POSTSCRIPT

YELTSIN'S LAST YEAR

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Why the Dismissal of Primakov?

On the morning of May 12, 1999, Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov was summoned to the Kremlin to report to President Yeltsin on the economic situation in Russia. But the president didn't want to hear what the premier had to say, and swept aside all the documents he presented. After several angry reproaches Yeltsin declared he had decided to dismiss Primakov, although he was exceedingly grateful to him for his courageous and helpful efforts. "You did the necessary tactical job well. But to tackle the strategic problems I've decided to appoint someone else as premier."

In a televised speech to the nation Yeltsin stated: "It was Primakov who eight months ago, in a white-hot political situation and a terrible economic crisis, demonstrated his masterful art as a diplomat: he displayed caution and circumspection. The confidence the government has to its credit is great, as in earlier times, but this is primarily because of the personal qualities of the premier, who has shown amazing self-possession, composure, and cool-headedness in the most difficult circumstances."

However, in recent months, said Yeltsin, the government had been

making no headway. It did not wish to take unpopular measures that could move things forward more quickly. For that reason, Yeltsin said, he had made "a difficult but necessary decision," to appoint a younger and more energetic man as premier, the 47-year-old colonel-general in charge of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Sergei Vadimovich Stepashin.

Primakov made no attempt to argue with the president. Within an hour he was at the Russian White House addressing an emergency session of the cabinet. He was brief and to the point. He read aloud the president's decree dismissing himself as prime minister, and presented to the cabinet members their new leader. Primakov made his remarks with great dignity and twice was interrupted by bursts of applause. Almost all the cabinet members had smiles on their faces. Only on Stepashin's face—and on that of his new chief deputy premier, Nikolai Aksyonenko, head of the Ministry of Roads and Railways—was there a worried look, even a look of dismay. After wishing everyone success and making a humorous remark, Primakov left the room.

Politics, in the view of many, is similar to the theater, where you have to know not only how to step forward into the lights, but also how to leave the stage properly. In their next day's reports even the newspapers that were demanding Primakov's retirement had to admit that "Primakov made his exit gracefully."

A SURPRISE THAT WAS EXPECTED

Primakov was prepared for dismissal as early as mid-April. At the end of January materials aimed at discrediting the prime minister and his cabinet began to appear in the press and on television. News commentators on two popular private TV channels—Sergei Dorenko and Mikhail Leontyev—were especially zealous in their denunciations. They blamed Primakov for the collapse of the economy and accused him of trying to organize a "surreptitious coup d'etat." Some newspapers kept repeating the charge that Primakov was a do-nothing premier, and had been since the previous autumn, that he was afraid to take responsibility and avoided making decisions. Others argued that he was doing a lot, but that it was all intended to undermine the market economy, which he simply didn't understand, since he was a "mastodon trained in the school of Andropov." (Yuri Andropov had

headed the Soviet government in 1982–84.) The newspaper *Kommersant* declared that Primakov was "not only betraying but selling out the interests of Russia."

Besides trying to discredit the premier, the media tried to create a conflict between him and the president. Headlines such as the following were common: "Yeltsin is no longer Number One in the country," "Primakov wants the president's job," "Yeltsin is ready for rough measures," "The president is going to say goodbye to Primakov."

The Western press was more friendly toward the Russian premier. The French paper *Le Figaro* wrote on February 28: "The situation in Russia is stable, and the author of this surprising stability is Primakov. His public image is of one who rejects confrontation and works quietly. This has calmed and reassured his compatriots. Russian society is beginning to dream of wisdom like Primakov's becoming dominant in the government." Similarly, the *Economist* of London reported on February 9 that "Yevgeny Primakov has done remarkably well. Unimaginable though it seemed when he took office in the chaotic days after the rouble fell out of bed last August, political stability has broken out." Still, said the *Economist*, there was not "any great applause" for Primakov.

