

ILYA YASHIN



# THE CRIMINAL RUSSIA PARTY

AN INDEPENDENT EXPERT REPORT



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«THE CRIMINAL RUSSIA PARTY»,  
AN INDEPENDENT EXPERT REPORT

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AUTHOR:  
ILYA YASHIN

MATERIAL COMPILING:  
VERONIKA SHULGINA

TRANSLATION:  
EVGENIA KARA-MURZA

GRAPHICS:  
PAVEL YELIZAROV

PHOTO EDITOR:  
ALEXANDRA ASTAKHOVA

LAYOUT:  
ALEXEY BARANOV  
ANDRII YANKOVSKIY

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# UPWARD SOCIAL MOBILITY FOR CRIMINAL ELEMENTS

Russia's current ruling party emerged shortly before the 1999 parliamentary elections. It was created as an election campaign project called the "Interregional Movement for Unity" (Mezhregionalnoye Dvizheniye Yedinstvo or Medved). It was a political movement, which included officials and representatives of law enforcement structures upon which then-Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin relied. After the parliamentary elections, when President Boris Yeltsin gave up his post, voluntarily leaving the job to Putin, whom he named as his successor, a new political era began in Russia.

Russian oligarchs actively supported the newly created party in the 1999 elections. Boris Berezovsky and Roman Abramovich became Unity's main sponsors in the election campaign. Other major business representatives close to the Kremlin chipped in as well. With the "average donation" amounting to \$10 million, the budget of Unity's election campaign soon topped \$170 million.<sup>1</sup>

In October 1999, former Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin openly called Unity a project of the oligarchs. "I don't see anything good about the creation of this movement. They have no message - all they have is Boris Berezovsky," Chernomyrdin said at the time.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, Berezovsky was often believed to have initiated the creation of Unity. In the fall of 2000, he admitted as much. Speaking on NTV's Glas Naroda (Voice of the People) talk show, he declared that he had founded the movement for the sole purpose of guaranteeing Vladimir Putin's victory in the elections. In fact, it was also Berezovsky who came up with the symbol for the future ruling party. He saw the bear as the symbol that most accurately represented the spirit of Russia.<sup>3</sup>

"Today, United Russia does not like to be reminded that Berezovsky had anything to do with the emergence of the party. But the facts speak for themselves. We should not forget those who actually founded the party," says Tatyana Yumasheva, the daughter of the first Russian president. At the turn of the 21st century, Yumasheva was actively involved in Russian politics and influenced key decisions of the presidential administration.<sup>4</sup>

Unity won a majority of seats in the State Duma in the 1999 elections. Soon after that, the movement absorbed another major caucus, known as the Fatherland-All Russia caucus. In 2001, during a joint congress, the movement was converted into a party and officially changed its name to United Russia.

Vladimir Putin was gradually consolidating the regime of his personal power in the country. United Russia became a key element of the new political system with Putin as its leader. In the 2007 parliamentary elections, it was Putin who led the United Russia party list. Relying upon a media monopoly, the use of administrative resources and financial support from the oligarchs, United Russia gradually gained control over the entire legislative branch and all levels of government, from the federal to the municipal. United Russia members were playing an increasingly noticeable role in the national government. Almost all governors and heads of the national republics became United Russia members.

"The United Russia party has become a consolidating force that guarantees political stability," President Vladimir Putin has said.<sup>5</sup>

However, not many Russian citizens share the president's opinion. In fact, in recent years, Russians have been increasingly referring to United Russia as "the party of crooks and thieves."



A considerable part of the Russian population associates the ruling party with crime and corruption.

According to a poll conducted by the Levada Center, on the eve of the 2011 parliamentary elections, 33% of Russians agreed that United Russia was a party of crooks and thieves. A similar poll conducted in 2012 showed that 42% of respondents shared this opinion.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, in 2013, according to pollsters, more than half of all Russians considered United Russia to be a party of crooks and thieves. The same polls also showed that 62% of the population believed that Putin's subordinates were only interested in strengthening their personal authority and ensuring themselves financial benefits.<sup>7</sup>

Russians' attitude toward the ruling party is hardly surprising. Over the years of a de facto political monopoly, many top United Russia representatives have been involved in widely publicized criminal cases. With ever increasing frequency, State Duma members, senators, governors and mayors representing the ruling party have been imprisoned on charges of corruption and bribery, and even of masterminding murders.

In the 1990s, criminal organizations either opposed the state or bribed its representatives. However, the turn of the 21st century was marked by a new trend: organized crime groups began actively penetrating government structures by using United Russia's potential and resources. Thugs from the 1990s traded leather jackets and golden chains for business suits and party membership cards. Soon, they themselves were occupying government offices.

Criminal elements essentially began using the structure of the country's main political party as a means of upward social mobility; it allowed them to integrate into the government system and to gain access to budgetary resources.

This process led to a dramatic increase in corruption and to the wide-scale theft of the nation's wealth. Criminal structures were establishing strict control over entire industries of the Russian economy. Several Russian regions were left completely at the mercy of organized crime groups acting under the protection of the United Russia party.

The many criminal cases and arrests of United Russia members that have taken place in recent years show the scale of the problem. However, these measures have not actually solved anything; on the contrary, corruption has become a systemic issue. During its years in power, United Russia has learned not only how to generate corruption, but also how to build mechanisms guaranteeing immunity for a political regime based on theft and lies.

Today, United Russia leaders openly say that the fight against corruption represents a threat to the Russian state. For instance, Irina Yarovaya, Chairperson of the State Duma Committee on Security, declared that "the fight against corruption could destroy state sovereignty."<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, as was revealed in 2013, Yarovaya's family owns a luxury apartment in central Moscow that is worth roughly 100 million rubles, a figure many times higher than a State Duma members' official income. Yarovaya seems to have "forgotten" to declare this apartment on her tax return.<sup>9</sup>

The intent of this report is to document for Russian society how organized crime groups supported by the ruling party have established control over Russia and are simply stealing the nation's wealth. In order to survive in the 21st century, our country will need to oppose this phenomenon and to deliver itself from the grip of corruption, which is camouflaged in patriotic rhetoric.

# GAIZER'S CRIMINAL GROUP

FOR ALMOST SIX YEARS, A UNITED RUSSIA TEAM HEADED BY VYACHESLAV GAIZER CONTROLLED THE KOMI REPUBLIC. KREMLIN OFFICIALS CONSIDERED GAIZER AND HIS PEOPLE TO BE EFFECTIVE MANAGERS AND AN EXAMPLE TO BE FOLLOWED. HOWEVER, CRIMINAL CASE FILES REVEAL THAT THIS TEAM WAS NOTHING BUT AN ORGANIZED CRIME GROUP THAT HAD TAKEN OVER AN ENTIRE REPUBLIC.

## UNITED RUSSIA'S EXEMPLARY STUDENT

Vyacheslav Gaizer has always been in good standing with the Kremlin. Having come to public office from the banking sphere, in 2002 he was appointed finance minister of the Komi Republic and had been serving as deputy governor since 2004. After moving up quickly through the ranks in the United Russia party, Gaizer soon entered the party's Supreme Council and headed the party list in the elections to the republic's State Council.

In 2009, then-President Dmitri Medvedev named Gaizer in the top hundred of Russia's best government officials. Shortly thereafter, the United Russia party put forward Gaizer's candidacy for the post of head of the Komi Republic. Medvedev supported this decision, and soon Gaizer was the new governor of the region.

High-ranking United Russia members at the federal level and top



Russian government officials actively helped Gaizer to strengthen his authority in the region. Shortly before the elections, Putin himself personally met with the governor of Komi in the Kremlin and lavished him with praise. "You are making good progress! Good job! Well done!" Putin said on camera, commenting on the "successes" of Gaizer and his team.<sup>10</sup>

In 2014, with the support of the ruling party and the Russian president, Gaizer was re-elected to a second term. For all these years, his people had been in key positions in the republic's government and, as a result, had established control over almost all of the region's economic assets. A political monopoly was established in the region as well; all but three Komi legislators are members of the United Russia party.

"United Russia is the only party that does real work. Our work is not a staged show—we work in the interests of citizens. We are on the side of those who want to develop our republic. My duty as the highest-ranking official of the Komi Republic is to live up to the people's trust, to fulfill my promises and to do my job diligently," Gaizer said during a United Russia party forum.<sup>11</sup>

## THE HISTORY OF THE CRIMINAL GROUP

In 2015, it became clear what Gaizer had meant by "real work" when the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation arrested him on charges of running an organized crime group that had essentially taken over the region. Many of Gaizer's cronies were also thrown behind bars.

Most members of this criminal clan have known each other for a long time. Back in 1994, employees of the Komi Social Bank (Komisotsbank) formed the core of this criminal group. This entity turned out to be a kind of a regional-scale equivalent of the Ozero cooperative.<sup>12</sup> Aleksander Zarubin, Chairman of the Board of Komisotsbank, became a major Komi oligarch in the 2000s. Investigators believe him to be the "brains of the gang" and the mastermind behind most of its criminal schemes. In the mid-1990s, Gaizer worked as Zarubin's deputy in the bank.

After United Russia member Vladimir Torlopov became governor of Komi, the group began turning into a criminal organization. Zarubin's criminal group, of which Gaizer was a low-ranking member at the time, offered him organizational support during the election campaign. After he was elected, Torlopov cleared the way for members of his criminal organization to obtain key positions in the regional government.

"Torlopov basically gave the republic to this 'team of like-minded colleagues' united in the pursuit of personal gain; they then acted as his representative in meetings with the country's establishment," former Syktyvkar Mayor Sergei Katunin recalls.<sup>13</sup>

## THE MAFIA IN POWER

The crime group behaved in public as an exemplary United Russia team. Thanks to its support from ruling party, the mafia quickly gained political authority in the region and established control over its economic assets. Using fraud schemes and relying on public funds, gang members were able to embezzle huge sums of money that gradually found their way to foreign accounts.

For example, when he was head of the tariff service, gang member Konstantin Romadanov gained control over the housing and communal services sector. After purchasing energy from network providers, he would resell it to consumers with a 50% surcharge, thus providing the gang with a steady income. Romadanov's own scams involving communal services made him one of Russia's top ten wealthiest officials. The criminal group also actively facilitated Romadanov's career advancement within the United Russia party. He became deputy secretary of the local United Russia branch, and in 2009 was promoted to the post of deputy head of the regional government. He is currently serving a prison sentence.

Mafia boss Valeri Vesolov is yet another noteworthy representative of this criminal group. During Gaizer's first term as governor, Vesolov obtained control over some of the republic's major agro-industrial assets, such as its milk and bread production plants and the Zelenetskaya poultry plant.

"Vesolov is simply a thug. In the 1990s, he was allegedly Gaizer's driver in Komisotsbank—this was a cover that he used for his organized crime group Ivanhoe," said Sergei Sorokin, a journalist from the Komi Republic. "Vesolov is a sinister figure in the history of Syktyvkar. He is a real thug with no feelings. He wrested businesses away from people. He began by stealing real estate and land," said Sorokin's colleague Valeri Chernitsyn, editor of the Krasnoye Znamya newspaper.<sup>14</sup>

# Vyacheslav Gaizer's Criminal Group

## KEY ORGANIZERS



**Aleksei Chernov**  
Deputy Head  
of the Republic



**Konstantin Romadanov**  
Deputy Head of the  
Regional Government



**Igor Kovzel**  
Speaker of the  
Republic's Parliament

## LEADERS OF THE CRIMINAL GROUP



**Valeri Vesolov**  
Businessman



**Vyacheslav Gaizer**  
Head of the  
Komi Republic



**Aleksandr Zarubin**  
Businessman,  
Adviser to the  
Head of the Republic

## PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FRAUD SCHEMES



**Igor Kudinov**  
Director of the  
Foundation for the  
Support of Investment  
Projects of the Komi Republic



**Igor Pozdeyev**  
Mayor of Syktyvkar



**Pavel Marushchak**  
Head of the Information  
Department of the  
Republic's Administration

Assets controlled by Vesolov were moved offshore through the republic's Foundation for the Support of Investment Projects, which was controlled by Igor Kudinov, yet another member of the gang. The Foundation created several affiliated enterprises, with Cyprus-based companies among their founding members. These companies controlled more than 20 of the republic's largest profitable industrial enterprises. Using this fraudulent scheme, Gaizer's criminal group transferred almost all of the profits of the republic's industrial sector into its offshore accounts. These scams robbed the regional budget of more than one billion rubles. Vesolov was eventually put under arrest.

The Syktyvkar wood processing plant had become yet another source of enrichment for Gaizer's gang. Using the governor's administrative resources, criminals drove the enterprise to bankruptcy and gave control over it to a company called Tavrisheski, owned by another member of the criminal group, United Russia Senator Yevgeni Samoylov. Payments for lumber from the Republic of Komi ended up in Swiss offshore accounts controlled by Gaizer's people. Thanks to its support from the political wing of the criminal structure, Samoylov also established control over the Shakhta Intaogol company. In 2015, Samoylov was put behind bars.

Gaizer's criminal group also wielded political power in the republic's capital. Gang member Ivan Pozdeyev became mayor of

Syktyvkar. A well-known United Russia member, Pozdeyev set up a company, Stroimaterialy-K, and then issued a decree according to which two lots of land worth 400,000 rubles were sold to his company for 4,000 rubles; this was 100 times below their actual market value. This and other companies controlled by Pozdeyev were awarded almost all government contracts for construction work in the region, at a value of 650 million rubles. Using the authority of his office, the mayor appropriated the lion's share of profitable business in Syktyvkar. Pozdeyev's family members took control over more than a dozen companies. Kseniya Pozdeyeva, the wife of the former mayor, is a joint owner of 12 companies, including the Raduga 3D Cinema and TTS, which controls the Raduga shopping center.<sup>15</sup> Eventually, Pozdeyev was detained by FSB operatives and sent to prison.

## KREMLIN PROTECTORS

Rank-and-file members of the criminal group are not the only ones to have ended up behind bars. Gang leaders, including the republic's senior United Russia officials, such as Governor Vyacheslav Gaizer, his deputy Aleksei Chernov, and Chairman of the State Council Igor Kovzel, are now in pre-trial detention. Oligarch Aleksandr Zarubin is the only one who managed to flee abroad and was consequently put on the wanted list. All in all, 18 members of this gang have been sent to prison.



«IN ITALY, GAIZER'S CRIMINAL GROUP WOULD BE CALLED MAFIA. WE CALL IT AN ORGANIZED CRIME GROUP» MAJOR-GENERAL MARKIN, RUSSIA'S INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE SPOKESMAN



**EXTRACT FROM THE RECORD OF THE SEARCH CONDUCTED IN THE OFFICE OF KOMI GOVERNOR VYACHESLAV GAIZER**

- The following valuable items were confiscated during the investigation in the office of V.M.Gaizer:
- a tax certificate issued by the Cyprus Internal Revenue Service in January 2013 to Greettonbay Trading Ltd.;
  - a certificate of good standing issued to Afina Management Ltd., registered in 2004 in the Seychelles islands;
  - more than 50 stamps and seals of legal entities involved in offshore scams, as well as financial documents legalizing over 1 billion rubles in stolen assets;
  - a strongbox containing cash;
  - draft documents for the purchase of Bombardier and Hawker aircrafts;
  - more than 60 kilos of jewelry;
  - a collection of 150 watches of different brands worth between \$30,000 and \$1 million each;
  - a gold fountain pen.

“The purpose of the activity of the criminal group led by Zarubin, Gaizer, Chernov and Veslyolov was to perpetrate serious crimes aimed at illegal acquisition of state assets. In Italy, these individuals would be considered to be members of the mafia In our Criminal Code, this crime is referred to as setting up and running an organized crime group,” Russian Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin declared.<sup>16</sup>

The defining characteristics of Gaizer’s mafia clan are its ramified structure and its deep penetration of the country’s government system, both of which were made possible thanks to the support of the United Russia party.

For many years, criminals had been positioning themselves as a respectable political force. Their leader was invited to the Kremlin and publicly supported by Russia’s Presidents Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Medvedev. The Russian authorities were trying to convince Russian citizens that these people were reliable and trustworthy leaders who would lead the Republic of Komi toward a successful future.

It soon became clear, however, that the ruling party, Putin, and Medvedev had been propping up a common criminal organization, members of which had been posing for years as “effective managers” while robbing the republic’s citizens under the protection of the United Russia party and hiding their stolen money in offshore accounts. ■

SEARCH IN THE OFFICE OF VYACHESLAV GAIZER. POLICE FOOTAGE.



Photo: Aleksandra Astakhova, S. Khoiyachuk/PHOTOPRESS, V. Dmitriyev/PHOTOPRESS, Aleksandr Mironov/Kommerсан

## BANDITS IN ST. PETERSBURG



RUSSIAN  
STATE DUMA  
MEMBER  
VLADISLAV REZNIK

IN THE 1990s, ST. PETERSBURG WAS DUBBED THE CRIME CAPITAL OF RUSSIA. LEADERS OF A NUMBER OF CRIMINAL GROUPS FROM THAT ERA HAVE MANAGED TO SURVIVE AND TO ADAPT TO THE NEW REALITY. FURTHERMORE, THEY USE THEIR CONNECTIONS AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE RULING PARTY, WHICH ALLOW THEM TO CARRY OUT THEIR SCAMS AND ENJOY A LUXURIOUS LIFESTYLE.

## THE RUSSIAN MAFIA IN SPAIN

In the summer of 2008, Spanish law enforcement authorities launched a wide-scale operation against a St. Petersburg criminal structures that had established a foothold on the Iberian Peninsula. More than 300 law enforcement operatives surrounded villas owned by Russian crime bosses. Searches were conducted in the residences of Aleksandr Malyshev and Gennadi Petrov, leaders of the so-called Malyshevskaya Organized Criminal Group (OCG),<sup>17</sup> and so-called “thief-in-law” Vitali Izgilov. Together with their accomplices, all three were detained by the police along with their sidekicks on charges of legalizing money from added-value tax scams and illegal banking transactions carried out in Russia, as well as on suspicion of extortion and smuggling. Later, investigators discovered more than 500 bank accounts that had been used to launder the money. The Spanish authorities seized €12 million from bank accounts belonging to the criminals.<sup>18</sup>

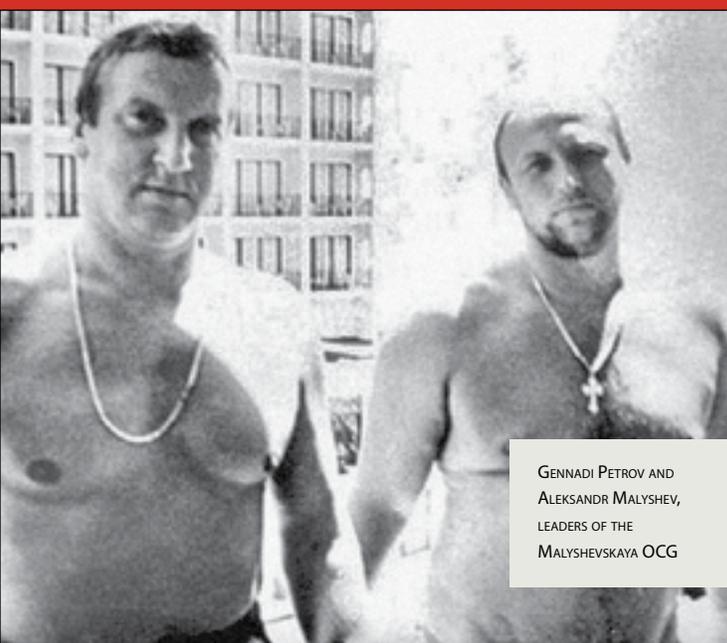
During the investigation, it became clear that, in its money-laundering operations in Spain, the St. Petersburg mafia was actively using its connections in the corridors of Russian power. According to investigators, State Duma member Vladislav Reznik, a high-ranking United Russia official, was a key figure who played the role of intermediary between criminal organizations and Russian government structures.

showed that the lawmaker owned a luxury villa in a small town of El Toro in the Pyrenees. As it turned out, the villa had previously belonged to Gennadi Petrov, a mafia boss from the Malyshevskaya organized crime group, who was later detained by the Spanish police.

In the fall of 2008, during a search of Reznik’s villa in El Toro, investigators confiscated a number of documents concerning the activities of the Russian mafia. Additional evidence was uncovered that proved the ties between the State Duma member and the crime boss. For example, both Petrov and Reznik used the same lawyer and bought villas in the same neighborhood in the city of Calvia.

As follows from the indictment, Reznik was found to be “responsible for carrying out all required and necessary actions, both legal and illegal in nature, including using his connections and information trading among the highest echelons of power in Russia, and was acting in the interests of Petrov and the organization that answers to him.”

Spanish investigators named former Russian Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov and former State Duma Speaker Boris Gryzlov, both United Russia members, as the main contacts used by Reznik to lobby in favor of the mafia’s interests.<sup>19</sup> According to Spanish police and law enforcement bodies, Reznik’s key task was to organize sham transactions in Spain as part of the money laundering scheme.



GENNADI PETROV AND ALEKSANDR MALYSHEV, LEADERS OF THE MALYSHEVSKAYA OCG



THE ARREST OF GENNADI PETROV IN SPAIN

## A DOUBLE-DEALER WITH A PARTY MEMBERSHIP CARD

Reznik has for many years been a key figure in the Russian Parliament, and not only in the ruling party. He has continuously ranked first on the list of Russia’s most influential State Duma members and has been successful in pushing through financial and insurance legislation.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Reznik has repeatedly admitted to being the wealthiest Russian legislator of all: his annual income is estimated at 1.5 billion rubles.<sup>21</sup> According to his income declaration, he also owns 17 lots of land, a residential property, and several Russian utilities.<sup>22</sup>

In 2008, the Spanish police established that Reznik also owned real estate abroad, which he had failed to declare. The investigation



**VLADISLAV REZNIK**  
**“YES, I KNOW PETROV. HE’S A NICE MAN.”**



Prosecutor General's Office has been helping the notorious United Russia member to remain beyond the reach of Spanish investigators.

Both Reznik's aforementioned "longtime friend" Ilya Traber and Petrov are well known to St. Petersburg law enforcement bodies. Investigative reports mention Traber as a crime boss nicknamed "the Antiques Dealer." He was involved in criminal cases connected with contract killings. In the 1990s, Traber and Reznik ran a joint business and were beneficiaries of the major St. Petersburg gas station chain PTK.

## CRIME IMPORT

In the 2000s, leaders of criminal organizations connected with Reznik moved abroad. They had enough money to settle down in Spain for a life of leisure and luxury. Meanwhile, their criminal businesses in Russia had basically been legalized thanks to their ties to Russian government structures.

According to the criminal case filed against the Russian mafia in Spain, the crime bosses' income mainly came from laundering proceeds that had been illegally obtained through scams that took place in Russian territory. For example, Spanish investigators uncovered \$30 million that had been transferred from one of Reznik's accounts into an offshore account in the Virgin Islands. Petrov, who was responsible for legalizing these funds, was supposed to use them to buy a property in Spain with the help of his business partner, Francisco Hernando Contreras.

Contreras, however, decided to rob his colleagues and just pocketed the money instead. At that point, Reznik intervened. As it follows from the indictment filed by Spanish prosecutors, the United Russia State Duma member ordered his criminal associates to kidnap Contreras's oldest son and get the money back in the form of ransom.

It was also determined that real estate, yachts, and cars used both by the legislator and by the member of the organized crime group in Spain were purchased through the same companies, Antel SL and Gudimar.

Although Reznik was forced to publicly admit his ties to the mob boss, he declared that the connection between them had been limited to the purchase of the villa. The United Russia member called Petrov a nice guy. "I met him in Spain. My longtime friend Ilya Traber introduced him to me when I was looking to buy a house," Reznik said in an interview with the Vedomosti newspaper.

However, the facts show that Reznik and Petrov were actually linked by a long-standing relationship—theirs was not a casual acquaintance. In 1989, Reznik was elected as deputy chairman of the board of directors of the Bank Rossiya, and later controlled a block of shares in the Bank through legal entities. In the 1990s, crime boss Gennadi Petrov was among the Bank's shareholders. Bank Rossiya was founded by Vladimir Putin's old acquaintances Nikolai Shamalov and Yuri Kovalchuk and remains under their control. Both Shamalov and Kovalchuk were also involved in the creation of the Ozero cooperative that counted Putin among its members.

## POLITICAL PROTECTION OF THE ORGANIZED CRIME GROUP

From the very beginning of the investigation, Spanish law enforcement representatives have repeatedly tried and failed to question Reznik, who has successfully avoided any contact with them. It would seem that the Kremlin would be interested in cooperating with its European colleagues in battling the Russian mafia and its dealings in the international arena. In fact, Russian police and security forces made statements promising assistance to their Spanish colleagues. In reality, however, the Russian

## WHILE ON TRIAL IN AUGUST 2009, LUIS RODRIGUEZ PUEYO, THE KIDNAPPER DETAINED BY THE POLICE, CONFIRMED THAT STATE DUMA MEMBER REZNIK HAD BEEN THE MASTERMIND BEHIND THE CRIME

While the crime bosses were settling down abroad, Vladislav Reznik realized that Putin's rise to power would lead to significant changes in Russian society and clearly saw the direct path into the government system that the United Russia party was creating for people like him. In 1999, thanks to financial resources and connections in Putin's inner circle, Reznik was elected to the State Duma and still occupies his seat.

It is also noteworthy that as soon as charges were brought against Reznik, the United Russia party began its public defense of him. For example, Boris Gryzlov, who was speaker of the State Duma and leader of the ruling party at the time, called the accusations against Reznik a provocation and refused to comment on the charges brought against him.

There is nothing surprising about the fact that the Russian authorities refuse to give up Reznik. He has been a key Russian legislator and member of the United Russia's elite for a long time, as well as a member of the ruling party's Supreme Council. The Kremlin considers him to be one of its own, and it is well known that Putin does not give his people up.

In 2008, Vladimir Kumarin (Barsukov) was arrested, and in 2009 he was sentenced to 14 years in a penal colony for fraud. In 2012, he was convicted in a second criminal case under Art.163 "Extortion." However, his family members still control a considerable part of the economic assets that belong to the leader of the Organized Crime Group.

The connection between former Deputy Mayor of St. Petersburg, Vladimir Putin, and Kumarin (Barsukov) has repeatedly attracted the attention of independent investigators. For instance, it has been revealed that between 1997 and 2000, Vladimir Putin served as a consultant for the Russian-German company SPAG. This company was controlled by the Tambovskaya gang and was used to launder money abroad.

The Malyshevskaya organized crime group, headed jointly by Aleksandr Malyshev, who had been twice convicted for murder

## REFERENCE:

### THE KREMLIN CONNECTIONS OF ST. PETERSBURG CRIME BOSSES

IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 1980s, THE SO-CALLED TAMBOVSKAYA MAFIA EMERGED IN ST. PETERSBURG. IT WAS FORMED BY VLADIMIR KUMARIN, A NATIVE OF TAMBOV, WHO LATER CHANGED HIS LAST NAME TO BARSUKOV. AMONG THE INTERESTS OF THIS CRIMINAL GROUP WERE IMPORTING OFFICE EQUIPMENT AND EXPORTING LUMBER, AS WELL AS STAKES IN THE GAMBLING INDUSTRY AND IN PROSTITUTION RINGS.

IN THE EARLY 1990s, IN A CONFLICT OVER THEIR SPHERES OF INFLUENCE, THE TAMBOVSKAYA MAFIA ACTIVELY PARTICIPATED IN ARMED CONFLICTS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER CRIMINAL GROUPS. FOR EXAMPLE, MASSIVE SHOOTOUTS TOOK PLACE INVOLVING MEMBERS OF COMPETING ST. PETERSBURG AND PSKOV ORGANIZED CRIME GROUPS. AS A RESULT OF AN ATTEMPT ON HIS LIFE, VLADIMIR KUMARIN WAS SERIOUSLY INJURED AND LOST AN ARM.

IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 1990s, THE TAMBOVSKAYA MAFIA BEGAN LEGALIZING ITS CRIME BUSINESS. THE ARMED WING OF THE GROUP WAS RE-ORGANIZED INTO PRIVATE SECURITY COMPANIES. THE GROUP'S RESOURCES WERE MOSTLY INVESTED IN ENERGY BUSINESSES. THE TAMBOVSKAYA GANG BOUGHT OUT AFFILIATED BRANCHES OF THE COMPANY SURGUTNEFTEGAS AND USED THEM TO BUILD THE ST. PETERSBURG FUEL COMPANY (PTK), WHICH HAD CLOSE LINKS TO THE MAYOR'S OFFICE.. KUMARIN (BARSUKOV) WAS ONE OF THE COMPANY'S OWNERS. WITH THE SUPPORT OF VLADIMIR PUTIN, WHO WAS DEPUTY MAYOR OF ST. PETERSBURG AT THE TIME, PTK BEGAN SUPPLYING FUEL TO MUNICIPAL SERVICES AND FACILITIES. IN 1998, BARSUKOV WAS APPOINTED AS VICE PRESIDENT OF PTK.

ACCORDING TO VEDOMOSTI NEWSPAPER, "KUMARIN WAS RECEIVED IN THE CORRIDORS OF POWER, WHICH ALLOWED HIM TO ACTIVELY DEVELOP HIS BUSINESS IN THE CITY; IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO RUN SUCH AN IMPORTANT COMPANY IN ST. PETERSBURG WITHOUT COOPERATING WITH THE AUTHORITIES."<sup>23</sup>

in Soviet times, and by Gennadi Petrov, emerged from the Tambovskaya gang. The Malyshevskaya gang's areas of influence included drug trafficking, the gambling industry and control over hotel, restaurant and antiques businesses. In 1992, Malyshev was arrested on racketeering charges. However, in 1995, he was released.

In the late 1990s, Malyshev and Petrov immigrated to Spain, where a few years later they attracted the attention of local law enforcement bodies.

In the early 2000s, the Tambovskaya and Malyshevskaya organized crime groups as good as legalized their businesses in Russia through their connections in Russian government structures both in St. Petersburg and nationwide. Having established a foothold in Spain, Russian mafia bosses were reaping profits from their Russian assets while carrying out various money-laundering schemes abroad. ■



THE CONNECTION BETWEEN FORMER DEPUTY MAYOR OF ST. PETERSBURG, VLADIMIR PUTIN, AND KUMARIN (BARSUKOV) HAS REPEATEDLY ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF AUTHORS OF INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS. THUS, IT BECAME KNOWN THAT FROM 1997 TO 2000, PUTIN HAD SERVED AS A CONSULTANT FOR A RUSSIAN-GERMAN COMPANY SPAG THAT WAS CONTROLLED BY THE TAMBOVSKAYA GANG AND WAS USED TO LAUNDER MONEY ABROAD.



**ANDREI ZYKOV,**  
LIEUTENANT COLONEL OF JUSTICE OF THE  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, SENIOR INVESTIGATOR  
FOR SPECIAL MATTERS, RETIRED:

"IN THE 1990s, IGOR SECHIN WAS RUNNING PUTIN'S OFFICE IN ST. PETERSBURG. HE WAS THE ONE THROUGH WHOM ONE WOULD GET ACCESS TO HIS BOSS. IGOR SECHIN WAS ON FRIENDLY TERMS WITH GENNADI PETROV, AND THE LATTER WAS OFTEN SEEN IN VLADIMIR PUTIN'S OFFICE. VLADIMIR KUMARIN WAS ALSO SEEN THERE AS WELL AS OTHER LEADERS OF CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS. IN ORDER FOR COMPANIES, WHICH OFFICIALS USED TO SIPHON OFF MONEY, TO EXIST, OFFICIALS HAD TO HAVE DEALINGS WITH CRIMINALS. THE TAMBOVSKAYA GANG'S ACTIVITY FLOURISHED WITH PUTIN'S ASCENT TO POWER IN THE ST. PETERSBURG GOVERNMENT."<sup>24</sup>



# THE TSAPOK GANG

RUSSIAN SOCIETY WAS DEEPLY SHOCKED BY THE STORY ABOUT A CRIMINAL GROUP THAT HAD BEEN TERRORIZING THE VILLAGE OF KUSHCHEVSKAYA. THESE THUGS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR DOZENS OF ROBBERIES, MASS MURDERS AND RAPES. THE INVESTIGATION REVEALED THAT GANG LEADERS ALSO HAD POLITICAL POWER AND WERE BEING BACKED BY PEOPLE IN THE UPPER ECHELONS OF THE RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES.

## ORGANIZED CRIME BORN IN THE “FREEWHEELING 1990S”

The Tsapok gang became widely known in Russia in late 2010 after a mass murder in the village of Kushchevskaya. However, in Russia’s Krasnodar region, the last names of the leaders of this criminal group have been household names since the early 1990s.

In the mid-1980s, the gang’s founder Nikolai Tsapok, a card shark with a criminal record from the Soviet times, was in the meat business and ran a cooperative. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, he and his brother Viktor opened a gym in the village of Kushchevskaya, which served as a base for a criminal group that lived on racketeering and robberies.

Police reports referred to the gang as the Tsapkovskiye organized crime group. In the 1990s, the gang was involved in numerous crimes including robberies, rapes and murders. Gang members were able to get away with most of their crimes thanks to their ties to corrupt representatives of local law enforcement agencies. The Tsapok criminal group became increasingly influential, and by the late 1990s, it included some 200 gangsters and held the entire Kushchevskaya district under its control.

“Relying on Tsapok’s criminal influence, the gang members began getting into mischief. Having acquired the taste for violence, they began to cause real trouble. We detained them and launched criminal cases, but these cases all ended with fines or suspended sentences. They had many protectors here. Their impunity led them to lawlessness,” according to Aleksandr Grigoryants, former prosecutor of the Kushchevskaya district.

Despite the fact that the gang promoted a healthy lifestyle, and gang members were not allowed to either smoke or drink alcohol, the Tsapok criminal group established control over drug trafficking in the district. This group was also actively developing ties to criminal organizations in Krasnodar and Rostov.

In 1998, Vladimir Volkov, whose nickname was “Volchok,” and who was a Krasnodar “thief-in-law” and a close associate of one of Russia’s most notorious criminal masterminds, Ded Khasan, gave Nikolai Tsapok the task of “supervising” the Kushchevskaya district. By that time, through the use of corrupt mechanisms and direct intimidation, this criminal organization had put the local administration, judges, prosecutors and the police under its control. Tsapok established contacts with the authorities of neighboring districts and forced farmers in neighboring territories to pay “tributes” to the criminal boss.

## GANGSTERS GAIN POLITICAL POWER

In 2002, Nikolai Tsapok was killed by a gunman in a battle between rival gangs. Nikolai’s nephew, Sergei, who had previously been responsible for the economic aspect of the gang’s activity, took charge of the organized criminal group.

At the time, Russia was undergoing a series of profound changes. With his first presidential term well underway, Putin was actively strengthening his “power vertical.” Having won the majority of seats in Parliament, the United Russia party was in the process of establishing political control in the Russian regions and was attracting new members.



**WHILE STILL RUNNING THE CRIMINAL GANG, SERGEI TSAPOK DECIDED TO LEGALLY JOIN THE OFFICIAL “POWER VERTICAL.” IN 2004, HE WAS ELECTED TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AS A MEMBER OF THE UNITED RUSSIA CAUCUS.<sup>25,26</sup> SUPPORTED BY HIS PARTY COLLEAGUES, TSAPOK HEADED THE BUDGET COMMISSION AND GAINED CONTROL OVER THE KUSHCHEVSKAYA DISTRICT’S FINANCIAL RESOURCES. IN 2010, ANOTHER GANG MEMBER, VYACHESLAV TSEPOVYAZ, AND HIS BROTHER SERGEI WERE ALSO ELECTED TO LOCAL OFFICE. THEY WERE BOTH BACKED BY THE UNITED RUSSIA PARTY IN THE ELECTIONS.**

## UNITED RUSSIA CAUCUS IN THE KUSHCHEVSKAYA MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT



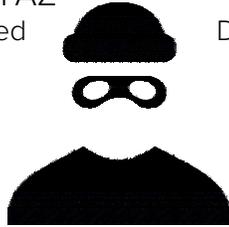
VYACHESLAV  
TSEPOVYAZ  
Convicted



SERGEI  
TSAPOK  
Died in Prison



SERGEI  
TSEPOVYAZ  
Convicted



VLADIMIR  
DZYUBA  
Wanted  
by Authorities



SERGEI  
DZYUBA  
Convicted



SERGEI TSAPOK AT DMITRI  
MEDVEDEV'S INAUGURATION AT  
THE KREMLIN, MAY 7, 2008,  
MOSCOW.

United Russia member Tsepovyaz was a key figure in the crime boss's close circle. He and Tsapkov were business partners. For example, they co-owned the agricultural company Sever Kubani, as well as the companies Yug-Agrotekhnika, Kushchevski Agrosnabservis, Zerno Kubani, Rayskaya Roza, and Parus. Tsepovyaz was also CEO of the Experimental Production Farm Slava Kubani LLC, one of Russia's 300 largest agricultural companies at almost 14,500 hectares. Their wives, Natalia Tsepovyaz and Anzhela Mariya Tsapok, were co-owners of Parus, Sakhar Kubani and the agricultural company Vasilyok. When the gang was on trial, it was revealed that Tsapok's wife kept \$6 million in her Sberbank account alone.<sup>27</sup>

According to the prosecution, United Russia representative and local legislator Tsepovyaz was also responsible for the financing of the gang's armed squads.<sup>28</sup>

With its legislators in the regional Parliament and the support of United Russia representatives, the Tsapkovskiye organized crime group was able to legalize its business. By getting closer to senior United Russia members, Sergei Tsapok was gradually moving up to the regional and even federal level. For instance, Governor Tkachev, a member of the United Russia party, visited Tsapok's Arteks-Agro, a company run by Sergei's mother, Nadezhda Tsapok. Furthermore, in 2008, as part of the Krasnodar governor's delegation, Tsapok attended the inauguration of Russian President Dmitri Medvedev.

**THE LAST FEW YEARS OF THE KUSHCHEVSKAYA GANG'S EXISTENCE WERE THE APOTHEOSIS OF IMPUNITY. THE TSAPOKS HAD DIRECT ACCESS TO THE HIGHEST ECHELONS OF POWER. FAMILY MEMBERS OF REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS HAD CUSHY JOBS AND RECEIVED SALARIES FROM ARTEKS-AGRO. THANKS TO SERGEI TSAPOK'S CONNECTIONS IN THE CORRIDORS OF POWER, STATE LOANS WORTH HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF RUBLES WERE ALLOCATED TO HIS AGRICULTURAL COMPLEX BUSINESSES**

## BLOODY SLAUGHTER

Despite his growing political influence and strengthening ties in both the regional government and the ruling party, Tsapok had not abandoned the criminal methods that allowed him to keep his territory under control. Violent crimes continued to shake the Kushchevskaya district. According to the investigation, together with assaults and robberies, gang members were also responsible for more than 200 rapes of local girls and women.<sup>29</sup> Murders of local businessmen, who refused to pay tributes to gangsters continued as well. For example, in 2003, the Bogachevs, a farmer and his son, were killed after having refused to pay a tribute to the gangsters. In 2008, the farmer Anatoli Smolnikov was stabbed to death in front of the local administration building. The gangsters continued to persecute him even after his death: they dug out the coffin with the farmer's body and left it in the middle of the street as a threat to all those who refused to pay tribute.



**ALEKSEI NAVALNY,**  
HEAD OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION FOUNDATION

"THE STORY OF THE TSAPOK GANG IS NOT JUST A DISGRACE FOR THE UNITED RUSSIA PARTY--IT IS A VERDICT. MURDERERS AND THUGS FROM THE VILLAGE OF KUSHCHEVSKAYA FELT SO COMFORTABLE IN THE PARTY BECAUSE IT HAD ACTUALLY BEEN CREATED FOR PEOPLE LIKE THEM."

In 2010, Sergei Tsapok decided to kill yet another village resident, Server Ametov. "This farmer interfered with my business and undermined my authority, so I wanted him to suffer and to see his family members suffer as well," the gang leader said in explaining his motives for the murder. Tsapok personally participated in the massacre.

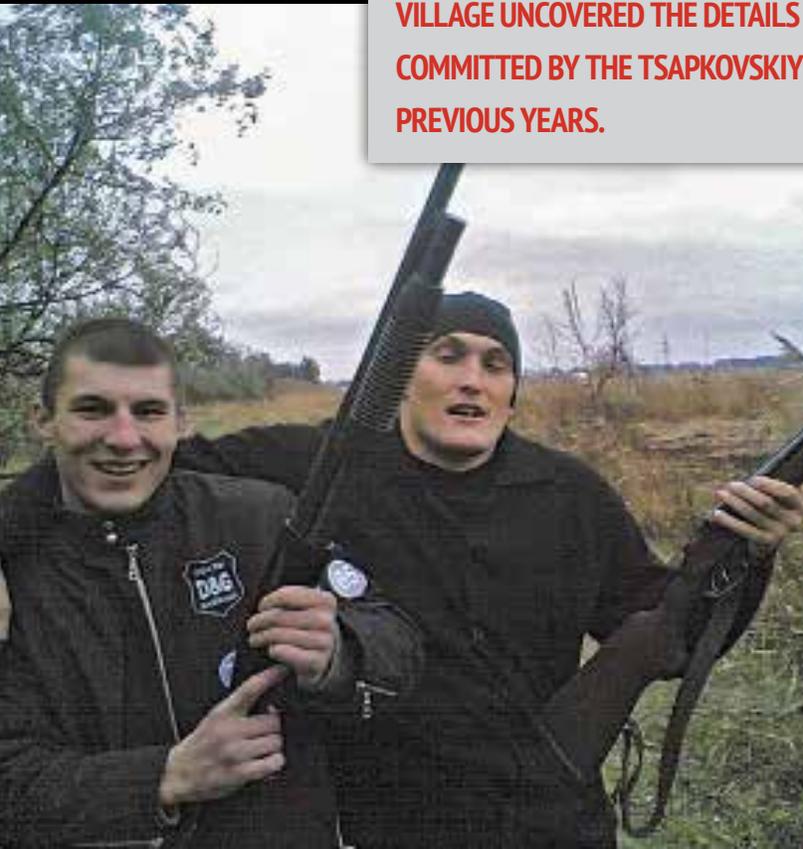
The criminal case files contained Tsapok's testimony in which he described the mass murder in detail: "We knew that Vladimir Mironenko, director of a Rostov agricultural company, and his family would be visiting Ametov, so we waited for them to have a drink and relax. We assumed that they would be playing billiards in the sauna. This is where I went with Bykov and Alekseyev. We were armed with guns, of course, and knives. Others went into the living room where women and children were. Having seen us, Ametov tried to defend himself with a billiard cue. I knocked him to the ground, began to strangle him, and stabbed him a few times. Meanwhile Andrukha and Mayhem were killing Vladimir Mironenko. We dragged Ametov into the living room--he was still breathing--and finished off the others while he was watching. Then we threw all the corpses in one pile and put Ametov's nine-month-old granddaughter Amira on top. She was alive and crying. We doused the corpses with gasoline and set them on fire. We checked the time and were surprised to see that we had carried it all out in about ten minutes."<sup>30</sup>

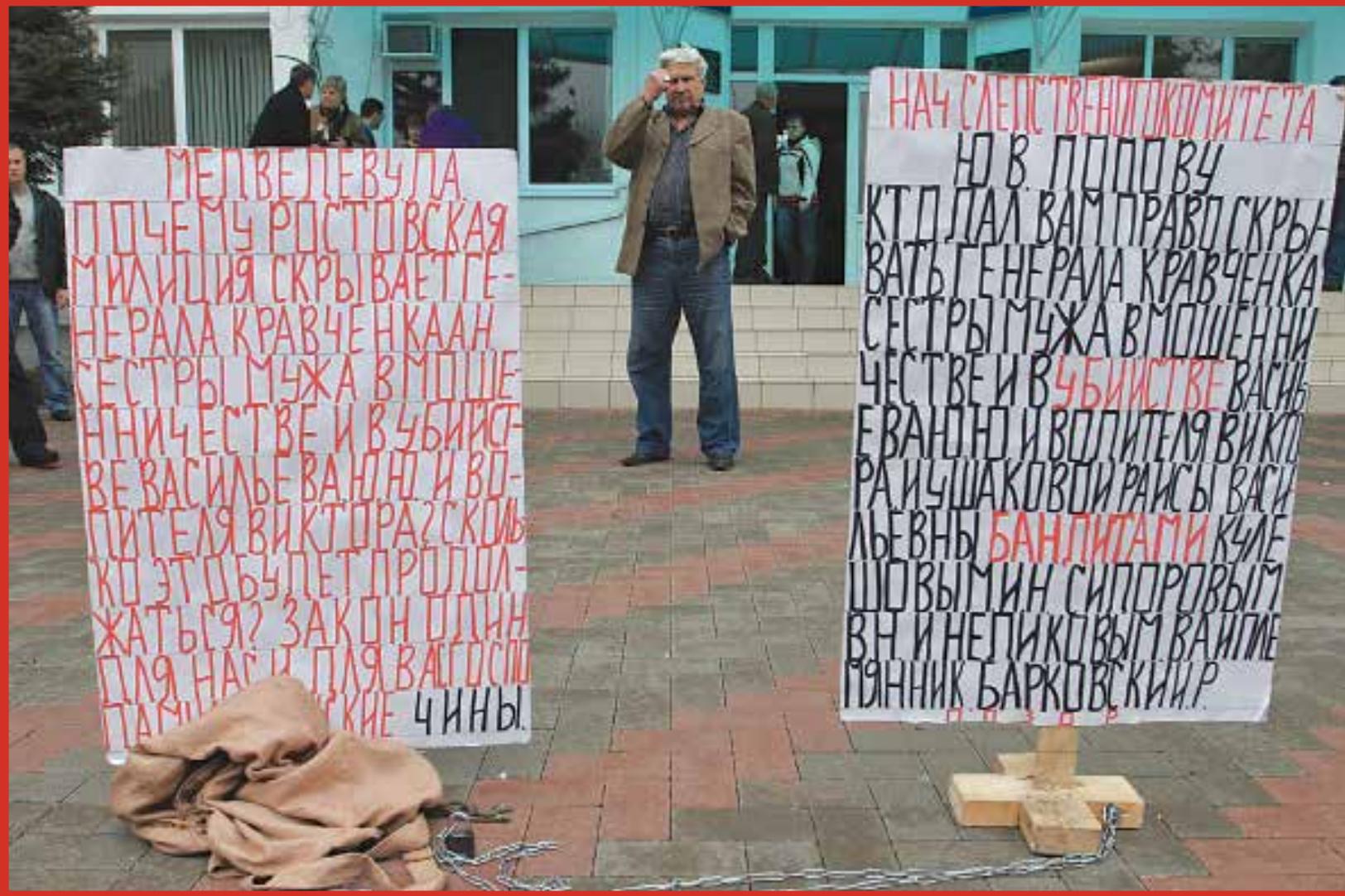
In 2013, Sergei Tsapok, leader of the Kushchevskaya gang, and his two accomplices, Vladimir Alekseyev and Igor Chernikh, whom investigators believed to be the gang's main gunmen, were sentenced to life in prison. Three other gang members received long prison sentences. Two of the gangsters committed suicide while in pre-trial detention. United Russia member Tsepovyaz was sentenced to 19 years and 10 months in a high-security prison.

Sergei Tsepovyaz, another United Russia member with connections to the gang, was also convicted. Investigators determined that he had burnt the documents proving the gang's



**WHEN THE GANGTERS MASSACRED 12 PEOPLE, INCLUDING 4 CHILDREN, EVEN THE GANG'S HIGH CONNECTIONS COULD NOT HELP COVERING UP SUCH A BLOODY SLAUGHTER. A CRIMINAL CASE WAS INITIATED. MOSCOW INVESTIGATORS AND JOURNALISTS WHO CAME TO THE KUSHCHEVSKAYA VILLAGE UNCOVERED THE DETAILS OF HORRIFIC CRIMES THAT HAD BEEN COMMITTED BY THE TSAPKOVSKIYE ORGANIZED CRIME GROUP OVER THE PREVIOUS YEARS.**





crimes.<sup>31</sup> Nadezhda Tsapok, the mother of the gang's leader, was sentenced to 6.5 years in prison for large-scale fraud.

Sergei Dzyuba, another local lawmaker and United Russia member from the Kushchevskaya district, was on trial at the same time. He was sentenced to 6 years in prison for large-scale fraud. Using a shell company, the United Russia member embezzled more than 100 million rubles from Rosselkhozbank. Dzyuba's lawyers tried to convince the court that the case against their client had been initiated by Tsapok. However, investigators discovered that Dzyuba and Sergei Tsapok had been business partners, and that illegal credit transactions were being channeled through companies controlled by representatives of this organized crime group.<sup>32</sup>

A similar charge was brought against Vladimir Dzyuba, the brother of the convicted United Russia member. He was also a member of the Kushchevskaya municipal government from the ruling party. "It was established that Vladimir Dzyuba, a member of the government of the Kushchevskaya district from the United Russia party, formed an agricultural company called Vlad. He then appointed his subordinate to the post of the company's director. The company received two loans from Rosselkhozbank, as the result of which the state incurred 270 million rubles in damage," explained special investigator Igor Shemetov.

"Dzyuba is hiding from the authorities. We are working on establishing his location," Shemetov added.<sup>33</sup>

## LAWMAKERS WITH KNIVES AND BRASS KNUCKLES

The story of the Tsapok gang is quite a common one in modern Russian society. It shows how, at the turn of the 20th century, organized crime has evolved from the criminal gangs of the 1990s into legalized groups that control business assets and use the ruling party's political influence. A local thug was able not only to join the United Russia party, but also, thanks to his party's support, to be elected to the regional legislature, to get close to the governor, and to stand only a few steps away from current United Russia leader Dmitri Medvedev during the latter's presidential inauguration.

This example illustrates how, having managed to survive in the 1990s, gangsters adapted to the new reality and turned from crime bosses into respectable United Russia members. It was the ruling party that provided them with the opportunity for this transformation. However, having acquired legal status with United Russia's help, the criminals did not abandon their principal activities. Thus, using United Russia banners as a cover, the Tsapoks were able to keep the entire Kushchevskaya district under their criminal control by killing undesirable farmers, and were living on racketeering, robbery and rape. Their superiors in the ruling party chose to ignore the gangsters' activity, and law enforcement representatives, who were simply afraid, turned a blind eye to the crimes that the gang committed. ■

# “I FELL IN LOVE WITH A CRIMINAL”

IN 2012, RUSSIAN SOCIETY WAS SHAKEN BY A CORRUPTION SCANDAL IN THE DEFENSE MINISTRY. THE INVESTIGATION UNCOVERED MASSIVE FRAUD AND ABUSE INVOLVING ANATOLI SERDYUKOV, RUSSIAN DEFENSE MINISTER AND MEMBER OF THE UNITED RUSSIA PARTY. THE MAJORITY OF THE FRAUD SCHEMES WERE CARRIED OUT BY SERDYUKOV’S LOVER, YEVGENIYA VASILYEVA.

## A PATH TO THE GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE CIVIL REGISTRY OFFICE

In 2007, President Vladimir Putin appointed Anatoli Serdyukov as defense minister.

Serdyukov's spectacular career advancement was predictable. By 2007, Serdyukov belonged to the United Russia elite and used his party contacts as a stepping stone to higher positions. Furthermore, he was conveniently married to the daughter of Viktor Zubkov, a close associate of the president who had worked as Putin's deputy in the St. Petersburg City Hall in the 1990s. Soon after Serdyukov's appointment to the Defense Ministry, his father-in-law became prime minister.

As he introduced Serdyukov to generals of the Russian armed forces, Putin explained the reason for the appointment: enormous investments were to be made in the Defense Ministry to cover the cost of reforms and of the upgrading of equipment, and the new minister from the tax authorities would be to the man best-suited to control spending.<sup>34</sup>

With the president's full support, Serdyukov actively tackled reforming the country's armed forces, which essentially came down to reducing and eliminating marginal assets. One of the minister's key decisions concerned the creation of Oboronservis, a holding company that was responsible for servicing military equipment, maintaining military towns, and providing the military with food, retail, and utility services.

### FAILED REFORMS

Over time, Oboronservis' activity generated a lot of criticism. For instance, the authorities of the Sredni military town in the Irkutsk region publicly complained that two-thirds of residential buildings were in critical condition, garbage was not being collected, and that, as a result of the reforms, law enforcement was practically nonexistent. The situation in the OPOCHKA military town of the Pskov region was even worse. The town was basically reduced to rubble, and the authorities' demands to put things right were ignored by Oboronservis management.

Furthermore, as a result of the reform allegedly directed at optimizing expenditures, maintenance of military equipment had become considerably more expensive. The decision to carry out maintenance exclusively through Oboronservis led to increased public spending. "Whereas before maintenance costs for aviation companies were from 12 to 15 million rubles, nowadays it costs them from 15 to 30 million rubles," estimated Anatoli Tsyganok, head of the Military Forecasting Centre.<sup>35</sup>

Oboronservis's inefficiency can probably be explained by the fact that the corporation's objective was to use public funds, rather than to solve the problems faced by the Russian military. The holding company was used as a key mechanism for the large-scale embezzlement of military budget funds during Serdyukov's tenure as defense minister.

### HOW DEFENSE MINISTRY OFFICIALS STOLE MONEY

In the fall of 2012, five criminal cases were initiated simultaneously in connection with large-scale fraud committed by Defense Ministry officials. According to investigators, Oboronservis regularly seized federal plots of land and other property, used public funds to renovate or build expensive facilities there, and then sold these to subsidiaries/shell companies at a bargain price. Furthermore, sometimes these renovated or newly built facilities were bought with the money stolen from Oboronservis itself.



## A CONVENIENT MARRIAGE TO THE DAUGHTER OF RUSSIAN PRIME MINISTER VIKTOR ZUBKOV CONTRIBUTED TO SERDYUKOV'S APPOINTMENT TO THE POST OF THE RUSSIAN DEFENSE MINISTER

The same scheme was used in 2011 to found Ellada, a resort in the Temryuk district of the Krasnodar region. Ellada was supposed to become a vacation resort for military personnel. In reality, however, 300 million rubles from the budget of the Defense Ministry were used to build a resort complex that included residential buildings, a conference hall, a helicopter landing pad, a pool, a park and a dock for motorboats.

When the complex was finished, City Engineering LLC, purchased the 3 hectares of land containing the resort for 92 million rubles. This company exhibits all the classic characteristics of a shell company. For example, City Engineering, which officially declares that it has only one employee, shares the same registration address with 900 other companies.<sup>36</sup>

In fact, rather than a resort for military personnel, it was a closely-guarded luxury getaway for the defense minister that emerged on the coast of the Azov sea. The minister spent so much time there that the resort became known as "Serdyukov's dacha."<sup>37</sup>

Investigators also found that there had been an illegal sale of a Voentorg building in downtown Moscow at a sharply discounted price. Furthermore, when signing and paying for a supplement to an existing agreement, officials at the Department of Property Relations of the Russian Defense Ministry and representatives of Oboronservis top management were found to have stolen money from Mosvoentorg.<sup>38</sup>



**RATHER THAN A VACATION RESORT FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL, IT WAS A CLOSELY-GUARDED LUXURY GETAWAY FOR THE DEFENSE MINISTER THAT EMERGED ON THE COAST OF THE AZOV SEA. THE MINISTER SPENT SO MUCH TIME THERE THAT THE RESORT BECAME KNOWN AS “SERDYUKOV’S DACHA.”**

According to investigators' estimates, the head of the Defense Ministry from the United Russia party and his team cost the state approximately 7 billion rubles in losses.<sup>39</sup> After the corruption scandal broke out, Putin was forced to dismiss Serdyukov for his glaring error.

