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CERTAIN ASPECTS OF RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

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THIS IS not a lecture in the real sense of the word. It's more a series of thoughts spoken aloud, judgments which do not pretend to be ultimate truths. A couple of words about how we see ourselves in the contemporary world. Russia is not the USSR. It is smaller both in territory and in population and in economic potential. And, today, it is not in the best shape. Nevertheless, I think we have the necessary basis to count Russia as a powerful state, although not a superpower. This expression has come to take on a negative connotation in recent years--so, consider Russia simply powerful and international. And the issue here is not simply nuclear strength--although that is no less important-- but many other components: size of the population, its level of education, its quality, its culture and territory, its mineral resources and economic potential.

Our objective is to raise Russia's international role as a powerful state, as a pillar of the emerging multipolar world. I stress multipolar, not pyramidal. Today, Russian President Boris Yeltsin appeared before the Russian Federation's Federal Council, and presented an annual address on the state of the union. He formulated his views about the contemporary world like this: "We find that the world must

lean not on the military world, or on one power center, rather on law and the principle of respect for the interests of all states."

"...Those who accuse us of imperial ambitions, are either innocently confused, or intentionally distorting the reality."

The next issue is the protection of the territorial integrity of Russia, taking into consideration the Chechen factor, as well. Another concern is the progress of the process of CIS integration of CIS states. "The most important direction of Russian policy is the strengthening of the CIS," said Boris Yeltsin in his address.

Of course, among the fundamental issues are contributing to the resolution of conflicts within the CIS; deepening of the disarmament processes, strengthening of the regimes of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, contributing to the creation of the common and comprehensive security regime model for Europe, designating a central role for the OSCE within the European and euro-atlantic organizations, and in that regard, offsetting NATO's expansion. Through the development of equal and cooperative relations with the US and the states of Eastern and Western Europe, Russia

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intends to also diversify its foreign policy, particularly through strengthened relations with the countries of the Asian and Pacific region.

Here, I must mention the People's Republic of China, the Arab world, Latin America and Africa. One of the important issues is the protection of the rights of our citizens in the CIS and Baltic countries. In some countries, this is an acute problem. Armenia is not among these countries. The development of cultural and humanitarian cooperation with other countries.

Among our objectives is aiding in the resolution of conflicts in regions of strategic importance (Balkans, Middle East, Afghanistan, Korea), the creation of favorable conditions for the future integration of Russia into international financial and economic systems, under acceptable conditions. The fundamental guideline is that Russia is determined to preserve its vital interests. Nevertheless, we do not wish to become confrontational. We are prepared to search for a balance of interests, and, where they exist, real opportunities for cooperation.

I wish to call your attention to the fact that in pursuit of the above-mentioned foreign policy objectives and methods for their implementation, there is a rather broad consensus among the Russian public. With regard to several of the issues, there is even a consensus, or very close to consensus. and apparently, it is not coincidental, that during the previous and current years, the foreign ministry has not been subjected to extensive and severe criticism.

I will elaborate on three of the above-mentioned issues: CIS, Transcaucasus and NATO.

CIS

I can confidently say that this is our first priority and Russia's historically defined sphere of influence—strategically, politically, economically, philanthropically and in all other respects. There is nothing imperialistic in all this, and those who accuse us of imperial ambitions, are either innocently confused, or intentionally distorting the reality. The CIS states are our neighbors, and one is always interested in one's neighbors. Our economies, until very recently, were one unit, and are still interdependent, as they were in the past, and are suffering from the sever-

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ance of links. It is not possible to underestimate our linguistic and cultural commonalities. The processes of integration have taken over the whole world. Then, why would anyone want to deny Russia and its commonwealth partners that right, I would say that natural right?

Let me stress that the CIS was created and continues to exist on a strictly voluntary basis. Regarding the processes of integration, there is the strong awareness that this is not re-

integration; there is no return to the former soviet system, and the sovereignty of the CIS member states is irreversible. Finally, the golden rule of integration is defined and strictly observed, according to which each state of the commonwealth decides for itself its own direction of integration, speed, and breadth. no one forces it to speed up or slow down; additionally, no one tries to pull it towards the CIS by isolating it from the rest of the world, and impeding its integration in other structures.