Primakov's own reaction to the media campaign was, I would say, rather mild; he took it in stride. The president was more emotional. "There's no use trying to drive a wedge between me and Primakov," Yeltsin told journalists. "No one has yet invented such a wedge." Other comments by Yeltsin included: "Primakov and I have agreed to work together until the year 2000"; and "Don't go trying to make me butt heads with the premier, I beg of you; that is very dangerous." No one listened to Yeltsin's plea, but the effect of the continuing campaign was to lower public confidence not so much in Primakov as in the media themselves.

By mid-April 1999 it was obvious that Yeltsin was being influenced by the stage directors in the anti-Primakov camp and others of similar opinion within his own circle. Still, he had no convincing pretext for dismissing Primakov. Possible scenarios for accomplishing this kept changing from week to week. It was thought that failure in negotiations with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank could be used as a pretext, but these negotiations proceeded successfully despite difficulties.

Then there was an attempt to involve Primakov in the outcome of

impeachment proceedings in the Duma. The Kremlin made statements along these lines: "The Duma better stop making preparations for impeachment of Yeltsin, or else Primakov will be dismissed." But Primakov had nothing to do with the impeachment preparations, which had been under way in the inner recesses of the Duma for over a year. The premier spoke out publicly against impeachment several times. Besides, any serious analysis would have shown that none of the various charges being brought against Yeltsin had a chance of winning the 300 votes needed by Yeltsin's accusers. The left-wing Duma politicians made the mistake of presenting too many different charges all at once.

The press claimed that it was the Duma's insistence on impeachment that provoked Yeltsin into firing Primakov, but this argument was not convincing, and Yeltsin himself made no such statement. The impeachment controversy masked the real underlying causes of the conflict.

THE MAIN REASON FOR PRIMAKOV'S OUSTER

In his earlier post as director of intelligence for the Federal Security Service, Primakov had already learned a good deal about the enormous scale of corruption in Russia and the way capital was flowing out of the country. As premier he learned quite a few additional details, but, more importantly, he now had not just information but government power as well. He declared war on corruption and promised to jail all those found guilty of economic crimes.

Thousands of criminal cases were begun, at first in the port cities and the provinces, later in Moscow as well. Boris Berezovsky was not the chief object of these trials, although the papers wrote about him more than others. Bigger targets than he were mentioned. Lists of the twelve richest *families* in Russia, not just the richest individuals, were circulating. It was hinted that these lists were drawn up with assistance from the Swiss attorney general's office. Reports spoke of tens of billions of dollars whose trail could be followed by bank account records. When billions are involved, there are no secret paths, not even for "dirty" money.

As these reports came out bankers and financial speculators began to feel uncomfortable, as did big shots in advertising, major importers and

exporters, customs officials, people prominent in the arms industry, and influential government bureaucrats. It was people like this, especially those with media connections, who now found Primakov quite unsuitable as premier. Thus, it was the campaign against corruption that sparked the intrigues against him. Although Primakov did not personally conduct investigations or bring cases to court, he allowed free rein to the considerable number of honest staff members within the Russian Prosecutor General's Office, the Federal Security Service, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs who were willing to take such initiatives.

How would Sergei Stepashin conduct himself in this area? That was a question that concerned people as much as the exchange rate of the ruble. Initially he made some significant statements: "The economy must be kept going, but not swindling," and "Fighting against corruption and gangsterism—those are our priorities."

YELTSIN'S POWERS AND RUSSIA'S GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

It would have been hard to find a worse time for Primakov's dismissal. The economy was slowly coming out of crisis, and industry had grown relative to the previous year. Earnings from exports had increased, and $6 billion of debt had been repaid to Western creditors. The exchange rate of the ruble had begun to improve. In 1999, for the first time in many years, there were no major strikes in the spring. Back wages were paid up, and salaries and pensions increased.

