

# Fear of strong Russia yesterday, fear of weakened Russia today

By Shin Yasui

It has been quite a while since Moscow calmed down. The Russian military remains loyal to the Yeltsin government. However, Moscow's turmoil is a reflection of neither the former Soviet Union nor the whole Russia. The Russian military, which inherited most of the elements of the once mighty, fearful Soviet Union military, may face its internal disintegration. That possibility is a regional and global problem of concern.

Russia now faces 14 independent republics with its own "near abroad" policy. The Russian military still remains in those countries, but its role and reputation varies from one state to another. Some support the government of the host country, while others get involved in armed opposition to it.

The problem is that the central authorities do not have full

control over the military deployed throughout the former Soviet Union. The military officials in Moscow consider Yeltsin's government a legitimate one; however, in each region, policy-making decisions are more likely to depend on local military commanders. Therefore, aggressive or covert operation of Russian soldiers in the internal conflicts of former Soviet republics does not necessarily reflect Moscow's official policy.

In Moldova, the former Soviet Union's 14th Army has taken the side of the self-declared "Dneister republic" of Russians. Like Serbs in Bosnia, the old communists try to maintain the sphere of influence with an excuse of "protecting Russians and Russo-fied Ukrainians" from the Rumanian threat. This is one example showing how local commanders do not recognize the host government and

joined the rebels to preserve the Union. Petru Lucinschi, the Moscow-oriented former first secretary of Moldova's Communist Party, said that Russia's troops are "creating a situation on the Yugoslav model by cutting off Moldova's eastern area from the rest of the country."

That's not the case for all of the former Soviet republics. However, there are mercenaries, extremists and Cossacks who are independently fighting against legitimate governments regardless of their nationalities. Loss of central control indeed causes this problem. Crisis in Moscow may further accelerate disintegration of the military itself.

The Russian government is actively trying to solve regional conflicts in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Tajikistan although its effectiveness is doubtful, especially in Georgia's case. However, it is interesting to notice that some former Soviet republics begin to

look at Russia as a neutral or even a peace broker.

"The former Soviet republics need to recognize that the government cannot be 'ethnic' anymore," said Alan Kimball, a Russian history professor, citing a recent example of Georgia's approach toward Russia. "I cannot be optimistic," he said, "but it may be a re-establishment of relationship between Russia and neighbor republics with bilateral treaties. What the international community can do is to support the 'tranquility' of those relationships."

Although there is a negative legacy of the U.S.S.R., there is also the fact that independent republics begin to find it impossible to have an ethno-centric role. Federal or confederate structure in republics and loose but carefully coordinated cooperation between republics, especially with Russia, will be important elements for their sur-

vival.

The Russian military itself is not a threat to outside countries. Rather, its disintegration is a grave threat. Misuse of weapons and military technology may contribute to greater warfare in hot spots worldwide. The international community needs to focus more on non-proliferation of weapons.

The United States, which has its own industrial complex, is not likely to faithfully face the non-proliferation issue. The Pentagon has been and will continue to sell arms to "legitimate" governments overseas (by their standard). While the Russian military's industrial base is eroding from the ground, the U.S. military industry doesn't want to face the same fate.

We were afraid of a strong Russia. Now we are worried about weakened Russia.

Shin Yasui is a pre-journalism major at the University.

## LETTERS

### Dis-Bullregard

Hello! Look. Doonesbury's missing again. And so is the crossword puzzle. Well. What have we in their place? Bullregard, an incomprehensible cartoon about a toad and something that seems to be a duck in sunglasses, or perhaps is intended as a caricature of Ayn Rand.

But the plots nearly spoil the art. Their sheer perfection is amazing. Although I haven't once laughed, I can almost appreciate the humor and intelligence of the strip.

But I think it's just a bit over my head: For example, the comic last week about the tutoring session, where the terrible two were being read to from a book of fairy tales. I found this strip fascinating. I just wonder what the point of it was. And I also wonder: Where's Doonesbury? Please give a comic strip I can understand. Bullregard, though sociologically interesting, is inappro-

priate for the low intellects of us college students. Give us Doonesbury back. We'll all be happier for it.

Eric McCready  
Undeclared

### Bad gas

In response to the letter from David Cole in Wednesday's paper I'd like to get some facts straight. According to G. Tyler Miller, author of *Living in the Environment*, a text used at this University, "At present consumption rates, the world's crude oil reserves will deplete in 42 years" (Wadsworth, 1993).

