

Russia's "Managed Democracy" and the Civil G8 in 2006

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Introduction

During Vladimir Putin's presidency (2000-2008), foreign media coverage of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) often focused on how Russian authorities harassed human rights groups and those with foreign funding. Yet Russian NGOs still had opportunities to act on the world stage, and Putin—ironically—should receive part of the credit. In 2006, while holding the rotating presidency of the Group of Eight (G8), the Russian government claimed that it had “democratized” G8 decisionmaking by grouping NGOs into a new forum called the Civil G8.¹ Over 2,000 representatives of NGOs from 58 countries, including nearly 500 representatives of Russian NGOs, and international NGOs (INGOs) took part in Civil G8 events. Why did Putin endorse the idea, which Russian NGOs had conceived independently, while restricting Russian NGOs at home? How did the Putin regime and Russian NGOs use the Civil G8? In what ways did they say that it had or had not benefitted them? Did it change the opportunity structures for Russian NGOs, including their relations with officials?

In 2006, the Civil G8 offered Russian officials and NGOs different benefits. The former viewed it largely as a vehicle for improving Russia's global reputation. The forum, which was coordinated by a Putin appointee, was a multinational version of his corporatist design for NGO consultation. It also *de facto* served to marginalize radical opposition and anti-corporate globalization groups, many of which opted to run their own events around the time of the St. Petersburg G8 Summit in July. The Civil G8 did not grant NGOs any effective check on the G8 leaders' decisionmaking authority. However, it was innovative, and participation in it still offered Russian NGOs a wide range of opportunities. Human rights activists used it as an arena for criticizing a restrictive NGO law and Putin's human rights record. Russian NGO representatives also saw it as a practical way to broaden their domestic and global NGO networks, learn how to function in global forums, and help draft recommendations to G8 leaders concerning the official agenda (global energy security, education, and infectious diseases) and other issues (i.e., human rights, sustainable development, climate change).

This paper will map the range of views about the Civil G8 among a sample of representatives of Russian NGOs who participated in the Civil G8 in 2006. My methods are informed by Joan Wallach Scott's critical approach to analyzing personal narratives. “What counts as experience,” she argues, “is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, always therefore political.”² In Russia, where democratic institutions are anything but consolidated, the meaning of “civil society,” “consultation,” and “democracy” continue to be contested. Between January and March 2008, I e-mailed 213 Russian NGO representatives to invite them to answer four questions about their participation in the Civil G8 and received 20 useful responses (some responded but declined to take part).³ My goals in conducting the survey were to clarify the ways in which Russian Civil G8 participants felt that their involvement was significant, whether state officials interfered in their work as Civil G8 participants, whether they found that the Civil G8 influenced G8 decisionmaking, and whether the Civil G8 experience led to any long-term change, such as better relations with Russian officials or expanded cooperation and contacts with Russian or global NGO networks. Nine respondents were from Moscow, one from St. Petersburg, one from northwestern Russia, five from central Russia, three from southern Russia/the Caucasus, and one from Siberia. Given that it was an e-mail survey, the quality of the responses varied, and the small sample was not representative. Some respondents sent detailed answers, while others were brief and did not address all or any of my questions. In addition to survey data, I collected statements of Russian NGO representatives about

¹ “Democratization processes gaining momentum at G8 – Putin,” ITAR-TASS World Service, July 17, 2006.

² Joan Wallach Scott, “Evidence of Experience,” in *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, edited by Terrence J. McDonald (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 400.

³ See Appendix I for a list of respondents to my survey. Instead of footnoting a respondent each time I cite his/her opinion, I direct the reader to Appendix I.

their participation in the Civil G8 that were published in Russian and English-language newspapers or posted on the Civil G8 Web site. I also mined the site for press releases and transcripts of interviews, press conferences, and Civil G8 meetings.

In addressing my questions, I will first outline the literature on Russian NGOs that informs my study and provide background about general NGO developments in Russia in 2006. Secondly, I will detail more fully how the Civil G8 was initiated and contributed to the evolution of G7/G8-civil society relations, how participating NGO representatives were selected, and how the Putin leadership and Russian NGOs had imagined the benefits of the Civil G8 to be in 2006. Thirdly, in mapping the range of contestation about the meaning of the Civil G8 among a sample of Russian NGO participants, I will focus on two main events, the March 2006 International NGO Forum and the July 2006 International NGO Forum, and on Russian NGO opinions about the Civil G8's influence on G8 decisionmaking. I will conclude by analyzing Russian participants' opinions of the Civil G8's benefits and weaknesses and discussing state-NGO relations since 2006.

Russia's Managed Democracy and Nongovernmental Organizations Under Putin

Putin's critics and supporters called his approach to governing "managed" democracy.⁴ In an attempt to create a more stable political and economic environment in ways that served his own interests and those of his supporters, Putin built a "power vertical" to assert Moscow's dominance over the regions, acquire a near monopoly of control over television networks and a significant segment of the printed media, weaken political opposition groups and parties, and "keep powerful holders of economic power in a state of fear" using law-enforcement agencies and the courts.⁵ Moscow journalist Masha Lipman argues that the Putin regime tried "to clog up every channel for public participation in politics and to block every opening for the emergence of an autonomous force on the Russian political scene."⁶

Over 240,000 registered NGOs of various sizes and with diverse missions still exist in Russia, although development has been uneven across certain regions, particularly the Far East.⁷ One characteristic many share, as Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom and Laura A. Henry note, is low institutionalization, or the inability "to act as stable, recognized channels for societal constituencies to express their demands to the state and the wider public."⁸ Another is lack of funds. Consequently, some NGOs rely on foreign funding while others appeal to state officials for support. The state dominates state-society interaction, which is a persistent Soviet legacy.⁹ Organizations that learn to strike a "balance of constructive engagement" between complete dependence on the state and total opposition to it, and appeal to widely-accepted Russian norms, tend to experience the most success in meeting their goals.¹⁰ Also, while the majority of Russian NGOs have not received foreign funding or have regular contact with Western NGOs, any dialogue that occurs with the international community "on issues such as feminism, domestic violence, disability, military service, and the environment"

⁴ Timothy J. Colton and Michael McFaul, *Popular Choice and Managed Democracy: The Russian Elections of 1999 and 2000* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 3.

⁵ Michael Waller, *Russian Politics Today* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 43.

⁶ Masha Lipman, "Putin's 'Sovereign Democracy'," *Washington Post*, July 15, 2006, A21.

⁷ Sarah L. Henderson, *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 45. The figure of 240,000 was based on data collected by the Federal Registration Service. Human Rights Watch, "Choking on Bureaucracy: State Curbs on Independent Civil Society Activism," February 2008, 18. <<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/russia0208/>>

⁸ Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom and Laura A. Henry, "Russian Civil Society: Tensions and Trajectories," in *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment*, edited by Alfred B. Evans, Jr., Laura A. Henry, and Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 306.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 316-18; Alfred B. Evans, Jr., "Vladimir Putin's Design for Civil Society," in *Russian Civil Society*, 156; and Henderson, 18.

¹⁰ Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom, "Soldiers' Rights Groups in Russia: Civil Society Through Russian and Western Eyes," in *Russian Civil Society*, 190.

tends to have a significant impact on their work.¹¹ They—particularly those based in Moscow and St. Petersburg—are not completely isolated from their Western counterparts or immune from the pressures of foreign funders to adopt their agendas. According to Sarah L. Henderson, “A civic community does exist in Russia, but it is a civic community more comfortable at international conferences with fellow Western audiences than at home working in the local community.”¹²

Where exactly did NGOs fit into Putin’s power vertical? On the one hand, he needed their support in providing social assistance. Putin sought “to dominate society but not to absorb it completely,” Alfred B. Evans, Jr., argues, “partly because he [did] not want the state to shoulder full responsibility for providing material resources to all nongovernmental organizations.”¹³ On the other, he wanted to guard against activist NGOs tied to oppositionist political parties and movements. He sought to avoid the “colour revolutions” that occurred elsewhere in the former USSR, and he wanted, according to Nadezhda Pavlova (respondent 13) of the Karelia Union for Children’s Salvation, to have “the kind of ‘civil society’ that consists of likeminded people” who similarly define patriotism, national interests, and democracy.¹⁴ Part of the solution to his dilemma was to create forums for “institutionalized dialogue.”¹⁵ By November 2001, when he convened a Civic Forum for NGO consultation, Putin had already begun to craft his design.¹⁶ Around this time, several “government-organized nongovernmental organizations” (GONGOs) were formed to do the Kremlin’s bidding.¹⁷ By 2002, another key part of the Kremlin’s strategy was to marginalize those NGOs that it thought resembled Soviet-era political dissident groups by portraying them as foreign agents and subversives.¹⁸ Along with a progressive heightening of anti-NGO rhetoric (i.e., Putin’s 2004 state of the union speech and speech to the Federal Security Service, FSB, in early 2006), some “dissident” NGOs like the Moscow Helsinki Group were targeted for harassment.¹⁹ According to Mikhail Troitskiy (respondent 19), deputy director of the Academic Educational Forum on International Relations and a professor at the Moscow Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), the few NGOs that were directly tied to political parties and movements and those that criticized the regime’s human rights record, particularly in the North Caucasus, encountered the most problems with the authorities.

