# RUSSIA
# *in the Transcaucasus*
# OR
# DEMOCRACY
# *in a state of emergency*

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The difficulties of establishing stable democracy in Central and East European countries, freed from communism, given rise to various research works and papers on the problem.

In many of these papers the authors, following the well-known philosophy that the cause of every phenomenon should be found in itself, come to the conclusion that these people are not ready for democracy. At the end of report, concerning military coup d'etat that overthrew democratically elected government of Azerbaijan (summer 1993) "Time" magazine quotes one of the citizens of Baku: "We are given freedom, but we do not know what to do with it." A similar quotation is set forth in the "Financial Times," in a report about falsification during Parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan (November 1995): "The voters say they have got freedom only they do not know what to do with it." The striking resemblance of these quotations makes me think that there is a stereotypical view at work in the thoughts of Western magazine editors.

Of course we are not ready to accept the democracy as would have been desired. But to what extent? Then to what extent are our failures to establish stable democracy determined by the above unreadiness? Are not there some other reasons? Why do the scholars and observers pay so little attention to the induced instability in our countries?

It is well known that tension imposed on the country from outside often results in the growth of separatism, ethnic nationalism and paternalism. Democracy cannot successfully develop in a condition of a permanent state of emergency, in which we found ourselves because of our geographical location -- we are too far from God and too near to Russia.

It could be argued that western observers in trying to ignore the above issue are trying to evade the answer to the following question: "What is to be done and why don't we help them?" Of course it is so simple to say "we do nothing, because they are not ready and there is nothing to help them with."



**"THE EVIL IMPIRE" IS REVIVING, WHAT IS TO BE DONE?**

*...In the short term the main task of the West towards Russia is not to clear up the prospects of democracy in this country, but to define if Russia will become national state or restore its empire status."*

Zbigneiw Brzezinski

In 1994 public opinion in the West was seriously concerned for the first time by the fact that the democratic wave on the territory of the former USSR began to go down and the pro-imperial public attitude was intensified by the failure of the supporters of independent pro-western policy at Presidential elections in Ukraine . Although president Kuchma, who won the presidential elections maintained a policy of independence for the Ukraine, we could see the extend of resistance to this policy within the country as well as pressure coming from outside which he had to overcome. Then there was another warning: the communists in Boleros came to power and declared openly the necessity of reconstituting the USSR. They also called for necessity of opposing NATO.

However the backlash to democracy and expansion of neo-imperialism on the territory of the former USSR began before. It took only a year for imperialistic forces in Russia to overcome the shock, caused with disintegration of the USSR in 1991. Since the autumn of 1992 Russia (its force ministries and especially General Staff of Russian Army) started making the situation unstable almost unintentionally, without working out a clear foreign policy and then exercised harsh military pressure into the affairs of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, with the aim of reconstructing its influence upon them. Armenia practically has lost its independence, Georgia, Moldova, Azerbaijan and Ukraine are oppressed and the republics of Middle Asia and Kazakhstan are in permanent fear for their future. Of course, the longing for freedom in these countries was replaced by longing for safety.

The end of 1993 was marked by impressive success of adherence to the idea of Russian Super Power and socialist economy. It brought the victory to communists and nationalists at parliamentary elections in Russia. In 1994 - 1996 this tendency became stronger and brought a great success (some 40%) to the supporters of this idea at parliamentary elections in December 1995 and the presidential election in 1996 (41%).

Even the representatives of the reformative wing of the political elite in Russia headed by Yeltsin have to repeat the ideas of the supporters of the empire about the greatness of Russia and its special interests.

These expansionist ambitions are restricted not only to the territory of the former USSR. Today "admirers of the former greatness" work out actively the idea of "After Byzantine space," where Russia must prevail. Further and further they turn their eyes towards the Balkans and Middle East. These people are not looking for space to co-operate, to be engaged in commerce or to exchange ideas; they want a space to dominate or to have so-called "Lebensraum" (Space for the living -- germ.), an expression well known since before Second World War.

Today it is clear that the "Evil Empire" is reviving regarding its policy toward CIS and that this is going on with the silent connivance of the West. There is no need to remind that such policy finally makes America pay twice, when Russia will take control of CIS without any hindrance.

## RUSSIAN AMBITIONS REGARDING CIS

How does Russia itself formulates its national interests and foreign policy problems in CIS? Today, when Russian society has gained a certain amount of freedom of information, this is easy to see even from sources published officially as well as from the quite frank statements of high-ranking Russian politicians.

