

CONFIDENTIAL

PTQ7650

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D), B6

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ACTION EUR-01

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	CIAE-00	SMEC-00	INL-01	DODE-00
	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	FBIE-00	VC-01	H-01	TEDE-00
	INR-00	LAB-01	L-00	MCO-01	MOFM-04	MOF-03	M-00
	AC-01	NRRC-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00
	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	IRM-00
	SSO-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	SA-01	SNIS-00	NISC-00	PMB-00
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INFO MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
CIS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MOSCOW 007375

E.O. 12958:DECL: 3/24/10
TAGS: PGOV, RS
SUBJECT: ON THE EVE OF THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTIONS: PUTIN CLEAR LEAD; YAVLINSKIY SURGE

CLASSIFIED BY GEORGE KROL, MINISTER-COUNSELOR FOR
POLITICAL AFFAIRS. REASONS: 1.5 (B,D)

SUMMARY

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1. (C) DESPITE SOME POLLS SHOWING A STEADY DECLINE IN
ACTING PRESIDENT PUTIN'S POPULARITY, MOST POLITICAL
OBSERVERS IN MOSCOW CONTINUE TO BELIEVE ACTING
PRESIDENT PUTIN WILL WIN THE MOST VOTES SUNDAY AND
PROBABLY ACHIEVE THE PRESIDENCY OUTRIGHT WITH NO SECOND
ROUND NECESSARY. IN A LATE SURGE, LIBERALS SEEMED TO BE
COALESCING AROUND YAVLINSKIY WHOSE POLL RATINGS STARTED
TO CLIMB. YAVLINSKIY'S SUPPORTERS ARE WORKING
FRANTICALLY TO GET THEIR MAN PAST THE COMMUNIST
ZYUGANOV INTO THE SECOND SLOT. HOWEVER, THIS BOOST IN
SUPPORT MAY BE TOO LITTLE TOO LATE AS DIVISIONS AMONG
THE LIBERALS AND SOLID COMMUNIST VOTING MAKE YAVLINSKIY

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: FRANK H PEREZ
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 26 MAR 2015
DATE/CASE ID: 04 SEP 2007 200702380

A LONG SHOT EVEN FOR SECOND PLACE. [REDACTED]

B1

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] END SUMMARY

 POLLS FLUCTUATE SLIGHTLY--MOST SHOW ONE ROUND LIKELY

2. (C) ALTHOUGH SOME POLLS, [REDACTED]

B1, B6

[REDACTED]

SHOW ACTING PRESIDENT PUTIN WITH 48 PERCENT VOTE SUPPORT, MOST RECENT POLLS CONTINUE TO REFLECT PUTIN'S VOTE SUPPORT HOVERING ABOVE 50 PERCENT. PUTIN'S APPROVAL RATINGS HAVE ALSO DROPPED marginally IN THE

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LAST FEW WEEKS, BUT THE DROP IN HIS LIKELY PERCENTAGE OF THE VOTE HAS BEEN LESS DRAMATIC. EVEN GIVEN A REASONABLE MARGIN OF ERROR, PUTIN STILL RETAINS MAJORITY SUPPORT. SOME POLLSTERS HAVE REPORTED EXPECTED RESULTS BASED NOT ONLY ON THE POLLS THEMSELVES BUT ALSO BY APPLYING HISTORICAL PATTERNS TO POLL RESULTS SUCH AS ESTIMATING THE EFFECTS OF THE HIGHER TURNOUT OF COMMUNIST VOTERS, THE LIKELIHOOD UNDECIDED VOTERS WOULD NOT BOTHER TO VOTE, ETC. EVEN THE RESULTS USING THIS KIND OF METHODOLOGY TEND TO GIVE PUTIN BETWEEN 53 AND 55 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, SUGGESTING MOST PEOPLE WILL GO WITH THE FRONT-RUNNER.

3. (SBU) THE 48 PERCENT RATING FOR PUTIN IN SOME POLLS MAY BE EXPLAINED BY THESE POLLS' HIGH NUMBERS FOR ZYUGANOV (28 PERCENT), SUGGESTING THAT TURNOUT FOR THE COMMUNIST CANDIDATE WILL BE MUCH HIGHER, AND THEIR COUNTING THE RESPONSES OF ONLY THOSE WHO SAY THEY WILL DEFINITELY VOTE. OTHER POLLS SHOW ZYUGANOV WITH 20 PERCENT SUPPORT OR LESS. YAVLINSKIY SHOWS BETWEEN 5 AND 9 PERCENT. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] TOLD US THAT ZYUGANOV, YAVLINSKIY, AND ZHIRINOVSKIY HAVE SHOWN SMALL INCREASES IN THEIR POLL NUMBERS GAINED LARGELY FROM THOSE RESPONDENTS WHO PREVIOUSLY WERE UNSURE OR WHO ARE OPPOSED TO PUTIN.

