

SERGEY YUSHENKOV's murder on April 17 may have been the result of machinations aimed at destroying Russian President Vladimir Putin politically and personally, as well as undermining U.S.-Russia relations, seemingly on track again after the rift over Iraq. Gunned down outside his Moscow apartment, Yushenkov, the leader of the Liberal Russia political party, joins a lengthening list of Russian luminaries slain in gangland-style hits in recent years.

Yushenkov was a harsh critic of the "oligarchy" as it evolved under Boris Yeltsin and his "family," the loose network of Yeltsin associates that remains the dominant force in Russian politics and economics today. Ironically, Yushenkov had lately become associated with "oligarch-in-exile" and determined Putin foe Boris Abramovich Berezovsky (BAB), who has financed the Liberal Russia project from his mansion near London, while fighting attempts by Moscow to have him extradited to face embezzlement charges. With support from Berezovsky-backed media, Yushenkov was also involved in conducting an unofficial investigation of possible FSB (the domestic-security successor to the KGB; Putin is a former KGB/FSB officer) involvement in the 1999 terrorist bombings, allegedly carried out by Chechen terrorists, that helped get Putin elected president.

One pundit claimed that the murder was the result of Yushenkov's connections to Berezovsky, an indirect "punishment"—and a warning—to BAB. Berezovsky himself was bolder, telling reporters that he had "one question" regarding the murder: Was Putin "informed about the murder happening or about the murder being carried out?" BAB answered his own question: "I think the latter would be more correct."

No Russian commentator, however, has dared raise one theory that is making the rounds among Kremlinologists: The murder was likely connected to efforts by Berezovsky to collect *kompromat* ("compromising materials") on President Putin. Following Putin's falling-out with Berezovsky and his subsequent election to the presidency in March 2000, BAB-connected media began dropping hints that the Russian president was *goluboy* ("powder blue")—a homosexual. The *goluboy* theme has recurred in Russian media

ever since, suggesting that BAB, and possibly others, were warding Putin off with threats of exposure, something that could be devastating to him both politically and personally.

Since then, Berezovsky has claimed Putin was involved in narcotics trafficking. BAB's claims were followed by articles in Russian newspapers asserting that Russian military and security personnel have long been involved in the Central Asian drug trade, with the trade network targeting the West as its primary market. The main trade route reportedly originated during the Soviet era, using the Western Group of Forces, stationed in East Germany, as a transit stop on the way to the West. Perhaps not coincidentally, KGB officer Putin was stationed in East Germany at one point. Moreover, in May, German officials reopened an investigation of a St. Petersburg-based real-estate firm for which Putin once worked as a consultant: According to European press sources, German law-enforcement agencies believe that, among other things, the firm was using connections in Germany to launder drug money.

The timing of the articles on drug trafficking, the reopening of the German investigation, and the continuing recurrence of the *goluboy* theme in Russian media suggest that the real target is Putin himself—and that BAB is using his connections in Russia and Europe to undermine the president. The drug materials are likely aimed at discrediting Putin in the West, even as Moscow has renewed ties with Washington after the rift over Iraq and has strengthened Russian ties with Europe. If BAB has hard evidence of a secret Putin *goluboy* life, then that material could be used to destroy him as a public figure in Russia.

Berezovsky, who has attempted to portray himself as a persecuted dissident, may be hoping to interest the United States, among others, in the dirt he has gathered on Putin. Whatever the nature of the *kompromat*, the Bush administration should not become involved in the intrigues that are part and parcel of Russian politics (BAB may desire Western help in his political war on Putin), nor should such *kompromat* prevent cooperation with Russia on important matters, such as possible Russian help in securing an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement.

Washington's relationship with Moscow is strategic. Given the criminalized nature of Russian politics, it is extremely doubtful that any Putin replacement BAB or other parties may have in mind would be a more desirable interlocutor than the current occupant of the Kremlin. In any case, Washington should work to depersonalize relations with foreign leaders: The United States has an interest in cooperation with Russia, unencumbered by any illusions about the postcommunist system or Putin himself.

—Wayne Allensworth

BEIRUT'S OCCUPATION in 1983 by U.S. Marines may provide a small-scale sample of what a prolonged U.S. occupation of Iraq could be like, should the Pollyannaish postwar scenarios of some members of the War Party fail to materialize. Of course, the two situations are, in some ways, very different. Beirut, for instance, is just a city, while Iraq is a country spanning 169,000 square miles with a population in excess of 20 million and, thus, will require many more than the roughly 1,300 men that the Reagan administration placed at Beirut International Airport. And the Beirut occupation was but a blip on the political radar screen for the Reagan administration compared to the importance of Iraq to George W. Bush in 2003—and 2004.