1. Western countries at present have lost their ability to maintain an active foreign policy and they are busy now with domestic affairs. USA devotes a lot of attention to its domestic affairs, Europe is busy with the Maastricht process, Germany has the problems of uniting its divided territories. So there will not be any

special resistance to Russian expansion in the CIS. However the West has enough resources to unleash a new cold war in which Russia will be defeated again.

2. At the same time, Russia can hardly keep from taking advantage of the weakness of some of the CIS countries in order to entirely return its unrestrained influence over them, to use their resources, to seize their markets, to deprive them of the possibility of choosing their own way of integrating themselves into the economic and political systems of the world.

"Integration with a great number of states of the former USSR... or (in the case of their disintegration) with regions that broke away from them is almost inevitable in strategic prospect. There is no way out of this and the only problem is in its forms and conditions," -- as was confirmed in the "Theses of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy" (1993), headed by some famous Russian political leaders: A.Adamishin (at that time first Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, (at present he is the ambassador to Great Britain ), D.Rewrikov (Yeltsin's assistant for foreign policy issues), S.Stepashin (then the Head of Federal Security Service ), S.Shakhray (then Deputy Prime Minister of Russian Federation) and others.

3. However Russia should not overestimate its abilities in maintaining the political stability and economical situation in CIS countries -- as they consider in the Kremlin. The mistakes of the USSR mustn't be repeated, which was broken down because of trying to help all the republics to develop simultaneously. Russia needs the time to "accumulate strength" to assure the well-being of its people first.

4. Russia considers that at present there are only two ways to solve the problems of the CIS:

a) Unification with these countries or with their regions into a federate state;

b) Russia is now hampered by economical crisis and it will be a costly enterprise to form the federate state of out of CIS countries that would in addition set Western countries against Russia. It seems to be more pragmatic to choose a policy of keeping the formally independence of CIS in exchange for unlimited access to their resources, their markets, stocks and services for the creation of an effective defense union and insuring single legal space for all national minorities.

*(From the "Theses" of Foreign Policy Council")*

In the highest strata of Russian government there are supporters of the first as well as the second way of "integration" of the countries of the former USSR. These two ways for the “Russian type to integration" promise to cause much suffering for the countries that have chosen independence. They will abandon democracy because of their permanent state of emergency and they will be isolated from the whole world. Western countries will then witness a State that is again rising from ruins, which is great not because of its economical or cultural achievements but due to its aggressive aspiration for conquest.

**THE INTENTIONS OF RUSSIA IN THE TRANSCAUCASUS.**

Submit to a new reality -- the independent policy of former vassal states and to leave Caucasus alone? Never! The imperial thought that was restored very quickly in the heads of Russian politicians dictates quite another thing to them. "If we leave the Caucasus, others will come: Turks, Americans... And no matter who comes, the Transcaucasian republics will be lost for us." Why it does not strike their minds that the idea of "coming ..." and " leaving" makes no sense at the threshold of the 21 century, the century of democracy, with the disappearance of frontiers and unification efforts all over the world.

***There are no changes can be seen*** in Russian policy in Transcaucasus after the victory of Yeltsin on president elections in 1996. The President himself and his renovated team are forced to keep the same course on the “Russian type to integration” according to pro-imperial public attitude.



***ARMENIA***

Having gained a victory over Azerbaijan in alliance with Russia, Armenia fell under the military, political and economical dependence of Russia. It is not possible for Armenia to carry on military operations in the territory of Azerbaijan without Russian support. At the same time the present administration of Armenia cannot abandon its policy of expansion because it

has come to power under slogans, proclaiming the annexation of Karabakh to Armenia. Besides, the Armenian industry today is not able to develop without deliveries of oil and raw materials from Russia as it always got the subsidies from the budget of USSR. According to the facts given in the Moscow's free press, Russia pays 57% of Armenian`s budget (as "Segodnya" newspaper reported in the summer of 1993). Russia took from Armenia anything that it wanted.

As then Minister of Defense of Russian Federation, P.Grachov reported in an interview to the ORT TV: "Levon Ter-Petrosyan has successfully gone through all the trials..." (by this he means that the first presidents of Georgia and Azerbaijan couldn't undergo all these trials).