In perspective, taking the CIS as a basis, we are talking about the creation of an open, powerful center and practical cooperation with other centers in our multipolar world. Unfortunately, within certain western countries, there is a reaction to the integration processes taking place within the CIS. Russia is blamed for having imperialist tendencies. Let me honestly say that the negative reaction to the integration processes taking place within the CIS is one of the chief irritants in the relationship between Russia and the West. Let me quote from Boris Yeltsin: "We wish to have brotherly relations with Ukraine, that is what our people demand. We must also strive for future integration with Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan and other CIS countries. I wish to specifically speak about the future economic and political rapprochement between Belarus and Russia. Developing the path of cooperation between two sovereign states is not easy. But our states and peoples are fully prepared to take that path. This year will be a significant year of resolutions for our two countries."

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Andrey Urnov was born in 1937 in Moscow. He was graduated from the Moscow Institute for International Relations in 1961. In 1976, Mr. Urnov has defended his doctoral candidacy on "The New Course of the Republic of South Africa," which was published in 1982 and served as a basis for his doctoral degree. He is also author of many articles.

From 1990-1994 Andrey Urnov has served as ambassador of the Soviet Union to Namibia. Prior to his Yerevan appointment, Mr. Urnov continued his diplomatic service as ambassador for special assignments. In 1995 he was appointed Russia's ambassador to Armenia.

TRANSCAUCASUS

When we say Transcaucasus, we generally have three states in mind: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia. There is the concept of macroregion; this also includes Iran and Turkey. These countries have substantial influence on the situation in the Transcaucasus. They have their interests here. There are a number of countries interested in the region: developing, western countries such as the US, Great Britain, France. In principle, this is natural and normal. Today, the republics of the Transcaucasus are sovereign, independent states. As such, they are in turn interested in establishing, developing, broadening new ties. At the same time, those countries share no fewer interests with Russia. Russia, itself is tied by a thousand threads to the Transcaucasus. We are still unable to define international relations with mathematical accuracy, nevertheless, evidently, it is not coincidental that the Caucasus has always been the center of Russia's gaze, and Russia's presence in this region has already a history of several hundred years. Tsarist and communist regimes have come and gone, but the interests have remained. The question arises, how do the interests of Russia and other countries merge in the region. I wanted to say the "newcomers", but I realize that neither Turkey, nor Iran nor Great Britain can be called beginners in the region.

I would not be honest if I insisted that there are no problems. The fact that the inter-bloc confrontation is behind us does not yet mean that the world is devoid of conflict. There exist different interests and clashes. But the new post-confrontational system of international relations demands that we find a civilized solution to those contradictions, and ensure the just balance of the interests of the various sides. That necessarily assumes that all the states in defining their interests must realistically face the interests of other states, know their limits, and be prepared for mutual compromise.

Any unbiased analyst can not deny that Russia's interests in the Cau-

casus, nevertheless, are greater than those of other non-regional states, and we wish that this reality is accepted and respected by our partners. Otherwise, there will emerge not balance but a disruption of balance, and where balance is disrupted there you will find tension, something which is highly undesirable. Thus, we do not wish to rule in the Transcaucasus or to impose our will. Neither will we allow others to dictate to us. We will defend our legitimate rights with determination and persistence.

What do we want in the Transcaucasus? The Transcaucasus is part of the CIS, and everything that I mentioned above, with regard to the CIS, also concerns the Transcaucasus. Sim-

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ply put, we desire good, friendly, close relations with all three republics of the Transcaucasus, a deepening of bilateral and multilateral relations in all spheres within the CIS. We want peace in the region, we hope that all conflicts will find mutually satisfying resolutions, and that Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia will constructively cooperate among themselves, and build their common Caucasian home open to the rest of the world.

That is the ideal. This idea is shared by the Transcaucasian states. Read the declaration: "In the name of international agreement, peace, economic and cultural cooperation" which in 1996 was signed in Kislovotsk, by the ministers of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia. Everything is said quite well there. Sometimes they criticize us for not having a doctrine for the Caucasus. How is that declaration not a doctrine?

