

Editor's Introduction

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Is it time to change our journal's name? Can we say with any authority or respectability that Russia and her former states are building "democracy" by anyone's definition? Trends, policies, and events over the past several years suggest otherwise. Gone are the halcyon days of debate and honest reporting, and of perestroika in all policy arenas, domestic and foreign. Perhaps we should rename the journal *Rekonstruktsiya: The Pro-Soviet Journal of Reconstruction*?

As this issue goes to press, I am struck by how little has changed in the past twenty years. Gorbachev launched an "Asian offensive" in 1988, traveling east and calling for a Russo-Chinese summit. Foreign policy, as *Mark Katz* points out, has resumed a "Primakovian" bent. Seeking to re-create multipolarity in the face of American unilateralism and economic supremacy, Putin is looking east to China, India, and other states for improved relations and economic ties. He is also looking south. *James Warhola* and *William Mitchell* report on a warming trend in Russian-Turkish relations driven largely by economic and security concerns. In the near abroad, *Charles Ziegler* sees a more concerted effort to promote Russian culture, language, and pride in the Central Asian states where large populations of ethnic Russians still reside. The Russian diaspora is regaining prestige in the post-Soviet states.

In the judicial sphere, we see continued struggles in designing, enforcing, and respecting law. *Flemming Splidsbael Hansen* demonstrates the difficulties surrounding the creation of a Russian law on conscientious objectors (*alternativshchiki*). Once Russia joined the Council of Europe in 1996, it was essentially "shamed" into observing this law, provided for in the 1993 constitution. *Kristi O'Malley* untangles the controversy over the implementation of jury trials in Russia. Does the Russian populace really have a mature-enough legal consciousness to conduct jury trials? The Supreme Court overturns many acquittals that jury trials have dealt. Perhaps it will take decades to remove the image held by judges and legal scholars of the defendant as caged and guilty until proven innocent. *Thomas Firestone* outlines in superb detail the shortcomings of Russian law with respect to investigating organized crime. He argues that critical tools, such as wire-

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taps and undercover operations, are available but cannot be used. Wiretap evidence is treated as “state secrets,” and disclosing these “secrets” makes the investigator vulnerable to prosecution! Undercover agents can operate, but they receive no protection. Tools such as these could be used to investigate organized human trafficking operations in the Russian Far East more effectively. As *Emily Schuckman* reveals, human trafficking in the Russian Far East continues to grow unabated. South Korea’s responses to these crimes should serve as a model for Russia, in her view.

Party affiliation is still virtually nonexistent in Russia, as *Stephen White* reports. Based on surveys he conducted in 2005, only 1 percent of the adult population claims allegiance to a political party. This is no surprise, given the dominant and intrusive role of the Communist Party in citizens’ lives for seven decades. Cynicism continues to run rampant and hinder efforts to build solid platforms and political perspectives.

Perhaps the most interesting and promising developments today lie with the youth. One might be tempted to conclude that today’s youths are mobilized by the Kremlin to perform patriotic, nationalistic duties and molded into becoming Putinesque automatons and mouthpieces for the president. It is simply not so. *Viktoriya Topolova* presents a nuanced case. She believes that the situation in Russia, unlike Ukraine, is extremely volatile, complex, and in dire need of further study. Russia’s youth are pulled in many directions: liberal, conservative, patriotic, and skeptical. Parties and associations include “Walking with Putin,” “Walking without Putin,” “Ours,” “I Think,” and many others.

As we “walk together” through this issue of “Dem,” we ask you to form your own views and to consider taking up the study of youth organizations and trends in the CIS so that we might all become more informed as to what is happening with the generation born during or after Gorbachev’s tenure. This cohort has no personal connection to the Soviet era, save the views and experiences of their parents. Let’s explore today’s youth culture!