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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1419
INFO MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
CIS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 MOSCOW 009243

E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/13/00
TAGS: PGOV, RS
SUBJECT: ROUND-UP OF ELECTION MONITOR EXPERIENCES (PART
ONE) -- SIBERIA/FAR EAST

CLASSIFIED BY EDWARD SALAZAR, CHIEF, POLITICAL INTERNAL
UNIT. REASONS: 1.5 (B,D).

INTRODUCTION

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1. (C) BETWEEN MARCH 22-27 MORE THAN 60 OFFICERS FROM THE
EMBASSY AND THE THREE CONSULATES FANNED OUT ACROSS RUSSIA
TO TAKE THE PULSE OF THIS COUNTRY ON THE EVE OF THE
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AS WELL AS MONITOR THE VOTING PROCESS
ON ELECTION DAY, MARCH 26. WHILE THEIR EXPERIENCES SAY
MUCH ABOUT THE ELECTION, THEY ALSO PROVIDE OTHER INSIGHTS
INTO RUSSIA'S REGIONS. THE FOLLOWING IS A SAMPLING OF
OBSERVATIONS BY EMBASSY MONITORS WHO SPENT ELECTION DAY IN
SIBERIA AND THE FAR EAST.

NOVOSIBIRSK

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: FRANK H PEREZ
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 12 APR 2010
DATE/CASE ID: 05 SEP 2007 200702380

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4. (C) DESPITE AN OVERWHELMING FEELING AMONG THE POPULATION THAT PUTIN WOULD WIN, MORE THAN 65 PERCENT OF NOVOSIBIRSK VOTERS TURNED OUT. MANY LOCAL OBSERVERS, INCLUDING JOURNALISTS, BUSINESSMEN, AND OBLAST OFFICIALS TOLD EMBOFFS THAT THEY BELIEVED A PUTIN PRESIDENCY WOULD USHER IN AN ERA OF STABILITY AND PREDICTABILITY WHICH, NEVERTHELESS, WOULD NOT AFFECT THEIR LIVES SIGNIFICANTLY. NEWLY-ELECTED GOVERNOR TOLOKONSKIY TOLD EMBOFFS ON MARCH 27 THAT HE EXPECTS THE KREMLIN TEAM TO BE ONE WITH WHOM HE CAN WORK TO DEVELOP LONG-TERM PLANS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE OBLAST.

3. (C) VOTERS SEEMED RELIEVED THAT THE ELECTION WAS OVER AND THAT PUTIN WOULD NOT BE FACING A SECOND ROUND BATTLE WITH THE COMMUNISTS (ALTHOUGH ZYUGANOV RECEIVED 38.3

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 PERCENT). YAVLINSKIY RECEIVED NEARLY EIGHT PERCENT OF THE VOTE, SHOWING THAT HIS MESSAGE HAS RESONANCE IN THIS ACADEMIC CENTER, EVEN WITHOUT HIS CAMPAIGNING PERSONALLY. FROM THE MARCH 27 NEWS ON A LOCAL CHANNEL, WHICH ONLY SHOWED ELECTION RESULTS AFTER TWO OTHER STORIES, IT WAS CLEAR THAT NOVOSIBIRSK VOTERS ALREADY WERE MOVING ON WITH THEIR LIVES, HARDLY CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY THAT A PUTIN PRESIDENCY COULD CHANGE THEIR, AND RUSSIA'S, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION. THE PEOPLE OF NOVOSIBIRSK SEEMED TO HAVE FEW EXPECTATIONS OF THE NEW PRESIDENT, EXCEPT THAT HE WILL NOT WORSEN THEIR SITUATION.

 KEMEROVO

4. (C) THE EMBASSY OFFICERS WHO TRAVELED TO KEMEROVO TO OBSERVE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS HAD MEETINGS WITH A WIDE-RANGE OF POLITICAL FIGURES PRIOR TO THE ELECTION, INCLUDING [REDACTED]

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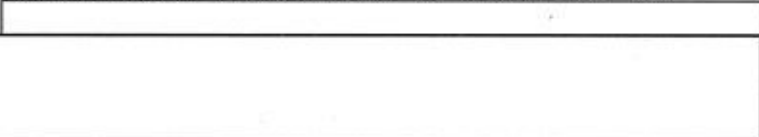
[REDACTED]
 THEY ALSO ATTENDED TULEYEV'S CULMINATING CAMPAIGN EVENT IN THE KEMEROVO PHILHARMONIC HALL, A TYPICAL SOVIET-STYLE RALLY WHERE REPRESENTATIVES OF EVERY SOCIETAL ELEMENT WERE CAREFULLY INCLUDED -- PENSIONERS, MILITARY, YOUTH, WOMEN, AND VETERANS.