In any case, it is easier to declare intentions and point to the paths for their

implementation than to actually implement them. In recent years, our foreign policy in the Caucasus has been to develop bilateral relations and assist in the resolution of conflicts. Russia attempted to approach all, I repeat all the Transcaucasus states. The results were different. I don't want to place all the responsibility on our partners. It is apparent that we, too, did not work hard enough. But the general tendency during these years, was stated clearly. Armenia has demonstrated greater interest, and bilateral relations between Armenia and Russia have surpassed the others. I am convinced that that momentum must be maintained, that we must not be satisfied with achievements, but must move forward. Let me refer to just a few examples.

With regard to the ratification of the Russian military bases in Armenia. The president of the defense committee of the state Duma, L. Rochlin's view does not reflect the opinion of the committee which he chairs, let alone the entire Duma. The Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation has clearly come forward in favor of ratification. The Russian president has presented the agreement for ratification. First Deputy for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Boris Pastukhov has been instructed to present it for ratification.

The military presence, together with political, economic and other issues, is the most important element of Russia's presence in this region, and that needs to be maintained. Of course, if there is agreement at the receiving end. Armenia has given such agreement.

With regard to the statement of Aman Tuliev, let me note that the formal statements regarding Russian foreign policy can be made by the president, prime minister and foreign minister of Russia. In other words, this is private opinion, which is not substantiated by documents. The statement did not effect bilateral relations, and I believe it won't.

As to the ongoing investigation in the state Duma, it is simply an internal matter. (continuation on p. 4)

The postponement of the visit of Russia's defense minister Radionov has its internal objective reasons. It is expected that during the current year, the chief event of our bilateral cooperation will be the signing of the renewed agreement on cooperation and mutual assistance. The negotiations toward agreement on the text are practically completed and the signing will be at the highest level.

It is a pleasure to note the invigoration of cultural ties between our two countries. Recently, Cinematography Committee Chairman Medvedev visited Armenia. There are preliminary agreements to host Russian-Armenian film festivals, and joint production of one or two films. There is significant movement in the economic sphere, as well. First and foremost, I have in mind the agreement with Russia's Gazprom, which was signed by Prime Minister Armen Sarkisyan, during his Moscow visit. You are naturally interested in our relations with Azerbaijan. For Russia, this is a very important state. It is located at the crossroads of the Muslim population centers of Russia and neighboring countries. We have a common interest: the Caspian. The number of Russians living in Azerbaijan is not small. Finally, in Azerbaijan, one feels very strongly the activities of those powers, which, to put it mildly, do not benefit the strengthening of our relations.

But we do want, and we have always wanted, such a strengthening of relations. Thus, statements implying that Russia's direction or policy in the Transcaucasus is changing or veering more towards Azerbaijan is not substantiated. If the interrelationship between Russia and Azerbaijan has become somewhat more active, or has improved, that is in complete accordance with our previously adopted direction. It is not that the direction has changed, rather that the policy has begun to produce results. What must not happen is that the improvement of relations with one country come at the expense of another country, in this case, Armenia. It is understandable that both in Azerbaijan, and Russia, there are forces which would wish that things go in exactly

that direction. Russia is a country of varying opinions. We have a variety of political forces, which have adopted different views and positions, but that isn't the policy of Russia or its leadership. Let me tell you a secret: in Armenia there are also people who blame us for the lack of a policy, and instead, propose their own. In simple terms, it goes like this: "Azerbaijan is defective, there's no need to spend energy on it, it's time to take it in hand." Such a principle, in my view, is not productive, and defeatist. As long as there are minimal possibilities for mutual understanding and cooperation, they must be utilized.

KARABAGH

This brings us to the issue of Karabagh. As mediators, our responsibility is quite heavy. The mediator, as

"NATO expansion can become a critical decision that may cost the peoples of Europe dearly."

a rule, is subjected to criticism by all the parties to the conflict. All are dissatisfied with it. But as soon as it becomes appealing to any one of the parties, it ceases to be a mediator. Our position is clear, and thus, as a member of the Minsk group, and an independent mediator, we strive for a just and lasting solution. In order to be durable and lasting, the solution must be acceptable to all the parties. As I have often had the opportunity to say, such an agreement can be expressed by a *de jure-de facto* formula. The importance here is Nagorno Karabagh's security, including international guarantees, ensuring its free land access with Armenia—in other words, the elimination of the enclave situation, the creation of the possibility for the population of Karabagh to resolve matters of life and progress, on their own; the rest is secondary.

