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Privatization, Government Crisis, and Elections (1993)

After the liberalization of prices the most important element of the market reforms was privatization, several variants of which had been discussed as early as 1990–91. The most active phase of privatization began in the fall of 1992 and continued through the whole of 1993.

Many different forms and methods of privatization and "de-statization" had been worked out and tested, both in the West (especially in the Reagan-Thatcher era of the 1980s) and in 1990–91 in Eastern Europe. In the West, among the most common reasons for carrying out privatization, or the offering of shares in government-owned property to private buyers, were: to attract resources for modernization purposes, to increase the efficiency of operations, to reduce spending from the government budget, or to increase budgetary income.

FIRST STAGE OF PSEUDO PRIVATIZATION

Privatization in Russia has been different. In its goals, its scale, and its time frame it has no precedent in world history. It was proposed that

over a period of two or three years the greater part of the publicly owned enterprises and property that had been accumulated in Russia, not just in the Soviet era but ever since industrialization began in Russia in the 1870s—all this was to be sold or auctioned off or somehow distributed among the citizens of our country. It was expected that a new class of entrepreneurs and property owners would make its appearance and complete the transition from socialism to a capitalist market economy.

General supervision of the enormous changes envisaged in this program was entrusted to the State Committee for the Management of State Property, which was established as part of the government of the Russian Federation in mid-1991, around the time of Yeltsin's election as president. (We will refer to it as the State Property Committee, for short.) All the best-known economists and people with practical experience in the economy were kept away from this committee and its operations.

In November 1991, on Gaidar's recommendation, a new chairman of the State Property Committee was appointed—Anatoly Chubais. Relatively unknown at the time, he went on to become one of the most prominent figures in the Yeltsin government.

Chubais and Gaidar together drew up a privatization program, whose basic features were confirmed and given legal authority by a presidential decree that Yeltsin signed on December 29, 1991. This marked the beginning of what has been called "the biggest transformation of property relations in world history" (*Argumenty i Fakty*, 1997, no. 48, p. 5).

In view of his later prominence, a few words about Chubais are in order here. A 35-year-old engineer with a candidate's degree in economics when he was placed in charge of privatization, Chubais had worked in 1990–91 as chief economic adviser to the mayor of St. Petersburg, Anatoly Sobchak. He had not otherwise distinguished himself in either science and scholarship or politics.

Born in the Byelorussian Soviet Republic, Chubais had graduated in 1977 from the Leningrad Engineering and Economics Institute. His dream had been to become a factory manager, but reality kept him at his alma mater, as a junior member of the teaching staff and later a senior lecturer. Like anyone seeking a career in the Soviet Union, he joined the CPSU. After gaining his candidate's degree, he began to think about a doctoral dissertation.

In the late 1980s, St. Petersburg (then Leningrad) became a center for the "informal" groups that later evolved into the democratic movement. As a Komsomol activist in 1989, Chubais could be seen at a number of different unofficial clubs and "communes," where he sometimes spoke on economic questions. He also served as a consultant to several candidates for the Congress of People's Deputies. His older brother, the philosopher Igor Chubais, was a far more visible and authoritative figure in the "informal" movement, however. People who knew Anatoly at that time thought of him merely as a moderately ambitious social movement activist. Chubais was always extremely loyal to his superiors, a person who was easily guided. In later years he often repeated the remark, "I never sweated and strained to be Number One." Under Sobchak he headed the mayoral committee for economic reform in St. Petersburg. Sobchak and Chubais had many ideas but in fact accomplished little.

We probably never would have heard of Chubais if Gaidar had not tapped him. They first met in 1986 at an economics seminar outside Leningrad. Chubais later spoke of this meeting as "historic." The young economists discussed almost every question, from the possibility of their coming to power to the probable length of their future prison terms (if the old-line Communist officialdom reasserted itself). Gaidar didn't forget his new Leningrad friend, and when he was given carte-blanche by Yeltsin and Burbulis to form a government, Gaidar summoned Chubais to fill an important post.

Chubais displayed an ability to work long and hard hours as a government minister. Lack of experience and knowledge were combined with great energy, organizational ability, and extreme radicalism. "The aim of privatization," Chubais said later, "was to build capitalism in Russia, and to do so in a few years of frontal assault, thus accomplishing production norms that had taken the rest of the world centuries." (He made these remarks on the television show "Podrobnosti" ["Details"] on June 29, 1994.)

There were many vacancies at the State Property Committee in late 1991-early 1992, and Chubais invited numerous friends and acquaintances, mostly from St. Petersburg, to come work with him. These included Alfred Kokh, Pyotr Mostovoi, Sergei Belyaev, Sergei and Dmitry Vasilyev, Sergei Ignatyev, Maksim Boiko, Aleksandr Kazakov, Andrei Illarionov, and Pyotr Filippov, among others. After Yeltin's "Sverdlovsk mafia" (which included Burbulis, Lobov, Ilyushin, Yuri

Petrov, and others) this group of "homeboys" from St. Petersburg was the largest such regional grouping in the new Moscow government.

Since there were no Russian officials with experience or knowledge of privatization, several dozen foreign specialists were brought in to work with the State Property Committee, and their number grew steadily both in the committee and in the Russian government apparatus.

Disputes over the goals, methods, and principles of privatization continued in every part of the Russian Federation during the entire time that it was being carried out. By no means did it always go according to Chubais's plans. Moscow mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, compared privatization to "a drunkard in the street selling his belongings for a pittance."

The first stage of preparation involved a plan to transfer most state property in equal shares to all citizens of Russia without exception. Each citizen was to have a privatization account in his or her own name into which a certain sum would be deposited—its size to determined by the Government Privatization Program. Another law defined the sources of funds for obtaining privatized property. In effect, the government guaranteed each citizen a cash payment to be used only for purposes of privatization. On the other hand, a decree by Yeltsin specified that all large or medium-sized enterprises (other than military or extractive) must be reorganized as "joint stock companies," that plans must be drafted for privatization through the sale of shares, and that each such plan must be approved by a meeting of the work collective, then submitted to the government for approval.

Each citizen was to receive ten thousand rubles. Why that exact figure? The plan for a "people's privatization" took as its starting point the idea that the total productive capacity of the country was the property of the people as a whole and therefore each citizen should receive equal initial opportunity to own some of it. This took the form of each citizen receiving an "equal share." Every enterprise—whether a power plant, airport, or factory—had a certain "base value" (*balansovaya stoimost*), reflecting the original cost of building it and putting it into operation. The "base value" was usually not revised or reevaluated after construction of the enterprise, but was simply added together with the "base values" of other enterprises in the same branch of industry. The resulting totals from all branches of industry were added up to arrive at an estimate of the national wealth in money terms. In

1991 the "base value" of the Russian Federation's productive capacity was set at 1,260,500,000,000,000 rubles—that is, one trillion, 260.5 billion. This sum was divided by the population of Russia (148.7 million in 1991), giving the sum of 8,467 rubles, which was rounded off to ten thousand.

In 1991, ten thousand rubles seemed a fairly large amount. It was proposed, in addition, that the shares citizens would buy in privatized enterprises would increase in value—in other words, each citizen's ten thousand rubles would grow. Chubais declared that in effect each citizen would be receiving an amount equal to the value of one Volga automobile, perhaps even two Volgas.

That was the plan. The reality turned out to be quite different.

First of all, the government decided against establishing a cash account in each citizen's name. Instead, anonymous privatization certificates called "vouchers" were issued. These were nondescript pieces of paper, not backed by any government guarantee. All citizens were to receive their vouchers by December 31, 1992. The anonymity of the vouchers removed the question of how one or another person happened to possess them. Obviously they could be bought or sold, used as collateral for loans, etc. On the other hand, a privatized enterprise did not have to accept vouchers as payment for shares. Moreover, not all of the enterprises with the most favorable prospects were included in the voucher form of privatization. The inflation that followed liberalization of prices dealt the final blow to the voucher system. As the mass distribution of vouchers began, prices increased by as much of 15- 20 times and continued to rise, but no revaluation of the vouchers occurred. By the fall of 1992, ten thousand rubles would buy no more than a man's suit of average quality.

Not knowing what to do with their vouchers, people began selling them. Buyers or brokerage firms at first offered 7–8 thousand rubles per voucher, but their value fell as the number of vouchers increased. At a time when other prices were soaring, the vouchers were the only commodity on the market whose value kept going down, both relatively and absolutely. By May 1993 a voucher would bring only 3–4 thousand rubles. In 1991 prices, that was the equivalent of only 30–40 rubles. Many citizens never did receive their vouchers, and many who received them did not use them to buy shares. Even those who did exchange vouchers for shares did not actually acquire ownership or income. No dividends have been paid by the new joint stock compa-

nies, neither in 1993 nor since. In the public mind the term voucher has become a synonym for gigantic swindle. For most ordinary Russians, "Chubais" and "voucher" are dirty words.

"People's privatization" was not the only form of denationalization in 1993. There was also the sale of "municipal" property. Stores, barber shops, laundries, restaurants, cafes, and so on were auctioned off to the highest bidder. In a number of cases the work collectives were offered the chance to buy the business from the municipal authorities — for example, drivers at a taxi depot could buy their cabs, or hairdressers could become owners of their salons. In these cases the "base price" was just the starting price. The auction process would determine the current "real market value." In the end a piece of property might sell for 50–200 times more than the starting price, a reflection of the hyperinflation in 1993.

This form of privatization proceeded at a brisk pace, involving a large number of enterprises in the service industry. Some of the new owners in the service sector gained from this, and services did improve, especially in retail commerce. But in many cases, instead of improving, services deteriorated

After taxi drivers had purchased their vehicles, for example, they found they could not afford to repair them or replace them when they wore out. Taxi service almost completely disappeared. Many services confronted a dilemma: whether to cater to a large number of customers at relatively low prices or to serve a small number at higher rates. The second path was usually preferred. Thus, in almost every case where a cafe, restaurant, or the like passed into private hands it reoriented toward a wealthy clientele, particularly those with foreign currency. Even the youngsters washing cars understood that it was better to wash two foreign cars and make twenty dollars than to wash ten Russian cars.

Waiting lines disappeared, but this was mainly because people went less often for a haircut or to the store or laundromat. They didn't take taxis any more and went less often to the movies or theater. For some the number of conveniences increased, but for the great majority everyday life became harder

The Russian government's decree on the formation of joint stock companies provided for a number of variants. Under the first variant, the employees of an enterprise (the "work collective") were given 25 percent of all shares free of charge, and could buy another 10 percent

at reduced cost. This variant was not very popular. Although workers could obtain shares at low prices, they would have little opportunity to affect the fate of their company. Their consent was not required for any reorganization of the business, including layoffs. This variant, although it opened the greatest possibilities for modernization and reconstruction, had no success with work collectives at enterprises. Only 2 percent of the total number of enterprises were privatized according to this first variant. The third variant was the most "market-oriented" of them all. It provided for the free sale, on the stock exchange, of all shares in a company, and at market prices—no matter what those prices might be.

The work collectives at most enterprises chose the *second* variant, viewing it as the most conservative. Under this variant the work collective received a controlling block of shares—51 percent—and became the real owner of the enterprise. It could therefore influence the appointment of the management and decisions about what to do with profits. It was obvious that workers would not be interested in allocating profits to pay dividends to incidental shareholders instead of increasing their own wages. On the other hand, this variant of privatization made it difficult to carry out reorganization and modernization, especially if laying off workers was involved. In other words, productivity of labor would be raised very slowly. Few people were interested in buying shares in such enterprises. Not surprisingly the formation of such joint stock companies did not result in greater efficiency of production and in many cases made the operation of plants and factories more difficult.

