

'Human rights' protectors play a double game

Five months after war flared in Chechnya, Russian politicians and journalists learned that President Yeltsin had issued a decree earlier than his Dec. 9, 1994 order No. 2166. His secret statement No. 2137, with a description similar to No. 2166, was dated Nov. 30, 1994, before his ultimatum to stop the fighting in Chechnya expired. Statement No. 2137 formed a secret group under Gen. Pavel Grachov, the defense minister, to "direct the actions to disarm and dissolve armed formations" in Chechnya. On the secret group were Speaker of the Federation Council Vladimir Shumeiko and Speaker of the Duma Ivan Rybkin, as well as the heads of the defense committees in those respective houses of Parliament, Pyotr Shirshov and Sergei Yushenkov.

Thus, only on April 13, 1995 did it emerge that Yushenkov, probably one of the most violent opponents of Grachov and President Boris Yeltsin on the Chechnya question, was a member of the secret group overseeing the start of the war. On Jan. 15, 1995, Yushenkov told a Russian TV reporter that he was not alone in his opposition to Grachov and in backing the actions of the Russian military in Chechnya. He declared that the Bertrand Russell Foundation in Brussels, Belgium had launched a special commission to investigate human rights violations in Chechnya. Participation in launching a war and then a public struggle against the same war, however, are not as

contradictory as it might seem.

Yushenkov was never a recognized human rights activist before the Chechen war. As with many middle-rank liberal functionaries, he was granted a building for some "democracy-promoting" foundation in 1992, when he also took part in setting up the Russian Union of Cossacks Troops. His heroism was further displayed in his hearty support for Yeltsin's violent abolition of the Russian Supreme Soviet (Parliament) in October 1993, and then in organizing the electoral campaign for Yegor Gaidar's Russia's Choice liberal bloc in November-December 1993.

A sudden alliance

Many Russians were astonished to see Gaidar's people, and radical left, Working Russia activists, together at public rallies in Moscow and St. Petersburg, in support of the "Chechen national-liberation movement." It was a sudden alliance begging attention not to the color of banners, but to the geopolitical background of the Chechen affair.

But the main part in the human rights performance was played by the Moscow mass media, controlled by Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov and his close associates from Vladimir Gusinsky's Most Bank group. This financial group was also involved with the arms deals of "Rosvooruzheniye." In the summer of 1994, it was already clear that Gusinsky's networks were deeply involved in geopolitical games around Chechnya, even as they developed a widening system of contacts in the state leadership, including high officials in the Army and counterintelligence agencies, prepared to intrigue against Yeltsin. On July 30, the Most Bank-financed NTV television program

Khasbulatov related what happened, in a Jan. 27, 1995 interview in *Smena*: "Several planes with unarmed commandos arrived at the Grozny airports, while the weapons went to . . . Mozdok, North Ossetia. For two hours, the soldiers wandered around until they got an order from the Defense Ministry to fly back. [Minister of Nationalities Affairs] Shakh-ray asked me to fly to Grozny myself, explaining he 'could not find Yeltsin.' I called Arsanov, the head of Grozny administration. He said that the streets of the town were lifeless and Dudayev had fled. Dudayev really disappeared for some three hours but then was seen again, when it was clear that the state of emergency had failed. Then I was told that Marshal Yevgeny Shaposhnikov and General Barannikov (internal affairs minister at that time) refused to lead troops into the city, citing Gorbachov. I called Gorbachov and he told me that he had indeed ordered the troops not to be sent."

Thus, the dual-power situation—Yeltsin as President of Russia, Gorbachov of the U.S.S.R.—determined Yeltsin's

first flop in Chechnya. The fact that Gorbachov had greater influence on the Army than Yeltsin is easily explained: Not yet being "commercialized," Russian troops retained formal discipline, and obeyed U.S.S.R. commander Shaposhnikov, who was of higher rank than Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachov.

Yeltsin's unlucky attempt to defeat Dudayev was evaluated by radical liberals, especially by the self-styled "antifascist" wing of Democratic Russia, as a "gross political mistake." The most pro-Dudayev person in the liberal circles was Galina Starovoitova, who had been active in the Caucasus region since her involvement in support of the Karabakh movement in Armenia in 1988. (Although vociferously pro-Armenian and anti-KGB, Starovoitova suddenly started speaking out in favor of Azerbaijan when Heidar Aliyev, the former Azerbaijan KGB chief and co-owner of the Caspian oil consortium, returned to power.) In 1991, she wanted to divide Russia into 72 separate countries; in the summer of

gave the floor to Sergei Filatov to declare that "there are healthy forces in the Chechen opposition to Dudayev, and Russia should support them."