## CHERCHEZ LA FEMME

Yevgeniya Vasilyeva, the head of the Defense Ministry's Property Relations Department, became a key defendant in the criminal case on large-scale embezzlement in the Russian armed forces. During their search of her apartment, in addition to documents pertaining to the case, investigators confiscated more than 3 million rubles in cash, several antiques, a few dozen paintings and 130 million rubles worth of jewelry.<sup>40,41</sup>

Furthermore, it became known that the connection between the minister and his subordinate was not purely professional. Early one morning, when uncovering cash and jewelry in Vasilyeva's apartment, the investigators were surprised to find that Minister Serdyukov himself was there.

Further inquiry showed that the defense minister had created privileged working conditions for his lover. Her monthly salary amounted to 5 million rubles, in addition to which she also received from 1.5 to 2 million rubles in bonuses for every successful sale of state property. Furthermore, Vasilyeva owned three apartments, including a 13-bedroom residence in a luxurious Moscow district known as the Zolotaya Milya (Golden Mile). The cost of this apartment alone amounts to \$10 million.<sup>42</sup> She also owns a house in the Leningrad region outside of St. Petersburg, and a commercial building in Moscow.

The investigation also uncovered a network of companies that had been used to illegally launder military funds. More than 10 defendants were tried in this case, including experts who knowingly undervalued properties for sale, company managers involved in carrying out fraud schemes and Defense Ministry officials.

YEVGENIYA VASILYEVA IN COURT ON THE EVE OF THE VERDICT



JEWELRY SEIZED FROM VASILYEVA

## SLIGHT FRIGHT

Serdyukov and Vasilyeva, the main defendants in the fraud case, have basically escaped real punishment despite a public uproar.

Yevgeniya Vasilyeva spent two and a half years under house arrest in her 13-bedroom Moscow apartment. She was quite comfortable during that time. She was allowed to use the services of her housekeeping staff, including a maid and a manicurist, to see her family members and friends, including Anatoli Serdyukov, and to take walks outside. Vasilyeva was repeatedly seen on Moscow streets and in high-end boutiques.

In May 2015, the court sentenced Vasilyeva to 5 years' imprisonment for fraud. However, she only spent three months behind bars. Because her time under house arrest counted as half of the sentence served, she was released on parole in August 2015 and returned home.

Soon after that, investigators began returning the convicted official's property, including the jewelry and paintings that had been seized during the search.

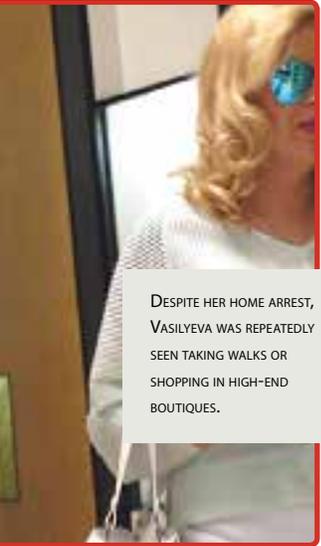
Anatoli Serdyukov also got off with nothing more than a fright. While stealing from the Defense Ministry, Serdyukov faithfully served the United Russia party. For example, after the 2011 elections, Serdyukov reported to the president in writing that 80% of members of the Russian military and their families had voted for United Russia, 30% above the national average.<sup>43</sup> This is why it was no surprise that after the corruption scandal broke out, United Russia leader Dmitri Medvedev

publicly supported his fellow party member despite the outrageous facts established in the criminal cases. Medvedev called Serdyukov an efficient minister who had shown concentrated willpower. Medvedev also voiced his opinion that the defense minister had not been involved in any corruption related to the Russian armed forces.<sup>44</sup>

The criminal investigation left no doubt about Serdyukov's involvement in fraud. Despite the probation of senior United Russia members, the former minister was officially charged with negligence under Article 293 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. However, he escaped liability and served no actual prison sentence for the crime he had committed. In 2014, Serdyukov was granted amnesty and the criminal case against him was dropped.



**RUSSIA'S INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE REFUTED THE STATEMENT OF THE UNITED RUSSIA LEADER: ACCORDING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT REPRESENTATIVES, SUCH LARGE-SCALE EMBEZZLEMENT AND FRAUD SCHEMES COULD NOT HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT IN THE DEFENSE MINISTRY WITHOUT THE MINISTER'S INVOLVEMENT.**



DESPITE HER HOME ARREST, VASILYEVA WAS REPEATEDLY SEEN TAKING WALKS OR SHOPPING IN HIGH-END BOUTIQUES.

### STATE DUMA MEMBER VALERI RASHKIN

"SERDYUKOV'S PROMOTION IS AN AFFRONT TO FAIRNESS, JUSTICE AND THE RULE OF LAW; IT IS AN AFFRONT TO ALL CITIZENS OF RUSSIA. ANY STATE OFFICIAL, NOT TO MENTION IN THE RANK OF DEFENSE MINISTER, IF HE STEALS, IF HE WAS CAUGHT RED HANDED, IF THERE IS A CRIMINAL CASE AGAINST HIM, BUT HE WAS GRANTED AMNESTY, CANNOT BE A CIVIL SERVANT."



What is more, Serdyukov was even promoted while the criminal proceedings against him were underway. In 2013, he was appointed general director of the Federal Research and Testing Center for Machine Building. In 2015, the former defense minister became industrial director of the state-owned corporation Rostekh and joined the board of directors of the company Russian Helicopters.

"Serdyukov's promotion is an affront to fairness, justice and the rule of law; it is an affront to all citizens of Russia. No state official, not to mention defense minister, who steals, who is caught red handed, who has a criminal case against him, but was granted amnesty, can be considered a civil servant. Let Serdyukov tend his garden. But he has no place here [in the government]," said State Duma member Valeri Rashkin.<sup>45</sup>

The legal proceedings against Defense Ministry officials were rushed, and the main defendants in the case have basically escaped liability. There was an attempt made in the State Duma to initiate an independent parliamentary investigation into this corruption case. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) and the Just Russia party insisted on carrying out an investigation in order to determine the reasons for treating the former minister's activity merely as "unlawful use of federal property." However, their initiative was blocked by the United Russia caucus that controls the majority of seats in the State Duma.<sup>46</sup> ■

PHOTO: EPA/VOSTOCK PHOTO, KPRF, AP/EAST NEWS, A. ASTASHEVA





# FEMALE THIEF WITH A BIRKIN BAG

CORRUPTION IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS REACHED A WHOLE NEW LEVEL UNDER PUTIN'S RULE. THIS MUCH IS CLEAR FROM THE FRAUD SCHEMES IN THE RUSSIAN MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE THAT MADE YELENA SKRYNNIK, AGRICULTURE MINISTER AND MEMBER OF UNITED RUSSIA'S SUPREME COUNCIL, A WEALTHY WOMAN.

## THE QUEEN OF LEASING

In the 1990s, Yelena Skrynnik worked in the financial sector and specialized in leasing. Vladimir Putin's rise to power provided her with ample opportunities. Viktor Khristenko, the president's man who became deputy prime minister, supplied Skrynnik, his cousin, with great references in the Kremlin. In 2001, supported by her high-ranking relative, Skrynnik became general director of Rosagroleasing, a company responsible for implementing the government's agricultural development program.

One year later, Skrynnik found herself in the middle of a corruption scandal. Russia's Accounts Chamber discovered that the state-owned company that she directed had been purchasing farming equipment for the agricultural complex at 38.9% markup over the manufacturer's suggested retail price, while prices on goods purchased through the government-owned leasing company were not supposed to exceed the manufacturer's price by any more than 18%. According to auditors, these actions inflicted multi-billion-ruble damage on the federal budget. Investigation materials were transferred to the Prosecutor General's Office, but Skrynnik's high-level connections seriously disrupted the inquiry.

Auditors also determined how Skrynnik had been using her position as the general director of a state-owned company to contribute to the development of her business. It became known that, before being appointed to Rosagroleasing, Skrynnik became a co-owner of Akademkhibank, a small finance and credit company with a minimum amount of capital. Following her appointment to the government position, Rosagroleasing became a partner of Akademkhibank, which was used for transactions by the company and its partners. For example, Konstantin Babkin, president of the Novoye Sodruzhestvo industrial group, openly admits: "Rosagroleasing strongly urged us to open an account in Akademkhibank. This was not just a simple bank account. We made deposits and remitted vast sums of money." Thus, Skrynnik's role as intermediary led Akademkhibank to rapid success.

Between 2000 and 2004, the bank's assets grew 30-fold, reaching 5.853 billion rubles, while its capital increased 85-fold, reaching a total of 965.7 million rubles.<sup>47</sup>

The fraud schemes that were uncovered had no effect upon Skrynnik's further career advancement. In 2005, she joined the United Russia party, and three years later, supported by the ruling party, Skrynnik was appointed as Russia's minister of agriculture. Current United Russia leader Dmitri Medvedev played a crucial role in her appointment.

## DUBIOUS EXPERIENCE

Despite Skrynnik's appointment to the Russian government, investigators did not lose interest in her.

Criminal evidence against the newly appointed minister and her close circle continued to accumulate in the offices of representatives of the police and security forces. Step by step, law enforcement officials managed to uncover a large-scale embezzlement scheme.

A 2010 prosecutor's investigation revealed serious violations in Rosagroleasing's activity. It was established that the state-owned company had been providing advance payments for agricultural equipment with deferred delivery of up to one year, during which time the company's suppliers transferred money to offshore accounts. The Russian Prosecutor General's Office was mostly interested in the connection between Rosagroleasing and the Saransk Excavator Plant (SAREX). For instance, in December 2008, Rosagroleasing transferred more than 730 million rubles to SAREX. However, the first shipment, worth less than 80 million rubles, was not delivered until mid-October 2009. SAREX's report for the third quarter of 2009 mentions Rosagroleasing as the plant's biggest creditor, and lists the company's debt to its supplier at 919.85 million rubles. The Prosecutor General's Office discovered that SAREX had been depositing the money received from Rosagroleasing into bank accounts as well as transferring it to a certain non-commercial organization involved in channeling money into offshore accounts. It was also established that SAREX was run by people from Skrynnik's close circle.<sup>48</sup> (See the table on page 24)

Among other violations discovered during the investigation was the fact that more than 70% of Rosagroleasing's contracts had not been made directly with lessees; rather, they had been concluded with intermediaries that charged the lessees another 2.5-4% above the declared price.

As a result of the prosecutor's investigation, Skrynnik was forced to leave the board of directors of Rosagroleasing. However, she remained in the post as agriculture minister.

## HELLO HIGH LIFE

While the investigative authorities were accumulating documentation for the inquiry, Skrynnik was collecting state awards. She sported a Medal of the Order for Merit to the Fatherland, a Gold Medal for Contributing to the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex, and a Patriot of Russia government distinction. The minister was also in very good standing in the United Russia party, having evolved from a rank-and-file member into a member of the party's Supreme Council in only six months' time.

The minister did not seem too concerned about the investigators' activity, confident, as she was that she enjoyed the support of her high-ranking protectors. Skrynnik's officially declared annual income did not exceed 10.5 million rubles. Her lifestyle, however, was similar to those of the Russian oligarchs. She seemed to have no compunction about wearing an exclusive €40 thousand Bell & Ross Swiss watch encrusted with 672 diamonds to government meetings.<sup>49</sup> She was

PHOTO: APEASTNEWS, KP.RU

RUSSIAN POP BAND  
TEA FOR TWO AT YELENA  
SKRYNNIK'S BIRTHDAY  
PARTY

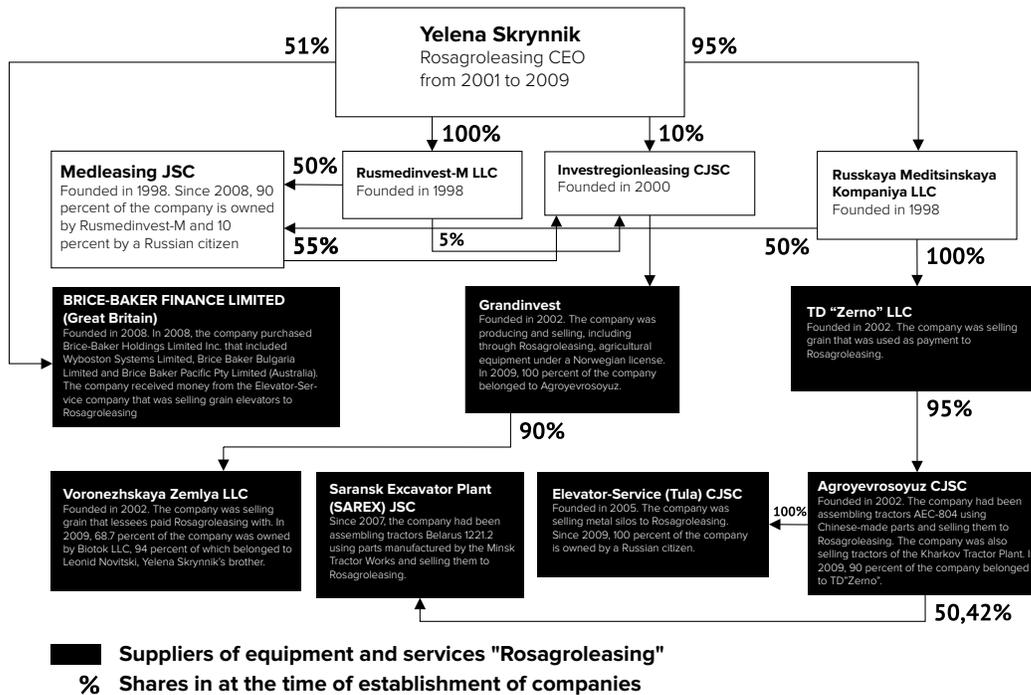


YELENA SKRYNNIK DURING  
A GOVERNMENT SESSION



KP

## YELENA SKRYNNIK'S COMPANIES AND ROSAGROLEASING'S SUPPLIERS IN 2008 AND 2009



**LEONID VOLKOV,**  
**EXPERT AT THE ANTI-CORRUPTION FOUNDATION**

"YELENA SKRYNNIK IS A TYPICAL MINISTER FROM THE UNITED RUSSIA PARTY. HAVING GAINED ACCESS TO THE BUDGET TROUGH, SHE BLATANTLY WALLOWED IN LUXURY AND DID NOT EVEN TRY TO HIDE IT. HER STANDARD OF LIVING WAS OBVIOUSLY HIGHER THAN AN OFFICIAL'S INCOME CAN AFFORD, EVEN SUCH A HIGH-RANKING ONE AS A MEMBER OF THE GOVERNMENT."

seen wearing even more expensive watches, such as a \$50,000 Franck Muller Long Island model, to social events. The minister's favorite pop band Tea for Two, which usually charges around €15,000 for a private event, performed at her birthday party.<sup>50</sup> Skrynnik chose a Jane Birkin bag, at a cost \$35,000, to use as her ministerial briefcase.<sup>51</sup>

The investigation revealed that Skrynnik had numerous accounts in European banks as well as real estate assets.<sup>52</sup> For instance, Skrynnik purchased a 200 square meter luxury villa in France for €8 million.<sup>53</sup>

### EMBEZZLEMENT SCHEMES

By 2012, the accumulated evidence against Skrynnik had finally reached a critical level. Representatives of the Anti-Corruption Department at the Russian Interior Ministry declared that they had discovered an organized group that had been systematically embezzling federal budget funds allocated to the state-owned corporation Rosagroleasing through the Agriculture Ministry.

According to the police, the criminal group had obtained hundreds of millions of rubles for fictitious equipment supplies for distillery plants and cattle farms. The embezzlement scheme consisted in concluding lease and supply contracts, after which budget funds were channeled into the accounts of subsidiaries/shell companies before either being transferred to affiliated organizations or embezzled.



YELENA SKRYNNIK'S PARTY.  
OLEG DONSKIKH (FAR LEFT),  
AN AGRICULTURE MINISTRY  
OFFICIAL WANTED BY  
RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES

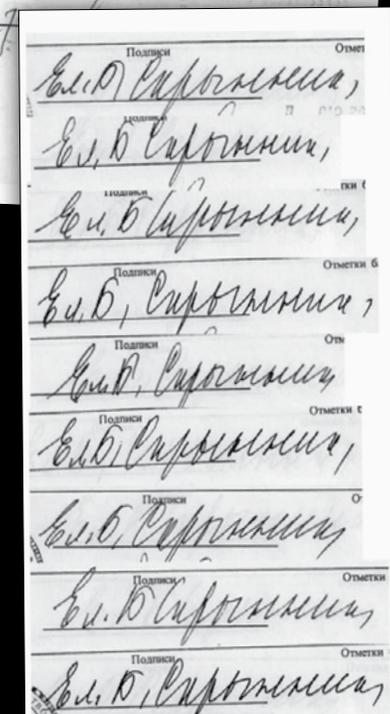
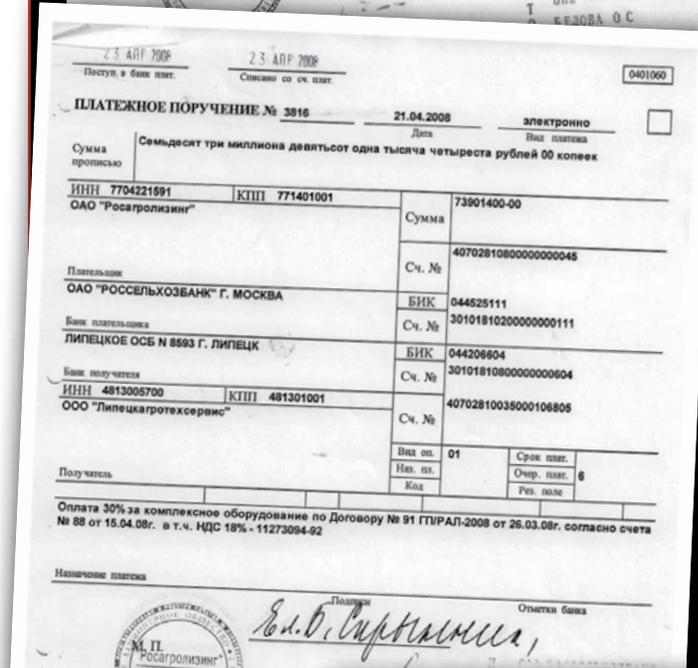
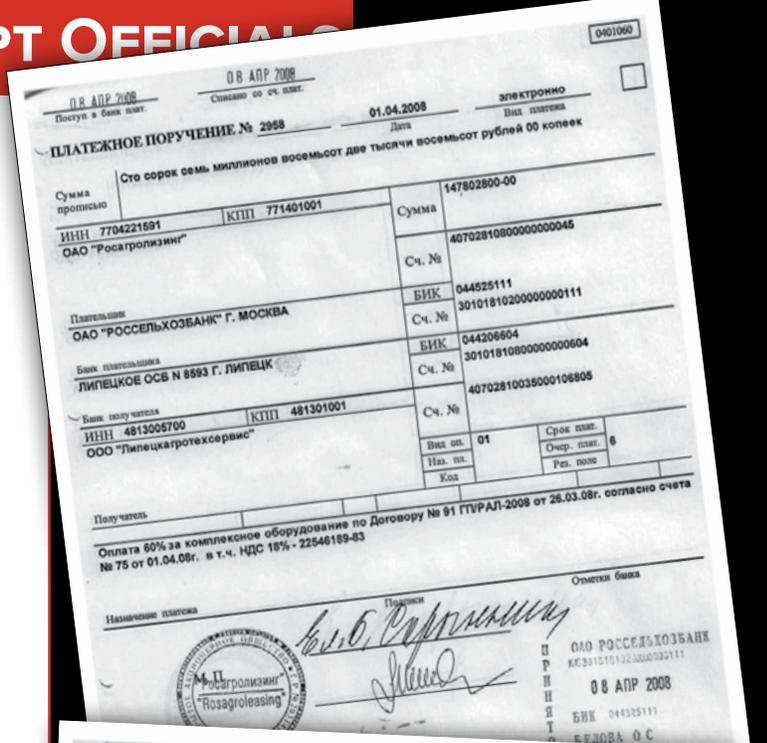
Meanwhile, false documents confirming the alleged deliveries were being fabricated. According to investigators' estimates, such schemes were used to steal approximately 40 billion rubles worth of state funds.<sup>54</sup>

The embezzlement schemes used to steal money allocated to Rosagroleasing through the Agriculture Ministry were very simple. According to investigators, the simplicity of the schemes indicates that the high-ranking criminals involved were convinced that they would enjoy impunity. For example, billions of rubles were transferred into the account of Brice-Baker, a British company founded by Skrynnik.<sup>55</sup> Some of the money ended up in accounts belonging to AgroYevroSoyuz, a company owned by Skrynnik's brother Leonid Novitski.<sup>56</sup>

Interior Ministry representatives named Sergei Burdovsky, the CEO of Mezhhregionorg+, Igor Konyakhin, Director of Lipetskagrotekhservis, and Oleg Donskikh, head of the Agriculture Ministry's department for administrative work, as key members of the criminal group. From 2007 to 2009, Donskikh had worked as head of a Rosagroleasing branch and had run several other companies.<sup>57</sup>

Like Yelena Skrynnik, Oleg Donskikh was also a member of the United Russia party. He was Skrynnik's proxy and part of her inner circle. When Skrynnik became agriculture minister, Donskikh was appointed to the ministry as well and soon became her right-hand man.

Donskikh was the one responsible for implementing the schemes to embezzle state funds that were intended for the development of the agricultural sector. He negotiated budgetary allocations, participated in drafting contract documents, and made sure that the fact of any missing equipment was concealed. The investigation revealed that fictitious contracts used by the criminals to enrich themselves had been signed by Skrynnik herself.<sup>58</sup>



**TRANSFER ORDERS SIGNED BY YELENA SKRYNNIK AUTHORIZING THE REMITTANCE OF ROSAGROLEASING'S BUDGET FUNDS INTO THE ACCOUNTS OF DIFFERENT COMPANIES CONSTITUTE THE MAIN PIECE OF EVIDENCE AGAINST HER. SKRYNNIK OFFICIALLY CLAIMED THAT THE DOCUMENTS HAD BEEN SIGNED BY HER OFFICE STAFF. HOWEVER, THE HANDWRITING ANALYSIS CONDUCTED BY THE INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE DETERMINED THE AUTHENTICITY OF HER SIGNATURE.**



Transfer orders signed by Yelena Skrynnik authorizing the remittance of Rosagroleasing's budgetary funds into the accounts of various companies constituted the main piece of evidence against her. Skrynnik officially claimed that the documents had been signed by her office staff. However, the handwriting analysis conducted by the Investigative Committee confirmed the authenticity of her signature.

Oleg Donskikh was officially charged with embezzling 266 million rubles allocated from the federal budget for the construction of a dairy farm and a distillery in the Lipetsk region. At the time of the investigation, neither the distillery nor the farm had yet been built; Investigators found only ruins.<sup>59</sup> The crook, however, managed to flee abroad and has since been on Interpol's most wanted list.

## SAFE HAVEN ABROAD FOR THIEVES FROM THE UNITED RUSSIA PARTY

After her colleague Oleg Donskikh had escaped abroad, former Agriculture Minister Yelena Skrynnik also left the country. According to the Interior Ministry, she ignored their summons for questioning and preferred to communicate with investigators in writing.<sup>60</sup> Interpol agents later discovered that she had been staying at her French villa.

In 2013, Skrynnik finally agreed to appear for questioning. According to lawyer Alexei Mamontov, the former minister agreed to return to Russia and meet with investigators only "after receiving guarantees of immunity."<sup>61</sup> Following a five-hour long interview, Skrynnik remained in the status of a witness was still officially listed as merely a witness. The law enforcement representatives running the investigation were obviously unable to muster the political will to arrest such a high-ranking official.

Today, Russian law enforcement officials show almost no interest in Skrynnik. Donskikh, her associate, has yet to be located. However, it would seem that the former minister has sparked the interest of European law enforcement bodies.

"The West is no longer interested in covering up cases of Russian officials involved in money laundering," according to State Duma member Dmitri Gudkov.<sup>62</sup>

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**IN 2015, THE SWISS OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL ARRESTED BANK ACCOUNTS BELONGING TO FORMER AGRICULTURE MINISTER YELENA SKRYNNIK IN CONNECTION WITH MONEY LAUNDERING. SWISS AUTHORITIES DISCOVERED MORE THAN \$140 MILLION ON FORMER RUSSIAN OFFICIAL'S SWISS ACCOUNTS, WHICH AROUSED THEIR SUSPICION. MORE THAN \$60 MILLION WAS CONFISCATED. REPRESENTATIVES OF THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF SWITZERLAND ADDED THAT THEY HAD REQUESTED RUSSIA'S ASSISTANCE IN THIS CASE BUT RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES DISREGARDED THE REQUEST.<sup>63</sup> ■**

# “MOSCOW CRIME BOSS”

THE LENGTHY MOSCOW CORRUPTION SCANDAL SURROUNDING FORMER MOSCOW MAYOR YURI LUZHKOVA HAS BECOME THE STUFF OF LEGEND. DURING HIS TENURE, LUZHKOVA'S WIFE WON MULTIBILLION RUBLE CONTRACTS AND BECAME RUSSIA'S WEALTHIEST WOMAN. DURING THE ENTIRE PERIOD OF HIS REIGN AS MAYOR, LUZHKOVA REMAINED A LEADER OF THE UNITED RUSSIA PARTY.

## UNITED RUSSIA'S FOUNDING FATHER

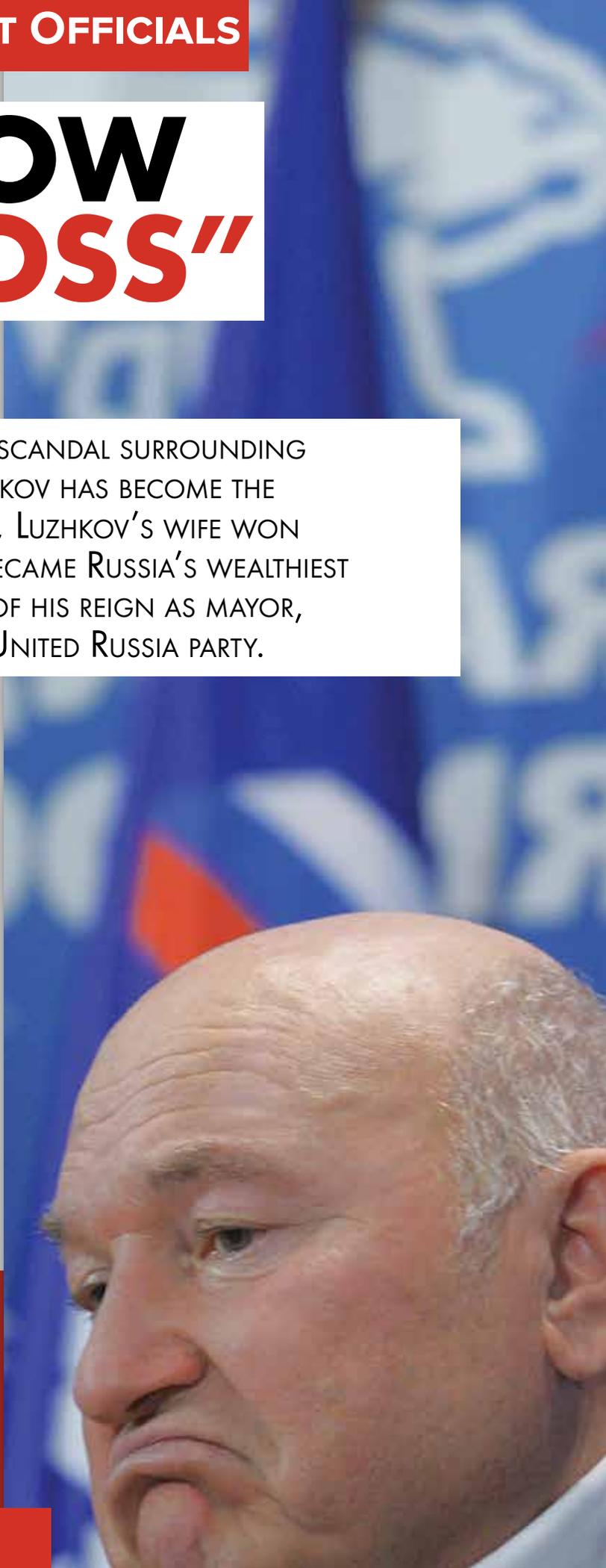
Yuri Luzhkov had for a long time been considered a pillar of Russian politics. He became Moscow mayor back in 1992 and remained in the post for 18 full years.