A certain number of very large factories became joint stock companies under the first or third variants. There were hardly any individuals or organizations that could pay the large sums of money needed to buy stock in these enterprises. Vouchers had to be accepted. On the other hand, some businessmen and recently formed "voucher funds" had bought up vouchers from the rest of the population at very low prices and were seeking ways to invest them profitably. No auctions were held in these cases, and the properties were sold for their "base value." Thus, some very large enterprises passed into private hands at ridiculously low prices.

For example, a celebrated shipyard in St. Petersburg, the Baltic Works, was put up for sale for 150 million rubles, payable in vouchers. At the same time the price for a children's store, Malysh, on

Nevsky Prospekt, the main shopping street in St. Petersburg, was 701 million rubles. The Minsk Hotel in Moscow, a medium-sized structure, was sold for vouchers with a nominal "worth" of 200,000 rubles. In contrast, the gigantic ZIL auto plant, which occupies more than a thousand hectares in Moscow, was privatized (under the first variant) for about 800,000 rubles worth of vouchers that had been collected from all parts of Russia. A number of sports complexes, port facilities, and factories were sold at very low prices for vouchers. The Urals Machinery Manufacturing Plant, better known by its Russian acronym Uralmash, which had been the largest plant in the USSR and was still the largest in Russia and which employed more than 100,000 workers, was privatized for vouchers in June 1993. Its value was set at 1.8 billion rubles, or $2 million at the exchange rate of that time. What would $2 million buy in the heart of New York City by comparison? Nothing more than a luxury apartment.

The controlling block of shares in Uralmash was bought by the Moscow businessman Kakha Bendukidze (whom we discuss further in the chapter "Russia's New Class"). He had established a biotechnology company called Bioprotsess.

A giant plant like Uralmash did not benefit by passing into private hands. For meaningful investment that would modernize the plant what was needed was not vouchers but real dollars, in the millions, if not tens of millions, but the new owners did not have that kind of money. The new owners of these giant plants also did not benefit much from their acquisitions, because in the general conditions of industrial decline the plants were not making profits; in fact, they were barely able to stay afloat. The expectation was that in the future these plants would become sources of enrichment. Bendukidze explained to the *Financial Times* (July 15, 1995): "For us privatization was manna from heaven. It meant that we could move forward and buy from the government on favorable terms whatever we wanted. . . . We have taken a hefty bite out of Russia's industrial capacity, although we weren't able to buy a single square meter of real estate in Moscow. It turned out to be easier to grab Uralmash than to get even one warehouse in Moscow. . . . We bought that plant for one thousandth of its real worth. The most profitable way to invest capital in today's Russia is to buy up factories at a reduced price. Of course, if someone offered us a billion dollars for Uralmash we would say, Yes. . . . In my past life I was a biologist and a Communist. Now I am a businessman and a liberal."

Although privatization was "manna from heaven" for businessmen like Bendukidze, ordinary people could find no advantage in it. After losing their savings, after being hoodwinked and robbed by various pyramid schemes, and seeing prices going up wildly all around them, most people were in no hurry to obtain or sell their vouchers. The government proposed to complete "voucher privatization" in 1993, but in fact by the fall of that year only 36 million out of a total 148 million vouchers had been used. The management of an enterprise did not obtain any real capital as the result of privatization, but it found itself more dependent on "workers control" (new decision-making powers in the hands of the work force) or on the whims of new owners like Bendukidze. The government, for its part, gained no economic benefits from privatization.

In view of this poor showing, both the Yeltsin-Gaidar government and the Supreme Soviet began drafting plans to change the way privatization was being carried out; in particular, the concept of distributing state property free of charge to the population as a whole was to be abandoned. The government's new plan was drafted by Vice Premier Oleg Lobov, who on August 30, 1993, submitted to Yeltsin a memorandum on the need to revaluate the basic productive capacity of the country, since by July 1993 its real market value was no longer 1.5 trillion rubles, but more than 300 trillion. It was necessary to make a corresponding revaluation of privatization vouchers and joint stock company shares.

That would have meant a fiasco for the reformers on Gaidar's team. According to reports in the September 14 issue of *Rossiyskie Vesti*, a newspaper close to the government, Yeltsin at first agreed with Lobov, then changed his mind when he realized what a blow to the authority of his government it would be to alter the course of privatization at that point. Lobov was reassigned. He was removed from the cabinet and given the post of secretary of the Security Council under Yeltsin. Gaidar was given Lobov's former vice premier's position.

Even after Gaidar's return, privatization proceeded very slowly, because its internal resources had been practically exhausted. The government felt obliged to look to the West, to give Western capital equal opportunity in the matter of buying up state-owned property in Russia. In the next chapter we will examine how that process unfolded in 1994–95.

As we have said, the main aim of privatization was to form a class

or stratum of property owners who could become a reliable base of support for the new social system being created. There was no precedent in economic history for this kind of privatization.

The commentator Anatoly Strelyany, a supporter of the radical democrats, gave a rather candid explanation of the philosophy of privatization in Russia: "Gaidar and Chubais proposed to achieve something small, which they hoped would develop into something great. Property would be distributed to anyone at all, even to a gangster, as long as it was taken out of government hands. If a gangster proved to be a capable manager of his capital, he would thereby cease to be a gangster, and if not, he would lose his wealth" (*Literaturnaya Gazeta*, June 25, 1997).

The economist M. Gelvanovsky wrote in 1993: "In the West there have been no precedents, no instances in which all the property in a country was transformed in an extremely compressed time frame from publicly-owned, or state-owned, to privately-owned. . . . Russia is facing an event of truly epochal proportions: privatization, if it is carried out according to its authors' conception, will mean a lightning-fast redistribution of property on a gigantic scale, comparable only to the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, but going in the opposite direction. But this 'return' of property to private hands will for the most part lack any historical legitimacy, and therefore the consequences in store for the economy and for social and political stability would appear to be rather dismal" (*Voprosy ekonomiki*, no. 10, pp. 64–65).

Chubais, in the "Introduction" to his book *Istoriya rossiyskoi privatizatsii* [History of Russian Privatization], which achieved a rather scandalous notoriety, admitted that his hastily conducted privatization program had lowered the economic efficiency of production and had not in fact created a broad and substantial stratum of property owners: "We constantly had to decide questions of the relations between ends and means. But I held, and still hold, that the creation of private property in Russia was an absolute value [to strive for]. In order to achieve this goal, it was necessary at times to sacrifice certain schematic notions of economic efficiency. These are categories that are measured by different yardsticks. Economic efficiency exists on a scale of one or two or ten years; private property operates on a scale of a hundred or a thousand years, and so on" (*Novoye Vremya*, 1997, no. 48, p. 10).

Most Russians have a very low opinion of Chubais and his priva-

tization program. And even in the West, he is not universally praised. Writing in the *Washington Post* of August 24, 1997, the Russian expert Peter Reddaway observed that Chubais's dubious integrity as a politician and his authoritarian administrative methods raised a question whether the U.S. government should continue its friendly relations with Russia. Reddaway held that the U.S. should stop aiding a corrupt government and stop supporting people who did not work in the interests of their own nation. Similarly, in the fall of 1997 the *Chicago Tribune* wrote that Chubais's privatization program had been thoroughly corrupt from the start and that it had not produced a viable private sector that could help restore the ruined Russian economy.

SHARPENING POLITICAL CONFLICT, SPRING 1993

The change of prime ministers in December 1992 did not lead to any noticeable change in foreign or domestic policy. The underlying causes of the sharp conflict between legislative and executive branches that had been revealed at the Seventh Congress of People's Deputies persisted. Opinion polls showed a loss of confidence in Yeltsin. His popularity ratings in February 1993 had fallen to 20–25 percent. But confidence in the legislative branch had fallen even lower. Khasbulatov's ratings that same month were around 10–12 percent.

The economic situation in the Russian Federation continued to worsen, and public dissatisfaction kept growing. Under these conditions a renewal of the conflict between the two branches of government seemed inevitable. The first move in the new round was made by Yeltsin.

On Saturday evening, March 20, 1993, regular broadcasting on Russian television was interrupted, and it was reported that President Yeltsin would make an address to the people of Russia. We all waited apprehensively to hear what he would say. The president was brief. He announced that he had just signed a decree placing Russia under "special administrative rule," a condition in which the Supreme Soviet and Congress of People's Deputies would be subordinated to the president and would not have the right to cancel his decrees or to pass laws contradicting them.

Yeltsin's action was in violation of specific clauses of the constitu-

tion. It was a new attempt to carry out a coup d'etat from above and to change by decree the relations between the two branches of government. Before Yeltsin was off the air the Presiding Committee of the Supreme Soviet had gathered at the parliament building, the so-called Russian White House. It condemned Yeltsin's words and action. This was reported by Russian television, which also announced that at midnight it would broadcast statements by top government figures. Almost everyone in the country tuned in. The first to speak was Yuri Voronin, deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet. (Khasbulatov was visiting Kazakstan at the time.) Aleksandr Rutskoi spoke next, criticizing and condemning Yeltsin. Valery Zorkin, chairman of the Constitutional Court, was the third to speak. After them Attorney General Valentin Stepankov, a man Yeltsin had been able to rely un until then, also condemned the president's action. This was a strong blow to Yeltsin's intentions.

Later it became known that Yeltsin had videotaped his speech the morning of March 20, and copies of the videotape had been delivered to foreign diplomats so that they could inform their governments. Yeltsin had acted in haste, even before his staff had completed the wording of the decree. Prime Minister Chernomyrdin supported the president, but Yuri Skokov, secretary of the Security Council, refused to endorse the new decree and tried to persuade his boss not to take this risky step. Vice President Rutskoi also refused to endorse the decree.

On Sunday afternoon, March 21, a full session of the Supreme Soviet was held. It condemned the president's action and passed a resolution calling for an emergency session of the Congress of People's Deputies to be held immediately. The heads of the "power ministries," army head Pavel Grachev, internal affairs minister Viktor Yerin, and state security chief Viktor Barannikov, were summoned to appear before the Supreme Soviet. They all felt obliged to support the Soviet. The evening of that same day the Constitutional Court convened and held an all-night session. On Monday morning, March 22, it declared Yeltsin's decree unconstitutional. Yeltsin realized he had misplayed his hand and retreated. His decree, published on March 24, no longer spoke of "special administrative rule," and several other points discussed in his speech of March 20 were omitted.

On March 26, the Ninth Congress of People's Deputies of the Russian Federation convened in the Kremlin. Unlike the Eighth

Congress, it promised to be of great significance: I followed its proceedings very closely. On the first day Valery Zorkin presented a report. Yeltsin took the floor several times, seeking to justify himself and take the offensive. Deputies spoke, one after another, very sharply. At the same time, behind the scenes, a search for a compromise was under way. Outside the Kremlin mass rallies were going on continuously. On one side several thousand Yeltsin supporters demanded that he not give in to the Congress. On the other side supporters of the opposition loudly chanted anti-Yeltsin slogans.

