplace. The same LDPR symbolism briefly reappears with the throbbing music. Malyshkin, his necktie slightly askew, advocates free medical care. Another rave LDPR interlude. Back to Malyshkin, who growls that companies should not be able to cut off heat, water, or electricity. In more such segments, he demands a more accessible bureaucracy, restoration of the coal industry, and natural gas in every home. (Aired on 1st Channel, March 9, 2004)

Putin's participation, its management declared, there was just not enough public interest to justify showing them.

Adding a dash of tragicomedy to this story, former Security Council Secretary and ex-Duma Speaker Ivan **Rybkin** (pictured below with a video link to his reputed chief sponsor, "oligarch" Boris **Berezovsky**) provided a bizarre diversion during the campaign. Having just been registered as a candidate, he mysteriously disappeared on February 6, prompting his wife and campaign manager to file a missing persons report. When he suddenly reappeared five days later, he at first claimed he had



gone to Kiev for a bit of relaxation and was shocked to read all the fuss about him in the newspaper. A few days later, he gave a press conference with a very different story, saying that he had been lured to Kiev with an offer to meet with Chechen rebel leader Aslan **Maskhadov** but that this turned out to be a trap resulting in his being injected with drugs and rendered unconscious for four days. Later, he related fragments of stories that commentators found hard to piece together, including being tailed by the FSB, plied with spiked sandwiches and tea, targeted by a blackmail scheme that hinged on a compromising videotape of himself, which he was shown, and more. During all this, he declared that he would campaign only from London, where it was safe for him to speak his mind and that his chief issue would be Chechnya. The CEC, however, ruled that to participate in televised debates, he had to appear in person and not by satellite link. Rybkin further complained that all the major networks were citing technicalities in order to

Internet Resources in English

While a number of news agencies have excellent coverage, outstanding campaign summaries, polling data, and analyses of events can be found at:

Carnegie Moscow Center: www.carnegie.ru

RFE/RL: www.rferl.org/specials/russianelection

VTsIOM-A / Univ. Strathclyde: www.russiavotes.org

avoid airing his campaign ads, which were reportedly barbed attacks on Putin. After courts rejected his various pleas, Rybkin withdrew from the race on March 5.

Some liberal, pro-democracy forces appealed to voters to protest what some called the farcical nature of the campaign by either voting "against all" or by not casting a ballot. At a February 24 appearance at Harvard University, the leader of one of these groups, Yabloko Party chair Grigory **Yavlinsky**, compared Russian presidential elections to a soccer game. If in 1996 and 2003 he was playing on a badly short-handed team aiming at a smaller goal than his opponents, he said, in 2004 both the ball and goal have disappeared, leaving only a scoreboard. "Committee 2008," a new movement co-led by chess grandmaster Gary **Kasparov**, also encouraged liberal voters not to legitimize the election with their participation and called for democratic forces instead to concentrate on finding a strong candidate for the 2008 presidential contest.

At various times, every candidate other than Putin and Sergei **Mironov** has admitted to pondering a withdrawal from the race in protest. For precisely this reason, most analysts say, Putin has assigned Mironov, his own loyalist, to run as a kind of insurance policy; that way, there will at least be one alternative candidate to point to if all the others withdraw. Mironov, in line with this theory, continues to praise Putin regularly during campaign appearances.

— *Henry E. Hale, Indiana University*

Russian Election Watch can be found online at <http://daviscenter.fas.harvard.edu/publications/rew.html>

Russian Election Watch is produced with support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and is a joint publication of The Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University

Graham T. Allison, Director

The Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University

Timothy J. Colton, Director and Lisbeth Tarlow, Associate Director

Indiana University - Bloomington

The views expressed in *Russian Election Watch* are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of any sponsoring organization. The editors welcome feedback of all kinds. Please direct comments to

Henry E. Hale (Editor)

Assistant Professor

Department of Political Science

and Russian & East European Institute

Indiana University

hhale@indiana.edu

Danielle Lussier (Associate Editor)

Research Associate

Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs

John F. Kennedy School of Government

Harvard University

danielle_lussier@harvard.edu

Special thanks to Isabelle Kaplan for translation, editing, and layout and to Mara Zepeda for logistical support. The editor is also grateful to the Carnegie Moscow Center for moral and logistical support.