A key similarity between the two countries is their multicultural diversity. Lebanon was split between Christians and Muslims. A power-sharing arrangement between the two groups dissolved when the Muslim population grew, in part because the country absorbed Palestinian refugees. By the early 1980's, Lebanon had been embroiled in civil war and chaos for seven years. Iraq, on the other hand, is overwhelmingly Islamic, but a Sunni minority dominates the Shiite majority. The situation is complicated by the presence of a large Kurdish minority (about 20 percent).

In June 1982, Israel invaded southern Lebanon in order to expel the Palestine Liberation Organization. U.S. Marines first landed—with rifles unloaded—in August of that year, in order to cover the PLO's retreat. When the withdrawal was complete, the Marines returned to their ships in the Mediterranean. But turmoil

generated by two events brought the Marines back ashore as part of a multinational force along with French, Italian, and, later, British troops. The first event was the assassination of Lebanese president-elect Bashir Gemayel; the second was a massacre carried out by Lebanese Christian gunmen, supported and armed by Israel, against Palestinian refugees in camps under Israeli control.

When the Marines returned, they were under orders to “establish a presence”—a rather passive-sounding command for America’s premier fighting force—at the BIA. The early part of the occupation was relatively uneventful. The tone of the mission was set by the constraining rules of engagement, which kept the weapons of the Marines unloaded and forced them to call in to request permission to return fire. They were also not allowed to fire on anyone not currently firing on them. Muslim militiamen could simply cease fire, sling their weapons, and walk right past the Marines, knowing that they would not be attacked.

Maj. Bob Jordan (USMC, retired), the public-affairs officer in Beirut from August to November 1983 and a former president of the Beirut Veterans of America (www.beirutveterans.com), wrote in *Leatherneck* in 1989 that a superior warned him not to allow his men to have their pistols loaded because of the “concern at the time that there was more danger from accidental shootings than from any attacker.” (Ironically, the final Marine to die in Beirut perished in an accidental shooting.)

The first time a Marine returned fire was in April 1983. The incident, which involved no injury, was quickly overshadowed by the suicide bombing of the American embassy in Beirut. After the attack, which killed 63 people (most of them Lebanese), President Reagan stated that “this criminal act on a diplomatic establishment will not deter us from our goals of peace in the region . . . We will do what we know to be right.” The *New York Times* reported that Reagan’s statement “generally seemed to match the mood on Capitol Hill, with most members of Congress who spoke on the issue saying that the explosion should not be allowed to set back American efforts.” Sen. Barry Goldwater disagreed. He called for the withdrawal of the Marines, prophetically saying, “I think we’re headed for trouble.”

The Marines of the 24th MAU (Marine Amphibious Unit), along with the

Lebanese army, clashed with Shiite militiamen on Sunday, August 28, 1983. The next day, the headline in the *Chicago Tribune* screamed, “U.S. Marines return fire in Beirut.” The first American combat deaths—2nd Lt. George D. Losey and Staff Sgt. Alexander M. Ortega—would come the next day.

The fighting that the Marines engaged in and the casualties that they sustained caused a stir in Washington. The *New York Times* reported on September 1, 1983, that “the Reagan Administration reiterated today that there was no reason to say the marines in Lebanon were the targets of Moslem militia units or that they were engaged in hostilities. It was the third such statement in as many days.”

The Reagan administration was concerned about triggering the War Powers Act. An admission that the Marines were engaged in combat would allow the Congress to require a troop withdrawal in 90 days; thus, Secretary of State George Schultz told the world that the Marines “are involved in a situation where there is violence, a generalized pattern of violence.”

The situation faced by the troops, however, was much different. A *Chicago Tribune* report on the August 28 fighting described a 90-minute battle, which is hardly consistent with the notion of a “generalized pattern of violence.” Eric Hammel’s history of the occupation, *The Root*, describes the fighting on August 29 occurring over several hours as the Marines took fire against their positions in the vicinity of the Beirut International Airport.

The Marines would continue to sustain casualties from the fighting, including two more deaths in the month of September, while the Reagan administration maintained that the Marines were not engaged in hostilities. The commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. P.X. Kelly, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—amid calls for Congress to invoke the War Powers Act—that “imminent hostilities, as it exists in my professional view, is not the case, so far as we the Marines are concerned. We have no firm evidence, no firm indication, that any of the rockets, mortar, or artillery rounds that have impacted within our perimeter have been specifically designed against Marines.”

