

RUSSIA: HUMAN RIGHTS AND POLITICAL PROSPECTS



June 23, 2005

**Briefing of the
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

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ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

The Helsinki process, formally titled the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, traces its origin to the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in Finland on August 1, 1975, by the leaders of 33 European countries, the United States and Canada. As of January 1, 1995, the Helsinki process was renamed the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The membership of the OSCE has expanded to 56 participating States, reflecting the breakup of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia.

The OSCE Secretariat is in Vienna, Austria, where weekly meetings of the participating States' permanent representatives are held. In addition, specialized seminars and meetings are convened in various locations. Periodic consultations are held among Senior Officials, Ministers and Heads of State or Government.

Although the OSCE continues to engage in standard setting in the fields of military security, economic and environmental cooperation, and human rights and humanitarian concerns, the Organization is primarily focused on initiatives designed to prevent, manage and resolve conflict within and among the participating States. The Organization deploys numerous missions and field activities located in Southeastern and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The website of the OSCE is: <www.osce.org>.

ABOUT THE COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the Helsinki Commission, is a U.S. Government agency created in 1976 to monitor and encourage compliance by the participating States with their OSCE commitments, with a particular emphasis on human rights.

The Commission consists of nine members from the United States Senate, nine members from the House of Representatives, and one member each from the Departments of State, Defense and Commerce. The positions of Chair and Co-Chair rotate between the Senate and House every two years, when a new Congress convenes. A professional staff assists the Commissioners in their work.

In fulfilling its mandate, the Commission gathers and disseminates relevant information to the U.S. Congress and the public by convening hearings, issuing reports that reflect the views of Members of the Commission and/or its staff, and providing details about the activities of the Helsinki process and developments in OSCE participating States.

The Commission also contributes to the formulation and execution of U.S. policy regarding the OSCE, including through Member and staff participation on U.S. Delegations to OSCE meetings. Members of the Commission have regular contact with parliamentarians, government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations, and private individuals from participating States. The website of the Commission is: <www.csce.gov>.

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RUSSIA: HUMAN RIGHTS AND POLITICAL PROSPECTS

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Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe Washington, DC

The briefing was held at 2:00 p.m. EST in 2360 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington D.C., Congressman Mike McIntyre, presiding.

Mr. MCINTYRE. OK, we'll bring this meeting of the Helsinki Commission to order, and the hearing today.

I'm Congressman Mike McIntyre, a commissioner on the U.S. Helsinki Commission, and we welcome all of you today who have joined us.

We know that several members are in and out because there will be votes this afternoon, and there's some other committee hearings going on currently but, nevertheless, we wanted to start this meeting on time. We hope that we'll be joined by other commission members during the course of the time today.

We'd especially like to welcome during the summer months the college students who are here, and the Helsinki Commission is blessed with having Kyle Clark. Kyle, stand up, from the University of North Carolina. Beside him: My son, Joshua, and my new daughter-in-law, Caroline, who also graduated from UNC, who are here on Capitol Hill, and Caroline is with the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

So we welcome them with us today as well.

We especially want to welcome all of you who have taken the time to come here on this important subject involving Russia and human rights and political prospects.

Today's special speaker, Valentin Gefter, is general director of the Human Rights Institute in Moscow, and he is also a fellow at the Kennan Institute in Washington, D.C., where he's working on a project on post-Soviet political persecution in countries of the CIS.

His field study is human rights in transitional society. Born in 1944, Mr. Gefter is a 1967 graduate of the mechanics and mathematics department of Moscow State University.

After many years of work in research institutions at the Academy of Sciences, he became involved in 1995 in the work of the Memorial Human Rights Center, where he continues to head the program on political persecution in the CIS.

Between 1996 and 2003 he also participated in the activity of state and Moscow city Duma committees, in working groups concerned with human rights, and served as an

assistant to several members of these legislative institutions. He's co-editor of the Russian Human Rights Bulletin and editor of the "Russian Messenger" of Amnesty International.