In the late 1990s, Luzhkov competed with some of the Kremlin elites that looked up to Putin. However, when Putin won the 2000 presidential elections, the Moscow mayor realized that cooperation with the new regime would provide him with multiple opportunities, including some that he could use for his personal enrichment. In 2001, Luzhkov became Putin's ally and joined the United Russia party. As co chairman of United Russia's Supreme Council, Luzhkov immediately became a key party leader.

Putin publicly supported Luzhkov as Moscow mayor and in 2007 nominated him for a new term. At the same time, the Moscow mayor relied on the support of the United Russia party and led its lists in the elections to various government offices.

Thanks to the support of the Kremlin and the United Russia party, Luzhkov established a regime of personal power in Russia's

PHOTO: DIMITRI AZAROV/KOMMERSANT, PHOTOPRESS



capital and gained control over its enormous budget. The mayor's control over administrative resources created favorable business conditions for his spouse, Yelena Baturina, who in just a few years became the country's wealthiest woman, with a net worth estimated at \$4.2 billion.<sup>64</sup>

Back in the 1990s, Inteko, a company founded by Baturina, was already making profits thanks to favoritism from City Hall. For example, Baturina built a polypropylene plant on the territory of the Moscow Oil Refinery, after which all polymers produced by the refinery belonged to Baturina's company. As a result, Inteko captured almost one-third of the Russian market for plastic products.<sup>65</sup>

However, Baturina's questionable business enterprises of the 1990s served merely as a warm-up for the expansion of her reach in the following decade. It was only once the Moscow mayor had reached the top ranks of United Russia and had become Putin's ally that his family began making really big money.

## BEHIND EVERY GREAT MAN THERE IS A GREAT WOMAN

In 2001, Inteko began establishing itself as Russia's largest construction company. Baturina established control over a fourth of the Moscow market of panel house-building as well as a considerable part of monolithic house-building. Mayor Luzhkov's city government played a key role in the company's growth. Inteko bought shares in the Moscow construction materials factory DSK-3 from the widow of Yuri Svishchev, a shareholder who had been killed. In order to gain complete control over DSK-3, Baturina participated in the company's privatization and purchased a controlling stake from the Moscow city government. After that, Moscow Deputy Mayor Vladimir Resin declared that the city government had decided to allocate money from the city budget for the development of DSK-3. In this way, Luzhkov's wife's company received city funds based on the deputy mayor's decision.<sup>66</sup>

"We do not do much work for the city," Yelena Baturina said in an interview with Forbes. The facts, however, tell a different story. Inteko built more than 20 real estate projects in Moscow, all of which had been officially approved by Yuri Luzhkov. These included Grand Park, a mid-range housing complex Shuvalovsky, an exclusive housing development, a luxury apartment building on Krivoarbatski Pereulok, a business center on the Sadovnicheskaya Naberezhnaya, and the Moscow International Business Center, also known as Moscow City.

According to Article 1 of the Russian Federal Law on combatting corruption, "Corruption is the abuse of an official position, the offering of bribes, the acceptance of bribes, the abuse of power, commercial bribery or other illegal use by a physical person of his/her position in defiance of the legitimate interests of society and the state for the purpose of profiting through the obtainment of money, valuables, other property or services of a material nature, of other property rights for oneself or for third parties, or of the illegal provision of such benefits to the said person by other physical persons."

Luzhkov went on record as saying that he sees no connection between Baturina's spectacular enrichment and his job as Moscow mayor. "My wife is a prodigiously talented person. She could be even wealthier, were she not the wife of a Moscow mayor," Luzhkov said in an interview with REN TV.

In reality, it was the Moscow city government's regulations and orders, approved by Luzhkov, which authorized Baturina's company to build numerous real estate developments and reaped multi-billion ruble profits for the mayor's family. It was preferential treatment from City Hall that made Baturina the wealthiest woman in Russia.

"Corruption is first and foremost the abuse of power, which paves the way for the personal enrichment of public officials and their family members. Yelena Baturina's business during Yuri Luzhkov's tenure as Moscow mayor is a textbook example of such an abuse," according to politician and economist Vladimir Milov.

## RAMPANT CORRUPTION

Russian opposition activists have repeatedly drawn attention to the facts of corruption in Moscow connected with Yuri Luzhkov and his close circle. For example, Boris Nemtsov published an independent expert report entitled "Luzhkov: Conclusions" in which he pieced together the facts pointing to the abuse of power by Moscow authorities and supplied evidence of their corrupt activities. "I believe that Luzhkov is a thief and a corrupt official," Nemtsov said in an interview with the Kommersant newspaper.<sup>67</sup>

Even politicians loyal to the Kremlin called attention to the level of corruption in Russia's capital. For example, during his meeting with Putin, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), referred to Luzhkov as "the Moscow crime boss" and gave the president a folder with incriminating evidence against the mayor.<sup>68, 69</sup>

Finally, the skyrocketing corruption in Moscow reached such an obvious level that it began to raise questions in the Kremlin. As a result, in the fall of 2010, Luzhkov was fired for having lost the president's trust.

After Luzhkov's dismissal, his colleagues from the United Russia party, who had called him an effective manager and an example to follow, drastically changed their tune. For instance, State Duma Speaker Sergei Naryshkin publicly accused Luzhkov of rampant corruption.<sup>70</sup>



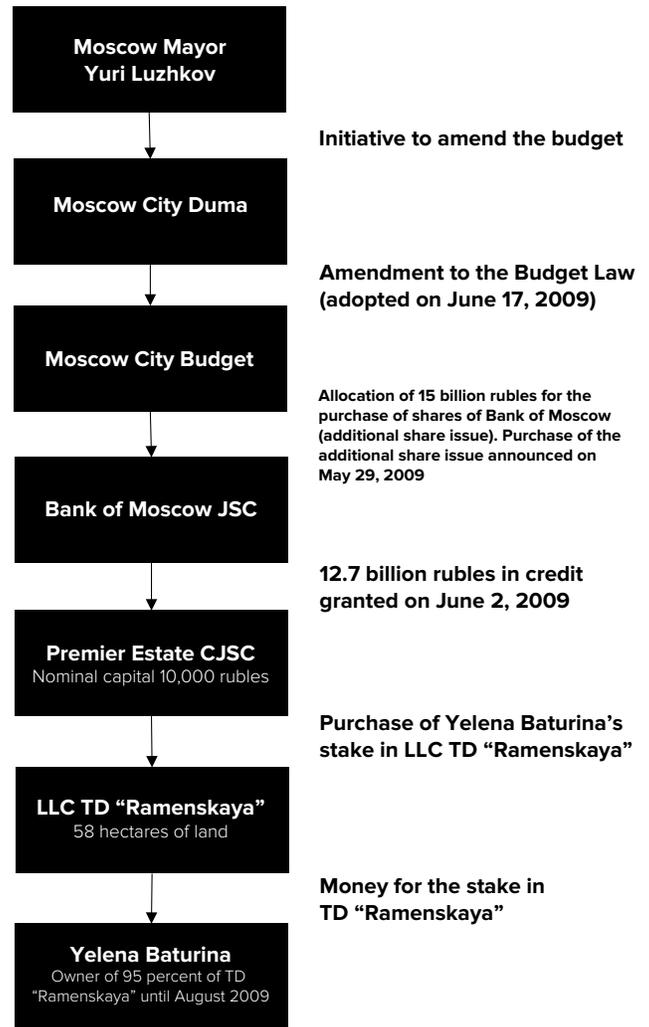
MOSCOW MAYOR YURI LUZHKOV AND HIS WIFE YELENA BATURINA

By 2007, with the mayor's support, Inteko already had 1300 hectares of Moscow's available land for construction projects at its disposal. The city's new housing supply program included a projection of 1 million square meters of new housing to be built per year.

## THE INVESTIGATION

Soon after that, the Russian Investigative Committee launched a probe into Luzhkov's activities during his tenure as Moscow mayor. His wife Yelena Baturina was also under investigation. As a result, a criminal case was initiated against top managers of the Bank of Moscow in connection with fraud directed at embezzling public funds through the taking of a 13 billion ruble credit with the Bank. These funds were later transferred into Yelena Baturina's personal bank account. Andrei Borodin, head of the Bank of Moscow, managed to flee abroad, but a number of his employees were convicted.

In fact, in the summer of 2009, Moscow authorities carried out a chain of fraudulent deals directed at helping Inteko and



### BORIS NEMTSOV:



**"I BELIEVE THAT LUZHKOVA IS A THIEF AND A CORRUPT OFFICIAL."**

Baturina pay off their debts to creditors using public funds from the Moscow budget.

On June 17, 2009, the Moscow mayor signed amendments to the 2009 Moscow budget allocating almost 15 billion rubles to cover the city government's investment in the nominal capital of the Bank of Moscow. It was assumed that by purchasing the additional shares, which had been intentionally issued for that purpose, the Moscow government would be able to restore its majority stake.

The Bank of Moscow then granted a 13 billion ruble credit to Premier Estate, a previously unknown company in the construction and real estate development market. As later became clear, this company was affiliated with the Bank of Moscow through a chain of subsidiaries/shell companies. Essentially, an illegal credit loan deal was set up., Premier Estate then proceeded to the immediate purchase of a 58 hectare plot of land belonging to Baturina for 13 billion rubles; at \$7.2 million per hectare, this figure was much higher than the actual market price. This deal was arranged through the purchase of 100% of the nominal capital of TD Ramenskaya LLC, the owner of the plot of land that was obviously its main asset. Before the deal, TD Ramenskaya LLC belonged to Yelena Baturina and the vice presidents of Inteko CJSC. According to the Vedomosti newspaper, "Today, there are practically no structures that could come up with such a lump sum for assets that are not readily convertible."<sup>71</sup>

Soon after that, the Moscow city government declared its intention to devolve the responsibility for the development of that property to TD Ramenskaya LLC and Moszemsintez JSC, companies which were owned by the city government (Government Decree of the City of Moscow from August 25, 2009, no. 828-PP).

This chain of deals inflicted multi-billion ruble damage both on the city budget and on the city of Moscow as the main shareholder of the Bank of Moscow. Thirteen billion rubles, allocated from the city budget to the Bank of Moscow, were basically used to buy an asset that was not readily convertible at a price greatly exceeding its market value from a company belonging to the mayor's wife.<sup>72</sup>

## A PEACEFUL RETIREMENT

However, Yuri Luzhkov and his wife managed to avoid criminal prosecution. This was made possible thanks to an informal agreement between Luzhkov and Russian federal authorities, according to which Luzhkov agreed to abandon Russian politics and to leave Russia together with his wife; in response, the Kremlin promised to put a halt to the criminal case.

As a result, Luzhkov and his family were able to transfer their profits into foreign accounts and to live like European billionaires. The unprecedented levels of corruption that attracted the attention both of current Russian authorities and of opposition activists did not prevent the former united Russia leader from enjoying a peaceful retirement. ■

A photograph showing two men in suits. The man on the left, wearing a dark blue suit and a purple tie, is pinning a medal onto the lapel of the man on the right. The man on the right is wearing a dark grey suit and a dark tie. In the background, a flag with red, white, and blue elements is visible. The text 'GOVERNOR KHOROSHAVIN'S MEDAL «FOR MERIT TO THE FATHERLAND»' is overlaid in large, bold, red and white letters.

# GOVERNOR KHOROSHAVIN'S MEDAL «FOR MERIT TO THE FATHERLAND»

WHEN SAKHALIN RESIDENTS ELECTED A UNITED RUSSIA MEMBER AS THEIR GOVERNOR, THEY WERE PROMISED A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE. IN REALITY, IT WAS THE GOVERNOR WHO WAS LIVING IN LUXURY AND WALLOWING IN CORRUPTION. AS COULD BE EXPECTED, THE STORY ENDED WITH THE OFFICIAL'S ARREST, BRINGING DISGRACE TO THE RULING PARTY.

## UNITED RUSSIA'S MAN

Sakhalin residents received a new governor in 2007 when President Putin appointed high-profile United Russia member Aleksandr Khoroshavin to the post. The way in which the new head of the region worked appealed to the country's leaders, and his "successes" were often mentioned as examples to be followed.

"The United Russia party and the party's Supreme Council support Aleksandr Vadimovich Khoroshavin. This means that Aleksandr Vadimovich has the respect of the Russian authorities," Viktor Ishayev, the presidential plenipotentiary envoy to the Far East Federal District, has noted.<sup>73</sup>

In 2011, Khoroshavin was appointed to a second term in office. Boris Gryzlov, chairman of the United Russia Supreme Council, sent him an official congratulatory message: "Your candidacy, which was put forward by the United Russia party, has been approved by the president. Your work in the post of governor is highly appreciated."<sup>74</sup>

## THE GOVERNOR AND THE TROUBLES

The support of the Kremlin and the ruling party provided Khoroshavin with a sense of total impunity. He gradually turned into minor royalty, with a corresponding standard of living and attitude toward his "subjects."

While on the island of Sakhalin, the governor was escorted by an extravagant motorcade that included two Lexus LX570s, which were worth a total of more than 10 million rubles, a luxury Lexus LS600h sedan, worth 5 million rubles, and a Toyota Land Cruiser 200, valued at 3 million rubles. Yet another car belonging to Khoroshavin, a luxury Audi A8L, was kept in Moscow for the governor's visits to the capital. All of the governor's cars were fitted with special sirens and flashing lights although, under Russian law, the governor was entitled to use only one flashing light. "It is an inexcusable luxury for someone with my salary to be stuck in traffic," Khoroshavin remarked in response to the criticism directed at him.

In 2013, the governor spent 8 million rubles of public funds to purchase a Mercedes. However, that was apparently not enough, as the same year Khoroshavin allocated more than 1 billion rubles for the purchase of two helicopters with VIP amenities for his personal use. The construction of two helicopter landing pads was begun at Khoroshavin's country residence.<sup>74</sup>

Khoroshavin's craving for luxury also manifested itself in the organization of his working space. For example, in 2014, more than 850 million rubles in public funds were allocated to renovate the Government House of the Sakhalin region. Out of that amount, 576 million rubles were spent on the renovations, which included the installation of a US-made Micro Tiles video display system for 30 million rubles; similar systems are used by the London Stock Exchange and by TV networks. Another 49.7 million rubles were spent on renovating the so-called "governor's rooms" which include the governor's reception area, his office, a lounge, a private bathroom and the offices of the governor's assistants. One of the three-legged tables that was purchased for the Government House cost 1.6 million rubles. The price of the average couch amounted to 500,000 rubles. The premises were decorated with hazel wood and gold-encrusted furniture. A 3-D painting entitled "Islands" was purchased for officials at a cost of 1.5 million rubles. Curtains for the head of the regional government cost the region's budget another 1.5 million rubles. That amount could have easily covered a major repair and renovation project for a childcare center. Public funds were also used to install an interactive toilet with a control panel and a built-in hydro massage function in the governor's private bathroom.<sup>75</sup>

### ALEKSANDR BRECHALOV, HEAD OF THE RUSSIAN PUBLIC CHAMBER

"THE MONEY ALLOCATED FOR THE REMODELING OF THE GOVERNOR'S ROOMS COULD HAVE EASILY COVERED THE RENOVATION OF THE ENTIRE SURGERY DEPARTMENT OF THE SAKHALIN HOSPITAL, WHICH COVERS A TERRITORY OF 1,000 SQUARE METERS. BY COMPARISON, THE GOVERNOR'S ROOMS MEASURE ONLY 170 SQUARE METERS."<sup>76</sup>



GOVERNOR ALEKSANDR  
KHOROSHAVIN'S COUNTRY  
RESIDENCE



# NOT A SINGLE CONTRACT INVOLVING PUBLIC FUNDS IN THE SAKHALIN REGION WENT THROUGH WITHOUT A KICKBACK TO HIGHLY-DECORATED UNITED RUSSIA MEMBER AND SAKHALIN GOVERNOR KHOROSHAVIN

The protection that Khoroshavin received from those in the upper echelons of power allowed him to remain in office until 2015, when his true “merits to the Fatherland” were uncovered as the result of an investigation.

As it turned out, the governor of the Sakhalin region managed to have Russian citizens cover the costs of his entertainment too. For example, in 2009, the regional administration posted information on the state procurement website about having invited the African ensemble “Burundi Drummers” to a New Year’s Eve reception hosted by the governor. This meant that 490,000 rubles were allocated to cover the cost of these exotic dancers with drums.<sup>77</sup>

As he led a life of luxury, United Russia member Khoroshavin spared no taxpayer expense on self-promotion. In 2013, he decided to allocate 680 million rubles from the regional budget for the “improvement of the governor’s public image.”<sup>78</sup>



**NOT A SINGLE CONTRACT INVOLVING BUDGET FUNDS IN THE SAKHALIN REGION WENT WITHOUT A KICKBACK TO THE HIGHLY DECORATED UNITED RUSSIA MEMBER AND SAKHALIN GOVERNOR KHOROSHAVIN**



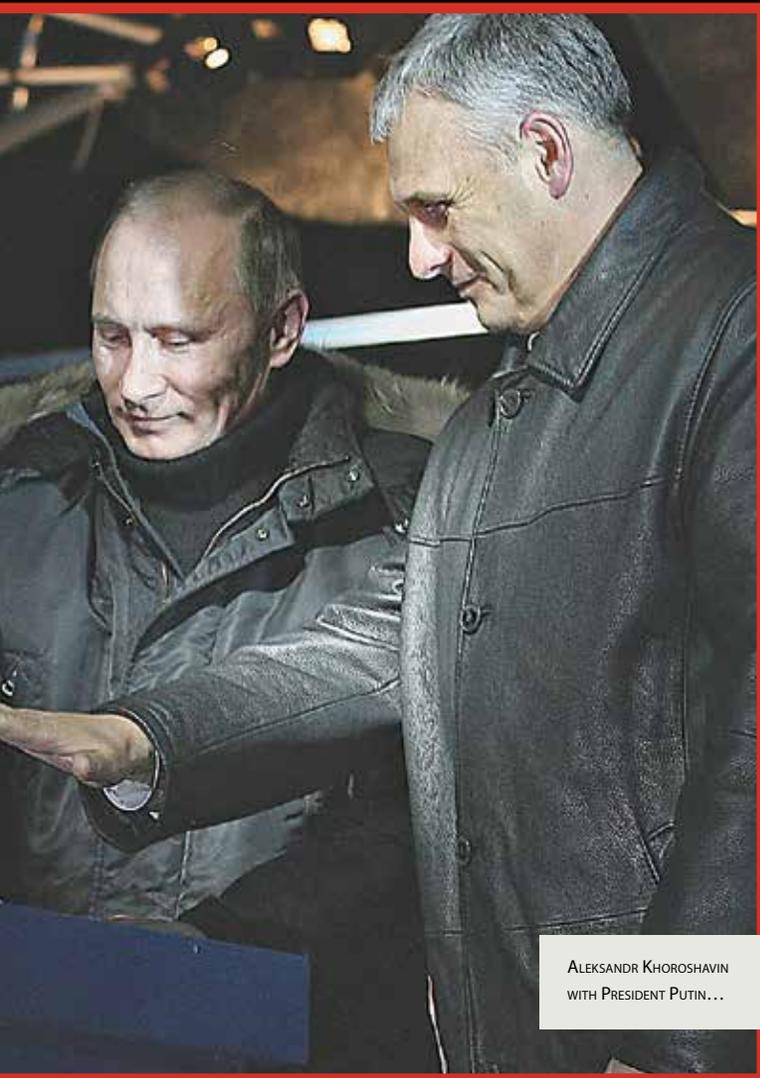
ILLEGAL CASH SEIZED FROM GOVERNOR KHOROSHAVIN DURING SEARCHES

## MERITS TO THE FATHERLAND

Despite the outrageous facts mentioned above, Khoroshavin enjoyed the support of Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Medvedev, as well as of the United Russia party. Furthermore, he was awarded two important state medals, the Order of Honor and the Order “For Merit to the Fatherland.”

The protection that he received from the upper echelons of power allowed Khoroshavin to remain in office until 2015 when his true “merits to the Fatherland” were uncovered as a result of an investigation.

In the spring of 2015, Sakhalin Governor Aleksandr Khoroshavin was arrested on bribe-taking charges. The criminal case against him detailed more than ten incidents of bribery. “These incidents involved both large-scale bribery and extortion,” according to representatives



ALEKSANDR KHOROSHAVIN  
WITH PRESIDENT PUTIN...



... AND BEHIND BARS

of the Russian Investigative Committee. The investigation established that the governor had accepted more than \$5.6 million in bribes during his time in office.<sup>79</sup>

After Khoroshavin's arrest, it was discovered that this high-ranking United Russia member and regional governor had set up a system of extortion and bribery on a vast scale.

## HIS GREED DID HIM IN

"Not a single contract involving public funds went through without a kickback to Khoroshavin. Nobody in the Sakhalin region could run a business that received government monies without paying the governor a certain sum. Otherwise, such a person would basically go out of business," according to Vladimir Markin, spokesman for the Russian Investigative Committee.<sup>80</sup>

The Sakhalin governor's criminal activity had allowed him to accumulate tremendous wealth. More than 1 billion rubles in cash in various currencies as well as 800 pieces of expensive jewelry, including a unique pen worth 36 million rubles, were discovered by investigators during their searches of Khoroshavin's office and residence.<sup>81</sup> Later, the court seized 1.1 billion rubles' worth of the United Russia member's property; at the same time, the official income declaration of the governor's family in the last four years had shown an income of no more than 50 million rubles.<sup>82</sup>

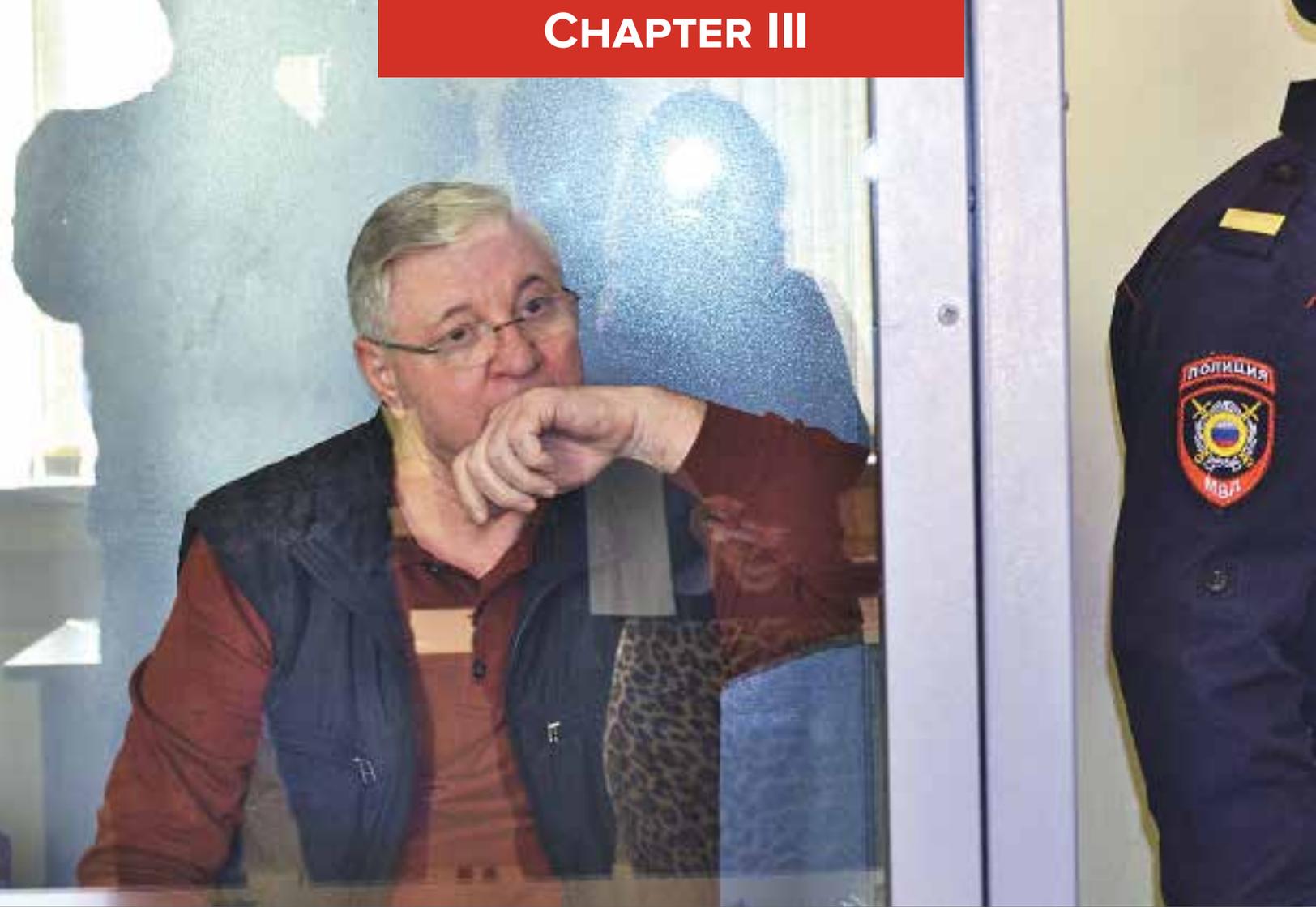
It is also worth mentioning that the governor's blatant corruption had not bothered the Kremlin or the United Russia party, until such time as Khoroshavin attained the status of influential opponent to another member of the Russian power structure. After Khoroshavin's arrest, it became known that he had entered into conflict with General Igor Struchkov, the head of the local FSB branch.

During the investigation that ensued, Struchkov's subordinates discovered fraud schemes that were used by the management of a contracting firm responsible for the construction of the fourth power unit of the South Sakhalin Thermal Power Plant (TPP)1. Nikolai Kran, a well-known businessman in Russia's Primorye region, as well as a number of his partners and employees were the main suspects in this case. All of these businessmen worked closely together with Governor Khoroshavin.

When the governor's close allies failed to reach an amicable agreement with the FSB general, the businessmen tried to have General Struchkov dismissed or transferred to a different region. Toward this end, intermediaries were sent to Moscow with about \$2 million in order to bribe high-ranking FSB officials. The mission failed, however, and led to the arrest of Nikolai Kran and his associates.<sup>83</sup>

The conflict between the governor's administration and the local FSB branch led to a criminal case against Khoroshavin. After the arrest, Governor Khoroshavin was removed from office and has since been highly criticized by his former colleagues from the United Russia party. However, the ruling party has never been held liable for forcing a corrupt governor on the Russian population.

PHOTO: EPA/VOISTOCK PHOTO DIMITRI LEBEDEV/KOMMERSANT



# THE ASTRAKHAN BRIGADE

A UNITED RUSSIA TEAM HEADED BY MIKHAIL STOLYAROV TOOK CHARGE OF ASTRAKHAN AFTER A VOTE-RIGGING SCANDAL DURING THE CITY'S MAYORAL ELECTIONS.

HAVING SEIZED POWER, THE OFFICIALS BEGAN SHAMELESSLY ROBBING THE CITY. AS A RESULT, A SERIES OF CRIMINAL CASES WAS INITIATED, WHICH LED TO THE IMPRISONMENT OF THE ASTRAKHAN MAYOR HIMSELF ALONG WITH SEVERAL OFFICIALS FROM HIS ADMINISTRATION.

## THE BRIBE-TAKERS GAINING POWER THROUGH ELECTORAL FRAUD

In April 2012, Astrakhan was a center of protest activity. For a whole month, large protests, marches and hunger strikes shook the city.

The discontent of Astrakhan residents was provoked by rigged mayoral elections, as a result of which the United Russia candidate Mikhail Stolyarov was declared the winner. Opposition activists supplied evidence of a large-scale ballot-box stuffing and declared that election results had been rigged in favor of the United Russia member. Opposition candidate Oleg Shein and his supporters even went on a hunger strike to protest against the rigged elections.