On the other hand, Yeltsin's relations with parliament and with the Prosecutor General's Office had worsened dramatically. In public opinion polls only 2 percent expressed confidence in the president, but 70 percent had confidence in Primakov as premier. Primakov was completely loyal to Yeltsin. In fact, his was the only solid support Yeltsin had. The new premier, Stepashin, did not have the knowledge, experience, wisdom, and charm that Primakov demonstrated. Yeltsin, although he acted within his poswers under the constitution, made a major mistake in dismissing Primakov.

The president of Russia has greater powers than the president of France or the United States. Yeltsin could keep a cabinet in power even if the Duma passed a motion of no confidence. On the other hand, he could dismiss a government that the parliament and the people had confidence in.

This defect in the Russian constitution is the result not just of faulty legislation but of conditions in Russia in general, for democracy is only taking its first steps and no mature, responsible political parties have yet grown up. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) is the only organization that fits the definition of a political party. All the others are still embryonic or in their infancy. But the CPRF is a surviving fragment of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which crashed and fell apart in 1991. Could such a party, with rural residents and pensioners as its main support, really run the country? Does the CPRF draw sustenance from society's soil through young roots, or are its the dying roots of a felled tree? In conditions where the only serious political party is one like this, a strong presidency remains necessary for Russia for the time being.

At the height of fame and success, during the Potsdam Conference, Winston Churchill suffered a crushing defeat in the British elections of 1945. His place was taken at Potsdam by the new premier, Clement Attlee. In Stalin's entourage scornful remarks were made: "That's what you get with democracy!" When Churchill first heard about the election results he was dumbfounded and spoke of the ingratitude of the British public. Later he had a more profound comment: "democracy is the worst form of government—except for all those other forms that have been tried. . . ."

In Russia we have become convinced of the accuracy of the first part of this observation. But in the end, who other than we ourselves will be able to demonstrate the true value and full potential of Russian democracy?

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The Dismissal of Stepashin

On August 10, 1999, less than three months after making Sergei Stepashin prime minister, Yeltsin dismissed him. In announcing that the new premier, Vladimir Putin, director of the security police, would also be Yeltsin's candidate as his successor to the presidency, Yeltsin made it clear to Russian politicians that he was preparing to take early retirement. Putin, who was then so little known that his name had not figured at all in the election campaign, seemed at first to have very little chance of being elected president.

Yeltsin's personal support did not seem likely to add to Putin's popularity. But there was another possibility. If Yeltsin gave up his post before the end of his term, the new prime minister would automatically become acting president. Under the Russian constitution, if the president resigns, presidential power goes to the prime minister for three months, during which time new elections must be held. It was obvious that in such a three-month period Putin, with the combined posts of prime minister and president, would have almost unlimited power. Yeltsin and his immediate circle hoped apparently that this

power would give Putin a jumping-off point for making a leap into the Kremlin through democratic elections.

It was clear that Putin could play the same role for Yeltsin, his family, and his inner circle that Gerald Ford played for Richard Nixon after the latter's resignation in 1974. On September 8, 1974, President Ford granted a full pardon to Nixon for any laws he might have broken. In this way he guaranteed that the investigations which had been launched against Nixon would cease. Yeltsin and a rather large number of people in his administration needed a similar amnesty. Sure enough, this scenario was played out. After Yeltsin's surprise resignation on New Year's Eve, Putin soon granted Yeltsin and "the family" immunity from prosecution. He also was quick to remove many of Yeltsin's entourage from key positions in the Kremlin.

But between the August 10 appointment of Putin and his New Year's accession to the acting presidency other significant developments occurred.

Before looking at those, let us pause for a moment to review what we know about the man who suddenly emerged as the likely new president of Russia—Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin.

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Who Is Putin?

Little was known about Putin before August 10, 1999. He apparently preferred to remain in the shadows, especially after Yeltsin appointed him director of the Federal Security Service (Russian initials, FSB; the successor organization in Russia to the KGB of the Soviet Union). This occurred as part of the government reshuffling in the summer of 1998. In March 1999 Yeltsin also made Putin secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, although he had worked in Kremlin posts only since 1996. Over a period of three years he held six different positions successively—not enough time to reveal very prominently his abilities as a politician or administrator.