SOURCES USED IN *REW*, Vol.3, No.6: All images from Itv.ru and accessed on March 9, 2004, except: Putin, Putin & Fradkov (president.kremlin.ru, March 8); Kasyanov (cnews.canoe.ca); Glaziev, Zyuganov (gzt.ru, August 18, 2003); Baburin (rodina-nps.ru); Khakamada (hakamada.ru); Rybkin (bbc.co.uk). Much of Fradkov bio from novinite.com.

INSIDER INFORMATION: CAMPAIGN ANALYSIS BY LEADING RUSSIAN PRACTITIONERS

THE 2004 PRESIDENTIAL RACE: THE GLAZIEV PHENOMENON **Sergei Kolmakov** *Vice-President of the Foundation for the Development of Parliamentarism in Russia*



SOME KEY POINTS:

- * *Kremlin's fierce "anti-Glaziev" campaign shows fear of this rival*
- * *Glaziev formulates populist message more powerfully than does Kremlin*
- * *Glaziev presents self as alternative to Russia's current "road-to-ruin" policies of market globalization and foreign investment*

The smokescreen of scandals and related publicity surrounding the candidacies of Khakamada, Rybkin, and Kharitonov notwithstanding, the real hidden nerve of this campaign is the Kremlin's struggle against "the Glaziev threat."

The summer-fall 2003 assault on the "oligarchs," Motherland's subsequent phenomenal electoral success, United Russia's forced embrace of the anti-oligarch policy at the end of the 2003 campaign, and the current anti-Glaziev efforts all demonstrate the serious forces of public opinion the Kremlin itself has aroused.

Glaziev has turned the President's favorite lines about doubling GDP, overcoming poverty, and resurrecting Russia's greatness into a comprehensive economic, philosophical, and geopolitical strategy so accessible to the masses that the Kremlin dares not oppose it openly. Further, the Glaziev program is neatly packaged into user-friendly points and slogans easy for the public to understand. Basically, it boils down to the following:

- a state takeover of so-called "natural rents" not only in the energy sector but in raw materials as well as alcohol production;
- the effective introduction of mobilizational economic levers to (a) redistribute what is taken so as to restructure the economy in favor of goods-

producers and (b) to fulfill social obligations as part of a plan to overcome poverty and spark a breakthrough in innovation;

—an end to the structural transformations of the previous reform cycle, including those reforms already implemented (such as with Unified Energy Systems, the housing and utilities sector, and the pension fund);

—a fundamental review of tax reforms so as to revoke the flat 13% income tax and switch to a wage scale based on "contribution to national revenue" (practically speaking, this means a progressive tax on "super-profits" that will pay for Glaziev's plan to double the average Russian salary);

—an end to investment deals with the West involving the acquisition of Russian raw materials, permitting only those investment deals geared towards developing infrastructure in production sectors;

—a slowdown in the process and ultimate rejection of membership in the World Trade Organization even in the medium term.

Philosophically and geopolitically, we are talking about a full-fledged nativist revanchism, interpreted as a reaction to failed attempts by reformers to follow the rules of globalization, democratization, and liberal conceptions of a market economy.

Glaziev and his supporters contend that the alternative to them – to continue along the old path of participating in projects like "market-globalization-foreign investment in the natural resources sector" – will lead to Russia's ultimate historical defeat in the 21st century, involving the seizure of the country's natural riches by trans-national corporations and Russia's relegation to the role of

the West's little-valued junior partner, useful only as a source of raw materials and with an excess of population.

