

# ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

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FINAL STAR

## RUSSIA: BACK TO THE FUTURE

### Crimea Threatens To Push Ukraine, Russia Into War

Choice May Become Give In Or Fight

By Jon Sawyer  
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SIMFEROPOL, Ukraine — Iskander Memetov's open casket bobbed through a sea of mourners, its red satin lining a splash of color in a somber crowd.

Memetov, a prominent member of the local parliament, was gunned down in his own driveway. His slaying, the fourth political killing since December, punctuated an election campaign that swept Russian nationalists to power in this contested peninsula of Ukraine.

For Ukraine, a country sliding toward national collapse, the election results set up a painful choice: Accept the voters' verdict and capitulate to Moscow, or risk a disastrous war.

The United States and Western democracies face an equally fateful choice, not just on Crimea's Black Sea coast but across the full breadth of the former Soviet Union:

Will they help new nations rise from the ashes of Soviet power? Or leave them to smolder, amidst a resurgent nationalism that is making the new Russia look more and more like the old?

#### TODAY

**PART ONE: Crimea:** On the Black Sea coast of Ukraine, moves toward a new Russian empire

#### COMING

**PART TWO: Saransk:** In Central Russia, the Communist past lives on

**PART THREE: Moldova:** In a former Soviet republic, a lesson in Russian intimidation

**PART FOUR: Krasnoyarsk:** In Siberia, disillusionment with both Moscow and the West

The Crimean peninsula is the next likely "hot spot" in a roiling cauldron of ethnic, economic and military conflict.

In a five-week reporting tour across Russia, the former Slavic republics and Eastern Europe, the ingredients in this witches' brew simmered everywhere. There was:

- A newly assertive Russian government.
- New poverty and the scapegoating it breeds — of the West, of Moscow and of rival ethnic groups.
- Nationalistic appeals, often raised by old Communist apparatchiks as the means to power.
- The sense that life was better



Thousands in Simferopol, Ukraine, mourn Iskander Memetov, a prominent member of Crimea's regional parliament, who was killed in January.

before, that the old union will, should or must come together again.

■ Suspicion that the West, too, yearns for the simpler days when Moscow ruled.

Mix them together and you have a noxious recipe, one that threatens to drag the emerging democracies of the old Soviet Union back to the future — a future of Russian domination, economic stagnation and hostile isolation from the world beyond.

Call Iskander Memetov an early

- **Russia unchanged:** bureaucrats still rule, historian says 6A
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victim.

The man murdered in January was a Tatar Muslim, Crimea's oldest ethnic group, with roots that stretch back 700 years to Genghis Khan. The Tatars had been expelled from their homeland by Rus-

sia twice, first by a czar and the by Josef Stalin.

Memetov was one of Crimea's richest businessmen and the Tatars' only representative in parliament. He had close links to local officials of Ukraine, which controls Crimea. And Ukraine had pledged, after several false starts, to restore property and political rights to Tatars coming home from exile.

Now Memetov was dead, a pro-Russian had won the election. See RUSSIA, Page

# Russia

From page one

growing sentiment for Crimea to reunite with Russia was threatening to put the Tatars — and Ukraine — at the mercy of Russia again.

"People in the West are completely ignorant of what's happening here," said Mustafa Cemiloglu, leader of the Crimean Tatar community. His 15 years in Soviet prison camps make him look much older than 51.

"It seems to me the West should have been much more active in helping these newly dependent states to be really independent," he said, "not to let them be devoured again and lay the basis for the restoration of the Russian empire."

If the West permits that to happen, Cemiloglu warns, it won't be for the first time.

In 1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt came to Yalta, on this peninsula. He said, in effect, that in this part of the world what Russia does is Russia's business. Today, many in the West would agree, reasoning that Crimea is only a speck of a faraway land.

"It's a very naive and narrow-minded attitude, I fear," said Cemiloglu.

"We all live on a very small planet. If conflict flares up in one place, it reverberates everywhere. Look at Yugoslavia. The whole world is affected. And Crimea is much bigger than that."

Crimea's troubles, he says, could lead to war between Russia and Ukraine. "And we could not forget that there are nuclear weapons both in Russia and Ukraine."

## Yeltsin's Changing View

In August 1991, Boris Yeltsin leapt atop a tank in front of the Russian White House. In that miraculous moment, and in the tumultuous months that followed, he brought the Soviet Union crashing to collapse.

No one did more than Yeltsin to promote the various movements of independence across the former union and within Russia. He alone was more a champion of economic reforms and decentralized authority.

But that Yeltsin is not today's Yeltsin. More recently, Yeltsin's government has quashed a rebellion in Georgia, dismissed local parliaments in Russia and back-pedaled on promised reforms. Russia has asserted its right to intervene militarily throughout the former Soviet Union and has blackballed Poland's bid for early membership in NATO.

And that was all before ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy swept a quarter of the Russian popular vote in parliamentary elections in December. Before Yeltsin's most prominent reformers, Yegor Gaidar and Boris Fyodorov, abandoned his government. Before Russia inserted itself into Bosnia.

What's driving Yeltsin? The same forces that drove many Russians to vote for Zhirinovskiy: a wretched economy, rising crime, shrinking western aid and mounting fury at Russia's perceived loss of status.

In the first two years of Russia's post-Soviet life, national production dropped by 28 percent — a worse shock than America experienced during the Great Depression. Is it any wonder that people look back with nostalgia?

"This country is ruined; it has no future," says Helena Turabina, who teaches English in Samara, an industrial city on the Volga River and St. Louis' newest sister city.

"Capitalism in America is different. It's reformed, controlled, kept in limits. But in Russia it's raw, uncontrolled, like something out of Dreiser," she said, referring to Theodore Dreiser's harsh literary portraits of robber-baron America.

In Saransk, a provincial capital an overnight train ride north of Samara, Communists control the government. They're pushing Moscow to reverse policies from defense conversion to privatization. Economic reforms, they believe, have enriched western companies while impoverishing Russia.

Despair about the economy surfaces again some 2,000 miles east, across the Ural Mountains in Siberia. In the industrial city of Krasnoyarsk, residents are deeply cynical about western aid programs and disgusted with the "so-called democrats" of Moscow. Somehow, they believe, the broken pieces of the old Soviet Union must reunite.

Why? Ask Valeri Zubov, a 40-year-old economist elected last year as governor of the Krasnoyarsk province, a region twice the size of Texas. His sister lives in Kazakhstan, his mother-in-law in Ukraine and his mother in the Caucasus. He knows firsthand how the Soviet Union's political demise has frayed not just business ties but family relations, too, in steeper travel costs and new border restrictions.

Zubov is a modern post-Communist, trained in Oklahoma and Texas, who wants to jump-start the potential of Russia's vast resources. Making that happen, he believes, requires Russia to end the economic free ride the other republics have enjoyed.

Take Belarus, for example, which recently sacrificed much of its independence in exchange for the relative stability of the Russian ruble. Fair is fair, Zubov says, noting that in its two years of existence as an independent country Belarus has run up debts to Moscow in excess of half a billion dollars. Creation of a common ruble zone means Moscow will end up absorbing the Belarus debt.

"So you were on your own for two years, and now we must pay for all your good living," he says. "And we will pay, under one condition: that we will control your economy in the future, through a strong union both politically and economically."

Zubov says the situation is like a family:

"If my teen-age daughter comes home too late at night, it's too bad; she must be punished," he said. "But she is still my daughter."

But what if the daughter insists on an independent life? In that case, Mother Russia plays rough. During the last two years, she has split Moldova in two and installed pro-Moscow regimes in Azerbaijan and Tajikistan.

"Independence," for many republics now split from Russia, feels like a bad joke.



"...we should not forget that there are nuclear weapons both in Russia and Ukraine."

Mustafa Cemiloglu

Leader of the Crimean Tatar community



"The living conditions of local people have gone from bad to worse."

Roman Grechanik

Editor, Russian member of the Crimean parliament

## East Europe's Fate Decided Here

Consider Ukraine and its "accidental" province of Crimea, where economics, demographics and history have opened the door to Russian intervention.

The mountain terrain and subtropical vegetation that line this Black Sea coast have been playground and killing field for Russian czars and Communist commissars alike.

Half a million soldiers died here during the Crimean War, a 19th-century conflict (1853-56) pitting Russia against Turkey, Britain and France.