In order to display his democratic credentials, Putin regularly attended meetings with NGO representatives. At a meeting of the Presidential Commission on Human Rights in December 2003, audience members were “taken in by his performance” and “poured out their hearts to him.”²⁰ While NGO representatives sometimes questioned his motives, they calculated that by opting into his design,

¹¹ Sundstrom and Henry, “Russian Civil Society,” 306.

¹² Henderson, 171.

¹³ Evans, 154.

¹⁴ See also “NGO law to prevent foreign meddling in domestic affairs – Putin,” *RIA Novosti Report*, January 25, 2006; and Human Rights Watch, “Choking on Bureaucracy.”

¹⁵ Sundstrom, *Funding Civil Society: Foreign Assistance and NGO Development in Russia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 20. Like the authors of *Russian Civil Society*, I recognize that civil society actors are not exclusively NGOs but may also include social networks and movements. Sundstrom’s definition of civil society—“a realm of citizen-initiated, publicly oriented, not-for profit activity between the household and state”—is appropriately worded; Sundstrom, *Funding Civil Society*, 174.

¹⁶ Evans, 149; John Squier, “Civil Society and the Challenge of Russian Gosudarstvennost’,” *Demokratizatsiya* 10, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 177.

¹⁷ Alexander Nikitin and Jane Buchanan, “The Kremlin’s Civic Forum: Cooperation or Co-optation for Civil Society in Russia,” *Demokratizatsiya* 10, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 148.

¹⁸ Evans, 149-50, 154; Anna Politkovskaya, *A Russian Diary* (London: Random House, 2007), 160.

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, “Choking on Bureaucracy”; and Amnesty International, “Russian Federation: Freedom limited—the right to freedom of expression in the Russian Federation,” Feb. 26, 2008, 8 (FN 5)

<<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/008/2008>>; and Tanya Lokshina, “Russian civil society: an appeal to Europe,” April 4, 2007.

<http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalizationinstitutions_government/russia_civil_society_4573.jsp>.

²⁰ Politkovskaya, 16.

they might influence public policy. In 2005, the Putin regime further institutionalized NGO consultation when it created public chambers on the federal and subfederal levels. The stated purpose of the 126-member federal Public Chamber, one-third of whose members are directly chosen by the president, is to promote “cooperation between citizens and federal and local organs of power by taking into account the demands and interests of citizens, defending their rights and freedoms in formulating and implementing government policy, and in general, carrying out public control over the activities of state organs.”²¹ Critics argue that members are co-opted by the Kremlin and that the Public Chamber is an ineffective way to influence leaders.²² While their concerns are well founded, the Public Chamber has not always acted as a rubber-stamp body. For instance, in late 2005, 21 of its members urged the Duma to delay adopting a new NGO law and remove its restrictive measures.²³

Although some of the draft’s most controversial measures were expunged after Putin and the Council of Europe intervened, the Duma adopted the NGO law on December 21, 2005, and it entered into force the following April. It became a corollary of Putin’s power vertical for civil society, because it granted state officials the authority to scrutinize NGO activities and finances.²⁴ The Duma also began to allocate more funding to NGOs in late 2005. Critics argued that the funding furthered the Kremlin’s campaign to control NGOs and was a response to the US government’s funding of opposition parties.²⁵ As the Civil G8 project and Russia’s G8 presidency got underway in early 2006, the authorities intensified their campaign against human rights groups and foreign-funded NGOs and used the NGO law as an instrument. For instance, a program that aired on the state-run television channel Rossiia on January 22 claimed that the FSB had exposed spies at the British embassy in Moscow who had distributed grants to the Moscow Helsinki Group and other human rights groups.²⁶ In April, the Federal Registration Service tried to liquidate the Human Rights Research Centre for allegedly failing to file reporting documents.²⁷ That year, Putin’s design for civil society was nearly complete, as the Kremlin launched a state ideology “consolidating citizens around the authorities in order to defend sovereignty, strengthen managed democracy, and revive ‘Russia’s former greatness’.”²⁸

Lastly, Russian authorities’ treatment of NGOs, opposition parties, and political movements that organized unsanctioned forums and street protests against the regime contrasted sharply with that of sanctioned Civil G8 events. Law-enforcement officers arbitrarily arrested four activists and a German journalist at a meeting of the Other Russia coalition, which was composed of anti-Putin activists, days before the G8 Summit.²⁹ A second meeting that officials viewed as a potential security threat was the

²¹ Web site of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation: <<http://www.oprf.ru/ru/about/>>

²² Politkovskaya, 233; Evans, 151; and Sundstrom, *Funding Civil Society*, 8.

²³ Francesca Mereu and Oksana Yablokova, “Duma Gives \$17.4M to NGOs,” *Moscow Times*, Nov 21, 2005.

²⁴ The 2006 law “allows the [Federal] Registration Service to demand any document from an NGO at any time, without a warrant, and be present at all NGO events. It provides the government with unprecedented discretion in deciding what international NGO projects, or parts of projects, should be banned for not complying with Russia’s vaguely defined national interests....even minor administrative infractions can result in liquidation.” “Human Rights Watch EU-Russia Human Rights Consultations: Human Rights Watch Recommendations,” September 2007. <<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/10/24/russia17164.htm>>. Authorities also used the law “On Combating Extremist Activity,” tax laws, and the criminal code to target activist NGOs; see Amnesty International, “Russian Federation: Freedom limited.”

²⁵ Francesca Mereu and Oksana Yablokova, “Duma Gives \$17.4M to NGOs,” *Moscow Times*, Nov 21, 2005. In 2007, the Public Chamber on Civil Society reported that state bodies on all levels funded 29 percent of NGO budgets. Amnesty International, “Russian Federation: Freedom limited,” 8 (FN 5).

²⁶ Human Rights Watch, “Choking on Bureaucracy, 17; and Jeremy Page, “Analysis: a shot across Western bows,” *Times Online*, January 22, 2006.

²⁷ Yevgenia Zubchenko, “Kak zanesennyi nad nami mech,” *Novye Izvestia*, April 11, 2006, 2.

²⁸ Vladimir Rudakov (trans. Pavel Pushkin), “The Ideology of 2006,” *Profil*, 3 April 2006: 24-33.

²⁹ Lipman; Maria-Luiza Turmaste, “Kommunisty soshlis’ s ‘Drugoi Rossiei,’” *Kommersant*, July 14, 2006; Anastasiya Lebedev, “NGOs Prepare to Address the President,” *Moscow Times*, July 4, 2006, 3.

Russian Social Forum of countersummit activists, who met in St. Petersburg during the Summit. The Forum included both Russian and foreign delegates, but was poorly attended (under 1,500 participants). One explanation for the low turnout was that law-enforcement officials had prevented up to 250 Russian delegates from reaching St. Petersburg.³⁰ *Kommersant* called the authorities' "well coordinated" actions a part of "operation Firewall."³¹ In Western Europe during leadership summits, law-enforcement agencies routinely announce that activists are denied entry because of heightened security. In contrast, wrote *Kommersant*, Russian authorities could not allow themselves officially to impede activists given the regime's declared "law-based state" framework. Thus, officers did not identify themselves or provide legal grounds for detention before hauling activists from trains and buses, confiscating their internal passports, and sometimes beating them. Operation Firewall functioned in a "grey zone" between the written law and reality, what *Kommersant* described as a "hidden form of political repression and a violation of the constitutional right to freedom of assembly."