5. (C) ON ELECTION DAY, EMBOFFS SEPARATELY VISITED 23 POLLING STATIONS IN 20 LOCATIONS (ABOUT HALF IN KEMEROVO,

AND HALF IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AROUND KEMEROVO AND IN THE
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SMALLER DEPRESSED CITIES OF TAPKI AND LENINSK-KUZNETSK).
THE OSCE HAD NUMEROUS OBSERVERS AS WELL IN OTHER CITIES IN
THE OBLAST. NO SERIOUS VIOLATIONS WERE NOTED; SIMPLY THE
USUALLY FAMILY VOTING AND BOOTHS NOT QUITE ACCORDING TO
REGULATION BUT PRESENTING NO OBSTACLE TO SECRET BALLOTING.
REGARDING POLLWATCHERS, PUTIN, TULEYEV, AND ZYUGANOV HAD
OBSERVERS VIRTUALLY EVERYWHERE, AND ZHIRINOVSKIY
OCCASIONALLY. HOWEVER, OBSERVERS FOR OTHER CANDIDATES WERE
FEW AND FAR BETWEEN. YOUNGER VOTERS RARELY WERE NOTICED
AND TALKS WITH OTHER POLL-WATCHERS CONFIRMED THAT VOTER
TURNOUT FOR "YOUTH" WAS LOW.

6. (C) EMBOFFS FOUND VIRTUALLY NO SIGN OF AN ACTIVE
CAMPAIGN. PUBLIC CAMPAIGN ADVERTISEMENTS WERE RESTRICTED
BY MUNICIPAL ORDINANCE TO ONE SITE. ONLY ONE FORMAL
COMPLAINT (BY "YABLOKO") WAS MADE AND IT WAS SETTLED
AMICABLY ACCORDING TO BOTH "YABLOKO" OFFICIALS AND
RAZYGRAYEV. LOCAL TELEVISION GAVE A LOT OF COVERAGE TO
GOVERNOR TULEYEV.



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MOST, IF NOT ALL, TELEVISION ADS FOR PRESIDENTIAL
CANDIDATES APPEARED TO BE ON THE NATIONAL TELEVISION
STATIONS. A LOCAL "YABLOKO" OFFICIAL TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE
HAD PARTICIPATED IN DEBATES BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE

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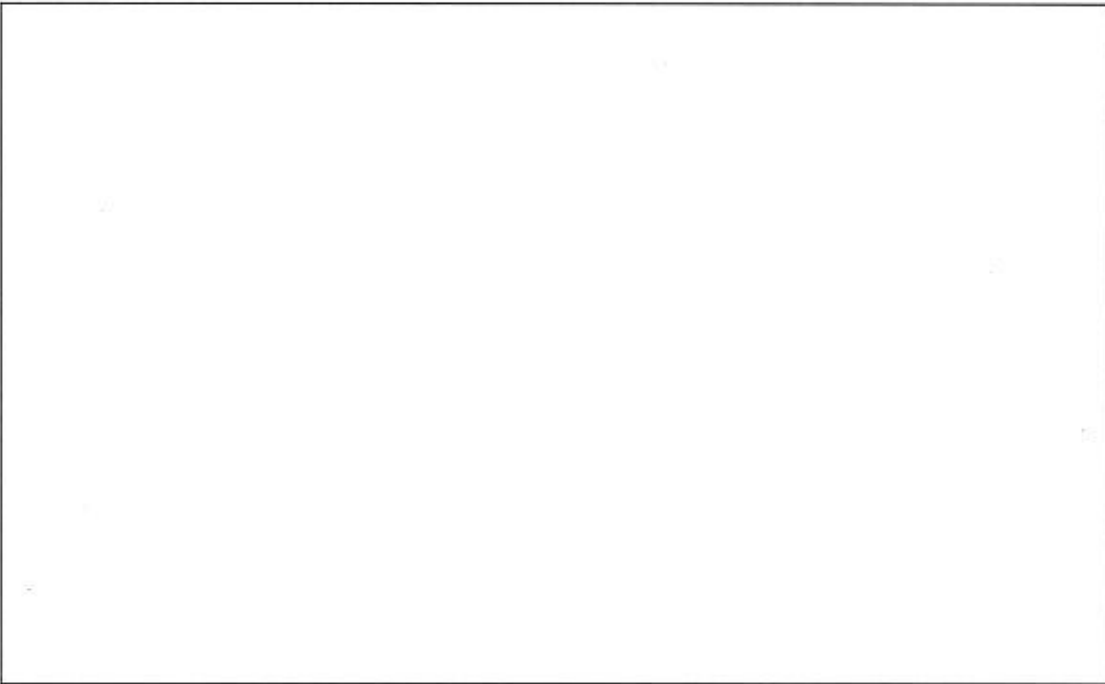
C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 04 MOSCOW 009243