Czar Alexander II expelled the peninsula's Tatars on grounds that they had openly sympathized with fellow Muslims from Turkey. The Tatars gradually came back, only to be expelled again in 1944 by Stalin, who accused them of collaborating with Germany's army of occupation during World War II.

In 1954, at a celebration marking the 300th anniversary of Ukraine's forced union with Russia, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev delivered the Crimean Peninsula, previously part of the Russian Federation, to Ukraine. Some say Khrushchev was drunk that night, but no matter — in a Soviet Union overwhelmingly dominated by Moscow, his gesture was purely symbolic.

By 1991, no one was laughing — not with the Baltics breaking free, Ukraine moving toward independence, and Crimea voting to become an independent soviet socialist republic. Mikhail Gorbachev, who thought he could preserve the Soviet Union by tinkering at the margins, ended up a prisoner in his Crimean dacha as the Soviet Union collapsed.

The Crimean setting for Gorbachev's demise was richly ironic.

His dacha at Foros is just down the road from Yalta, where Stalin met with President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill as World War II ground to a halt. They charted the postwar peace, laid the foundation for the United Nations — and sealed Russia's dominance of Eastern Europe for nearly half a century to come.

The venue Stalin chose was Livadia, the ornate palace completed in 1911 for Nicholas II, Russia's last Romanov czar. Seven years later Nicholas and his family lay dead, their



"The natural ethnic groupings were split. And... this idiocy started to become a reality."

Boris Kizilov  
Ideology chief for Crimean president  
Yuri Meshkov

brutal murders a grisly prelude to Russia's descent into a communist totalitarian hell.

Gorbachev's dacha stands empty now, as do most of the beach hotels that made Yalta a favored vacation spot in the salad days of Soviet communism.

Unchanged, of course, is Yalta's defining feature — a low, humped hill, jutting out to the sea, that resembles a bear crouched low to lap the waves. Local legend says the gods froze the bear, ages past, as punishment for its greed in trying to drink up the sea.

Some say the bear is Russia past. Some fear it will rise and drink again.

### Why Union Looms

In Ukraine, a country of 52 million people that borders Europe and includes Crimea, the bear has already begun to sip.

Over the past two years, Russia has suspended Ukraine's finance credits, threatened to shut off fuel, and demanded control of the Black Sea Fleet and the Crimean peninsula. Constantly, Russia has drummed Ukraine to give up its 1,800 nuclear warheads.

Some Ukrainians welcome closer ties with Russia. The population includes 11.3 million ethnic Russians. In Ukraine's army, ethnic Russians make up 90 percent of all generals and 80 percent of the entire force.

The mismanagement of Ukraine's economy has made reunification attractive, too. Under Leonid Kravchuk, a long-time Communist Party chief and the first president of independent Ukraine, the country has failed to privatize land or industry. Its currency is depreciating by 50 percent or more a month.

People making salaries that average \$12 to \$15 a month shop in state stores where a dollar buys only about two pounds of beef, a dozen eggs or half a gallon of gasoline.

This economic free-fall, more than new travel restrictions or the requirements to use the Ukrainian language, has ethnic Russians desperate for reunification.

"The living conditions of local people have gone from bad to worse," said Roman Grechanik, an ethnic Russian who serves in the Crimean parliament. "People look at Russia, they think people live much better there — and so they seize on that."

By January, Crimea had obtained the status of a semi-autonomous region within Ukraine.

Voters then elected Russian nationalist Yuri Meshkov as their first president.

Meshkov, a former low-ranking KGB official, swept 73 percent of the vote. That's roughly the proportion of ethnic Russians in Crimea, a region of 2.5 million people with a heavy representation of retired Russian military personnel.

Since the vote, tension over Russia has mounted. Returning from a post-election trip to Moscow, Meshkov crowed that Russia had promised to deliver more oil and gas and to re-introduce the Russian ruble. He proclaimed that Crimeans drafted into Ukraine's army would serve inside Crimea only. And he named a Russian citizen and Yeltsin ally as head of his government.

Ukrainian officials called Meshkov's moves illegal and provocative. Meshkov's backers answered with demonstrations in Simferopol, Crimea's administrative capital.

Crimea's turmoil appears likely to have broader repercussions in Ukraine, where voters are to elect a new parliament March 27 and a new president this June. Kravchuk has announced that he will not run again.

Boris Kizilov, Meshkov's ideology chief, denies any direct links between the Crimean Russians and Moscow. But in an interview at the party's headquarters in Simferopol, Kizilov rattles off a string of high-ranking Russian officials who have visited the Crimean region to lend their support.

Kizilov sees the demise and resurgence of Russian domination as part of a historical trend. Its roots lie with Vladimir Lenin, who began to create separate socialist republics during the revolution in 1917.

"Out of an integral, centuries-old organism called the Russian empire, the borders of these so-called states were defined, at first on a purely artificial, administrative basis," Kizilov says. "The natural ethnic groupings were split. And then incrementally, over time, this idiocy started to become a reality."

It was "a time bomb," Kizilov said. "We see what has happened, and now these state borders are being remade."

### Is Russia Destabilizing?

Russia's actions in Ukraine match a "disturbing pattern" in the conflicts that have broken out the past two years along Russia's periphery, according to a study completed in January by Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

"In each of the conflicts there is evidence to suggest that Russia has intervened in such a way as to promote their escalation and/or continuation instead of their cessation," conclude Fiona Hill and Pamela Hewett, the report's authors. "... The sovereignty of each of the former republics of the Soviet Union has been compromised, forcing them into a dependent relationship with Moscow."

John Hewko, an American lawyer who has worked in Kiev and Moscow for five years, believes these trends may come to a head in Crimea: "The next big challenge for U.S. policy in this part of the world is making sure that Crimean secession doesn't become the vehicle for the destruction of Ukraine."

Like other Americans working in Kiev, Hewko faults U.S. officials for their "obsession" with dismantling Ukraine's nuclear weapons. A nuclear-free Ukraine is even more vulnerable to Russia, analysts warn.

"The whole focus in Washington has been on these nuclear weapons here," Hewko said, "but what is the real danger in this part of the world? It's Russian imperialism. I'm sorry, but I don't see Vladimir Zhirinovskiy as a wacko; he represents a real strain of Russian thought. They like the empire. They think it's their right."

"That's why it's in our interest, long term, to see a strong Ukraine. Because a strong Ukraine means a weak Russia."

**Wednesday:** In the industrial city of Sankt-Petersburg, the Communist past lives on.

# Ukraine's Straits Put Rosy Glow On Old USSR

By Jon Sawyer

Post-Dispatch Washington Bureau Chief

KIEV, Ukraine — In the fall of 1991, as Ukraine lurched unexpectedly toward independence from the Soviet Union, Valeri Teteryatnik was a nonstop dynamo — lecturing on Ukrainian history, dredging up the country's forgotten folk music, plunging into local politics.

The future appeared limitless, he told a Post-Dispatch reporter in an interview during those heady days, and his own prospects impossibly bright.

Two and a half years later the future is here. A mean and shabby thing it is, with corrupt Communist holdovers in office, worthless currency and mounting tension with Russia.

Teteryatnik, a sad-eyed engineer in Kiev, has paid a high personal toll. His wife left him, the nationalist candidate he helped elect to parliament turned out to be an opportunist, and his best friend, despairing of the future in Ukraine, emigrated to Germany. "At the moment, what we have is a society with its hopes dashed," Teteryatnik says.

Jurii Maniichuk, a Canadian-trained lawyer and former analyst with the U.S. Library of Congress, is one of the disillusioned. He returned to his native Ukraine three years ago to work with the government, but left the post six months later, fed up with President Leonid Kravchuk and other Communist apparatchiks.

They had seized the rhetoric of nationalism and reform, Maniichuk said, but were "completely comfortable" with the status quo. He now runs a law program sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

"Of course Russia is playing games here, interfering where it can. But from my point of view, that's secondary," he said. "The whole reason Ukraine is so weak is that Kravchuk is unwilling to do, or incapable of doing, anything that contradicts his experience from the Communist past."

Kravchuk did go to Washington Friday, for a meeting with President Bill Clinton aimed at shoring up the U.S.-Ukrainian relationship. He came away with the promise of an extra \$50 million in U.S. aid and rhetoric on both sides about a "historic" new partnership. He comes home to the same economic morass he left, however, and no guarantees of even his own political survival beyond the election this June.

