

the only problem. As many as a quarter of a million children also returned, to already-bursting class sizes.

The returnees also exacerbated the separatist and inter-ethnic dynamics unleashed by withdrawal from Empire and the concomitant introduction of more democratic structures and procedures. Thus many settled in the Baltic Republics, and Kaliningrad--some because their roots were there; others because of better housing and quality of life prospects. The influx of Russian military retirees added fuel to the forces of exclusive nationalism and separatism. These, again, inflamed Russian nationalism, and Russians' very different concepts of historical rights.⁷

Glasnost filled in the "white spots" of Stalinist and later history, from Red Army atrocities when re-absorbing the Baltic states after the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939, to more recent brutalities of hazing and racial discrimination and worse (one report attributed all or most of 6-10,000 military deaths from "suspicious circumstances" between 1985 and 1990 to this *dedovshina*). In the new context of political tolerance, dissidence was nurtured, and spread. Conscription intakes fell, as separatists in the Baltics, Georgia and elsewhere openly urged defiance.⁸

Local crack-down attempts, in Tbilisi in April 1989 and Baku in January 1990 served only to inflame local passions. The deaths of Tbilisi became the banner that brought V. Gamsakhurdia to the Presidency--where the former dissident and Shakespeare scholar transformed himself into dictator, and racist; when driven from office, though, he acknowledged no irony in effectively allying himself with the very minorities whose rights he had suppressed. His chameleon-like proclivities, and cavalier attitudes towards civil rights, proved not un-representative of the emerging class of "democratic" politicians, especially those now emerging in the former Baltic republics (see below).

Tbilisi was also symptomatic of the counter-trend. The commander in charge of the crack-down, Colonel-General Igor Rodionov, an Afghan war veteran, vilified by democrats, was lionized by advocates of re-imposed discipline--by force if and when necessary. The former, led by reserve officer Vladimir Lopatin, secured significant representation in the first elected Supreme Soviet, or parliament, but so did those riding the backlash against anarchy and dissolution, notably Colonels Alksnis and Petrusenko, the "Black Colonels". The latter achieved notoriety for a November 1990 ultimatum to Gorbachev, demanding his resignation if his reforms could not be made to work within 30 days. The two demanded a "Committee of National Salvation".⁹

Reaction against separatism also spawned the re-establishment of Cossack "Hordes", purportedly independent, but with clear ties to Russian nationalist forces, within and without the military, and three new Ministry of the Interior Special Forces type internal security formations.¹⁰ The premier of these was the Omon. The initial organization of Omon, in particular, appears to have been somewhat haphazard. Its emergence represented the confluence of two phenomena: now-unemployed ex-Army Paratroop and Special Forces