Should Glaziev come in second on election day and get no less than 7-10% of the vote, his openly populist plan will present an immediate political challenge to President Putin himself, to the project of establishing a "dominant party," and to the 2008 presidential "succession" plan.

All this can explain the fierce, systematic nature of the attack by the "anti-Glaziev" campaign in its effort to defuse the Glaziev "bomb" now, in the current electoral cycle. The subsequent organizational, political, and publicity moves against Glaziev are an indicator of how seriously the Kremlin is taking this rival.

Virtually the entire arsenal has been engaged in this struggle, from an "unexpected" dip in Glaziev's rating and Kharitonov's emergence in second place to the sudden orchestration of rifts in the Motherland coalition and the Ministry of Justice's decision to register the Russia's Regions party, headed by Yuri Skokov and Dmitry Rogozin, under the name "Motherland"; Glaziev was soon replaced by Rogozin as leader of Motherland's Duma fraction.

It is obvious that Glaziev has been deprived of financial resources and support by both national and local media. The main TV networks' coverage of Glaziev's campaign is designed to prevent him from outlining his position, depicting only a "talking head," a "crazy professor" who repeats the same asserted truths over and over. President Putin's visit to Krasnoyarsk, the birthplace of the "Glaziev phenomenon," may also serve as indirect evidence that the Kremlin has major concerns about this rival. ■

ELECTIONS WITHOUT CHOICE: THE 2004 CAMPAIGN

Galina Michaleva

Head of the Yabloko Party's Analytical Center



SOME KEY POINTS:

** No candidate other than Putin is actually trying to become president; each is a mere tool of some other political force, e.g., the Kremlin*

** Kremlin invests surprising effort to control an election it has in the bag*

** The logic of authoritarianism inevitably leads to repressive excess*

** Kremlin destroying even the illusion of democracy it hopes to project*

** Putin reduces political role of PM's office and government itself*

Since we all know what the results of the presidential election will be, we know that the president will not only stay in office but that he will win in the first round with approximately 75-80% of the vote.

Regardless of one's opinion of Putin, descriptions of the events to take place on March 14 range from farce to national referendum on confidence in Putin. Unlike the Duma elections in December, this election is a none-too-skillful, less-than-serious imitation of free and fair elections. From the get-go, it excluded elements of the democratic process.

First of all, it lacks competition. Not one of the challengers has even the remotest chance of getting enough votes to bargain with the winner for significant political position.

Second, the favorite is not hiding the fact that he is not taking the other candidates seriously, leaving challenging statements unanswered and not participating in debates.

Third, the President is putting nationwide television networks to maximum use, a strategy perfected during the Duma campaign. With Putin's domination of the media, critiques of his activities are by and large absent.

Fourth, the other candidates have no hope of defending their rights. Neither the courts nor the Central Election Commission (CEC) have rendered a single verdict favorable to the challengers, whether it is the refusal to allow Zhirinovskiy to represent Malyshevskiy in the debates, or the CEC's

ruling that a television broadcast of Putin's meeting with his supporters is not an infringement upon the other candidates' rights.

Finally, in the improbable event that one of the challengers gets more than 5% or that voter turnout is less than 50%, no one doubts that these "mistakes" would be corrected by precinct and district election commissions during vote tabulation, just as they were in the Duma elections.

Thus, the result is predetermined. The majority of Russian voters will vote for the current president, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin.

Only two questions remain:

—Why are other candidates participating in this game that has a predetermined winner?

—Why, despite the obvious absence of competition, is the government making not less but more use of its administrative resources than it did in the Duma elections?

First, let's take a look at who is formally competing with Putin in these elections.

Sergei Mironov is Speaker of the Federation Council, a constitutional organ that has basically squandered its political role since Putin's federal reforms. In many gubernatorial races and elections in the Asian part of the former Soviet Union, Mironov is playing the role of "doubler" in case, due to the vagaries of different candidacies, a leading candidate should find himself running unopposed. His task is to lend a semblance of legitimacy to an undemocratic election. He himself "fully supports the President's policies" and will vote for him. Without an agenda of his own, Mironov is but an instrument of the Kremlin.