Tensions at the Congress kept rising. One version of an agreement with the president was proposed, but most deputies objected to it, and many of them demanded the removal of Khasbulatov from his post as chairman of the Supreme Soviet. A break in the proceedings was announced, so that deputies could consult with one another. I listened in on the discussions of one group. Its leader was trying to convince his fellow deputies: "It's too early for us to try to remove Khasbulatov." A simple majority was all that was needed to remove the chairman, and it was with some anxiety that Khasbulatov awaited the results of the secret balloting. Those who voted to remove him numbered 339; those opposed, 558.

During the first several days no one raised the question of removing Yeltsin from power. Khasbulatov tried to persuade the deputies to pass a resolution calling for elections ahead of schedule, both for deputies to the Congress and for president. Yeltsin very much feared such a resolution. He was not at all sure that the population would reelect him. The deputies, too, had reason to fear this proposal. They did not wish to risk losing their seats. They voted against consideration of the proposal, although a peaceful resolution of the conflict might have resulted if new elections for both branches of government had been held.

On the evening of March 27, there was a change in the relatively smooth proceedings of the Congress. Yeltsin, who was displeased with a number of the Congress's resolutions, asked for the floor. He spoke slowly and uncertainly, proposing that the Congress pass a resolution criticizing both branches of government and then disperse. Puffy in the face, hair uncombed, Yeltsin made a strange impression. He did not seem to be fully in command of his faculties. After his speech the session closed, but the deputies, guests, and reporters were in no hurry to leave. They stood around in the lobby discussing the events of the

day. Suddenly a door at one end of the lobby opened and Yeltsin entered, propped up firmly by a bodyguard on either side. Video cameramen were quick to film the unsteady steps of the president and his rather incoherent answers to the questions that poured forth. Still surrounded and supported by his guards, Yeltsin went out of the building onto Red Square, and to the shouts of his supporters continued on down Tverskaya Street almost as far as the building of the Moscow Soviet. Several foreign correspondents I knew asked me: "Can we sleep calmly? What if Yeltsin, in the shape he's in, decided to push *the* button?"

On March 28 the morning session of the Congress opened in a very tense atmosphere. No less than a hundred thousand Yeltsin supporters had gathered on Red Square, and they were fired by passions that were not purely political. Yeltsin spoke to the rally. He declared that if the Congress passed a resolution calling for his dismissal from office, he would not submit to it but would submit only to the verdict of the people. The mood of those at the rally was at such a fever pitch that Yuri Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow, asked deputies not to leave the Kremlin even during breaks. This smacked of blackmail, an attempt to pressure or intimidate the deputies.

A secret ballot on impeachment of the president was held the afternoon of March 28. Under the constitution, three-fourths of the total membership of the Congress were required—that is, 780 votes. Yeltsin was nervous awaiting the results, as he admits in his memoirs.

The evening session of the Congress began at 9 p.m., but it was not until 10 that the members of the government entered the room, and it was even later before the members of the Constitutional Court took their seats. Yeltsin did not appear. The results of the secret ballot were announced at 10:30 p.m. For Yeltsin's dismissal there were 617 votes, or 66 percent of those voting. Against dismissal were 268, or slightly more than one quarter of the total number of deputies. Such a close vote was in fact a political defeat for Yeltsin, but speaking before a crowd of his supporters on Red Square, he proclaimed victory.

The fourth day of the congress went relatively smoothly. Against Khasbulatov's objections the Congress passed a resolution for a referendum to be held at the end of April in which the public could vote on whether they had confidence in Yeltsin and whether elections should be held ahead of schedule.

Preparations for the referendum developed into a regular political campaign. Vice President Rutskoi was especially active during this time. In addition to dealing with problems of agriculture and agrarian reform, he had been assigned by the president to head an interdepartmental government commission to combat organized crime. This gave him the opportunity to collect quite a lot of information about corruption and abuse of power in the upper echelons of government. It was during this time, on April 10, that I met with the vice president to discuss questions of collaboration between the Socialist Party of Working People, of which I was one of seven co-chairs, and the Free Russia People's Party, which was headed by Rutskoi.

Many newspapers and magazines at the time were waging a campaign to denounce and discredit the vice president. Some of these publications were lying on his desk, in particular the magazine *Stolitsa*, which had a major article with the insulting title, "The Hussar Born of a Sow." "These scum," said Rutskoi. "What they don't write." We agreed on a number of joint measures to be taken by our two parties, but it proved impossible to carry them out. On April 11, by order of President Yeltsin, Rutskoi's bodyguard was reduced and a different car was assigned to him. Two days later he was removed from his position in charge of agrarian matters. His assistants dealing with agricultural questions and the staff he had built up were dismissed.

On April 16, Rutskoi gave a major report on crime and corruption to a session of the Supreme Soviet. He cited numerous cases of connections between organized crime and highly placed government figures, including military officers, especially in the Western Group of the Russian army. Many newspapers published the full text of his report, and by decision of the Supreme Soviet it was broadcast in full on television. Some of the government ministers accused in the report disputed the facts and documentation presented by Rutskoi and threatened to take him to court for slander, but they never did. Yeltsin answered Rutskoi's report in his own way. He announced that from then on he himself would take charge of the interdepartmental commission to combat crime and corruption. Chernomyrdin was added to this commission, and Rutskoi was removed from it. The press of the "democrats" continued the campaign against Rutskoi, accusing him of all sorts of sins, including the absurd charge that he had misappropriated several million dollars, allegedly hiding this money in secret Swiss bank accounts.

At the end of April a referendum was held throughout the territory of Russia on four questions:

1. Do you have confidence in the President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin?
2. Do you approve the social and economic policies carried out by the President and the government of the Russian Federation since 1992?
3. Do you consider it necessary that elections for President of the Russian Federation be held ahead of schedule?
4. Do you consider it necessary that elections for People's Deputies of the Russian Federation be held ahead of schedule?

Yeltsin and his supporters called for a Yes vote on the first two questions, and a No vote on the third and fourth. The opposition called for a No vote on the first two and a Yes vote on the last two. The referendum results were disappointing for the opposition. On the rolls of the Electoral Commission, 107 million voters were listed. Of these, 64.5 percent took part in the referendum. On the first and second questions, the Yes vote was 58.5 and 52.9 percent, respectively. On the third and fourth questions, the Yes vote was 32.64 and 41.4 percent, respectively. Thus, the citizens of Russia expressed confidence in Yeltsin as president and rejected the proposal for early elections. The bitterest pill for the opposition was the voters' approval of the social and economic policies since January 1992.

Yeltsin of course was quite pleased with the referendum results and began preparations for the next phase of battle against the Supreme Soviet. The president's staff and a so-called Constitutional Conference began compiling drafts of a new constitution in which the powers of the president would be increased and the powers of the Supreme Soviet reduced proportionately. A May Day demonstration by Toiling Russia and a number of Communist organizations was ruthlessly dispersed by government forces. Many demonstrators were beaten and one was killed by a blow to the head. On May 6, Yeltsin appeared on television to present his program of action for the next few months. In this speech he made a surprise announcement: "The referendum was a defeat for Vice President Rutskoi. During the preparations for the referendum the vice president in fact became a leader of the opponents of reform. I have lost confidence in

Rutskoi and have relieved him of all assignments entrusted to him by the president."

TENSIONS REACH THE BREAKING POINT

As we have seen, a major political division had developed in Russia. A majority of the Russian Congress of People's Deputies and the Russian Supreme Soviet, which had been pro-Yeltsin in 1990–91, were opposed to him, and Rutskoi and Khasbulatov, both former Yeltsin supporters, were now leaders of the opposition.

During June and July 1993 the political tension in Russia continued to grow. By August it was plain to virtually all observers that the situation had become critical. Vitaly Tretyakov, chief editor of *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, published a long article on August 11 with the heading "Death Agony of Regime Evident: Only new elections and a new government can save the country." An article of mine, published in several Western newspapers, discussed the danger of radicalism in Russia:

> The events of the last few months have revealed a harsh reality: a deep division is endangering Russian society. Rallies by supporters and opponents of Yeltsin are attracting approximately the same numbers, and the speakers at these rallies seem equally deaf to the arguments of the other side. An irreconcilable hostility separates these two sections of our society, which remain relatively small (at least for now), but with every day the gap between them grows wider and the confrontation intensifies. . . . The political struggle is taking cruder and cruder form; it is hard to call it civilized—or justifiable. The apparent success of the president's supporters is accompanied by a deepening of the political and economic crisis, a growing embitterment in the politically active part of society, and apathy in the majority of the population. . . .
>
> In what other country could the president start a campaign of denunciation against the vice president? Or a president walk unsteadily to the speaker's stand before the highest legislative body in the land, so that hardly anyone could doubt the instability of his physical condition? Or declare at a rally that he

would not abide by the constitution? Where else could a government remain in power, unchallenged, after its actions had led to a decline in production by nearly one-half, to a fall in living standards to many times below the previous level, and to destruction of the systems of health care, education, and culture? . . .

Before our eyes a new Russia has been born, but it is a very strange country. It does not have clearly defined borders, but it has an army. Yet that army does not always carry out the orders of its commanders. This country does not have a clear foreign policy or military doctrine, but it has thousands of nuclear warheads—aimed at who knows what?

We don't know what kind of economy this government is constructing. More than half of 1993 has gone by, but we don't have a budget; we don't know what the government's income and expenditures are. Things cannot, and will not, go on this way for long. One cannot fail to see that the inner logic of such a crisis narrows the choices and creates the possibility of a right-wing or left-wing dictatorship. Neither would make things any easier for Russia or the world. . . .

The experience of the twentieth century has shown that radicals of any orientation, left or right, should not have the power to decide the fate of nations or of humanity as a whole. Today's world is too fragile to be entrusted to people bent on destruction.

On August 21, 1993, the "left" forces organized a demonstration with tens of thousands outside the Russian White House (nickname of the building housing the Supreme Soviet) to mark the second anniversary of the failed coup of August 1991. The demonstrators carried signs saying "All Power to the Soviets." Yeltsin, for his part, declared that in September "decisive events" would occur in Russia and that the remaining days of August should be used for "artillery practice." It soon became clear that this choice of words was no accident.

CIVIL WAR IN MOSCOW

Like the events of August 18–22, 1991, the eruption of civil war in Moscow on October 3–4, 1993, and the preceding two-week standoff

between the Yeltsin government and the Russian parliament have given rise to a voluminous literature with quite a few differing versions of the events based on extensive investigations, both official and unofficial. The greater number of publications have been produced by the opposition. Many opposition leaders, including Khasbulatov and Rutskoi, have published books; others have confined themselves to articles and interviews. Several books and hundreds of articles on the subject have come from the pens of both Russian and Western journalists. The magazine *Twentieth Century and the World*, headed by Gleb Pavlovsky, printed a large volume with a chronology and analysis, entitled *'93 - October - Moscow*. Yeltsin's memoirs devote only one chapter, "Difficult Autumn," to the events of September–October 1993. In 1995, another large volume, entitled *Moscow, Autumn 1993: Chronology of a Confrontation*, presented the views of those in charge on the government side, including Yeltsin, Gaidar, Chubais, Kulikov, Volkogonov, and Luzhkov.

There is nothing strange in the fact that various authors view the events of "Black October" in different ways. Sometimes they merely supplement one another's accounts. In many cases they present contradictory, mutually exclusive versions. Within the limits of the present work I cannot go into detail about the events or examine the different versions in depth. But a general account is necessary and at least a preliminary analysis of specific versions.

