

GARRI KASPAROW

RUSSIA - SIX MONTHS WITHOUT ANNA POLITKOWSKAJA

Moderator:
Franz Kössler

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Garri Kasparow was born on April 13, 1963 in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, then part of the USSR, started playing chess at five and by the age of seven, he was a child chess prodigy. At nine, he had already won a semifinal of a 'blitz' championship for adults in Baku. He became the youngest player in history to win the Soviet Junior Championship (under 18), first when he was 12 years of age in January 1976 and then again aged 13 in 1977. In 1979 he, for the first time, entered a foreign adult tournament, which he finished first ahead of fourteen Grandmasters. Garri Kasparow achieved Grandmaster status at age 17, in August 1980 he won the World Junior Championship. In 1984, aged 21, he was the youngest player in chess history to compete in a World Championship final match. At 22, on November 9, 1985, Garri Kasparow became the youngest ever World Chess Champion when he beat Anatoli Karpow. This made him the 13th World Champion and he had already become the number one ranked player in the world. In January 1990, Kasparow created two milestones in chess history: first, he moved past Bobby Fischer's best ever point rating of 2785 and then in November 1989 in Belgrade, he broke the magical 2800 ELO ratings point sound barrier - he was the first player in chess history to do so. In November 1999, after winning the three major events of that year, he created a new milestone by achieving an ELO rating for 2851, the only player in the history of chess to pass the 2850 level. From December 1981 to February 1991, Kasparow made chess history by not losing a single official event for ten years. This was the period in which he created the reputation of invincibility. In 2000 after 15 years, Kasparow's reign as World Champion came to an end with a loss to Kramnik in London. On Friday, March 11th, 2005, Kasparow announced his retirement from competitive chess after twenty years as the Number One Ranked Player in the World.

Those close to Garri Kasparow know his kindness and caring and know him as a multi-faceted human being. All of his adult life the courage of his convictions has been put to the test. His matches against Anatoly Karpow (the previous champion closely connected with the Communist establishment) were widely regarded as a show of individual opposition to the authoritarian state. He had difficulties with the USSR Sports Committee, the Communist Party and even the KGB. He was in the forefront of the anti-Communist movement, resulting in real threats to his person. In December 2004, Garri Kasparow was elected Co-Chairman of the ALL RUSSIA CIVIL CONGRESS and in May of 2006 he became Chairman of the UNITED CIVIL FRONT OF RUSSIA. Garri Kasparow is busy campaigning throughout the length and breadth of Russia and, as he explains, "We are not fighting to win elections - we are fighting to have elections. The goal is to bring all opposition groups into a broad coalition to return Russia to the path of democracy."

Franz Kössler was born in South Tyrol, Italy, 1951, studied philosophy in Frankfurt/Main and Florence. During his journalistic career Franz Kössler worked as head of the foreign policy department for the Italian daily *il manifesto*, Rome and the weekly magazine on international policy of *RAI 3* and has been with the ORF/Austrian broadcasting since 1981. He headed the ORF-offices in Moscow, Washington and London, worked as director for *Zeit im Bild* and *Europajournal* (radio) and is currently director of the international weekly magazine *Weltjournal* (Austrian Television). Franz Kössler has contributed to numerous publications on issues of foreign policy and media coverage of international affairs.

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Max Kothbauer

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen. On behalf of the Board I welcome you at the Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue. A special warm welcome to our guest of honour and speaker of tonight's lecture, Garri Kasparow and his wife Dasha. It is quite impressive to see how many people came to listen to you. I have to say that we had to limit the audience as you see the capacity of the Forum is not large enough. But you should see that many Viennese and others are interested in what you have to say.

Tonight we pay tribute to Anna Politkowskaja. She was our guest of honour in 2005 in a program which was dedicated to the courageous work of Reporters in War. Her assassination was a shock to all of us. Her murderer killed a woman who was committed to freedom, to democracy, to human rights, to humanity. The international community lost a journalist who spoke about the weak, the forgotten, and the people without a voice. The Bruno Kreisky Forum decided to continue her legacy by inviting people who pursue her courageous path. Irina Sherbakowa and her colleagues from Memorial and the journalists of *Novaja*

Gaseta already were our guests. Many of you came to honour Anna Politkowskaja in December 2006 at the Akademietheater. Garri did not make it that time, but you promised to come on the first occasion that would be possible for him. In spite of the events of April 14th he succeeded in coming to Vienna and we will kindly give us his account of Russia – six months without her.

Let me on this occasion remind you on the patron of our Forum, Bruno Kreisky. I am sure that he would have liked this evening as it is comprising all the ingredients of an evening to his taste. A man of courage and intellect as a speaker, a great and fascinating country as an object, if I may say so, and democracy as the goal. Mr. Kasparow, thank you for being with us tonight. Franz Kössler, a good friend of the Forum and a great journalist who for some time was heading the office of ORF, has agreed to chair this evening. The floor is yours.

Franz Kössler

Thank you for your kind introduction and good evening to all of you. It is a big honor to me to introduce to you one of the most extraordinary personalities in Russian public life. It is a little bit difficult to make a presentation because you may know all about Garri Kasparow. He is not new in the public scene. I will try to give you a few hints to his personality. He was born in 1963 in Baku, and he has the right blend of cultural roots, different and contradicting roots, that are a good fundament for being, for becoming a genius. His father was German Jewish. His mother was Armenian, but not only Armenian, but from Nagorni Karabach which is an enclave contested by Azerbaijan. So his cultural basis is a very controversial cultural blend. At 17 he became the youngest Grandmaster in the chess world; at 21 he was the youngest World Champion ever, and for two decades he stayed as the number one player in the world chess arena. I have a personal memory. When I arrived in Moscow in 1985, a few months after Gorbachev became Secretary General, there was this very interesting and passionate chess match between Garri Kasparow and Anatolij Karpow. It was clear from that point on that something very new was coming up in the Soviet Union. And we had there as chess players and opponents a symbol of the old Soviet world which was Anatolij Karpow. His personality was rather cold and self-controlled. An Italian journalist always said, he is very Soviet. On the other side we had Garri Kasparow, who was a young Jewish guy from Baku, and who had an image of anti-Sovietism even if he did not talk much about it. But we understood. And so understood the Soviet media. They were split into two opposing camps. It was the beginning of Glasnost, not yet the official political course. There was no mention of the word, yet. But already you could observe that some of the Soviet papers were on the pro-Western, nearly democratic, side and they were all supporting Kasparow. On the other side you had the old style Communist, orthodox, pro-Russian and a little bit anti-Semitic media, and they were all pro-Karpow. Then the political developments followed the chess game. We had these very passionate and interesting years of Gorbachev and then Jelzin. A few years ago Garri Kasparow decided to leave the chess world and to enter a new one, the political world, which maybe benefits from his ability to analyze the strategies as a chess player would. I read a lot about his strategies. He was always defined as a very aggressive, offensive, creative player. But he has to realize, and he did last week especially, that the opposing side is not playing the game. It is a different game with different rules. Some of their opponents already are in jail somewhere in Siberia. So Garri Kasparow has to adapt to a completely new world with completely new rules.