Oleg Malyshevskiy is a Duma deputy, a member of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), and a fitting response by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, who, not wanting to participate in this game, nominated his chief bodyguard, who acquired a reputation during the Duma campaign as a dim-witted

brawler. For Zhirinovskiy, Malyshevskiy's candidacy meant a chance to continue the intense Duma campaign and to shore up ratings. From the start, however, the CEC and then the Supreme Court deprived Zhirinovskiy of this opportunity by not allowing him to participate in nationally televised debates. Malyshevskiy is an instrument of the LDPR leader, and does not have his own political goals.

Ivan Rybkin, formerly a member of the ruling state elite as Speaker of the Duma and secretary of the Security Council under Yeltsin, quickly left the political arena with the advent of Putin. As Boris Berezovskiy's chance to remain on the Russian political scene, Rybkin has served as a mouthpiece for the exiled millionaire's anti-Putin statements. Despite his minimal ratings and most Russians' aversion to Berezovskiy, Rybkin was forced to flee to London and then drop out of the race. He is another instrument without his own goals.

Nikolai Kharitonov, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) candidate, is a leader of the Agrarian Party of Russia known for his drive to restore the monument to Dzerzhinsky that used to stand in front of the former KGB's Lubyanka Prison. The KPRF's nomination of this second-string figure is the result of conflict within the party. Because of his dwindled influence, Zyuganov was unable to unite the party behind his push for non-participation in the elections. But the KPRF leadership has not rejected non-participation for good: Kharitonov may drop out of the race yet. His candidacy has been something of a boon to his popularity, but a significant showing on Election day is not expected. A personal victory in the election is not a goal for this candidate.

Irina Khakamadova, one of the leaders of the Union of Right Forces (SPS) until its party congress last December, was not even supported by her own

party. She cites the need for a liberal opposition candidate in this race as the basis for her run. She began her campaign with a pointed statement about Putin's responsibility for the lives lost during his response to a terrorist seizure of a crowded Moscow theater in October 2002. However, this statement, which echoes arguments made by Berezovsky, has been the only substantive one made by Khakamada, who now talks most often about the numerous threats to her safety. Her campaign is financed by Boris Nevzlin, a former Yukos chief who is the target of an international investigation by Russian authorities and currently resides in Israel. For all intents and purposes, Khakamada, who is using the campaign to bolster her own ratings, is another instrument of the anti-Putin forces outside Russia, Yukos representatives and Berezovsky. Willingly or not, Khakamada is also an instrument of the Kremlin, legitimizing the elections through the participation of a representative of democratic forces. Therefore, her unanswered appeals to Glaziev and Kharitonov to drop out of the race with her are hardly coincidental.

Sergei Glaziev is an administration economist who joined the opposition Congress of Russian Communities, was later in the KPRF, and then co-founded Motherland, a project aimed at eroding the KPRF's support in the last Duma elections. He was not nominated by his own bloc, which has endorsed Putin. At the start of the campaign, he looked like the President's only serious challenger although his rating never exceeded 4%. A series of scandals connected with a split in Motherland and a conflict with the bloc's other leader, Dmitri Rogozin, substantially hurt Glaziev, whose main task was to strengthen his personal popularity after Motherland's success in the Duma elections. As the most influential of all the opposition candidates, he also serves to legitimize the elections, willingly or not.

From this list, it is evident that running for president is not the goal for any of the candidates, and many of them are not independent figures. Not one major Russian politician with significant name-recognition and his own financial and organizational re-

sources (that is, a party) is running in these elections.

The Russian democratic party Yabloko at first refused to nominate a candidate and later virtually called for a boycott of the presidential elections. An official statement released by the party in February says, "We operate on the assumption that people are seeing a growing limitation of freedom in this country, inequality among the candidates in these pseudo-democratic elections, and candidacies that lack substance and are even comic. We propose that under these circumstances the natural form of protest for people with democratic convictions is non-participation in the elections for president of the Russian Federation."

