



# Corruption empowers: Russia's struggling economy

BY ERIN FITZPATRICK

*Due to the nature of the issues covered, the names of sources used in this article may not necessarily be the sources' real names. All sources and statistics have been verified and authorized.*

(Russia) — When capitalism came to Russia in 1991 markets opened, and competition and entrepreneurship were introduced in the business world. Most people felt that Russia, with its vast human and natural resource potential, would quickly become a developed country. It would appear that such hopes were not unfounded: since 1991 the country has increased its exports and has been running a trade surplus in excess of \$15-billion a year. However, despite the fact that Russia is making money, it hardly qualifies as a developed nation. In fact, most Russians are living at a lower standard than they did in 1990. How is it that more economic activity in Russia has not meant more money for Russians? The reasons are many, but one of the most important is surely the high levels of corruption in Russia's business and governmental spheres.

"There's corruption everywhere," Yivgenia Svetlova, a frustrated Russian student, said bluntly.

Not that corruption is anything new to the Russian people.

"During communism, if you wanted to get ahead, you joined the communist party," says Natalia Roudakova, a teacher. "Not because you believed in communist ideals, but because you knew that party members had special privileges. They had power, money, the right to travel— even the right to have those they disliked thrown in jail."

Alexander Lebedinski, a journalist with the Kaliningrad Pravda and former Communist

Party member, says that he never supported the ideals of communism, he only understood that it was where "the ambitious got the powerful connections they needed."

While communism in Russia may be finished, some feel that because it lasted 70 years, tolerating corruption has become almost a part of Russian culture.

"We characterize ourselves as patient, forgiving, tolerant...I think that these are bad things! We put up with too much," said Roudakova.

All of the opportunities presented by capitalism, combined with such a permissive collective attitude, mean an increase in corrupt economic practices and so, a decrease in living standards for ordinary

Russians.

"The Mafia during communism was smaller and harder to enter," says Roudakova. "Anyone without scruples can be a part of it."

According to Lebedinski, the Russian Mafia comes in two varieties: street bandits and white collar criminals. Street bandits sell drugs and burn down small businesses which haven't made their extortion payments. The white collar branch, allegedly made up largely of politicians, runs more complicated operations. Most people will tell you that those who have become really rich, termed "New Russians", are those involved in the natural resource industry. New Russians are said to steal anything from amber to oil, sell it and then pocket the profits, ensuring that little goes back into the

struggling Russian economy.

Svetlova gives the example of the amber factory in her home town of Yantarnik. Workers there haven't been paid for months; bank accounts are frozen until the owner can be identified. No one seems to know exactly who is running what was once one of the most successful enterprises in the Soviet Union. Incredibly, one of its managers once stopped by the factory on a Saturday to find four men loading amber into a truck.

"When he asked them what they were doing, he was told to 'shut up and go away, please, you'll have all the documents you need on Monday'," said Svetlova.

Why are such glaring injustices tolerated? Natasha Federovna, an employee of the Administration of the Kaliningrad Region answered,

"Russian people prefer to wait and let the system...work out its kinks. When all of this chaos is over, we will have an honest government."

In the present system, most people justify illegal actions in a similar way, "The government steals from us, so why shouldn't we steal from the government?" said Roudakova.

Meanwhile the government maintains that they can only truly begin reinvesting in the economy once revenue starts coming in. Presumably they are referring to the revenue which is being lost through corrupt practices. It would appear then that the case of corruption in Russia is a chicken-and-egg scenario. Thus, those like Federovna who are prepared to "wait for the chaos to pass" will need a lot of patience.

PROFESSOR PROFILE

## Research personnel only: behind closed doors

BY JENNY AINSLIE

Many wonder what goes on behind the "Research Personnel Only" doors of Dalhousie University. Dr. Raymond Klein, Experimental Psychologist and a professor in Dalhousie's Psychology Department, opened the doors to his lab allowing students to learn about its projects.

Klein began his career at Dalhousie in 1974, fresh from the University of Oregon, with a PhD in Experimental Psychology. Presently the Departmental Graduate Coordinator, he can be found teaching or working in his lab.

Both undergraduate and graduate courses are taught by Klein. He gives lectures on human development in the team-taught Psychology 1000 program; as well as teaching a third year cognitive psychology course. At the graduate level, Klein teaches Proseminar and Methods of Experimental Psychological Enquiry, a mandatory class for all graduate students. The course stresses not only content, but skill acquisition. Klein enjoys teaching because the students "don't need to be convinced that it [psychology] is interesting".

One of Klein's major concerns is what will happen to the quality of the full-year courses if the proposed "Banner System" goes through. This computer program assumes that all courses are one

computer".

Teaching obviously limits Klein's time for research, however, his lab is filled to capacity.

"I'm blessed right now with lots of



semester in length. If used by the registrars office next year, full credit courses would be split into half-credits. Not only does Klein not want to break courses up, he feels that "you shouldn't give away that decision-making power [of how to organize a class] to a dumb

really good talent in my lab" said Klein. Initially he held what he now feels was "a naive hope to understand how the mind worked". Presently his lab is filled with people trying to do just that. Klein's main interest lies in visual attention, particularly eye movements, and reading

in relation to dyslexia. He is now editing a book, with colleague Patty McMullin, called *Converging Methods for Understanding Reading and Dyslexia*. He is also conducting several computer tests on eye movement and visual imagery.

Klein's lab consists of computers, odd-looking machinery, and an unbelievable amount of manpower. Students at different levels of study work in the lab on experimental projects. These include studies on the perception of motion; problems with inhibitory control of behaviour in children with Attention Deficit Disorder; and even a collaboration with Nortel technology in the development of graphic user interfaces. Graphic user interfaces are what make Windows programs different from DOS.

Aside from giving insight as to the way the mind works, Klein's research may have important applications, such as the development of new software, and remedial treatments for ADD. However, Klein thinks that it's a specific talent to be able to see the application, and often it takes someone other than the researcher himself.

He explained that, "When I study stuff I'm interested in, I basically see a puzzle and, to me, it's like an irresistible process to solve the puzzle...the puzzle itself is interesting, but it may have some uses."

Klein's lab is always happy to answer questions and talk about their work. For more information check out the Psychology website: <http://or.psychology.dal.ca>.

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