

ENQUIRY

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Political Murder in Russia

By ELIZABETH BERRY
EDITOR IN CHIEF

"Russia's president, Vladimir V. Putin, has made no secret of his ambition to restore his country to what he sees as its rightful place among the world's leading nations," writes *New York Times* columnist Andrew Kramer. "Indeed, Putin has invested considerable money and energy into building an image of a strong and morally superior Russia."

"Morally superior," however, is far from the image many Western nations have of the former U.S.S.R. Under Putin, the Russian government has treated muckraking journalists, rights advocates, opposition politicians, and government whistle-blowers with disdain and worse, imprisoning them on trumped-up charges and smearing their names in the news media at every opportunity.

More alarming, Putin and his government have decided to re-implement the tactic of political murder, which played a distinct role in the Kremlin's foreign policy during the Soviet era. Now, instead of simply imprisoning or chastising those who threaten Putin's carefully crafted image of the Russian state, the Russian government is killing these individuals with increasing frequency.

Political murders, and particularly those accomplished with poisons, are nothing new in Russia: they have been a favorite tool of Russian intelligence for more than a century. Beginning in 1928, a biochemist named Grigory Mairanovski worked in secret for the K.G.B. to develop tasteless, colorless and odorless poisons. Since then, the K.G.B. and other government agencies have developed an arsenal of lethal, hard-to-trace poisons, which are still in use today.

In 1995, for instance, Russian banker Ivan K. Kivelidi died after coming into contact with cadmium. In 2008, Karinna Moskalenko, a Russian lawyer specializing in taking cases to the European Court of Human Rights, fell ill in Strasbourg, France, from mercury found in her car.

While typically not traceable to any individuals and denied by government officials, poisonings leave little doubt of the state's involvement, according to experts. "Outside of popular culture, there are

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no highly skilled hit men for hire," explains Mark Galeotti, a professor at New York University and an authority on the Russian security services.

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Looking Ahead for the Supreme Court

By SAM BENEVELLI
STAFF WRITER

More than nine months after Justice Antonin Scalia's sudden passing, his seat on the Supreme Court remains vacant. Instead of allowing President Obama's nominee, Judge Merrick Garland, to take his place, Senate Republicans, led by Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, have undertaken what the Obama administration is calling "an unprecedented level of obstruction."

McConnell and his fellow Republicans see Garland's nomination as an effort by Obama and his supporters

SUPREME COURT cont.

to liberalize the Supreme Court. In response, these senators are refusing to hold a confirmation hearing at least until a new president takes office in January. They hope that a President Trump would nominate a more conservative judge in Garland's place.

In fact, Donald Trump has already presented a list of potential nominees, including federal and state judges. One prominent prospect is Utah Senator Mike Lee, a staunch conservative and close friend of Senator Ted Cruz.

In contrast, Hillary Clinton would have two options if elected – to push Obama's choice through Congress or to propose her own appointee. Last month on the Tom Joyner radio show, she stated that she would cast a broad net for "common-sense" justices with some "real-world experience." The worry among conservatives is that Clinton will yield to demands to nominate a younger and more liberal judge: California Supreme Court Justice Goodwin Liu and New

This Week's News in 140 Characters

EDITORIAL REPORT



Where To Next?

By ANDREW JUCHNO
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Last week, *Enquiry* staff writer Will Utzschneider chronicled a relatively cogent progression of the American voter's frustration with the nation's political establishment, ultimately culminating in the Republican nomination of Donald Trump. Establishing how we got here necessarily begs the follow-up question, "Where are we going next?"

Given that the current disconnect between voters and politicians stems largely from a lack of trust, a logical outcome presumably would be the election of a trustworthy president. Disregarding logic, the nomination system has produced two candidates perceived largely as deceitful.

On the one hand, voters suspect Mrs. Clinton of corruption, anxious about the

"If it's a skilled job, that means it's [done by] a state asset." Former member of parliament and onetime lieutenant colonel in the K.G.B. Gennadi V. Gudkov corroborated Galeotti's claim when he admitted in an interview that "the government is using the special services to liquidate its enemies."

This past summer, another whistle-blower, Yulia Stepanova, who's hiding with her husband in the United States, was forced to move amid fears that hackers had found her location. "If something happens to us," she said, "then you should know that it is not an accident."