NATO

This is the second irritant in our relations with the West. Recently we listened here with great interest to the statement of the Secretary General of

NATO with regard to NATO's eastward expansion. Frankly speaking, his arguments did not convince me. On the contrary. His statement convinced me more about the correctness of Russia's position. I will quote in its entirety the portion of President Boris Yeltsin's address in this matter. "We will spare no effort to help create a world which is prevented from returning to the past. For that reason we are against the plans for NATO's expansion to the east. Such an expansion will cause great damage to our security. The west's motive behind the expansion is to keep Russia out of Europe and isolated militarily. NATO expansion can become a critical decision that may cost the peoples of Europe dearly. Let me remind you that efforts to create a European security system without Russia, let alone against its wishes, have failed.

We will do everything we can not to allow the division of Europe. I am hopeful that my upcoming meeting with US President Bill Clinton will provide new impetus to the search for a strategy for cooperation. We have both been elected to a second term. Those terms end at the turn of the century. We must think about the kind of world in which our peoples will live in the 21st century. We must present our successors with a secure world based on trust."

The evolution of the positions of western leaders on this matter is interesting. Regarding the reunification of Germany, they assured M. Gorbachev that NATO would not "move an inch" eastward. This has been recorded in the minutes. Although that formulation never received a legal status, but it is accepted that a gentleman's word is more valuable than gold. And, suddenly now, expansion. The question arises, what has happened. Is the new Russia suddenly more dangerous for the west, than the USSR was? And especially in today's situation, where already, for several years, the Warsaw convention no longer exists. It would have seemed

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that after the removal of the Warsaw convention, the necessity for NATO, too, would have ended. At worst, it would have remained within the old borders. But instead, a mechanism has been put in place for its expansion.

The desire of the eastern and central European countries to enter NATO is cited as a primary explanation. It is presented in such a way as to imply that such an expansion is not so important to NATO, but that NATO can not refuse. Mr. Solana somehow seemed to suggest that if Russia had succeeded in convincing the respective countries to withdraw their requests, the issue would have been closed. In that case, why not try to convince those countries through the joint efforts of NATO and Russia? Of course, that would succeed. By taking into consideration its neighbors' concerns, Russia has proposed all sorts of compromises. We were prepared to provide security guarantees, both unilaterally and together with NATO, as well. We would not have objected to NATO's unilateral guarantees either. For the security of Eastern Europe that would have been truly satisfactory. Those suggestions however were not accepted. The conclusion therefore is that it is not simply the desire of the Eastern European countries which is the determinant. NATO, if it finds it necessary, can refuse to do so. Since it did not do so, that means there must be a congruence of interests.

Why are we so stubbornly against NATO expansion? Because we are talking about our own national security, our future. They tell us that

NATO does not want to create divisive lines in Europe, and that the expansion would not endanger Russia. They even say that it must be explained to Russia that it is confused, the poor thing does not understand what is for its good, and what isn't. But, the whole Russian nation essentially is in agreement that NATO expansion is a hostile move against Russia. Are we all suffering from an inability to reason, and somehow, some outsider can better understand and feel Russia's interests?

NATO expansion, in one way or another, will lead to the creation of divisive lines in Europe. Those lines are visible, they pass through the eastern borders of the alliance's new members. A new outline of Europe is being drawn for decades to come. "They" will be on one side, and "we" on the other; the so-called "clean" and "non-clean."

And this is not ordinary geography. This is a new geopolitical and strategic situation. The strategic balance is changed, the entire basis of arms control is endangered—the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty and others. Those declarations which purport that the expanding alliance holds no hostile intentions towards Russia do not stem our concern. In politics, intentions are abstract, and potential is concrete. While not implemented, it holds the temptation of implementation at every turn. It's like a Chekhov gun; it doesn't exist and the danger does not exist that it will go off. But if it's hanging from the wall, it is possible that one day it will be necessary for someone.

NATO's expansion will extremely complicate the formation of

Europe. It is already sowing the seeds of distrust and alienation, creating the premises for future conflict. Here there are two perspectives: moral and practical.

When an incorrect, dangerous step is in the planning, one must struggle against it. Even when it is not possible to prevent it. If I cannot pre-empt evil, that does not at all mean that I must agree with it, or even, acquiesce to it. The intent is to reduce the possibility of evil to a minimum. Having affirmed our opposition to NATO plans in principle, being realistic, we wish to reduce the danger that those plans may present for our security.