In early September, Robert McFarlane, the special envoy to the Middle East, requested that the 24th MAU’s commanding officer, Col. Tim Geraghty, order naval gunfire in support of the Lebanese army. Geraghty eventually complied, but

not before prophetically telling a McFarlane associate that “we’ll get slaughtered down here.”

The Marines would soon suffer an assault that no reasonable person could deny was aimed at them. In the early morning hours of Sunday, October 23, 1983, a suicide bomber in a yellow Mercedes truck drove up to the headquarters building, through a barrier of concertina wire and past several sentries on duty, and detonated his explosives. The blast destroyed the four-story structure, lifting it off of the ground and leaving a pile of rubble, body parts, and some survivors trapped in the debris. The explosion killed 220 Marines, 18 sailors and 3 soldiers.

Before the attack, Colonel Geraghty had been concerned about the dangers his Marines faced, but he was constrained from taking necessary measures to protect them. Hammel writes that Geraghty “made guarded entreaties through the chain of command in hope of being allowed to dig in deeper, but each request was rebuffed with a warning that Beirut International Airport (BIA) could not be fortified.” Major Jordan, who arrived in Beirut just as things were heating up, described for me some of the errors that made the Marines vulnerable: “The first mistake was to force the Multinational Forces into static positions. The second was to place too many troops on the ground as a ‘presence’ while denying the commander enough forces to be a viable deterrent.”

Jordan stated that the Shiite militiamen were (correctly, as it happens) convinced that America’s political leadership would lose its will if they could inflict large-scale (200 to 500) casualties on the Marines. When the suicide bomber struck, the Shiites succeeded: The United States withdrew in February 1984.

In the aftermath of the bombing, President Reagan called on the country to continue the mission in Beirut and to “be more determined than ever that they cannot take over that vital and strategic area of the earth.” But concerns about the ill-defined nature of the mission and analogies to Vietnam kept coming up. Sen. Robert Byrd stated that “at present our people are just sitting ducks where they don’t even know who is attacking them.”

A special commission headed by a retired admiral criticized Colonel Geraghty and his chain of command. A House subcommittee also laid some of the blame on Marine Commandant Kelley. But it is hard to dispute the words of Cleta Wells,

a Beirut widow, who told *Newsweek*, "It was not the Marine Corps that kept saying it was a peacekeeping mission . . . It was not Col. Geraghty who told them not to fire back . . . My husband was a Marine for 17 years and he was a good Marine . . . And no group of men in white shirts and ties are going to sit and blame the Marine Corps for his death."

The occupation and small war that the Marines participated in 20 years ago in Beirut is largely forgotten today. A total of 266 U.S. servicemen—most of them Marines—died there. (Compare that to the 305 American lives lost in the first Gulf War.) The details of the Beirut occupation may seem more relevant now that U.S. troops are attempting to keep Iraq from coming apart at the seams. President Reagan removed the Marines at minimal political cost and with no harm to our national security (though he may have emboldened later terrorists). I fear that, 42 Americans having been killed since "major combat" ended, Iraqis who want Americans out of their country have decided that what worked in Beirut will work for them as well.

—Clark Stooksbury

JUNE CARTER CASH, R.I.P. On May 15, at the age of 73, a living country-music legend died from complications following heart surgery at Nashville's Baptist Hospital, with her husband of 35 years at her side. Her life is a testament to the cultural heritage of the rural South, and the news of her death seems all the more bitter when we ponder the fate of those traditions.

Those who think of June Carter merely as the wife of Johnny Cash betray their ignorance of the once original and lovely genre that has now degenerated into such spectacles as Garth Brooks smashing guitars on stage and Toby Keith bashing the Dixie Chicks over the honor of President George W. Bush.

June Carter was born two years after her mother, Maybelle, and her aunt and uncle, Sara and A.P. Carter, gave birth to country music. In 1927, Victor Records' Ralph Peer toured the rural South in an effort to find representatives of "old-time" music to record. Among others, he found the blue yodeler, Jimmie Rodgers, and the Carter Family of the Clinch Mountains of Virginia. Like a Negro bluesman, Rodgers, accompanying himself on the guitar, sang of poverty, heartache, and toil; the Carters, on the other hand,

carried on the Appalachian traditions of Celtic folk song mixed with shape-note Gospel music, which placed great emphasis on the blessed hope of Heaven that awaits believers in Jesus immediately after death. This music reflected the suffering and faith of the people of the rural South, where, after a brutal week of work in the fields, families and friends gathered on Saturday night to fiddle and dance and, on Sunday morning, to worship the Lord. Those connected both to each other and to the land knew the importance of the family circle and the blood of Jesus. To them, the Carters sang, "Will the circle be unbroken / By and by, Lord, by and by? / There's a better home awaitin' / In the sky, Lord, in the sky."