For a long time Yeltsin had been making preparations for abolishing the existing Russian parliament, but in early September 1993 he intensified his efforts. His first secretary, Viktor Ilyushin, assigned to draft a decree annulling the powers of the Russian Supreme Soviet and Congress of People's Deputies, learned of these plans earlier than others. (Ilyushin, one of Yeltsin's closest collaborators, had worked with Yeltsin in the CPSU's Sverdlovsk province committee and had been his assistant in the party's Central Committee and Moscow city committee.)

After a week Yury Baturin, Yeltsin's assistant on legal matters, was brought in to help on the project. Earlier Baturin had served Gorbachev as part of the staff of the president of the USSR. A few weeks later the heads of the three "power ministries" were made privy to Yeltsin's plans. They were Pavel Grachev, minister of defense, Viktor Yerin, head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Russian initials, MVD), and Nikolai Golushko, Russia's new minister of state security. Yeltsin had

dismissed the previous security minister, Viktor Barannikov, in late July. The official reason cited was corruption, but the real reason was Barannikov's sympathy with the opposition to Yeltsin.

Initially it was proposed that MVD units occupy the Supreme Soviet building on Sunday, September 19, since no members of the Supreme Soviet or their staffs would be in the building on a Sunday. An announcement of the dissolution of the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of People's Deputies would be made in the evening that same day. Later, Yeltsin rescheduled operations to September 21, on the assumption that seizure of the White House would not be necessary. On September 15 a pay increase of 180 percent for employees of the "power ministries" and the presidential guard was announced. MVD and OMON units from all over Russia were assembled outside of Moscow and in the city itself. (The OMON was an organization of "volunteers" trained to assist the police, created in the Gorbachev era. The acronym OMON means "special purpose militia detachment"—or in Russian, *otdel militsii osobogo naznacheniya*. Its members were not ordinary volunteers, but transferees from the military to the police, selected on the basis of physical features—tall, strong men trained to deal with "special" situations, including ethnic conflicts.)

Yeltsin signed the decree annulling the powers of the Soviet and Congress on September 15, but did not inform anyone except his chief associates. At 5 p.m. on September 21 a speech by Yeltsin was videotaped by a special unit, which was then sent to the central television office after 7 p.m. Broadcasting of the president of Russia's appeal to the people began on all TV channels exactly at 8 p.m. The speech lasted about twenty minutes. Simultaneously copies of Yeltsin's decree, which was named Decree No. 1400, were sent by official messenger service to all the chief centers of power throughout Russia.

The chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov, received a packet of papers from the Kremlin, containing the text of the decree, just five minutes before it was broadcast to the country. The title of the decree was rather obscure: "On Step-by-Step Constitutional Reform in the Russian Federation."

The essence of this "reform" was as follows:

1. The functions of the Russian Congress of People's Deputies and Supreme Soviet would cease and a new, dual-chambered

Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation would begin operation.

2. A draft constitution would be presented by a constitutional commission by December 12, 1993.
3. Temporarily, until a new constitution was adopted and new elections were held for a Federal Assembly, the country would be governed by the decrees of the president and resolutions issued by the government of the Russian Federation (that is, the cabinet appointed by Yeltsin).
4. The proposal for the election of representatives to a State Duma, drafted by the constitutional commission, would go into effect immediately. Elections for the State Duma would be held on December 11 and 12, 1993. The Federal Assembly would take up the question of presidential elections.
5. A Central Electoral Commission would be established to oversee the elections to the State Duma, the lower chamber of the two-chambered Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. (The upper chamber would represent geographic units, especially the non-Russian republics, regions, and districts.)
6. No session of the Russian Congress of People's Deputies would be called. The powers of the people's deputies would cease to exist.
7. It was proposed that no session of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation be held before the Federal Assembly began operation.

At 6 p.m. on September 21, Yeltsin left the Kremlin for his residence outside of Moscow, from which he would watch the unfolding of events. He gave orders to cut off all phone service to the Russian White House, including the government's internal telephone system.

At 8:15 p.m. a session of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet began. From all directions people converged on the White House—members of the Supreme Soviet, journalists, and certain members of the Russian government, including Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoi.

The constitution of the Russian Federation contained a significant provision, Article 121, Clause 6. This stated that in the event of an attempt by the president to disperse a legally elected representative body, his powers would immediately—that is to say, automatically—

cease to exist. This constitutional clause became the basis for all the resolutions passed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet on the evening of September 21. During the night, in the early hours of September 22, the Supreme Soviet as a whole adopted these same resolutions. By September 23 many people's deputies who were not members of the Supreme Soviet had gathered in the Russian White House, and the opening of the Tenth (Extraordinary) Congress of People's Deputies was announced. This body confirmed the resolutions passed by the Supreme Soviet, which were essentially as follows:

1. In accordance with Article 121, Clause 6, the powers vested in President Yeltsin ceased to exist as of 8 p.m., September 21, 1993.
2. In accordance with Article 121, Clause 11, the presidential powers were vested in the vice president of the Russian Federation, Aleksandr Rutskoi.
3. The actions of President Yeltsin were to be regarded as a coup d'etat.

Rutskoi began performing the duties of president of Russia, issuing his first decrees the night of September 21 and in the early hours of September 22.

The Constitutional Court also handed down a decision on the night of September 21. It ruled Yeltsin's Decree No. 1400 unconstitutional and stated that his actions provided sufficient grounds "for his removal from office and for other special mechanisms to go into effect."

The law and the constitution were on the side of the Supreme Soviet, but what practical effect could this have? All the power ministries were siding with Yeltsin. Only the head of the Attorney General's Office, V. Stepankov, came to the White House.

Ordinary Muscovites also began to gather at the White House, including leaders of the more radical opposition groups, but they added up to only about two thousand. Rutskoi was constantly on the phone to various military units, but none were in any hurry to follow his orders.

Yeltsin, too, encountered disappointments. Defense Minister Grachev, who sided with Yeltsin, was unable to convince the Collegium of the Defense Ministry to adopt a resolution supporting the president. The army did not wish to go to war against the civilian popula-

tion or to disperse the Supreme Soviet. Moods within the army were complex and contradictory. Opinion polls of active-duty soldiers and retirees showed that sympathy for Yeltsin was not prevalent. During 1992 and 1993, before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, one out of two serviceman questioned by pollsters expressed support for Rutskoi. The same was true among retired military personnel and skilled workers in military industries. In August and September 1993 in these circles Yeltsin's ratings hovered around 25–30 percent, while Rutskoi's were 35–45 percent. These polling results were reported in *Itogi*, June 30, 1996, but they were known to the initiated in 1993, and it was no wonder that the Defense Ministry Collegium decided on neutrality.

Those in charge of the television system sided with Yeltsin almost from the start, a great advantage for him. The TV channels gave no details on the actions taken by the Supreme Soviet, the People's Congress, and Rutskoi. The newspapers, on the other hand, mostly took a neutral position or sided with the Supreme Soviet. On September 23, under the general heading "President Tramples Constitution" *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* published Decree No. 1400 alongside the resolutions of the Supreme Soviet and the decrees issued by Rutskoi.

Among the resolutions of the Supreme Soviet was one removing Grachev, Yerin, and Golushko from office. New "power ministers" were appointed: Colonel-General Vladislav Achalov as defense minister, Andrei Dunaev as head of the MVD, and Viktor Barannikov as head of state security. They all accepted their appointments and went to the White House. But no army units, MVD troops or police, or state security personnel responded to the orders they issued. Only some individual officers from the power ministries went to the White House. From the ranks of these scattered individuals the new "president," Rutskoi, with Achalov's assistance, organized a defense guard for the White House and a personal bodyguard.

From the provinces reports were contradictory. Almost all local administrative chiefs sided with the president, while the majority of representative bodies of local government sided with the Supreme Soviet. Some heads of provinces or autonomous units of the Russian Federation declared their neutrality or offered to act as intermediaries. Thus, during the first days of the confrontation neither side had the overwhelming advantage. The American politician Zbigniew Brzezinski

was right when in answer to a question about the standoff in Moscow he predicted, "Whoever sheds blood first will lose."

Meanwhile, all leaders of the Western powers declared their support for Yeltsin. I directly experienced this pro-Yeltsin sympathy in the West during a visit to Germany on September 15–26, 1993. Lyudmila Vartazarova, chairperson of the Socialist Party of the Working People (Russian initials, SPT), and I were there on an invitation from the Democratic Socialist Party of Germany. I observed that German television and most of the German press were on Yeltsin's side. On the evening of September 23 we met with a large group of businessmen and Bundestag members. Vartazarova spoke on the economic situation in Russia, and I on the political situation. My sympathies were with the Russian White House, but most of my listeners obviously sympathized with the Kremlin. I asked the audience, "What would you say if here in Bonn the president or chancellor suddenly dissolved the Bundestag, declared the German constitution null and void, and called for the establishment of new government institutions?"

"Russia is not Germany," was the reply of one Bundestag member.

September 22–23

As the standoff continued on September 22–23, barricades were built around the White House, but its defenders were not numerous. The people of Moscow displayed an obvious indifference to the appeals coming from either side. The leaders of the parliament had counted on mass support. Not much earlier, on May 9, 1993, more than 100,000 Muscovites had turned out for an opposition demonstration. The unofficial street leaders had given their chiefs definite assurances, but as it turned out, they were unable to fulfill their promises.

The trade unions made no response to Yeltsin's dissolution of the Supreme Soviet. There were various limp statements of protest, but no calls for action. No political strikes were declared in Moscow or anywhere else in Russia—actions Rutskoi and Khasbulatov had counted on. Small groups came to the White House from St. Petersburg, from the Trans-Dniester region, from Abkhazia, and from other regions to show support for the Soviet, but they numbered in the dozens or at best hundreds, not tens of thousands.

This absence of large-scale street support for the legislative branch worked to the advantage of Yeltsin and company, who gradually

stepped up the pressure on the Supreme Soviet and Congress of People's Deputies. It was announced that any deputy who would leave the White House would be assured an influential post in the executive branch. These promises had an effect. Khasbulatov's deputy, Nikolai Ryabov, was one of the first to quit the White House; he was immediately appointed chairman of the newly created Central Electoral Commission. Aleksandr Pochinok, a member of the Soviet's budget committee, left and was appointed deputy minister of finance in Yeltsin's government.

The White House and neighboring buildings were sealed off by reinforced police units, which did not, however, interfere in any of the proceedings. Sessions of the Supreme Soviet and of the Congress of People's Deputies were broadcast to the territory surrounding the White House. By the end of the day on September 23, 632 people's deputies were present in the building. This was not a sufficient number to pass constitutionally binding resolutions. Nevertheless, the Congress voted to abrogate the powers of people's deputies who had declared support for Yeltsin and who refused to attend sessions of the Supreme Soviet or Congress. The first resolution on this point contained 88 names.* A separate resolution stripped Ryabov and Pochinok of their mandates as deputies for "supporting a coup d'etat." Several similar resolutions were adopted later on.