How bad is Ukraine's economic management? Awful, according to outside studies and the gut experience of people.

Consider the travails of Sergei Burlaka, former disc jockey and aspiring Kiev businessman.

Burlaka committed himself last summer to buy a railcar full of Walkman-type recorders and other electronics from a Hong Kong firm, payment cash-on-delivery — in dollars. To get the dollars, Burlaka stopped by Ukraine's central bank and deposited 600 million karbovanetz — the equivalent

of the \$200,000 he needed at the rate in effect that day.

But in Ukraine the bank completes a currency transaction in its own good time. Three weeks later, the bank completed the transaction — at the rate in effect then. The karbovanetz were worth just \$38,000, a disastrous fivefold drop.

Burlaka persuaded his Hong Kong suppliers to deliver anyway, on consignment instead of C.O.D. But he was so far in the hole that he had to sell half the shipment to a Russian firm.

It could have been worse. "If I had tried to borrow the money instead, the state bank would have charged me interest of 400 percent a month," he said. "And if you don't pay back on time, they double the percentage."

Ukraine's economic fiasco makes many residents — and not just ethnic Russians — look back fondly to the old Soviet Union. The CIA, in a January report, warned that the country was in danger of splitting in two or three, along ethnic lines, jeopardizing Ukraine's promise to dismantle its nuclear weapons.

At the least, local analysts fear, the economic and political tensions could strengthen the pro-Communist, anti-reform block that dominates parliament. Elections are March 27.

"I'm pessimistic about the elections," said Ian J. Brzezinski, a member of the Council of Advisers to the Ukrainian parliament. The independent advisory group is funded by the American investor/philanthropist George Soros.

"People have endured a lot of pain these past two years — and they associate that with capitalism and democracy, which they think they have here," Brzezinski said.

"In fact, of course, what they have is street bazaars and central command and control. But people are increasingly tired of political disorder and economic chaos, and many of them think the solution is returning to the old methods."

Ian Brzezinski is the son of Zbigniew Brzezinski, who served as national security adviser to former President Jimmy Carter. Ian Brzezinski shares his father's chiseled features, and when it comes to assessing Russia's intentions, he is his hawkish father's hawkish son.

American policy-makers have put their money and focus on shaping Russia internally, on the theory that a country building

## Ethnic Tension In Ukraine And Crimea



"At the moment what we have is a society with its hopes dashed"  
Valeri Teteryatnik  
Engineer from Kiev



"People have endured at lot of pain these past two years — and they associate that with capitalism and democracy."  
Ian J. Brzezinski  
Member of the Council of Advisers to the Ukrainian parliament

democratic and market-oriented institutions would have no interest in imperial sway. But whether the theory can actually produce a democratic Russia remains a question: Witness the rise of ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy.

Another way to limit Russian aggression, Brzezinski said, would be to support stable institutions and western ties in Ukraine and the other shaky offspring of the Soviet Union's collapse.

"By shaping the states on the periphery we would deny Russia both the opportunities and the impetus to exercise hegemony," he said. "We haven't done nearly enough of that."

## RUSSIA: BACK TO THE FUTURE

## 'Nightmare' Under Yeltsin Appalls Ex-Ally

By Jon Sawyer

Post-Dispatch Washington Bureau Chief

MOSCOW — Is Russia headed toward a new era of authoritarian rule at home and expansionist designs abroad?

To Yuri Afanasyev, the historian who helped Boris Yeltsin engineer the peaceful collapse of the old Soviet Union, the question misses the point.

"These kind of people," he says, "have power already."

Yeltsin's government has imposed its will, militarily or economically, in almost every former Soviet republic, Afanasyev notes, from Moldova in the far southwest through the Caucasus to Central Asia. Russia has blocked eastern European countries from membership in NATO.

At home, Russia has pursued sham economic reforms, erecting a facade of privatization and free prices. Real power remains, as always, in the hands of Moscow bureaucrats, army generals and the "red directors" of the big state enterprises.

The only mystery, to Afanasyev, is why U.S. officials and most of western Europe don't understand what has happened. "The West is trying to describe the situation they would like, not the real situation as it is," he said.

Afanasyev, a stocky, square-jawed specialist in French historiography, is president of the Russian State University for the Humanities. Five years ago he was one of three leaders of the pro-democracy faction in the First Congress of People's Deputies that pressed Mikhail S. Gorbachev to speed political reforms. His co-chairs: Boris Yeltsin and Nobel Laureate Andrei Sakharov.

Only Yeltsin is left.

Sakharov died in December 1989, too soon to witness the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yeltsin's ascension to the presidency of Russia.

Afanasyev abandoned politics and returned to the university — unwilling, he says, "to participate in this nightmare of what Yeltsin and the so-called democrats have done."

By "nightmare," Afanasyev means, first, the charade of economic reform.

Despite some steps toward privatization in 1992, the big enterprises still depend on Russia's central bank for operating credits. Monopolists with close government ties control most of the kiosks and private shops that have sprung up in Moscow and other big cities, he said.

"On the whole, it's the same planned economy as before . . . Its essence is the same

because it remains an operation in the hands of the state."

The second point in Afanasyev's indictment is that, in many ways, the old legal system persists.

He cites the ongoing trial of Vil Mirzayanov, a chemist accused of revealing state secrets in an article he wrote alleging that Russia was testing chemical weapons.

The law Mirzayanov supposedly violated has never been published. Yeltsin's advisers have hinted they may drop the charges in response to international pressure. But Afanasyev is not reassured.

"So it's a trial for violating an unpublished law, in a closed courtroom, with the release of the prisoner at the caprice of unnamed officials," he said. "Is that democracy? Is that justice? And how does it differ from the system we had before?"

Looking beyond Russia, Afanasyev sees more trouble in Russia's heavy-handed military and economic intervention in the neighboring republics of the former Soviet Union.

"What the western media tend to miss," Afanasyev said, "is the similarity in position between Zhirinovsky and Kozzyrev" — that is, between Andrei Kozzyrev, Yeltsin's foreign minister, and Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the rabid ultra-nationalist whose success in December's parliamentary elections stunned the West.

"When Zhirinovsky says he will squeeze all the former republics, making them beg for readmission to the old Soviet Union, it's treated as some kind of wild extravagant statement," Afanasyev said. "Yet the government itself has stated, in its new military doctrine and elsewhere, that the whole territory of the former Soviet Union is Russia's sphere of influence."

"These statements don't represent just some rhetorical thrust. They are the basis for the whole of Russia's foreign policy."

Afanasyev doesn't think Russia will lurch back to communism. But he predicts a fitful journey of decades before western-style institutions are established.

"As a historian, I know how long it took to build the infrastructure of the west: the roads, the stores, the railways, law enforcement — everything," he said. "There are 10,000 different elements of this infrastructure which you have in the west and which we do not."

From the 15th century on, Afanasyev contends, Russia has been the victim of its own



Yuri Afanasyev

"So it's a trial for violating an unpublished law, in a closed courtroom, with the release of the prisoner at the caprice of unnamed officials. Is that democracy?"

**Yuri Afanasyev**  
Historian and former leader with Boris Yeltsin and Andrei Sakharov of the pro-democracy faction in the First Congress of People's Deputies.

success — conquering vast lands and disparate peoples.

"They gathered in so many lands that they couldn't rule this huge territory," he said. "They had to centralize the structure of the Russian empire in such a way that no one could breathe, no one could be independent."

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5-STAR ●●

RUSSIA: BACK TO THE FUTURE

## Loving Lenin: Saransk Clings To Past

By Jon Sawyer

Post-Dispatch Washington Bureau Chief

SARANSK, Russia

**I**N A RUSSIA that appears hellbent on returning to its past, this industrial city 400 miles east of Moscow is a place that never really left.

Communist Party members swept all four of the seats decided here in Russia's parliamentary elections in December. Communists still control all the local administrative posts and every big factory. No private kiosks clutter the staid downtown streets.

Just a month ago the local parliament agreed, reluctantly, to drop "Soviet Socialist" from the official title of the autonomous Republic of Mordovia, which includes Saransk.

A portrait of Vladimir Lenin gets prominent display in the office of Nikolai Biryukov, chairman of the local parliament and this region's dominant political figure. In the painting Lenin sits on draped furniture,

receiving a delegation of workers from the Russian hinterland.

Biryukov, smiling as he stands, agrees to be photographed with Lenin.