When he was asked by the *Guardian* in March 2005 why he decided to leave chess and to enter politics he answered, "I had to find a new target. My nature is to excite myself with a big challenge." I think he got the challenge he wanted.

Garri Kasparow

Good evening and thank you very much for this warm welcome and thanks to the Bruno Kreisky Forum for inviting me on such an important occasion and also for the outstanding commitment to support democracy and human rights in Russia. When I walked in this hall I was a bit confused by this configuration. Last time I experienced being encircled was in Moscow some days ago. But at that time it was the police. Now I feel more comfortable because I sense friendly energy coming from all sides.

I was very upset when I discovered that I could not attend this conference on December 14th. The reason was that on December 16th was our first rally in Moscow and I as one of the main organizers had to stay there to work on this project. But I knew that I would come. I used the first occasion to make sure that I met you and to deliver a speech on this great woman.

On the morning of October 7th, 2006, I was in New York City and preparing to sit down with David Remnick, the editor of *New Yorker* magazine, for a special occasion. They have a similar event with the public. And suddenly this terrible news came from Moscow. Anna Politkovskaja had been killed in cold blood. Her killers wanted it to be clear that it was an act of political assassination. The gun was left behind, next to her body, and it was Wladimir Putin's 54th birthday. Anna was 48.

I'd like to talk about what Anna Politkovskaja did during her life and what she still means for all of us today. Both her life and her death have been dismissed by Russian authorities. We all have a moral obligation to prove them wrong. This means not only preserving her memory but also by continuing her fight for truth and justice. To know Anna was to know how deeply she cared. She felt the pain of others very, very deeply. And she communicated this unique passion in her work. Anna was a vocal supporter of the Other Russia opposition conference I helped to organize last year in July in Moscow. She understood that we had to unite to make any progress. Our primary goal was to end Putin's regime. She had seen the tragedy and darkness with her own eyes and she understood that there was no negotiating with such sinister forces. Anna was not a diplomat, and probably I am not either. She had strong words for those in Russia and abroad who believed and still believe they could negotiate in good faith with the KGB government that rules Russia today. As a journalist Anna was a powerful symbol in Russia. Her investigations inspired passion on all sides. She was loved by the victims whose stories she told. And she was hated by the authorities whose crimes she exposed. As I like to believe, when the Putin administration is angry at you, you must be doing something right. I call it making all the right enemies.

Anna was best known for investigative writing and profiles from the war in Chechnya. But this is not the typical battlefield correspondence you might imagine. In a dirty, secret war like this one you have to go from family to family to discover the truth. She had to take great care in keeping her sources secret, simply to protect their lives. Russian and Chechen officials disgusted by their own actions would talk to her anonymously about the torture and murder that became routine in this region. In an essay Anna wrote: "All the top officials talk to me at my request when I am writing articles or conducting investigations, but only in secret where they cannot be observed, either in the open air, in squares, in secret houses that we approach by different routes like spies. You don't get used to this but you learn to live with this." When you read Anna's stories from Chechnya you had to admire her as a person not just as a journalist. She took on the most sensitive stories and the most painful subjects. Anna was an inspiration because she was never intimidated and because she never wrote a line she did not believe in passionately. Her enemies were powerful and she had seen the atrocities they were capable of. Chechen warlord, Ramsan Kadirow, publicly promised to kill her. This is the same Kadirow who was appointed President of the Chechen Republic this March by Wladimir Putin. And on April 7th of this year, exactly six months after Anna's assassination, Kadirow was sworn in as the President of Chechnya. It is important to point out that while she had strong opinions she was not a politician or an ideologist. Her writings document the day to day atrocities. She did not give speeches. She said she was not a political analyst. She went to hell and she went to hell with open eyes and reported what she saw in this hell. She let the actions speak for themselves and she saw the construction of Putin's police state very clearly. Three years before her death Anna wrote: "I am not one of Putin's political opponents or rivals. I am just a woman living in Russia. Quite simply. I am a 45-year-old Moscowite who observed the Soviet Union as its most disgraceful in the 70's and 80's. I really don't want to find myself back there again." The words you most often hear about Anna Politkovskaja are courage and inspiration. Her importance went far beyond her writings. She was a powerful symbol and she will continue to be one. She showed us all that one person with courage could do more than one can imagine. It reminds me of the famous words of the 7th US President Andrew Jackson who said: "One man with courage makes a majority."

Putin's reaction to Anna's murder was to say that her influence was minimal and "her death caused more damage than her writings". That is what he said a couple of days after this horrible murder. "Her death caused more damage to Russia than her writings." That illustrates Putin's relationship with the media. And it also shows he does not understand the power of inspiration. There are others who will continue not only her work but her style of work. They will be inspired by her to fight for the truth and not to be afraid to care, to never give up. Putin also added almost as a casual remark that her murders will be punished. Of course, they have not yet been found. And the regime has lost the little interest it had in finding them. It is simply understood that being a journalist in Russia, especially one investigating the Kremlin, is often a deadly job. Recently a newspaper reporter, Ivan Safronov from the newspaper Kommersant, who was investigating secret Russian military supply to the Middle East, fell out of a 5th story window. For some reason it is always the journalists disliked by the authorities who die in Russia. Over a dozen have been assassinated since the start of 2006. There is little to be gained from speculating about who exactly ordered the murder of Anna Politkovskaja. The system that encouraged the crime, the logic that made it politically expedient for some of those in power, that is the true face of Mr. Putin's Russia. I do not know the names of the people who killed Anna Politkovskaja and Alexander Litvinenko. But I do know their address. In a country where one man and his gang have total control, where can they be but in the Kremlin? These brutal murders cannot be taken outside the context of the recent events in Russia. The forces in control are facing a crisis.