CONFRONTATION BETWEEN OPPOSITION CANDIDATE OLEG SHEIN AND UNITED RUSSIA MEMBER MIKHAIL STOLYAROV DURING ASTRAKHAN'S MAYORAL ELECTIONS

As a result of an investigation conducted by the Astrakhan regional prosecutor's office, the information about election violations was proven to be accurate, and several lawsuits were subsequently initiated. The federal authorities, however, sided with Stolyarov.

At the time, Vladimir Putin's press service confirmed that the president was fully aware of the situation in Astrakhan. However, the Kremlin did not see any reason to doubt Stolyarov's victory. The ruling party continued to actively support its candidate. Despite protests, opposition forces did not manage to have the vote declared invalid. On March 16, 2012, Mikhail Stolyarov officially took office as Astrakhan mayor.

## AN UNDECLARED WAR

Stolyarov's people went for key positions in the Astrakhan City Hall, and then as good as declared war against city residents. This development principally affected the most vulnerable social groups, as the new officials began to reduce social spending drastically, explaining the cuts by the need for savings.

In 2012, the Astrakhan City Hall decided to close down the city hospice; despite residents' protests, Stolyarov signed the corresponding ordinance. The local prosecutor's office tried to challenge the decision without success. The United Russia member also managed to make money off hospice employees by holding back their salaries and then laying them off. As a result, the hospice personnel were not paid for their last two months' work and did not receive the legally required redundancy payment.

The same year, by decision of the Astrakhan City Hall, the local Veterans' Council was kicked out of the premises in a municipal building

that it had occupied since Soviet times. After throwing the Council's property into the corridor, City Hall representatives changed the locks on the doors. It should be noted that veterans were obviously a source of particular irritation for the mayor. One year later, the City Hall also decided to abolish the Victory Day celebration, once again claiming that it was a cost-saving effort. However, in the end, after the mayor's decision had provoked the outrage of federal media outlets, the celebration was held after all.

Astrakhan's Society of Disabled People also nearly lost its office space. Officials decided that it would be more profitable to lease the Society's few offices for commercial purposes. Only fervent protests staged by local activists prevented City Hall from throwing the Society of Disabled People into the street as well.

In January 2013, the free school meals program for orphans and disadvantaged children was abolished in Astrakhan by order of Stolyarov. As it turned out, the amount of money saved through this drastic measure was extremely insignificant, since only 15 rubles per day were being allocated to each child.<sup>84</sup>

## A BOUQUET OF CRIMINAL CASES

Having proclaimed the goal of optimizing public spending, the new mayor's team was saving on everything but its own costs. After gaining power, Stolyarov and his close circle had acted so quickly to implement their corrupt practices that, just 18 months later, several key officials in the Astrakhan administration were already under investigation. Incidents of abuse of power and bribery had become standard practice in the Astrakhan City Hall once it was filled with United Russia members. Initiating one criminal case after another, investigators had trouble keeping up with the officials, who were literally robbing their city blind.

In March 2013, Andrei Kovalev, the city's deputy mayor for municipal services and development, was arrested for accepting a bribe.

In April 2013, Oleg Lebedev, head of the financial department of the city administration, attracted the attention of investigators. However, when summoned for interrogation, the official packed his suitcase and fled from the country instead. He was later put on the most-wanted list.



A SEARCH UNDERWAY IN THE OFFICE OF DEPUTY MAYOR ANDREI KOVALEV. POLICE FOOTAGE.



PHOTO: ALEXEI DIMITRIYEV/KOMMERSANT, E.FELDMAN/NOVAYA GAZETA

In May 2013, Gennadi Didenko, another deputy mayor who had been supervising the housing and public utility sector, was convicted for corrupt practices that had cost the city more than 4.3 million rubles in damages.

In September 2013, investigators established the criminal activity of Denis Knyazev, yet another high-ranking official from Stolyarov's inner circle, who was head of the Astrakhan Department of Land. He was charged with negligence and exceeding his authority.

Stanislav Salangin, another mayoral associate and former head of the Astrakhan Municipal Properties Department, also became a defendant in a criminal case and was tried for accepting a large bribe.

Corruption in Astrakhan had ceased being merely a problem; it had turned into an all-pervasive system that affected the well being of the city's residents. After Stolyarov's United Russia team came to power, living standards in Astrakhan deteriorated considerably, and the budget deficit reached the critical 20 percent level.



ASTRAKHAN MAYOR  
MIKHAIL STOLYAROV  
UNDER ARREST

certain Ms. Levchenko, which detailed her stake in his company's equity capital. Hidden cameras that had been installed by law enforcement operatives captured the moment in which the United Russia member accepted the bribe. The police detained Stolyarov as he was leaving the restaurant, and on the same day the former mayor traded his office in the City Hall for a pre-trial detention cell.

Stolyarov maintained his defiant attitude even after the arrest. "I don't believe myself to be guilty of the crimes for which I am being charged. What I have done for the country and for the city is worth far more than these 10 million rubles," the United Russia member declared during court hearings.<sup>85</sup> He later claimed that he had planned to donate the bribe money to charity.

The court, however, decided that Stolyarov was guilty. A year later, he was sentenced to 10 years in a maximum security penal colony.

## UNITED RUSSIA'S RESPONSIBILITY

The experience of Astrakhan provides a revelatory example. United Russia opened the doors of the Astrakhan City Hall to a whole "brigade" of bribe-takers and extortionists, led by Mikhail Stolyarov. Despite the protests of voters and opposition forces, the ruling party basically forced these corrupt officials onto Astrakhan residents: in only a couple of years' time, they managed to ruin the city's economy and accumulated a veritable bouquet of criminal cases.

Not even the numerous arrests and corruption scandals involving the mayor's close circle were reason enough for the ruling party to revoke its support of them. Protection in the upper echelons of power encouraged the officials' sense of complete impunity; the result was large-scale criminal activity that engulfed the entire region. ■



### ОЛЕГ ШЕИН, ДЕПУТАТ ГОСДУМЫ:

"MORE THAN HALF OF STOLYAROV'S DEPUTIES HAVE BEEN EITHER ARRESTED OR MISSING OR CONVICTED. TO THIS ONE SHOULD ADD A COMPLETE DISINTEGRATION OF THE CITY'S ECONOMY IN THE CONTEXT OF INCREASING ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS."<sup>85</sup>

## A BRIBE-TAKER AND EXTORTIONIST

Criticism of the Astrakhan mayor was being voiced with increasing frequency. During a meeting of the City Council, opposition legislators openly accused Stolyarov of opening the doors of the City Hall to outright bribe-takers and corrupt officials. In response to these accusations, the United Russia member said that corruption within his close circle could be explained by the meager salaries of City Hall officials.<sup>86</sup> Stolyarov, however, forgot to mention that during his tenure as Astrakhan mayor, social spending had decreased by almost 1 billion rubles, while his own and his employees' salaries had grown by 30 percent.<sup>87</sup>

However, this did not seem to be enough for the Astrakhan mayor. In November 2013, Stolyarov was charged with bribery. According to the investigation, the city mayor used his official position to solicit a multi-million ruble bribe from a businessman.

Judging by the circumstances of this crime, Stolyarov believed himself to be untouchable and extorted money with no fear whatsoever of any criminal liability. Investigators discovered that Konstantin Khvalik, a businessman from Kazan, had approached the mayor with a request to purchase a land plot for a commercial construction project. Stolyarov demanded that 10 million rubles be paid to him personally for his intervention, and that 25 percent of Khvalik's company's nominal capital be turned over to his proxy. The businessman reported the incident to the police.

In November 2013, in the Astrakhan restaurant "Sobraniye," under police supervision, Khvalik gave Stolyarov the requested 10 million rubles in marked bills, together with a set of documents in the name of a



# A Character From the 1990s

YURI LASTOCHKIN HAS BECOME ONE OF THE MOST DESPICABLE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED RUSSIA PARTY. DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE 1990S ARE LONG GONE, THE RYBINSK MAYOR HAS RETAINED HIS IMAGE AS A RUSSIAN MOBSTER IN A GARISH SUIT.

## “I WOULD HAVE BEEN PUT IN PRISON LONG AGO IF IT WEREN’T FOR MY PALS”

Shortly before his arrest, Lastochkin met with one of his colleagues. The conversation was recorded by a hidden camera and, soon after that, the video was posted online and then aired on TV.

The video shows the mayor speaking in a typical manner about the interest that law enforcement bodies had taken in him. “They have been pestering me for four months - bugging my phones, reading my mail, watching my house,” he complained. However, Lastochkin was sure that his high-level connections would guarantee him immunity: “If it weren’t for my pals, I would have been put in f...ing prison long ago. You get it? They think they can throw me in a f...ing prison. I was like: Do you guys get it or what?”

The politician had connections at the highest levels. Back in 2001, he had been at the head of NPO Saturn, one of the country’s largest manufacturers of aircraft and marine engines. He also controlled a major portion of the company’s shares. NPO Saturn had its main office in Rybinsk.

Lastochkin joined the United Russia party soon after its creation and enjoyed a reputation as an effective manager. Years of working closely with United Russia had allowed him to gather quite a collection of state medals, including a medal “For Laboring for the Good of the Yaroslavl Region” and a badge of honor “For Service to the Fatherland.”

The ruling party’s support and Lastochkin’s job as head of a major industrial company allowed him gradually to establish control over his hometown. In 2004, United Russia assured his victory in the elections to the regional legislature, and in 2009 the party made sure that Lastochkin became Mayor of Rybinsk.

During his tenure as General Director of NPO Saturn, Lastochkin had successfully carried out a fraud scheme that inflicted multi-million-ruble damage on the flagship company of Russia’s industrial complex.

Lastochkin met with Vladimir Putin a few times, and in 2008 the Russian president visited an NPO Saturn factory. Lastochkin publicly campaigned for Vladimir Putin, using a mixture of obscene language and criminal slang.

For instance, during a campaign event, Lastochkin interrupted a journalist’s question about the accomplishments of other presidential candidates with the following comment: “If not Putin, then who? That lousy Zyuganov? That f...ing clown Zhirinovskiy? I’m f...ing tired of clowns! F...ing tired! Let’s f...ing vote for Putin! Quit talking rubbish here!”

## FIRST CALL

However, the high-ranking “pals,” upon whom Yuri Lastochkin was counting did not prove to be all-powerful in the end. The scope of the mayor’s corrupt activity grew to such an extent that by July of 2013 the mayor of Rybinsk was forced to defend himself in the first criminal case brought against him.

According to investigators, in his role as Director General of NPO Saturn, Lastochkin had successfully carried out a fraud scheme that inflicted multi-million-ruble damage on the flagship company of Russia’s industrial complex.

In 2009, Lastochkin signed an agreement with Stroieniengineering about the sale of a water-treatment facility for 4.8 million rubles, even though the company’s market price was more than 121 million rubles. Two years later, in his capacity as mayor, Lastochkin approved the use of public funds to purchase the property at its actual market price. The role of buyer was played by Vodostabzheniye LLC, an organization affiliated with Stroieniengineering CJCS. In so doing, Lastochkin had moved money from one pocket into another and appropriated approximately 116 million rubles in the process.

Neither Yuri Lastochkin himself nor his protectors from the United Russia party were much concerned about this criminal case. Investigators did not dare to send the influential United Russia member to pretrial detention during criminal proceedings, and the ruling party once again put forward his candidacy for the post of Rybinsk mayor.

In September 2013, when he was under investigation, Lastochkin won the Rybinsk mayoral election. However, this could hardly be called an election, since none of the candidacies of Lastochkin’s real opponents were accepted by the authorities, leaving him to run against an unknown street-cleaner and a lighting technician.

## BETRAYED BY HIS OWN INSTINCTS

It seems that the support of the ruling party and Lastochkin’s reelection to a second term despite the criminal case against him had completely numbed any instinct of self-preservation on his part. Only six weeks after the elections, Mayor Lastochkin once again made the crime report.

The story began with Lastochkin’s decision to announce a competition to fill the post of the head of the municipal enterprise Teploenergo. Lastochkin declared that in order to get his job back, Vladimir Ivanov, the former Teploenergo director, would have to pay the mayor. Ivanov then brought the Lastochkin 500,000 rubles. However, soon after that, Lastochkin’s representative demanded 1.5 million rubles more for the “final settlement of the issue.”



**AS GENERAL DIRECTOR OF NPO SATURN, LASTOCHKIN SUCCESSFULLY CARRIED OUT A FRAUD SCHEME THAT INFLECTED A MULTI-MILLION-RUBLE DAMAGE ON THE FLAGSHIP COMPANY OF RUSSIA’S INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX.**



MAYOR YURI LASTOCHKIN  
AT LARGE...

Ivanov informed local law enforcement bodies of the situation and then continued his contacts with the mayor and his deputies under the supervision of Russian Interior Ministry operatives.

As a result, criminal cases were launched for bribe-taking and embezzlement of public funds. Lastochkin was tried and found guilty on both counts. In September 2015, he was sentenced to 8.5 years in a maximum-security prison and was ordered to pay a fine of 140 million rubles.

It is worth mentioning that, given his experience, Lastochkin preferred to accept bribes through intermediaries rather than personally. On October 24, Deputy Rybinsk Mayor Gennadi Telegin met with Ivanov and received the requested amount from him. The handover was recorded by a hidden camera that had been installed earlier by police operatives. The official was detained as soon as he had accepted the funds.

Meanwhile, Yuri Lastochkin was enjoying himself on a moose hunting trip in the countryside, where he was himself arrested by the police soon after the arrest of his deputy. The mayor was taken to Rybinsk still dressed in his hunting gear. Searches were already underway in the offices of the city administration.

## THE PROTECTORS FROM UNITED RUSSIA

As the inquiry progressed, Lastochkin admitted to having received money from his deputy Telegin. However, he failed to see anything

criminal in his actions and accused police officers of provoking him. He also accused former Teploenergo director Ivanov of "sneaking up on him in the corridors of the administration and bombarding him with requests for reinstatement."<sup>89</sup>

Telegin, who had been caught red-handed, admitted his guilt and confirmed that, in accepting the money intended for the mayor, he had been acting as an intermediary.

There is one detail that is worth mentioning: United Russia went to great lengths to defend Lastochkin. In 2013, Sergei Neverov, secretary of United Russia's General Council, declared that he would take care of the situation regarding the arrest of his fellow party member. In 2014, the United Russia caucus in the State Duma sent an inquiry to the Russian Prosecutor General's Office in support of Lastochkin.<sup>90</sup> And even after the Rybinsk mayor's guilt had been established, and the sentence was in effect, United Russia members still remained loyal to the criminal. For instance, in January 2016, United Russia's Political Council voted against expelling Lastochkin from the party.<sup>91</sup>

## STEALING IS PERMITTED, BUTGETTING SMART WITH PUTIN IS NOT

A bribe-taker and a crook, Yuri Lastochkin ended up in prison. Investigative results, criminal case materials and the evidence produced in court all strongly suggest that the former Rybinsk mayor is guilty of the crimes of which he was accused. However, the real reason behind his persecution has nothing whatsoever to do with the fight against corruption.

During his last visit to NPO Saturn, Putin met with Lastochkin and promised that the company would receive a multi-billion ruble contract. At the same time, Putin demanded that Lastochkin give up his portion of the company. However, believing himself to be the rightful owner of both the company and the city, Lastochkin had tried to bargain with the head of state.

Such behavior was seen as impertinence, and Lastochkin consequently found himself under an investigation that resulted in two criminal cases and a prison sentence. Lastochkin was then replaced by a much more clever and obliging successor.

There is no doubt that, had the convicted mayor been more aware of the informal code of Russian politics, he might still be in good standing with the United Russia party, he might still be mayor of Rybinsk, and the country's leaders might still consider him to be an effective manager and an example for others. In that event, law enforcement bodies would have shown absolutely no interest in his fraud schemes.

...AND BEHIND BARS



MEETING ORGANIZED BY  
UNITED RUSSIA IN RYBINSK  
IN SUPPORT OF ITS FELLOW  
PARTY MEMBER ARRESTED  
FOR CORRUPTION.





# GOVERNOR NICKNAMED HANS

RUSSIA'S BRYANSK REGION PROVIDES YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF A BLATANT POLITICAL POWER GRAB BY CRIMINAL ELEMENTS. NOW A CONVICTED CRIMINAL, NIKOLAI DENIN PREVIOUSLY SERVED AS THE REGION'S GOVERNOR FOR TEN YEARS. IT WAS THE SUPPORT OF UNITED RUSSIA AND MONEY FROM CRIME BOSSES THAT ALLOWED HIM TO ESTABLISH CONTROL OVER THE REGION.

## A CANDIDATE FROM THE CRIMINAL COMMUNITY

In the 1990s, Nikolai Denin was a businessman. Despite the economic crisis, Denin was financially comfortable and ran the profitable Snezhka poultry plant. Denin's childhood friend, the crime boss Nikolai Yemelyanov, known in the gangster community as "Yemelya," helped Denin to nip any emerging problems in the bud. The future governor and the organized crime representative were also connected by family ties; they had been born in the same village and had married two sisters, making them brothers-in-law.

Denin was an ambitious man and realized that in order to make a lot of money, he needed to find a way into the country's power structures. However, before Putin became president, Denin's political career had not been successful: in 1999, he had run for the State Duma in a single-member district but had lost to a candidate from the Communist Party of the Russian Federation.

In 2000, Russia elected a new president. Denin quickly got the lay of the land and adapted to the new political reality. Ambitious crooks with criminal connections such as Denin were then given the opportunity to find their place within the new regime. At the early stages of the presidential election campaign, Denin found his way into Putin's campaign headquarters, where he made useful contacts that he later successfully used.

The following year, Denin became head of the Bryansk branch of the Unity party, which later evolved into United Russia. Unity's position was strengthening with every passing year, as was Denin's influence in the Bryansk region. During the 2003 parliamentary elections, Denin was finally elected to the State Duma.

A year later, United Russia supported Denin's candidacy for governor of the Bryansk region. During the elections, Denin not only represented the ruling party but also the organized crime elements that wanted to see one of their own become the region's governor. There are even documents that attest to this fact.

On May 14, 2004, Denin signed a contract with Oleg Isakov and Andrei Vkharyov, representatives of the Uralmash organized crime group. The contract also bears the signature of Uralmash leader Vladislav Kostaryov, who was later put on the international most-wanted

list in connection with illegal takeovers of major factories. According to the contract, the crime bosses were supposed to finance Denin's election campaign, while the latter committed himself to appoint representatives of the organized crime group to positions in his administration after winning the elections.

The support from the ruling party and the gangsters practically guaranteed Denin's rise to power in the region. However, he was still worried about losing to popular Communist party candidate Yuri Lodkin. As a result, in late 2004, after convincing the Kremlin to remove Lodkin from the ballot, Denin finally became governor.

## CRIMINALS IN POWER

Denin's victory in the Bryansk gubernatorial elections strengthened the influence of organized crime in the region. The United Russia member cleared the way for both local and visiting criminal elements to enter the region's power structures.

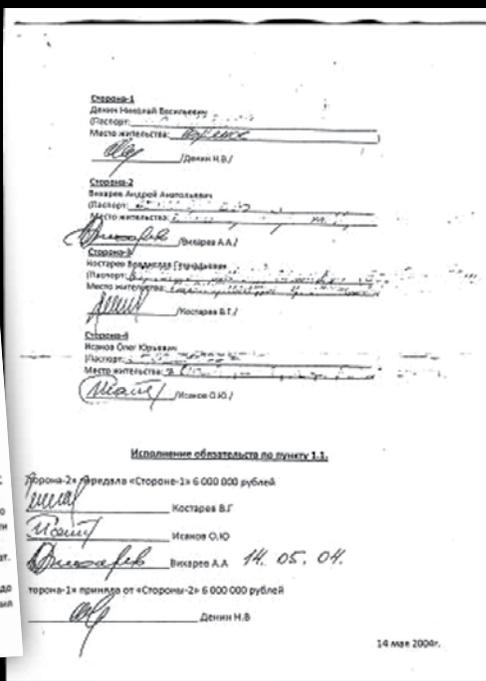
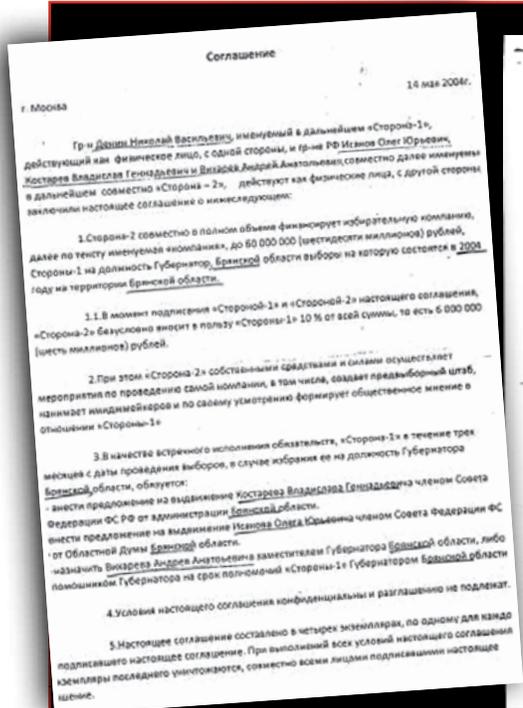
Bryansk crime boss Nikolai Yemelyanov was able to secure positions for his relatives in Denin's administration; Yemelyanov's brother was appointed head of the Bryansk district, and his nephew became the governor's deputy.

Thanks to his influence over the governor, Yemelyanov remained a key figure in the Bryansk region for a long time, even after his name was placed on the international most-wanted list in 2009. His increasingly powerful organized crime group controlled the heads of local law enforcement bodies, collected tributes from regional businessmen and punished anyone who refused to cooperate.

Under the contract, the crime bosses were supposed to finance Denin's election campaign, and the latter committed himself to appoint representatives of the organized crime group to positions in his administration once elected.



THE GOVERNOR WAS BACKED BY CRIME BOSS NIKOLAI YEMELYANOV KNOWN AS "YEMELYA"



**UNDER THE CONTRACT, CRIME BOSSES WERE SUPPOSED TO FINANCE DENIN'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN, AND THE LATTER COMMITTED HIMSELF TO PROVIDING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ORGANIZED CRIME GROUP WITH POSITIONS IN HIS ADMINISTRATION AFTER WINNING THE ELECTIONS.**

Oleg Afanasenko, a member of the organized crime group who was arrested by the police and placed into the Witness Protection Program, gave details about the activity of Yemelyanov's criminal group.

According to Afanasenko, it was Yemelyanov who, on Denin's orders, had organized an attempt on the life of former Deputy Governor Aleksandr Kasatski. The official had gotten on the wrong side of the governor; according to the witness, the governor then asked Yemelyanov to teach Kasatski a lesson. Kasatski managed to survive a stabbing. Afanasenko also claimed that Yemelyanov's gang had been involved in the attack that was carried out against businessman Aleksei Rassylshchikov. According to the witness, Yemelyanov, with the governor's help, made Rassylshchikov deputy chairman of the City Council. In return, the businessman was supposed to pay a monthly tribute to the criminal group. However, due to the economic crisis, he missed a payment. Rassylshchikov resumed his monthly payments after he was injured in an explosion caused by the gangsters.<sup>92</sup>

According to Afanasenko, Governor Denin's nickname in the criminal community is "Hans."

## THE USE OF SUCH FRAUD SCHEMES WAS COMMON PRACTICE IN THE BRYANSK REGION DURING DENIN'S RULE, WHICH LED TO A GENERAL ECONOMIC DECLINE AND A RECORD GROWTH IN THE REGION'S PUBLIC DEBT, WHICH TOPPED 10 BILLION RUBLES.

### THEY OWNED THE CITY

Denin's people regularly made the crime report.

In keeping with the above-mentioned contract signed during the election campaign, Ural crime boss Andrei Vikharyov became an assistant to the governor in 2005. In 2008, he was caught red-handed while accepting a bribe and sentenced to 4 years in prison. Later, however, Vikharyov was released on parole, and Governor Denin allowed him to run the Bryansk Asphalt Concrete Plant. Furthermore, Vikharyov's spouse managed the plant's finances, and his son was put in charge of procurement. The majority of road construction and renovation projects in the Bryansk region were carried out without tenders or municipal contracts. The Bryansk administration found itself owing 227 million rubles to the organization. According to official figures, the company was overcharging the city by 16 million rubles for road construction and renovation projects. As a result, a criminal case was initiated against the company's management for fraud and abuse of authority.<sup>93</sup>

Vladimir Rodichev, yet another assistant to the governor, was also caught red-handed while accepting a bribe. A Bryansk resident filed a written statement against the official with the police, in which she claimed that he had been soliciting a bribe to place her child in a childcare center. Rodichev was detained by law enforcement operatives while accepting the requested money.<sup>94</sup>

The governor himself barely escaped receiving a prison sentence in 2005. In fact, he was responsible for the death of a pedestrian. A Toyota Land Cruiser driven by Nikolai Denin hit a woman as she was crossing the street. The victim later died from her injuries. Although a criminal case was initiated, the governor got away with the crime. The investigation established that the victim had been at fault in this fatal accident.<sup>95</sup>

In 2009, Deputy Bryansk Governor Nikolai Simonenko was arrested; he was a member of Denin's inner circle. According to investigators, Simonenko was involved in a fraud scheme under which more than 140 million rubles worth of state land and property were sold for 9 million rubles to Snezhka - the very same enterprise which, founded by Nikolai Denin's daughter and sister-in-law, the governor himself had been running until 2003.

### THE IMPOVERISHMENT OF THE REGION

As Bryansk governor for a decade, Nikolai Denin became accustomed to treating the region as his private estate. His post as governor provided him with ample opportunities to get rich quick.

Denin did not try to hide the fact that he was the biggest landowner among all Russian governors. According to his 2011 tax declaration, he owned 3,900 hectares, with another 1,500 hectares belonging to his spouse. At the time, the governor's property holdings were valued at 90 million rubles.

In 2006, the governor used his official position to sign an order to build a bread factory. The contract was concluded in violation of Russian legislation, as it did not provide for a competitive tender. Although at the time of signature, the contract value was for 660 million rubles, it eventually reached 1.8 billion rubles in value.

The use of such fraud schemes was common practice in the Bryansk region under Denin's rule; this led to a general economic decline and record growth in the region's public debt, which reached 10 billion rubles.

Thanks to the support of the United Russia party, this odious official had managed to get away with everything for a long time. Time and again, the ruling party had put forward Denin's candidacy for the post of governor despite the social and economic decline, the governor's obvious ties to criminal elements and the many corruption scandals.

In 2012, Denin was barred from taking part in gubernatorial elections based on violations and falsification of documents. However, he was soon reinstated by the Russian Supreme Court. This was obviously made possible thanks to intervention from representatives of the federal government. The fact that Irina Yarovaya, a United Russia State Duma member, announced Denin's reinstatement a few hours before the corresponding court decision was reached proves this point.<sup>96</sup> Thus, Denin was able to remain in his post as Bryansk governor.

### THE ARREST OF THE UNITED RUSSIA MEMBER

For many years, law enforcement bodies had been gathering materials proving Governor Denin's involvement in corrupt practices. However, since they were considered to be unusable for political reasons, these materials had just been collecting dust. As a member of United Russia's Supreme Council who enjoyed the trust of the country's top-ranking officials, Denin had managed to avoid criminal liability for years.

However, by 2014, the evidence against Denin had reached such a critical level that he was dismissed. Soon after losing power, the former governor became a defendant in a criminal case.

In 2015, the prosecutor's office was finally able to officially charge Nikolai Denin. The former governor was accused of illegally allocating 21.8 million rubles from the Bryansk administration's reserve fund in 2011 and 2012; the funds went to Snezhka, the poultry plant owned by his family, which means that Denin had been using his position as governor to finance his family business from the regional budget.

Soon after that, this United Russia member was placed under house arrest. In November 2015, the trial against the former governor ended in a conviction, and Denin was sentenced to 4 years in prison. ■



# THE PARTY OF CROOKS AND THIEVES: YOUNG BLOOD

IN 2005, THE PRO-KREMLIN YOUTH MOVEMENT NASHI (OURS) EMERGED IN RUSSIA. THROUGH NASHI, THE MOST SUCCESSFUL AND CAREER-ORIENTED OF THE MOVEMENT'S ACTIVISTS WERE ABLE TO FIND THEIR WAY INTO THE UNITED RUSSIA PARTY AND TO OBTAIN POSITIONS IN THE REGIME'S STRUCTURES. HOWEVER, ONCE AGAIN, IT ALL ENDED IN ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES AND CRIMINAL CASES.