The frontiers of Armenia are guarded by Russian army. According to the agreement Russian military bases has settled in the territory of Armenia for 25 years and from these bases military operations are
carried on against Azerbaijan that persists in objecting to the "Russian type to integration ."

***GEORGIA***

Though Russia has maintained its interests in Georgia to the fullest. The country was forced to join the CIS, to sign "the agreement on collective security of CIS" and to sign the intention record, according to which 3 Russian military bases will be settled in Vaznani, Ahalkalaki and Batumi. The latest, almost solved the problem of Russia, is to settle its naval forces on the Black Sea shore of Georgia in Abkhazia.

However, the overall crises is still going on in the country. Three hundred thousand refugees from Sukhumi, that were ravaged by Russian bombers, still cannot return home. Georgia has lost control over the South-Osetia before, which is guarded by Russian army today. Civil war between the supporters of the former president Gamsakhurdia and the current president Shevardnadze, stirred up by Russia, rendered the country lifeless. About a million people left Georgia and have become economical immigrants. We can hardly speak about democracy in such a situation.

Russian policy makers think that it will be difficult to set active co-operation with Armenia without having the required dependence of Georgia from Russia, because Russia has no frontiers with Armenia. One can get there only via Georgia or Azerbaijan.

Independent Georgia and Azerbaijan serve as "a bad example" and they are the factors making the situation unstable in the North-Caucasian autonomous republics of Russia.

***AZERBAIJAN***

It was the first republic among CIS that during the democratic government of Elchibey (1992-1993) gained the withdrawal of Russian army and frontier troops from its territories in the spring 1993. Moreover, after accession to power, the government of Democrats has made switch in policy of the country towards the West.

Of course Russia took vengeance over Azerbaijani democrats for trying to pursue the independent policy . In June 1993, Elchibay's government fell with Russian assistance. Just after that event Armenia with Russian assistance occupied four regions in the territory of Azerbaijan, beyond the borders of Nagorny Karabakh. It put former CP leader Haydar Alyev's Administration into a state of emergency. From September, Azerbaijan was forced to join the CIS being foolished by then Defense Minister, P. Grachov, who assured them in his interview given to Azerbaijan TV that Russia would immediately help Azerbaijan to withdraw Armenian troops from the occupied lands. In October, after Azerbaijan had joined the CIS, Armenia with Russian assistance occupied two more regions in the territory of Azerbaijan.

***Russia threatens Azerbaijan with annexation of its lands, having the aim:***

- getting the consent of Baku to guarding its frontiers by Russian frontier troops and for forming military bases on the territory of Azerbaijan;

- gaining that Azerbaijan will recognize Russia to be the only negotiator in the Karabakh conflict and to settle Russian "peacemaking troops" there.

- taking an active part in extraction of Azerbaijan oil. Moreover Russia put forward the problem that the oil, being extracted from the Caspian shelf near Azerbaijan is a common property of all Caspian regions.

(In the former USSR Caspian basin and its shelf has been divided between the republics as an internal reservoir.)

- making that oil, extracted on the territory of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan will flow trough the pipe-line, passing through the territory of Russia; otherwise Russians think they will lose control over these countries.

***Furthermore,*** Azerbaijan is of great strategic value for Russia. A glance at the map will be enough to understand that in the territory of the former USSR all the railways from Russia to Iran and to oil-bearing fields of the Persian Gulf lie through Azerbaijan .

The independent democratic Azerbaijan will be the attractive example for Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tadjikistan, the countries trying to resist Russian control.

Russia could not make yet Azerbaijan agree with the requirements given above. How long can Azerbaijan stand against Russia without any support from the West? If Armenia will go on occupying district after district on the territory of Azerbaijan then, Haydar Alyev has nothing to do but to accept the suggested "Russian type to Integration." Also it will be difficult for the Democrats to suggest an alternative to society.