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TAGS: PGOV, RS

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CANDIDATES ON LOCAL RADIO. ALL CANDIDATES RECEIVED GRATIS
COVERAGE IN THE OBLAST-OWNED OFFICIAL PRESS.



Khabarovsk

8. (C) ON MARCH 24, EMBASSY ELECTION MONITORS IN
Khabarovsk met with the acting governor, the acting mayor,
the head of the Kray Duma, and a group of 40
representatives of local political parties. The meeting
with party representatives, which was hosted by the Kray
electoral commission and the Kray administration, was held
at the Kray Duma building. It lasted one hour and was
filmed by the local media. OSCE election observers also
attended. Putin campaign representatives were present, but
did not participate in the discussion.

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9. (C) DURING THE MEETING, KPRF REPRESENTATIVES DENOUNCED THE LOCAL POWER STRUCTURE FOR ABUSING GOVERNMENT OFFICES TO FURTHER THE PUTIN CAMPAIGN AND FOR UNFAIRLY LIMITING MEDIA ACCESS AND CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES BY THE OTHER CAMPS. AN OSCE OBSERVER PRESENT TOLD THE AUDIENCE THAT THEIR ALLEGATIONS OF ELECTORAL LAW VIOLATIONS WERE MINOR AND NO DIFFERENT FROM COMPLAINTS HEARD IN GERMANY OR ELSEWHERE. ONE PARTY REPRESENTATIVE ASKED IF HE COULD MEET AGAIN WITH THE ELECTION OBSERVERS AT THE END OF ELECTION DAY, BUT HIS REQUEST WAS NOT TRANSLATED AND WHEN THE MEETING ENDED, THE ATTENDEES WERE ASKED TO REMAIN IN THE HALL FOR A SUBSEQUENT MEETING WHILE THE FOREIGNERS WERE EXCUSED. [REDACTED]

10. (C) THE COMPLAINTS VOICED BY THE PARTY REPRESENTATIVES INCLUDED: THE REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION HAD TURNED INTO A CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS; THE PRESIDENTIAL REPRESENTATIVE IN KHABAROVSK WAS MEDDLING IN THE ELECTION; THE GOVERNOR CAMPAIGNED IN HIS MEETINGS WITH GROUPS OF BUSINESSPEOPLE, MILITARY, ETC.; THE GOVERNOR CONTROLS WHICH VIEWS ARE REPORTED ON LOCAL TV; LOCAL MEDIA EMPLOYEES KNOW THEY CAN BE FIRED IF THEY GIVE TOO MUCH COVERAGE TO THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION; THE OUTCOME OF ONE DUMA RACE IS BEING CONTESTED IN THE KRAY SUPREME COURT, BUT POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON THE COURT MAKES IT UNLIKELY THAT THE DECISION WILL BE IMPARTIAL; VOTER LISTS ARE INACCURATE, OMITTING SOME NAMES WHILE INCLUDING THE NAMES OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE MOVED OR DIED; AND, THE AREAS APPROVED FOR HANGING CAMPAIGN POSTERS WERE TOO LIMITED.