4. (C) [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ATTRIBUTE PUTIN'S SLIGHT DROP IN POPULARITY TO THE NORMAL EROSION OF SUPPORT FOR

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SOMEONE IN OFFICE. IN OTHER WORDS, SOME OF THE INITIAL
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BLOOM IS OFF THE ROSE. [REDACTED] TOLD US THAT PUTIN,
UNTIL RECENTLY, HAD BENEFITED FROM INCUMBENCY. HE
COULD LOOK PRESIDENTIAL AND USE THE KREMLIN'S
ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES TO HIS ADVANTAGE. NOW, PEOPLE
ARE STARTING TO BLAME PUTIN FOR THE COUNTRY'S ILLS AND
THE LACK OF PROGRESS. ALTHOUGH PUTIN STILL ENJOYS
OVERWHELMING SUPPORT, MORE PEOPLE ARE BECOMING
DISILLUSIONED AS TIME GOES ON AND PUTIN BECOMES LESS OF
A "UNIVERSAL MIRROR" REFLECTING THE HOPES OF INDIVIDUAL
VOTERS THAN HE WAS IN THE PAST.

5. (C) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] SUGGESTED THAT ON MARCH 26
VOTERS MAY BE DISPLEASED WITH THE LACK OF ALTERNATIVES.
HE BELIEVES THAT IF PUTIN CAN FEED EXPECTATIONS AND
AVOID A DISASTER, HE WILL REMAIN POPULAR, BUT THAT
MAJOR DISAPPOINTMENT IN HIM WOULD LEAD TO CRISIS.

[REDACTED] POINTED OUT THAT RUSSIANS BELIEVE
IT IS POSSIBLE FOR PUTIN TO DO BETTER THAN THE PREVIOUS
ADMINISTRATION, BUT THEY ARE SKEPTICAL. [REDACTED] TOLD
US THAT IF PUTIN DOES NOT WIN IN THE FIRST ROUND, IT
WILL BE SEEN AS PUTIN'S FIRST MAJOR DEFEAT WITH
SIGNIFICANT CONSEQUENCES FOR HIS FUTURE ADMINISTRATION.

6. (C) THERE IS ALSO THE QUESTION WHETHER A MOOD OF
INEVITABILITY WILL DEPRESS TURNOUT BY THOSE RESPONDENTS

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INFO MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
CIS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 MOSCOW 007375

E.O. 12958:DECL: 3/24/10

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ELECTIONS: PUTIN CLEAR LEAD; YAVLINSKIY SURGE

WHO NOW TELL POLLSTERS THEY WILL VOTE FOR PUTIN.
(NOTE: AROUND 75 PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED STILL BELIEVE
PUTIN WILL WIN. END NOTE) TURNOUT COULD BE KEY TO
WHETHER PUTIN WILL BE FORCED INTO A SECOND ROUND, MORE
SO THAN THE PROSPECT OF OTHER CANDIDATES' TAKING VOTES
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FROM PUTIN. [REDACTED] TOLD
US MARCH 23 THAT FOR THIS VERY REASON HE IS ORGANIZING
A CAMPAIGN TO ENCOURAGE VOTERS TO BOYCOTT THE ELECTION.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] CONSIDERS NONE OF THE
CANDIDATES ACCEPTABLE. NEVERTHELESS, EVEN HE IS
CONVINCED PUTIN WILL WIN.