The Civil G8-2006 as an Arena of Contestation

The Civil G8 was an offshoot of earlier efforts to "democratize" G7/G8 decisionmaking. The media's portrayal of civil society's involvement in G7/G8 summits as street-based protests by anarchic, anti-corporate globalization demonstrators is, of course, an incomplete picture. NGO consultations with G7/G8 decisionmakers date back to the mid-1970s, but have markedly evolved since then. Whereas in the 1970s, G7 officials cultivated ties largely with academics, by the 1990s, NGOs were running parallel summits to advance their own policy recommendations.³² For the first time, in 1995, the G7 mentioned NGOs and civil society in its documents at the Halifax Summit, when the communiqué referred to NGOs' role in promoting sustainable development and the G7's need to work with an "active civil society" in implementing development goals. The University of Toronto's G7/G8 Research Group, headed by John Kirton, encouraged G7 leaders that year to consider NGO contributions to implementing various goals.³³ Then, in 2002, the Montreal International Forum/Forum International de Montreal (FIM), at the Ford Foundation's request, initiated an annual dialogue shortly before the G8 Summit in Kananaskis, Canada, between NGOs and G8 leaders, and in so doing, further legitimized and formalized NGO consultations with G8 leaders and their representatives.³⁴ Since Russia joined the ad hoc elite leadership group in 1998, a number of Russian NGO representatives (typically working for INGOs or well-resourced Russian NGOs) have taken part in G8-related NGO forums. Such activities included events coordinated with Britain's G8 presidency in 2005. The NGO Forum in Britain included 150 participants whose declarations were submitted to G8 ministers. Igor Chestin, who represented the Russian branch of the World Wildlife Fund, "was positively surprised when [he] saw that the Ministers Declarations kept eighty percent of our text, prepared by the NGOs. And we were also happy that the authorities of G8 states and NGOs were considering the same problems as most important for the world and civil societies."³⁵

³⁰ Valeriia Strel'nikova, Dmitrii Polianski, and Nikolai Donskov, "Gostei sammita vozili po askfal'tu," *Novaia gazeta*, July 17, 2006, 8. See also Aleksei Nelidov, Nikolai Koval, and Mikhail Telkhov, "Ochen' malen'kii antisammit," *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, July 15, 2006, 3.

³¹ "Sammit v seroi zone," *Kommersant*, July 14, 2006, 7.

³² For background on NGO-G7/G8 relations, see works by Peter I. Hajnal, "Partners Or Adversaries? The G7/G8 Encounters Civil Society," Academic Symposium G8 2000: New Directions in Global Governance? G8's Okinawa Summit, July 19-20, 2000, <<http://www.g7.utoronto.ca/scholar/hajnal20000720/>>; "Civil Society at the Gleneagles Summit," March 17, 2006, <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/scholar/hajnal_060309.html>; and undated interview, <<http://en.civilg8.ru/opinion/1612.php>>.

³³ Comments by Alexander Auzan in an interview in July 2006. <<http://en.civilg8.ru/1992.php>>

³⁴ Nigel Martin, "FIM and the G8," <<http://en.civilg8.ru/opinion/1492.php>>; and FIM, "Civil Society and the G8," <http://en.civilg8.ru/Civil_and_G8/1642.php>.

³⁵ Press-Conference of the National Working Group of Civil G8-2006 Project "G8-2006 – CivilG8-2006: Dialogue or Conflict?," Interfax Agency, February 9, 2006. <<http://en.civilg8.ru/1146.php>>.

Also in 2005, over 40 Russian NGOs conceived of the Civil G8 through a series of consultations and received Putin's backing.³⁶ Anatolii Kanunnikov (respondent 8), president of the Social Ecology Fund, noted that, at an NGO roundtable held at the UN Information Centre in Moscow, representatives of his organization and other Russian NGOs shared ideas about methods for organizing Civil G8 activities and coordinating them with Russia's G8 presidency. G8 Research Group representatives attended and made presentations. At an early stage, Oxfam also expressed an interest in helping organize the Civil G8. Given Putin's stated opposition to foreign meddling in the work of Russian NGOs, his endorsement of the Civil G8 and Western organizations' involvement in its preparation may have seemed uncharacteristic, but it reflected his pragmatic approach to relations with the West and an awareness of consultative NGO mechanisms tied to intergovernmental organizations. Vadim Karastelev (respondent 9) of the Novorossiisk Human Rights Committee agreed that Russian officials were knew that they were expected, as participants in international forums, to interact with NGOs. Putin welcomed expertise from Western organizations, such as the G8 Research Group, as long as such cooperation shed positive light on his regime.

Several Russian NGO activists questioned Putin's motives for supporting the Civil G8.³⁷ Tanya Lokshina of the Demos Centre, for example, argued that it was "to a great extent a project of the president's office, with Ella Pamfilova essentially put at its helm by the administration. The Kremlin successfully used the event to show that Russia is a democratic country that treats NGOs with respect."³⁸ However, the Kremlin reportedly did not manage Russian participants. None of my sources cited evidence of government interference in Civil G8 work; with the exception of Putin and his sherpa, Russian officials were not invited to meetings. NGO leaders "would not have tolerated any manipulation or pressure," noted Irina Malovichko (respondent 12) of UNESCO Child's Dignity in Volgograd, "as it would have become a matter of immediate discussion within the Civil G8."

In early November 2005, Putin appointed Pamfilova, chair of his Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights Council (formerly called the Commission of Human Rights), a member of the Civil G8's initiative group and offered the Civil G8 the Human Rights Council's support.³⁹ He later appointed her coordinator of the nine-member Civil G8-2006 National Working Group of the Advisory Council, which arranged the participation of Russian NGOs.⁴⁰ Pamfilova's detractors argue that she emulated Putin's approach to managing NGOs.⁴¹ Indeed, she appeared to defend the Kremlin by claiming that former CIA employees had drafted a 2006 Freedom House report criticizing Putin's human rights record.⁴² Yet, as the public face of the Civil G8, she was a more complex actor than this description allows. Although her words were never radical and her tone sometimes patronizing, Pamfilova still challenged the regime on specific points related to NGO freedoms, encouraged Russian officials to view them as their partners in implementing programs, championed NGOs' increased

³⁶ The number was stated on the Russian government's G8 Web site. <http://en.g8russia.ru/page_work/19.html>.

³⁷ "Russia in G8 chair not an entirely easy fit," Associated Press Newswires, July 5, 2006.

³⁸ Tanya Lokshina, "Russian civil society: the G8 and after," July 19, 2006.

<http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-institutions_government/after_g8_3753.jsp>.

³⁹ Press Release, "Chairman of the Council Ella Pamfilova is included on the Organising Committee for preparation and support for the Russian Federation's chairmanship of the "Group of 8" in 2006," November 3, 2005.

<<http://en.sovetpamfilova.ru/release/85.php>>; and "Press-Conference of the National Working Group of Civil G8-2006 Project "G8-2006 – CivilG8-2006: Dialogue or Conflict?"

⁴⁰ For a list of members, see <<http://civilg8.ru/about/council/6858.php>>. In addition to scheduling events for the Civil G8 and participation of Russian officials and officials from other G8 countries, the National Working Group also conducted a dialogue with antisummit activists. Press-Conference of the National Working Group of Civil G8-2006 Project "G8-2006 – CivilG8-2006: Dialogue or Conflict?" Pamfilova visited the Kirov Stadium to attend a Social Forum event, where she said that the Human Rights Council would investigate the detentions of antiglobalists. "Ella Pamfilova, Presedatel' Soveta pri Presidente RF po sodeistviu razvitiu institutov grazhdanskogo obshchestva," *Moskovskii komsomolets*, July 18, 2006, 2.

⁴¹ Politkovskaya, 123-25.

⁴² Russian Officials Lash Out at a Human Rights Report, *Kommersant.com*, Feb. 2, 2007.

access to G8 leaders, and referred to Western countries as positive role models for Russian civil society.⁴³ The guarded words of the former liberal Duma deputy indicate that she is a pragmatist who would rather work within the system than be marginalized: She noted that, “Maybe the root of [Russian officials’ arbitrariness] is in that people do not believe in self-organization, in the possibility to influence the quality of the government... Let’s not rely on false hopes, that when the summit is over, then everything will be over or will be absolutely fine. It will be hard and there will be the same problems but I hope that there will be ways to deal with them more efficiently through cooperation.”⁴⁴

On December 20, Pamfilova and other members of the Civil G8 Initiative Group announced the Civil G8-2006 forum at a press conference.⁴⁵ They next built an Advisory Council, consisting of 49 members, 29 of whom were Russian. Pamfilova described its mission as helping to clarify all positions and finding a common language for discussing issues.⁴⁶ In an early example of how the Civil G8 was an arena of contestation among Russian NGOs, Kanunnikov (respondent 8) felt that Pamfilova had selected Russian members based on favouritism and was shocked when his organization was not selected despite having been a Civil G8 initiator. The selection process, he observed, was such that “Russian NGOs actually were limited in their opportunities for participating in the preparation and conduct of all activities.” Conversely, Alexander Auzan, president of the Institute for the National Public Agreement Project and a member himself, claimed that the Council had a diverse Russian membership—including Moscow State University Rector Victor Sadovnichy, Moscow Helsinki Group Chair Ludmila Alexeeva, and St. Petersburg University Rector Ludmila Verbitskaya—“three persons with three different opinions about most important world events and three different approaches on how civil society must communicate with the authorities on issues of power.”⁴⁷ The extent to which other Russian Civil G8 participants agreed is impossible to gauge without more data.