[Translator's Note: The London *Financial Times* of January 1, 2000, and other Western newspapers since then, reported the following information about Putin: Born in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) in 1952, he earned a law degree at Leningrad State University, graduating in 1975 and then working for the KGB in Leningrad for nine years. From 1984 to 1990 he served as a KGB officer in East Germany, where he became fluent in German and acquired an admiration for German efficiency and discipline. In 1989, as pressures for change in

East Germany built up in response to perestroika in the Soviet Union, he is said to have sought out East German reformers during the final crisis of the East German Communist regime. Returning to St. Petersburg, he joined the administration of Anatoly Sobchak, the market-reform "democrat" elected mayor there in 1990. (Sobchak had been one of Putin's law professors at Leningrad State University.) By 1994, Putin was deputy head of the St. Petersburg municipal government, under Sobchak. In 1996, Anatoly Chubais brought Putin to Moscow.] As author of the present book and other books on Soviet and Russian history, I had the occasion to meet Putin personally. This happened only once, but it was a remarkable occasion. Putin asked me to give a presentation about my new book *The Unknown Andropov* to the Collegium, the governing body of the FSB. On June 15, the anniversary of Andropov's birth, I made my presentation to a Collegium session enlarged to include veterans of the KGB. I told the assembled officers about my research work in preparing the book and shared my views on Andropov's place in Soviet and Russian history. (Andropov, of course, had headed the Soviet government in 1982–84 after the death of Leonid Brezhnev, and previously had headebook, *The Unknown Andropov*, to the Collegium, the governing body of the FSB. On June 15, the anniversary of Andropov's birth, I made the presentation to a Collegium session that had been enlarged to include veterans of the KGB. I told the assembled officers about my research work in preparing the book and shared my views on Andropov's place in Soviet and Russian history. (Andropov, of course, had headed the Soviet government in 1982–84 after the death of Leonid Brezhnev, and previously had headed the KGB.) Before the presentation I met with Putin briefly, and I also observed how he handled himself in this assemblage of top officials of the FSB and former KGB. He struck me as serious, calm, and intelligent. He listens more than he talks and is undoubtedly steadier and less vain than the previous prime minister, Sergei Stepashin. Discussions about Putin's relations with Sobchak, with Boris Berezovsky, or with Yeltsin and "the family" make little sense. Whenever a political leader becomes head of government his circle of advisers and the considerations that motivate him inevitably change. A prime minister cannot simply be a pawn in someone else's game.

The military conflict in Dagestan and Chechnya was Putin's first real test. It was he who proposed that combat pay for all Russian

troops involved in these operations be raised to $1,000 per month, an amount equal to that paid to Russian peacekeepers in Kosovo.

Sergei Stepashin has referred to himself as a "mere boy" who was thrust into high politics by Yeltsin. In contrast, Putin has never seemed "boyish," not even when he first came to Moscow in 1996. He steers clear of off-the-cuff remarks or actions. A journalist for *Izvestia* described him this way: "Putin's rare television appearances are striking for their extremely laconic quality. His rather acerbic manner, the toughness of an organization man, is rather pleasing in its own way, although this is overridden by the coldly intelligent, impenetrable look in his eyes. He abides strictly by the wise old rule—that language exists to conceal one's thoughts, and facial expressions, to hide one's feelings."

The events around Kosovo revealed that there has now come to the fore in the Russian army a group of 40–50 relatively young generals who command Russia's main military districts and Defense Ministry departments. These are men of unquestionable patriotism and strong determination. They constitute a new power center in Moscow, one that is disconcerting to certain "democrats" in Russia and influential circles in the West. The operations directed by these men in Dagestan and Chechnya are more professional and more politically astute, with tighter control of information, than during the Chechnya war of 1994–96. Putin is clearly working in tandem with these generals.