## THE OPPORTUNITIES RUSSIA HAS IN AZERBAIJAN

Russia has some other opportunities, besides the Karabakh crisis, to exert influence over Azerbaijan.

a) About 40% of the commodity turnover in Azerbaijan belong to Russia. The Russian frontiers, recently closed, as a result of the Chechnya conflict, which drove the economy of Azerbaijan into a desperate state.

b) There are 300 000 ethnic Russians in Azerbaijan. Russia uses them as a ground for interference, though all their, cultural rights were guaranteed already by Elchibey's Decree, "About the rights of ethnic minorities."

c) Russia takes an active part in stringing up the separatism of the Lezghins, who live in the North of the republic and the Talish people, who live on the South. Lately, Russia and Armenia try to raise the question of the Kurdish people in Azerbaijan. Armenian propaganda alleges that most regions in Azerbaijan, occupied by Armenians are places of compact residence of Kurdish people, who are in favor of Armenia.

d) The representatives of the former Communist nomenclature are also pro-russian. This well-arranged force, associated with financial, commercial and industrial groups, headed by former president A.Mutallibov (who has gotten Russian shelter), is the main hope of Russia.

e) Since the USSR period, the Russian espionage system, has been distributed for 70 years by KGB, Army Security Service and Frontier troops of the former USSR.

From the evaluations of the Ministry of National Security Service of Elchibey's Administration about 100 000 people in any case were linked with the USSR Secret Services in Azerbaijan. A great number of adherents to Russia are in the supreme officer's corps of the Azerbaijan Army.

Iranian secret services are also intensifying their efforts in Azerbaijan. At the time of the Democrats' government, about 100 Iranian agents and citizens of Azerbaijan, recruited by Iranian secret services, were

arrested as a result of the efforts of the Ministry of National Security Service. It is clear that the aims of Russia and Iran are almost the same.

Fundamentalist Iran, more than Russian imperialists, does not want to see the Open Society near itself, considering that about 20 million ethnic Azerbaijani Turks living in Iran.

## THE PROSPECTS OF DEMOCRACY IN THE AZERBAIJAN

Military coup d'etat inspired by Russia in the summer 1993 struck a blow to democracy in Azerbaijan. According to the "Freedom House" reports on Human Rights, Azerbaijan from the “Partly free country” in 1993 has become the “Not free country” in 1994 and 1995. In spite of the mass arrests of the democrats, informal veto on occupation for them, and severe censorship it was impossible to turn back society to Stalinism. As the result of an unceasing three-year political struggle, the democratic community of the country gained the government recognition of the existence of opposition political parties and partly free mass media. The most happy thing is that the present government had to renew the foreign policy adopted by democrats which towards independence and integration with the democratic world community.

Embassies of democratic countries, especially the US Embassy gave indispensable help to the democrats in their struggle for existence. This demonstrated that there are no bounds for democrats, that morale support can be affective and it is possible to struggle against dictatorship by peaceful means...

Obviously, without support of the world democratic community Azerbaijan won't stand long against Russia and Iran. The loss of Azerbaijan for the West means the loss of future prospects for a successful struggle against Russian expansion on the South, against Iranian fundamentalism, the possibility to support the democratic processes in the republics of Central Asia, and naturally the loss of markets in these countries.

It should be explained to the Russian government that Russia won't be able to become a full member of democratic community (The Country of the Seven, European Council and others) if it continues a neo-imperialistic policy towards its neighbors.

Support the democrats and defenders of independence in CIS countries? The answer is yes! They should be given a hand. They need help in establishing contacts with the global system of democratic organizations. They need intellectual and technical support. Their intellectual community subdivisions need help in making contacts with the intellectual centers of the West.

The situations with Human Rights in these countries have to be closely watched. The present Azerbaijani administration should be informed by the Western community that they will not communicate with regimes violating Civil and Political Rights.

It is necessary also intensify the spread of democratic values, of world coexistence and the advantages of market economy in Russian Society. Russians have lost very quickly the guilt complex gained during the years of Perestroika for the injustices of 70 years of communist imperialism toward individuals as well as to the whole nations.

The efforts and means needed for all that are 1000 times less than for keeping the stability of national financial system in countries sliding to despotism...

***How ready were we for democracy during the time of Elchibey's administration***? The estimate of the experts of the European Bank (EBRD) in their report published on March 1993 is as follows:

"Azerbaijan with regard to the work that was done in the orientation toward market economy as well as establishment of multi-party system and democracy, to the economic potential and mental ability of the population is one of the most prepared countries of the former USSR which have already started to carry out the economic reforms."

Then this is the report of the Parliamentary elections in 1995, written together with the Joint Mission of UN-OSCE.

"...Violation during pre-election campaign casts doubts on democracy of the election." "...Elections do not answer the world standards."

At the same time, a conclusion of great importance for us made by the Joint Mission, is as follows:

"...Azerbaijan is able to hold elections true to international standards."

Yes, we are able to do it, only if they leave us alone.