In late 2005, organizers posted on the Civil G8 Web site an application (in Russian and English) for participation in Civil G8 events. As Pamfilova explained:

Practically all applicants could then take part in the Civil G8 2006 meetings. The National Working Group did permit all Russian NGOs to participate in the Civil G8-2006 if they applied or expressed their intention to be involved in our process. They could raise any problems and present their concerns and opinions either on official agenda of the G8, or on any issues they considered critical to be discussed by the G8 leaders. At the same time, members and experts of the National Working Group who were reputable representatives of Russia’s NGO community [contacted] their partners and colleagues, suggesting them take part in the Civil G8 2006. These were mainly NGOs focusing on the areas which had been announced as the [G8 agenda]... Russian NGOs could find out about the Civil G8-2006 via NGO networks at all levels... local, regional, national. Besides, in 2006, the National Working Group held several press conferences presenting the project and outlining the general idea of civil society’s attempt to influence the G8... For a full year, we distributed among NGOs a monthly updated brochure about the Civil G8 2006.⁴⁸

The Civil G8 attracted over 500 representatives of nearly 400 NGOs from across Russia; most attended either the March or July Forum or both (see Appendix II). A minority sat in the Public Chamber and on the President’s Human Rights Council, and several NGOs were openly critical of Putin’s human rights record. A strong plurality of NGOs was Moscow-based. Malovichko (respondent 12) conceded that some groups may have been chosen based on their loyalty to the regime, but that overall Pamfilova “played a large, positive role in the choice of organizations that participated” due to

⁴³ Pavel Dul’man, “Zapad kak fakt,” *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, May 31, 2006, 3; and Valerii Volkov, “Dlia sebja i liderov.” *Moskovskie novosti*, June 9, 2006, 21.

⁴⁴ Echo Moskvy radio program, July 3, 2006. <<http://en.civilg8.ru/forum0307/2317.php>>

⁴⁵ Press conference of the initiative group of NGOs, “Dialogue of Russian and world community with G8 within the Russian Federation’s presidency in 2006,” December 20, 2005. <<http://en.civilg8.ru/2493.php>>.

⁴⁶ “Press-Conference of the National Working Group of Civil G8-2006 Project “G8-2006 – CivilG8-2006: Dialogue or Conflict?”

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* For a list of members, see <<http://civilg8.ru/about/council/6857.php>>

⁴⁸ Text of Ella Pamfilova’s e-mail message to author, April 10, 2008.

her “competency and considerable knowledge of Russian civil society.” She described the three Volgograd NGOs that were Civil G8 participants, including her own, as adopting a “constructive approach to cooperating with state organs” while advancing independent positions. Similarly, Aleksey Toropov (respondent 18), director of the Siberian Ecological Agency in Tomsk, found that “the recruitment of Russian participants was adequate”; Greenpeace invited his and other Russian environmental NGOs to participate, and he did not recognize any GONGOs in the Civil G8.

Russian Civil G8 actors identified several goals for participating. The most often cited goal was to use the Civil G8 and Russia’s G8 presidency as a platform for voicing their concerns about human rights in Russia—especially the new NGO law. Resembling a “boomerang” pattern of influence, human rights NGOs wanted to use the Civil G8 forum as a direct channel to INGOs and G8 leaders, who might then feel compelled to pressure Russian authorities to revise or overturn the NGO law and comply with their human rights obligations.⁴⁹ Their efforts began as early as the December 2005 press conference when the Civil G8 was launched.⁵⁰ In January, a group of NGO representatives issued a statement blaming “certain politicians” for using the British Embassy scandal to harm NGOs and, in the process, “putting Russia to shame and undermining its authority on the world stage at the beginning of its chairing the G8.”⁵¹ In May, Yuri Dzhibladze of the Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights and Lokshina spoke at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC, about their hope that the Summit would provide an opportunity to pressure the Putin regime to “play by democratic rules.”⁵² On July 5, human rights groups from 30 regions of Russia, along with INGOs and the Council of Europe’s human rights commissioner, met at a conference where they urged G8 leaders to discuss their recommendations for resolving the “systematic crisis of human rights and democratic institutions.”⁵³ The following week, a group of Russian NGO representatives met with President George W. Bush at the US Consulate in St. Petersburg to discuss their concerns while he was in town for the G8 Summit.⁵⁴ Respondent 17 (name withheld) confirmed that addressing the NGO law was a key concern along with having a “direct dialogue with the Russian president about the paths to developing civil society.” Ruslan Badalov (respondent 2) of the Chechen Committee for National Salvation wanted G8 leaders to discuss the human rights situation in the North Caucasus.

Russian Civil G8 participants’ goals also included strengthening ties with the domestic NGO community, particularly NGOs with related concerns, and engaging with foreign NGOs. Maria Filatova (respondent 5), director of New Planetary Television of Youth in Moscow, said that Russian NGOs “believed that this participation would stir up [their] activities” and offer them opportunities to participate in international programs. Similarly, Vladimir Lagutov (respondent 11), director of the Green Don ecological movement, was pleased to meet with other Russian NGOs and Western colleagues to cooperate and make contacts, but assumed that Russian officials were using the Civil G8 only “to mimic agreement from inside the country.” Pavlova (respondent 13) planned to use the Civil G8 to “speak my mind about important problems concerning the defense of children’s rights” and possibly benefit from G8 recommendations. Iosif Dzialoshinskii (respondent 3), president of the

⁴⁹ Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Transnational Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 12.

⁵⁰ “Dialogue of Russian and world community with G8”; and Peter Teslenko, “Press Conference on Co-operation between Civil Society and the Group of Eight during Russia’s Presidency,” Moscow, December 20, 2005. <<http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/whatsnew/cs051220.html>>.

⁵¹ “Statement of Russian NGOs ‘the spy scandal’: position of civic organizations,” Moldova.org, Jan 31, 2006.

⁵² “Rights Groups Urge Leading Nations to Pressure G8 Host Russia on Democracy,” MOSNEWS (Russia), May 27, 2006.

⁵³ Address of the Conference “Human Rights in Russia in the Year of Her G8 Presidency and Council of Europe Chairmanship” to the Leaders of the G8 Nations, July 5, 2006. posted on <<http://www.demoscenter.ru/projects/649C353/7927E4F/1154349227>>.

⁵⁴ Aleksandr Voronov, Mikhail Zygar, and Andrei Kozenko, “Dzhordzh Bush poluchil obshchestvennoe poruchenie,” *Kommersant*, July 15, 2006, 3.

Moscow-based Commission on Freedom of Speech, found that most Russian NGOs participated simply to speak their minds to Russian authorities (i.e., for cathartic purposes) rather than for specific ends. His reasoning, which echoed the concerns of several other respondents, was that Russian officials would refer to NGOs' proposals only when they bolstered their existing positions. Aware of the criticism by some foreign counterparts that Russian NGOs were fixated on domestic problems, Pamfilova said she hoped that the Civil G8 would help "rehabilitate" Russia's democracy and "raise the community of Russian NGOs to [a] higher level of international cooperation."⁵⁵

Early Civil G8 events consisted of meetings among Russian and foreign NGO and INGO representatives in January and February 2006. They focused on agenda-building, particularly around the three official issues of global energy security, education, and infectious diseases.⁵⁶ In addition to over 30 smaller meetings on topics related to the G8's agenda and other key concerns of Civil G8 participants, the Civil G8 sponsored two two-day international NGO forums in Moscow before the G8 Summit. These meetings garnered the Civil G8 the most media attention, demonstrated the effectiveness of the organizers, challenged participants to reach a consensus on issues, and showed how well Russian participants adapted to global forums.

The March International NGO Forum

The first International NGO Forum, "The Contribution of Civil Society Institutions to the G8 Agenda," was held in Moscow on March 9-10. Its main goal was to prepare recommendations on agenda items and other concerns of NGOs in time for the G8 Summit. Over 300 NGO representatives, including approximately 100 NGOs from 35 countries, attended. More than 200 Russian national and regional NGOs took part, and representatives of approximately 20 NGOs from other former Soviet republics attended.⁵⁷ Pamfilova stressed that the Forum proved how Russian civil society was still alive and how groups with various political viewpoints, even anti-globalists, had participated.⁵⁸ Nigel Martin, president of the Montreal International Forum, said he had witnessed "the fruits of a birth of a free, dynamic, sophisticated civil society."⁵⁹ During March 9, NGOs separated into roundtables on the three G8 agenda items and other issues of interest, including trade, development and intellectual property; human security; fighting terrorism; and regional conflicts. The meeting marked the first time in the G7/G8's history that all sherpas (from each G8 member state, plus the EU) attended a large NGO forum. The sherpas listened to NGOs' comments and recommendations and promised to pass their final documents to G8 leaders. Later, the Organizing Committee of Russia's G8 Presidency stated that the meeting gave the sherpas valuable expertise to use in their work.⁶⁰

Pamfilova reported that the participants had reached consensus on a number of issues and wrote their recommendations for the G8 sherpas without controversy.⁶¹ She also discussed how Russian NGOs had an opportunity to "to learn tolerance and [the] ability to conduct a friendly and effective dialogue with...opponents [among] our foreign colleagues."⁶² Vladimir Chuprov, who worked in the

⁵⁵ Report on the NGO Meeting in Kazan with Sherpas, May 18-19, 2006. <<http://en.civilg8.ru/1776.php>>; "Dialogue of Russian and world community with G8"; "Press-Conference of the National Working Group of Civil G8-2006 Project "G8-2006 – CivilG8-2006: Dialogue or Conflict?"