PRIMAKOV, ZYUGANOV, AND OTHERS

Objective conditions had arisen by the summer of 1999 that could potentially have helped the Communists return to power by democratic means. Russians perceived NATO's war against Yugoslavia in the first half of 1999 as a show of force directed mainly against Russia. In May, the unexpected and unfounded dismissal of Yevgeny Primakov, the most popular prime minister in Russia since Aleksei Kosygin, was perceived to be the result of a plot by "oligarchs," bankers, and other big property owners, who had become anxious about the campaign against corruption. The anti-corruption investigations, as we have said, were reaching close to "the family" around Yeltsin.

Although Primakov did not belong to a political party, his govern-

ment was considered "left of center." After Sergei Stepashin's appointment, government policy seemed to take a turn to the right. As a result, left-wing forces became more active and the position of CPRF leader Gennady Zyuganov was strengthened. He emerged in first place in public opinion polls on the presidential candidates. The leftward shift in public opinion was intensified by a continued poor showing of key economic indicators in the first half of the year and a rise in food prices caused by a severe drought and very poor harvest in 1998. In the Communist past the price of bread had been kept low by government subsidies and did not depend on the harvest.

In these circumstances a plan was formulated to ban the CPRF. The Communists were to be provoked into demonstrations of protest against the closing of the Mausoleum on Red Square and the reburying of Lenin's body in a cemetery in St. Petersburg. However, this plan was called off because the political and economic elites realized that demonstrations might not occur, and respect for the government might simply fall still further.

There was only one remaining way to prevent a Communist victory—uniting the center-left political groups and small democratic organizations with the regional governors, leaders of national republics, and mayors of large cities. This plan was put into operation at the beginning of August 1999, when the "Fatherland" and "All Russia" political movements formed a coalition. It put the upper house of the Russian parliament, the Federal Council, consisting of governors, leaders of national republics, and the mayors of Moscow and St. Petersburg, in opposition to the president.

This new political coalition seemed to ensure that the right wing would be defeated in the December parliamentary elections, but it did not guarantee victory over Zyuganov and the CPRF. To achieve that aim, the new bloc needed a genuinely popular leader. The only possible candidate was Primakov, who stood outside parties and blocs.

THE RETURN OF PRIMAKOV

When Primakov was dismissed in May 1999, he announced that he was leaving politics and would write his memoirs. He would be seventy years old that October. But his publishing plans were interrupted. He was called to "save the fatherland," literally and figuratively,

by becoming leader of the Fatherland-All Russia bloc and putting his name forward as a candidate for president in the elections then scheduled for June 2000. The mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, who had frequently announced his intention of contesting the presidential elections and who had established the Fatherland bloc, agreed to take the post of prime minister. As a talented organizer but mediocre politician, this role suited Luzhkov better than the presidency.

The duumvirate of Primakov and Luzhkov seemed to herald a Primakov victory in the 2000 presidential elections, but hopes for a big victory by the new bloc in the Duma elections of December 1999 were not well founded. The Fatherland-All Russia bloc was not a political party, but a coalition of elites. It opposed Yeltsin but was based, not on the mass of the people, and not even on the middle class (which, as we have seen, does not yet exist on any substantial basis in Russia), but on governors and mayors. It was a revolt of the boyars against the tsar. However, this boyar revolt had the potential to be more dangerous for "Tsar Boris" than a popular uprising.

That is why Yeltsin began to prepare his departure from the throne in favor of a personally selected successor, Putin. He hoped to win the end game, or at least end with a draw. The "Putin move" took everyone by surprise. But the "Primakov move" also looked like a very strong one, with the highest popularity ratings as of August 1999. Opinion polls at that time suggested that the Fatherland-All Russia bloc would win 30–35 percent of the vote.

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The Second Chechnya War

This whole picture changed, however, as the result of Putin's decisive, even ruthless, prosecution of the Chechnya war. Government-controlled television discredited Luzhkov and Primakov, and boosted Putin and his successes in reasserting Russian control of Chechnya, with the result that the Fatherland-All Russia bloc did poorly in the December Duma elections, winning only 12 percent. A new political formation, the Unity bloc, backed by Putin, did surprisingly well, using the advantages of incumbency and riding on Putin's war-related popularity. In January 2000, after becoming acting president, Putin made another surprise move. His hastily created Unity bloc, which had won 24 percent of the vote, formed a parliamentary alliance with the Communists and their allies, who had won more than 25 percent, thus creating a pro-government bloc controlling a majority of votes in parliament.