Now let us look back and see how we arrived at the sad situation. In 1991 we could not have imagined where we are today in Russia. The statue of the founder of the secret police, Felix Dzerschinski, was removed from the Lubyanka Square in these days of August 1991 when the communist rule collapsed. Dzerschinski's name is synonymous with the KGB and the mass murders of the Soviet regime. His statue in central Moscow was pulled down by a jubilant crowd. There are amazing photos of ordinary citizens taking pictures of each other with their feet on Dzerschinski's bronze head. Surely it would be impossible to return to the dark days he represented. If anyone had suggested in 1991 that a KGB Lieutenant Colonel would soon be the President of Russia he would be laughed at. And yet, on November 8, 2005, a bust of Felix Dzerschinski was put back up in a public courtyard in front of the KGB headquarters – against the protests of human rights activists. It is not as large as the prominently placed original, but because it is small it makes a perfect symbol of Putin's low-profile police state. Putin has learned that if things are done in small steps the West will say little and do nothing. With the Russian media back under total state control Russians do not find out about their disappearing freedoms until it is too late. Last summer Putin signed a new law on extremism that gives the government total impunity to crush political dissent. Extremism is now whatever they say it is. He signed this law right before sitting down at the table with the leaders of the G-7 and they accepted him without question. Last week I spent four hours in a KGB interrogation room thanks to this law. Only now they call it FSB. This organization has had many names but never changes its nature. Now I am being investigated for possible extremism because of a radio interview and a newspaper that our organization published. In this interview I called on people to attend a peaceful march. There were two portraits at this FSB offices where I was questioned, two portraits on the wall facing each other of Wladimir Putin and Felix Dzerschinski. After our April 14th protest Parliament quickly updated the extremism law. Now any statement critical of a government official of any level as determined by the prosecutor and not even a court can lead to criminal charges and up to 15 years in prison. Just today Putin called for even tougher measures on what he calls extremism. It is classic Orwellian language. Any opposition to the Kremlin equals extremism. We have not yet arrived at the dark ages. But the next station of our train is Minsk and our speed is increasing. They call Belorussia's Lukashenko the last dictator of Europe. But the current application of Russian law is creating a similar atmosphere.

It is a popular myth that Putin has brought Russia stability and prosperity in exchange for our freedom. Outside of the rich centres of Moscow and St. Petersburg the country is in a stagnant economic crisis. The so-called vertical of power benefits very few. The system is not just corrupt, the corruption is the system. State profits are privatized while expenses are nationalized. And yet, I often hear about Wladimir Putin's

popularity in the Western media. To understand this you have to stop making comparison about opinion polls between Russia and other countries. In a country with no free media polls cannot be reliable. As Kremlin analyst, Sergej Markov recently said, “television is our nuclear weapon.” As in the old Soviet days they use this weapon to annihilate the public consciousness. We only recently escaped the oppression of the all-seeing Soviet dictatorship and now our President is a KGB spy. When someone calls you at home and asks, “What do you think about the top man?”, what answer are you going to give? I am surprised that 25% are still giving negative answers. No, you have to do it differently. You can’t ask about the President or the governor or any top official. You have to ask about policies, about the direction of the country, and how people feel about the situation. When you ask questions about economy, crime, health care, social security, or how Russians feel about the future of the country, you get a very, very different picture.

We have spent six months without Anna Politkowskaja and her writing. How are we doing in Russia today? On April 14, just twelve days ago, I was arrested with many others on my way to an opposition march in central Moscow. I was held for eleven hours, far more than the maximum of three hours allowed. My court hearing was a complete joke. The judge refused to hear any witnesses for the defence. Why waste time? The arresting officer’s testimony was completely wrong on every count. Of time, place, and everything else. I am surprised that he even recognized me! And yet, the judge stated openly – and I want you to pay attention to this official verdict now written by a Russian judge – the officer’s testimony was accepted because “he was performing his duty.” It is a new era in Russian law. If the appeals court within the next ten days upholds this verdict it means that anybody in Russia can be convicted on the testimony of a police officer simply because the man is wearing a uniform. No other testimony is required. The entire world saw I was arrested at around 12.05 hrs. It was even reported on some Russian radio stations. The police report said that I was arrested at 1.30 pm, when I had already spent fifty minutes at the police station. But the man was on duty. He is right. We are wrong. I want you to recognize the consequences because my case was small. But that was just the tip of the iceberg. That is what is happening across Russia every day. That is the grim reality the Russian opposition activists are facing. And they have no world press watching it. They have no funds to hire good lawyers to expose the crimes of the regime. What you saw in Moscow on April 14th or in St. Petersburg on April 15th was just the realization of the brutal nature of the police state that had been steadily built by Mr. Putin over seven years.

During the dark days of the USSR the world understood that people like Andrej Sacharow, Sergej Kowaljow, and Nathan Scharanski were heroes for the non-violent resistance. The modern Putin style of totalitarian oppression is different. It has many advocates in the West and most of them defend it by saying how much better are things now than they were back in the USSR. For example, after I appeared on a panel discussion on BBC television last year on a show recorded in Moscow, a British viewer wrote on the BBS website that he was amazed how freely we said things that, he said, would have led to our execution not long ago. This perception that Russians are better off now and should not complain has been very harmful to our democratic cause. By the way, the show was recorded in Moscow, but was shown on BBC. So it is another illusion. I think we should all follow Bruno Kreisky’s famous advice, “Learn a little history, Mr. editor!” Do not forget that between the end of Communist dictatorship and the crackdown under President Putin there was a period of real democracy. It was brief, it was not perfect, it was flawed. But it could have served as a foundation for a better future.

So Politkowskaja was fighting during a time with very little outside support. In this new KGB Russia she was ignored while elites fought over the billions of dollars in oil revenue. And Chechnya, people wondered, where is Chechnya? The Cold War and the threat of nuclear destruction focused everyone’s attention very well on every move the Soviet Union made. Today Europe’s leaders prefer to keep their heads in the sand and to pretend that everything is fine. The day before yesterday the Russian Parliamentary President, the Speaker of the Russian Duma, Boris Gryslow was received in Germany by the German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and other leading German political figures. This is the same Gryslow, following Mr. Schroeder’s description, another “crystal-clear democrat,” who once

bluntly said, "Parliament is not a place for discussion!" On the weekend of the 14th and the 15th Russian police and security forces, more than 9.000 in Moscow and more than 5.000 in St. Petersburg, brutally attacked many protestors at the marches we organized as "The Other Russia" in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Even several foreign journalists were assaulted. When some Western politicians politely questioned these violent tactics, what was the Kremlin's reaction? Gryslow was one of the several prominent Russian politicians that publicly commended Russian police for their excellent work. Putin himself promoted three top officials in charge of the police operation. How is that for an official response? Does that answer your questions about violent tactics?

Some will tell you that Putin's assault on democracy is a big shift from the Boris Yelzin days. But unfortunately it is not the case. It is a very logical progression. Yelzin, while he established a few fragile democratic institutions, never uprooted the nomenclatura, the appointed bureaucrats who run the state. And this corrupt patronage system proved immune to democratic reform. For a limited time this old system lived alongside new elections and basic democratic rights. But this unnatural combination of democratic transparency and these Byzantine palace intrigues could not last for long. Yelzin's successor had to choose one or the other. Either the veiled power of bureaucracy or openness and transparency of democracy. And it was obvious which would be chosen by a man of Putin's KGB background.