⁵⁶ "Press-Conference of the National Working Group of Civil G8-2006 Project "G8—Civil G8: Dialogue or Conflict?"

⁵⁷ Irina Belasheva, "Demokratiia. Organizovannoe grazhdanskoe soobshchestvo," *Vremia novostei*, March 10, 2006, 3; and the Transcript of the Open Plenary Session, March 9, 2006. <<http://en.civilg8.ru/1374.php>>. For texts of the March Forum's documents and transcripts, see <<http://en.civilg8.ru/forum9march>>.

⁵⁸ Aleksei Chebotarev, "Nepравitel'stvennye organizatsii sochiniaut rekomendatsii pravitel'stvam," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, March 10, 2006, 2.

⁵⁹ Stephen Boykewich, "NGOs Divided on Message for G8 Summit," *Moscow Times*, March 13, 2006, 1.

⁶⁰ "Russia's G8 Presidency organizers praise sherpas, NGOs," posted on the Web site of Russia's G8 Presidency. <<http://en.g8russia.ru/news/20060309/1144828.html>>.

⁶¹ Pamfilova's remarks about March International NGO Forum. <http://en.civilg8.ru/opinion/1175.php>.

⁶² Ibid.

Nuclear Energy Program of the Russian branch of Greenpeace, was relieved that energy lobbying groups did not dominate the meeting and felt that “the mere opportunity to declare our opinions and the chance to be heard is already an achievement.”⁶³ Denise Roza, director of Perspektiva, belonged to a working group that drafted recommendations on educational opportunities for disabled children.⁶⁴ The Human Rights Council covered the travel costs of foreign education experts. Roza stressed that, “Even if nothing goes beyond this...we've made new partners and new friends who understand our needs in Russia...”⁶⁵ Malovichko (respondent 12) felt that Russian and foreign participants were on an equal footing, and that “all recommendations, even the critical and sharply worded ones, were freely proposed and openly discussed” in roundtables. She noted that language was no barrier because of synchronous translation services and the fact that many Russian participants were multi-lingual.

However, not everyone felt as positively about the Forum. Kanunnikov (respondent 8), whose organization was not invited, thought that the “list of participants of the Forum and subsequent activities show that it was not only narrow but did not represent the entire spectrum of the views of Russian civil society.”⁶⁶ Vladimir Sliviyak (respondent 16), co-chair of the NGO Eco-Defense, concluded that the “way the forum was organized and the makeup of its participants [were] such that any constructive proposals from active community members simply [could not] make their way into the concluding documents and reach the G8 in any form.”⁶⁷ Pamfilova was disappointed that only one-third of participants were foreigners, when one of her stated objectives was to encourage regional Russian NGOs to increase contacts with foreign NGOs.⁶⁸ In addition, consensus was not reached until a week later on energy security recommendations, which meant that they could not be tabled in time for G8-sponsored meetings on the issue held later that week.⁶⁹ The Forum’s participants “struggled to agree on their message for [G8] leaders” and “split on policy recommendations and the health of Russian civil society.”⁷⁰ According to Leonard Grigoryev, president of the Institute of Energy and Finance, NGOs who drafted the energy security recommendations largely called for placing more emphasis on alternative energy sources and curtailing state subsidies for nuclear energy, which contradicted Putin’s preferences. As a result, compromises were made. Alexander Antonchikov (respondent 1) of the Bird Protection Union in Saratov was disappointed when his recommendation to stress energy development’s adverse effects on biodiversity did not appear in the final version. “My general impression is that our proposals were not seriously taken into account,” he noted. He also thought that most of the proposals should have been vetted before the Forum.

The July International NGO Forum

Over 600 NGO representatives from 58 countries attended the International NGO Forum “Civil G8-2006” at the World Trade Centre in Moscow from July 3-4. More than 300 participants were foreigners, while 130 representatives of regional Russian NGOs and 170 representatives from Moscow NGOs were invited.⁷¹ Russian authorities allegedly had “tried to secure” observer status, but only

⁶³ Vladimir Chuprov, Nuclear Energy Program, Green Peace, Russia, Comments on the March 9, 2006, CG8 Forum. <<http://en.civilg8.ru/880.php>>.

⁶⁴ Stephen Boykewich.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Organizers later apologized “to all who wished to participate but were unable to owing to time constraints and the impossibility of accommodating all applicants.” <<http://en.civilg8.ru/1220.php>>.

⁶⁷ Stephen Boykewich.

⁶⁸ Pamfilova’s remarks about March 2006 International NGO Forum.

⁶⁹ Peter I. Hajnal, “The 2006 St. Petersburg Summit and Civil Society.” <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/scholar/hajnal_061202.html>.

⁷⁰ Boykewich.

⁷¹ Text of Ella Pamfilova’s press conference, July 2006, <<http://en.sovetpamfilova.ru/release/civil8/>>; and Anastasiya Lebedev, “NGOs Prepare to Address President,” *Moscow Times*, July 4, 2006, 3. For texts of Forum documents, see <<http://en.civilg8.ru/forum4july>>.

Putin and his sherpa, Igor Shuvalov, attended.⁷² Foreign and Russian organizers arranged 11 roundtables. Three focused on the official G8 agenda, and eight addressed particular Civil G8 concerns (sustainable development, NGOs and the state, public control over law-enforcement and prisons, migrants and refugees, human rights and the fight against terrorism, global security and the public interest, environmental issues, and business and society). Three Russian human rights organizations—Demos Centre, Public Verdict, and Memorial—helped organize the human-rights roundtables.⁷³

Many Russian participants deemed the Forum a success. Auzan stressed that its key result was their designing practical short- and long-term goals for monitoring government action.⁷⁴ Victoria Panova, a MGIMO professor who was the Moscow director of the G8 Research Group and a member of the Civil G8 National Working Group, found the Civil G8's recommendations "mostly [of a] declarative nature. But we [witnessed] a progress of willingness to hear the voice of the world civil society."⁷⁵ According to Valentina Gordienko (respondent 7), who works for a Dutch agency that funded several Russian NGOs that attended the Forum, Russian participants began by focusing only on domestic problems, but her fundees reported that most of their roundtable discussions were productive. The Russian branch of the World Wildlife Fund credited itself, Greenpeace, the Socio-Ecological Union, and other Russian NGOs with making it "a real summit of non-governmental organizations in which a wide range of global problems were discussed."⁷⁶ Respondent 17, a Moscow human rights activist, found the meetings well planned, and Badalov (respondent 2) noted the serious tone of the roundtable discussions. Kanunnikov (respondent 8), who sat on the business roundtable, was pleased that his organization's proposal on furthering international dialogue on problems of civil society was included in the final Civil G8 recommendation on the issue. Karastelev (respondent 9) found his work with foreign NGOs "useful and productive" on matters concerning victims of human rights abuses. Svetlana Gannushkina, who chaired the Committee for Civil Assistance, helped lead a roundtable discussion on xenophobia and migration, and emphasized the plight of Chechens and other displaced people in Russia. "I've [done] everything I intended to do," she said, "invited the experts, they analyzed the situation, prepared the final documents."⁷⁷ Perhaps most importantly, the Forum offered Russian NGOs a learning experience. The press secretary of the regional bureau of the UN Development Program, Snezhan Kolomiets, observed how Russian NGOs openly exchanged views with representatives of international organizations and learned how to appeal to state officials.⁷⁸ Pamfilova emphasized how Russian NGOs had "strengthened their positions."⁷⁹

As with the March Forum, several Russian participants of this forum were disappointed, including some who were not sure what the Forum had accomplished, given that they had no access to the G8 Summit draft documents. Ol'ga Alekseeva, director of the Russian branch of the Charities Aid Foundation, felt that the conversation was "abstract and that the Forum's participants tried to absorb too many themes for one small period of time"; she questioned whether the G8 leaders would even read the recommendations.⁸⁰ Gregory Vergus (respondent 20), coordinator of a grant program of the International Coalition of Readiness for Treatment in St. Petersburg, thought that the recommendation

⁷² Auzan's interviews about the July Forum. <<http://en.civilg8.ru/1992.php>>.

