PART 2

THE ELECTIONS OF 1995–96

AND THEIR AFTERMATH

6

Duma Elections, December 1995

During much of 1995 and 1996 public attention in Russia centered on two sets of elections: for the parliament, or State Duma, in December 1995; and for president, in June and July 1996. These elections did not lead to any change in regime or in the character of the government. They did, however, reveal much about the disposition of political forces in Russia, the nature and influence of the main political parties and groups and of the individual leaders.

Russia's "Third Republic," born in the bloody events of October 1993, lacked legitimacy. The first Duma elections, in December 1993, were conducted in extreme haste, before the new constitution had been adopted. Society had not yet recovered from the shock of the bombardment of the building that housed the Supreme Soviet. Some political parties and groups had been banned during the 1993 elections, while many prominent political figures had been in prison. The regime needed new elections to gain greater legitimacy, but it also feared the possible outcome of elections.

Yeltsin had been elected in 1991 to a five-year term as president of

the Russian Federation, but the constitution he had sworn to defend had been annulled by his government.

DUMA ELECTIONS

In outlining a series of social, economic, and political measures for 1994–95, Yeltsin and his entourage, together with the Chernomyrdin administration, were sure they could change direction and improve the social and economic conditions in Russia. They proposed to stop the decline in production and stabilize finances, and expected market mechanisms to start working full force. This would strengthen the regime's political base.

But it did not happen. The economic situation kept growing worse, and financial stabilization remained as elusive as ever. Discontent mounted, while the political groups that had consistently supported Yeltsin and his government grew weaker and began to fall apart. The unpopular war against Chechnya (begun in the winter of 1994–95) with its heavy casualties and severe setbacks aroused opposition even among "democrats" who had always supported Yeltsin.

All this caused concern in the president's inner circle, and proposals were made to postpone or cancel the elections. But such a step would have required political and ideological resources that the Yeltsin regime no longer had. To many in his circle, the risk entailed in any use of force or threat of dictatorship was greater than the risk of democratic elections.

On top of that, Yeltsin's health kept getting worse. Nevertheless, and with some doubt and hesitation, Yeltsin announced that the elections would be held as stipulated by the new Russian constitution: Duma elections in December 1995; and presidential elections in June 1996. Thus, the Duma elections became a test of strength and a dress rehearsal for the more significant presidential elections. From the spring of 1995 on, all the political events in Russia and all realignments of political forces were viewed and analyzed by political observers from the point of view of the upcoming election campaigns. In particular, the pollsters began to assess the standings of the various parties and candidates.

Two years earlier, in the Duma elections of December 1993, the parties and groups supporting Yeltsin's government had suffered a

palpable defeat: they had failed to win control of the Duma. The parties of the left had not won control either. At best they could swing about 30 percent of the vote. Small groups in the center of the political spectrum had taken different tacks at different times, while Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), one of the largest groups in the Duma, had supported the government rather than the Communist opposition on all the most important questions.

A special factor was the role of Ivan Rybkin. As a leader of the Agrarian Party he had been elected Duma chairman, but he soon went over to the Yeltsin camp. In 1991, Rybkin had led the "Communists of Russia" group in the Russian Supreme Soviet. In 1992, when the Socialist Party of Working People was founded, he became one of its co-chairs. In 1993, he switched parties and became a deputy chair of the CPRF and a leader of the Agrarian Party. Making one more switch, in 1994 he became one of Yeltsin's closest cohorts. Both Communists and Agrarians denounced him as a turncoat, but attempts to remove him as Duma chairman were in vain. The right-wing bloc, the center, and the LDPR supported him. Most groups in the Duma found him amenable, especially because he managed to obtain unheard-of benefits for all Duma members, supplying their offices with all sorts of hi-tech equipment for communications and other purposes.

The adherence of Rybkin meant a lot to Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin, but it could not compensate for the general disarray on the right. The Russia's Choice Party soon lost whatever authority it had, and the smaller groups of "democrats" broke up into warring factions. Yeltsin needed some sort of new organization, and so the government, rather than being formed by a party, set out to create a party to fill the void beneath it. President Charles DeGaulle of France had acted in a similar way in the 1960s, creating his own Gaullist party to support his regime.

The government officials in the Kremlin and on Old Square were much taken with the idea of creating a "party of power." Many felt inspired, convinced that at last they had the key to all the government's problems. A political scientist, using the pen name "N.B.," analyzed the Yeltsin's camp's strategy:

> The idea of a "party of power" is the ingenious product of Yeltsin's entourage. If brought into being, such a party could keep

the intransigent opposition from gaining access to any real power. Meanwhile, the present ruling stratum, by ridding itself of the ballast of the "democrats," could avoid a crushing political defeat.

Political life in Russia is not very highly structured. Its most structured component is the state apparatus, the government administration. There, all structure is quite clear and reliable. In view of the ordinary Russian citizen's inclination, fostered by decades of Communist rule, to support the existing regime, it can be assumed with considerable certainty that a substantial portion of the electorate will indeed vote for the "party of power." Only accident could prevent such a party from winning in the presidential elections.