7. (C) MANY OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT TALK OF LOW TURNOUT
AND PUTIN'S DROPPING NUMBERS HAVE BEEN HYPED BY THE
KREMLIN PRECISELY TO ENCOURAGE HIGH FIRST ROUND
SUPPORT. IN FACT, PUTIN HAS STARTED TO SAY PUBLICLY
THAT THE COST OF CONDUCTING A SECOND ROUND WOULD BE
ENOUGH TO PAY ALL THE PENSIONERS IN MOSCOW. POLLSTERS
ARE ESTIMATING AROUND 65 PERCENT TURNOUT DESPITE THE
FACT THAT THE TOTAL OF THOSE WHO DO NOT PLAN TO VOTE,
OR WILL VOTE AGAINST ALL, OR ARE UNSURE STANDS AT
AROUND 20 PERCENT. FURTHERMORE, THE "DISGRUNTLED" VOTE
APPEARS NOT TO HAVE GELLED AROUND THE CURRENT "AGAINST
ALL" CAMPAIGN. AMONG THOSE NAMING CANDIDATES TO
POLLSTERS, THERE STILL IS UNCERTAINTY THAT THE SUPPORT
WILL TRANSLATE INTO PARTICIPATION.

8. (C) SOME OBSERVERS, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] HAVE
SUGGESTED TULEYEV IS FIGHTING FOR THIRD PLACE (WITH A
POSSIBLE KREMLIN BOOST TO TAKE VOTES FROM ZYUGANOV). IN
ALL POLLS HOWEVER HE LAGS BEHIND YAVLINSKIY.
ZHIRINOVSKIY, WHOSE STRANGE CAMPAIGN WAS TOPPED THIS
WEEK BY HIS ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HE WOULD CONSIDER
WITHDRAWING AND SUPPORTING EITHER YAVLINSKIY OF
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 ZYUGANOV, REMAINS FAR BEHIND. ZHIRINOVSKIY'S
 STATEMENT WAS LIKELY A STUNT BECAUSE HE HAS PERSISTED
 IN REPEATING IT ALTHOUGH THE DEADLINE FOR WITHDRAWAL
 HAS PASSED.

9. (C) [REDACTED] HAS NOTED TO US A FEW MISSTEPS BY
 PUTIN'S CAMPAIGN STAFF. INITIALLY, PUTIN'S CAMPAIGN
 FOCUSED ON PUTIN ACTING PRESIDENTIAL. HOWEVER, THERE
 WAS INSUFFICIENT PUBLICITY AND PUTIN HAS NOT OFFERED
 VOTERS MANY POSITIVE MOTIVATIONS TO VOTE FOR HIM.

[REDACTED] ALSO NOTED THAT PUTIN OVERDID PLAYING UP TO
 THE VOTER WHO APPRECIATES A STRONG, MILITARY IMAGE AND
 IGNORED LIBERALS, SENDING THEM FEW SIGNALS THAT WOULD
 WIN HIM THEIR SUPPORT.

10. (C) LAST WEEK'S LESS-THAN-ENTHUSIASTIC
 ENDORSEMENTS OF PUTIN BY OTECHESTVO AND SPS REVEALED
 THE WEAKNESSES OF THESE PARTIES. [REDACTED] NOTED THAT
 SPS ALWAYS HAS BEEN SPLIT BETWEEN ITS INTEREST IN
 STAYING CLOSE TO THE KREMLIN AND STAYING TRUE TO THE
 LIBERAL ORIENTATION OF ITS VOTER BASE. HE FURTHER
 OPINED "OTECHESTVO" HAS DISINTEGRATED AND WARNED SPS IS
 ON THE VERGE OF A SPLIT. HE DECLARED "YEDINSTVO" WILL
 NEVER BECOME A REAL PARTY. [REDACTED] THINKS "YABLOKO"
 HAS A CHANCE TO SURVIVE AS A POLITICAL FORCE IF
 YAVLINSKIY DOES WELL IN THE ELECTION.

 YAVLINSKIY--SUPPORT AND BACKLASH

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11. (U) YAVLINSKIY'S CAMPAIGN RECEIVED A BOOST THIS
 WEEK WHEN MOSCOW FOUNDATION FOR PRESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS
 AND LUZHKOVA-ALLY SEVASTYANOV WITHDREW FROM THE RACE AND
 THREW HIS SUPPORT BEHIND YAVLINSKIY. THIS MOVE MAY NOT
 HAVE NETTED YAVLINSKIY VERY MANY VOTES -- AS SUPPORT
 FOR SEVASTYANOV WAS ALMOST NONEXISTENT -- BUT DID
 GENERATE PUBLICITY HIGHLIGHTING A SMALL PUSH. AN EVEN
 BIGGER AND MORE SURPRISING TURN HAPPENED WHEN SPS
 LEADERS IRINA KHAKAMADA AND BORIS NEMTSOV ANNOUNCED THEY
 WOULD CAMPAIGN FOR YAVLINSKIY. HOWEVER, LESS THAN 24
 HOURS LATER, KHAKAMADA EXPLAINED THAT WHAT SHE REALLY
 MEANT WAS THAT SHE HOPED YAVLINSKIY RATHER THAN
 ZYUGANOV WOULD BECOME NUMBER TWO, JUST IN CASE THERE IS
 A RUN-OFF ELECTION.