If British Petroleum and/or other interests wished to block the Baku-Grozny-Novorossiysk oil pipeline project, they would welcome not a quick and effective military operation in Chechnya, but a long and bloody war that would destabilize the situation in the whole surrounding region. Both Yushenkov and the Luzhkov-Gusinsky media have given a boost to such geopolitical hopes, for the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea region.

The tilt toward arrangements preferred by London extends to the north, as well. When the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development refused to invest in the Primorsk port project on the Baltic Sea, one potential terminus for the Caspian Sea oil, its place was promptly taken by the Anglo-Dutch Shell Oil Co.

Control by British oil firms of the entire oil route from the Caspian Sea across Ukraine, Belarus, and Latvia to the Baltic, would reproduce the infamous East India Company that was designed not only for trade, but for long and bloody wars "in the queen's name." Today's oil pirates, assisted by the corrupt Russian elite, have created the bloodbath in Chechnya and will not hesitate if they have an opportunity to create bloodbaths in other countries and regions, too.—*Roman Bessonov*

Sources

1. Anatoli Stepovoy, "The War in Chechnya Began under a Secret Statement of Yeltsin," *Chas Pik*, April 14, 1995.
2. "Government Anxious About Future of Primorsk Port Project," *Delovoy Peterburg*, March 31, 1995.

1994, she spoke of "the peaceful return of Crimea to Russia." She often visits London, where her son already lives, and Washington.

Starovoitova insisted that the state of emergency be dropped, held phone talks with Dudayev, and explained to the mass media how "gallant" and "democratic" this person is. (Three cut-off heads of Dudayev's opponents were displayed in Grozny in November 1993 as a symbol of his power, perhaps also illustrating his gallantry.)

The arms caches

Supplies of weapons were left in Chechnya by withdrawing Russian troops. Recently, Shaposhnikov's name has figured foremost in this connection. But when Shakhray directly accused him during an Ostankino TV program in January 1995, the marshal replied that Grachov and Gaidar were responsible. The freshly appointed Gaidar had not been in a position to initiate such an arms deal, but it later emerged

that he had unofficial links to the same arms-trading companies and joint ventures in the Baltic states as Dudayev had.

Gaidar's team was more specifically involved in another notorious Chechen venture, the infamous false *aviso*. Criminal operations with huge amounts of money that appeared "out of thin air" started in March-April 1992, when it became clear that Gaidar's tax policy wasn't working, and the payments crisis could cause a social explosion.

The false letter of advice issue was exposed while Georgi Matyushin was Central Bank director; after his replacement by former U.S.S.R. Bank Director Viktor Gerashchenko, nothing more was heard about Matyushin. The mechanism of producing money "out of thin air" still functioned, but was used only by a limited number of special channels. This may explain the continuing material and propagandistic support for Dudayev from certain Moscow financial clans. The more than 4 trillion rubles, by preliminary accounts, derived from false *aviso* operations, along with the profits from unofficial arms sales, sufficed to create a powerful pro-Dudayev lobby in the Russian leadership.

In early 1992, Shaposhnikov, then commander-in-chief of the Community of Independent States (CIS) forces, reported to the Russian leadership that Dudayev had suggested sharing troops in two parts. Defense Minister Grachov later claimed that he had withdrawn all the weapons from Grozny. But the most reliable version is that none of them were withdrawn; when they were later sold, some high-ranking officials in Moscow shared the money, maybe in two parts.

When the two former state arms trading companies (the former Chief Engineering Department and Chief Technical Department of the Defense Ministry, after a two-year period of being half-privatized and, consequently, tremendously corrupted) were finally united into the State *Rosvooruzheniye* ("Russian Arms") Concern in 1993, Marshal Shaposhnikov was appointed the President's representative to the firm. It was later reported that First Vice Prime Minister Oleg Soskovets and Chairman of the Federation Council Vladimir Shumeiko were competing for influence in the concern. The former director of a military plant, Shumeiko was under investigation by the Supreme Soviet for large-scale corruption, in the summer of 1993. This resulted only in the resignation of Internal Affairs Minister Andrei Dunayev and Security Minister Victor Barannikov; Shumeiko did not resign. Subsequently, Yeltsin supported him to become chairman of the Federation Council, and for a while he was spoken of as a possible successor to Yeltsin.

Shumeiko and Dudayev

Shumeiko has evidently played an important role in the Chechnya events and in the personal fate of Dudayev.

In March 1992, when the anti-Dudayev opposition in Chechnya was planning its first demonstration to protest corruption and unemployment, the separatist Dudayev received 150 million rubles from Moscow. In August 1992, a week