In the Duma elections, the chances are also high that such a party could win leading positions in the lower house of parliament. In the center of power, this party would control the main television channels and radio stations, as well as several daily newspapers. It would have no great problem obtaining the financial means for its election campaigns. Its main constituency would be in the government administration and in the "power ministries" [defense, security police, interior ministry troops and police], among those working in the "budget sphere" [services or occupations supported by the government budget] and in state-owned enterprises, a section of the entrepreneurial class, and most ordinary "loyal citizens." Consequently, such a party could win no less than 30–35 percent of the seats in the Duma.

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Of course, there were doubts and hesitations about this strategy. The government and its actions had become increasingly unpopular. Who could guarantee that a "party of power" would succeed with the voters? Nevertheless, in the spring of 1995 Yeltsin warmly supported the idea and announced it publicly. At one of his press conferences he stated, as if in passing: "We have decided to establish two big political parties of the center. One will be a party of the right center; the other, a party of the left center. The first might be headed, for example, by Chernomyrdin. The other by Ivan Rybkin." Together, these two parties, as Yeltsin saw it, might be able to garner more than half the votes in the Duma elections.

Yeltsin's wish for a "party of power" was Chernomyrdin's com-

mand: he immediately began taking practical steps to bring such a party into being. As for the "party of the left center," a kind of loyal opposition, that was a different matter. There were already several parties opposing the government from various points of view. The creation of one more, and a *tame* opposition at that, simply wasn't feasible. Anyone who took up Yeltsin's assignment was bound to lose face, and it was only with reluctance and after much delay that Ivan Rybkin began the effort. Though provided with ample resources, he was unable to produce anything by the fall except a diverse and not very numerous conglomeration of several dozen small, uninfluential groups. They couldn't even agree on a name, and in the end the party registered as "the Rybkin Bloc."

Chernomyrdin did better, though his results were not brilliant either. The founding conference of the new "party of power," which was given the name Our Home Is Russia (Nash Dom Rossiya, or NDR), was held in May 1995. Chernomyrdin of course became the party's leader. Its executive body was made up of top government officials, as was its membership both centrally and locally, but there were also factory managers, directors of banks and insurance companies, chief administrators of libraries, top physicians at hospitals, rectors of universities, and the like. Three main goals were singled out in the NDR program: "a strong state," "liberal foundations for the economic life of Russia," and "appreciable social measures."

Virtually every politician and political party in Russia entered the Duma election campaign. The number of political groups vying for the electorate's attention reached as high as five hundred.

Gaidar's Failure

On the right wing appeared a Bloc of United Democrats: Yegor Gaidar's party, Russia's Choice; Yuri Chernichenko's Peasant Party; Aleksandr Yakovlev's Party of Social Democracy; and the Congress of National Organizations of Russia. This was the core group of "democrats," to which most ministers of the first Yeltsin government had belonged. This bloc paid the price for the failures of that government, for the *bespredel* (lack of restraint; lawlessness) that accompanied market reforms, for the "shock therapy," for the fleecing of investors, for all the unfulfilled promises.

In spite of all that, the Russia's Choice representatives were able to

form a fairly solid bloc in the 1993 Duma. By 1995 their bloc had weakened. Several prominent figures had left, among them Boris Fyodorov, Mikhail Poltoranin, Ella Pamfilova, Gennady Burbulis, and Andrei Kozyrev. They had founded their own groups with such names as Forward Russia, Common Cause, and Transformation of the Fatherland.

The pollsters guessed that only Gaidar's main group would pass the 5 percent barrier and make it into the Duma. That did not happen. In the 1995 elections, Gaidar suffered a humiliating defeat. His bloc won only 3.9 percent of the vote, and none of its leaders won a seat, neither on the basis of party lists nor in districts where votes went to individual candidates. None of the other groups of right-wing "democrats" made it into the Duma, although together they accounted for about 10 percent of the vote.

Yavlinsky's Showing

Grigory Yavlinsky ran a more successful campaign with the Yabloko electoral bloc that he put together with five other small political groups. Although he was usually numbered among the right-wing "democrats," he had been critical of the Yeltsin-Gaidar policies since as early as 1991 and bore no responsibility for the sorry results of the "structural reforms." He had rejected all offers from Gaidar to unite their blocs, correctly assuming that any alliance with Gaidar would only worsen Yabloko's prospects. In late November and early December 1995 the pollsters' predictions gave Yavlinsky's bloc 9–10 percent of the vote, but the Yabloko group won only 7 percent. This did nevertheless allow Yavlinsky to form his own independent faction in the Duma.

Setback for Yeltsin's "Center" Formation

The Our Home Is Russia group defined itself politically as "right-center." In the early summer it counted on winning as much as 24–30 percent of the vote, and its aim was to establish a large and influential voting bloc in the Duma. In the fall, predictions were more modest. The pollsters guessed that the "party of power" would gain no more than 12 percent of the vote. Although the bloc had an impressive list of candidates, including Chernomyrdin himself, the popular film

director Nikita Mikhalkov, and General Lev Rokhlin, who had won fame in the Chechnya war, it was able to win only 9.9 percent. Yet this bloc had conducted the most lavish and energetic election campaign. Tens of millions of dollars had gone to promote Our Home Is Russia. The most highly placed administrators and many regional politicians had participated in the campaign. The "party of power" bought 7.5 hours of television advertising time. But the results achieved were less than modest. The "party of power" did succeed in placing quite a few deputies in the Duma, but it was unable to obtain a controlling bloc of votes. Such a situation is understandably seen as a defeat for a party representing the government in power.