September 24

On September 24 it was still relatively easy to enter and leave the White House. Delegations from various regions arrived one after another. Groups of deputies went to talk with representatives of the MVD and Defense Ministry and with the media. A group from the Union of Officers arrived at the White House in uniform and bearing arms. Armed groups of Cossacks and others from the Trans-Dniester region also arrived. No one responded to an ultimatum issued by Yeltsin and Moscow's Mayor Yuri Luzhkov demanding the surrender of all weapons and military supplies. A surprise attack by a group of armed men on the staff headquarters of the Unified Armed Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States provoked a stormy reaction

* The author lists 20 of those who would be most famous to Russian readers, but we have omitted this list.—G.S.

in the mass media. The attack was beaten off and the attackers fled. One officer defending the headquarters was killed. The Defense Ministry blamed the Union of Officers and the Supreme Soviet for the attack. The White House, for its part, charged that it was a provocation organized by the government.

The number of people around the White House was smaller on this day. A poll of Muscovites showed that more than 75 percent sympathized with neither side. The overwhelming majority were not interested in demonstrations or strikes in support of Yeltsin or of the Supreme Soviet. This situation suited Yeltsin just fine, but for Khasbulatov it was a big disappointment. He proposed that the work of the Congress of People's Deputies be interrupted.

"Much has been accomplished," he declared, "but the main thing has not been done—the rule of law has not been restored in our country. This has happened as a result of the apathy of our fellow citizens and the behavior of officeholders who, from careerist considerations, do not wish to submit to the law."

The ring of MVD and OMON forces around the White House was strengthened, giving rise to rumors that the building was about to be stormed. But Yeltsin and Grachev both announced that there would be no storming of the White House. Nevertheless, the units protecting the building were reinforced. The Congress passed a resolution calling for elections ahead of schedule both for president and for the people's deputies "no later than March 1994." Such resolutions did not become widely known. Russian television ignored them, and *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, which had remained loyal to the Supreme Soviet, was closed down. Khasbulatov's motion for the Congress to cease operations was not carried. Some deputies accused Khasbulatov of cowardice and called for the election of a new chairman. These motions were voted on and rejected.

Late in the evening the White House's electricity was turned off. The blockade of the building was reinforced, and now only members of parliament and staff were allowed through.

September 25

On September 25 more than 5,000 gathered for a rally outside the White House. The building of barricades continued. Rutskoi came out of the parliament building and walked the whole length of the police

and OMON cordon surrounding the White House, appealing to these men to abide by the law. They listened in silence with no show of emotion. During that same day Khasbulatov held several press conferences and meetings with opposition party leaders. Yeltsin also gave several interviews. He claimed that one deputy after another was leaving the White House and soon only Rutskoi and Khasbulatov would remain. "But I don't understand what the two of them, alone, will be doing in that building," he joked.

At an evening rally outside the White House, according to press reports, there were about ten thousand people. Among defenders of the White House a regiment was formed which took a vow of loyalty to the constitution. Rutskoi and Achalov attended this ceremony.

Toward evening the cordon around the White House was tightened. Private citizens and the press were no longer admitted, but anyone could leave the White House without interference. Some of those rallying to support the Supreme Soviet gathered by the subway station that bore the name "Barrikadnaya" (of the barricades). New police units and some ambulances were brought up to the ring around the White House. The defenders of the White House were now joined by a group of neo-fascists from the ultra-nationalist organization Russian National Unity, headed by Aleksandr Barkashov. They were given several rooms in the building but no weapons were issued to them. Inside the building all the reins of leadership were held firmly by Khasbulatov.

September 26

On September 26 rumors began to circulate both inside and outside the White House that the building was going to be stormed late that night. Indeed, the cordon around it was reinforced with elite units from the Dzerzhinsky Division. Snipers took their places in many buildings around the White House perimeter. The encirclement of the building was strengthened by the placement of dozens of trucks and buses.

More than two thousand people were on constant duty guarding the White House. Food was regularly brought into the building by various means. On the other hand, Yeltsin continued his efforts to buy deputies off. He decreed that anyone leaving the White House would be awarded a million rubles, a permanent residence permit for Moscow, and

deputies' quarters. The eminent cellist Mstislav Rostropovich arrived in Moscow and directed a big concert on Red Square at noon on September 26, with Yeltsin, Grachev, Yerin, and Luzhkov among those in attendance. At 2 p.m. a rally of Yeltsin supporters was held on Soviet Square, with about 30,000 in attendance. At the White House rumors spread that military units coming to rescue the Supreme Soviet were already in the suburbs of Moscow. A religious procession headed by several priests made its way around the White House building. Several times each day Rutskoi came out on a balcony and gave a speech to the defenders of parliament. A continuous rally went on at Free Russia Square. Rutskoi announced that the Urals and Volga military districts had come over to the side of the parliament. The Defense Ministry denied the report.

In the evening the pumps providing water to the upper stories of the building stopped working. Sessions were held by candlelight. Many foreign correspondents attended Khasbulatov's evening press conference. Although representatives of the press were supposedly not allowed through the cordon, their number in the White House increased. The strictness of controls at the cordon had been relaxed somewhat that evening, and the ring of police and OMON units was pulled back several hundred meters.

Prime Minister Chernomyrdin for the first time offered to negotiate. Yuri Voronin, a spokesman for the opposition side, replied that before any negotiations, the water and electricity would have to be turned back on.

September 27

On the morning of September 27, rumors of an imminent storming of the White House again began to circulate. Gas masks were issued to many of the building's defenders, who were joined by an armed unit from Moldavia, the "Dniester Detachment." Observers estimated the total number of people around the building at 5,000–6,000. The Congress of People's Deputies voted to send out various appeals: to particular regions of Russia, to the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, to the United Nations. The police again stopped journalists from entering the White House, and even people who worked in the building. Crowds of people gathered around the outside of the police cordon, and here and there clashes broke out between them and the

OMON troopers, who made free use of their clubs. Among the defenders of the White House calls for marching on the television center at Ostankino were heard for the first time.

Negotiations went on all day long between some of Yeltsin's cabinet ministers and some leaders of the Supreme Soviet, with Valery Zorin presiding as intermediary. In the evening Rutskoi and Khasbulatov addressed the crowd at another rally.

September 28

An operation aimed at blocking off the White House completely began early on the morning of September 28. The encirclement of the building was reinforced with MVD units accompanied by trucks with water cannon, and OMON troopers occupied passageways and courtyards in streets adjacent to the parliament. Many of the OMON carried automatic weapons. Mounted police were among the many new units brought up around the White House. A public address system was set up near the building, and an ultimatum was announced to its defenders to put down their weapons and surrender to the authorities. That morning roughly one hundred people's deputies who were away from the parliament building for various reasons were not allowed to reenter. Patriarch Aleksiy II of the Russian Orthodox Church joined the negotiations, where attempts were being made to work out a compromise.

Telephones in the White House and neighboring buildings were cut off. One-third of the buildings in Moscow's Krasnaya Presnya district, where the White House is located, were left without telephone service. Among foreign correspondents, only Americans were allowed into the building. Barbed wire began to go up around the White House, and many fire trucks and bulldozers for breaking down barricades joined the encircling forces. The number of White House defenders grew smaller. It rained all night, and some people left their posts in order to dry off and rest. By then the ring enclosing the White House was sealed tight. People were allowed to leave but no one could enter any more. All the schools in central Moscow were asked to suspend classes.

Another session of the Congress of People's Deputies began in the White House. Khasbulatov reported that 514 deputies were present. A large number of people gathered outside the police encirclement, and again there were clashes between police and demonstrators, with injuries on both sides. Demonstrators closed off the Sadovoye Koltso,

or Garden Ring, and construction of another barricade began there. A barricade also went up at the "Barricades" subway station blocking entrances and exits.

Toward evening more barbed wire began to go up around the White House. Tension and bitterness mounted on both sides. Even foreign observers assessed the situation as explosive.

September 29

On this day the cordon around the White House was expanded outward. At the same time, Khasbulatov's deputy Veniamin Sokolov began negotiations with representatives of Yeltsin and his cabinet. Later in the day Ramazan Abdulatipov, another spokesman for the Supreme Soviet, joined the talks. A break in the continuous sessions of the Congress was announced as the shortage of food and water in the White House began to make itself felt. In the Kremlin a session of the Security Council, with Yeltsin presiding, was under way. The MVD gave the mass media greatly exaggerated information on the arms in the possession of the White House defenders. One headline proclaimed, "Parliament Armed to the Teeth." Other newspaper reports indicated that most Muscovites, and most people in the provinces, continued to favor neither side and had no desire to get involved. Though numerous rallies were held in various parts of Moscow, the number of participants remained small.

I visited different areas in Moscow that day—including the area around the White House, the Arbat, and the Garden Ring. Except for the immediate vicinity of the confrontation, life in the city went on undisturbed. The events around the White House did not seem to be on the minds of Moscow's residents. In the crowds that did gather along the Krasnaya Presnya embankment, by the Hotel Ukraina, at the Barricades subway station, and on the outer side of the police cordon around the White House, people who were simply curious seemed to predominate. Some people, after standing around near the parliament building for two or three hours, would leave, and their places would be taken by new arrivals.

At a few locations near the police cordon indignation reigned. At another spot, however, some elderly people were treating OMON troopers to homemade pirozhki. Elsewhere the men of OMON were pushing the crowd back, waving their clubs in a threatening way, curses

and insults were flying. Khasbulatov's claim that more than 300,000 had taken part in protest meetings in Moscow and that a wave of opposition was starting to roll across Moscow and all of Russia simply didn't correspond to reality.

In the evening the usual rally was held at the White House, and there were rallies on the other side of the police cordon. Here and there police used their clubs, and demonstrators threw stones and iron bars. An especially large rally went on at the Barricades subway station.

September 30

On this day armored personnel carriers made their first appearance in the cordon around the White House. Journalists counted six of them. The Congress resumed its sessions, passing various laws and issuing decrees.

In the building of the Constitutional Court there began a conference of representatives of all the components of the federation: 54 provinces and autonomous republics were represented. The aim was to establish a new government body, the Council of the Federation.

In the Kremlin, Yeltsin met with Patriarch Aleksiy II and agreed to his intercession. Negotiations were to be conducted at the Svyato-Danilovsky (St. Daniel's) Monastery. Sergei Filatov and Oleg Soskovets were to represent the president in these talks.

A headquarters for processing renegade deputies began operation at 17 Novy Arbat Street. This was where deputies abandoning the White House could receive their million rubles apiece, permits for Moscow residences, and posts in various government ministries. Several dozen deputies were milling around in the reception room. Many were arguing about the jobs being offered them, demanding more prestigious posts. Even the pro-Yeltsin paper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* wrote about these people contemptuously, calling them "turncoats tempted by a mess of pottage."

About 150 people's deputies who had not been allowed to return to the White House found a place to work at Moscow's Krasnaya Presnya District Soviet. That evening the police prohibited people from gathering in groups of more than ten in the area near the Barricades subway station. Violators of this ban were beaten with

police clubs or arrested and taken away. Nevertheless there were constantly 500–600 people crowding the vestibule of the subway station. Small rallies were also held on Pushkin Square.

October 1

On this day the two sides began negotiations mediated by the church. Voronin and Abdulatipov represented the parliament; the president and his cabinet were represented by Luzhkov, Filatov, and Soskovets. Some telephone service was restored at the White House, and electricity was turned back on at 6 a.m. Abdulatipov and Voronin agreed to some preliminary conditions—all weapons in the possession of the White House defenders were to be placed in a pile, and monitoring groups from both sides would oversee these stores of weapons. However, the Supreme Soviet would not accept this condition and denounced the negotiated agreement. In the afternoon, negotiations continued. The Supreme Soviet demanded that all its functions and powers be restored, but this condition was unacceptable to Yeltsin. He announced that he saw no way out of the conflict other than a peaceful conclusion; still, he would continue negotiations only after White House defenders laid down their arms.