He's married and has one daughter, 25 years old. I know we all are proud of our children today, that we care so much about.

I want to also recognize Congressman Alcee Hastings, of whom we are very proud, not only because he served so well in Congress and is a colleague of mine, that I enjoy knowing personally, but he also, of course, is our esteemed president, on the international level, of the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe.

So before we have our guest speaker come, I want to call on Mr. Hastings.

Mr. HASTINGS. Thank you, Congressman McIntyre.

I'll add that this is one of many significant hearings that the Helsinki Commission is holding, and thank you for hosting it.

I want to thank our presenter, Mr. Gefter, and welcome him here.

I'm sure that he will edify us better as we progress, and if time permits, perhaps I might have a question or two, if permitted, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you.

Mr. Gefter, welcome, and we'll let you proceed.

Mr. GEFTER. Excuse me, please, for my primitive English—and maybe, I hope, non-primitive thinking about my topic.

I will try to read my preliminary text, but after, you can give me questions, of course.

Dear commissioners, ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to speak here today on the human rights situation in Russia.

Russia is becoming a normal country—slowly, and controversially; but as regards human rights, it has very little in common now with the so-called "outcast" countries.

However, recently by now there black spot, so to say, on this surface which is not exactly shining, by the way.

But first a couple of general words, especially starting with what is connected with Chechnya and how the authorities react to this awful terrorism all over Russia.

As you know, authoritarian trends are increasing in Russia now, and one distinction of this trend should be criminal prosecution of the people who are socially. This should be clear identified as political immunity to persecution.

What are the driving forces behind it? The most immediate one is the increasing role of the so-called power institutions, or, as we call them, power structures, sularikee and the security institutions too.

This development is the result of many factors. Chechnya, who has often goes far beyond any understandable limits.

Another factor is, next, people being unhappy and expressing their protest against the social and economic policies and against violation of their rights by individual officials.

I believe the third is to what may be called preventive action—from the side of state, of course.

All the more often people are persecuted who are not happy with some individual official's actions or with some individual government body's actions while the authorities claim that this individual's action should be considered as representing the state and should be protected by the state.

We don't mean that any such protests are illegal, and should be approved. What I am saying is the methods and the scope of state persecution, be it by legal or administrative or criminal persecution are not fair, obversely selective, and is directed against those who are not liked by the authorities or just by individual officials.

My key conclusion may be preliminary. The first: There have been no mass criminal prosecutions now, recently in and used to be during, after and/or years of the Soviet Union. That is in the Soviet Union: A, based on ideology; B, declaring a large social group dangerous for state; or C, persecuting people for public criticism—as happened in the late Soviet times.

The second position, point: There have been principal changes of the social, political and legal situation in the post-Soviet states, and in my native Russia, of course, too, but law enforcement borders have not changed that much. Their methods, are pretty much the same. Very often, political, corporate, and even personal reasons prevail over the rule of law.

Besides that, the authorities should feel responsible for the whole political atmosphere in our country, which cannot be influenced with legal system.

In conclusion—the last, but not the least, by my opinion—I would like to return to the most dangerous manifestations of the whole atmosphere, which I mentioned at the beginning.

Besides numerous victims of the military conflict in Chechnya, and besides the convicted victims of campaign against ersatz terrorism, we have political prisons, prisoners, in Russia now. They are given huge prison sentences, as if murderers or criminals, and this was done in a manner which has nothing to do with the principles of the rule of law and habeas corpus.

The authorities call them enemies of the state, and we call them victims of the regime.

It's fike, the first, it's fike spies, in fact scholars, really—Valentin Danilov and Eva Sutaget, who got 14 and 15 years in prison, correspondingly.

The second one, Egor Sentagium's fate is especially hairy because he has already spent six years in prison for his open work and a military politics analyst, presumably in the interest of U.S., according to the core centers.