## NO EXPENSE IS SPARED

The Nashi movement was supposed to achieve the ambitious goals of creating an alternative to the opposition forces that would appeal to young people, and of nurturing a new generation of leaders for the country's political elite. "Our objective is to train a new generation of nationally-oriented managers, to carry out revolutionary personnel changes, and to replace the current elite. But those are long-term plans, let's say, for the next three to seven years," Vasili Yakemenko, founder of the Nashi movement, said in 2005.

The regime was generously financing its young activists by providing them with multi-story offices, a huge workforce and large-scale projects. Soon enough, Nashi became one of Russia's wealthiest social and political organizations.

During an annual summer gathering organized for Nashi activists at Lake Seliger, young people participated in trainings and other activities designed for their political education. Between 2007 and 2012, public spending on the yearly forum increased from 1.5 to 200 million rubles.<sup>97</sup> High-profile guests participated in the forum, including President Putin, Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov and Pskov Governor Andrei Turchak.

In return, Nashi activists organized mass demonstrations in support of the current regime and provoked violent conflicts during opposition rallies. Deputy Kremlin Chief-of-Staff Vladislav Surkov was the movement's main sponsor and guaranteed the activists the support of the executive branch. The movement also worked together with the United Russia party. For instance, shortly before the 2007 elections, Nashi commissars led by Vasili Yakemenko met with Vyacheslav Volodin, head of United Russia's election campaign at the time, and reached an agreement under which Nashi activists committed themselves to support the ruling party and to participate in its election campaign.<sup>98</sup>

## A MEANS OF UPWARD SOCIAL MOBILITY FOR CAREER-ORIENTED ACTIVISTS

Using the opportunity for upward social mobility provided by United Russia, the most active and career-oriented Nashi members managed to obtain positions in Russian government structures.

Nashi commissar Aleksei Mitryushin and his history as a football hooligan serves as a good example of such a career. A member of the CSKA fan group "The Gallant Steeds," which gained notoriety for its participation in the 2002 mass riots on Manezhnaya Square, Mitryushin was involved in a criminal case against the neo-Nazi gang BORN that was found to have been responsible for the killings of Federal Judge Eduard Chuvashov and of lawyer Stanislav Markelov. The neo-Nazi Nikita Tikhonov, who was convicted for these murders, named Mitryushin among those with whom the gang leader had coordinated his plans.<sup>99</sup>

Mitryushin oversaw the strong-arm wing of the Nashi movement. He was responsible for providing security during the events organized by the movement. This Nashi commissar and his people are notorious for their involvement in confrontations with opposition activists. Later, Mitryushin obtained the post of executive supervisor of the Nashi movement and thus basically became Vasili Yakemenko's right-hand man.

Despite his questionable biography, once Aleksei Mitryushin outgrew the pro-Kremlin youth movement, he was able to build a successful career in the ruling party. After his work in Nashi, he became a member of the General Committee of United Russia's Moscow-area branch. In 2013, supported by the ruling party, the former football hooligan became head of the local government in Vidnoye.

Nashi commissar Maksim Mishchenko's career path led him to even greater success. Beside his work with Nashi, he also ran another pro-Kremlin youth movement called Rossiya Molodaya or "Young Russia"—this is a smaller organization that specialized in confrontations with and provocations of opposition forces during protests. Mishchenko and his people were repeatedly involved in violent clashes with opponents of the current regime.

Just like Mitryushin, Mishchenko is notorious for his connections to neo-Nazi groups. Ilya Goryachev, a convicted BORN leader, had also been running Russki Obraz, a far-right organization that operated in the public sphere and served as a cover-up for neo-Nazi militants.

During his trial, Goryachev spoke in detail about his connections with the Russian authorities, including with officials of the presidential administration and State Duma members. According to the neo-Nazi leader, Maksim Mishchenko was his key contact in the Russian Parliament.<sup>100</sup>



STATE DUMA MEMBER MAKSIN MISCHENKO AT A NEO-NAZI RALLY ORGANIZED BY THE RUSSKI OBRAZ MOVEMENT THE LEADER OF WHICH WAS CONVICTED FOR ORGANIZING MURDERS

Mishchenko got a parliamentary seat in the 2007 elections when United Russia included his name on the party list. As it was Vladimir Putin who led the United Russia party list during those elections, it was essentially the Russian president himself who brought the little-known Nashi activist into the State Duma.

"I realized what a great responsibility fell to me—our responsibility as young people who have become members of the Russian parliament.. We will help to make our country even stronger," Mischenko said after the elections.

However, the State Duma was to be the high point of Mishchenko's career. He left elected office at the end of his first term, and in 2012, on the president's invitation, he became a member of the Russian Public Chamber. One year later, however, Mishchenko was forced to leave in disgrace following a scandal that broke out when he called for reducing the financing of treatments for cancer patients.<sup>101</sup>

In 2014, Mishchenko traded the federal level for the regional one by assuming the post of deputy minister of domestic policy of the Tula region. Soon after his appointment, Mishchenko was caught committing fraud.

In the fall of 2015, a criminal case was brought against Maksim Mishchenko. According to the investigation, 650,000 rubles were allocated from the regional budget to the local Union of Chernobyl Victims. The money was supposed to cover offsite events for participants in the program. It became known, however, that no events had ever taken place; instead, the money had been transferred into the accounts of unrelated organizations under fake contracts.

Meanwhile, Mishchenko and Gennadi Yefimov, chairman of the Union of Chernobyl Victims, submitted a report describing the events that had allegedly taken place as well as event-related expenditures. Both Mishchenko and Yefimov were charged with fraud, and the case went to court.<sup>102</sup>

## THE PUBLIC FEEDING TROUGH

The fraud schemes that were created and carried out by Nashi activists at the federal executive level were much more ambitious.

Back in 2007, a State Committee for Youth Affairs was formed within the government. This committee later evolved into the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs or Rosmolodezh. Nashi leader Vasili Yakemenko was appointed head of this agency and thus gained direct access to public funds.

Yakemenko implemented a large-scale scheme of withdrawing funds from the budget through non-commercial organizations that were registered by his former subordinates from the Nashi movement.

Between 2007 and 2010, Nashi and organizations created with the help of the movement's leaders received 347 million rubles through government contracts with the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs, which was headed by Yakemenko. Meanwhile, in 2009, the share of financial support allocated to organizations under Nashi's control amounted to 116 million out of the total sum of 588 million rubles worth of government contracts concluded by the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs. In 2010, the same figure was 231 million of 430 million rubles in total allocations.

The following organizations turned out to be the main recipients of financial resources:

- **The Youth Policy-2020 Foundation:** In 2009 and 2010, the Foundation received nine contracts worth 185.6 million rubles from Rosmolodezh. Artur Omarov, co-founder of Youth Policy-2020, is also Nashi chief-of-staff;
- **The National Higher School of Management Institute:** This nonprofit organization, which received 113.5 million rubles between 2007 and 2010, was created by Nashi co-founder and commissar Mariya Kislitsina and Nashi commissar and State Duma member Sergei Belokonev;
- **Healthy Generation (located in the Moscow suburb of Lyubertsy):** This nonprofit organization, which in 2010 received three contracts worth 60.2 million rubles, was founded by Roman Shviryov, head of a Nashi branch and former chairman of the management board of the Iduschiye Vmeste (Walking Together) movement, previously headed by Yakemenko.

The fact that Vasili Yakemenko, the founder and leader of the Nashi movement, was also running a government agency clearly constituted a conflict of interest. Government contracts were concluded with organizations affiliated to this official. Such fraud schemes provided the grounds to launch criminal proceedings in connection with apparent signs of corruption, as defined by the Law On Combating Corruption, namely the abuse of authority for the purpose of gaining profit for oneself or for third parties.

Yakemenko, who was personally acquainted with Putin and enjoyed his protection, managed to escape liability. However, he lost his government position in the corruption scandal.



**"I HEREBY ORDER TO GRANT A ONE-TIME PAYMENT OF 8,601,300 RUBLES 00 KOPECKS FOR THE PURCHASE OF A RESIDENTIAL UNIT TO BELOKONEV SERGEI YURYEVICH, HEAD OF THE FEDERAL AGENCY FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS," SAYS THE DOCUMENT SIGNED BY BELOKONEV HIMSELF.**

## “HAVE I NOT BEEN NEGLECTING MY OWN NEEDS?”

In 2012, Nashi commissar Sergei Belokonev replaced his colleague Yakemenko as head of the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs (Rosmolodezh). He came to the government from the State Duma, to which he had been elected through the United Russia party list.

Despite Rosmolodezh’s damaged reputation, in 2013, Belokonev’s agency received around 1 billion rubles from the state budget; this was two and a half times as much as the organization had received in 2012.<sup>103</sup>

This young United Russia member was spending money on such a massive scale that just two years after his appointment, the possibility of his dismissal was raised. According to Kirill Kabanov’s National Anti-Corruption Committee, the distrust of Belokonev was generated on suspicion of embezzlement and other abuses. The Russian Prosecutor General’s Office launched a probe into the system of kickbacks that had been paid by contractors in obtaining and enforcing government contracts signed by Belokonev. For example, during the execution of the contract, contractors were threatened with the rejection of the completed work and were thus forced to reduce the actual amount spent under the contract. Using this scheme, Rosmolodezh leaders appropriated up to 50 percent of the funds allocated for contracts.<sup>104</sup>

The probe into the activity of the head of Rosmolodezh revealed even more outrageous incidents. For example, in February 2014, Belokonev signed an order granting himself 8,601,300 rubles in public funds for the purchase of an apartment.

“I hereby order a one-time payment of 8,601,300 rubles 00 kopecks for the purchase of a residential unit by Sergei Yuryevich Belokonev, head of the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs,” reads the document signed by Belokonev himself.<sup>105</sup>

A month later, Belokonev was dismissed.

## THE CONTINUITY OF CORRUPTION

For many years, Nashi activists had been using United Russia’s resources to obtain positions in various levels of both municipal and federal government. The most high-profile activists were involved in crude and blatant fraud involving the embezzlement of public funds.

However, as they were in no hurry to initiate criminal cases, law enforcement bodies had for a long time been turning a blind eye to such fraud. The trouble began when Nashi’s protector Vladislav Surkov was replaced by Vyacheslav Volodin in a re-shuffling of the presidential administration.

Volodin brought along his team of young career-oriented people who quickly pushed out Nashi representatives, including those who held positions in the government and the State Duma. Nashi activists obviously tried to fight back, which is when law enforcement bodies got involved in order to speed up the replacement process by probing into corruption schemes and initiating criminal cases.

The Nashi movement had initially positioned itself as a new political elite. However, this elite turned out to be prone to the same vice of corruption, as were its predecessors. ■

“I AM THE KREMLIN’S MAN”

IN 2008, UNITED RUSSIA MEMBER IGOR PUSHKARYOV, WHOSE CAMPAIGN SLOGAN HAD BEEN ‘I AM THE KREMLIN’S MAN,’ BECAME MAYOR OF VLADIVOSTOK. DURING HIS TENURE AS MAYOR, PUSHKARYOV USED HIS OFFICIAL POSITION TO CREATE AN ENORMOUS BUSINESS EMPIRE THAT MADE HIM ONE OF THE RICHEST PEOPLE IN RUSSIA’S FAR EAST.

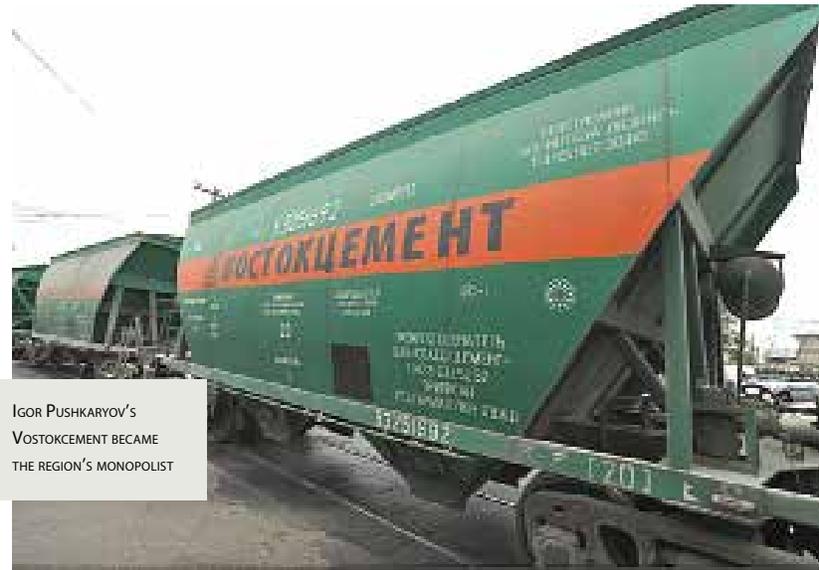




## THE CEMENT MOGUL

Igor Pushkaryov's career began in the mid-1990s when he started working for Pusan, a company owned by South Korean businessman Kan Hyun Chul that imported Choco Pie biscuits and Dosirak instant-noodle cups into Russia. In late 1995, when Kan Hyun Chul was killed, Pushkaryov became the company's CEO, and by an odd coincidence, the company's assets were passed to Vlad-Kan, a company that Pushkaryov had founded just six months before the murder.<sup>106</sup>

The future Vladivostok mayor got on well with representatives of diverse influential groups in Russia's Far East, from criminal elements to top officials. By the late-1990s, he had found the economic niche that was to serve as the foundation for his future business empire. Pushkaryov gradually established control over JSC Spasskcement, the Teplozersk Cement Factory, the Vladivostok Crushed Stone Plant and the Vladivostok Crushing and Screening Plant.



IGOR PUSHKARYOV'S  
VOSTOKCEMENT BECAME  
THE REGION'S MONOPOLIST

By 2002, Vostokcement LLC, a company owned by Igor Pushkaryov and run by his brothers Andrei and Vladimir, controlled all of the above-mentioned businesses. Pushkaryov became the region's monopolist, as to the east of Lake Baikal, all of the cement and most of the asphalt, crushed aggregate and concrete that were manufactured were produced by enterprises controlled by Pushkaryov's company.

## COMPETITION AMONG CRIME BOSSES

Pushkaryov realized that his criminal connections were not enough to protect such a huge business. Political power was essential to him in order to maintain his monopoly position. He had everything he needed to obtain such power: money, influence and the loyalty of local officials. The mechanism for his integration into the power structures was also obvious. United Russia was unlocking all the doors to power and providing regional oligarchs with the means of upward social mobility to speed up their political careers.

Pushkaryov quickly climbed the first few steps leading to the coveted post of Vladivostok mayor. He served as a member of local government, was elected into the Primorye legislature and soon became its deputy speaker.

In 2004, Pushkaryov was ready to run for mayor but Vladimir Nikolayev stood in his way; Nikolayev was another Primorye lawmaker and a crime boss known as "Winnie the Pooh."

Фото: Сергей Киселев/Коммерсантъ, Евгений Петровцев/Коммерсантъ



IT WAS SERGEI SHOYGU HIMSELF WHO GAVE THE UNITED RUSSIA MEMBERSHIP CARD TO CRIME BOSS VLADIMIR NIKOLAYEV, LATER REPLACED BY PUSHKARYOV AS VLADIVOSTOK MAYOR

In the late 1990s, Nikolayev had served a prison sentence for murder. This, however, did not prevent him from becoming a key figure in the United Russia party. His party membership card was given to him by Sergei Shoigu himself.

Pushkaryov did not dare to compete with the more influential mafia boss, whose candidacy for the post of Vladivostok mayor was put forward by United Russia, so he supported Nikolayev. In appreciation of the loyalty of the young party member, United Russia rewarded Pushkaryov with a seat in the Russian Federation Council.

Pushkaryov's family business also benefited considerably from his flexibility. From 2004 to 2007, 563 million rubles had been allocated from the regional budget directly to the JSC Spasskcement company that was controlled by Pushkaryov. Meanwhile, in 2007, Spasskcement invested 526 million rubles in the securities of other companies, and 100 million rubles more were spent on dividends. More than 92 percent of these dividends ended up in offshore accounts in Cyprus, a typical method for embezzling public funds. Some figures are worth mentioning in this regard. Given that the company's nominal capital amounted to 433 million rubles, and its real estate assets were worth 532.5 million rubles, the amount of government grants received by the company was comparable to the value of the enterprise itself. However, the state did not own one single share of this plant.<sup>107</sup>

Meanwhile, Pushkaryov was waiting for a favorable opportunity; it arrived in 2007, when top officials in the regional government found themselves under criminal prosecution. Nikolayev was placed in pretrial detention. Governor Darkin's offices were searched. In 2008, Pushkaryov, with the support of the United Russia party, won the elections and finally became the mayor of Vladivostok.

## POWER AND FRAUD SCHEMES

After becoming mayor, Pushkaryov withdrew from his companies, leaving his relatives to manage them. However, thanks to Pushkaryov's newly acquired influence, these companies were able to increase their turnover and profits considerably.

Fraud schemes were now being used in road construction projects. For instance, the municipal enterprise Dorogi Vladivostoka (Vladivostok Roads) received 135 contracts worth 7.14 billion rubles from Pushkaryov. The majority of contracts were concluded in violation of the law without recurring to tenders. Furthermore, construction materials were being supplied to Dorogi Vladivostoka by companies included in the Vostokcement structure owned by Pushkaryov's relatives.<sup>108</sup> Thus, the city mayor provided his family business with a constant inflow of public funds.

The 2012 APEC summit in Vladivostok was a real goldmine for Pushkaryov. "We have to explore all avenues. The APEC summit is a driving force that will push and propel the economy of the city and the

entire region," Pushkaryov said in an interview. And he did explore all avenues – though mostly for his personal enrichment.<sup>109</sup> Although the summit's initial budget had been estimated at 150 billion rubles, it eventually reached 679 billion rubles. Pushkaryov and the companies under his control were actively tapping into billions of rubles that were falling out of the sky like manna from heaven. However, they failed to complete the work according to schedule. For instance, the Vladivostok Sea Façade project, which included the renovation and reconstruction of buildings and public gardens along the route that invited guests would take to travel to the summit, was not completed by the beginning of the event. Nor was the city seafront walk ready in time. Another project, Seafront Arbat, on which developers had spent about six months only to leave uneven cobblestone pavement



THE BUDGET OF THE APEC SUMMIT GREW FROM 150 TO 679 BILLION RUBLES

and storefronts crumbling from poor quality work, did not stand up to scrutiny either. New roads lacked markings and traffic signs, and some intersections and exits featured signs reading "No Through Traffic."<sup>110</sup>

What officials did manage to do successfully was to embezzle the funds that had been allocated. Following the summit, several criminal cases were initiated for fraud and embezzlement. Investigators discovered signed documents confirming the acceptance of mandates for the work that had not been completed on schedule. Furthermore, the Russian Interior Ministry discovered incidents involving multi-million ruble embezzlement connected with tenders for government contracts for engineering, scientific and technological support of construction projects in the preparation for the APEC summit.<sup>111</sup>

Another corruption scandal was discovered through a probe into contractors involved in the construction of a bridge across the Zolotoy Rog (Golden Horn) bay in the Primorye region in preparation for the APEC summit. Investigators revealed that more than 11 billion rubles had been illegally spent under this project. Furthermore, the trail of this crime led directly to the Vladivostok administration. By that time, Mayor Pushkaryov had become one of Russia's youngest billionaires, but the prosecutor's office did not yet have enough political influence to send him to prison.

## THE OLIGARCH FROM UNITED RUSSIA

Since 2007, when he had become mayor, Igor Pushkaryov's fortune had grown fivefold, reaching 5.1 billion rubles. The Vladivostok mayor also owned a 600-square-meter plot of land and a 491-square-meter home, as well as shares in four other plots of land and three residential buildings. Pushkaryov drove a luxury Mercedes-Benz

\$500 4matic. The income declaration of the mayor's wife also showed record revenues. With Pushkaryov's rise to power, his wife's income had immediately increased by 25 times year on year. The degree of embezzlement and corruption in Vladivostok was continuously on the rise, together with the mayor's personal fortune.

Despite corruption scandals and large-scale embezzlement in the preparation for the APEC summit, Pushkaryov still enjoyed the trust of United Russia. In 2013, the ruling party once again put forward his candidacy for the post of Vladivostok mayor, and Pushkaryov remained in office.

It was common knowledge that Pushkaryov did have connections among high-ranking Moscow officials. However, the governor's connections proved more powerful.

Pushkaryov's fate was decided on May 30, 2015, when Vladimir Putin met with Governor Miklushevski in the Kremlin. According to sources in the region's administration, Miklushevski complained to the head of state that Pushkaryov had become uncontrollable and was provoking a political crisis. Putin then gave the nod to the police and security forces, and the materials against Pushkaryov that had been piling up for years were used to launch a criminal case. A month later, the Vladivostok mayor was arrested.

## A CRIMINAL CASE

As it often happens in Russian politics, the fight against the corrupt practices of officials begins only when these officials begin to pose a problem to even more influential officials. Pushkaryov is a case in point. His close associate Andrei Lushnikov, director of Dorogi Vladivostoka, accompanied the city mayor to prison.

According to investigators, Dorogi Vladivostoka purchased considerable amounts of construction materials from Vostokcement, a company owned by the mayor's relatives. These purchases were made at inflated prices. Pushkaryov received at least 45 million rubles and Lushnikov another 1.4 million rubles from the deal. According to the Russian Federal Security Service, this fraud scheme i cost Vladivostok more than 160 million rubles.

Investigators searched 20 offices in the Vladivostok City Hall, including Pushkaryov's office. Investigations were also carried out in the offices of companies controlled by Pushkaryov's relatives. Soon after that, Andrei Pushkaryov, the Vostokcement CEO and the mayor's brother, was also placed under arrest.

Igor Pushkaryov, the long-time mayor of Vladivostok and member of the Presidium of United Russia's General Council in the Primorye region, is now awaiting trial in a pretrial detention center. Given the charges brought against him, Pushkaryov faces up to 10 years in prison. ■



PUSHKARYOV  
TRIED TO PUSH OUT  
GOVERNOR VLADIMIR  
MIKLUSHEVSKI...

## MEETING ONE'S MATCH

Pushkaryov could have possibly remained as mayor of Vladivostok for many years. He had enough financial resources and political influence to fend off any attacks by investigators.

However, the United Russia member's growing political ambitions backfired on him. Pushkaryov felt that he had outgrown the mayor's office, so he set his sights on the post of the Primorye governor. This provoked a conflict between Pushkaryov and Primorye Governor Vladimir Miklushevski.

The confrontation between the two members of United Russia grew, and Pushkaryov decided to run against Miklushevski in the elections to the Primorye legislature. First, they began competing against each other within the party. "Two groups of United Russia members, Pushkaryov's team and Miklushevski's people, were prepared to fight with one another for seats in the legislature. Pushkaryov wanted to become governor of the region, so it is no surprise that a struggle for a loyal legislature broke out," according to lawmaker Artem Samsonov.<sup>112</sup>

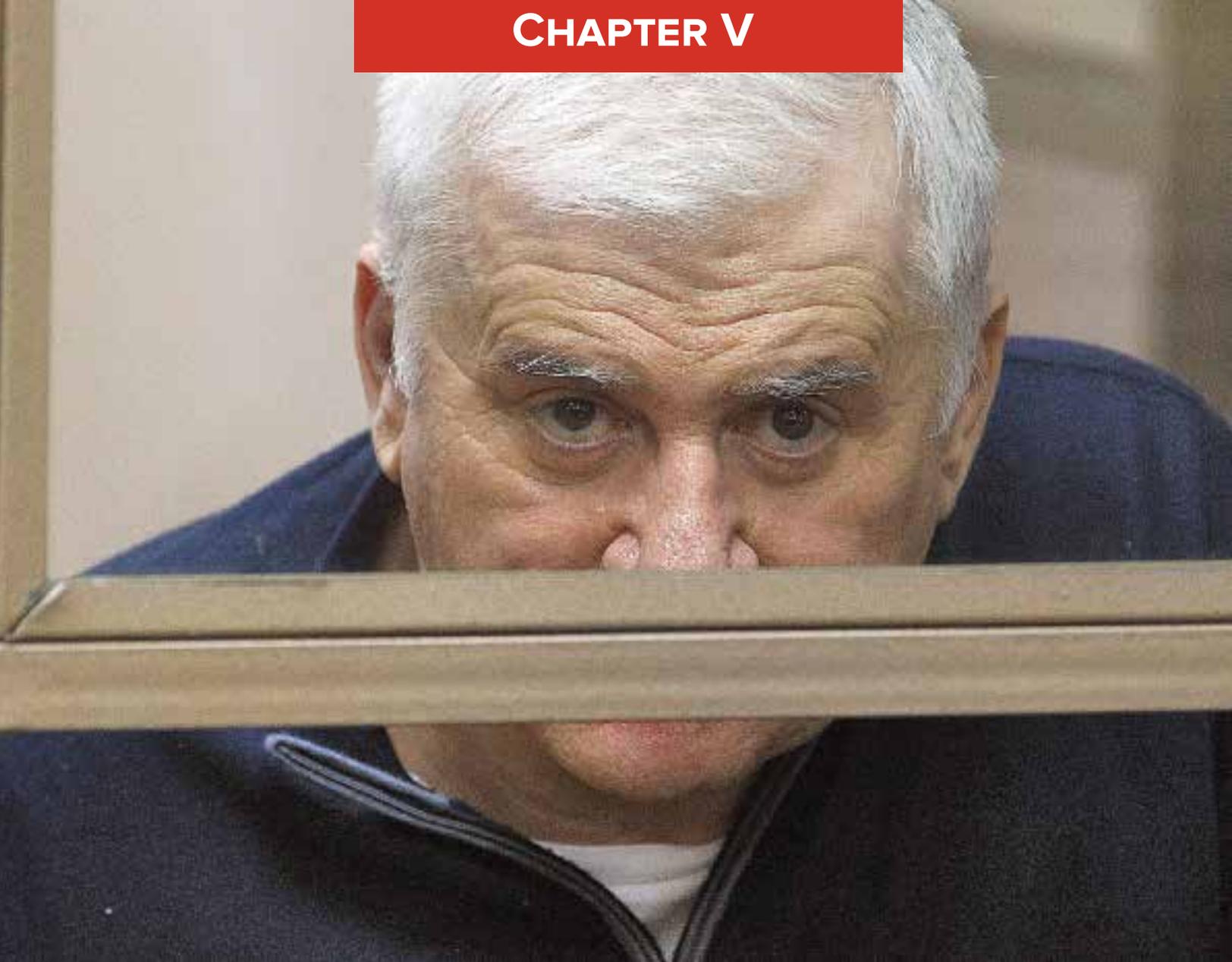
"The mayor talked back during meetings with the governor. He published critical comments about Miklushevski in media outlets under his control. In response, the regional TV station aired criticism of Pushkaryov.

The mayor behaved as if he had the backing of important figures in Moscow," former Deputy Vladivostok Mayor Nikolai Markovtsev said.



...AND FOUND HIMSELF  
BEHIND BARS INSTEAD

PHOTO: A. MALGAVI/PHOTOXPRESS, A. NIGOLAEV/PHOTOXPRESS, DIMITRI KOSTYUKOV/KOMMERSANT, DIMITRI LEBEDEV/KOMMERSANT, S. BERTOV/PHOTOXPRESS, GERHARD GULYAEV/KOMMERSANT



# «BLOODY ROOSEVELT»

SAID AMIROV WAS MAYOR OF MAKHACHKALA FOR 15 YEARS. HE FOUNDED THE DAGESTANI BRANCH OF THE UNITED RUSSIA PARTY AND ENJOYED IMMENSE INFLUENCE IN THE REPUBLIC. A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT AWARDED HIM THE TITLE OF RUSSIA'S BEST MAYOR. IN 2013, IT BECAME KNOWN THAT THIS WELL-KNOWN UNITED RUSSIA MEMBER WAS THE LEADER OF A BLOODY GANG AND THE MASTERMIND BEHIND TERRORIST ATTACKS AND CONTRACT KILLINGS.