Today, that issue is being studied. We insist on the necessity for the adoption of a binding NATO-Russia document, to be signed at the highest levels, subject to ratification. In that document, as we envision it, the obligations about not deploying nuclear weapons in those countries where they currently do not exist, about the non-movement of NATO forces, as well as mechanisms for consultation and agreement, must be affirmed. We expect that NATO will be transformed, and its political functions in particular will be reinforced, and the focus of activity will be shifted to the peace-keeping field. On the whole, we are in favor of the creation of a new general and comprehensive security system for Europe, where the principal role will be relegated to the OSCE. In that system, also, there will be room for NATO, not as the principal structure, but as one, albeit important, element.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

- What do you say about the role of the military in Russian foreign policy?

- Alas, the world today is such that force is still a major factor. This element must be reduced to a minimum. But as long as the world is as it is today, the role of the army is great. It is another matter, that the army's role would be better formulated as preventive and a contribution to stability. Once stability has been achieved, the diplomats may negotiate and find solutions.

- Recently during the visit of the president of Georgia to Azerbaijan, the two presidents agreed to transport Azeri oil

through Georgia. This contradicts Russia's interests. Don't you think that Russia will be interested in reviving the Nagorno Karabagh conflict to bring Azerbaijan in line?

- I don't believe so. Our policy is that the Nagorno Karabagh conflict be resolved as soon as possible. What concerns the agreement between Azerbaijan and Georgia, here I believe there is nothing new. It was agreed long ago about two routes for the pipeline. One was to go through Georgian territory,

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the other through Russia, and perhaps there will come a time when a third pipeline might go through Armenia?

- *Recently, there is disturbing news about the increase of military forces along the Armenian borders and along Karabagh's borders, as well, and one cannot rule out the resumption of military operations. What, in your opinion, will be Russia's stand if such is the case?*

- I believe that such a case will not occur. I wanted to remind you of the most recent telephone conversation between the two presidents where they firmly asserted their commitment to the cease-fire. They agreed that even in the propaganda, they will refrain from acute, unnecessary moves. This proves that there is no need to over-dramatize the situation. In the future, the mediators will meet in the region, the Co-Chairmen will meet in Paris, and already, at the end of March, the first round of talks will resume in Moscow. I can note with satisfaction that both the Armenian and Azeri sides have agreed to participate. In other words, the process is back in motion.

- *What is Russia's position with regard to the Kurdish issue in Turkey?*

- That's an internal matter. I believe a solution must be found which will allow the Kurdish people to fully express themselves. And, it is necessary to put a stop to the military pressure. Unfortunately, some elements on the Kurdish side also employ terror tactics which ought to be ruled out.

- *In Armenian political thinking, there is the Barents curve which assumes links and cooperation along the Paris-Berlin-Moscow-Yerevan-Tehran axis. What is your opinion on the practical applicability of this?*

- Why not? We have good relations with Berlin and Paris and Tehran, you have such relations as well. If we are speaking about general links, no one would be opposed to that. If what is being considered is some sort of axis which will be opposed to some third party, that is already another issue.

- *Is the news about the Russian-Iranian military union, directed against NATO's expansion, correct?*

- Our relations with Iran are not bad, and we continue to cooperate, especially economically, politically. But I wouldn't want such cooperation to be construed to be in opposition to anyone.

- *What do you think of the possibility that the Karabagh conflict will be resolved along the lines of the Russia-Chechnya model?*

- The Russia-Chechnya model is still in the formulation stages, negotiations are just beginning. Today, Russia's President pointed to the cessation of hostilities as an important achievement. In his words, the two sides have just embarked on the path towards mutual understanding. But that process is not mature, and quite delicate. Extreme care must be taken by all sides. We are prepared to offer Chechnya broad rights, and on that basis, the decision will be made about Chechnya's remaining within Russia. As I understand it, the leadership of Karabagh has displayed an interest in this process. In my view, the issue of direct negotiations between Stepanakert and Baku is firmly substantiated, and difficult to argue. It is a given that Karabagh is recognized as party to the conflict, and that premise must be firmly maintained.

THURSDAY, APRIL 10



MR. EDWARD YEGORYAN

CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON
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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ARMENIA

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