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Parasitic Police State

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The government has published its budget through 2016. It includes an increase in defense spending in 2014 from 15.7 percent of the budget to 17.8 percent — or in real terms, an additional 390 billion rubles ($12 billion). Spending on state employees will rise from 6.9 percent to 7.4 percent of the budget, even while spending for health care, education, housing and utilities will decrease.

Overall spending for the state apparatus, the army and the police totals more than 40 percent of the budget. You might make the quick assumption that this is the budget of a military

and police state, were it not for the fact that Russia has neither a professional military nor a serious police force. Russia has five times more policemen per capita than Europe and 16 times more murders.

A similar problem exists with the army. Increased defense spending does not result in increased efficiency, if only for the simple reason that the Kremlin is concerned that a highly trained, professional army could stage a coup.

So where does all that money go? It lines the pockets of the people who support the regime: the defense industry thieves and their employees who make their living producing useless equipment.

A perfect example is the story of the Uralvagonzavod tank factory. When Anatoly Serdyukov was defense minister, he announced his refusal to purchase the high-priced and outdated tanks. Soon afterward, factory foreman Igor Kholmanskikh told President Vladimir Putin during his live call-in show that he was willing to personally come to the capital and help disperse the white-ribbon-toting protesters. Soon after, Putin appointed Kholmanskikh as his presidential envoy to the Urals Federal District, and Uralvagonzavod was back in business with government contracts.

The same can be said about increased spending for the state bureaucracy.

A factory director in the Urals recently wrote to tell me how his company had been subjected to inspections by 14 different agencies, the existence of most of which he had learned about only during the actual checks.

They included a veterinary unit consisting of two elderly men who actually drove 120 kilometers from the regional capital to inspect the factory's two guard dogs that lay all day in doghouses at the factory entrance. The men required three days to complete their review, which comes to 1 1/2 days per dog.

In addition, the education oversight agency fined the factory 300,000 rubles ($9,300) for providing vocational training to workers without a license. Never mind the fact that no other source of training existed for those workers. The factory did have licenses for its milling, slotting, finishing, polishing, sharpening and core-making machines, but it lacked one for its lapping machine. True, the factory had been trying to obtain a license to instruct its workers on the lapping machine, but it had been refused for several months. At that point, the factory was fined for not having it.

The increased spending is intended to strengthen the class of parasites that does not want to work and only wants to extort money. They support Putin because he gives them the opportunity to do both.

This is not the budget of a real police state but only a parasitic one. It is a budget devoted to providing jobs to people who live off of the rest of the economy and who form Putin's core electorate.

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