It is appropriate today to speak a little more of Boris Yelzin so soon after his death. Yelzin was a hero to many and a villain to many, often both to the same people. No one could have lived up to our optimistic expectations back in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Yelzin was a career bureaucrat, but he had an instinct for breaking down barriers and opening doors. Unfortunately, inconsistency became his trademark. He allowed regional leaders to have more control, but then started the war in Chechnya. He fought against privileges for the elite, but later allowed the oligarchs to rob the country. He promoted fair elections, but could not accept them himself and abused power to win the election in 1996. Missed opportunities were inevitable considering the magnitude of the changes and the problems that confronted Yelzin. It is still too early to analyze what he could have done better. But it is simple to compare how things have gone since Mr. Putin took over in 2000. There was some chaos with Yelzin. But he never attacked individual freedoms. Putin has built his entire presidency to be the opposite of Yelzin's. The entire government has been brought under the direct control of the President. The Parliament, which fought constantly with Yelzin, even tried to impeach him in 1998, this Parliament is now a tool, a puppet of Mr. Putin. The corruption of the oligarchs has been moved inside the Kremlin walls where it has expanded to fantastic levels, unseen and unheard of in the 90's. The media that was free to criticize Yelzin is entirely at the service of Putin's administration. The economy is where we see the biggest difference, although most of the credit must go to the simple fact that during Putin's term the price of oil went from ten dollars to eighty dollars per barrel. And even with these energy riches the average Russian is seeing little if anything in improvement of his or her standard of living. Boris Yelzin had more than his share of faults. But he was a real person. We exchanged him for a shadow of a man who wants only to keep us all in the darkness. 25.000 Russians waited to pay their respect at Yelzin's coffin at a Moscow cathedral. This demonstrates that despite his many failures people sensed the possibility for good in what he attempted. Thinking of Yelzin made people remember the freedom we have lost. Mr. Yelzin is gone and little remains of the freedoms he helped create. His spirit, however, will not die with him. Some light is beginning to show through the KGB wall. Soon it will again be time, time for building and re-building in Russia.

The cracks are forming in the Kremlin thanks to their uncertainty about 2008. March 2008 makes Kremlin officials and old bureaucrats across Russia crazy. A mafia cannot bear uncertainty and the turmoil is beginning to spill over. Putin and his associates are approaching a dilemma. The President's term of office ends in 2008. This efficient machine is threatening to explode. You cannot divide the Presidency like you can divide seats in the Parliament. Should Putin stay or should he go? The chaos that will surely occur if Putin leaves office is relatively easy to understand. Any mafia structure is based on the authority of the top man. If he leaves or if he looks weak there is a bloody fight for his position. Whoever wins the battle must eliminate the others to consolidate his grip on power. Putin knows that if he

wants to receive guarantees of immunity from his successor he must appoint a weak leader to replace him. But the system needs a strong leader to survive and to function. And if things do not go smoothly after 2008 Putin and his friends know their activities will be under the new leader's microscope. This is why they are so nervous today, why they are so worried about a few thousand peaceful marchers. As the need for active repression increases the potential for an explosion increases as well.

This all sounds like a depressing, even hopeless situation. When I first entered the Russian political arena two years ago in March 2005 I had feelings of sitting down to a chess game with my side facing checkmate in every variation. I realized that our first task as an opposition force was simply to survive. It is still the same now. To get out the message that we existed, that we did not agree, and that we are there, and we are fighting. With every television station and almost every major newspaper and radio station under state control this has been a very difficult task, as you might imagine. The opposition was in disarray. Small political and non-governmental groups, each with their own issues with the government. The one thing we all had in common was the knowledge that democracy was our only salvation. Liberals, human rights activists, even groups from the left including Communists, they all know that given a choice in fair elections the Russian people will reject Putin's attempt to turn our country back into a totalitarian state. To have a real impact it was necessary to unite on this core issue. You were either working with the Kremlin or dedicated to dismantling the regime. We also needed to find a way to reach out beyond the Garden Ring, the walls of central Moscow. I travelled Russia from Wladiwostok to Kaliningrad to spread our message, to talk about why the countryside was so poor and the elites so rich. And most importantly to say that it was not too late to come together and fight for our civil liberties and democracy. Because only those things will improve the deteriorating standard of living. In a way the key step was taking a page out of the Kremlin book, a non-ideological movement. Forces from across the political spectrum came together. Our model is the referendum coalition that formed against Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet in the late 80's. Several months ago I spoke in Washington with Genaro Arriagada, one of the organizers of that coalition. They united conservatives, Socialists, and Communists, 18 different organizations who all realized they need to unite for the greater good. This is what we are doing in our coalition called The Other Russia. In the summer of 2006 we had enough momentum to go on the offensive, hosting The Other Russia Conference in Moscow in advance of the summit in St. Petersburg. We knew we had achieved significant progress when the administration made every effort to harass us at every turn. If this is a measure of success I should be proud that my humble United Civil Front offices – that is the organization I lead – were raided by security forces at the end of 2006, just a few days before our first march on the Moscow streets on December 16. In fact, our offices were raided by the so-called "Centre-T" anti-terrorist terrorist unit. Just another demonstration how these anti-terrorist and anti-extremists laws are used to harass the opposition. They confiscated a bunch of papers and books. They took them to investigate them for extremism. The district attorney confirmed that they acted within the law while our lawyers insisted that they violated every letter in the book. We do not know what they found. We believe it was just another element of harassment and psychological pressure.

In December came our peaceful march under "We do not agree" banners. We were outnumbered probably four to one by the police in the Moscow streets. But this formula continued with our other marches including the two this month. The government literally created martial law in the centres of Moscow, St. Petersburg and Nischni Nowgorod. Each time the police have become more aggressive despite our policy of non-violence. After five rallies I can proudly tell you there was not a single broken window. As the head of the Moscow Helsinki Group, Ludmilla Alexejewa, said, there was only one extremist group on the streets of Russia, the police. But the chorus of the Kremlin controlled media claimed that President Putin was only doing what was necessary to preserve order. Clearly the regime was worried. And as unfavourable as our position may still be my evaluation of our opponent's forces discovered that they are not without their own weaknesses. Unlike the old Soviet regime this ruling elite has a great deal at stake outside of Russia. Their fortunes are in banks, stock markets, real estate, even football teams, mostly foreign. This means they are vulnerable to external pressure and also worried about what will happen to them if they fall from grace. They cannot afford cutting the ties that come with open hostility between Russia and the West. Apart from our organization's continued efforts at home, the Other

Russia is working to establish a communication structure beyond the long reach of the Kremlin. At our new website, which just opened, “theotherussia.org” we expose the daily crimes that are occurring and press them into the hands of the right people around the world. Our hundreds of activists on the ground in Russia are also in need of support. We are building a legal defence fund to force the regime to follow their own laws. As Anna Politkowskaja once wrote about our government, “There is not much wrong with our laws in Russia. It is just that not many people want to obey them.”