At first three prominent, democratic-minded leaders, Primakov, Yavlinsky, and Kiriyenko, protested this move and walked out of the Duma. Within a few weeks, after discussions with Putin, they returned and seemed to accept their role as a parliamentary minority. Primakov

also abandoned his intention to run for president. To be sure, three major candidates were still competing with Putin—the CPRF leader Zyuganov, the "democrat" Yavlinsky, and the maverick Zhirinovsky—not to mention eight other minor figures. But a fairly solid victory for Putin as Russia's new president in the elections rescheduled for March 26, 2000, seemed virtually assured.

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The December 1999 Elections

In general, the December voting testified to a more experienced electorate for whom radical sentiments held little appeal. The previous Duma had a large left wing, made up of the CPRF and its allies. The right wing was fragmented, and there was no influential center party or bloc. In 1995, only four parties—representing 50.5 percent of the electorate—had won more than 5 percent of the vote, allowing them to have representation in parliament. Those were the CPRF, on the left, and on the right, the Nash Dom Rossiya party, or NDR, of Chernomyrdin, the Yabloko party of Grigory Yavlinksy, and the so-called Liberal Democratic Party of Vladimir Zhirinovsky. Relations between parliament and president had been hostile, and only the government of Yevgeny Primakov had enjoyed support in the Duma.

The elections of December 19, 1999, fundamentally changed the situation. This time six political organizations—representing 80 percent of the electorate—passed the 5 percent barrier. The CPRF continued to have a large parliamentary group, but it was weaker because many of its allies failed to win reelection. On the right, the Unity bloc, which everyone recognized as the party of President Putin, replaced

the NDR. (Chernomyrdin's party, not unexpectedly, suffered a crushing electoral defeat, with only about 1 percent of the vote, and is no longer represented in parliament, although Chernomyrdin himself won an individual seat.) A new party, the Union of Right Forces, headed by Sergei Kiriyenko, the former prime minister, and backed by "democrats" like Anatoly Chubais, also won representation in the Duma. The parties of Yavlinksy and Zhirinovsky remain on the right wing as well, although both suffered heavy losses and were barely able to pass the 5 percent mark. In the center was the new formation, the Fatherland-All Russia bloc of Primakov and Luzhkov, which, as we have said, won only 12 percent instead of the expected 30–35 percent.

The surprise parliamentary alliance between the Unity bloc and the CPRF called into question the characterization of Unity as part of the right wing. It suggested either that Putin had made a shift to the left—or that most of the political parties in Russia were lining up loyally behind the Putin regime, regardless of whether its policies could be characterized as "right" or "left."

It seemed almost certain that the two most influential politicians in Russia would continue to be Putin and Primakov. This is not at all surprising or puzzling. The countless number of political aspirants who have appeared on the Russian stage in the last ten years failed to understand that politics is not just a profession but an art. In order to succeed in politics, it is not enough to have professional training and high ambitions. Real intellect and native leadership abilities are also required. During 1999, only Primakov and Putin demonstrated these qualities. For others mere ambition seemed to suffice.

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A Change Without a Coup or Revolution

The end of the year, century, and millennium also marked the end of the Yeltsin era, which had lasted for most of the decade and which culminated in his voluntary resignation. This major change occurred without revolution or bloodshed, without a palace coup or plot of any kind. Russia entered the new century with a new leader, Acting President Putin, and almost all the population perceived this, not as cause for alarm, but as a providential New Year's gift..