## MEMBER OF A SOVIET COOPERATIVE

Said Amirov's professional biography dates back to the 1980s, when he worked as a government purchasing agent in northern Dagestan. Thanks to his ability to make useful contacts, Amirov quickly moved up the career ladder in the consumers' union Dagpotrebsoyuz, becoming its deputy chairman and finally chairman.

Many opportunists found the Soviet system of consumers' cooperatives to be appealing; they allowed one to make good money using criminal methods. "In Dagestan, government purchasing agents have always been seen as dealers of a sort, as businessmen with a criminal nature. Back then, Amirov was making his way relying on various means," said Eduard Urazayev, former Minister for Dagestan's National Policy.<sup>113</sup> He further recalled that when Amirov was working in Dagpotrebsoyuz, the cooperative was constantly involved in scandals involving embezzlement, counterfeit products and unexplained "accidental" fires that destroyed documents, and even some scandals involving murder.



SAID AMIROV WAS THE FOUNDER OF THE DAGESTAN BRANCH OF THE UNITED RUSSIA PARTY

Amirov's sister-in-law, Perziyat Bagandova, was appointed as head of the Executive Committee of the local branch of United Russia. The mayor's brother, Magomedsalam Amirov, was appointed chairman of the Kirov Federal District Court of Makhachkala, and his son Magomed was not only made a member of the regional legislature but also deputy head of the Justice Department responsible for the financial and technical support of Dagestani courts. Another son of the mayor, Dalgat, became head of the republic's Court Bailiff Service.<sup>114</sup>

Amirov consolidated his personal power over the city. Beginning in the 1990s, one after another, the mayor's opponents and critics were found dead. The long list of victims of fatal attacks included Magomed Suleymanov, a member of the republic's legislature; Toturbi Toturbiyev, the head of Dagvodokanalstroj; State Duma member Nadir Khachilayev; Ministers of Information Zagir Arukhev and Magomed Gusayev; Sharapudin Musayev, the head of the region's pension fund; Khadzhimurat Kamalov, the owner of the opposition newspaper Chernovik, and Dagestani Interior Minister Adilgeri Magomedtagirov.

Any deputies to the Makhachkala mayor who dared contradict him died as well. In May 2007, Magomed Murtazaliyev, the head of the Makhachkala Committee on Land Resources, was burnt alive in his car for having actively opposed Amirov's plans to transfer

federal and republican lands into private ownership. Another Deputy Mayor, Akhmed Aliyev, who had opposed the deliberate destruction of Makhachkala's historical buildings, was shot dead together with his wife.<sup>115</sup>

Amirov earned a sinister reputation from the series of murders of his opponents. He was known in the republic as "Bloody Roosevelt."<sup>116</sup> However, unlike the American president who had brought his country out of the Great Depression, Amirov's rule in Makhachkala was notorious for an escalation of lawlessness and gang violence.

By the time the Soviet Union collapsed, Amirov had accumulated enough money to adapt himself to the new reality and launch a political career. The fact that Magomedali Magomedov, the new leader of Dagestan, came from the same clan as Amirov contributed to the latter's career. In 1991, Amirov was appointed deputy head of the Dagestani government.

The 1990s in Russia are known for the numerous shootouts that took place between criminal gangs in a competition for spheres of influence. The Republic of Dagestan was no exception. One such shootout was an attempt on Amirov's life in which attackers fired at his car. The future Makhachkala mayor survived the attempt on his life, but was paralyzed below the waist and has been confined to a wheelchair ever since. This, however, did not affect either his political will or his luxurious lifestyle.

## THE MAKHACHKALA GODFATHER

In 1998, with the support of the head of the republic, Amirov won the Makhachkala mayoral elections. In the years that followed, he became one of the most influential politicians in the North Caucasus; he enjoyed access to enormous financial resources and armed personnel, and had the services of his associates from criminal groups at his disposal.

### MAKSIM SHEVCHENKO, JOURNALIST:

**"SAID AMIROV IS A HIGH-RANKING MAFIA BOSS WITH CONNECTIONS AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL"**



When the freewheeling 1990s came to an end, Mayor Amirov appointed his relatives to key government positions in Makhachkala.

"After steamrolling businessmen, Amirov has managed to consolidate his power," according to Magomed Magomedov, a columnist from the Dagestani newspaper Chernovik. Under the established system, only those entrepreneurs who agreed to pay tributes to the local authorities could run their businesses. Any businessmen who refused to collaborate was essentially signing their own death warrant.

Fraud was rampant in public sector construction projects. "Under Amirov, the city turned into a cesspool, characterized by densification, unauthorized construction, infill development and fraudulent property transactions. In 2003, a measure was passed stipulating that land could only be sold through a public auction. However, in order to avoid this, the authorities simply backdated all documents to before 2003,"

said Isalmagomed Nabiyeu, the head of the regional trade union of entrepreneurs. “All construction projects—on gas routes, in parks, on city streets—included a kickback for the administration. Complete lawlessness reigned over the city.

Anyone who claimed to be with Amirov could do whatever they wanted,” according to Dagestani journalist Khadzhimurat Kamalov.<sup>117</sup>

All of Makhachkala’s major economic assets were in one way or other put under the control of Said Amirov’s criminal group. This allowed him to become one of the richest and most influential men in the North Caucasus.

## LIFE IN A BUNKER

Prone as he was to solving problems in a violent way, Amirov feared for his life, and all the more so given the numerous attempts that had been made to kill him. He traveled around Makhachkala in an armored Mercedes. “This armored car is able to withstand direct hits from a grenade launcher, landmine detonations, or heavy machine-gun fire. It’s practically a military vehicle. The interior of the car is a monolithic capsule. This is a one-of-a-kind vehicle that is valued at around 10 million rubles,” remarked Aleksei Zabelski, a specialist in

His fellow party members were not at all embarrassed by the Makhachkala mayor’s bloody criminal reputation. Using his influence, Amirov provided the party with consistently high results in both parliamentary and presidential elections. This is why both the Kremlin and United Russia chose to turn a blind eye to the fact that the Dagestani capital was engulfed by corruption and other abuses and provided the backdrop to a whole series of contract murders.

Amirov was often cited as an example for other mayors. He is the holder of an Order for “Merit to the Fatherland” and a medal for “Cooperation with the Federal Security Service.” Furthermore, in April 2013, only three months prior to his arrest, Said Amirov was awarded the title of Russia’s best mayor; his fellow party member and Minister of Regional Development Igor Slyunyayev presented the mayor with the award.

United Russia put forward Amirov’s candidacy for the post of Makhachkala mayor time and again, and provided him with the necessary political support at both the local and the federal level.

## CONNECTIONS TO MILITANTS

United Russia also credited Amirov with combatting the Dagestani criminal underworld. According to United Russia representatives, Amirov played an important role in curbing Islamic terrorism, which had the potential to plunge the republic into chaos. However, it was no secret to the Russian secret services that the Makhachkala mayor himself had direct ties to militants.

For example, in 2011, a SWAT team turned up at the mayor’s home.<sup>120</sup> The day before, a Dagestani businessman had gone to Moscow to seek the help of the Federal Security Service (FSB) after receiving threats and demands for a large sum of money from militants.

As a result of an operation organized by FSB operatives, the extortionists received a bag that contained both the money and a tracking device. This device led Moscow operatives directly to the mayor’s home where, together with Amirov, they found Ibragim Gadzhidadayev, a leader of the criminal underworld who was wanted by the authorities.<sup>121</sup> At the time, however, Amirov still had enough influence to settle the conflict. By using his connections at the federal level, he managed to avoid an arrest and even prevented the sting operation from becoming public knowledge.

## A KILLER AND A TERRORIST

Despite the fact that criminal evidence against the Dagestani United Russia leader had been piling up for years, for a long time investigators were unable to bring a case against him, given that Amirov was an extremely influential figure with important connections in Moscow.

The situation changed in 2013, when police and security forces were finally given an order to take action. On June 1st, an FSB helicopter landed on the city’s main square, and Amirov’s fortress was soon surrounded by special forces. FSB operatives had been prepared for armed resistance by the mayor’s security guards, but the operation went smoothly, and on the same day the notorious United Russia member was brought to Moscow, arrested and placed in pre-trial detention.

The murder of Arsen Gadzhibekov, a Dagestani investigator who had been investigating official misconduct of employees of the Makhachkala administration at the time of his death, served as the foundation for the first criminal case against Amirov. The stubborn investigator Gadzhibekov did not respond to hints or threats, so Amirov ordered his killing. A criminal group led by Magomed Abdulgalimov, an assistant to the Kizlyar prosecutor who was known in the criminal world as “Kolkhoznik,” was entrusted with Gadzhibekov’s murder.



armored cars.<sup>118</sup>

Each time the mayor traveled in his motorcade, surrounded by armed guards, the streets were closed; ordinary city residents had to wait for 30 minutes for the normal traffic flow to resume.

Amirov turned his residence into an unassailable fortress of which even the most notorious Italian mafia bosses could merely dream. A magnificent palace was built into a mountain: to permit the construction, a cliff was cut at a 45-degree angle. The residential complex included Amirov’s Arabian-style palace, a guesthouse and a garage. Both the interior and the exterior design used expensive kinds of wood and stone, including marble. An underground shelter was built on the premises that were capable of withstanding a direct airstrike. The mayor’s fenced-in residence was heavily guarded. The neighboring street was secured at all times, and access to it was denied to anyone without a special pass or the personal invitation of the owner.<sup>119</sup>

## AN INFLUENTIAL UNITED RUSSIA MEMBER

Amirov was one of United Russia’s founders—not just a high-ranking party member. It was on his initiative that the party opened its Dagestani branch, which Amirov headed until his arrest. As a member of the ruling party’s Supreme Council, Amirov was also a member of United Russia’s national leadership.



AMIROV WAS GIVEN A LIFE SENTENCE

The killers succeeded at their task: Gadzhibekov's car was literally riddled with bullets.

Yusup Dzhaparov, nephew of the Makhachkala mayor and deputy head of Kaspysk, also wound up behind bars for his involvement in the investigator's murder. Dzhaparov tried to flee from the police but broke his leg after jumping out of a window.<sup>122</sup>

A few months later, members of Amirov's criminal group were also charged with preparing a terrorist attack. Investigators proved that Amirov, Dzhaparov and Abdulgalimov had purchased a man-portable surface-to-air missile system Strela-2 that they planned to use to shoot down a plane with Sagid Murtazaliyev on board; this Dagestani lawmaker was a longtime political opponent of Amirov's. The gangsters had planned to blame the plane crash on the actions of militants. Abdulgalimov, a member of Amirov's inner circle who was responsible for organizing contract murders, pleaded guilty and revealed the location of the hiding-place where the Strela-2 missile was being kept. He also named Amirov as the mastermind behind the crime.

Investigators provided enough evidence for the court to sentence Said Amirov to life imprisonment. The sentence was pronounced on August 27, 2015.

"Amirov had always positioned himself as equal in power to the the head of the republic. And he was a force to be reckoned with, because he had total control over the city and its election procedures. For example, Makhachkala accounts for 30 percent of the republic's total electorate, which forced the head of Dagestan to negotiate with Amirov to obtain the desired election results; this gave Amirov plenty of room for maneuver," Dagestani journalist Magomed Magomedov explained.<sup>123</sup>

The conflict between the head of Dagestan and the Makhachkala mayor was escalating and finally reached critical levels. "During a meeting in the Kremlin, Abdulatipov said that he wanted to change the republic for the better, but was being hampered in his task by Amirov. Many clans supported Abdulatipov, which led to Amirov being cast aside," Magomedov said.<sup>124</sup>

The Kremlin took Abdulatipov's side in the conflict and the Makhachkala mayor was finally sent to prison. However, following the mayor's arrest, the government system in the republic did not change. No mechanisms were introduced that would prevent other criminal elements from coming to power, or from using the means of upward social mobility provided by United Russia. ■

## THE CRIME BOSS'S MISTAKE

There is no doubt that law enforcement bodies knew about Said Amirov's crimes long before his official arrest. Criminal case files and his previous disagreements with the police and security forces prove as much.

However, thanks to Amirov's position both in the United Russia party and in the regional government, the powerful mayor of Makhachkala had been untouchable for many years.

In Russia, as numerous examples have shown, the law is applied to high-profile criminal elements only when their interests collide with the interests of even more influential figures. This is the reason behind the majority of recent arrests of Russian governors and mayors. The case of "Bloody Roosevelt" from Makhachkala provides even more evidence.

In early 2013, Magomedislam Magomedov, a Dagestani leader loyal to Amirov, was dismissed. He was replaced by Ramazan Abdulatipov who, with the support of the Kremlin, began introducing order in the republic. However, the independent and powerful Makhachkala mayor stood in his way.

PHOTO: PHOTOPRESS ©2016 INVESTIGATIVE DIRECTORATE OF THE INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION FOR THE REPUBLIC OF DAGESTAN



AMIROV'S KILLERS  
MURDERED INVESTIGATOR  
GADZHIBEKOV



MAGOMED  
ABDULGALIMOV,  
AMIROV'S ASSOCIATE, WHO  
WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR  
ORGANIZING THE MURDER



# BUTCHER FROM GROZNY

FOLLOWING RAMZAN KADYROV'S ASCENT TO POWER, CHECHNYA HAS ESSENTIALLY BECOME A SOVEREIGN STATE. THE REPUBLIC IS ENGULFED IN CRIME, INCLUDING CORRUPTION, KIDNAPPINGS AND EVEN MURDER. KADYROV'S OPPONENTS HAVE BEEN TURNING UP DEAD ON AN INCREASINGLY FREQUENT BASIS. THE FIGURE OF ADAM DELIMKHANOV, A MEMBER OF THE STATE DUMA FROM UNITED RUSSIA, KNOWN IN CHECHNYA AS "THE BUTCHER," LOOMS BEHIND ALMOST EVERY HIGH-PROFILE MURDER.

## AN INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL

State Duma member Adam Delimkhanov has for a long time been seen as Ramzan Kadyrov's right-hand man. According to Kadyrov, Delimkhanov is his "closest friend, more than a brother." He also sees him as his potential successor in the position of the head of the Chechen republic.<sup>125</sup>

During the First Chechen War, Delimkhanov fought alongside the separatists and was close to the notorious terrorist Salman Raduyev, working as his personal driver.<sup>126</sup> When the Second Chechen War broke out, Delimkhanov joined the federal forces and headed the Chechen Interior Ministry's so-called "oil regiment," which was responsible for defending pipelines in the republic. According to observers, with the help of combatants under his control, Delimkhanov monopolized the right to install illegal pipeline junctions, thus pushing away all outsiders.<sup>127</sup> Delimkhanov allegedly personally gave funds from the illegal sale of oil to Ramzan Kadyrov.<sup>128</sup> Kadyrov was the one who encouraged the former rebel's political career by first appointing him to the Chechen government, then by securing him a safe place on the United Russia party list



in the parliamentary elections.

Foreign secret services are also well acquainted with Delimkhanov's name. In the United States, he is suspected of a connection with the international crime syndicate "Bratski Krug" (the Brothers' Circle).<sup>129</sup> This mafia structure includes major crime organizations operating in post-Soviet, European, Middle Eastern and Latin American countries.

## A RESPECTABLE UNITED RUSSIA MEMBER

Whereas in the 1990s, Adam Delimkhanov had to hide out in the mountains, today, he leads the respectable existence of a United Russia oligarch. This lawmaker is one of Chechnya's richest men. He occupies the 313th position on the list of Russian billionaires, with his wealth estimated at no less than 9 billion rubles.<sup>130</sup> Delimkhanov built an enormous palace for his brother and himself in his home village of Dzhalga, Chechnya. "There are a few buildings of stately proportions and a few streets in the center of the village, the reconstruction of which was paid for by Delimkhanov himself. This is an absolutely feudal story about a prince who made it possible for himself to arrive at his residence in style," journalist Ivan Sukhov said after visiting Chechnya.<sup>131</sup>

Delimkhanov also displays a penchant for extravagance and luxury. In 2011, he had a fight in the State Duma with a colleague from the United Russia caucus, Aleksei Zhuravlev.

Having accused Zhuravlev of disliking Kadyrov, the Chechen legislator proceeded to beat him up and threatened to kill him.

According to witnesses, during the fight, a golden gun fell out of Delimkhanov's pocket.<sup>132</sup> Soon afterwards, it became known that the gun was a gift from Kadyrov, which Delimkhanov carries everywhere he goes, even in the parliament building.

## A SERIES OF MURDERS

The relationship between Kadyrov and Delimkhanov has been truly close and was probably sealed with someone else's blood. Delimkhanov is most likely the one responsible for all the dirty work relating to the physical elimination of Kadyrov's enemies. For instance, Delimkhanov was suspected of involvement in the Moscow assassination of FSB Lieutenant-Colonel Movladi Baisarov, the commander of the "Gorets" special division. This rather influential law enforcement officer was known for his sharp criticism of Kadyrov and had blamed him for usurping power. In response to this criticism, the head of Chechnya decided to disband the "Gorets" division and demanded that it be disarmed.

"Kadyrov wants everyone to obey him and to worship him. He is a rich landowner. He is a big boss. Ramzan has an Asian way about him," Baisarov said in an interview with the newspaper *Moskovskiy Novosti* in October 2006.<sup>133</sup> On November 18th of the same year, Movladi Baisarov was shot dead in Moscow by Chechen Special Forces controlled by Kadyrov.<sup>134</sup> The Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation refused to initiate a criminal case in connection with this assassination. Meanwhile, the involvement of Kadyrov's right-hand man in this murder was no secret. "According to my sources, Adam Delimkhanov personally oversaw the special operation," noted Mikhail Markelov, a member of the State Duma Committee on Security.<sup>135</sup>

Adam Delimkhanov's name was also mentioned in other high-profile cases connected with murders of Ramzan Kadyrov's opponents. Thus, he was suspected of organizing the murder of brothers Ruslan and Sulim Yamadayev. In 2001 and 2002, Ruslan Yamadayev was the military commandant of Chechnya. In 2003, he was elected to the State Duma, and in 2004 he received the Hero of Russia award. In 2003, Sulim Yamadayev created Chechnya's Vostok Battalion under the supervision of the Chief Intelligence Directorate (GRU) of the Russian Federation, which fought alongside Russian security forces against the "Wahhabis." In 2005, he was promoted to the rank of colonel and awarded the Hero of Russia Star.

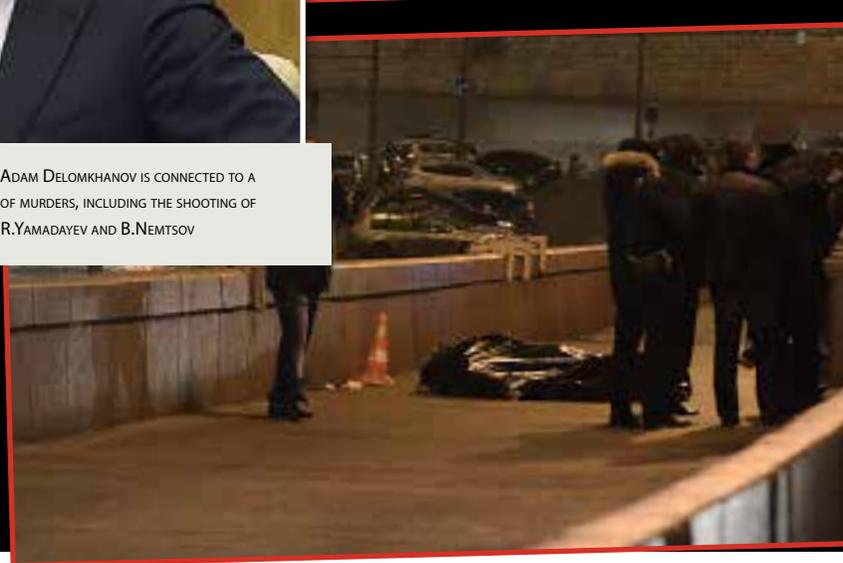
As Ramzan Kadyrov's position in Chechnya was strengthening, his frustration grew with regard to the Yamadayev brothers, who were maintaining their independence and who disposed of an armed group that was outside the control of the Chechen leader. In 2008, the conflict reached an acute stage. This confrontation ended in the brothers' death.

Ruslan Yamadayev, who was considered the mastermind behind the opposition to Kadyrov, was shot dead in Moscow on September 24, 2008. He was returning from a meeting with Deputy Kremlin Chief-of-Staff Vladislav Surkov.<sup>136</sup> According to the *Kommersant* newspaper, the Kremlin saw Ruslan Yamadayev as a potential candidate for the presidency of Chechnya.<sup>137</sup> Yamadayev was driving back from the meeting in his car. When the vehicle stopped at a red light on the Smolenskaya Naberezhnaya, an unidentified attacker walked up to the car and fired a pistol around 20 times. Yamadayev died on the spot from his wounds.

According to Isa Yamadayev, a brother of the deceased, Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov ordered the crime and State Duma member Adam Delimkhanov, who "manages executions and kidnappings there," organized the assassination.<sup>138</sup> Fearing for his life, Sulim Yamadayev left Russia after his brother's murder and settled in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).



THE NAME OF ADAM DELOMKHANOV IS CONNECTED TO A WHOLE SERIES OF MURDERS, INCLUDING THE SHOOTING OF M.BAISAROV, R.YAMADAYEV AND B.NEMTSOV



On March 8, 2009, in Dubai, an assassination attempt was made on Sulim Yamadaye's life. A UAE police officer testified that Yamadaye had been "killed on the spot by a pistol shot to the back of the head in the presence of his two bodyguards."<sup>139</sup>

Two people were convicted as a result of the murder investigation in the UAE. One of them was an Iranian, Makhdi Lorniya, Ramzan Kadyrov's former horseman.<sup>140</sup> Dubai police chief Dhahi Khalfan Tamim named Adam Delimkhanov as the organizer of the assassination, and made it clear that he possessed "irrefutable proof of his guilt."<sup>141</sup> Soon afterwards Delimkhanov was placed on Interpol's most-wanted list.<sup>142</sup>

According to Isa Yamadaye, who, unlike his brothers, survived an assassination attempt by the Kadyrovites, Delimkhanov's well-known nickname in Chechnya is "the Butcher."<sup>143</sup>

## THE ASSASSINATION OF BORIS NEMTSOV

The most notorious murder involving Kadyrovites took place on February 27, 2015, in downtown Moscow. The killer caught up with Boris Nemtsov, a leader of the Russian opposition, on the Bolshoi Moskvoretski Bridge and shot him six times in the back. Five bullets hit him. Nemtsov died on the spot.

Opposition leader Boris Nemtsov had systematically criticized Ramzan Kadyrov's actions as well as the inaction of law enforcement bodies against him. The Russian politician had repeatedly called directly on the secret services to establish order in Chechnya. For instance, in May 2014, Nemtsov had sent an official request to the director of the Russian Federal Security Service demanding that they look into the publication of a video depicting a large group

of Kadyrov's combatants speaking Chechen as they crossed the Russian-Ukrainian border.<sup>144</sup>

Nemtsov held Vladimir Putin personally responsible for "Kadyrov's impunity." "I cannot understand what Putin expects when he arms 20,000 Kadyrovites. Putin diligently finances Chechnya by sending trainloads of money. Chechnya receives a minimum of 60 billion rubles a year in grants. Only Allah knows how much money is being siphoned off through various programs, such as the Northern Caucasus Resort," Nemtsov wrote in December 2014, two months before his murder.<sup>145</sup>

Kadyrov's reaction to such criticism, addressed both to him and to President Putin, went beyond frustration. "Those who criticize Putin are savages, they are my personal enemies. As long as Putin supports me, I can do anything. Allahu akbar!" Kadyrov said in an interview for Newsweek magazine.<sup>146</sup>

On March 8, 2015, Zaur Dadayev, deputy commander of Chechnya's Sever (North) Battalion and a number of his henchmen were arrested and charged with Nemtsov's murder. According to the investigation, it was Dadayev who shot Nemtsov. In 2010, Ramzan Kadyrov had decorated Dadayev with the Order of Courage. Commenting on the gunman's arrest, the Chechen president called him a true patriot of Russia.<sup>147</sup>

During the course of the investigation, it was established that just three days before Nemtsov's murder, Dadayev had arrived in Moscow accompanied by another combatant from the Sever Battalion, Ruslan Geremeyev, who is the nephew of Suleyman Geremeyev, a senator from Chechnya in the Federation Council and a politician close to Kadyrov.

# THE MURDERERS

Dadayev and Geremeyev shared an apartment, and the day after the murder they both left Moscow for Nazran on the same flight.<sup>148</sup> Later, the paths of the former comrades-in-arms diverged. Dadayev stayed in Ingushetiya, where he was later detained by an FSB SWAT team, and Geremeyev managed to reach Chechnya. He spent the following weeks hiding from the authorities in the Chechen village of Dzhalka. This is the Delimkhanovs' home village. Alibek Delimkhanov is the commander of the Sever Battalion. Dadayev and Geremeyev served under his command. He is also the brother of Adam Delimkhanov. Russian investigators' attempts at getting to the village of Dzhalka to interrogate Geremeyev failed when Chechen law enforcement forces blocked the road to the village.<sup>149</sup>

Geremeyev's trail soon vanished. According to one version of events, he left Russia with a fake passport.<sup>150</sup> According to another version, he is still laying low somewhere in Chechnya under Kadyrov's protection.<sup>151</sup> The Russian Investigative Committee put Geremeyev on the so-called "operational search list." If arrested, he will probably be charged with involvement in Nemtsov's murder.<sup>152</sup> According to investigators, the murder was organized by Ruslan Mukhutdinov, whose role in the group of killers was that of an intermediary who dealt with guns and money. Investigators' attempt to pass off a rank-and-file member of the criminal group as the organizer and mastermind of the killing clearly demonstrates that Moscow law enforcement officials are unable to trace the investigation back to the real mastermind, who obviously occupies a top position in the government system.

According to one version, it is Adam Delimkhanov who may have been the real organizer of Boris Nemtsov's assassination. The trail of the investigation leads into Delimkhanov's inner circle. Considering his reputation, it would only be natural for the Investigative Committee to be interested in this State Duma member from United Russia.

However, the lawyer's demand received no response. Russia's Investigative Committee could not muster enough political will to interrogate the notorious Delimkhanov, despite the long trail of blood leading to him.

## MILITANTS FROM THE UNITED RUSSIA PARTY

Ramzan Kadyrov and members of his inner circle have the Chechen authorities under their control. They represent the local branch of the United Russia party and give speeches during federal party congresses. Kadyrov has empowered representatives of the armed bloc so that none of his opponents can feel safe.

With the support of United Russia's top officials, Kadyrov's regime receives multi-billion-ruble subsidies from the federal budget that allow Ramzan Kadyrov and his followers to live like Arab sheikhs.

With the connivance of the federal authorities and the support of the United Russia party, Kadyrov has turned Chechnya into a separate nation that lives according to its own laws and traditions. Crime has become the republic's only system of political organization. The Russian authorities have failed to curb the wave of corruption, assassinations and kidnappings that has ensued. Top-ranking Kadyrovites are basically able to get away with impunity.

## DMITRI MEDVEDEV, LEADER OF THE UNITED RUSSIA PARTY:

«KADYROV IS NOT SUCH A BAD MAN AS HE IS BEING MADE TO SEEM.»



