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What kind of democratic developments for Russia?

Minutes of session 3 - 30 October a.m.

Participants: Bart Staes and Garry Kasparov

Staes. Pressures and intimidations on you and your party; you said you feared for your life; you have been appointed by your coalition as presidential candidate.

Kasparov. The situation is getting worse; this is the failure of the system created in the nineties; Putin's decision to become head of the list violates the principle that the president is the guarantor above all the parties and not a member of one of them; in the nineties candidates accepted the distribution of functions; democratic institutions have been turned into mere decoration useful for Putin to keep his place among civilised nations; this vacuum can last for a long time; all parties regardless of their place still live according to the fashion of the nineties, they will all disappear; Putin's attempt is to privatise the country through the elimination of democratic institutions; in the present regime there are elements of feudalism, Latin American dictatorship, of Mussolini's corporate state and loyalty to the leaders; the aim of this regime is to nationalise the expenses and privatise the profits; the gap between rich and poor is widening every day; a few hundreds richest family control most of the richness of Russia and its GDP; no doubt that Putin needs stronger and stronger control; those who say that this regime is necessary for the transition are fooling themselves; dividing Yeltsin's from Putin's years is wrong; still looking for a national identity; Putin is the consequence and the follow-up of Putin; with this managed democracy; any action of opposition is getting increasingly difficult; why Russia's opposition is still divided? Take a look at the nature of opposition: those who belong to the politics of the nineties are not really in opposition; opposition should try to do its job, in reality they play the game; over these years it was a failure; these elections will close the circle; today there is only one key element: to build or restore democracy; all talks about trying to get concessions from the regime are useless; the regime is making electoral rules tougher and tougher; our opposition is the best thing we could do: all together no matter whether from left or right in order to restore democracy; many difficulties and also unwillingness of those who called themselves democrats to engage in real opposition; we must not apply double standards; bringing together liberals and radical left we succeeded in create a democratic spirit; often no venues for our meetings, pressure and intimidation on our people; many people of our bloc facing lots of problems, false accusations, forced hospitalisation in psychiatric centres; "The other Russia" is now enemy number one for the Kremlin; they accuse us of being extremist but all we want is to be part of the political process; to be a registered party means that you already made some concessions to the regime; except for the Communist party with its old members all the other parties have problems as for the minimum required number of members (50.000); the registration process is the test for loyalty; Kremlin is rewarding with the right of participation to the elections only those parties who are loyal; Kasyanov's position is to boycott these elections and participate in presidential elections; United Russia decided today not to participate in the debates on television and political debates have been moved from prime time; Duma is not a real parliament but a political forum; only three parties very likely will make it: United Russia, Communists and maybe Just Russia; Zhirinosky

will not make it because he is not needed anymore; we want to offer the potential source of legitimacy in case for crisis; we are on the brink of a crisis; in Russia the government is not listening to public demands; we don't want to repair the system but to replace it.

Questions by **Cohn-Bendit** (will you take part in presidential elections? In which way another system can grow?), **Truepel** (strategic partnership without sharing values: how can it be possible? What do you thing about the independence of Kosovo?) and **Kallenbach** (how can your voice be heard in Russia and in the Kremlin?

Kasparov. In December after most parties are wiped out we can understand what our potential is; collecting 2 million signatures in a period in 2 months is impossible but for us it is a chance to communicate with people; yes, it is difficult to be heard in Russia but we have no alternative; people are gradually expressing interest about us; I support liberal democracy contrary to those who challenged it in the nineties; presidential powers must be reduced; we must reduce the gap between rich and poor; the economic policy must be decided by the parliament; our coalition is based on the recognition of universal liberal democratic values; Bolsheviks, who are part of "The other Russia" coalition, never took part in violent actions; as to Kosovo any immediate solution could cause a problem in Russia and could not be explained to Abkhazians for example; according to the polls Abkhazia is more important for Russians than the Olympic games in Sochi; no strategic partnership with those who don't share your values; Putin is acting like Lukashenko; inviting Putin to take part in the G7 club was a mistake, no democratic recognition should be given to him.

Questions by **Beck** (where do you get he money for your campaign? Your alliance with Bolsheviks is questionable because they are suspected of racism), **Lunacek** (all the political families in the EU see Putin as a strategic partner) and **Cramer** (do you think NATO's enlargement is a threat to Russia? Was the Orange revolution promoted by the American or a genuine democratic movement?

Kasparov. No free and fair elections in Russia otherwise nationalist parties would get more than 25% of the votes; I never compromised with Bolsheviks, it is them who accepted our platform, I did not move an inch; we have little support in the country but things are changing; I hope that the collapse of the regime will not end up in the collapse of the country like in the nineties; we expected the EU to say something about Putin's plans to stay in power; Putin is a KGB guy, his intentions are never displayed ahead of time; he is surrounded by circumstances that go beyond his control; the Orange revolution was confirmed by the following 2 elections and Ukraine did not collapse after the revolution; Ukraine enjoys elections with unpredictable results compared to us; not much money available for our campaign, no support for our demands but I see that there is a growing interest by the public opinion.

Questions by **Hautala** (investigation on Polytkovskaia's murder), **Harms** (lot of American money in support of the Orange revolution but it was not decisive) and **Horacek** (Kodorkhovski's case).

Kasparov. The investigation on Politkovskaia's murder is looking increasingly as a mockery, we will never hear anything as long as Putin stays in power; the question of Yukos is linked to this one and it shows the injustice of our judicial system; people were forced to testify against Kodorkhovski; this symbolises the end of the independence of the judiciary in Russia; as to Ukraine I am not aware to say how much American money was invested there but if it were so it would not even be 5% of what Russia invested there; Ukraine never experienced the destruction of democratic institutions; scenarios cannot be repeated, this regime in Russia cannot make it to 2012; we must try not to pay the price for this corrupt and inefficient regime.

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