Yeltsin's resignation was no surprise. Only the timing of it, sprung upon the world on the last day of the year, caught people unprepared. It is true that Yeltsin did not want to leave his post. Yet he had thought and even spoken about his possible resignation ever since the summer of 1996, when heart trouble rendered him practically unable to perform his duties. In the fall of 1996, when he underwent a complex bypass operation, he was forced to consider all possible outcomes, including the one even worse than resignation. In 1997–98 the state of his health continued to be troublesome. In September 1998, U.S. President Clinton and his advisers, during a meeting with Yeltsin, were astounded by his inappropriate behavior. In October, during a visit by

Yeltsin to Tashkent and Alma-Ata, hundreds of people directly witnessed his incapacitation. That same month nearly half the members of the Federation Council called for the "immediate voluntary resignation of the president."

During 1999 Yeltsin was sidelined by illness virtually every month. His ability to snap back after each crisis, firmly grasping the helm of power again, was a constant surprise. For example, in December 1998, after a long stay in the hospital, he had returned to the Kremlin and suddenly fired a number of top people in his administration. Likewise, in May 1999 his dismissal of Primakov occurred without warning. In November 1999, at the Istanbul summit meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, he impressed diplomats and journalists as being strong, healthy, and self-confident. "Yeltsin didn't pound the rostrum with his shoe," one diplomat commented, "but he had untied his shoelaces. I don't know what pills he's taking, but they certainly seem to help." Such bursts of activity were, however, increasingly rare—and risky for Yeltsin's health. Meanwhile, Russia sorely needed a competent president who could steadily remain at his post, not in the hospital. And it seemed that Russia would soon have such a leader.

Over the preceding hundred years only ten men have stood at the head of the Russian or Soviet state, some for many years, others for only a few months. They were Tsar Nicholas II, Alexander Kerensky, Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, Konstantin Chernenko, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Boris Yeltsin. These men differed widely in their political views and individual personalities. Only one of them, Boris Yeltsin, was actually elected by the voters of Russia. The others came to power as the result of revolutions, closed-door decisions by the ruling party, palace coups, or other intrigues behind the scenes. These men had generally come to power against the wishes of their predecessors, and frequently condemned the previous ruler's policies, proclaiming their intention to establish a new and better system.

Kerensky was certainly not about to continue the legacy of Nicholas II, nor Lenin that of Kerensky. For good reason Lenin was apprehensive about Stalin's growing power, and for his part, Stalin praised Lenin in words but turned against much that Lenin had sought to achieve in the early 1920s. Khrushchev made the struggle against the "personality cult of Stalin" one of his prime objectives, while

Brezhnev declared war on the "subjectivism and voluntarism" of Khrushchev. Andropov did not want Chernenko to succeed him, nor did Chernenko want Gorbachev as his successor. Once in power, Gorbachev denounced the preceding "era of stagnation."

There was no natural or normal system for the transfer of power in Russia or the Soviet Union in the twentieth century, and that was one of the most important causes of our country's many difficulties and failures. Five of the leaders listed above remained in power to the last days of their lives. Three were removed by revolutions, one by a palace coup. Yeltsin was the only one to leave office voluntarily before the end of his term, and he transferred power to a successor whom he himself had selected. Still, this is progress. It is to be hoped that this kind of orderly and constitutional procedure will become the norm in Russia. There has arisen the real possibility of creating a democratic system of succession from one leader to another, and we do not have the right to fumble this opportunity.

There is no question that many disorderly practices, habits, and ways of doing things have taken root in Russia in the past ten years, and they need to be reexamined and changed. Some measures need to be taken right away, even before the presidential elections. Let us hope, however, that these inevitable changes will not take the form of a new struggle against a "cult of personality." Our country and people are weary of revolutions, upheavals, and sharp about-faces of the kind that abounded in the twentieth century. The breakthrough that Russia needs can be accomplished without excessive strain, simply by making use of the substantial resources and favorable conditions that, even today, Russia still enjoys. These resources have not been used rationally in past years, or they have been used to the detriment of Russia and its people. We saw no exception to this pattern of wastefulness during the Yeltsin era, which has now passed into history.