We know from experience that the only way to deal successfully with military thugs and totalitarian government is strong resistance. Big words, dramatic gestures! Kennedy’s “Ich bin ein Berliner”, and Reagan’s “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall,” echo in history. These were strong statements that drew a clear line in front of totalitarianism. They were leaders of the free world who were real leaders. Now we have managers and accountants trying to do a little business. Small minds, small ideas, small words. Putin laughs in their face. What do we hear from them about democracy? Condoleeza Rice saying she will be “watching with interest” what happens in Russia! Was she watching the police attack us? Did she enjoy the show? Kennedy and Reagan believed democracy was the most powerful force for improving lives around the world and for making the world safe. And because they believed and because they stood up for their beliefs it was true. If they had acted like Bush and the others act today I would still be playing chess for the Soviet Union and Angela Merkel would be looking for a job in East Germany! Today we hear almost nothing about democracy and human rights in Russia from the West, not from the Western leaders. No, they are too busy making deals for gas and oil with Mr. Putin’s friends to worry about human rights. Democracy has been traded today like a weak piece on the geopolitical chess board. Where is the line today? How much more will the so-called leaders of the free world tolerate?

Today in Moscow, several hours ago, Henry Kissinger stated that he understood the need to treat Putin’s Russia as “an equal.” He is talking about a regime that has unlimited money, unchecked power, and does not have allergy to blood. Will Putin still be welcomed and treated as equal if his police are shooting people in the streets of Moscow? I do not want to find out. The time is now for the West to tell Putin that they will not watch quietly any more. The time is now to tell Putin and his gang that there will be economic and political consequences if they continue to turn Russia into a dictatorship. Because silence is agreement. Politkowskaja wrote about the situation. Again, I quote. “This transformation has happened to choruses of encouragement from the West. Primarily from Silvio Berlusconi who appears to have fallen in love with Putin. He is Putin’s main European champion. But Putin also enjoys the support of Blair, Schröder, and Chirac, and receives no discouragement from the transatlantic junior Bush.” (2004) Today most of those leaders have been replaced, and Bush and Blair are on the way out. Will their replacements continue to be so timid, so happy to work with an authoritarian Russia? Putin accepts every concession and returns nothing. He grows only bolder when he sees such weakness from Western leaders. One thing is certain. If the Western leaders continue to ignore the signs and to enable Putin’s crackdown they will be complicit in the crimes to come. If you do anything to reward Putin’s regime during this period you share the responsibility when they use brutal force to preserve their powers.

I would like to finish on a note of optimism. Inside Russia there is hope on the horizon. These Other Russia marches represent the beginning of real resistance to Putin’s KGB Inc. It is very sad that Anna is not here to see it. In recent months the Other Russia Coalition has brought thousands of people into the streets in our “Marches of Dissent.” Anna would truly have loved to see it and, no doubt, to march at the front of the line. The day is coming when all of the crimes she described will be investigated with the full authority of the elected government, not just the moral authority of one valiant woman. The criminals who committed the crimes, the officials who ordered them, they all will be brought to justice. The new democratic Russia will have new heroes, and Anna Politkowskaja will be one of them. Thank you.

Franz Kössler

Thank you for this dramatic picture you gave us about the situation in Russia. I still have questions that remained open for me. The West has had quite a dramatic experience in trying to bring democracy to somebody who did not like it. My experience from my Soviet years is that in the Russian population, not

in the elite, not in the intelligentsia, there was very little understanding of democracy. In history there was no democratic period to be referred to. Do you think that this short period of democracy could not blossom in Russia because there is a lack of fundamental understanding and trust in democracy?

Garri Kasparow

First of all, we are not asking the West to interfere on our behalf. What we are asking is not to interfere on behalf of Mr. Putin. We are not calling for cutting economic ties with Russia. This is stupid. The West is dealing with China. It is a big business, much bigger than with Russia. But nobody here gives democratic credentials to Chinese leaders. Any time the Western leaders received Mr. Putin as an equal the Kremlin propaganda trumpets this fact, showing that Mr. Putin is a democrat, and all this opposition activists are marginals, they are extremists, they are radicals who are attacking our democratically elected President. So we want the West to be objective and not to apply double standards. It is quite amazing to see that those who are trying to build democracy in Iraq are doing it at the expense of democracy in Russia. As for historical references, I think that sixty years ago many people had the same doubts about Germany. I think that it is very dangerous to give the final verdict that this nation has no appetite or is not open for democracy. Again, if we look at the post-World War II picture what about Japan and South Korea? Had they ever experienced any democracy by that time? And what is happening now? I don't want to undermine the difficulties we are dealing with in Russia by trying to promote democracy. Also because in the 90's the terrible mistakes made by Yelzin and his government are associated in the minds of many Russians with hardship. So for many of them democracy and liberal market economy equals destruction of the Soviet Union and terrible experiences. But things are changing. If I can say anything positive about Putin's rule it is that he taught many Russians, ordinary people and political activists, that free and fair elections is the only way to control this rotten bureaucracy that is looting the country. People are coming to understand slowly. It is a very slow education. But they are coming to understand that even at a time when the country has so much money from these high energy prices these people do not feel any economic rewards because an uncontrolled bureaucracy stands in the way of these huge funds and ordinary Russians. They are suspecting that the social and economic problems in Russia are due to the fact that Putin destroyed democratic freedoms. It may take some time. But we are definitely on the way. I have been talking to all sorts of people in different Russian regions. And I could see that they are gradually embracing the concept that high living standards are directly related to the political freedom.

Franz Kössler

Nevertheless, there must be a portion of the population profiting from the economic development or even from the windfall oil profits because Putin apparently was able to cut down the areas of freedom and democracy that were created under Yelzin without meeting any popular resistance.

Garri Kasparow

As I said, people did not see any value in democratic freedoms because unless you understand that you benefit one way or another the value of freedom means little or nothing for the majority of Russians. Also let's not forget that oil prices helped dramatically. With oil prices at twenty dollars a barrel I am not sure it would be that easy. But everything worked nicely for Mr. Putin. Also he benefited from this stability that could be achieved because of these new fresh injections of cash into Russian economy from high energy prices. For Russians the first term of Mr. Putin was a period of stability. It takes time for us to actually appreciate and understand the depths of the psychological trauma of 1991 when the whole empire collapsed. For tens of millions of people it was a time of relocation. People are not happy when they are dealing with such chaos. That is why the first term of Mr. Putin was a big relief. It took time before people realized that things are not improving further. Putin was a "President of hope." The first two or three years of his rule made people believe that he might be able to deliver. People always want to have hope. I can hardly criticize millions of Russians who thought that with Putin they might be doing better. But now they have discovered that the freedom has gone and prosperity is not there. You are absolutely right pointing out that there are groups of Russians that benefited from this period of Putin's rule. I would probably roughly divide Russia today into two uneven countries. One the one side you have approximately 15%, 20 million people, who either made a fortune or have good jobs. They can afford

travelling abroad and to make some plans for the future. But on the opposite side of the fence you have 120 million people who do not have such opportunities. And the gap between these two groups is growing. So sooner or later, and I believe sooner, the 120 million majority will start asking very unpleasant questions.