To make an argument that fuel reserves are unlimited based on your ability to get a tank of gas whenever you want is uninformed and invalid. Oregon has better air quality than most states — but Portland has already exceeded EPA air quality standards — and Eugene is headed in this direction. We have to do

what we can to help keep the quality of life what we want here.

Kristen Shuyler  
Anne Morris  
OSPIRG

### Expression

I'd like to express my full expression expressed by the individual expressing the expression of the will to express opinion on the editorial page last Tuesday (ODE, Nov. 16).

In my feelings I felt a feeling of full support during the time that I felt like reading the feelings of other people at that time. The feelings expressed by the author more so feelingly expressed that I couldn't help but begin to feel a similar feeling at express speed.

Thank you for taking the time to express your feelings about the feelings expressed by some other people. I'm sure that Ayn Rand would have expressed the expressly same feelings had she

been present at that time and felt like expressing her feelings in the *Emerald*. I hope this isn't more than 250 words.

Eric McCready  
Eugene

### Get a life

Albany Oregon Citizens Alliance representative John Leon groused that his failed attempt to recall Mayor Gene Belhumeur wasn't going to "help the community divisiveness in Albany." What bald-faced nerve, considering Leon and the OCA have done their damndest to perpetrate "community divisiveness" throughout Oregon! Then again, maybe it is not so surprising "Sore Loser Leon" would hasten to remind citizens about community divisiveness, this being the OCA's very stock in the trade.

It's clear who's doing the dividing. Belhumeur on the eve of his violation said, "It's not the homo-

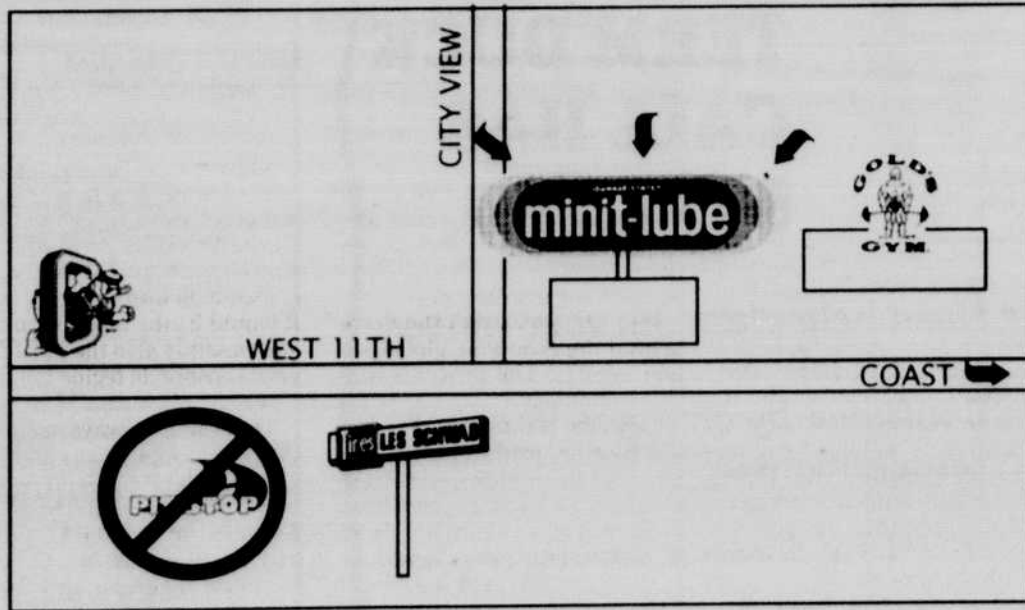
sexuals coming before city council demanding attention. It's the OCA taking up hours and hours of council time." Leon might try honest reflecting, instead of banal mouthings professing concern about turmoil. He should own up to the ugly scenarios happening throughout Oregon, and then stop this needless conflict.

Heartful thanks to every voter who supported Belhumeur's right to oppose OCA's discriminatory agenda. These voters stood up to blustering, punitive-minded thugs who thrive on community conflict. The German citizenry in the late 1930s stood idly by while brownshirts enabled a thug to come to power. Nobody will ever be able to say that about Belhumeur and citizens of Albany.

So OCA, are you finally over your "Recalls-R-Us" obsession? First 30 legislators canceled then Belhumeur failed. Get a life.

Carol Berg  
Eugene

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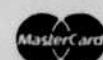
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