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11. (C) FOR HIS PART, THE HEAD OF THE KRAY DUMA, IN A SEPARATE MEETING WITH THE INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS, STATED THAT BOTH HE AND THE GOVERNOR HAD "PUBLICLY DISTANCED" THEMSELVES FROM ALL PARTIES AND THAT "OUR PARTY IS KHABAROVSK KRAY." COMMENTING ON SPECULATION THAT PUTIN WILL REDUCE REGIONAL AUTONOMY, THE DUMA LEADER SAID HE AGREED WITH THE IDEA THAT "FREEDOM" WITHIN THE SUBJECTS SHOULD BE ACCORDING TO THE LEVEL OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INTEREST IN THAT SUBJECT." HE THOUGHT IT WAS SHAMEFUL THAT SOME SUBJECTS, INCLUDING TATARSTAN AND BASHKORTOSTAN, HAD GONE BEYOND THE BOUNDS OF THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION AND SAID "THE ONLY ONES WHO NEED TO FEAR THE NEW PRESIDENT ARE THOSE WHO ARE OUTSIDE THE BOUNDS OF THE CONSTITUTION." AS A

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MEMBER OF THE FEDERATION COUNCIL, HE EXPECTED THAT THE COUNCIL SOON WOULD TAKE UP THE ISSUE OF CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM.



IT SEEMED TO EMBOFFS THAT THERE WAS SOME CONSTERNATION ON THE DAY AFTER THE ELECTION, BOTH AT THE KRAY ELECTORAL COMMISSION AND AT EMERCOM, THAT AS OF MIDDAY MARCH 27, WITH ABOUT 95 PERCENT OF PRECINCTS REPORTING, PUTIN HAD RECEIVED ONLY 49.97 PERCENT IN THE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 04 MOSCOW 009243

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KRAY. EMBOFFS BELIEVED THAT THIS WAS A GOOD INDICATION THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO VOTE TAMPERING BECAUSE, OTHERWISE, PUTIN WOULD HAVE POLLED MORE THAN 50 PERCENT. THERE WAS SOME DISCUSSION AT THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION THAT WITHIN MILITARY STRUCTURES, WHILE NO OVERT PRESSURE WAS EXERTED TO

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VOTE FOR PUTIN, THE PRINCIPLES OF MILITARY DISCIPLINE AND SUBORDINATION MADE IT LIKELY THAT TROOPS WOULD VOTE THE SAME WAY AS THEIR COMMANDER IF THE COMMANDER LET IT BE KNOWN WHICH CANDIDATE (I.E., PUTIN) HE SUPPORTED.

13. (C) IN ORDER TO BOOST VOTER TURNOUT, THE CITY OF Khabarovsk offered free public transportation on election day. In addition, in the weeks leading up to the election, meetings were held, particularly with youth, to instill a sense that voting is a part of their civic duty. Voter turnout in the Kray was approximately 68 percent, slightly short of the electoral commission's goal of 70 percent. The head of the Kray electoral commission thought turnout could have been five percent higher if not for the change to daylight savings time. Bad weather along the coast of the sea of Okhotsk across from Sakhalin also affected voter turnout in some areas. According to the commission, this election was easier and less expensive to organize than the December Duma election. Around 2,500 voters in remote areas voted early with ballots and ballot boxes that were transported by helicopter.

14. (C) Emboffs heard Russian residents of Khabarovsk express chauvinistic attitudes regarding the Chinese, their close neighbors across the Amur. Various people told Emboff that the Chinese befouled the rivers, sold only inferior products and foul-smelling food products (mainly at a "Chinese Rynok" outside of town), and undercut the price of Russian meat by bringing in cheaper inferior meat -- which Russia allowed only to be used for processing into sausages. Even though Russians may travel without visas in
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THE SUMMERTIME BY HYDROFOIL ON ONE-DAY SHOPPING TRIPS TO A NEARBY CHINESE TOWN, MOST PEOPLE SEEMED UNINTERESTED IN THIS. ONE ELDERLY "YABLOKO" POLL WATCHER TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE AMUR RIVER REPRESENTS THE CULTURAL BOUNDARY BETWEEN EUROPE AND ASIA, AND HE IS NOT INTERESTED IN VENTURING TO THE NON-EUROPEAN ZONE.