Franz Kössler

Would you say that Putin's regime is a dictatorship?

Garri Kasparow

Dictatorship might be a strong word. When you say dictatorship you think about China under Mao Zedong, about Stalin's Soviet Union. But it is a modern dictatorship because it is based on different limitations of freedom. If you put Russia today on the political map I would say it is probably in the league of Belorussia and Zimbabwe rather than the European Union. Is it a dictatorship? I don't know. Is Chavez a dictator? Is Mugabe a dictator? We don't know. Obviously North Korea is a dictatorship. But you have so many countries now in this grey area. It is definitely authoritarian rule. It is definitely a police state. Open dictatorship? No, because they can't afford to cross the final line since money is kept in the free world. That is what makes them so vulnerable. Their fortunes are allocated in the world where rules of law are respected. That is why I think none of them have the appetite to actually cross this final line.

Franz Kössler

I remember when I was in Moscow in Soviet times there was not one newspaper which could write anything other than the party line. There was not one demonstration that lasted more than ten minutes. So compared to that you still have today a few papers who write, who support the opposition. You have the internet. You have some forums to present your case. And you are still here in Vienna with us and not in Siberia.

Garri Kasparow

This is a famous example made by many Western leaders. They say, oh, it is better than 1985. But is it better than 1989? Is it better than 1990-1991 where hundreds of thousands of people marched in the Moscow streets and you had already a few open publications even though it was a Communist regime? Technically it was a Communist dictatorship. But people could express their views. And even despite the fact that there was no internet, no social infrastructure, as now, people had more chances to express their disillusionment. So that is why I would not make these comparisons. If you compare 2007 to 1937 we are doing much better. But we have to look at the development, both positive in the early 90's and then negative which brought us from the mid-90's where we still had some sort of democracy – Yelzin was criticized by liberals and also by the Communists and nothing happened to these people – to today's Russia where television is under state control and the very few free papers are disappearing every day. Just about a week ago one of the last remaining radio stations for the Russian news service was totally closed down. It was a cleansing operation. The official line of the new editor was: 50% of good news and there are names that you cannot mention, the so-called "stop list." The stop list is all over the place now. Now they introduced it at that radio station and my name is there. So, certain names people cannot even mention. Russia is moving and it is in the wrong direction. Unless we are talking about it openly one day we will find out it is either Minsk or worse. Again, I compare how the demonstrations were treated in Minsk a month ago and in Moscow, and I don't see much of a difference. Also maybe Lukashenko is a little bit more now concerned about Western pressure than Putin. So we have to do whatever we can to fight for our constitution. All we demand is free and fair elections and respect for the constitution. Article 31 of our constitution gives us rights to march peacefully on the streets of Russia. If the regime violates all the constitutional rules and its own laws that is bad news.

Franz Kössler

We were all wondering last week when these events took place. What was the motivation of Putin sending so many police to repress this movement? It is not a mass movement of the order to be a real

political threat to Putin's power. And the damage he did in public opinion was much bigger. What was the motivation?

Garri Kasparow

Let's be absolutely clear. We have to talk about people that have a different set of mind. You are talking about a normal reaction of a person in Vienna, in Paris, in New York, elsewhere in the free world, they think, "Putin did damage to his reputation." But Putin does not see it. He sees Kissinger making these nice statements. He hears very little whispering from Western leaders. He does not care about anybody making statements. The Parliament, who cares? He has his own views about the importance of people and political institutions. From his perspective he cracked down on the opposition because he knows that while there are 5.000 he can bring troops. When 50.000 will fill the streets it will be too late. So he wants to run this fear campaign. He wants to make sure that people are frightened and that they are not joining the ranks and files of the opposition. And unless he sees any actions against him he does not care. That is why we are saying, please do something just to show that you care. What we see are just polite questions that Putin simply turns down because he knows that many things are done for diplomatic purposes. If you discuss democracy in Russia between dessert and sweet wine he does not take it seriously. That is why from his perspective there is no damage. He can see plusses, and he does not see any minuses.

Franz Kössler

There is still the war going on in Chechnya. What is the importance of that conflict? You say it is a main topic in Russian development.

Garri Kasparow

No. Today unfortunately the subject is already pushed to the back of the public mind. Chechnya is not pacified. There is no rule of law there. Chechnya is controlled by Kadirow's family, by this warlord's clan that chooses today to stay with Putin and with Russia. But unfortunately Russia has very little control in that region. Anytime Kadirow wants he can raise the flag of rebellion. I don't know how we can keep this region as a part of the Russian Federation. Frankly speaking, if you look at the result of this war Russia today is paying ransom to Kadirow. A few billion dollars a year go to this black hole to make sure that these guys are no longer fighting. That is why I would not pay much attention to one or another side of this Chechen opposition because many of the resistance fighters joined Kadirow and they are wearing Russian uniforms. They are just waiting for another chance. That is why Putin's solution for Chechnya is typical of what he has been doing in Russia for seven years. He is very good in painting the front. He succeeded. It looks great. The problem is that the roof is about to fall and the foundation is totally rotten.

Franz Kössler

And it could become an international problem.

Garri Kasparow

We are dealing today with the leadership or what is called the leadership of the free world that prefers not to deal with problems that could be dealt with later. The problems are spreading, but they are all focused on issues that are the most important for their own political survival.

Franz Kössler

What is the role of the military in Russia? Chechnya was a defeat for the generals as well.

Garri Kasparow

What military? Russia's army is in disarray. Putin demonstrated his treatment of the army by sending the son-in-law of a close St. Petersburg ally, who was a furniture trader, to be the Minister of Defence. I think that the army is in really bad shape. I travelled in some regions where I saw these miserable conditions like in Murmansk which is the harbour of the Russian nuclear fleet. It is terrible. 25% of the Russian budget is spent on military expenses. And nobody knows where the money goes. It disappears. Because the army is not properly functioning. Again, it is as unreconstructed as everything else. Putin did not

touch a single important issue that is relevant for reforming the country. All this money has been prominently displayed not in Russia but in South Kensington. I am sure you can find the richest of Russia in Vienna as well.