12. (C)

[REDACTED] SAID KHAKAMADA AND THE OTHERS RETREATED BECAUSE THEY WANT TO PROTECT THEIR JOB PROSPECTS IN AN EVENTUAL PUTIN ADMINISTRATION. [REDACTED] NOTED THAT KHAKAMADA HAD BEEN PRIVATELY ADVISING PRIMAKOV UNTIL IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT HE WOULD NOT WIN (SOMETHING WE HAD HEARD SEPARATELY [REDACTED])

NEVERTHELESS, YAVLINSKIY HAS CLEARLY IMPROVED HIS CAMPAIGN STYLE, PROJECTING A MORE RELAXED, (QUASI) MAN-

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 MOSCOW 007375

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OF-THE-PEOPLE IMAGE. YAVLINSKIY'S CAMPAIGN NOW PORTRAYS THE CANDIDATE MORE AS A LEADER AND LESS AS AN ECONOMIST OR PARTY LEADER AND SHOWS A MORE HUMAN SIDE.

YAVLINSKIY'S SUPPORTERS ARE WORKING HARD HOPING HE CAN SURGE PAST ZYUGANOV INTO SECOND PLACE AND GAIN HIM THE

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PREMIERSHIP IN A PUTIN ADMINISTRATION ([REDACTED])

[REDACTED] TOLD US THAT
YAVLINSKIY IS REALLY PUSHING TO ACHIEVE AT LEAST 10
PERCENT OF THE VOTE, SINCE THIS RESULT WOULD LEGITIMIZE
HIM AS THE HEAD OF THE DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION AND KEEP
HIM IN THE POLITICAL SPOTLIGHT.

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VIEWS FROM THE REGIONS - SNAPSHOT

15. (C) EMBASSY ELECTION MONITORS OUT IN THE REGIONS TO OBSERVE SUNDAY'S VOTING HAVE BEEN MEETING WITH REGIONAL LEADERS, PARTY OFFICIALS, AND CANDIDATE REPRESENTATIVES TO TAKE THE PULSE OF THE CAMPAIGN OUTSIDE OF MOSCOW. IN SAMARA, GOVERNOR TITOV AND PUTIN ARE NECK-AND-NECK, WITH ZYUGANOV RUNNING THIRD. MANY INTERLOCUTORS BELIEVE THE DETERMINING FACTOR WILL BE HOW MUCH SUPPORT GOVERNOR TITOV CAN MUSTER. OBSERVERS PREDICTED THAT SINCE TITOV RAISED PENSION PAYMENTS IN THE REGION, MORE OF THE TRADITIONAL COMMUNIST VOTE WOULD GO TO HIM. THE TWO TOP ELECTION ISSUES FOR THE VOTERS OF SAMARA ARE CRIME AND CORRUPTION (READ LAW AND ORDER) AND BREAD AND BUTTER ECONOMIC ISSUES SUCH AS

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WAGES AND PENSIONS. VOTER TURNOUT COULD BE CLOSE TO 60 PERCENT. VOTING FOR "AGAINST ALL" SHOULD NOT EXCEED FIVE PERCENT. THE ELECTION SHOULD BE RELATIVELY CLEAN.

16. (C) OUR MONITORS IN KRASNODAR REPORT THAT ZYUGANOV HAS NO MORE THAN 20 PERCENT SUPPORT THERE (SINCE KRASNODAR IS SUPPOSED TO BE A "RED BELT" STRONGHOLD, THESE FIGURES DO NOT PORTEND WELL FOR HIM ELSEWHERE). IN NIZHNIY NOVGOROD THE HEAD OF THE SUBJECT ELECTION COMMISSION WAS FIRED FOR EXPLAINING TO JOURNALISTS HOW FRAUD COULD BE COMMITTED. HIS SUCCESSOR WAS VISIBLY NERVOUS WHEN HE MET WITH EMBASSY MONITORS.

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COMMENT

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