"I understand your real reason in wanting this picture," he says, referring to the easy symbol of old Communists still in power. "But I don't mind. Lenin is everywhere here in Saransk. And even in Moscow, in the offices of the highest officials, you will find Lenin, too."

"And the most important thing is that everyone — everyone — carries Lenin, still, in their hearts."

Saransk, a city closed to westerners before last year, reflects the classic Soviet structure, economically and politically. Residents fiercely resent Moscow's tepid reforms and view with disbelief the self-inflicted destruction of the Soviet Union.

Many here would like to pick up the pieces, if not for Lenin then for Great Patriotic Russia.

If you wonder why Russian president Boris Yeltsin has turned to the right — why he talks tough on everything from crime to Russia's military prerogatives — consider that he is speaking to the angry people of

Saransk.

### Local Communist 'Purge'

Ask officials here how things have changed since 1991, and the answers often sound like caricature.

Take the local Communist party and its "purge" of old-line hacks.

"Among our leadership now, there is not one former leader from the highest level of the Communist party before," brags party secretary Ivan Dogaev, a former journalist who wears a wilted suit and a hand-dog look. On the shelf behind his office door, looking forlorn, sits a wadded-up Soviet flag.

Asked for particulars on the purge, Dogaev concedes that one of the old bosses now runs the local privatization program. Several others have traded their party memberships for lucrative posts in private business.

"Some of these others are playing games now based on the rules that Yeltsin has set," Dogaev said. "Right now they don't need the Communist party anymore."

A similar gap between rhetoric and reality is apparent at Svetotekhnika, the sprawling electronics factory in Saransk that produces 70 percent of the light bulbs for the entire former Soviet Union.

This local equivalent of General Electric makes everything from halogen street lamps to dining room chandeliers, from common fluorescent tubes to the highly specialized lights used in submarines, microscopes and outer space. Across the street from the factory entrance, bus commuters get off at a shelter shaped like an oversized incandescent bulb.

General manager Vacheslav Levakin, a veteran Communist, has a beefy face and wrists so thick that he can't button his shirtsleeves. During an interview in his wood-paneled office, he touts the firm's successful

privatization. Only 20 percent of the stock remains in government hands, he boasts.

But when asked for a list of man-

agement changes now that the central government no longer controls Svetotekhnika, Levakin comes up short.

Do the workers have a say in setting his salary?

"Of course," he replies.

And how much does he make?

"This is a commercial secret known only to our shareholders," he replies. "They voted to keep it secret."

No secret, however, is the badly frayed wiring in the cross-country industrial circuitry that Moscow's mighty switchboard once controlled.

The filament for Svetotekhnika's bulbs used to come from one factory in Uzbekistan and the ceramics from Ukraine. Both sources have disappeared — Uzbekistan because its prices quadrupled and Ukraine because of intolerable delivery tie-ups at the border.

Economic links like these used to tie together the regions of Russia and the republics of the former Soviet Union. No more.

"We've destroyed all these ties, the contacts with the former republics, and the impact here is huge," Levakin said. "You can think of this country as one big factory: In one part you produce light bulbs, in another steel, or furniture. But when you break the links that connect the parts, the whole enterprise shuts down."

Here at Svetotekhnika, disruptions in lines of supply and distribution have repeatedly forced production slowdowns and even temporary closure. The factory's 32,000 employees have been working reduced shifts since the first of January. They face large-scale layoffs if Moscow doesn't get rubles flowing again soon.

For the 400,000 workers in Mordovia as a whole, official unemployment hovers still at less than 5 percent. But one worker in eight gets paid for less than a full week's work.

### Moscow's Heavy Hand

The old system of central economic control did work, in a fashion, to

## RUSSIA: BACK TO THE FUTURE

## Communist Promotes 'Moral Values'

## Theater Official Embraces Religion

By Jon Sawyer

Post-Dispatch Washington Bureau Chief  
SARANSK, Russia

IT'S ENOUGH to drive a Communist to drink — or to church.

At the October Cinema, just up the street from the eternal flame commemorating the Great Patriotic War and a still-honored statue of Vladimir Lenin, a sexy poster promotes Madonna's "Body of Evidence." It competes with the busts of Lenin and Marx.

Meanwhile, over at the Mordovian State Theater, a matinee performance of Oscar Wilde's "Lady Windemere" draws only a few dozen patrons. Factories that once bought blocks of tickets for workers are going belly up, and the theater soon may follow suit.

In the drafty old theater's administrative offices upstairs, beneath a poster for the play "Paris Is A Dangerous City," deputy director Alexander Lubimov frets that Russia is on the slippery slope to moral ruin:

"When teen-agers right now have Mercedes cars that cost 10 million rubles," he sputters, "when they have their own stores and shops and set fire to the shops of their competition, when they sell American goods and goods from other Western countries — while our factories, the factories that produce our goods — are closing down, such a kind of life has no future."

Actually, there are no private shops in Saransk and few cars of any sort plied the snow-crusted downtown streets during a recent visit.

"They live under the principles of the jungle"

Alexander Lubimov  
Deputy Director Mordovian  
State Theater

But factories are shutting down in this central Russian city, and values are under assault.

Lubimov isn't about to give up the old truths. He's a career Communist official who used to work in the local department of ideology and propaganda. But he's found a new truth, too, in the Christian church.

Just over two years ago, in the tumult of Soviet communism's final months, Lubimov sat on one of the front benches at a Moscow outdoor stadium, transfixed by the preaching of American evangelist Billy Graham. The encounter changed Lubimov's life.

He went home to Saransk and threw himself into work for another American institution, the Salvation Army. Last year, with the help of a visiting troupe of missionaries from Houma, La., the new convert helped establish the first evangelical church in Saransk. Yet all through his spiritual odyssey, Lubimov kept the faith with communism, too.

"I myself think that people have to be religious; they have to believe in God," he said. "It doesn't matter which party you belong to, Communist or Democrat, you have to be ruled by moral values."

The new Communist party is the only political organization in Russia that has put those values to work,

Lubimov asserts. "In the other parties I haven't found here the same kind of moral principles. They live under the principles of the jungle — the survival of the fittest."

Lubimov's crusade has had some tangible results. Saransk Pravda, the local party newspaper, now features a religion page. And in the party's old house of propaganda, Lubimov arranges lectures on Christianity three times a week.

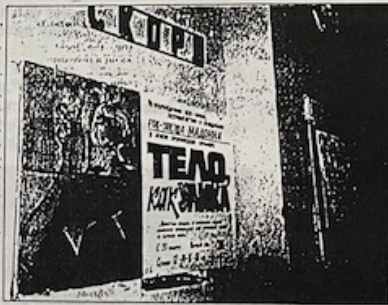
Attendance is high, he says — roughly a hundred people a night. The great majority are in their 20s and 30s and hungry for spiritual help,

he adds.

But there have been setbacks, too. A local schism drove Lubimov and his wife, a doctor, out of the evangelical communion and back to the Russian Orthodox Church.

The split dates from late last year, Lubimov said. That's when he discovered that some of his fellow evangelicals had taken Bibles, shipped here free by American church groups, and resold them for cash.

"Americans are absolutely different people," he sighs, "very simple and friendly. It's hard for them to work with Russians."



A poster for Madonna's "Body of Evidence" hangs under the stern gaze of Vladimir Lenin at the October Cinema in Saransk.



Deputy theater director Alexander Lubimov with posters of recent productions at the Mordovian State Theater.

allocate raw materials and goods. But for communities like Saransk the cost was high. "This system paralyzed the initiative of people," says Alexander Soukharev, former president of the local university and now head of an

institute that studies the post-Soviet trauma of Russia's regions.

Moscow's heavy hand "meant that the leaders of the regions never sought to find their own ways to development," he said. "Everyone thought: Moscow will decide. We'll take what they give us and leave the worry to them."

Soukharev speaks with authority; he once chaired the university's department of scientific communism. When Yeltsin outlawed the Communist Party in the fall of 1991, Soukharev stepped down as university president, the post he had held for 22 years. He did it for the good of the school, he said, to avoid making his office a lightning rod of protest for "the so-called democrats."

But the ban on the Communist party proved short-lived, and the party quickly re-emerged as a dominant force in Saransk. Soukharev bounced back too, with support from Moscow that promises to make his new institute the most important center in Russia for studying the country's tangled regional relationships.

One tangle is here in Mordovia, the province that includes Saransk. Mordovia has considerable natural resources — agriculture, minerals, timber and potentially large reserves of oil. But none was exploited under communism.

