

## Our Meeting with Alexey Semyonov



*Alexey Semyonov meets with members of the Foreign Affairs Club*

Alexey Semyonov is the President of the Andrei Sakharov Foundation, he is a mathematician and a computer scientist, and he was active in the dissident movement in the Soviet Union and was forced to leave the Soviet Union by the KGB. He is currently living as an ex-patriot in Washington DC, and has remained active in the human rights movement for more than twenty years he has close ties with Kyrgyzstan and Ambassador Abdrisaev.

The Foreign Affairs club was excited to have an informal meeting with Alexey Semyonov, President of the Andrei Sakharov Foundation. He expressed interest in the Foreign Affairs clubs members' diplomatic and political curiosity. Diplomacy relies on understanding countries, promoting their interests and those of their citizens around the world.

The Andrei Sakharov Foundation is a human rights foundation, according to Russian law as a foreign agent they are allowed to take money as donations but are responsible to perform something on behalf of the Russian people. His foundation is not a movement, it is not politically motivated, and the organization is here to support Art expression and independent of any political movement.

We discussed if President Putin has lost legitimacy, and what happens when a government attempts to suppress its citizens, if it had the effect in Russia of making its citizens stronger. Understanding that Russian citizens had been afraid of confrontation with the Russian government, and if they now realized that the state cannot do much to harm or crush them as it had before. The result being that Putin's government has grown weaker and civil society has grown stronger.

These citizen movements are expressions of mobilizing to change society. There is a need for effective laws against corruption; unfortunately Russia has a reputation that its criminals and state leaders are the same people. The people in Russia are tired of corruption and realize that they now have a base to organize and make changes to benefit the Russian people.

He believes that the civil society in Russia is getting stronger. The countries in the north among the Soviet bloc Latvia, Czechoslovakia, Slovakia and Poland have done well in the Post-Soviet

Divorce, and have made the necessary changes to thrive independently. Unfortunately European and Central Asian countries have not done so well.

Ambassador Abdrisaev native country of Kyrgyzstan, although it has overcome many obstacles and is leading the Central Asian Countries, it is currently stuck. He cited the example of Mongolia that it is currently the fastest growing economy. Mongolia after surviving many rapid regime changes which forced it to transform outdated and corrupt practices is now experiencing economic growth; this is what is needed in Kyrgyzstan.

***Gina Spurlock, Foreign Affairs Club***