No matter how hard the dominant culture tried to reconstruct the South, folks like the Carters hung on to their traditions, preserved in song. June grew up on the back of her Uncle A.P.'s truck, traveling to barn dances and radio shows where she and her sisters, Anita and Helen, learned from Mother Maybelle how to ease the burden of working people with humor, harmony, and memories, through such songs as "Wildwood Flower," "Worried Man Blues," and "Keep on the Sunny Side."

In 1942, Mother Maybelle and the Carter Sisters picked up the mantle of the Original Carter Family, and June sang with them into her 20's, when director Elia Kazan, enraptured by her simple but sophisticated humor, told her that she should be an actor. June studied acting in New York with Lee Strasberg before returning to Tennessee in the 50's to sing backup for Elvis Presley with her family (turning down a Woody Allen variety show). The King introduced her to fellow Sun recording artist John R. Cash, whom the wiley Sam Phillips had renamed Johnny.

John had grown up among sharecroppers at the Dyess Colony in northeast Arkansas (as did my grandfather), where he listened to Carter Family records and longed to play his mother's guitar. (Far from Garth Brooks, John's mother scraped together payments for a flattop that the family treasured until the Depression took it away.) In 1950, he had heard June and her family on the Grand Ole Opry; by 1961, June had joined The Johnny Cash Show, singing and telling stories. She also began to fall in love with him, though she knew that it was wrong: He was on the verge of divorce because of his addiction to prescription drugs. Frustrat-

ed, she turned to an old book of Elizabethan poetry that Uncle A.P. had given her, on which she found the words "Love is a ring of fire" underlined. She wrote: "Love is a burning thing / and it makes a fiery ring. / Bound by wild desire, / I fell into a ring of fire."

Johnny Cash recorded "Ring of Fire," one of his greatest hits, in 1963. Five years later, they married. June never shrank from saying that John was the love of her life, and, after they wed, she devoted herself to marriage and family, leaving behind her aspirations for stardom. John credits her love and perseverance with helping him kick his drug problem (apparently more than once). Though she was a member of the first family of country music, June preferred to live in John's shadow and sing, for the most part, with and for her family. She wrote songs for John ("Jackson") and played small roles in film and television (most notably, Robert Duvall's mother in *The Apostle*). In 1999, she recorded an acoustic album, *Press On*, which won her a Grammy.

In a memoir, as she reflected on that "Ring of Fire" that brought her and John together, Mrs. Cash confessed: "Christ died for people like me. People who mess up their lives and stand shaking in their boots with guilt, wondering if they're really going straight to hell. But he tells us to repent . . . That's what I did."

At her funeral, her "stepdaughter" (June never called her that) Roseanne said in a eulogy: "Recently, a friend was talking to her about the historical significance of the Carter Family, and her remarkable place in the lexicon of American music. He asked her what she thought her legacy would be. She said softly, 'Oh, I was just a mother.'" May the circle be unbroken.

—Aaron D. Wolf

OBITER DICTA: Our poetry this month is provided by **David Middleton**. Dr. Middleton, the poet-in-residence at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, Louisiana, is poetry editor for the *Classical Outlook* (University of Georgia) and the *Anglican Theological Review*. His books of verse include *The Burning Fields* (1991) and *Beyond the Chandeleurs* (1999), both on LSU Press.

Our art this month is provided by **Jeff Drew** of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Mr. Drew, who originally hails from Indiana, is a software developer specializing in computer graphic design.

It Was the Worst of Times

The French Revolution was a cancer that metastasized and spread through Western societies, weakening them to the point of collapse. Even the European and American right did not escape being contaminated by the forces they struggled against, and, certainly, by the end of the 19th century, it was increasingly difficult to frame a conservative argument that did not accommodate some basic principles of the Revolution.