Mordovia, like many regions, was simply expected to supply the workforce for vast enterprises directed from Moscow. Now, regions like Mordovia must learn to match local workers with local resources.

The transition can't succeed, Soukharev warns, unless Moscow gets beyond the idea that market reform means merely speculative trades in cigarettes, vodka or other consumer goods.

Soukharev speaks for many — including most of Yeltsin's current government — when he warns against

going too far with economic reforms. Some sectors demand government support and control, Soukharev said. Topping his list: defense, agriculture and energy — the very sectors that Russian reformers sought to unleash from government control.

That approach was profoundly wrong, critics like Soukharev believe. They consider it an exercise in "market romanticism" that ignored the state's legitimate role in propping up key industries.

They cite defense "conversion" as an example of Moscow's heedless disregard for its military-industrial base.

"We have factories that have gone from making missiles to making teflon coatings for kitchen appliances," Soukharev said. "They've gone from the highest technology to the lowest, most primitive technology. This is not 'conversion.' It's destruction."

Entertaining an American visitor in his apartment, Soukharev hosts a dinner that includes both borscht and stuffed dumplings. Another treat, sliced pineapples from a can, brings a sardonic quip from Soukharev's sister-in-law Antonina, a retired teacher of atheism:

"This comes from a local factory," she says. "They used to make motor fuel but now they grow pineapples. It's part of conversion."

### Voters Favor Zhirinovskiy

Amid this economic turmoil, Communists won all the parliamentary seats decided here last December. But they didn't win the popular vote. That distinction went to Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's ultra-nationalist Liberal Democrats, with 35 percent.

In Saransk, as in many other cities, Zhirinovskiy's failure to field well-known local candidates cost him seats in districts he might otherwise have won. Yet on most key issues, Communists and the Liberal Democrats see eye to eye.

Biryukov, the local parliament chair, ticks off a revealing list:

"First of all would be rebuilding the economy, with the restructuring of economic ties" with the former republics, he said. Russia should bring this about "using our own resources," he added, "without any financial aid from the West. We don't want to convert our people into poor wretches, extending an open hand to the West for aid."

"Here we have common agreement with Zhirinovskiy," he said.

Communists also approve of Zhirinovskiy's tough talk on crime, Biryukov said. And like Zhirinovskiy, they seem interested in reuniting the former Soviet Union.

Soviet citizens had only one chance to vote on the break-up, in a referendum that took place in March 1991. Three-quarters voted to keep the union whole.

"This shows that it's not the idea of Zhirinovskiy alone, to restore the Soviet Union," Biryukov said. "It's the will of the whole people. The people voted for the union. It's not their fault that the Soviet Union was destroyed."

Biryukov grew up in rural Mordovia, one of seven children in a peasant family. "I know what equality means, and work," he says, his voice taking on a hard edge. "When I see that right now my own government is trying to outrage ordinary people, to exploit them, I cannot understand the motives."

Ivan Kelin, Biryukov's ally, edits The Mordovian, a weekly newspaper here. He places the blame squarely on Boris Yeltsin and his "so-called Democrats."

Kelin does not favor Zhirinovskiy. His choice for Russia's next president is Alexander Rutskoi, Yeltsin's former vice president, who led parliament in its bloody showdown with Yeltsin last October.

Rutskoi and other leaders of the would-be coup, locked up in Moscow's Lefortovo Prison the past four months, are free again. The new parliament overwhelmingly voted a general amnesty, and Yeltsin's government proved powerless to intervene.

Why support Rutskoi, Kelin is asked?

"Because he's a patriot of Russia, a hero of the Soviet Union in the Afghan war. And because he tried to fight the people trying to sell the country out — and he did all this not in his private interest, but in the interest of Russia as a whole."

And what is the interest of Russia?

"The Russian nation is a great nation in the world," Kelin says. "I know for sure that we will see the restoration of the union. It doesn't necessarily mean that it will be called the Soviet Union, or the Russian Empire. . . ."

"It will be Russia. Patriotic Russia."

**Friday: The former Soviet republic of Moldova gets a lesson in Russian intimidation.**



"...everyone — everyone — carries Lenin, still, in their hearts."

Nikolai Biryukov  
chairman of the Mordovian parliament



Paul Stupichuk map



# ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

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(6)

5-STAR

## RUSSIA: BACK TO THE FUTURE

# The Molding Of Obedience In Moldova

## Russian-Made Rebels Force Republic Back Into Fold

By Jon Sawyer

Post-Dispatch Washington Bureau Chief

TIRASPOL, Moldova

The commander of Russia's army garrison in this former Soviet republic works in an office filled with automatic weapons, sniper rifles and a portrait of Jesus Christ.

Within moments of a visitor's arrival, Col. Mikhail Bergman works himself up to vein-popping rage, waving documents that he says prove complicity by local leaders in smuggling, bribery, extortion and worse.

His targets are broad: not only Moldova's leaders, 50 miles away in the capital city of Kishinev, but also ethnic Russians who have set up a rump "republic" here in Tiraspol with his army's help.

"Now we realize that fascists are in power in both Kishinev and Tiraspol," Bergman says. "The interests of the people aren't served in either place."

His own interests, barked out staccato-style, are crystal clear:

Moldova will "never" rejoin neighboring Romania.

Russia will "always" strongly influence Moldova.

The Russian army will "never" leave.

If Bergman comes off like a medieval warrior in a holy crusade, it's because he considers the stakes so high. He compares the situation here with Chernobyl, the nuclear plant in Ukraine that spewed radiation across half of Europe. Bergman commanded the first army units dispatched to the disaster in 1986.

"In the first days of that catastrophe, only the military could help," he said. The lesson applies to

Moldova today, he believes.

Here, and in other regions of the former Soviet Union, Russia has asked the world to endorse its role as peacekeeper. Russia has talked about "stabilizing" new countries and easing murderous ethnic tension.

That's the theory of Russia's new role in its "near abroad."

The reality is Col. Bergman and his Russian army of occupation. In Moldova, they've created a textbook example of how to bring a rebellious satellite to heel.

During the last two weeks, Moldovan voters wrote the latest chapter. They resoundingly elected pro-Russians to the local parliament and squelched talk of Moldova rejoining its ethnic kin in Romania — a course that had seemed certain just two years ago.

Only a formality, the signing of papers, remains before Moldova will return to full membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States under Moscow's firm control.

How Moldova got from there to here is a lesson in Russian intimidation.

### Moldova's Troubled Past

Moldova, a nation about the size of Maryland, lies in the southwestern corner of the former Soviet Union, between Ukraine and Romania. Moldova's gently rolling hills and open plains are fertile — producing a fifth of the wine and brandy sold in the former Soviet Union, and a third of the tobacco.

And they're vulnerable. Moldova has suffered repeatedly from its location — between Russia and the Balkans, between Poland and the Black Sea.

In the 18th century, Russia seized this territory from Turkey on five separate occasions, losing it each time. In 1812, Russia again secured a beachhead that lasted through 1918 and the Russian revolution. Then Romania claimed the territory and held it, briefly, until the Soviets pried it loose during World War II.

Still, cultural ties to Romania remain strong. Ethnic Romanians comprise two-thirds of Moldova's 4.8 million people. Ukrainians account for about 14 percent and ethnic Russians 13 percent.

Moldova declared independence in August 1991 amid turmoil in Moscow. Local Communist officials, following the pattern of other ex-Soviet republics, embraced nationalism. In Moldova, that meant making Romanian the official language and promising a referendum on reunification with Romania.

Moldova's government did join the Commonwealth of Independent States, the umbrella organization formed in December 1991 as successor to the Soviet Union. But Moldova refused to sign the CIS collective-security agreement, declaring that it would chart an independent course at home and abroad.

That bold assertion ignored one key fact — some 7,000 soldiers of Russia's 14th Army. They are stationed in Tiraspol, an industrial city on the east bank of the Dniester River.

The Russian troops had been there for decades and had no interest in leaving. They were only too willing to support a secession movement, led by hard-line Communists in the name of "imperiled" ethnic Russians.

The result was the "Trans-Dniester Republic" in a sliver of Moldovan territory between the Dniester River and Ukraine. Secessionists in the area vowed to rejoin the Russian Federation. No matter that ethnic Russians rank third in population among the 700,000 residents of the Trans-Dniester, behind ethnic Romanians and Ukrainians, or that no international organization had accused Moldova of discriminating against Russians.