Permission from above is no longer needed to use administrative resources; their use is becoming the *M.O.* for authorities, anticipating their bosses' will.

Then why, in this utterly predictable situation, is the Kremlin using the same tactics it used in the Duma elections, in which it had a completely different objective – to raise United Russia's percentage and weaken the opposition?

By the logic of the situation, it would be more advantageous to the President if opposition candidates received the maximum number of votes possible without jeopardizing a Putin victory in the first round as that would provide a more convincing imitation of democracy. Instead, one gets the impression that the Kremlin is doing everything to destroy that illusion rather than strengthen it.

The Kremlin takes systematic steps to weaken Glaziev, who has already suffered blows, first Motherland's nomination of Gerashchenko and then the bloc's split. The minimally popular and unpersuasive Rybkin is forced out of the country. There is pressure on Khakamada to tone down the oppositional pitch of her statements.

All the TV networks broadcast Putin's meeting with his supporters, and the CEC rejects Khakamada's and Kharitonov's complaints about unequal air time.

Finally, Putin fires his government and names Mikhail Fradkov, a man no one knows with a less-than-spotless reputation, as the next prime minister.

These steps seem illogical only in the context of the elections. Some have no bearing on the election, others are explained not by the irrational actions of the actual political players but by the inertial logic of bureaucratic decision-making.

The former category includes Putin's speech to his supporters, in which for the first time since he came to power he publicly and unambiguously blamed Yeltsin for corruption and poverty, the impotence of state machinery, and the oligarchs.

The firing of the government and the appointment of a technocrat as its new head is a practical and political step toward freedom from obligation to the Yeltsin "Family" and a statement of Putin's intention to follow his own political course.

By not selecting a political figure – whether United Russia poster boy Boris Gryzlov, Silovik Sergei Ivanov, or "liberal reformer" Aleksei Kudrin – Putin has reduced the political weight of the prime minister's office and of the government as a constitutional organ, the sole mission of which will now become the technical implementation of the president's policies.

As to the pressure on other candidates and the limitation of their electoral rights, this is a consequence of the logic of an authoritarian regime.

After the Duma election, the results of which underscored a rejection of the principle of division of power and a rejection of elements of democracy, actions such as the suppression of even insignificant displays of opposition are completely unavoidable.

Permission from above is no longer needed to use administrative resources, and their use is becoming the *modus operandi* for authorities, anticipating the will of bosses, at any level, from federal to local, and under any circumstance, at least as far as federal elections are concerned.

The real question lies elsewhere: How prepared are society and its elites to accept the new rules of the game? ■

MODERNIZATION OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE MIDST OF THE ELECTION

Vyacheslav Nikonov

President of the POLITY Foundation



SOME KEY POINTS:

** Putin's dismissal of the government is indication of resolve to generate modernization breakthrough*

** Electorate is asked to vote not only for President but also for new team*

** Kasyanov's oligarch-friendly cabinet stalled Putin's reforms for years*

On February 12, Putin gave a televised speech at Moscow State University to an audience of his supporters. The speech drew much attention, above all because Putin's opponents charged that it violated campaign rules.

However, it seems that this speech deserved attention for completely different reasons: it would not be an exaggeration to say that it was one of the most important speeches of Putin's presidency and possibly of all Russian presidencies as well. I am writing this with a certain degree of knowledge and self-criticism, for I co-authored several speeches for two previous presidents.

What Putin proposed was a broad and detailed program for a "modernization breakthrough" in Russia, which is to take place in his last four years in office.

According to the President, Russia must quickly complete the creation of a modern, competitive state that is capable of ensuring even greater economic growth rates and prosperity through the implementation of reforms in the realm of administration, pensions and taxes, as well as financial and military reforms; this is in addition to transforming housing and communal services, fighting corruption in the law-enforcement structures, etc.