⁷³ Echo Moskvyy radio program featuring Pamfilova interview, July 3, 2006. <<http://en.civilg8.ru/forum0307/2317.php>>

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Press Release, "The NGO World Community discussed the results of 'Civil G8-2006' Project," December 2, 2006, <<http://en.civilg8.ru/actcivil/media/2488.php>>.

⁷⁶ World Wildlife Fund-Russia, "G8 + WWF," *WWF Bulletin* (Summer 2006): 1.

⁷⁷ Svetlana Gannushkina's remarks. <<http://en.civilg8.ru/opinion/2006.php>>.

⁷⁸ "'Grazhdanskaia vos'merka' obsudila puti nalazhivaniia dialoga s glavami gosudarstv i pravitel'stv," UN Radio (Russian version), July 5, 2006. <<http://radio.un.org/ru/story.asp?NewsID=997>>. See also Ann Zakatnova, "Tretii sektor," *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, July 4, 2006, 3.

⁷⁹ "The NGO World Community discussed the results of 'Civil G8-2006' Project."

⁸⁰ Vladimir Kuz'min, "V obshchestve Putina," *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, July 5, 2006, 1.

on infectious diseases was abstract and lacked concrete proposals. He blamed this weakness on poor meeting preparation, lack of consultations with various NGOs in the health field, the dominance of UN representatives and representatives from a few large INGOs at the roundtable, and most participants' lack of experience in drafting documents at global forums. Respondent 14, a human rights activist from southern Russia, felt that Russian participants were deprived of opportunities to work with foreign participants because of limited discussion time and significant language barriers, which contradicted Malovichko's impressions of the March Forum.

The Forum's highlight was Putin's three-hour appearance on July 4, when the Civil G8 issued recommendations for the Summit and the G8's 2007 agenda. It marked the first time that the host of a G8 Summit addressed a large NGO audience and pledged to take their recommendations directly to the other G8 leaders for discussion.⁸¹ His appearance was a public relations coup; he portrayed himself as open to NGO input, especially in contrast to Bush, who refused to meet with NGO delegations before the Sea Island Summit in 2004.⁸² For many participants, including Dzhibladze, the Civil G8's meeting with Putin represented a "unique opportunity to...express to him all that we had discussed."⁸³ Putin listened to and remarked on the statements of each roundtable and responded to questions. He appealed to his audience by making seemingly candid comments (i.e., "I feel I am among likeminded people") and calling the lengthy preparation of G8 Summit documents "too bureaucratic."⁸⁴ Putin supported several recommendations—including reducing strategic nuclear weapons and supporting mandatory labeling on genetically-modified food—but opposed proposals for further regulating the nuclear energy industry and reaffirmed his opposition to the foreign funding of Russian NGOs.⁸⁵ He noted that G8 leaders categorized human rights as a "miscellaneous" issue because "everyone is ready to discuss human rights, but only in other countries, but with regard to domestic issues nobody wants to engage with or discuss this issue."⁸⁶

Several Russian participants, including Galina Bogolyubova (president of the Slavonic Fund for Russia and a Public Chamber member) and Gordienko (respondent 7), praised him.⁸⁷ Reportedly, the audience appreciated his tactful handling of a protest by representatives of Eco-Defense.⁸⁸ Some Russian participants were encouraged by his remarks on the NGO law. He promised that "if it turns out that registration procedures have become tougher, we are ready to react and even to initiate changes, including in line with your recommendations."⁸⁹ Despite this promise, the law was not revised. Moreover, not everyone hailed his performance. Some human rights groups, including Memorial and the Chechen Committee for National Salvation, protested his policies in the North Caucasus by walking out briefly. Lokshina concluded that "Putin's sudden goodwill" would not last, "particularly as he remains concerned that NGOs may promote oppositional (and foreign) political agendas."⁹⁰ Yuri Vdovin, director of Civil Control, thought that "Only world public opinion, through the leaders of the seven, can have an influence on him."⁹¹

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² In another first for a summit host, Putin met for three hours with heads of 13 INGOs at his Novo-Ogarevo estate later that night to discuss energy and climate security, human security, fighting poverty, and state regulation of NGOs. Chestin, who was present, described the meeting as "an opinion exchange and both sides had an opportunity to hear each other's positions directly." Chestin's interview with REGNUM. <<http://en.civilg8.ru/opinion/1991.php>>.

⁸³ Aleksandr Latyshev, "'Vos' merka' po-grazhdanski," *Izvestiia*, July 4, 2006, 2.

⁸⁴ Kuz'min.

⁸⁵ "NGO representatives rate dialogue with Putin positively," *RIA Novosti*, July 4, 2006.

⁸⁶ Putin remarks about NGO freedoms at July 2006 meeting with Civil G8 participants. <<http://en.sovetpamfilova.ru/release/civil8/102.php>>.

⁸⁷ "NGO representatives rate dialogue with Putin positively."

⁸⁸ Viktoriia Sokova, "Prezident nashel soiuznikov sredi neformalov," *Izvestiia*, July 5, 2006, 1.

⁸⁹ Putin remarks about NGO freedoms at July 2006 meeting with Civil G8 participants.

⁹⁰ Lokshina, "Russian civil society: the G8 and after."

⁹¹ "Russia in G8 chair not an entirely easy fit."

Gauging Civil G8 Influence

During the Summit, which took place in the Constantine Palace near St. Petersburg from July 15 to 17, Civil G8 participants monitored whether the G8 leaders had incorporated their recommendations into 12 final documents. Civil G8 organizers estimated that “about 28% of all civil society recommendations were taken into consideration.”⁹² Kirton reported that, “Civil society as a relevant and valuable actor was recognized in the chair’s summary far more than ever before and also throughout most of the individual communiqués.”⁹³ However, other evaluations of Civil G8 influence painted a less favourable picture and noted the difficulty in proving causation. Peter I. Hajnal of the G8 Research Group concluded that G8 leaders overall had not taken NGO opinions into account and that NGO participants took a “generally critical tone of the St. Petersburg summit,” citing reports by Amnesty International and other INGOs.⁹⁴ A Russian Oxfam representative, Vitalii Kartamyshev, was frustrated with how, when discussing how to relieve the international debt of developing countries, officials from wealthy G8 countries equated the granting of partial credit with actual “financial aid.”⁹⁵ While noting that “serious progress” was made towards the G8 leaders’ listening “to the opinion of the world community and [granting] additional legitimacy to its actions and its existence,” Panova found only two clear references to Civil G8 recommendations in the documents.⁹⁶ Among several other disappointments, the views of G8 member states and Civil G8 participants differed the most on nuclear energy, and no G8 documents addressed human rights.⁹⁷

The opinions of other Russian Civil G8 actors about their impact on G8 decisionmaking were also mixed. As respondent 17 explained, “In terms of how seriously G8 representatives took civil society’s recommendations, there is no one set answer.” Vladimir Slivnyak (respondent 16) “got the feeling that NGO work in the framework of Civil-G8 did not influence [the] official agenda at all.” He and several other respondents indicated that Russian officials did not bother to manage Russian participants because they did not take them seriously in the first place. Pavlova (respondent 13) said that Russian officials, if anything, were indifferent to NGOs’ concerns. Antonchikov (respondent 1) mentioned that Russian officials were free to ignore NGO proposals. Respondent 14 said that Russian officials neglected to create proper conditions for working on recommendations and proposals, while respondent 17 thought that Russian officials were not alone in largely ignoring the Civil G8’s recommendations, but that other G8 governments also discounted their work. Karastelev (respondent 9) reported that many Russian NGOs felt unclear about how to influence G8 decisionmakers.

Of the 17 respondents who answered a question about NGO influence, only two answered positively. Toropov’s (respondent 18) and Alexey Kokorin’s (respondent 10, a WWF staff member) responses indicate the potential of scientific expertise in swaying the opinions of G8 leaders. Toropov felt that his organization’s lobbying at the March Forum, including a meeting with Shuvalov, influenced Russian authorities to relocate a nuclear power station from a site near the city of Tomsk to a less developed area in the Cheliabinsk oblast. He thought that NGO opposition to nuclear energy expansion persuaded G8 leaders to omit from the final G8 declaration on energy security a strong call for the renewal of nuclear energy, although it is important to point out that Germany also opposed this

⁹² “The NGO World Community discussed the results of ‘Civil G8-2006’ Project”; Panova documented the 28% figure in a Power Point presentation, “Civil G8-2006 activities overall evaluation and its influence on the official G8.” <<http://en.civilg8.ru/conf0212/2482.php>>

⁹³ John Kirton, “The Future G8 after St. Petersburg, *Russia in Global Affairs* no. 2 (April-June 2007). <<http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/numbers/19/1106.html>>.

