

2008-2009 Alexander Dallin Lecture in Soviet and Post-Soviet Affairs
"The Unstable Politics of Russian Diarchy: Some Preliminary Thoughts"

The Annual Dallin Lecture honors Stanford Professor of History and Political Science Alexander Dallin, a founder of Russian and East European Studies not only at Stanford but also nationwide.

On October 15th 2008, CREEES sponsored Peter Reddaway, Professor Emeritus of Political Science and International Affairs at George Washington University, for the 11th annual Alexander Dallin Lecture. Peter Reddaway received both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Cambridge University, went on to do further graduate work at Harvard and the London School of Economics, and became director of the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies.

In less than two hours Professor Reddaway outlined the dual power relationship between current Prime Minister Putin and President Medvedev, analyzed why Putin chose a diarchal transfer of power, and then addressed the successes and issues regarding Russia's current political order. Reddaway began the lecture by describing how the economic trends under Putin followed a pattern of weak institutions, intimidation of rivals, the use of cronies in economic deals and state-sponsored nepotism that created a two-way dependency between Putin and Russia's senior officials. Because the majority of Russia's senior officials had acquired their capital illegally, their continued wealth was dependent on Putin remaining in power. Likewise, Putin relied on these wealthy officials for continued support and to preserve his secrets (such as potential evidence linking him to various murdered journalists and the 1999 Moscow apartment bombings).

By 2007, it had become clear to all Putin and all of the elites in his inner circle that Putin could not step out of power completely and guarantee the safety of their bank accounts and therefore their continued loyalty. Putin did not have a potential successor that would remain loyal to him if he stepped out of power completely, and so he chose Medvedev as his successor while becoming Prime Minister.

Reddaway explained that Putin did not continue on as president because this would have required changing the constitution to allow him a third term, which would delegitimize the image of democracy in Russia. Instead, Putin has established a diarchal political system where he is both out of the limelight and still in control of the reigns of the Russian troika, and can therefore continue to protect the interests of his elite circle.

Reddaway argued that this dual-power (or, *dvoevlastiia*) (spelling?) has been successful in that neither Putin nor Medvedev has criticized the other in public, there has been no apparent squabbling over what each leader should attend, and Medvedev has deferred to Putin's stance on Georgia and the West. Reddaway explicated that Putin has guaranteed continued control of the Kremlin by gathering support from the party Unified Russia, and by forbidding Medvedev from joining any parties. Without a party backing him, Medvedev will not be able to reform without Putin's support, or throw Putin from power.

In the final moments of the 2008 Dallin Lecture, Professor Reddaway considered how long Russia's diarchy will last. He noted that some Russians believe that a single dominant leader is necessary in lieu of the current worldwide economic crisis. Reddaway, however, anticipated that it would be highly unlikely for Putin to either eventually cede

all power to Medvedev or demand that Medvedev resign and retake the presidency. Rather, Reddaway projected that there are two much more likely outcomes: Putin will either let Medvedev take the lead for now (in order to avoid the current economic difficulties that the President faces), or compete with Medvedev over the best course of action to take until the most demanding issues have been addressed. Given this outcome Putin will then become more accommodating to Medvedev once the economic crisis has passed. Professor Reddaway ended his lecture by warning that the current Putin-Medvedev diarchy is likely to become increasingly unstable.

Article by Tanya Bulloch