The other two, the other persons, businessmen Vlasov Negediv and Mikhail Khodorkovsky, were selectively sentenced for nine years and had been singled out as scapegoats—one, to take responsibility for everybody who took part in development capitalism in Russia; and for their desire to get free from the bureaucratic dominance and to influence Russian politics, within constitutional limits, of course.

Naturally, they are not the only names on the list of people who reestablishing itself in bloodthirsty bureaucracy, Polis Everet, first of all. Plus fighting for their liberation should be symbolic as demonstration of responsibility for democracy in Malta, in my country.

In full correspondence with the law, their cases can and should be reconsidered or the process of pardon should be applied.

Looking forward to the fast-coming G-8 meeting now, and considering the Kremlin's plan on welcoming the next G-8 summit meeting to Russia, the American Congress and the president of U.S.A. can say, "We are happy to be partners in life" to Russian leader-

ship—“and stand together against numerous challenges,” but we should begin with correcting the unfineness in our own homes.

Each country should do its duty, recognize mitigating the suffering of those four people, who have already spent years in jail. By correcting these mistakes, reached, by my opinion, wars and crime you manifest your respect towards Russian constitution, towards the law in civil rights.

Most probably demonstrating such an attitude might result in more involved than discussions about the changes in electoral processes or choosing the legal governments and even jail called for this whole process in Chechnya.

Making these people free, might become clear an easier way for the authority to answer that question, where Russian politics are aimed at, toward our programs of human rights and freedoms for all persons, without exception, or towards state question and harassment without regard to what you have done.

Thank you very much.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you very much for your testimony.

Mr. Hastings, if you have any questions at this time?

Mr. HASTINGS. I'd like to ask Dr. Gefter, first, I have visited Russia on four different occasions, and each time I felt that things were changing and that you could see positive aspects in the society.

I make it a practice, when I go to places, to take the bus or the train, and in St. Petersburg, I spent about three hours alone just riding the bus system and underground. It was enjoyable for the reason that I could feel the sense of the people. I just add that part to demonstrate a little insight as to an American view of Russia.

I also was a participant in the December elections, as a monitor for OSCE.

But I've found the people, again, to be very forthcoming at the election sites, and I went to 11 in the south of Moscow.

But my question goes to the subjects that continue to come up about human rights and ethnic minorities, and one thing I do not know or clearly understand is the effect of the war in Chechnya on Russian society as a whole.

We see on the television here when buildings are blown up, and it's suspected that it's done by terrorists, so to speak. But how has that affected Russian society?

Dr. Gefter, one other component of that is: Does anti-Semitism—how do you assess the situation of the Jewish community in Russia or other ethnic minorities? I would be interested in your comments.

That would be all, Mr. Chairman, that I would have at this time.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you.

Mr. GEFTER. Thank you for your question.

Some parts of my—delighted parts of my answer.

At all reactions of Chechnyan events are very different in different parts of Russia. Maybe in neighboring area republics and south Russia, that is more intensive, because as—depending not only from war or even on the terrorist attacks, but the whole atmosphere is connected with the level of violations from the state actors and other social groups and social parties but in the main Russia, mostly persons are not connected with Chechnya, their ordinary life is not related directly from these events.

But the level of state violence—I mean state violence as the violence on the part of police and military officials, from bottom to top of this system—isn't growing, but in the last year we have, in bits of Russia—not provincial, no provincial areas, no areas—some attacks from the side of this policy main center, by contract, to serve by contract in Chechnya and return to their places, native places, attacks on these persons' businesses, without reason maybe, and there is, not the widespread situation, of course, but it's very dangerous, because in usual life not only connected with police working with crime, not always, because they are working with their relations as usual, too, is the first thing.

But the second question from you, connected with ethnic discrimination: By my opinion, personally, the discrimination of Jews is maybe on a very lower level from Soviet and maybe pre-Soviet times, but mostly there are no official collegiates in this field.

Two conditions here, to defend them from—defending the persons from not each kind of ethnic discrimination, and you understand me that in connection with Chechnya, the maximum of ethnic discrimination concerns to the persons who leave or arrive from Moscow, especially Chechnyans, native Chechnyans—beimach.