Furthermore, all of these changes are to take place within strengthened democratic institutions.

I carefully studied the speech and mentally applauded the President, but then thought to myself, "With the current government, his proposal will continue to be merely a proposal."

The oligarch-friendly cabinet headed by Mikhail Kasyanov was caution itself, as all the reforms men-

tioned by the President have been stuck in his governmental committees for years.

Economic growth in the past four years was considerable, but the degree to which our economy was reformed falls short in comparison with our neighbors like, for example, Kazakhstan. There, GDP rates are already increasing twice as fast as in Russia. Putin and his administration have repeatedly criticized the cabinet of ministers precisely for its sluggishness and lack of ambition in its planning.

And this is happening while the President carries an absolute majority in the Duma and thus any reform is conceivable and capable of being carried out.

When Putin unexpectedly dismissed the government on February 24, for me this was an indication of his resolute intention to generate a modernization breakthrough. Moreover, he clearly had become concerned with his place in history.

But the question remains of why the President decided to discharge his cabinet at this time, since by law the same thing has to be done again following the election?

The reason seems to be clear. If procedural changes in the government were to go according to schedule, the new cabinet would not begin its work until the middle of summer, which means that no work could be started until that time.

Now, however, there is a chance that the delayed and problematic administrative reform (which is supposed to reduce the bureaucratic apparatus, together with the number of ministries and their regulatory functions, by one-third) will be completed in the next few weeks. Thus, the new cabinet will be formed according to the new structure and begin its work in April.

To sum up, the primary reasons for an early dismissal of the government correspond with the content of Putin's second presidential term. But of course, everything that takes place

during the election campaign concerns political tactics.

The introduction of a new topic into the election campaign – particularly one regarding the creation of a new government – intensifies its significance and makes it more interesting.

It is no secret that up to this point there has been no real intrigue or drama. Certainly, the disappearance and subsequent return of presidential candidate Ivan Rybkin (together with the three completely contradictory explanations of what happened to him) could not be considered intriguing. The winner is known and a portion of the electorate started to experience apathy.

Now the political situation has exploded, while all of the news programs have started to attract more of the public's attention. The electorate is being asked to vote not only for the President but also for his new team; this can be seen as a sign of respect for the citizens.

Up until election day, March 14, all eyes will carefully follow the proceedings of the formation of the cabinet. This process will involve ratification in the Duma, and, finally, the personal appointment of the ministers.

But the media spotlight will, of course, be on Putin. There should be no worries about the last part of the campaign being saturated with news coverage. So the dismissal of the government was a very strong tactical move.

I assume that another reason for the dismissal of the government that is directly connected with the presidential election is that the government did enjoy some popularity, but it was significantly less than Putin's (the lowest popularity rating in Russian politics is enjoyed by the Duma and the various political parties).

The dismissal of the government could increase Putin's rating, though it is not clear why he would he need this – according to recent polls he is set to receive 70-80% of votes.

The question on everybody's mind was "Who is going to replace

Kasyanov?" I avoided making any forecasts since nobody has been able to predict any key appointments by Putin in the past.

It seemed to me that the best candidate for this position would have been Putin himself. The Constitution does not categorically preclude this option. This combination could unite the power of the presidency with the responsibilities of the head of the government as is already done in classic presidential republics such as the

United States. Such a move could certainly speed up the reforms.

But the President once again surprised everyone, nominating Mikhail Fradkov for the job. Putin followed his own criteria, and he mentioned professionalism, honesty, and broad-based experience.

Fradkov is definitely experienced. He is a smart economist and was in charge of the Ministry of Foreign Trade, an area where Putin previously

had responsibility as vice-governor of St. Petersburg.

Fradkov knows the force-wielding structures since he worked in the Security Council and headed the tax police.

And he knows the world as he is now moving to Moscow from Brussels, where he was Russia's ambassador to the EU.