**MARCH 6: Crimea:** On the Black Sea coast of Ukraine, moves toward a new Russian empire

**MARCH 9: Saransk:** In Central Russia, the Communist past lives on

### TODAY

**PART THREE: Moldova:** In a former Soviet republic, a lesson in Russian intimidation

### COMING

**PART FOUR: Krasnoyarsk:** In Siberia, disillusionment with both Moscow and the West

## RUSSIA: BACK TO THE FUTURE

### Russia

of sending agents to support the Russian parliament's uprising last fall.

Bergman says Trans-Dniester officials have deliberately provoked Russian troops, seeking a violent clash that would divert public attention from their own corruption and the bare market shelves.

Over at government headquarters, Litskai sighs.

"What Bergman and the others are doing — it's called blackmail," Litskai says. "He's waving papers in the air, accusing people of all sorts of crime. And yet there's been no trial, or even the beginning of criminal proceedings and a formal investigation."

In Moldova, as in other parts of the former Soviet Union, Moscow has given its commanders virtually free rein in political and diplomatic matters, Litskai says.

"There are differences from one area to the other," he said, "but what unites them is the lack of division between political and military authority."

"In the Asian republics, in contrast to here, Russian generals shoot people — but they don't appear on television. In the Baltic states, where the level of civilization is a bit higher, the Russian generals have exchanges of diplomatic notes."

"The Trans-Dniester Republic is somewhere in the middle," he said. "The Russian commanders have stopped shooting, generally, but they have a long way to go before accepted diplomatic standards are reached and they stop meddling in politics."

Strangely, this critical assessment comes from the representative of an ethnic Russian enclave that exists only because the Russian army intervened.

Stranger still is the sudden change of heart by officials in Kishinev, Moldova's capital. Those who presided over Moldova's short-lived bid for independence have just won re-election based on a pledge to mend fences with Moscow and get Moldova's economy moving again.

"As far as the relationship we have with Russia, it's already passed the critical point in all respects," said Prime Minister Andrei Sangheli. He said Russian leaders are prepared to play a "positive" role in resolving Moldova's conflicts. He even praised Russia's 14th Army, which Moldova has tried for more than two years to

expel.

"We hope the 14th Army will eventually leave Moldova," he said, "but we are realistic."

Now that the army is hurling broadsides at Trans-Dniester officials, Sangheli said, the perspective of officials in Kishinev has changed.

### Russia's Not Going Home

For at least a year, Russia has clearly signaled that it intends to maintain influence in areas like Moldova.

In February 1993, Yeltsin declared that Russia had a "vital interest in the cessation of all armed conflicts on the territory of the former USSR."

"I believe the time has come for authoritative international organizations, including the United Nations, to grant Russia special powers as guarantor of peace and stability in this region," he said.

Russian officials pooh-poohed criticism that this opened the door to Russian neo-imperialism. They insisted that Russia would send peacekeepers only with the consent of all parties in a conflict — despite evidence to the contrary in Moldova, Georgia and Central Asia.

By last spring, Yeltsin was pushing to expand Russia's peacekeeping role, arguing that forces under the Commonwealth of Independent States could take the place of the United Nations' blue helmets.

Last summer, President Bill Clinton's foreign policy advisers floated the idea of U.S. troops taking part in U.N. peacekeeping efforts in the former Soviet Union. Russia rejected a military role for the United States out of hand.

In a speech to the U.N. General Assembly in September, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrov declared that Russia should expand its use of troops beyond Georgia and Moldova to other areas of the former Soviet Union.

In an interview with the Russian newspaper *Izvestia* in October, he went even further: Russia had no interest, he asserted, in "losing geopolitical positions that took centuries to conquer."

Despite Moscow's assertive policies, Clinton's administration until recently has taken a benign view of Russia's interventions.

When Clinton traveled to Moscow in January, he said the Russian armed forces had been "instrumental in stabilizing" Georgia. In his town-meeting appearance on Russian national television, he predicted: "You will be

more likely to be involved in some of these areas near you, just like the U.S. has been involved in the last several years in Panama and Grenada near our area."

After his meeting this week in Washington with Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze, Clinton for the first time suggested that the United States might spend money to reduce Russia's military presence. He implied that he would back a U.N. peacekeeping mission to Georgia, if no American troops took part and if



Col. Mikhail Bergman

Photos special to the Post-Dispatch by Tudor Iovu

Russians didn't dominate the force.

Shevardnadze would prefer a multinational force, but he's prepared to accept Russian forces under U.N. auspices. The crude truth, he acknowledged, is that Georgia — like Moldova — must take what it can get.

"It would be comforting to believe that Moldova was a special case," British military analyst Jonathan Eyal wrote last month in an article for *The Independent*, a newspaper. "Unfortunately, the fate of this small republic conforms to a pattern. . . ."

"Everywhere ethnic conflicts begin and stop miraculously — precisely when Moscow wants them to. In each case Russian forces are directly involved, and in each Russia also claims to be an impartial arbiter."

A Georgia "pacified" by Moscow may end up resembling Moldova, a country awakening from its dreams of independence.

A traveler crossing this country by car climbs a low ridge to a place that overlooks Vadul lui Loda, "Valley of the King," a name that harks back to Moldova's medieval glories. The Dniester River stretches out below. Russia lies beyond the horizon, 500 miles away across Ukraine.

But Russia is here, too, in the single bridge that crosses the Dniester.

Russian soldiers, not Moldovan, control the Dniester bridge. And at Vadul lui Loda, Moldova's Valley of the King, it is a Russian soldier who demands a \$20 bribe before letting the traveler cross.

Next: In Siberia, disillusionment with both Moscow and the West.

## RUSSIA: BACK TO THE FUTURE

Skirmishes with Moldovan authorities escalated in the spring of 1992, with the Russians openly supplying arms and soldiers to the Trans-Dniester rebels. That June, as the death toll mounted to the hundreds, Russia intervened formally. Moldova, a country with no standing army of its own, sued for peace.

A joint military commission — with representatives from Kishinev, Tiraspol and the 14th Army — is supposed to monitor the peace with outside inspections by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. But the Conference, a 53-state group that includes members from both Eastern and Western Europe, has been barred from the Dniester River security zone since June.

"The Trans-Dniester delegation said it was too dangerous, that they couldn't guarantee our safety," said Maj. Cornelis Lodder, head of the Conference's military observer mission in Kishinev. "I'm still trying to investigate the military situation."

Talks between Moscow and Kishinev on withdrawing the 14th Army have gone nowhere. Or backward: The Russian forces in Tiraspol set up their own television station and newspaper ("Soldier of the Fatherland"). The commanding general won election to the Trans-Dniester parliament.

New recruits were solicited from the local population, with the promise of bonuses. And Russian soldiers, many of them lifelong area residents, have been assured they won't have to leave.

"It's not my fault that I'm a Russian but live here," said Maj. Valery Sayateyev, second in command at the Tiraspol barracks. "My grandparents were sent here after World War II, to help restore a broken economy. And now, I'm not going to be moved."

When Moldova's government reaffirmed its independence a year ago, Russia stepped up the pressure. First it staged military exercises, choosing a region of Trans-Dniester where most of the residents were ethnic Romanians. Then it threatened to turn over the 14th Army and its considerable equipment to secessionists in Tiraspol.

Last June, Russian President Boris Yeltsin named Moldova first on the list of former Soviet republics where Moscow wants a permanent military base.

Moldova balked again, and Moscow tightened the economic screws, imposing new tariffs on Moldovan goods and steep increases in fees for transport services and fuel. The squeeze brought Moldova to its knees: A rich harvest rotted in the fields for want of tractor fuel, and city dwellers shivered through one of the coldest Novembers on record.



Valery Litskai

Moldova's president, Mircea Snegur, then moved to break the impasse, dissolving parliament and setting the date for new elections in late February. The voters got the message, too: 65 percent chose the agrarian and socialist parties, the two factions committed to restoring economic and political ties with Moscow.

Significantly, every step Kishinev has taken toward Russia has cooled Moscow's ardor for its rebellious friends in Tiraspol. Should Moldova make the final move — agreeing to permanent basing rights for the Russian army — the temporary republic of Trans-Dniester may cease to exist.

## A Short-lived Republic?

Valery Litskai, foreign minister of Trans-Dniester, speaks with the anxious twitter of a lover about to be spurned.