It's a serious problem. She is—not constantly grows, maybe, dangerous, of this problem, but sometimes, especially after terroristic attacks or another even train line or surface, we are watch the very significant influence of this discrimination.

But these kind of discriminations is provided not only officials, usually of the middle level, by the police officer, by the usual man of the market, on the street, and maybe on the schools, where. It's an illness watch those on the association to hold social organism inside Russia. Sometimes you will want to see by your own eyes, as you—when you arrived to bus station, train station, but is a serious problem.

Thank you.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you. Can you tell us, in your opinion, why you believe President Putin has decided to limit civil liberties and human rights in order to, quote, “manage democracy,” and your analysis of why he's doing that and whether or not you think that will be effective.

Mr. GEFTER. By my opinion, managed democracy is a stage term, of course, but it's not a constant trend of Russia top politics, because at the beginning of Putin's term, maybe some official ideologies promote this idea as anti-anarchist in times for instance, ruling, et cetera, but maybe they saw that ruling is not the center from Kremlin only, maybe there's more not onboard.

But in our side, in this middle of the second term of Putin ruling, the more usual term “limited democracy.” By my opinion, the powers extending—being against their ideas, forced them to rule what they constructed.

Mr. FINERTY. “The authorities themselves have kind of run themselves up against the wall to save themselves,” as he put it.

Mr. GEFTER. Yes.

Mr. MCINTYRE. OK.

Mr. GEFTER. Because ideas of more liberal members of Putin's administration, maybe, liberal economists and senators, consist from simple ideas.

Our country needs consolidation, consolidation attempts, to provide socially unpopular reforms, unpopular social reforms, in different branches of life, and for this the other

members, maybe, of Putin's administration gave attempts to rule on the parliament's activity of organization, et cetera, for—combine and don't attempt to, until special discussions, long-time promotion of reform, et cetera, et cetera.

But at this moment, they have the opposite situation. The minimum attempts of providing this report stops by the absence of feedback from society.

Mr. MCINTYRE. So do you think Putin's plan to do that is going to work? Would you say yes or no or maybe?

Mr. GEFTER. I mean that this clearly is a question with concern to the hope that Putin—President Putin have hopes on the results of his policies. I mean that not because he has not time for it in this term. Because, as I was saying, the previous attempts are stopped in the very positive time, the oil price, the international situation, et cetera, et cetera.

But now his government and his relatives have no time for long and unpopular reforming or in various branches of social life.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you, sir.

Mr. McNamara, who works with the staff, I'm going to let him continue chairing the meeting since I have to go to an Armed Services meeting with the secretary of defense.

I want to thank you very much.

Mr. MCNAMARA. Great. Thank you very much, Congressman.

My name is Ron McNamara. I'm currently serving as the international policy director for the Helsinki Commission.

I should indicate that there will be a transcription of today's proceedings available on the commission's Web site within 24 hours. Our Web site is www.csce.gov.

As part of our normal format for briefings we will open up to questions from the audience. We'd ask that you use the microphone when we do open it up to your questions, and please indicate your name, any affiliation that you might have, and try to succinctly pose your question to our expert this afternoon.

There were a couple of points that I'd like to see if I could pick up on.

One is that despite his lip service, talking about the important role of civil society in the Russian Federation, his administration is not always particularly friendly to non-governmental organizations, and certainly an important element of civil society is the media, and media outlets have and continue to come under pressure even as quasi-state enterprises snatch up their ownership—most recently Izvestia. "So goes the news," I guess I might say.

I wonder if you could elaborate a little bit in terms of this whole approach of the Kremlin vis-a-vis the media outlets in the country—because on a certain level there's sort of a vibrant press, some, certainly, of the electronic media, especially, and now we see, with the takeover of Izvestia, that there's quite a concerted effort to try to have some control over some of the media outlets.