On March 5 the Duma will approve his nomination. On March 14 Putin will win the election. ■

A TACTICAL VICTORY FRAUGHT WITH STRATEGIC DEFEAT

Viktor Peshkov

Secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee



SOME KEY POINTS:

** Gross overkill in manipulating campaign may be priming voters for ending elections altogether*

** Putin admits aim to select a successor for the office of president, annulling essence of democracy*

** Polls show Putin's appeal unlinked to policies, which are far less popular than he is*

** People don't blame president for Russia's plight, seeing him as powerless; thus they choose presidents based on personality*

** Women are attracted to Putin as a nice guy; men like him as a tough guy*

The current presidential campaign in Russia has effectively turned into an urgent warning that the streets of Russian public politics are being rolled up. It is clear that for the time being the nation has lost the chance to make any kind of real political choice.

All the inalienable features of democracy – multipartism, free choice, a real and active opposition – have been drained of content. Only the shell of a formal judiciary remains, one whose moral and psychological status has been reduced to infinitesimal size.

The paradox is that all this is the result of ongoing conscious efforts by President Vladimir Putin and his team, people who are following a consistently liberal economic path. The paradox is even more striking considering that in public appearances President Putin consistently appeals to liberal democratic values.

In reality, all this is carefully engineered to achieve the opposite, as recent political events show. As a result of last December's Duma campaign, in which the President and his administration loomed large, a new party hierarchy has taken shape.

It was logical to assume that Putin, who openly endorsed United Russia during the Duma campaign, would finally become a party candidate – i.e., United Russia's nominee. Instead, he preferred nomination by no group in particular; he did not formally link himself to any party. This left United Russia in limbo despite its 300 Duma seats.

Since absolute power in Russia is concentrated in the president's hands, as long as this power has no direct party affiliation, multipartism will remain in an embryonic state. After all, what is the point of a party if it *a priori* cannot vie for real power?

Putin's remark during a meeting with supporters at Moscow State University attests to his perception of the political process in Russia as his own personal affair, not a party issue. He said that he sees it as his task to select a successor for the office of president.

This comment betrays either a lack of understanding of the essence of democracy or a lack of respect for it along with a purely monarchic, purely dictatorial attitude that precludes any chance that his successor might not require his approval. Putin is trying to foreclose any possibility of the opposition coming to power in Russia.

Strictly speaking, this is doubtless the main criterion for whether or not a

country has achieved democracy: the turnover of power to the opposition within the legal framework and as a result of free and fair elections. Putin does not even permit such a thought. Thus the basic principle of democracy, including its institutions, is discredited.

The same can be said of the scandalous removal of Mikhail Kasyanov from the post of prime minister. Putin has explained that he wants to present the people with a new head of his government.

But this is being done three weeks before the presidential election. Even if the President's high popularity rating justifies predicting a Putin victory, under no circumstances should he allow himself to act as if the elections were over and he had won. This is a show of disrespect for the very institution of elections.

Here one cannot ignore the strange phenomenon of the redundant efforts by Putin's team to preserve his power. With a two-thirds approval rating guaranteeing victory, it would seem unnecessary to resort to the kind of political pressure and violations of the democratic process that are consistently seen in Russia.

Are such methods laying the psychological groundwork for Russians' utter disillusionment with democratic institutions? Certainly, such disappointment could be insurance for Putin should he lose his current rating. Disillusionment with elections opens the door to abolishing them altogether.

For now there is no need for that, but who knows what will happen to-

morrow? To be sure, the stability of Putin's rating is in no way linked to any concrete results of the job he is doing as head of state: in Russia no major positive changes can be detected in any sphere, be it the economy, social services, or public and national security. Polls show that, of all the problems they face, Russians consider rising prices to be the most dangerous to them – that is about the essence of purported social and economic accomplishments.