While other countries, notably Israel and the United States, pursue targeted killings, it is only in a strict counterterrorism context. No other major power employs murder systematically and ruthlessly, as Russia does against those seen as betraying its interests at home and abroad. Certainly, this tendency toward murder is no mark of moral superiority.

Jersey Senator Cory Booker have already been identified as being among those who may be on Clinton's shortlist.

Although the Senate has the power to refuse to confirm a new justice indefinitely, the strong possibility of a Clinton victory in November means that Senate Republicans should hear the case for Merrick Garland before it is too late to prevent her from filling Scalia's seat with an appointee further

With three justices in their late seventies or early eighties, it is likely that there will be more than one vacancy to fill during the coming presidential term

to the left than this reputed moderate. Senate Republicans need to hear the case for Merrick Garland before it is too late. With three justices in their late seventies or early eighties, it is likely that there will be more than one vacancy to fill during the coming presidential term. It is particularly important that the Senate maintain the centrist nature of the court in filling these vacancies. If the vacancies were to be filled by liberal judges, some of the recent high-profile cases that were decided on a 5-4 vote may be overturned, including *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores* and *Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. v. Dukes*.

Approving Garland before the next presidential inauguration will both fill the open seat and keep the court from becoming too liberal. If Clinton gets even one vacancy in addition to Scalia's seat – or if Garland is not confirmed, meaning she can appoint someone in his place – the court is more likely to move strongly to the left. This is even likelier if the Democrats control the Senate after this year's election, of which there is probably a 50-50 chance. Waiting for the next president, which by all measures could be Hillary Clinton, may end up backfiring on Republicans holding out for the inauguration of Trump.

Until then, Chief Justice Roberts will have to do his best to mitigate the ideological conflict on the court as it tackles cases involving restricted voting rights and gerrymandering in the term that began October 3.

influence donors to the Clinton Foundation had over her while she held public office. Alternatively, voters see Mr. Trump as unruly and unreliable as he constantly doubles back on previous positions and spreads such blatant falsehoods from his national platform.

Trump has yet to hold public office, so he has, up to this point, lacked the opportunity to be involved in a governmental corruption scandal. This is not to say that, given the opportunity, he would not become corrupt; merely, he has not been afforded the chance.

Faced with such bleak prospects in the major party nominees, voters may be inclined to turn to the third party nominees, Gary Johnson and Jill Stein. The former seemed an attractive choice for young ideological conservatives, yet recent interviews have brought forth Johnson's limited understanding of world politics. His ignorance is dangerous given the level of violence in the Middle East. Jill Stein suffers equally from a lack of a strong foreign policy platform, as well as low levels of support.

Left, then, with a basket of deplorable candidates, voters on the left and right continue to search for rational options from an irrational pool. More mainstream thinkers contend that while Clinton is not the

Milo Yiannopoulos ... seems to think we should accept that Donald Trump is evil and vote for him anyway

perfect candidate, a Clinton presidency would be less devastating than a Trump presidency. This Machiavellian logic makes sense; accepting the lesser of two evils as good allows us to forego the truly greater evil.

Milo Yiannopoulos, an editor at Breitbart News, does not subscribe to this thought pattern. Referred to by devotees simply as Milo, he seems to think we should accept that Donald Trump is evil and vote for him anyway. In an interview with Dave Rubin, host of The Rubin Report, Milo painted himself, and Trump by extension, as an "agent of chaos." As such, he sees Trump as a radical sort of dissident, standing in the face of political tradition with the sole purpose of tearing apart the political establishment. Accordingly, a Trump presidency would bring about the decline of the Republican and Democratic parties, ushering in a major realignment based on preferences for "small" or "big" government.

It is admittedly easy and satisfying to dismiss Milo as an eccentric and hateful far-right radical, yet I would urge those familiar with his more sordid claims to consider for a moment the implications of what he is proposing. Trump's demeanor alone would disqualify him for the presidency. As Mike Pence demonstrated in the vice presidential debate, however, members of the Trump campaign can balance the wild-talking, childish candidate. As such, Trump may be a viable option for voters on both sides of the aisle who, in the primaries, expressed discontent with the current political landscape.

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