Mr. GEFTER. Maybe the freedom and the status of media is not in the range of my interest and my activity, but I personally wrote in Izvestia during my working in an institution for three months. I had two small notes in Izvestia concern to very sharp moment of our public life. If you're not, of course, as one example, not the general picture.

But by my opinion, the problem is not connected with freedom. Maybe, more exactly, to say: about independence. Because frequently the media are not depended from different ideas, different representations of different government.

The journalists, the persons who are working in media, frequently state the goal to give his own representative or their own views on life, not give the wide spectrum of opinions, is the first.

The second, frequently in Russian media, and in Estonia paper too, not dividing the opinions and the news. It's a very strange mixture. Maybe for Americans it's not understandable——

Mr. MCNAMARA. We understand it to some extent, too.

Mr. GEFTER [continuing]. But it's very strange for us—what is the view, what is the fact, what is your opinion, but I don't have interest in your opinion as a private person. This picture is misunderstanding of not only for reason of depending with ruling on the Kremlin or on Gastrom, oftenly is not.

Maybe own censorship is more—as a censorship dependent not on limits of and borders of representations, it's own mentality its own censorship is prevailed on the state censorship, who, of course, take place in the state, in the state media, the official as second channel.

But for me, as a usual citizen, Russian citizen, as inspector of most media is enough to know the use it's enough. But maybe for some members of opposite parties, members of very strong opposition movements, are not of the situation, because they don't have the possibility of speaking as a—in this TV or radio station.

Sorry for my primitive——

Mr. MCNAMARA. No, not at all. You're doing great.

If you have any questions—from the audience—again, please approach the microphone here at the podium, and please give your name and your affiliation.

Mr. JONAS. My name is Sam Jonas. I'm here on behalf of Benjamin Cardin's office.

Mr. MCNAMARA. Mr. Cardin is our ranking member from the House side.

Mr. JONAS. My question has to do with the OSC parliamentary assembly starting next week.

In your estimation, what effect, if any, will this event have on the human rights situation in Russia and Russian-American relations?

Mr. GEFTER. I don't represent the influence of this event, of course, but if you understand my primitive proposal to push on Russian officials, maybe some small point, small point, related with maybe some personal.

My idea that pushing, pressing, on Russian policy in human rights field maybe begin not from general attacks on the political system in Russia, maybe the Americans and some parliamentarians from this assembly could begin from—decide more concrete problem with political persecutions, with other, very important, but limit it in volume.

Mr. MCNAMARA. Being specific, and if there are specific cases as opposed to systemic questions.

Mr. GEFTER. Yes. Because the systemic is very long and very sophisticated in discussing the problem. It's important, of course.

But this problem, especially what is connected with the fate of people with sentences, with long imprisonment, et cetera, it's very important and a very practical approach, by my opinion.

Mr. JONAS. Thank you for your answer.

Ms. MULLEN. My name is Mary Mullen, and I'm from the advisory and support committee.

I saw on BBC—which I watch each evening—a small showing of Chechnya and of Russian soldiers going into Chechnyan homes and taking out boys about 10 or 11 years old, and the family was screaming and the boys were begging, “Don't take me,” and I'm wondering: What do they do with these boys and do you know about this and is this part of the human rights complaints or—if you could discuss it, I would appreciate it.

Mr. GEFTER. It's a very serious problem, of course, but I don't know about concrete conditions. By my representation of modern—of current situation at Chechnya, there are not often attacks on small children or women or ageds, et cetera.

Now, there are very controversial situation in some areas inside Chechnya, because the actors, military actors, not only officials, actors are federal war institutions, are Chechnyan institutions, are separatist forces, et cetera. But there are some—and especially military—officials, authorities, by my representation, of course, transition are not strong control and strong ruling of activities of each soldier, each officer, especially who arrived from other regions from Russia by contract.

It's my condemnation to my government, my criticism of my government, connected more with unrolling of this process, on the excellence of attempts to judge, to punish, the persons who have—their human rights violation of the people, et cetera, more than direct ruling of this kind.

