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RUSSIA AND STATE-SPONSORED TERRORISM IN UKRAINE (PART 1)

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Leading opposition presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko is the target of a range of dirty tricks intended to defeat his bid to succeed Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma. As Russian political commentator Andrei Piontkovsky wrote in *Ukrayinska pravda* on September 10, "The basic strategy of the outside political image makers is aimed mostly at the Russian population of Ukraine, to portray Yushchenko as a Russophobe and Ukrainian nationalist and to provoke an ethnic split in Ukrainian society."

Russian "political technologists" (a combination of political lobbyists and dirty tricksters), with close links to Russian President Vladimir Putin, have been very active in Ukraine's presidential campaign. Many of the dirty tricks originated with Gleb Pavlovsky, Maraty Gelman, and their Effective Policy Foundation (EPF), which works on behalf of Presidential Administration chief Viktor Medvedchuk.

This month Pavlovsky opened a public front in Kyiv for his secret EPF activities, the Russian Club. Both the Russian ambassador to Ukraine, Viktor Chernomyrdin, and Ukrainian Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych attended the club's opening.

Pavlovsky and Gelman's work on behalf of the Ukrainian Presidential Administration is based on long-standing ties with its head, Viktor Medvedchuk. Medvedchuk leads the Kyiv oligarch clan's Social Democratic United Party (SDPUo), which has worked closely with the EPF since the 1998 Ukrainian parliamentary elections.

The EPF has been hired to secure a Yanukovych victory by defeating his main rival, pro-Western reformer Viktor Yushchenko. Failing this, the election results could be annulled, with Yushchenko and Yanukovych barred from a repeat election. Kuchma could then stand for a third term, facing only weak left-wing opposition candidates (*Ukrayinska pravda*, August 30; *Hrani Plus*, August 30-September 5).

The EPF's objectives fall into three main categories. First they seek to undermine Yushchenko's credibility, by producing fake leaflets, critical books and pamphlets, and launching inflammatory television attacks. Second, they are using the Tax Police to investigate businessmen who support his campaign, thus undermining his financial support. Third, EPF has paid extreme nationalists to claim they support Yushchenko and use the same groups to carry out terrorist attacks that are then blamed on Yushchenko.

A November 2003 study prepared by Russian political advisors working for Medvedchuk was leaked to an opposition newspaper this summer (*Ukrayinska pravda*, June 25). The study outlined how President Kuchma or his chosen successor could win the 2004 elections by discrediting his main opponent as a "nationalist" and an inciter of inter-ethnic conflict. Strife blamed on the opposition would lead to a state of emergency that could, in turn, lead to an indefinite postponement of the elections. Such a scenario would be a desperate measure taken because Yushchenko was leading in the polls and likely to win the elections.

Another leaked plan would be to depict Yushchenko as somebody who would cause instability if he were elected. Kuchma or Prime Minister Yanukovych would then be proposed as a source of "stability." The strategy paper openly stated, "Our aim is to destabilize the situation in the regions (through political intrigues, not by harming the economy), to drag Yushchenko into these processes . . ." (*Ukrayinska pravda*, June 25). These leaked secret strategies outlined how conflict could be provoked between Tatars and Russian in the Crimea.

Yushchenko asked the Security Service (SBU) to halt such "inter-ethnic provocations" that were intended to discredit the opposition (*Ukrayinska pravda*, May 27). Oleksandr Zinchenko, the head of Yushchenko's campaign, warned that the Presidential Administration and its Russian political consultants are planning more "provocations" (*Ukrayinska pravda*, June 26).

To ensure any of these leaked scenarios takes place, the election campaign must be conducted in a hostile and tension-laden environment. Three different, but interrelated, groups are creating such an atmosphere. These include the Presidential Administration and its Russian political advisors; a shadow campaign headquarters (independent of the official campaign headquarters run by Serhiy Tyhipko) that organizes the local state administration to work on behalf of Yanukovich's candidacy; and extremist nationalist groups that act as agent provocateurs and undertake terrorist acts. (To be continued.)