Franz Kössler

You mentioned the dilemma in which Russia is beholden now between choosing a strong successor ...

Garri Kasparow

It is Putin. Don't mix Putin and Russia. It is Putin's dilemma. It is none of ours.

Franz Kössler

You are a former chess champion and you are very able to understand the strategic thinking of Putin. What would you say is he going to do?

Garri Kasparow

I can understand strategic thinking. He is fighting for his own survival and the protection of the enormous fortune he earned during his stay in office. But those are the problems that I cannot deal with because I don't understand their magnitude.

Franz Kössler

I have a last question about your coalition of opposition. You have very strange partners. There is a former ex-Premier and a former friend of Putin who left ...

Garri Kasparow

Ex-Premier yes, but friend, I would not say it is automatic.

Franz Kössler

Anyway, he left because he was accused of corruption. So he is not a very clear person. The other one is a writer, Limonow, who wrote a very strange book and he said that his aim is to create in Russia a conglomerate of armed, free, and orgiastic communities. He calls himself a National Bolshevik. How can you go along with these guys?

Garri Kasparow

Oh, there are many more in this coalition. You can look at what people did and said in their lives. And meanwhile let's make sure that Kasianow, the ex-Prime Minister, was fired and no corruption charges were filed against him. But obviously he was a part of Yelzin's and Putin's regime, and people remember that. And if he runs he will have to answer certain questions. That is very possible. As for Limonow and others, they again said and did many things in the past. Today they sign all the documents of the Other Russia. And they are with us fighting for the same purposes, free and fair elections, no censorship, and the ability of different political groups to participate in the political process. We cannot agree on a very comprehensive program. But we agree on the necessity of producing political reform which is to reduce presidential powers, to enhance the powers of the parliament, to give parliament power to appoint the government of parliamentary majority, to bring financial and political powers back to the regions, and a few other things including a number of extraordinary measures to cure poverty. No doubt, like in Chile, if we achieve, if our candidate wins the elections and carries these measure we will be doing other things because we have different views about a number of key issues for the future of our country. But my belief is also that if we today run free and fair elections in Russia there will be not one, two or even three leading parties, there will be maybe ten different groups very different from each other. And the only way to have a working government will be to find a compromise, to build a coalition. One of the major problems in Russia was this long lasting spirit of civil war. We always wanted to find the differences. Now, the Other Russia says the opposite. Let's compromise, let's find that we agree on something. Because that is the only way to build a new democratic country. People have to start looking at each other as potential friends, not as dedicated enemies. We are trying to promote a culture of political compromise

today hoping that soon we will be able to do it in parliament. I learned to talk to very different political groups, from liberals, to die-hard communists, to nationalists because I know that they are citizens of the same country. And unless we learn how to talk to each other we will never build anything even resembling a democracy.

Question

The Russians are one of the most intelligent peoples in the world. Why stick to mediocrity if you have so many intelligent people?

Garri Kasparow

Intelligent people are always a minority.

Question

Peter Kreisky. This is a problem of this partly sleeping democracy. How could it happen that Schröder, Blair, Berlusconi, and Chirac as leaders of the free Europe are supporting a tendency which makes us a bit hesitant on the developments in Europe? If Sarkozy comes to power, he is a friend of Berlusconi. We have these power structures in Europe with big multinational companies mainly supporting these political figures. We have to ask questions how endangered is our democracy? This is a question to ourselves. We have to be a bit ashamed for this collaboration of power elites. We are in a quite dangerous situation in Europe. One thing to your lecture. Reagan had two sides. He was brutally destroying civil society in Latin America, in Central America. Reagan was not a real defender of the free world.

Garri Kasparow

Everybody looks from his or her own backyard. For us the best American Presidents were Harry Truman, Kennedy, and Reagan because they stood against Communism. They could do other things. But we remember "Tear down this wall". Let us deal with our problems.

Question

You have spoken with measured respect of Boris Yelzin. As it has been presented to us in the West Mr. Yelzin himself more or less chose Mr. Putin as his successor. What do you think Mr. Yelzin thought he was getting?

Question

There is a lot of talk about Russian oligarchs these days, people who have amassed enormous fortunes, making big investments in Europe. The second richest man has bought a big chunk of a rather large Austrian firm. One of the Austrian newspapers today titled "Mr. Deripaska bought Austria". Should we be relaxed about that? Would you have some personal advice? Should we welcome these investments? Or would you rather say, personally, that yellow or even red lights should be flashing?

Garri Kasparow

Let me try to connect these two questions because I think they are related. Yelzin did not pick his successor "more or less." He did pick his successor. And that was Putin. I think that was logical because Yelzin at that time was already quite sick and tired and could not resist the pressure from the family, his personal family that could be in immediate danger if other guys won the battle for power in the Kremlin, and also from the expanded family including those oligarchs. Yelzin at that time wanted to preserve the seeds of the regime which grew up and was completed by Putin. Of course, these oligarchs amassed enormous fortunes in Russia. They did not always act in accordance with the law of the land. The problem is that the law of the land was very evasive. I just recently calculated the combined fortune of the hundred richest Russians, from the official magazine "Finance". It is 340 billion dollars. The combined fortune of the hundred richest Russians. By the way, this list does not include Putin and a few other people that must be there and probably in the top positions. But even this short list ended up with 340 billion dollars which is 30% more than the entire revenue of the Russian budget in 2006. Such proportions or call it disproportions can be found probably only in African countries, and probably not in

many African countries. That is why I think that when the Western businesses make this decision to deal with Russian oligarchs that is their decision. And that it is for the public to assess the potential damage that could be done to the financial system of the West by accepting the money that under any circumstances has a questionable nature. I say questionable because I believe in the rule of law. Until it is proven otherwise I cannot say anything more specific. But these tens of billions of dollars did not come out of the blue. We understand that today at a time with growing uncertainty in Russia the regime is trying to place as much money as possible outside of Russia. They are placing their bets everywhere where this money cannot be touched. This case that you described is a very prominent case for Austria. But I would probably pay more attention to the IPOs that run in London. Because that is what brings Western capital into the criminal – here I have no doubt – structures of companies that are technically nationalized but eventually are under control of Russian top officials. I have no doubt that sooner or later, rather sooner, most of these deals will be investigated. Any new government in Russia will have to clean up the house. I don't think there will be an overall revision of the ownership deals made in the 90's or at the beginning of the 21st century. But obviously there will be many highlighted cases that will be revised. Anybody who deals with these guys is gambling. They may win. It is like in a casino. They have good chances of winning. Because so far it looks that the company will be always on the winning side. But you never know. I don't think that the Russian people will be very tolerant looking at these enormous riches allocated throughout these fifteen years through very questionable schemes of privatization.