But the last—not the least—problem connected with some criminal sources against military officers, who has crimes against—this whole operation in Chechnya, some Jews in Rostov and in other cities, regions, of Russia are not given the convictions coming in, no convictions. In real cases, when military kills some persons, it's not questions about it. Maybe with the order of above, but the juries, usual Russian citizens, don't wish record life. This is a crime.

It's a very, very dangerous situation from the special bottom, not only from top of the power.

Mr. MULLEN. Because of the terrorist attacks on the Chechnyans, they feel perhaps that.

I wanted to know if you knew what happened to the boys, though. Why were they taking those boys? Do they use them in their army? What do they use the boys for?

Mr. GEFTER. Yes. I don't understand this concrete fact. Assure that that's not constructed by nature, because sometimes “military person” means that teenagers, not 10-year-olds—maybe 15-year-olds, maybe 16-year-olds—belong to separatistic military or to rebels.

But it's not constant and widespread situation—by my opinion so—I don't work in Chechnya in this war, only in the first war times.

Ms. HOMER. My name is Lauren Homer, and I'm with International Law Group, a private law firm. My area of expertise is religious freedom in Russia.

But I have a more general question, it follows on the last one, which is: To what extent do you think that the human rights violations that we're seeing all over Russia and in the religious freedom area—where churches are being knocked down or closed, and just all sorts of lawless activities going on—is due to the overall breakdown of the Russian governmental system and to what extent do you think it's part of a deliberate state policy of picking on weaker groups because they're easy to pick on, no one's standing up for them, and then it gives some of the anger and darker forces in society an outlet?

Mr. GEFTER. I mean, it's not a common uniform picture. There are some cases, of course. I don't mean that there exists official politics in this, as it exists it's not, but in some regions, or in some situations in some regions, the influence of Russian Orthodox Church or other influential—not necessarily official—group is very great.

The bureaucrats or the, maybe, middle level—not Moscow, Kremlin, et cetera have the tradition. Who is the main in my area? At Soviet times it's Reichholm and the KJB, et cetera. Now who is it? Maybe a governor, maybe a great businessman, or a criminal, and sometimes this Russian Orthodox Church and other conventional persons.

By my opinion, usually this case is connected with, by Russian terms, “syecht” it's more easily object for attack. Oftenly they are working in the gray zone between traditional religious forms and trends and for powers, for national sort of so it's more easy to push public opinion, very often—newspapers or other mass media—against these small groups. But sometimes the official politics against ego with, instance, some special groups too, and they laugh.

By my opinion, what's very dangerous now is widespread opinion and the attempts to attack Muslim groups, especially Muslim groups who became—belonged to radical Islam. Not military radical, of course. It's: radical by opinion, by representation of world, et cetera. Cheev Butach Reev groups, for example, et cetera.

It is very dangerous, because this attack is organized by radical things, from Supreme Court of Russian Federation, who gave the special decision in this Muslim organizations, and up to police, up to, say, local officials, by my opinion, is more dangerous than others.

Mr. VASILEVF. My name is Pasha Vasilevf. I am from the Center of Strategic and International Studies.

My question is related to an institution that I think is quite famous related to hazing in the military, where it's been the same in the Soviet times, and it seems to continue and to even become worse recently. I wanted to know your opinion about what is going on and if the Russian government is trying to or doing something about that situation.

Mr. GEFTER. I'm afraid that not, but now, I know, our ombudsman suggested to discuss—to organize role police, special-role police, what did not—belongs to Defense Ministry and towards—one of the roles of this special institution must be directed against citizenship, maybe.

By my opinion, there are not palliative decisions. By the opinion of march of NGO's activities is the main step to stop this, even is regulating from compulsory military service.

By my opinion and by opinion of much of us, of them, the alternative here is not the decision in our condition, as we hope, as we go. Maybe after some years. In real conditions, Chechnyan war, of counterterroristic and other—even since the wars in Russia, it's not possible in the role as a society.