"We will not resort to force," Yeltsin assured journalists. "But we don't want irregulars from Trans-Dniester or OMON troopers from Riga spilling Russian blood."

Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, the president of Kalmykia, was able to make his way through to the Russian White House. He warned that the police cordon had been reinforced again, and that by then there were several dozen armored vehicles surrounding the building. Meanwhile, the award for deputies leaving the White House was increased to two million rubles. But deputies were told they had only until October 4 to take advantage of these benefits. The office on the Arbat was to be closed on October 5.

On the morning of October 1 about 100 journalists, native and foreign, were allowed into the Russian White House. Achalov reported that several dozen OMON troopers had come over to the Supreme Soviet. Hundreds of new police and OMON troopers had been added to the cordon, bringing the total above 10,000, according to the estimates of observers. Police units from neighboring provinces had

arrived in Moscow. On this day rallies were dispersed (as had occurred at the Barricades subway station the day before), and several hundred people were arrested. All the police stations in the neighborhood of the White House were overflowing with arrested demonstrators. Rallies were held, nevertheless, at Insurrection Square and some other squares in Moscow. These were broken up mostly by police, but some military squads were also used.

In the evening the Congress went into session again. A new delegation to the peace talks included the people's deputies Vladimir Isakov and Valentin Agafonov, as well as the chairmen of both chambers of the Supreme Soviet. An amateur arts entertainment was presented at the evening session, with delegates singing songs and reciting verse. Rutskoi declared that he would never allow the White House to be surrendered and vowed he would take part in any new presidential elections. More armored vehicles were brought up around the White House, and high-powered lighting systems were set up. Journalists in the White House were warned that beginning Saturday, October 2, their permits would be canceled and admission to the building would be closed off completely.

A government spokesman, Mikhail Poltoranin, told newspapers that people should take an understanding attitude toward "the action that the president has decided to carry out on October 4."

October 2

On the morning of this day another session of the Congress began. Many deputies who had been outside the walls of the White House managed to return. Despite the previous day's announcement, journalists were admitted to the building. Early in the day conditions in the city were generally calm. Negotiations continued at the Svyato-Danilovsky Monastery, but only specialist advisers from each side were involved, rather than direct representatives.

Khasbulatov and Rutskoi held another press conference. They called on residents in all regions of Russia to support the Supreme Soviet more actively, including stopping railroad traffic, pipeline flows, and communications in general. No one responded to these suggestions. Khasbulatov reported that the number of armed personnel in the cordon around the White House had risen to 50,000. Rutskoi appealed to residents of Moscow and other cities to "come

out into the streets and join the protest rallies." In particular, he asked officers and veterans to take part in protest actions. In the afternoon a big rally began on Smolensk Square. When attempts were made to disperse it demonstrators resisted. Stones and chunks of wood were thrown. Several police and demonstrators were seriously wounded. Trouble continued at Smolensk Square for several hours, with activists from the organizations Toiling Russia and National Salvation Front taking part. On the Garden Ring barricades went up again, and tires were burned. By 4 p.m. the number of protesters had reached about 5,000, some of them carrying iron bars and Molotov cocktails. Barricaded areas were blocked off by the police. The rally on Smolensk Square was led by Viktor Anpilov, who called on Muscovites to offer open resistance. Not until nightfall did the demonstrators disperse after passing a resolution to renew the protest the following day.

At the White House rationing of food and water began, in expectation of a long siege. At the Svyato-Danilovsky Monastery the two sides resumed negotiations aimed at reducing tensions around the Supreme Soviet building.

October 3

On Sunday a small room in the White House became a church where a number of the building's defenders were baptized. Khasbulatov and Rutskoi attended the service. At 10 a.m. a session of the Congress began, and resolutions were adopted appealing to local Soviets, military personnel, and police. Meanwhile Yeltsin and the top personnel of his government were meeting in the Kremlin.

At 2 p.m. on October Square there began a large rally organized by Toiling Russia and the National Salvation Front. The Moscow mayor's office had ruled this rally illegal, but the Salvation Front leader, Ilya Konstantinov, urged demonstrators not to disperse but to march toward Zubovskaya Square. The column of demonstrators turned and headed toward the Crimea Bridge in the direction of the White House. OMON units blocking the bridge were meant to stop this movement, but the demonstrators broke through the OMON lines. By 3 p.m. the column appeared on Smolensk Square, heading for the White House. Marching in the forefront were several hundred demonstrators wielding iron bars. Four armored vehicles and two

OMON squads were sent to confront them. Automatic weapons fire rang out, but the troopers were firing in the air.

At this point events took a strange turn. Although no fewer than 15,000 men of OMON and other units were surrounding the White House, the demonstrators were able to break through the cordon and reach the Supreme Soviet building. Several thousand people from the Krasnaya Presnya embankment also got through the cordon at the same time. The blockade of the White House was broken. A mass meeting began outside the walls of the building. Above the crowd waved banners with such slogans as "Hang Yeltsin," "Rutskoi Is President," and "Judas Yeltsin." Addressing the crowd, Rutskoi called several times for the seizure of the mayoralty building and the Ostankino television tower. This was more than an appeal. It was an order. Under the leadership of Rutskoi and Makashov the formation of combat detachments began. Personnel included both White House defenders and newly arrived demonstrators. The mission of these units was no longer just to defend the building, but to conduct offensive operations. The nature of events in central Moscow was swiftly changing.

Why Did the Police Withdraw?

To this day sharp debate continues over the events of October 3 and 4, which marked a turning point not only in the standoff between president and parliament but in the history of modern Russia as a whole.

One of the most important but least comprehensible aspects of the events has to do with the October 3 behavior of the police, OMON, and MVD units surrounding the White House. Why were they unable to prevent the demonstrators from breaking through to the Supreme Soviet building? Throughout the confrontation the MVD had maintained a headquarters in the building of the Moscow mayoralty. Why did the MVD suddenly wrap up its business and leave the building, making it easy prey for Makashov's detachments?

From midday on, military helicopters were flying low over the Supreme Soviet building. Dozens of trucks with MVD troops were brought up to the cordon surrounding the building. Suddenly, within 20–30 minutes, the police, OMON, and MVD troops all disappeared from the vicinity of the White House. The armored vehicles also with-

drew. On the square in front of the Supreme Soviet building and next to the mayoralty building trucks were left standing, without drivers, but with full tanks and keys in the ignition.

The OMON and MVD troops did not return to their barracks. They gathered in side streets and courtyards a few blocks from the White House. What was this? A retreat? Had they fled in defeat? Or was this an ambush, a lure, an invitation for Supreme Soviet supporters to engage in offensive operations? Military and police units don't leave their positions unless ordered. Doesn't that mean that an order was issued?

Toward evening on October 3 it was not only the officers and troops of the cordon around the White House that disappeared. All police in central Moscow did likewise. Even traffic police were suddenly gone from the Garden Ring district. The illusion was created that all authority in the city had evaporated. This encouraged the defenders of parliament to make an insane show of force, when in fact their forces were pitifully inadequate to accomplish anything in a city as huge as Moscow.

Subsequently the police and MVD were frequently denounced in the press that reflects the views of the "democrats." The police were accused of cowardice and vacillation, of abandoning Moscow, leaving it to be sacked and pillaged by the raging bands of Makashov and Anpilov. Viktor Yerin, head of the MVD, was singled out especially for denunciation, although a few weeks after the events of October 3–4 Yeltsin gave him a "Hero of Russia" award. Is this because Yerin carried out a deceptive maneuver with particular skill and verisimilitude?

October 2 and 3 saw the first shedding of blood in the confrontation. Several police and several demonstrators or defenders of parliament were killed. Each side blamed the other, and no investigation has been able to determine with any certainty who was the first to fire. It was very important for Yeltsin to portray himself as being on the defensive. Kremlin analysts had studied the opposition leaders, drawing up psychological profiles of how they might act under extreme circumstances. They were regarded as people inclined toward adventurous actions, people who did not think things through and consider their actions carefully. After twelve days of siege and isolation it was possible for Rutskoi, Khasbulatov, and Makashov—and even for Achalov and Barannikov—to believe that the other side had been defeated, that the police had panicked, that the people had come out

on the side of the parliament. After all, hadn't thousands of demonstrators broken through to the White House from both sides? The opposition leaders fell into the carefully prepared trap. They played out their parts to perfection in a drama written by the other side.

As long as the supporters of the parliament were only defending the building, their position had many advantages from both the legal and the political point of view. They were defending themselves and upholding the existing constitution. Yeltsin had no valid justification for storming the Supreme Soviet building. To have a parliament that defended itself and perished under a hail of bullets was not to his advantage. On the other hand, an armed uprising, a putsch, a dangerous insurgency by the opposition forces benefitted him politically.

When Rutskoi and Makashov ordered the seizure of the mayoralty building and Ostankino, the putsch Yeltsin was looking for finally happened. The mayoralty building was quickly and easily taken. Makashov's detachments had it under their control by 5 p.m. There was great rejoicing among the defenders of the White House and the demonstrators gathered outside it. The order was given to march to Ostankino and seize the television tower. Some supporters of parliament reached Ostankino by taking trucks that had been left standing near the White House and mayor's building. Others marched through the city in a crowd. No one tried to prevent them. Armored personnel carriers with OMON troopers were encountered along the way, but the troopers shouted, "We're with you, fellows!" Rumors spread among the supporters of parliament that many police units had come over to their side.

General Makashov commanded the Ostankino operation. He was leading several thousand people, but only a few were armed. Viktor Anpilov also acted as a leader of the crowd. In the Ostankino building only some of its regular guards were on duty, but the MVD's special Vityaz brigade was stationed there. Between 12 and 15 armored vehicles were moving slowly back and forth at some distance from the besieged television tower. The thousands of angry demonstrators found the doors of the tower locked. Makashov ordered the doors broken down. Grenade launchers were used to fire at windows where lights were on, and as a result a member of the Vityaz brigade was killed. This served as a signal. A dump truck had been used to break down the doors, and a group of Makashov's men had gotten as far as the first floor.

Now a battle began. The troops of the Vityaz brigade, OMON troopers, and the armored vehicles began to fire directly into the

crowd. Dozens of people fell dead and wounded. The wave of attackers swept back from the television building, people taking cover wherever they could. Renewed attempts to take the building were repelled with many more casualties. Nevertheless, all television broadcasting stopped except for the government news channel. Lines of print appeared on TV screens, stating that the station had been seized by an armed mob. But of course it had not.

The truth came out later that broadcasting had been stopped by the director of the television center, acting on orders from Chernomyrdin. Next to the Kremlin were parallel TV broadcasting centers belonging to the Defense Ministry, the Communications Ministry, and the Ministry for Emergency Situations. They immediately offered their services to the government, but were not taken up on their offer. For several hours the country had no television news. This worked to the advantage of the president's side. At 4 a.m. on October 4 Yeltsin signed a decree declaring a state of emergency in Moscow. At 6:30 p.m. he arrived in the Kremlin by helicopter and assumed personal leadership over the operation to crush the parliament by force. At 8 p,m. the state of emergency decree was announced over all radio stations. At the same time the government issued a statement to the citizens of Moscow and all of Russia that an insurrection had begun and that the government was obliged to use force to suppress it.