Question

Next month Putin will be in Vienna. What would you expect from our Chancellor and our President? Please give some orders. It is your chance now.

Question

The United States have plans to establish missiles, rockets in Poland and in the Czech Republic. Does it help Putin to inflame patriotism? And how does it affect your movement? Is it welcomed? Is it good or bad for Russia or for the Other Russia?

Garri Kasparow

I have no advice for the Austrian leadership how to build relations with Putin. I am sure they are moved by Austrian national interest. And this interest might dictate things that may not be liked by us in Russia. What we believe is to be done is just to be absolutely open about the problems and to act as for instance they acted in the case of Belorussia. Ten days ago Russian human rights groups wrote letters to the European Union and the United States government asking them not to give entry visas to people who were responsible for the crackdowns, namely the Mayor of Moscow, the Mayor of St. Petersburg, and the Minister of Interior. I know it is probably too much to ask, but eventually you have to start dealing with the problem of a regime that is rejecting democracy as a concept but at the same benefiting from ties with a democratic world. They want to sit on two chairs and to get the best from the two worlds. I think it is time not only for Austria but for all European countries to come up with a united position. It has already happened once when Merkel rejected Putin's far-reaching offer to cut a separate deal between Russia and Germany on gas. And the united Europe showed its strength. And it was a major setback for Putin. We all know that he was quite devastated because he never expected such a generous offer to be turned down by a large European country. So a united Europe has power. I have no doubt that much can be done if Europe is united and shows its strength. And its strength should not endanger Russia because all this nonsense that it is going to hurt Russian people, no, it is going to hurt Putin's regime. And don't mix Putin and Russia. Putin will go, Russia will stay.

Going to the second question. We don't care. Those are the issues that are totally irrelevant for 99% of Russians. This is the propaganda on television where they talk about America's threat to Russia. Nobody believes in it because we are dealing with other problems. If you talked to Russians who live east of Omsk – and I had visited almost every major town from Omsk to Wladiwostok – they know that China is a threat. 20 years from now the Russian Far East and East Siberia might be another China. For instance, when you have polls on the remaining radio stations that still could carry different programs you find out

that for many Russians China is a real threat while America is not the country that the Russians like, but definitely it does not play a major role in our life. Of course, we are all accused of being American spies and stooges. But 30 years ago it was the same. Nothing changes. They are trying to find out our connections with America. But the problem is that our movement is so dispersed. They are accusing, for instance, Kasianow of playing into American hands but at the same time they have to find another good reason to accuse Russian nationalists who can be hardly seen as American spies. So the diversity of our movement gives us enough stability to resist all these calls. But, of course, the Kremlin does not need any new reasons to blame the opposition.

Question

Who can be the next president of Russia? What do you think about the political situation in the Ukraine today?

Question

The European Union has a regular dialogue with Russia on human rights. In your point of view what should be the priorities on the agenda?

Garri Kasparow

Human rights.

First of all Ukraine. Russian television is trying to pretend that Ukraine is in a big chaos. But my view, shared by many Russians, is that Ukraine has already moved into a different world because they are fighting each other, but they are fighting with words. It is quite clear that no side is willing to use force. They have to find a compromise. And I don't care who wins. What is important is that they are not relying on force to destroy their opponents. And that is what we want in Russia. Again, the goal of the Other Russia is not to win the elections. Our goal is to have elections. And we don't care who wins as long as the process is a real one. We try to establish a process which is not flawed and which is not influenced by certain lobby interests. So the presidency is a big deal because in Russia the parliament is "not a place for discussions." This is a group of people who simply vote when and how they are told by the Kremlin. By the way, the new chairman of the election committee, Mr. Churow from St. Petersburg, another close friend of Mr. Putin, had spent four years in Parliament and he had quite a record for the world. He never sponsored a single law and he never spoke! That is the best man to count the votes. We know that the draconian Russian laws will not let the opposition have its candidate registered unless there is very powerful support from the Russian people. For independent candidates there are provisions that nobody can meet. You have to allocate two million signatures over five weeks. Only 40.000 can be taken in a single region. So in Moscow, no matter what you take, 40.000. So you need 50 regions. Two of these five weeks is a general holiday. Also when you come up with the signatures you may provide only 2.2 million and 10% of rejection and you are out of the game. So we know that under no circumstances can we register our candidates – unless there will be 50.000 people waiting patiently in the street in front of the Central Election Committee building for Mr. Churow to come up with the results.

Who should be the candidate? It remains to be seen. I believe it should be someone who will be accepted by the left and the right, by very different political groups. We have two or three months to come up not only with a candidate which, again, will be important but not the whole project, we have to come up with a program of national unity. We have to put out a short document that could be signed by different groups announcing what we want to accomplish. We are not just against Putin. And I explained the certain ideas that unite us. That is what we stand for. And the candidate or the several candidates who will compete against each other will have to guarantee that this program will be realized if our candidate wins. As for myself I believe I should stay as a coordinator of this project because I am the only one who talks to all these groups. It is very important that my personal ambitions do not overcome the interest of the coalition. We must win in March 2008, and I don't think we are totally hopeless in this fight. I doubt that Kasianow can attract the attention and support of the left. It is not easy because the left-wing and nationalists are very suspicious of his record as Yelzin's Minister of Finance and Putin's Prime Minister. He will have his chance. I am sure he will try to run. But my organization and a few allies would probably

rather look at Viktor Geraschenko who was the ex-head of the Central Bank of the Soviet Union and the Russian Central Bank. Again, it is an open contest. We are not yet ready to have all these candidates because to take this position now and to stand as a potential candidate from the Other Russia, from the opposition, that is a big decision. It is not like running primaries in America or elsewhere in Europe. That is a big deal, that is a big decision. I am sure we will find a candidate. We will do our utmost to make sure that our candidate has a chance.

As for human rights. Again, just speak in a louder voice because in Russia we don't hear you. It is too private. And make sure that human rights are really part of the discussion because technically speaking in Russia today the Russian laws and the application of these laws do not accommodate the standards of the European Union. Pointing this out and making a big issue, that is what is required. Democracy suffers most from double standards. That is what Russian diplomacy is trying to establish now. They always want to make sure that Russia is treated differently. And it should be treated the same way as any other country. Either there is democracy or there is no democracy. And unfortunately there is no democracy in Russia today.

Franz Kössler

Unfortunately our time is running out.

Garri Kasparow

“Our time” is not running out!

Franz Kössler

I have prepared a quote for the conclusion. It is from Wladimir Kramnik, who once defeated you. He was asked what is the secret of a successful chess game. He had quite a remarkable formula. He said, “You have to have a profound distaste for losing the match.” And in this spirit we wish you a profound distaste for losing the game. Thank you very much for being here.