Mr. VASILEVF. Thank you.

Mr. MCNAMARA. I wanted to pick up on a point that you sort of alluded to a little bit, and that is in sort of the area of democracy in Russia.

We have to ask ourselves: What are the checks in place against the executive power in your country?

Mr. GEFTER. "Checks"—

Mr. MCNAMARA. In other words, sort of checks and balances. Here in the United States context you have the Congress and so forth, and understandably there's a parliamentary system in Russia, but even there, there doesn't have to be sort of unanimity of opinion between the legislative and executive branch.

Is the state Duma a check against the Putin administration? The courts? Or the people? Because frankly I found it quite interesting—the manifestation after the proposed reforms of the social net, that that seemed to get the attention of the authorities.

But in the normal course of the governance, what controls are there, really, on executive power in Russia today?

Mr. GEFTER. Yes. Maybe, by my sophist opinion, in order to give a view on this problem, as I say, the main point of—there are not institutional opponents to Kremlin, to top power in the country, but I hope—and maybe my colleagues hope—that there are some limits of power inside the power, not between the branches—in usual democracy of a country—but between some groups inside refuge of power.

My personal hope maybe connected with well-known institutions, warn about the power, as the power is a lone European actor in Russia.

It's not real now, of course, after 200 years, after Pushkin times, but maybe the representative views on top leaders of our country is not simply Soviet once, 20 and 30 years ago, because it's who not go away. He represents the—modern Russia is—strongly rules the country, but the Western side of the country. Maybe authoritarian country, not with the corpus (ph), the warrants of rights, not the totalitarian regime.

Long term I hope only on activity of usual, still activity of persons who, by my opinion, the volume of these persons, the quantity of these persons, slowly grow—in business, in NGO, in other branches of life. But it's very long time, you understand.

Mr. MCNAMARA. Well, I was interested, because in President Putin's most recent state of the federation address, after bemoaning the demise of the Soviet Union he then went on to boldly declare that "The ideals of freedom, human rights, justice and democracy have for many centuries been our society's determining values" and then concluded that "Ours is a free nation." That was his take.

I don't know if you have any reaction. I know my colleague, John Finerty, has something.

Mr. FINERTY. I just wondered, Valentin, if I could follow up.

You said that you rely on the average citizen—you think that the hope of Russia is the average Russian citizen.

You and I are about the same age. You might be a little older than I am. But for a while it was common, in the United States, in the West, that the younger generation of Russians would sort of be the ones that would lead forward and the older generation were the ones with the older ideas.

Do you think that's the case, by and large, in Russia today?

Mr. GEFTER. Maybe I am not belonging to understand innovation.

By my opinion, some part of them are not politically and socially involved, in modern terms, at all. In general, Russian society is very automatized, very integrated, more than—easily more than Soviet times, by my opinion, and maybe, in the same view, more than too, because our tradition of social collective life is fascinated, fasciticated, by Soviet way of life, and now much of young persons talk about his career, his money, his racing, et cetera, et cetera, not about—as last time.

We see some parts of politically-orientated young persons, with a lot of them directed in the official, ideological direction role of state as the main actor and similar ones. The official source of support—of course, support by money, by other things—support these attempts to organize.

But, by my opinion, it's not a crucial part of society. For me, more important is the social public activity. Then their absence of interest.

Mr. MCNAMARA. Are there any further questions?

Well, thank you very much for coming.

I'd just note that the upcoming G-8 summit meeting—that you referred to—in Scotland in early July provides another opportunity for President Bush to meet with his Russian counterpart and to discuss bilateral relations, and our commission is circulating amongst our members a letter to President Bush, urging him to raise some of the human rights issues, some of which were raised during our briefing here this afternoon.

Again, I welcome the fact that you've come this afternoon to join us.

A transcript will be available, as well as other materials, on our Web site: www.csce.gov.

Thank you very much.

Whereupon the briefing ended at 3:06 p.m.



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