In what many described as a bellwether battle, suburban voters rejected a swastika-bearing ultranationalist and a free-market democrat and instead elected to the Russian parliament a controversial businessman who is under investigation for tax fraud.

The Sunday by-election in a dreary industrial district north of Moscow, made necessary by the gangland-style shooting of the incumbent last spring, reflected the disillusion and disgust many voters felt for the government, analysts said.

Sergei Mavrodi, head of an investment firm that collapsed this summer in the most spectacular failure of Russia's young capitalist era, won with the support of Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the ultranationalist whose party won the most votes in parliamentary elections last December. Mavrodi, 39, spent much of the campaign, from Aug. 4 to Oct. 12, in jail while police investigated allegations against him.

Dotted by antisemitism and jackbooted neo-fascists, democratic reformers were totally defeated in the by-election, which came a little more than one year before scheduled nationwide elections. Most democratic parties did not even field a candidate. The closest to a free-market advocate, businessman Konstantin Borovoi, came in third, according to preliminary results. Some analysts suggested that Borovoi lost votes because his middle name, Natanzovich, has a Jewish ring to Russian ears.

The tone of the campaign was set by a neo-fascist candidate, whose jackbooted supporters filled every election forum even though Zhirinovsky backed Mavrodi. By portraying himself as a victim of arrogant government investigators, Mavrodi tapped into voters' resentment of corruption, high-handedness and incompetence in this nation's young democracy, analysts said.

Study Finds Denying Health Care To Terminally Ill Won't Save Costs

By Spencer Rich

Washington Post

A policy of denying life-prolonging treatments to terminally ill patients would save little money in the nation's budget to cut health costs, the authors of a study published Monday in the Annals of Internal Medicine concluded.

The findings contradict the widespread notion that huge amounts can be saved if life-sustaining treatments were withheld from those about to die, they said.

In the study, researchers examined the medical records of 115 patients at five major hospitals who were so ill at the time of admission that their doctors predicted they would die and when they would die, of nearly certain to die within a few months of hospital admission, said Joanne Lynn, a specialist in hospice medicine.

The authors first calculated what the actual costs had been of caring for those patients until they died, without any denial of treatment. Then they looked at how much would have been saved if three types of life-sustaining treatments had been deliberately withheld — ventilation, nutrition and the use of drugs to maintain blood pressure.

They observed that 9% of the 115 died within five days after entering the hospital. Only one survived beyond two months.

Although their candidate ended up far back in the pack, the swastika- bearing supporters put enough emphasis on the agenda of every electoral debate, the authors noted, that many candidates proudly declaring they were "Russian" — meaning not Jewish or Georgian, or from other ethnic groups. The early results showed Mavrodi collecting 28 percent of all votes. A local bureaucrat and long- time Communist Party functionary came in second, with 25 percent, and Borovoi received 14 percent. Nine other candidates, including a leader of the antisemitic Russian National Unity, split the remainder. Only 1 percent of eligible votes took part.

By portraying himself as a victim of arrogant government investigators, Mavrodi tapped into voters' resentment of corruption, high-handedness and incompetence in this nation's young democracy, analysts said.

The Chinese equivalent of Kronotologia has been a busy business recently, fueled by a spate of rumors that China's 90-year-old leader, Deng Xiaoping, is near death.

Speculation about Deng's death — a favorite pastime here for many years — began its most recent boomlet when Deng failed to make an appearance on Oct. 1 for China's National Day, the 45th anniversary of the Communist Party victory over the Nationalists.

Last week, Deng's daughter and private secretary Deng Rong, during a visit to Hong Kong, asserted that her father was okay. "His health is not bad," she was quoted as saying in the South China Morning Post. "Of course, he is a 90-year-old man now." But unlike her aunt, Deng Rong said she watched the fireworks with her father at Zhongshanhai, the house and office compound for Chinese leaders near Tiananmen Square, not at the government guest house.

Much is at stake. Deng has been the architect of China's economic reforms over the past 16 years and has held together competing factions within the Communist Party while pursuing rapid economic growth and tight political control. His designated successors — principal among them is president and party chief Jiang Zemin — will be hard-pressed to do the same because they lack his stature and authority.

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