It is more likely the reverse – nothing is being done about the worst problems, especially security. Chechnya and terrorist acts in the rest of Russia, including Moscow, have become almost the norm. Nevertheless, what is basically an obvious failure of the centerpiece of Putin's campaign commitments is not affecting Russians' opinion of him at all. Why is that?

It is logical to assume that the secret of Putin's "Teflon coating" is connected with a change in how Russians think about the office of the presidency and the person who holds it. There is a layering, interference between two waves, two trends – the old and the new. The old is an apathy, left over from the Soviet era, towards leadership in the spirit of classic fetishism, when the splendor of a uniform endows its wearer with dazzling virtues.

Here, the full extent of the often noted psycho-social characteristic of Russian political culture is manifested as an inclination toward authoritarian, autocratic consciousness.

But a new characteristic is superimposed on the old: less and less, Russians see the president as able to really influence the state of affairs in the country. Public opinion polls entirely confirm this trend, indicating that most Russians think real power in the country belongs to big business and not the head of state.

VTsIOM polls from September 2003 speak precisely to this issue. The most educated and influential social strata – i.e., those largely responsible for forming public opinion – are the ones in the forefront of this trend.

People correlate their personal material prosperity with the government's

actions less and less. According to the same polls, a majority of Russians do not believe in fast economic progress, whether on a general or personal level. Social pessimism with an overt twist of impending doom predominates: that's how it is, they say, and there's nothing you can do about it.

This mood explains the obvious paradox that sociologists regularly identify: the President's very high rating, on the one hand, and low levels of satisfaction with the situation in various aspects of everyday life (i.e., with the results of the actual work that the president is doing), on the other.

Dissatisfaction with the actual state of affairs should translate into dissatisfaction with the leadership itself, but this is not happening: the "Teflon president" effect.

It would seem that this dissatisfaction with the actual state of affairs should translate into dissatisfaction with the leadership itself, which is responsible for the state of affairs. But this is not happening (the "Teflon president" effect). It is not happening, apparently, because in the eyes of the majority, the President himself is hostage to circumstances, unable to make any radical changes.

In that case, expectations of him are different. External appearance, behavior, etc., rather than views, are the evaluation criteria and form the popular impression of him.

There is a good reason that the majority of Putin's supporters are women. Essentially, this is probably the manifestation of an approach to evaluating the president as a "nice guy" and not as an all-mighty government statesman in the Russian and Soviet tradition.

Here we see the gradual transformation of the old Soviet mentality into a new one that is fed largely by a televi-

sion image and not by actual facts and issues.

Then again, there is a new Russian psychological trend emerging more and more among the younger generation, especially its men. It consists of one or another version of the "camp mentality," based on raw strength and threats of its use.

As it happens, even Putin not infrequently expresses himself in just these terms: "*mochit' v sortire*" [roughly, 'to bump someone off while his pants are down'] and other pearls of prison lexicon.

One does not need evidence that the chief executive, wielding all punitive power, definitely has the ability to suppress.

In this aspect he is subliminally perceived as a national Cossack chieftain. You can dislike him, but you cannot deny his power. Here too we see a kind of fetishism developing, but this kind is from another era: a Cossack chieftain does not give anything, but he can take without being questioned. Therefore it does not occur to anyone to hold him accountable for his actions – try it, go ask a Cossack chieftain about it.

In Russia today, it is obvious that the political and psychological groundwork is being laid for the continuing gradual "desiccation" of democratic institutions and processes and for their increasing profanation.

The tactical victories of Vladimir Putin in strengthening his own personal power threaten the nation with a large strategic collapse. Certainly authoritarianism, if it is effective at all, is so only under very specific historical circumstances and for a very limited period. And as a rule, it is fraught with social unrest. I do not assert that authoritarianism and unrest are inevitable, but the preconditions are there.

In conclusion, we can note that the processes discussed above have room to exist also because they do not receive adequate attention from the opposition political parties, which have been unable to offer and attract Russian public opinion with projects to develop democracy. But that is a different subject. ■