⁹⁴ Peter I. Hajnal, “The 2006 St. Petersburg Summit and Civil Society.”

⁹⁵ “Sammit obsuzhdaet livanskii krizis,” BBC Report (in Russian), July 17, 2006.

⁹⁶ Victoria V. Panova, “Overall evaluation of the Civil G8-2006 activities and its influence on the official G8,” 5-7, 15. <en.civilg8.ru/media/pdf/Final_en.doc>.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3 and 12.

expansion. Russian WWF representatives concluded that their recommendations and those of other environmental NGOs influenced the wording of the St. Petersburg Plan of Action on Global Energy Security and changed Russian officials' thinking about climate change. Kokorin said that "we were able to show that Russian officials ought to take a new look at the [climate change] problem, that their view was outdated by a few years, and they did this." A WWF-Russia report detailed that, "by our demand, climate change and Kyoto mechanisms such as Joint Implementation projects were directly highlighted in the plan, especially in the context of the [2005 Gleneagles Plan]... This is a good basis for achieving practical results on a national level, e.g. sorting out problems of Russian Joint Implementation legislation and starting ecologically sound projects."⁹⁸ Kokorin found that the "[the higher] the professionalism and NGOs' knowledge about [climate change], the better they act within the framework of real problems – greenhouse effect, educational activities within the framework of the climate issues."⁹⁹ Kirton agreed that "the environmental NGOs that dominated the Civil G8 leadership and process did much to inject badly needed environmental sensitivity into the energy agenda and framing of the G8 governors."¹⁰⁰

Conclusions

The Civil G8 was widely viewed as innovative. Putin's sous-sherpa, not surprisingly, noted that it helped contribute to "the unprecedented scale on which civil society was involved in the preparatory work" for the Summit.¹⁰¹ Its organizers claimed that it obtained "the desired level [of] cooperation" between the G8 and civil society representatives.¹⁰² Pamfilova stressed that Russian participants became "more self-assured as full-scale partners in the international process."¹⁰³ Foreign participants praised its Russian organizers.¹⁰⁴ The coordinator of SUD France said they did "a lot to develop their relations with foreign colleagues."¹⁰⁵ Kirton argued that the Civil G8 "helped to empower democratic constituencies within Russia," and foreign NGOs recognized "how well developed this part of Russian civil society had become."¹⁰⁶ Beyond these initial compliments, though, Russian participants contested its meaning, objectives, and benefits. This contestation indicates that the forum's organizers allowed NGOs with diverse political views to participate. More generally, it reveals how the role of NGOs in political life and the state of Russia's democracy were being debated. Unfortunately, as outlined below, events that occurred after 2006 prove that the Civil G8 had little to no permanent effect on NGO-state relations.

Russian participants appreciated acting on the global stage, gaining access to officials, and meeting other NGOs. Even Lokshina, a Putin critic, observed that, "Russian NGOs in cooperation with their international and foreign partners succeeded in preventing manipulation of the process in the political interests, worked out the agenda without any restrictions and at the end produced some strong documents with solid recommendations, which were all delivered to the G8 leadership and broadly publicized."¹⁰⁷ Representatives of the WWF Russian branch and the Tomsk Siberian Ecological Agency perceived that their expertise influenced Russian officials to adjust their positions on climate

⁹⁸ World Wildlife Fund-Russia, "G8 + WWF."

⁹⁹ Kokorin remarks on Civil G8 site (trans into English) <<http://en.civilg8.ru/opinion/2202.php>>.

¹⁰⁰ John Kirton, "Shocked into Success: Prospects for the St. Petersburg Summit." <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/conferences/2006/mgimo/kirton_prospects_060717.pdf>.

¹⁰¹ Speech by Andrei Kondakov at an OECD meeting of the Executive Committee in Special Session, November 3, 2006. Text in English posted on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Web site <<http://www.mid.ru>>.

¹⁰² "The NGO World Community discussed the results of 'Civil G8-2006' Project."

¹⁰³ "Chairwoman of President's Council for Assisting the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights on "Civil G8" meeting," SKRIN Newswire, July 18, 2006.

¹⁰⁴ "Putin to recall G8 states about pledge to hold forums with NGOs," *ITAR-TASS Daily*, April 11, 2007.

¹⁰⁵ Comments by Fabrice Ferrier. <<http://en.civilg8.ru/opinion/1751.php>>.

¹⁰⁶ Kirton, "The Future G8 after St. Petersburg"; and Kirton, "Shocked into Success."

¹⁰⁷ Lokshina, "Russian civil society: the G8 and after."

change and nuclear energy. To Kokorin (respondent 10), the Civil G8's main significance was "the cohesiveness of Russian NGOs and the increase in the level of knowledge on the problem of climate and energy." Referring to the sherpas' and Putin's attendance at NGO meetings, he found that "Even taking into account the skepticism about the real significance of NGOs, one must admit that these personal contacts are very useful."¹⁰⁸ Malovichko (respondent 12) felt that the Civil G8 played a significant role in unifying Russian NGOs, clarifying their positions, and coordinating them with foreign NGOs. Badalov (respondent 2) appreciated how it gave Russian NGOs an opportunity to work with foreign NGOs to effect change within the G8. Alexander Fedorov (respondent 4) of the Lipetsk Socio-Ecological Union, reported that Civil G8 participation helped his group organize an inter-regional conference. Lagutov (respondent 11) thought that the Civil G8 may have prevented more NGOs from being liquidated because the Russian government did not want crackdowns to draw the public's attention.

While Russian participants identified tangible benefits, some also reported that the Civil G8 did not resolve their problems or broaden NGO networks. Gordienko (respondent 7) stated that, while the Civil G8 was significant for Russian NGOs at the time, the NGO community still struggles with a "lack of communication and coordination." Gefter (respondent 6), a member of the Civil G8 Advisory Council, agreed that the one-time Civil G8 experience did not have "any long-term and permanent extension" for most of the Russian participants and described G8 Summits as "political PR shows." Respondent 17 added that Russian NGOs "do not look on the alternative G8 as a means of resolving their problems." She reported that her organization did not make any new foreign contacts, largely because they had different interests and most Russian NGOs were focused on domestic concerns. Toropov (respondent 18), Malovichko (respondent 12) and Kokorin (respondent 10) also reported that their experience did not result in many new foreign NGO contacts. Slivyak (respondent 16) said that his organization had cooperated with foreign partners before the Civil G8, and its participation did not make a noticeable difference. Vergus (respondent 20) also found that it did not give Russian NGOs any long-standing opportunities for cooperation with other NGOs and was disappointed that a few seasoned NGOs dominated the drafting process. Overall, only a small minority of Russian NGOs participated in the Civil G8, so it stands to reason that its impact on civil society would be minimal.

Another finding is that Russian participants appeared to trust the Putin regime less than the general Russian population had. A day after the Summit ended, human rights NGOs hosted a meeting where they predicted that the transparency and openness that Russian officials displayed during the G8 Summit would not last.¹⁰⁹ Filatova (respondent 5) felt that Russian Civil G8 participants were used by Russian authorities. Pamfilova's office asked her to draft a program for a Civil G8 event, but then did not contact her again after receiving it. "I now think they gathered us together to demonstrate to the world and Europe that the government works in tandem with us. This was a lie and a show," she wrote. She observed that many other Russian NGOs shared this opinion. For instance, Malovichko (respondent 12) thought that "for the Russian government [the Civil G8] was a demonstration...an adornment of the democratic image of our government," in that it had ignored the essence and content of the Civil G8's recommendations. Similarly, respondent 14 described mechanisms like civic forums as "an imitation of large-scale change in social conditions."

Clearly, this case does not represent an effective boomerang pattern of influence. While the Council of Europe's human rights commissioner and various INGOs supported Russian NGOs' efforts to pressure Russian authorities to honour their human rights obligations, the other G8 leaders did not substantively address the issue with Putin at the Summit. Not all G8 leaders agree on whether to use a carrot or stick approach in dealing with Russia's human rights problems or its nationalistic energy policies, a fact that raises the question of how effective an ad hoc leadership group such as the G8 can

¹⁰⁸ Kokorin remarks on Civil G8 site.

¹⁰⁹ "Russian NGOs fear Kremlin crackdown after G8 charm," *Agence France Presse*, July 18, 2006.

be in inculcating and enforcing human rights norms.¹¹⁰ Some Russian NGOs observed that Russian officials were not receptive to pressure from Western leaders or NGOs to reform their behaviour. To Toropov (respondent 18), the Civil G8 “did not change the disdainful relations of the Russian vertical of power to the representatives of civil society,” and Russian officials would continue to “build their own dutiful civil society” through the federal and regional public chambers and the neo-Komsomol. According to Malovichko (respondent 12), state-NGO relations after 2006 “showed that the work of the Civil G8 did not have any influence on political decisions of the Russian government.” Pavlova (respondent 13) similarly concluded that G8 recommendations “had practically no influence on the formulation of social policy in Russia.” Badalov (respondent 2) was disappointed that the international community failed to sway the Russian government to improve its human rights record.