His spacious office in Tiraspol looks permanent enough, if garish. Bright purple swirls dance across the velour upholstery of his couch. His polished desk is bare, with the odd exception of 14 pencils and pens lined up in a regimental-formation salute to idle time.

Litskai, a plump and jowly career Communist who got his start teaching Spanish, wears thick glasses and red-and-blue suspenders under his diplomat's pinstripes. He jumps up with pleasure when a reporter remarks on a map of Europe, taken from Germany's *Die Presse* magazine, pinned to the wall behind his desk.

"Yes, it's true," Litskai cries out happily. "The map shows Trans-Dniester as a country!"

No authority in the world has followed suit, but perhaps *Die Presse* has inside knowledge: The headline

"What Bergman and the others are doing — it's called blackmail. He's waving papers in the air, accusing people of all sorts of crime. And yet there's been no trial..."

**Valery Litskai**  
*Foreign minister of Trans-Dniester*

"Now we realize that fascists are in power in both Kishinev and Tiraspol. The interests of the people aren't served in either place."

**Col. Mikhail Bergman**  
*Commander of Russia's army garrison in Moldova*

on its map reads "Europe's Future Horizon."

For Litskai, the omen couldn't be better. "Out of all the flashpoints of the former Soviet Union, we have the greatest degree of official recognition," he notes proudly.

There's a telefax machine in the reception room out front, an impressive array of personal computers down the hall. In the downstairs lobby, office workers fiddle with the republic's new flag, a green stripe across a red background — with the telltale hammer-and-sickle in the corner.

Outside, Tiraspol has the look of a city where time has stopped.

Lenin still stands guard at major squares and intersections. Giant slogans on factory walls still exhort workers, "Onward, to Socialism!" And at the town's entrance, an obelisk still bears the emblem of the Soviet Union. The legend, written in Romanian and Russian, reads: "Our strength is in unity."

Behind the facade, trouble lurks: in bread lines, in queues to make illegal currency transactions, in the desperate faces you see at every turn.

Just across the river, at the market in Bendery, several dozen people crowd an empty stand in an unheated pavilion, waiting for a promised delivery of meat.

"It's not even meat," an old woman says. "It's just bones. We've for-

gotten how to eat meat; already. We just eat bones."

Adding to the tumult is Col. Bergman's crusade.

He and other army officials have accused Trans-Dniester authorities of stealing millions of dollars in Russian aid, of running a "mafia" regime,

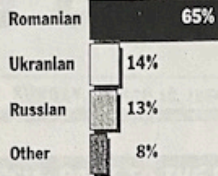
See RUSSIA, Next Page

## Moldova At A Glance



### Population:

Total population = 4.8 million



### Russian Troops:

7,000 troops of Russia's 14th Army are stationed in Tiraspol.

### Chronology:

**1700s** The Ottoman Empire loses the area to Russia and then recaptures it five times.

**1812** In the wake of Napoleon's retreat, Russia seizes control of the region.

**1856** Following the Crimean War the Treaty of Paris awards the region to Romania.

**1878** The area is retaken by Russia.

**1918** Romania claims the region in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution.

**1940** Nonaggression pact with Hitler allows the Soviet Union to annex the territory as the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.

**WWII** Romania reoccupies the area during the war, but it again becomes part of the Soviet Union in 1945.

**1991** Moldova declares independence as the Soviet Union collapses. It joins the Commonwealth of Independent States but refuses to sign a collective security agreement.

Ethnic-Russian secessionists form Trans-Dniester republic and vow to rejoin Russian Federation.

**1992** Civil war leaves hundreds dead and leads to intervention by Russian "peacekeepers."

**1994** Economic pressure on Moldova leads to new parliamentary elections. Parties committed to restoring economic and political ties with Russia receive 65% of the vote.



Post-Dispatch graphic



Residents of Tiraspol queue up for bread, one of many signs of problems in the former Soviet republic of Moldova. Jon Sawyer

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(6) FINAL 5-STAR

## RUSSIA: BACK TO THE FUTURE

### Siberia Gets Squeezed By New, Old; West, Moscow

By Jon Sawyer

Post-Dispatch Washington Bureau Chief  
KRASNOYARSK, Russia

**I**N THE FROZEN HEART of Siberia, four time zones east of Moscow, an American soap opera plays on the television in the airport lounge. Big as life, dubbed in Russian, it's "Santa Barbara."

Arriving downtown at midnight with no hotel booked, a Post-Dispatch reporter finds the Lights of the Yenisei, a third-rate riverfront hotel where ballerinas from the Siberian Dance Ensemble let most of the rooms long-term.

The exhilaration of moving so freely in a city long closed to Westerners proves short-lived. The KGB, furious that a foreigner has chosen an "unapproved" hotel, summons the reporter two days later for a dressing down.

And so it goes in Krasnoyarsk, a Siberian crossroads poised between Russia's past and its future, between communism and capital-

ism, between Moscow and the West.

This city of a million people is an industrial powerhouse where Russia's best-trained scientists extract plutonium for nuclear warheads and fashion rocket launchers for space satellites.

Yet it's also a throwback. Bundled-up women stand on frozen street corners to sell pre-scooped ice cream cones out of a cardboard box. Families rig up sleds to haul water from the village pump. Huge piles of firewood keep

winter at bay in traditional wood houses that lack central heat.

Krasnoyarsk territory, a region twice the size of Texas, stretches from Mongolia to the Arctic Circle and contains some of the richest untapped natural resources left on Earth — vast forests, mighty rivers, oil and coal, gold, copper and nickel.

The politicians and businessmen who wield power here know full well what the potential

is. But they feel stymied by Moscow's inept reforms and by what they view as cynical indifference from the West. Increasingly, in Siberia and beyond, their frustration turns into nationalism.

#### Trailers And Combines

Two Krasnoyarsk businessmen, who run two big industrial enterprises with radically different styles, sum up Siberia's indictment of Moscow and the West.

Vladimir Bogocharov, general manager of the Besotra truck trailer factory, would thrive in the white-shirt culture of the old IBM. He came

up with the idea of taking this company private when he read Russia's new law on privatization.

"I was lying on the beach with my wife, on a Black Sea vacation, and had nothing better to do," he explains.

Bogocharov begins an interview with a fact-filled working lunch, then continues the brisk discussion until it's cut short by a visiting delegation from Toyota.

He keeps a laptop computer on his desk. On the wall behind hangs a brightly painted pop-art question mark. Asked why, he points to the adjacent bookshelf, where Vladimir Lenin's tomes on communism occupy one full shelf.

"When I read those books," he quips, "this question is what I have."

Lev Loginov, the self-styled "Lion of Siberia," couldn't be more different. He runs the aging Krasnoyarsk Harvester combine factory with the retrograde self-indulgence of the long-time party satrap he is.

Loginov gives the entire day to an interview, breaking in the middle for a six-course feast with the reporter, three business cronies and the receptionist he toasts as "the love of my life." The party works through a bottle of Absolut vodka at a private downtown restaurant and then, back at the office, two more bottles of Stolichnaya.

His associate offers a lift back in his Jeep Cherokee. They talk of investments in western Germany, land deals in Manchuria, the dacha Loginov is building outside town at a reputed cost of a million dollars.

#### A New Capitalist Fails

One would scarcely know that Loginov's state-owned combine plant, like Bogocharov's private-venture trailer factory, is on the verge of shutting down.

"Yesterday you met with Lev Loginov, the manager of a state enterprise," Bogocharov says. "Right now we are sitting in a non-state property. This factory was privatized, auctioned off. We don't get any rubles from the state."

"But these very different operations, Loginov's and mine, have come to the point where neither he nor I can operate. This shows that neither Mr. Loginov nor I is guilty."

So who is? Moscow first, the West second, these men believe.

Bogocharov privatized the Besotra trailer plant in early 1992, just when Russian President Boris Yeltsin's government was lifting price controls

**MARCH 6: Crimea:** On the Black Sea coast of Ukraine, moves toward a new Russian empire

**MARCH 9: Saransk:** In Central Russia, the Communist past lives on

**MARCH 11: Moldova:** In a former Soviet republic, a lesson in Russian intimidation

#### TODAY

**PART FOUR: Krasnoyarsk:** In Siberia, disillusionment with both Moscow and the West

and moving to cut back state loans to industry. For Besotra, struggling to get off the ground with a Dutch partner, the combination proved lethal.