Monday, October 4: Bombardment of the White House

Neither Moscow nor the rest of the country knew as yet that Makashov's units had been defeated at Ostankino. News that the police had withdrawn and the mayor's offices had been seized caused a panic among many of the "democrats." Over the radio and on the still-operative Russian News television channel, Yegor Gaidar called on Muscovites to gather at the building of the Moscow City Soviet in defense of the government. Several thousand unarmed citizens turned out in response to this appeal. Many other prominent "democrats," both politicians and celebrities, called for the use of force to defend the government. Late on the night of Sunday, October 3, both Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin spoke along the same lines. A government-controlled television station at Shabolovka, which had begun broadcasting, carried their messages.

During the night army troops were brought up to the White House.

Units of the Ryazan paratroop division had been hastily deployed to Moscow. The 27th Motorized Infantry Division was relocated to the center of Moscow. Chernomyrdin appealed to the Collegium of the Defense Ministry, and the generals changed their minds, abandoning their former neutrality. They passed a resolution authorizing army participation in the suppression of armed rebellion. Paratroop units from Tula were also brought to Moscow. Tanks rolled out onto the embankment facing the White House. Dozens of armored vehicles took up positions on the other side of the building. A special anti-terrorist unit, the Alpha brigade, was given orders to arrest the leaders of parliament, Khasbulatov and Rutskoi first of all. Units of the Taman and Kantemir tank divisions were also brought into Moscow. As early as October 2 or 3, an American television news company had received permission to set up equipment at convenient locations around the White House. On the morning of October 4, CNN began broadcasting the bombardment and storming of the Supreme Soviet building for all the world to see.

Early on the morning of October 4 the armored vehicles around the White House opened up a heavy, concentrated fire on the positions held by the defenders of the building. There was hardly any return fire. Several dozen deputies managed to make their way through side entrances and backyards of neighboring buildings to safety. Some of them even showed up at the Novy Arbat office and claimed their 2 million rubles. Approximately 200 deputies remained. They and the staff of the Supreme Soviet building gathered in the large meeting room belonging to the Council of Nationalities, which was protected by walls all around. It was in the interior of the building and had no windows opening onto courtyards or streets. The parliament building was raked with fire from large-caliber machine guns. At 9 a.m., guns from armored units began bombarding the building, the upper stories first of all. The boom of artillery and the crash and rumble of shells hitting the building could be heard.

Rutskoi let it be known that the besieged defenders were ready to surrender. No one fired back at the armored units. The surrender signals and calls for help for the wounded were disregarded. It was necessary to terrify and punish. The building began to burn. The whole world witnessed the flames coming out the White House windows. It was no longer possible to get out of the building. It was enclosed by a solid ring of fire and a renewed police cordon. The police and OMON units which had disappeared the day before were back, forming a

large second ring around the White House. They detained and checked the identification of everyone who did somehow get out of the building. Such people were beaten up, then taken off somewhere.

Soon the bombardment was directed at the lower stories, not just the upper ones. Elite units approached the building, preparing to take it by storm. Helicopters circled above. At 10 a.m. some of the defenders surrendered, since resistance was useless. They too were beaten up and taken off somewhere. Later there were reports that some of them were executed, but no one could verify these reports. At 10 a.m. the helicopters began firing at the White House roof. A huge crowd of Muscovites had gathered around the distant approaches to the building, beyond the cordon of military and police. But they were merely onlookers, not demonstrators. They came to watch the spectacle of the White House being bombarded. Stray bullets flew in their direction, too, and several people were wounded. Some were even killed. Nevertheless the crowd of rubberneckers kept growing.

Now and then people would run from the White House. Some were shot and killed, some taken as "prisoners of war," some allowed to reach the crowd of onlookers. The armored units kept maneuvering around the building and firing on it. The seventh floor was burning, black smoke pouring out the windows. Toward 11 a.m. firing intensified. Inside the White House there were many dead and wounded. Now people in civilian clothes, some of them wounded, were fleeing the building in groups of ten or more. Official reports claim there was firing from the White House, but it is hard to give any credence to that. After the events, it was reported that very few spent cartridge were found inside the building. Resistance was useless, and what would have been the point in firing with rifles at tanks?

At 11 a.m. the first attack units entered the building. Fire directed at the lower floors was redirected to the upper ones.

Wounded people were arriving at hospitals, and already about 20 of them had died. In the end more than 200 were hospitalized. It was not possible to make a count of the total number killed or wounded. Many who fled did not go to hospitals.

Who Was Firing from the Roofs?

During the bombardment of the White House snipers from nearby rooftops kept up a steady fire. This was another enigma of the "bat-

tle" in Moscow. According to the Yeltsin government, the snipers firing from the roofs were Rutskoi supporters who at an earlier time had ensconced themselves in those positions. There was no evidence to confirm this version. Some left-wing publications contended that the snipers belonged to certain secret units of the MVD or the FSB, successor to the KGB?

In the newspaper *Zavtra* some surviving participants in the battle wrote that the snipers were under the command of Aleksandr Korzhakov, chief of the presidential bodyguard (Russian initials, GUOP—Gosudarstvennoe Upravlenie Okhrany Prezidenta).

Several publications claimed that the snipers were shooting not only from the rooftop of the Hotel Ukraina but also from the top of the nearby U.S. Embassy. They charged that the snipers were foreigners, a special unit trained in Romania and Israel. None of the snipers was captured and questioned. It is known for certain that the snipers' fire was directed not only at the White House defenders but also at OMON troopers and the special attack forces. One officer of the Alpha brigade was killed by a sniper's bullet. There were snipers among the defenders of the building as well as among the attackers. But the snipers on the nearby rooftops clearly belonged to some separate, special unit. Several people in the crowd of onlookers were also killed by their fire.

The End Comes

Not until 12 noon of October 4 did Channel One, the main television channel, resume broadcasting from Ostankino. The very first reports by news announcers spoke of fighting around the Supreme Soviet building and placed the blame on Rutskoi and Khasbulatov for innocent blood being shed.

At 12:30 p.m. the defenders of the White House and some of the building's staff began coming out of the building in large numbers with their hands up. The heavy, concentrated fire stopped, but then it started up again just as intensely. General Konstantin Kobets was directly in charge of the storming of the building. His assistant was Colonel-General Dmitry Volkogonov, the well-known historian.

More people came out of the building; among them were journalists and the group accompanying Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, president of Kalmykia. Some people were detained, others allowed to go free. Firing stopped again, and people began coming out of the building in

a steady stream. Around 4 p.m., firing at the building started again, including cannon fire from the tanks. The upper stories had been burning for quite a while, but still the tanks fired on them.

Around 5 p.m. firing stopped again, and approximately three hundred people came out of the building. A little later, several hundred more came out, including many deputies.

Soldiers of the Alpha brigade had entered the White House. It was they who brought the deputies out, along with Rutskoi, Khasbulatov, Achalov, and Barannikov, who had all surrendered to the Alpha unit. All the leaders were arrested and taken away to Lefortovo prison, Yeltsin being immediately informed of this. Some deputies were taken away in buses, others set free. Not until 7 p.m. did the MVD announce that fighting had ended, and not until 9 p.m. did firefighters begin putting out the fires in the Supreme Soviet building and at nearby barricades.

The Mass Beating of Deputies and White House Defenders

During the evening and night of October 4 a large number of people who had been in the White House were subjected to ferocious beatings. These beatings were mainly the work of the OMON and police who had formed the second, outer line of encirclement. The beatings occurred in the courtyards and entrances of buildings near the White House, in the Krasnaya Presnya stadium, and at local police stations. Two people's deputies, Ivan Sashviashvili and Oleg Rumyantsev, gave me first-hand accounts of these beatings. Rumyantsev was beaten in the entranceway of a building, Shashviashvili at the stadium. Several times the police pretended they were about to execute the deputies. They took their documents and some of their clothing, then left them. No deputies were killed on October 3 or 4, but dozens of them were made to suffer severely.

This was not a spontaneous outburst by drunken or irate police. It was a conscious act of intimidation. In carrying out these actions, the police were following orders from higher up.

According to reports by a number of deputies and the opposition press, many White House defenders who were caught bearing arms were executed. Those mainly singled out for execution were the fighters who had come from the Baltic, the Trans-Dniester, and other regions, as well as the neo-fascist followers of Barkashov. These reports remain unconfirmed.

A Battle Without Heroes

Salvador Allende, the president of Chile, died with an automatic weapon in hand, defending the presidential palace against a military coup. This made him a hero for many—not only in Chile. None of the leaders of the White House became heroes in the eyes of public opinion in Russia. They do bear their share of responsibility for the bloodshed on October 3 and 4. Even the anti-Yeltsin press subsequently acknowledged the bravery as well as the crudity and stupidity of General Albert Makashov, who led the takeover of the mayoralty building and the storming of Ostankino. Khasbulatov was pathetic and frightened during the decisive moments of the defense of the White House. On October 3 he was talking about marching on the Kremlin, but on October 4 he became almost hysterical and was barely able to talk, even with those closest to him. Rutskoi displayed great inconsistency. He *pleaded* with the enemy to stop the cannon fire from the tanks. But he ordered defenders to keep firing from the windows and doorways. He begged for help—from the soldiers of the Russian army and from foreign embassies. He really did not know what to do. He obviously feared reprisals against his person. When he surrendered his automatic weapon to an officer of the Alpha brigade he pointed out that the weapon had not been fired; the grease it was packed in was still clean. As though that were of any significance at the end of the day on October 4.

How Many Were Killed or Wounded?

The answer to this question was still not known three years after the events. According to official accounts, about twenty government soldiers and police were killed, while the death toll for supporters of Rutskoi and Khasbulatov was between 150 and 200. (There was disparity in the numbers provided by various official sources.) The number of wounded on both sides was roughly three to four times the number killed.

Kirsan Ilyumzhinov and the president of Ingushetia, Ruslan Aushev, stated that inside the Supreme Soviet building they had seen several hundred corpses and that the total number of White House defenders exceeded five hundred. According to the opposition press, about two hundred were killed outside the Ostankino television tower and no less than 1,500 died at the White House. Some MVD officers

confirmed these estimates (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, October 30, 1993). There are reports that the bodies of those who died in the parliament building were secretly removed on October 5 and 6 through underground passageways leading to the Barricades subway station. From there they were shipped out of the city and burned. In this operation no attempt was made to identify the dead. There is no confirmation of these reports.

No journalists or independent observers were able to gain access to the White House immediately after it was stormed. Even physicians from the Moscow public health department were not admitted to the building until after "investigative activities" had been completed. No bodies were brought to Moscow morgues after October 3 and 4. An investigative report on this subject appeared in the pro-Yeltsin paper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (October 15, 1993) under the heading "Did the White House Become a Mass Grave?" It should be noted, incidentally, that there has been no official publication of the names of all those killed or wounded at the White House and Ostankino.

Post-Confrontation Repression

In the heat of the confrontation between the executive and legislative branches of government, the executive side temporarily banned almost all pro-Communist newspapers and the more radical "national-patriotic" publications in Moscow. In St. Petersburg the newspaper *Narodnaya Pravda* was banned, and in Kemerovo, the newspaper *Kuzbas*.