15. (C) NOT EVERYONE IN Khabarovsk feels that way, however. Dalaviya, the Khabarovsk airline, is seeking to open a route between Khabarovsk and the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou. Emboff, who speaks Mandarin, spoke with a few Chinese merchants at the Chinese Rynok. These merchants said business had declined because of the poor Russian economy and complained of harassment by Russian authorities, even when their visas are in order. In answer to a question from an OSCE election monitor, the acting

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MAYOR SAID THE CHINESE CONSULATE IN KHABAROVSK HAD SHOWN AN INTEREST IN BOTH THE DECEMBER DUMA AND MARCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. ALTHOUGH NOT OFFICIAL OBSERVERS, THEY HAD SENT A LETTER TO THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION TO ASK FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION ON ELECTION RETURNS.

KRASNOYARSK

16. (C) KRASNOYARSK KRAY IN CENTRAL RUSSIA BORDERS CHINA IN THE SOUTH AND THE ARCTIC OCEAN IN THE NORTH. LOCAL LEADERS CONSIDER IT A BELLWETHER REGION -- SOMETHING OF A RUSSIAN PEORIA. HOWEVER, IN THIS PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, KRASNOYARSK DID NOT VOTE AS HEAVILY FOR PUTIN AS THE NATION
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AS A WHOLE DID. WHILE VOTING WAS ORDERLY AND WELL-ORGANIZED AT KRASNOYARSK PRECINCTS, THE TERRITORIAL ELECTION COMMISSION (TEC) IN THE OKTYABRSKIY REGION EXPERIENCED A TOTAL BLACKOUT FOR 30 MINUTES. DURING THE BLACKOUT THERE WAS TALK OF IT BEING A "PROVOCATION" BUT THE TERRITORIAL ELECTION COMMISSION (TEC) WAS QUICKLY BACK TO NORMAL ONCE POWER WAS RESTORED. ONLY ONE OBSERVER WAS PRESENT IN THE TEC, A SHARP CONTRAST TO THE KRASNOYARSK POLLING STATIONS WHERE ALL THE MAJOR CANDIDATES HAD OBSERVERS. "FAMILY VOTING" WAS SEEN EVERYWHERE IN KRASNOYARSK, WITH HUSBANDS AND WIVES AND PARENTS AND CHILDREN OFTEN SHARING THE VOTING BOOTH. WHEN QUERIED, ELECTION OFFICIALS SAID THEY KNEW THE RULES AND TRIED TO ENFORCE THEM, BUT THE PRACTICE WAS SEEN OFTEN AND MOST ELECTION OFFICIALS SIMPLY LOOKED THE OTHER WAY.

17. (C) IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] CLAIMED THAT GOVERNOR LEBED HOLDS THE KEYS TO KRASNOYARSK'S FUTURE. NEVERTHELESS, HE ALSO BELIEVED THAT PUTIN COULD PROVIDE THE STABILITY NEEDED TO ATTRACT ADDITIONAL FOREIGN INVESTORS TO RUSSIA. [REDACTED] IS LOOKING TO FIRST ATTRACT RUSSIAN INVESTORS TO KRASNOYARSK, AS HE REASONED THEY ARE MORE WILLING THAN FOREIGNERS TO TAKE RISKS. [REDACTED] IS CREDITED WITH BRINGING BUSINESS TYCOON BEREZOVSKIY TO KRASNOYARSK AND FORCING OUT MAFIA FIGURE BIKOV FROM THE KRAS ALUMINUM PLANT. [REDACTED] SAID TO ATTRACT

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 04 OF 04 MOSCOW 009243

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FOREIGN INVESTORS, RUSSIA WILL HAVE TO BE MORE "SINCERE AND TRANSPARENT" IN ITS DIALOGUE WITH THE WEST. HE SAID TOO OFTEN RUSSIAN POLICY IS MELODRAMATIC, CITING RUSSIA'S "FALSE SLOGAN" OF "SLAVIC BROTHERHOOD" DURING THE KOSOVO CONFLICT AS AN EXAMPLE. HE ALSO SAID THE WEST'S PICTURE OF

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RUSSIA IS DISTORTED BY COLD WAR STEREOTYPES AND OVERLY NEGATIVE. EVERYONE IN KRASNOYARSK ADMITTED THAT ORGANIZED CRIME IS A PROBLEM, BUT SOME RATIONALIZED IT BY SAYING THE PROBLEM IS MORE SEVERE IN MOSCOW.