Even before the Revolution, there were two Frances, the France of ordinary people—of the rich countryside and its traditions, of Joan of Arc, of the Church—and the France of the intellectuals—the country of atheism, immorality, and class warfare. After the Revolution, the gap widened and deepened. On one side were all those republicans and revolutionaries who had profited from the Revolution and saw the murder of the king and queen as the fulfillment (or even the beginning) of human history. On the other were not just supporters of the *ancien régime* but all serious Catholics and anyone who took seriously the social nature of man. Even among the republicans, there were those who pined for the solidity of the old institutions of French community life, and, as Robert Nisbet showed in *The Sociological Tradition*, French social theorists, while repudiating the old monarchy, longed to recreate the stability of a world dominated by the certainties of the king and the Church.

Politically, the 19th century saw many swings of the pendulum from right to left, but the rightward swing was always shorter. Increasingly, an official French national culture was recreated. While perpetuating the myths of the Revolution and republic, this official history also tried to incorporate them into the previous history and to make them acceptable to Catholics. And yet, despite the growing accommodation to Jacobin doctrines, every generation produced outstanding reactionary writers: Chateaubriand, in the decades following the Revolution; the novelist Balzac, who in early life was an unabashed monarchist and whose satires on the dreariness and greed of bourgeois republican France have sometimes been mistaken for leftist attacks. Even such an

avant-garde poet as Baudelaire, who reveled in immorality, was deeply dissatisfied with republican France and died a Catholic.

The counterrevolutionary tradition was still alive in the first three decades of the 20th century, and it is not too much to say that many of France's greatest writers were reactionaries of one kind or another. The greatest, perhaps, was Charles Péguy, a writer virtually unknown in America.

Ignorance of Péguy extends even to literary "scholars" who write essays on him. In a condescending article in the *New Criterion*, neoconservative critic Roger Kimball quotes the poet's most famous lines—the long passage of *Eve* beginning "*Heureux ceux qui sont morts*" and attributes them to the beginning of the poem, when, in fact, they come roughly a hundred pages into a poem that the scholar has obviously not read.

In his early years, Péguy was probably the outstanding socialist revolutionary intellectual in France at the turn of the 20th century, admired and feared by the Socialist Party leaders Jean Jaurès and Léon Blum, friend of the syndicalist Georges Sorel, collaborator with future Stalinist Romain Rolland. In the second half of his career, Péguy was among the most brilliant and original Christian writers of the 20th century.

Péguy was born to a poor family in 1874, and he never lost the peasant qualities—both good and bad—of his ancestors. Even as a child, his brilliance and independence were observable, and he was given a classical education. Scholarships allowed this son of a poor working-class family eventually to attend a prestigious *lycée* in Paris and the *École Normale*. Remembering his childhood, Péguy remarks that he was given two educations—one by the masters of his republican school, the other by the priests who taught him his catechism: "The young priests taught us exactly the opposite of what the young student-teachers taught us." And yet, as his friend and collaborator Daniel Halévy observed, "The forms of his belief never changed: they remained those he learned at school and in the parish. His devotion shifted from one to the other, but there

was no innovation and nothing was discarded."

Although he was a nominal Catholic most of his early life, he stopped going to Mass in his teens, because he could not accept the doctrine of damnation. As a student and young man, he gave his heart entirely to the world of the revolutionary republic and to the unfinished business of the Revolution. As a student in Paris, he quickly attached himself to revolutionary and socialist circles, and his fellow students, who admired him intensely, were forever being hit up for money to support this strike or that leftist cause.

By the time he was a student at the *École Normale*, he was a known figure, associating with the leading socialists of his day. He took a year off from studies and politics, however, to return home. The pretext was a problem he was having with his eyes, but his real purpose was to write a verse play on Joan of Arc, his first attempt at a subject that would inspire his masterpiece *La Mystère de la charité de Jeanne d'Arc*. He raised a subscription among his friends to publish the work handsomely, and it is known to have sold at least one copy.

Péguy's leftist activism reached a fever pitch during the Dreyfus affair. Some encyclopedias say that he was the leading Catholic supporting Dreyfus, the Jewish officer apparently railroaded on treason charges, but, in fact, he was not a Catholic at that time, only a revolutionary intellectual. France in 1899 was a powder keg, and street clashes almost provided the lit fuse. (The situation was so dangerous that a rightist coup was in the works.) It was after Dreyfus' vindication that Péguy started his most ambitious project, the publication of the *Cahiers de Quinzaine*—the *Fortnightly Notebooks*, whose first issue came out in 1900. Funding came not only from his well-placed socialist friends but also from his wife and brother-in-law.

At this time, the poet was sympathetic to the ideals of Christianity, but he still could not accept the dogma on damnation, which he called "that strange combination of life and death . . . no man whose lot is cast with humanity can give his assent to this." The *Cahiers* was among