**VADIM PROKHOROV, A LAWYER FOR BORIS NEMTSOV AND HIS DAUGHTER ZHANNA, HAS REPEATEDLY DEMANDED THAT INVESTIGATORS INTERROGATE DELIMKHANOV. "ADAM DELIMKHANOV IS KADYROV'S RIGHT-HAND MAN. IN VIEW OF THE SITUATION WITH THE INVESTIGATION OF BORIS NEMTSOV'S MURDER, HE IS A KEY FIGURE WHO MUST BE INTERROGATED IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH THE IDENTITY OF THE MASTERMIND AND ORGANIZER OF THIS HEINOUS CRIME," PROKHOROV SAID.**



Meanwhile, unable to counter criminal activity in Chechnya, United Russia leader Dmitri Medvedev chooses to court Kadyrov by publicly defending him. "Kadyrov fulfills his duties and he does a lot. He is sometimes criticized, but most of the criticism is undeserved. He is not such a bad man as he is being made to seem," Medvedev said about his fellow party member.<sup>153</sup> ■



# GOVERNOR WITH A STEEL ROD

JOURNALIST OLEG KASHIN SHARPLY CRITICIZED THE RUSSIAN REGIME, AND IN SO DOING PROVOKED THE FRUSTRATION OF ITS REPRESENTATIVES. IN LATE 2010, HE WAS ATTACKED NEAR HIS HOME IN MOSCOW AND BEATEN SO SEVERELY THAT HE BARELY SURVIVED. THE TRAIL OF THIS CRIME LEADS TO THE PSKOV REGION; IN FACT, THE PSKOV GOVERNOR HAD PUBLICLY THREATENED THE JOURNALIST SHORTLY BEFORE THE ATTACK.

## A JOURNALIST IS DECLARED TO BE AN ENEMY

Oleg Kashin is the author of numerous sensational articles and investigative reports. His professional activity has repeatedly provoked harsh criticism from United Russia and its supporters.

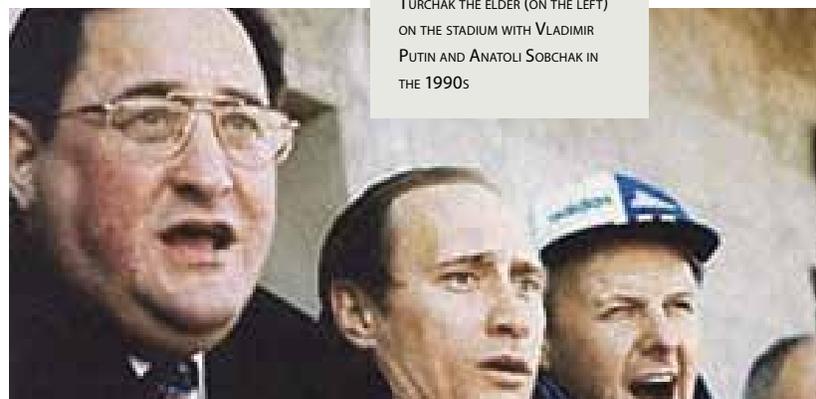
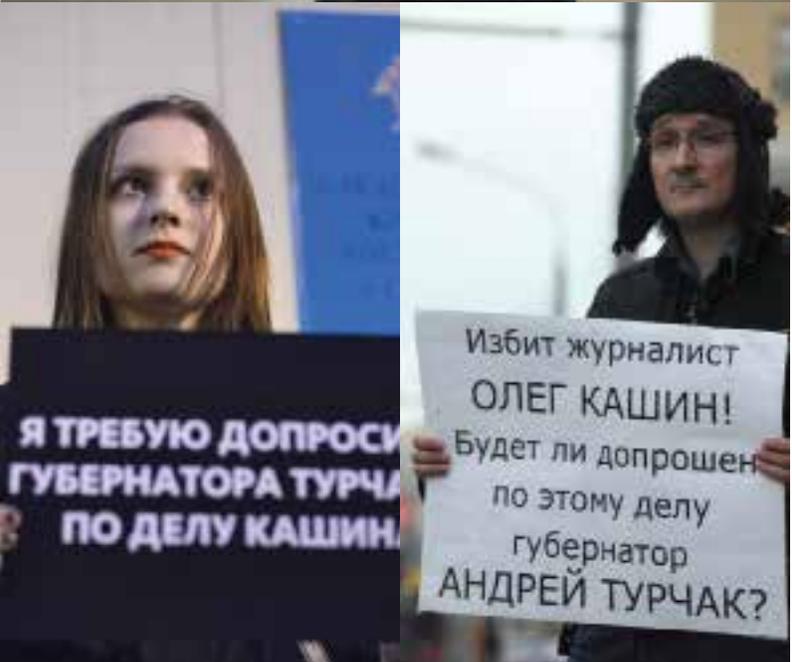
Back in 2005, Kashin was conducting a journalistic investigation into a Nashi camp near Moscow. The young supporters of the current regime reacted aggressively to the journalist's presence. Security guards reacted by forcefully ushering Kashin on stage before activists, and the Nashi leaders then declared Kashin to be an enemy of Russia. After this, Kashin was prevented from leaving the premises for some time.<sup>154</sup>

In 2010, a few months before the attack on his life, Kashin interviewed one of anarchists who had been involved in a radical protest in which the administrative building in the town of Khimki had come under attack. He published an article in the Kommersant newspaper, in which he covered the motives underlying the protest. The article provoked the outrage of the ruling party. A post was then published on the website of United Russia's youth organization in which Kashin was called a "traitor" and accused of involvement in "underground subversive activity directed at corrupting readers." The post was accompanied by Kashin's photograph stamped with the words "He will be punished."<sup>155</sup>

## "YOU HAVE 24 HOURS TO APOLOGIZE"

Another public dispute involved Kashin and Andrei Turchak, governor of the Pskov region and a member of the General Council of United Russia.

Turchak has close family ties to Vladimir Putin. The governor's father, Anatoli Turchak, has headed the large industrial holding company Leninets since Soviet times. In the 1990s, he worked as Putin's deputy in the St. Petersburg branch of the "Nash Dom – Rossiya" (Our Home Is Russia) movement. The Turchaks still maintain their ties to the Russian president. The elder Turchak is Putin's judo sparring partner, and his son has made a political career in the ruling party and became governor of the Pskov region with the president's support.<sup>156</sup>



TURCHAK THE ELDER (ON THE LEFT) ON THE STADIUM WITH VLADIMIR PUTIN AND ANATOLI SOBCHAK IN THE 1990s

Although the conflict with Turchak was provoked by a seemingly insignificant incident, it almost cost Kashin his life. Three months before the attack, the journalist used a derogatory term in his blog to refer to the governor. Turchak noticed it and demanded an apology. "Young man, you've got 24 hours to apologize," the official wrote.

JOURNALIST OLEG KASHIN



Kashin, however, refused to apologize and wrote that Turchak's "appointment [to the post of governor] is an insult both to federalism and to common sense."

Shortly before the attack, Kashin wrote to his colleagues from the Kommersant newspaper that, according to his sources, the Pskov governor had not forgotten the offense and was prepared to retaliate. Treating this information as a threat, the journalist wrote to his colleagues: "If anything happens, it's Turchak."<sup>157</sup>

## AN ATTEMPTED MURDER

On the night of November 6, 2010, Oleg Kashin arrived by taxi at the residential building on Pyatnitskaya Street in Moscow where he rented an apartment. He was approached by two men who had been waiting for him. One of them was holding a bouquet of flowers that concealed steel bars. After one of the assailants knocked Kashin down with a punch in the face, the two attackers proceeded to beat him up, hitting the journalist at least 50 times with steel bars. The attack was recorded by video cameras mounted on the wall of the building.

The journalist was taken to the intensive care unit of city hospital number 36 in critical condition. The assault left Kashin with broken legs, a broken upper and lower jaw, a fractured skull and broken fingers, one of which was later partially amputated. He was put in a medically induced coma, after which he underwent two operations. Oleg Kashin owes his survival only to the professionalism of his doctors, who spent a long time fighting to save his life.

Investigators had no doubt that the assault was provoked by Kashin's professional activity. The attackers did not even check his pockets for valuables, and it soon became clear that Kashin had been followed. A criminal case was initiated on suspicion of attempted murder.

## THE GOVERNOR'S REVENGE

The federal authorities immediately reacted to the attempt on the life of the prominent journalist. The Russian Prosecutor General took the investigation under his personal control. United Russia leader and then-President Dmitri Medvedev promised to find the assailants and "to tear their heads off." Whoever is involved in this crime will be punished regardless of his position, place in society or accomplishments," Medvedev declared at the time.<sup>158</sup>

The investigation advanced with considerable difficulty. Although by 2015, the case was basically solved and the names of the attackers were made public, the mastermind and the organizers of the crime managed to escape liability despite the promises made by the United Russia leader and the country's political leadership. The reason for this is that the assailants themselves had direct ties to the ruling party, and the mastermind behind the crime had connections among top-ranking Kremlin officials.

According to criminal case files, Aleksandr Gorbunov, a longtime acquaintance of Governor Turchak, was the organizer of the attack. At one time, they worked together in the St. Petersburg Leninets holding company run by Turchak the elder. Furthermore, they were both involved in the founding of United Russia's youth movement, which was the starting point of Turchak's political career.

According to the participants in the crime, after Kashin's refusal to apologize to the governor, Gorbunov enlisted Danila Vesolov, head of security at the Mekhanicheski Zavod plant, which was an asset of the Leninets holding company.

In the early fall of 2010, Turchak, Gorbunov and Vesolov met in a restaurant, which was proved by their cell phone bills. As Vesolov stated under interrogation, the meeting was held to discuss the future assault.



GOVERNOR TURCHAK RECEIVES VLADIMIR PUTIN IN PSKOV



ALEKSANDR GORBUNOV SUSPECTED OF ORGANIZING THE ATTACK ON THE JOURNALIST



DANIILA VESOLOV, ONE OF THE ASSAILANTS

Vesyolov asked the investigators for a plea bargain, promising to “provide information about the circumstances of the organization and the carrying out of the crime, including the roles of each of the participants in the crime—Gorbunov, Turchak and others.” His wife, Yelena Vesyolova, declared that Vesyolov had made a secret audio recording of the conversation in order to “cover all his bases.” “He went to Moscow with Gorbunov, where they met with Governor Andrei Turchak in a café. And he [Turchak] was the one who said that Kashin had to be roughed up, so that he would not be able to write anymore,” Vesyolova stated.<sup>159</sup>

The investigators established that Danila Vesyolov and his colleague Vyacheslav Borisov had been the ones who had beaten Kashin up. Mikhail Kavtaskin was named as the driver who drove the attackers away. All three suspects were employed as security guards at the Mekhanicheskii Zavod plant, which was controlled by Turchak the elder. According to participants in the crime, a few weeks after the attempted murder, Aleksandr Gorbunov held a meeting at the plant to discuss how to cover up the identities of the perpetrators. “At that time, searches and other investigative activities were expected at the factory, so all documents connected with illegal transactions and accounting records were destroyed. During that meeting, Gorbunov said that weapons that were being kept at the plant had to be hidden as well,” according to the testimony of Aleksandr Meshkov, a manager of the holding.<sup>160, 161</sup>

## DURING THE INTERROGATION, VESYOLOV STATED THAT THE DECISION TO ASSAULT KASHIN HAD BEEN MADE BY TURCHAK AND GORBUNOV, AND THAT HE HAD BEEN GIVEN THE TASK OF CARRYING IT OUT

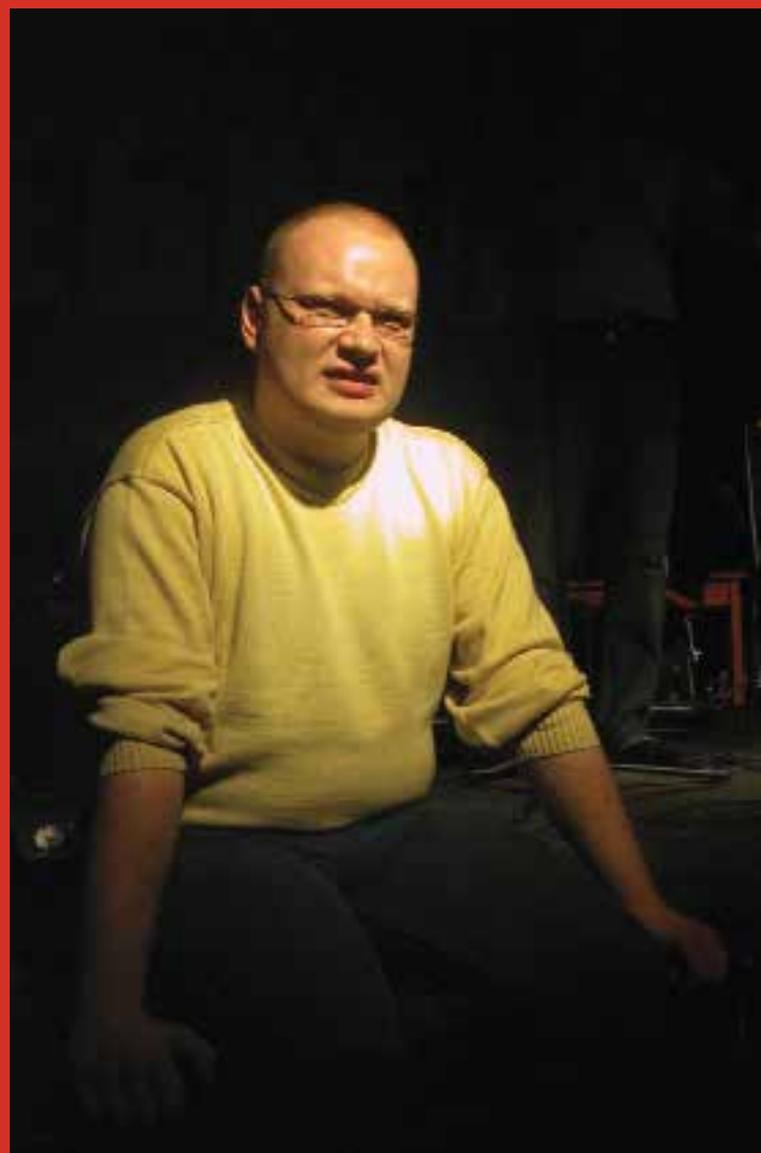
— In June, 2015, Gorbunov was arrested. Vesyolov and Kavtaskin, the perpetrators of the crime, went to prison as well. The fourth suspect, Borisov, managed to flee abroad.

### IMPUNITY

After the arrest of the organizer and the perpetrators of the attack, it seemed that the detention of Governor Turchak, who was named as the mastermind behind the crime, was but a question of time. However, this high-ranking United Russia official managed to escape liability, most probably thanks to his ties to the Kremlin and his father’s friendship with Vladimir Putin. Despite testimony and other evidence against the governor, he has not even been interrogated.

Furthermore, in September 2015, the investigator who solved the crime was taken off the case. The next day, the alleged organizer of the assault, Aleksandr Gorbunov, was released from pretrial detention. The investigation was basically blocked, and the case has never gotten to court. Andrei Turchak is still serving as Pskov governor, just as if nothing had ever happened. In fact, Turchak led the United Russia party list in the Pskov region in the 2016 elections.

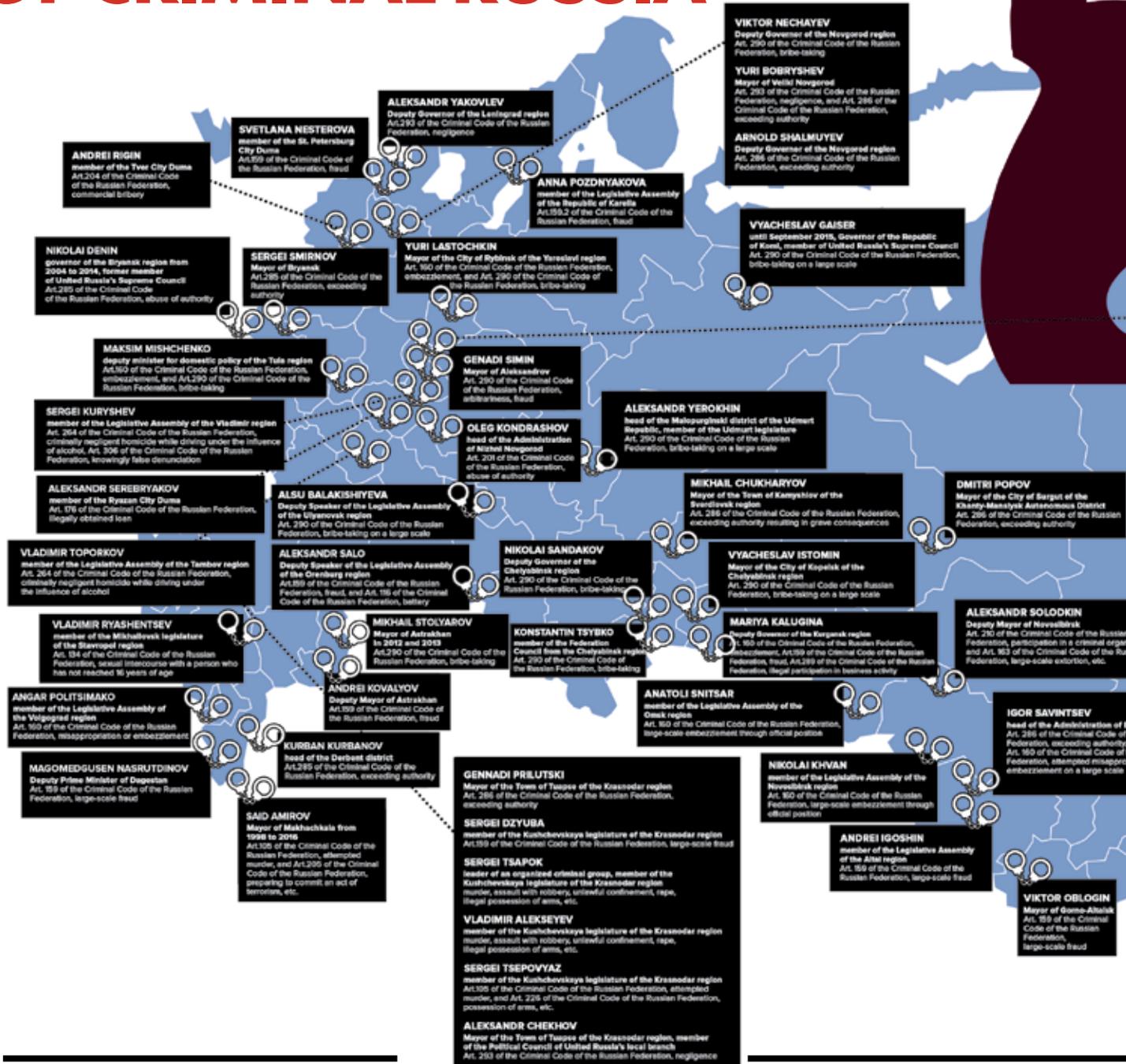
In 2010, United Russia leader Dmitri Medvedev promised to “tear off the heads” of the thugs responsible for the attempted murder of Oleg Kashin. However, it then became clear that these thugs had direct ties to his own party, and that the father of the most likely mastermind behind the crime was Putin’s longtime friend. These ties turned out to be stronger than Russian justice, and consequently, the statement of the leader of the ruling party was nothing but empty rhetoric. ■



## OLEG KASHIN, JOURNALIST

“TWO MEN ARE IN PRISON FOR TRYING TO KILL ME ON ANDREI TURCHAK’S ORDERS. THIS IS WHAT BOTH THE INDICTMENT AND THE COURT’S DECISION SAY. TURCHAK HAS ALREADY BEEN OFFICIALLY NAMED AS THE MASTERMIND BEHIND MY ATTEMPTED MURDER—THIS IS THE WORDING USED BOTH BY THE RUSSIAN COURT AND BY THE INVESTIGATORS. HOW IS IT POSSIBLE FOR TURCHAK TO CONTINUE TO HOLD THE POST OF GOVERNOR WITH SUCH A STIGMA ATTACHED TO HIS NAME? THE ANSWER IS THAT IT IS POSSIBLE IF YOU ARE THE SON OF A FRIEND OF PUTIN’S. THE ONLY TIME I EVER MET TURCHAK WAS DURING A CONGRESS OF UNITED RUSSIA’S YOUTH ORGANIZATION. THERE WERE MANY YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THE REGIONS WHO JOINED THE RULING PARTY TO ADVANCE THEIR CAREERS. THE BEST THEY CAN HOPE FOR IS TO BE ONE OF THE CROWD, BECAUSE LEADERSHIP POSITIONS ARE ALWAYS RESERVED FOR THE PARTY’S OWN, IN THIS CASE FOR TURCHAK. THIS PARTY IS STRUCTURED IN SUCH A MANNER THAT THE YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THE REGIONS WAVE THE FLAGS WHILE THE CHILDREN AND FRIENDS OF THE RIGHT PEOPLE WITH POWERFUL CONNECTIONS DIVIDE THE POSITIONS AND MONEY AMONG THEMSELVES. THIS IS WHY TURCHAK HAS BECOME A SYMBOL OF UNITED RUSSIA’S FEUDALISM FOR ME, AND THIS IS WHY I CALLED HIM THE NAME FOR WHICH HE ORDERED HIS THUGS TO CRIPPLE ME.”

# POLITICAL MAP OF CRIMINAL RUSSIA



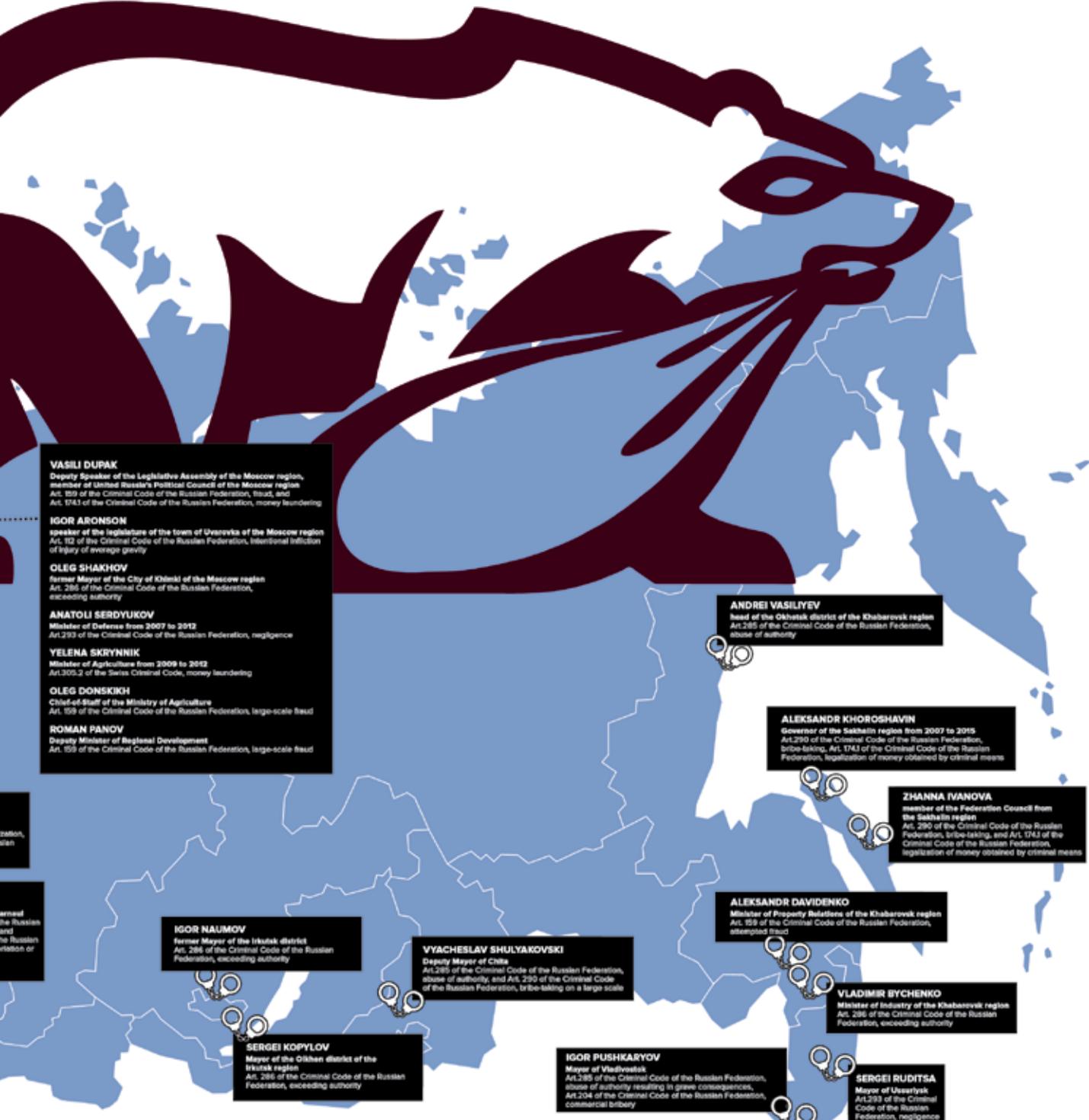
United Russia's leadership claims that criminal activity among the party's representatives is a rare phenomenon. However, the number of criminal cases against United Russia officials who occupy government positions, suggest quite the opposite. In fact, the geography of crime involving members of the ruling party covers the entire country.

There is no doubt that the Russian police and secret services' efforts to fight crime are not the product of any real willingness to eradicate corruption; rather, they are generally dictated by a simple need for redistribution of property or spheres of influence and the resolution of conflicts within the political elites.

However, even despite this fact, the numerous criminal cases that have been brought against United Russia members who have violated the law allow us to survey the immensity of the disaster: the Russian government is literally riddled with corruption at every level. The ruling party's core displays a complete collection of articles of the Criminal Code.

Meanwhile, although law enforcement bodies have achieved some success in their work, they are generally unable to curb the corruption that has pervaded the entire country and in some cases has even reached the international arena.

Over recent years, dozens of United Russia members in government office have become defendants in criminal cases. Criminals from the United Russia



Over the recent years, dozens of United Russia members, who were holding government positions, have become defendants in criminal cases. Criminals from the United Russia party have been charged with corruption, fraud, abuse of authority and even with masterminding murders. The geography of crime involving representatives of Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Medvedev's party has spread across the whole of Russia.

party have been charged with corruption, fraud, abuse of authority and even with masterminding murders. The geography of crime involving representatives of Vladimir Putin's and Dmitri Medvedev's party has spread across the whole of Russia.

As a rule, any United Russia member who is arrested on corruption charges is then replaced by another one. An imprisoned crook gives way to a thief who then commits fraud on an even larger scale because he or she enjoys the backing of even more influential protectors.

The reason for the mass-scale intrusion of corruption in Russian government structures lies in the fact that the country is in the clutches of a corrupt system.

The rule is that, in order to get access to the feeding trough of public funds, one must simply be loyal to and share one's illegal profits with those who offer protection from above.

As a result, since United Russia's rise to power, the party has established itself not only as the ruling party, i.e. the key political force on which the president and the prime minister rely, but also as a structure that provides means of upward social mobility for numerous criminal elements; these criminals have adapted to the new reality and have managed to successfully integrate themselves into government bodies by using the party's resources and potential.

In supporting United Russia, Russian citizens are contributing to the strengthening of a corrupt system that poses a danger to the state itself.

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THE SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT, THE BORIS NEMTSOV FOUNDATION FOR FREEDOM AND THE FREE RUSSIA FOUNDATION

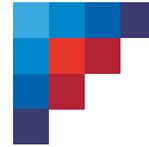


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объединённое демократическое движение



**BORIS  
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**FREE  
RUSSIA**



**AUTHOR: ILYA YASHIN**



Russian politician. Deputy Chairman of the People's Freedom Party (PARNAS). A leader of the Solidarity Movement.

A consistent critic of Russian President Putin's policy. One of the organizers of the Moscow rallies for fair elections and democratic reforms that gathered many thousands of people.

Coauthored an alternative draft for reforming the Interior Ministry. After the murder of Boris Nemtsov, initiated the completion of his report "Putin. War" describing the armed standoff in eastern Ukraine. Authored an independent expert report "A Threat to National Security" about Ramzan Kadyrov's regime in Chechnya.

Yashin was recognized as a prisoner of conscience after his arrest at an opposition rally in 2011. He won his case against the Russian government in the European Court of Human Rights over his illegal persecution.

PHOTO: PLAGIYA ZAMMITTA (BELUKOVA)

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“ I feel sorry for people who have become hostages of mediocre politicians whom they did not choose. ”



Dmitri Medvedev,  
Russian Prime Minister  
and Chairman of the United Russia Party