18. (C) OTHER LOCAL LEADERS WITH WHOM EMBOFF SPOKE EXPECTED BIG CHANGES UNDER PUTIN. EMBOFF FOUND THAT

[REDACTED] WERE MOSTLY SUPPORTIVE OF WHAT THEY SAW AS PUTIN'S WILLINGNESS TO TAKE ON AND EVEN REMOVE CORRUPT GOVERNORS. THEY ALSO DID NOT THINK THAT PUTIN WOULD BACK AWAY FROM THE BASIC NORMS OF DEMOCRACY. [REDACTED] TOLD US THAT AREA YOUTH INCREASINGLY ARE INTERESTED IN THE KPRF, ESPECIALLY AFTER THEY GRADUATE AND DISCOVER HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO FIND A JOB. HE SAID THERE ARE SERIOUS SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN THE TERRITORY, PARTICULARLY IN THE NORTHERN CITY OF NORILSK WHERE 35,000 PENSIONERS "HAVE BEEN ABANDONED." HE WAS PROUD THAT ZYUGANOV HAD NOT CHANGED

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"ONE MILLIMETER" FROM HIS LAST ELECTION CAMPAIGN, ADDING THAT THE KPRF DID NOT HAVE TO RELY ON A CHARISMATIC LEADER TO ATTRACT VOTES TO MAINTAIN A VIABLE PARTY. PUTIN'S SUCCESS IN KRASNOYARSK MAY WELL BE MEASURED BY HOW MANY OF THOSE YOUNG RUSSIANS FIND THEMSELVES EMPLOYED IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS AND WHETHER HELP FORM THE MIDDLE CLASS THAT SO FAR KRASNOYARSK LACKS.

IRKUTSK

19. (C) EMBOFFS OBSERVING IN IRKUTSK NOTED A LACK OF
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CAMPAIGNING OR EXCITEMENT ABOUT THE ELECTIONS ON MARCH 24, THE LAST CAMPAIGN DAY. THERE WERE, HOWEVER, SEVERAL BILLBOARDS FOR TITOV AND IN SPOTS, YAVLINSKIY POSTERS WERE UP. THE INTEREST IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WAS LOW AND RESIDENTS WERE MORE INTERESTED IN EMBOFFS' VIEWS ON THE U.S. PRESIDENTIAL RACE. THERE WERE NO LOCAL ELECTIONS IN IRKUTSK. ON MARCH 25, EMBOFFS ATTENDED A PROJECT HARMONY "INTERNET AND ELECTIONS" SEMINAR WHICH WAS CHAIRED BY SUBJECT ELECTION COMMISSION (SEC) CHAIRMAN IGNATENKO. THE CONFERENCE WAS QUITE INTERESTING AND WELL-ATTENDED. SEC CHAIRMAN IGNATENKO WAS PRESENT AND SPOKE WITH EMBOFFS AFTER THE CONFERENCE. HE SAID THAT HE HAD WORKED CLOSELY WITH IFES AND WAS VERY HAPPY WITH THEIR ASSISTANCE.

20. (C) THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ELECTION WAS EXCELLENT AND ORDERLY. TURNOUT WAS HIGH AND PEAKED AROUND LUNCHTIME, CAUSING CROWDING, LONG LINES FOR VOTING BOOTHS, AND VOTERS MARKING THEIR BALLOTS ON WINDOW SILLS, TABLES, AND OBSERVERS' TABLES. DOMESTIC OBSERVERS WERE SEEN AT NEARLY EVERY SITE AND MOST OFTEN INCLUDED KPRF AND PUTIN OBSERVERS. THEY WERE TYPICALLY NOT VERY WELL TRAINED. EACH POLLING STATION DID HAVE A CEC BOOKLET ON THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF OBSERVERS. THE VOTE COUNT AT THE POLLING STATION WHERE EMBOFF OBSERVED WAS COMPLETED QUICKLY AND GENERALLY ACCORDING TO PROCEDURE. ALL OFFICIALS SEEMED TO KNOW THE LAW AND THE ORDER OF COMPLETING TASKS. OBSERVERS WERE ALLOWED TO PEER OVER THE SHOULDER OF ELECTION OFFICIALS AS THEY COUNTED VOTES AND OBSERVE THE ENTIRE PROCEDURE. SEVERAL INDIVIDUALS, WHO WERE NEITHER ELECTION OFFICIALS NOR OBSERVERS, INCLUDING TWO MVD OFFICERS, WERE ALLOWED TO WALK IN AND OUT OF THE POLLING PLACE.

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