Most of the Communist and trade union papers soon resumed operations, some of them appearing under different names. For example, *Den* became *Zavtra*. But some of these papers never reappeared.

When the state of emergency was declared in Moscow many parties and social organizations that had opposed Yeltsin were ordered to cease their activities. The Ministry of Justice ruling on this point named the National Salvation Front, the Toiling Russia movement, Russian National Unity, the United Front of Toilers, the Union of Officers, the Shield Union of Military Personnel, the Free Russia People's Party, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the Russian Communist Workers Party, and several other less well known organizations. After the Moscow state of emergency was lifted, however, almost all of these organizations resumed their activities.

For several days after the arrest of Rutskoi, Khasbulatov, and the other White House leaders, further arrests were made among former White House defenders and among active members of left-wing and "national-patriotic" organizations. Also imprisoned were Viktor Anpilov and Ilya Konstantinov, the organizers of the October 3 demonstrations. Many criminal cases involving charges of "civil rebellion" were instituted.

Pro-Yeltsin politicians and other prominent public figures justified his actions without qualification. Opposition supporters and many legal experts regarded his actions of September–October 1993 as criminal. Some legal experts calculated that from September 21 to October 5 the Russian president violated the laws and constitution of the Russian Federation more than fifty times. These violations were enumerated by the opposition and by a number of legal defense organizations, but not by the prosecutor's office. "Victors are not judged."

ELECTIONS TO THE STATE DUMA, DECEMBER 1993

Yeltsin's Decree No. 1400, aside from abolishing the Congress of People's Deputies and Supreme Soviet, setting the stage for the elimination of all remnants in Russia of the system of Soviets (originally, workers' councils), cited a new law regarding the election of deputies to a State Duma. This election law, drafted by the presidential staff, was published in almost all Russian newspapers on September 25, 1993. It established new "rules of the game" and scheduled elections for December 12, 1993. As early as late September, many Russian political leaders and organizations began to make preparations for these elections. In early October, even before all the bodies of those who died in and around the White House had been buried, the election campaign went into full swing. After all, only two months remained before the voting.

From the legal point of view, this election was highly questionable. Yeltsin had violated the constitution but he had not abrogated it. The constitution still in effect, to which Yeltsin had vowed loyalty when he was sworn in as president in July 1991, made no provision for a Federal Assembly or a State Duma. Those were provided for in the draft of a new constitution, which was not even going to be published

until mid-November. People were supposed to vote on this new constitution in a referendum on December 12 at the same time they were electing a Duma. But what if the constitution wasn't approved? How could the Duma it provided for be valid?

Hardly anyone troubled themselves about these legal niceties, however. Yeltsin's opponents decided to take part in the Duma elections. After eliminating the previously existing legislative bodies, Yeltsin obviously could not remain in the legal framework of which they were a part. The new rules of the game, arbitrarily established, would be given legal validity after the fact, and the new constitution would have retroactive effect.

The new election law differed substantially from the laws and regulations that had governed the earlier elections of Supreme Soviets and Congresses of People's Deputies. Only half the deputies to the Duma, 225 out of 450, were to be elected under the winner-take-all (majoritarian) system, in which one candidate would be elected from each electoral district. The election of a candidate was considered valid if at least 25 percent of the registered voters in the given district had cast ballots. Only one round of voting was held, and the candidate with the largest number of votes was considered the winner (whether with a plurality or an outright majority).

The other half of the Duma was to be chosen on the basis of proportional representation, with people voting for party lists rather than individual candidates. Any competing party, electoral bloc, or other organization that received more than 5 percent of the vote was given a certain number of seats in the Duma, based on the proportion it won out of the total number of votes cast. Under the draft of the new constitution the Duma was to be elected for a four-year term. The first Duma would be an exception, however. It would serve only two years, from 1993 to 1995.

There was sharp and convincing criticism in the Russian press in regard to the new election law, as well as the draft of the new constitution (published on November 10), and the hasty scheduling of the Duma elections and the constitutional referendum. Even members of the intelligentsia sympathetic to Yeltsin asked, Why go galloping into an electoral contest of dubious outcome? Why the rush?

Yeltsin was in a hurry, however, because he knew, based on his experience in 1991, that a relatively short campaign favored the incumbent and created greater difficulties for the opposition. In addi-

tion, Yeltsin and his circle wished to distract public opinion from the bloody tragedy just played out in Moscow.

With doubts and hesitations the opposition parties decided to take part in the elections. Three parties could not participate; they were still banned, with their leaders in Lefortovo prison—these were Rutskoi's Free Russia party, Anpilov's Russian Communist Workers Party, and Konstantinov's National Salvation Front. Left-wing participants in the campaign included the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the Agrarian Party, and the Socialist Party of the Working People (SPT). The Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), headed by Vladimir Zhirinovsky, also stood in opposition to Yeltsin's government. It would be more accurate to call this a radical Russian nationalist party, rather than "liberal democratic."

In the center of the political spectrum were such groups as the Civic Alliance, the Russian Movement for Democratic Reforms, and Women of Russia. On the right, but still in opposition to the Yeltsin government was Yabloko, an electoral bloc headed by Grigory Yavlinsky.

In strong support of Yeltsin's government were two parties that had been formed in 1993: Russia's Choice, headed by the former prime minister, Yegor Gaidar; and the Party of Russian Unity and Concord (Russian initials, PRES), headed by Sergei Shakhrai. Gaidar's party—whose slogans included "Russia's Choice Is President Yeltsin"—was considered the front-runner. In November Gaidar said that his party counted on winning 40 percent of the seats and, together with its allies, would command a majority in the new Duma. Shakhrai and the center parties also made highly optimistic statements, backed up by polling agencies sympathetic to them.

The election results were a surprise to everyone. In the contest among party lists Gaidar's party made a showing of only 12 percent, a significant defeat. The bloc headed by Shakhrai barely won 7 percent. Success came to Zhirinovksy's LDPR, whose political pretensions had been viewed with scorn by most Russian leaders. Yet the LDPR won more than 22 percent of the vote. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), headed by Gennady Zuganov, gained about 14 percent, which was regarded as a big success. The Agrarian Party, headed by Mikhail Lapshin, also made a good showing, with about 9 percent, but the main center parties suffered a complete defeat: their leaders, such as Gavriil Popov, Anatoly Sobchak, and Arkady Volsky, did not even win seats in the Duma.

What were the reasons for the defeat of the pro-Yeltsin parties and the victory of the opposition, especially the radical Russian nationalists? There were many, but the main reason was the population's sharp reaction against the "shock therapy" that had been going on for two years, with no end in sight. As the poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko wrote, "Through cracks in the voting booth walls, Poverty's icy breath blew in."

All the promises of President Yeltsin and his cabinet, including those made before the April 1993 referendum, remained unfulfilled. Prices for basic consumer goods were five times higher in December 1993 than they had been in April, while wages and pensions were only 2.5–3 times higher.

I would cite another important reason: the difficult, sometimes humiliating position the Russian population found itself in after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Russians had grown used to thinking of themselves as one of the largest and most influential nations in the world. But now, even in tiny Estonia, Russians were abused and denied citizenship. The Russian population was being driven out of Tuva and Chechnya; thousands of Russian families had fled from Central Asia and Transcaucasia. In Ukraine Russians were scorned as "Moskali" (an insulting term meaning "Muscovite"); in Moldava and the Dniester region they were beaten up. All this was a painful blow to the Russian nation's self-esteem. It is not surprising that these conditions gave rise to many radical Russian nationalist organizations, the main ones being the National Salvation Front, the Russian National Assembly (Sobor), and Russian Unity.

Another factor explains the large vote for Zhirinovsky. After the Russian Supreme Soviet was crushed by force of arms, most of the radical Russian nationalist organizations were banned, as we have said. Zhirinovsky's LDPR was the only such group to remain on the ballot. Those who might have voted for other Russian nationalist groups gave their support to Zhirinovsky. The LDPR also enjoyed overwhelming support among military personnel and substantial support among those working in military industries. Most of the sailors and officers of the Pacific and Black Sea fleets voted for Zhirinovsky, as did a large number of servicemen in the elite Taman Division, whose tanks had bombarded the White House.

There were other reasons for the poor showing of pro-Yeltsin parties. The "democrats" were divided and bogged down in petty feuds

and squabbling. Their campaigning had been uninspired; they really had nothing to say to the electorate. Half the voters—young people mainly—boycotted the election.

Each of the participating electoral blocs made fairly extensive use of television. Zhirinovsky used it more effectively than his rivals. His broadcasts had the most specific content and were the most interesting. To be sure, he indulged in populist demagogy and made a lot of promises that he couldn't keep. But Yeltsin and the democrats came to power in 1990–91 on a wave of populist demagogy, scattering false promises right and left. Zhirinovsky simply used the democrats' own weapon against them. Some of Zhirinovsky's speeches were quite dangerous and inflammatory, as is typical of radical nationalists. He spoke insultingly about other nations, including former Soviet republics. But his speeches touched on some truths. As one newspaper observed, a great many problems existed in Russia that the democrats had been avoiding for two years. Only Zhirinovsky and extremists like him cried out about the lonely old people dying of hunger as food prices soared, about the collapse of the social safety net, about Russians being driven out of former Soviet republics just because they were Russians, about Russia being a great power whose distinct geopolitical interests were being disregarded by other world powers.

The defeat of the president and his cabinet was so obvious that the pro-Yeltsin press didn't even try to put a good face on it. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* wrote that the new Duma would be "more conservative, more leftist, and more evil than the parliament that was dispersed in September–October . . . The thunder of victory is heard on the extreme left wing. All that remains for the democrats is to lick their wounds and shake themselves thoroughly out of their torpor."

"What Have You Chosen, Russia?" exclaimed *Izvestia*. "The world is troubled and aghast over the outcome of our elections . . . You can almost hear people sighing for the 'good old days' of recent vintage when the chief villain was Aleksandr Rutskoi, and Vladimir Zhirinovsky was considered not so much a danger as an entertainment."

The most radical "democrats" were not only upset; they were panicked. Writing in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, the leader of the Democratic Union, Valeria Novodvorskaya, called on Yeltsin to immediately ban the parties of Zhirinovsky and Zyuganov. Otherwise, she warned,

> what awaits us are dungeons, gas chambers, crematoria. I would urge Boris Nikolayevich [Yeltsin] to forget the word "democracy." Russia has shown its incapacity for democracy. Those who voted for the Communists and Zhirinovsky are not the people, but the mob, dark and ignorant. What the mob likes is fascism. Therefore within the next few weeks a National Guard must be formed. We must all join it. Equipped with the latest weaponry and air power, we will then have something to defend ourselves with.

Leaders of "democrats" like this had just gotten through applauding the bombardment of the legally elected Russian parliament and reveling in their imagined victory.

The December 1993 Duma elections were of course a disappointment for Yeltsin, but they did not result in a weakening of his power and influence. On the contrary, his power grew. All those who feared the left rallied around him. Among these were the intellectual "elite" and many businessmen. His main support, however, came from the *bureaucracy*, whose numbers and influence, far from declining in the now "democratic" Russia, increased rapidly.

Hardly any of the more than two million Soviet bureaucrats and party apparatchiks were left without jobs in the new Russia. In fact, the government apparatus of Russia expanded by 20 percent, compared to that of the former Soviet Union. This apparatus became the mainstay of the "democratic" Yeltsin regime.