Yeltsin's economic aides predicted that decontrol might double or triple the price of transportation and raw materials. Bogocharov, applying a conservative calculus, figured he could make a go of the venture even if prices increased seven-fold.

What happened was "an economic free fall," he said. Some costs of doing business shot up a hundredfold.

"This was an absolutely incompetent policy," he said. "The decontrol of prices put this factory into the grave."

When Bogocharov started privatizing the operation about two years ago, Besotra counted 11,500 workers. It's lost 4,000 since, and more layoffs are expected. In Sosnovoborsk, the "company town" outside Krasnoyarsk that is entirely dependent on Besotra, the cutbacks have hit hard.

#### An Old Communist Flops

Similar problems at Loginov's combine plant threaten its very survival. Nearly 14,000 of the 17,000 workers have been on forced "vacation" since Jan. 1. For the three previous months, they worked with virtually no pay.

What happened here was a classic domino effect, Loginov explains, beginning with Moscow's failure to pay farmers for last fall's harvest. The farmers, lacking cash, could not order the combines they need. And Loginov, lacking paid-up orders and cut off from state credit, had no cash for his payroll.

Loginov argued that a shortage of

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combines would jeopardize this year's crop, but Moscow turned a deaf ear. "They said we don't need agriculture, that it's a black hole for government subsidies, that it's better if we buy everything in the West!" he said.

The reformers in Moscow who charted this policy lost their jobs in January. Loginov couldn't be more pleased.

"It was a policy of destruction, of destroying the economy," he says. "This policy brought people to nothing, to the garbage cans searching for food. It cannot be described as correct."

Anatoly Chimikhon, an electrician who has worked at the combine plant for 34 years, is among those laid off. Thanks to his wife, who still works as a teacher, he's not scrounging through garbage. But his horizons have narrowed.

"In the old days," he said, "for a month each year we'd go to Odessa," a four-hour flight away on the Black Sea coast of Ukraine. "But for five years now we haven't traveled anywhere."

### Empty Promises Of Aid

Yeltsin's reformers justified their policies by saying they were necessary to attract aid from Western governments. But to factory managers like Loginov and Bogocharov, Western aid seems at best a mirage, at worst a trap.

U.S. officials have made grand promises, with talk of mobilizing as much as \$43 billion in multilateral aid for Russia. Reality has proved more modest — about \$1.6 billion in U.S. aid, much of it going for U.S. goods and consultants.

"This aid is so small," Loginov said. "It can't help to do anything in a country the size of Russia."

Bogocharov, more cynical, calls U.S. aid a gravy train for Americans and Moscow bureaucrats. "Aid to the regions in Russia is a joke," he said. "We don't see it in our budgets here."

He's not looking for handouts, Bogocharov insists — just a serious business partner willing to invest real money and get his trailers to market. What he sees from the West instead are "suitcase businessmen" looking for short-term gains.

American officials talk glibly of Russia's success in privatization. They don't begin to appreciate the difficulties, Bogocharov said. Since the Soviet Union dissolved, prices have soared, bureaucratic hassles have multiplied and the network of supply and distribution has collapsed.

"You take the decorations of the situation as if they were the deep inside reality because you cannot imagine a lack of laws, rules or judicial structure," Bogocharov said.

"Unfortunately, we are living in a



"Aid to the regions in Russia is a joke. We don't see it in our budgets here."

**Vladimir Bogocharov**  
General manager of Besotra  
truck trailer factory



Post-Dispatch map

"The impression we have is that the Americans are waiting for the whole economy to collapse."

**Valery Zubov**  
Governor of Krasnoyarsk



different kind of society. . . . You are a very sincere and truthful people, but you absolutely do not understand the realities of our history and our life."

On a trip to America last year, Bogocharov toured Moline, Ill., where economic problems were, by U.S. standards, severe.

"I thought, 'I would like to pray for such a "bad" situation here,'" he said. "The two words 'happiness' and 'nightmare' have a different meaning in your language than they do in ours."

Valery Zubov, the American-trained economist who was elected

governor of Krasnoyarsk territory last year, spends much of his time promoting foreign investment. He's had some success: a German joint venture making cassette tapes, a

French refrigeration plant, a furniture-processing agreement with the Swedish outfitter IKEA.

"But I can't give you an example of even one joint venture with an American firm," he says. "We sit down. We discuss. But there's no real investment, no real movement of capital or money. . . ."

"The impression we have is that

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the Americans are waiting for the whole economy to collapse," Zubov added. "This is your right, to work in such a way. You have no commitments, no obligations at all. But neither are we committed to take a liking to you."

Zubov cites U.S. indifference as one of the factors that fueled the rise of ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democrats captured about a quarter of the votes in December's parliamentary elections nationally and nearly a third in Krasnoyarsk.

Felix Pashennikh, a member of the moderate Democratic Party of Russia who was elected to parliament from Krasnoyarsk, suggests that America had an even more direct hand in Zhirinovskiy's success.

"It's all in this book," he says, holding up a Russian-language election campaign guide, "How to Win an Election." It was prepared by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs with the help of U.S. tax dollars.

"Zhirinovskiy made better use of this book than anyone else," Pashennikh said, adding that Zhirinovskiy proved particularly adept at using punchy, American-style campaign slogans to manipulate television coverage.

## Zhirinovskiy On The Stump

Zhirinovskiy was also "the only person in national politics who promised to recreate the former Soviet Union," Pashennikh said. That had enormous appeal — even in Krasnoyarsk, the heart of Siberia.

If you wonder why, consider the personal ties between Siberia and the now divided union.

Pashennikh, an engineer by training, spent 10 years working half a continent away in Moldova. He believes the Russian army should stay indefinitely in that remote republic in a "stabilizing" role.

Loginov's daughter lives in the Baltic republic of Latvia. She's learning to be a pilot — and discovering Latvia's discrimination against ethnic Russians, her father says.

Bogocharov, before taking over management of the trailer factory in 1986, lived all his life in the Central Asian republic of Kyrgyzstan.

Chimikhoon, the combine factory electrician, hails from Ukraine. His mother lives there still, cut off from her family by the suddenly exorbitant costs of travel.

And Zubov, the governor, counts close relatives in Kazakhstan, Ukraine and the Caucasus.

These ties underlie Russia's resurgent nationalism and give it a special tone. It's a movement dominated not by the claim that Russians are a



Jon Sawyer

A girl helps her family draw water from a well on the outskirts of the city of Krasnoyarsk, Russia, where modern scientific work contrasts with crude living conditions.

"master race," but instead by the conviction that Russians must restore their multinational home. They took this vast common territory for granted until December 1991, when, for reasons no one quite understands, it all came crashing down.

They're not looking for empire, they insist. They do want respect. If that means restoring the empire, then so be it.

"Certain dangers do exist," Zubov said, "but the source of these dangers is not inside Russia."

The dangers he sees lie in the Baltics, where Russians are denied citizenship and jobs; in Ukraine and Belarus, where economic mismanagement and corruption threaten Russian prosperity; and in the West,

where ignoring these points of tension only make the tension worse.

Loginov notes that 25 million ethnic Russians live outside the Russian Federation, sprinkled across the former Soviet republics in the world's biggest diaspora. Every Russian is a potential point of crisis.

"If one American anywhere in the world is the victim of an attack, the U.S. will go in shooting," he said. "That's accepted all over the world. A country has to protect its citizens. So if there is genocide against the Russian people in Ukraine, the Russian army must go in to protect Rus-

sians there."

Loginov is reminded that many ethnic Russians are no longer Russian citizens. They are citizens of Ukraine, of Kazakstan, of all the other republics now struggling for independence.

Sometimes they're not, he retorts — citing the onerous requirements in Estonia and Latvia that have made citizenship unattainable for many Russians. And even where Russians have citizenship, he says, it's a far cry from the equal standing they anticipated when independence first came.

"The Russians favored independence in the beginning," he said, "but after independence they found they had been made the scapegoats in a foolish con game. Now we understand it. And most resent it."

Loginov presents his visitor with a parting gift: a stamped-metal pocket watch that is similar to one he presented earlier this year to Boris Yeltsin.

The watch's cover shows the two-headed eagle with triple crowns, ancient emblem of the Russian czars. Yeltsin has made it Russia's symbol again, minus the eight shields that represented the imperial possessions of old Russia.

On Loginov's watch, the imperial shields remain.