Evidence supports this view. At least five NGOs that participated in the Civil G8, including Badalov’s, were harassed by the authorities and faced legal action after 2006.¹¹¹ According to one NGO-sponsored survey of eight Russian regions, approximately 600 NGOs were threatened with liquidation by August 2007 as a result of the NGO law, including alleged failure to submit annual reports.¹¹² In the first half of 2007 alone, the Federal Registration Service issued 18,022 warnings to Russian NGOs (8 percent) and 34 warnings to foreign NGOs (15 percent) ostensibly for failing to submit documents.¹¹³ Irek Shaydullin (respondent 15), whose organization was targeted by officials, warned that “it’s now considered extremism to criticize the Russian government.” Pamfilova, the Human Rights Council, the Public Chamber, and the Moscow Higher School of Economics coordinated an effort to draft revisions to the NGO law and submitted them to Putin for consideration in mid-2007, without receiving a response.¹¹⁴ In a January 2007 Human Rights Council meeting, Putin did not address Pamfilova’s criticism of law-enforcement officers’ mistreatment of antiglobalist activists who were arrested en route to the Russian Social Forum.¹¹⁵ Later that year, law-enforcement agencies arrested and beat protesters during unsanctioned marches in Nizhnyi Novgorod and Moscow.¹¹⁶ The Federation Council’s recent creation of a Commission on the Development of Civil Society Institutions indicates how authorities continually design new ways to curb NGOs’ autonomy.¹¹⁷ It is perhaps too early to predict how President Dmitri Medvedev, Putin’s protégé, might treat NGOs, but the evidence is ambiguous at best. In his inaugural address, he pledged to guard civil liberties, while months earlier he claimed to oppose the foreign funding of NGOs, asserting that “the state should maintain these organizations on its own.”¹¹⁸

Lastly, the Civil G8’s long-term impact on the G8 remains unclear. At the St. Petersburg Summit, G8 leaders pledged to hold forums with NGOs at future summits.¹¹⁹ However, the German hosts of the G8 Summit in 2007 did not sponsor their own Civil G8. Gefter (respondent 6) regretted that viable and permanent mechanisms for consultations with sherpas following summits were not designed, although Civil G8 participants did form a working group for coordinating the strengthening of NGO

¹¹⁰ Pamela A. Jordan, “International and Domestic Dimensions of Russia’s G8 Presidency in 2006,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* (forthcoming in the November 2008 issue).

¹¹¹ They include the St. Petersburg-based Citizens Watch (Grazhdanskii Kontrol’), the Novorossiisk-based Committee for Human Rights (director and survey respondent, Vadim Karastelev), the Chechen Committee for National Salvation in Nazran (staff member and survey respondent, Ruslan Badalov), Green Don in Novocherkassk (director and survey respondent, Vladimir Lagutov), and Kazan’s Clean City NGO (director and survey respondent, Irek Shaydullin). See Amnesty International, “Russian Federation: Freedom limited,” 10.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹³ Nikolaus von Twickel, “NGOs buried by mountain of paper,” *Moscow Times*, August 24, 2007.

¹¹⁴ “Putin to recall G8 states about pledge to hold forums with NGOs,” *ITAR-TASS Daily*, April 11, 2007.

¹¹⁵ Ekaterina Pol’gueva, “Kreml’: V zashchite prav ne userdstvovat’,” *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, January 13, 2007, 1.

¹¹⁶ Lokshina, “Russian civil society: an appeal to Europe.”

¹¹⁷ “Russian legislators set up commission for civil society institutions,” Interfax, February 20, 2008.

¹¹⁸ “Russia should finance own NGOs – Putin’s likely successor,” Interfax, February 27, 2008.

¹¹⁹ “Putin to recall G8 states about pledge to hold forums with NGOs.”

participation. G8 leaders appear to value NGO consultations mainly when they involve practical expertise. In fact, “global civil society” has not gained universal legitimacy, partly because NGOs cannot say they represent the popular will when they are not democratically elected.¹²⁰ Karastelev (respondent 9) echoes that G8 members, “especially Russia, are not ready to seriously relate to NGO recommendations. It still lies ahead for us to become a strong civil society [whose demands] the government would have to take into account.”

¹²⁰ Kenneth Anderson and David Rieff, “‘Global Civil Society’: A Sceptical View,” in *Global Civil Society 2004/2005*, edited by Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius, and Mary Kaldor (New York: Sage Publications, 2005), 26-39.

APPENDIX I: RUSSIAN CIVIL G8 PARTICIPANTS WHO REPLIED TO SURVEY
January-March 2008

Name	Organization	Location	Date of Message* and Misc. Info.
1. Alexander Antonchikov	Bird Protection Union of Russia	Saratov branch	January 30
2. Ruslan Badalov	Chechen Committee for National Salvation	Nazran, Ingushetia	February 1
3. Iosif Dzialoshinskii	Commission on Freedom of Speech	Moscow	January 14 brief answer; did not address all issues.
4. Alexander Fedorov	Socio-Ecological Union	Lipetsk	January 12 (entry in online blog). Discussed only benefits to organization.
5. Maria Filatova	New Planetary Television of Youth	Moscow	January 8
6. Valentine Gefter	Human Rights Institute	Moscow	January 10
7. Valentina Gordienko	MATRA, NGO funding agency of Dutch government	Dutch Embassy, Moscow	January 15 & January 22; sent text of July 5, 2006, report. Attended one day of July Forum.
8. Anatolii Kanunnikov	Social Ecology Fund	Moscow	January 8
9. Vadim Karastelev	Human Rights Committee	Novorossiisk	February 11
10. Alexey Kokorin	World Wildlife Fund	Moscow	January 14
11. Vladimir Lagutov	Green Don Ecological Movement	Novocherkassk	January 11
12. Irina Malovichko	UNESCO Child's Dignity	Volgograd	January 20
13. Nadezhda Pavlova	Karelia Union for Children's Salvation	Petrozavodsk	March 19
14. NAME WITHHELD	NAME WITHHELD	Southern Russia	January 22 Member of human rights NGO.
15. Irek Shaydullin	Clean City	Kazan	January 9 Wrote only about NGO relations with Putin regime.
16. Vladimir Slivyak	Eco-Defense	Moscow	January 14
17. NAME WITHHELD	NAME WITHHELD	Moscow	January 12 Member of human rights NGO.
18. Aleksey Toropov	Siberian Ecological Agency	Tomsk	January 15
19. Mikhail Troitskiy	Academic Educational Forum on International Relations and MGIMO	Moscow	Phone call, January 23 Answered general question about Russian NGOs and relations with Putin.
20. Gregory Vergus	International Coalition of Readiness for Treatment	St. Petersburg	February 1

* All dates are from 2008, unless otherwise noted.

NOTE: Ella Pamfilova, Civil G8 coordinator, replied by e-mail on April 10 to questions I asked her about how Russian Civil G8 participants were selected and received information about the Civil G8.

APPENDIX II: PROFILE OF RUSSIAN PARTICIPANTS IN CIVIL G8-2006*

- 505 names of Russian NGO participants on the Civil G8 Web site list. I obtained this number after removing duplicate names. Note that a small minority of participants were scholars from Russian universities and academic institutes.
- 382 Russian NGOs participated in the Civil G8.
- Number of NGOs based in Moscow: 210 55%
- Number of NGOs based in St. Petersburg: 16 4%
- Number of NGOs based in Western Russia (to Urals, including Moscow and St. Petersburg): 314 82%
- Number of NGOs based in Southern Russia/the Caucasus: 16 4%
- Number of NGOs based in the Far East: 34 9%
- 14 Russian NGO representatives who participated in Civil G8 2006 were members of the Public Chamber in 2006.
- 18 members of the President's Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights Council as of Feb. 2008 also participated in the Civil G8.
- 29 out of 49 members of the Advisory Council worked for Russian NGOs.
- The National Working Group of the Advisory Council had nine members, all of whom were Russian.
- Over 200 members of Russian NGOs attended the International NGO Forum, March 9-10, 2006, in Moscow.
- Approximately 300 members of Russian NGOs attended the International NGO Forum, July 3-4, 2006, in Moscow.
- 46 representatives of Russian NGOs took part in the final Civil G8 conference, "Delivering the 2006 G8 Agenda," December 2, 2006. (42 foreign participants)

*The statistics are based on the lists of names and organizational affiliations posted on the official Civil G8 Web site.