Of course Chernomyrdin was not about to resign, but it was obvious he had to substantially alter the policies and composition of the government. As premier, Chernomyrdin did make some changes as early as January 1996, postponing until the presidential elections any more fundamental reshufflings of the cabinet.

Some of the smaller political groups that declared themselves allies of Our Home Is Russia were not even noticed by the voters, bringing in between zero (!) and 0.3 percent of the vote. Sergei Shakhrai, who ran as a center-right candidate together with his Party of Unity and Concord, also suffered a crushing defeat. His party gained only 0.36 percent. Yet two years earlier his party had won about 7 percent and had a solid bloc of votes in the first Duma. The Women of Russia movement also ran as an ally of Chernomyrdin's. It, too, had been quite successful in the 1993 election. The pollsters did not predict a repeat performance, but were confident that the women's group would have seats in the Duma. To the surprise of many observers, however, Women of Russia won only 4.6 percent of the vote. Only some individual members of this grouping entered the Duma, elected in districts where the voting was by individual candidate rather than party list.

The Defeat of Rybkin's Bloc

As early as August 1995 it might have seemed that Ivan Rybkin had succeeded in carrying out Yeltsin's assignment of forming a "loyal opposition" party of the center-left. At any rate he faced no financial obstacles: Rybkin's bloc held a leading position when it came to campaign spending; it was second only to the "party of power." During

September, however, many members of his bloc began to abandon Rybkin, fearing they would be compromised by associating with him. The group Trade Unions for the Elections left him, as did the United Industrial Party. Another group, My Fatherland, went off on its own. Rybkin continued to make optimistic pronouncements and frequent television appearances. Only Our Home Is Russia bought more television time than Rybkin. But the millions of dollars he got from the Yeltsin administration did not help him.

Rybkin's bloc won only 1.1 percent of the vote. All together, the blocs and groupings taking a center-left position won more than 15 percent, but the votes were divided among ten different "left of center" party lists, with the result that none of them won representation in the Duma. Among those roundly defeated was the Bloc of Social Democrats, headed by Gavriil Popov and Vasily Lipitsky. They won only 90,000 votes, or 0.13 percent. The election also revealed that the official trade unions enjoyed very little authority: they, too, won only about 1 percent of the vote. The so-called Party of Workers Self-Management, founded by the ophthalmologist Stanislav Fyodorov, was more successful, with 4 percent. This was an undeniable achievement for a left-wing party that had just recently been founded.

Setback for Zhirinovsky

Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) waged a fairly ambitious campaign. In the opinion of many specialists, it was Zhirinovsky who made the most effective use of television time. But to repeat the success of 1993, when the LDPR obtained 23 percent of the vote, proved impossible. In 1995, Zhirinovsky's party won 11.1 percent, which still enabled him to form a fairly solid voting bloc in the Duma. One newspaper commented that the LDPR differed from the other opposition parties "in being too obviously 'easy to buy' and too accommodating toward the executive branch, as well as in its leader's lack of concern with principles. . . ."

Failure of the Congress of Russian Communities

The Congress of Russian Communities (Russian initials, KRO) had been founded in 1992 to defend the interests of Russian communities

in the "near abroad," the former Soviet republics bordering Russia. A young politician by the name of Dmitry Rogozin had emerged as its first leader. This organization did not stand out, however, among the welter of Russian nationalist and "patriotic" groups and movements. In 1993 it was unable to obtain the support of even 100,000 voters, the minimum necessary to participate in those elections. In early 1995 General Aleksandr Lebed and Yury Skokov, head of the Commodity Producers Federation, joined the KRO leadership, which immediately attracted attention to this formation. Skokov, who had left Yeltsin's entourage, was still considered an influential politician, with links to the "shadow economy" and extensive connections in the business world of Russia. Lebed, at that time, was still commander of the Fourteenth Russian Army, deployed in the Trans-Dniester region. He was well known and popular throughout the country and among the troops. Several other prominent figures, well known in Russia, belonged to the KRO's National Council: S. Glazyev, K. Zatulin, S. Burkov, and V. Rastorguyev. Local KRO organizations were set up in all the provinces and republics of the Russian Federation. The program and aims of the KRO were expanded to include not only problems of Russian-speaking populations outside Russia but all ethnic problems as well.

The KRO distinguished itself from the extreme Russian nationalist organizations. As early as the summer of 1995 it came to be regarded as one of the favorites in the election campaign: the polls gave it no less than 10 percent of the votes. A bloc of about a dozen parties and groups formed around the KRO, including the Socialist Party of Working People, of which I was a leader. During September and October the prognosis for the KRO remained favorable. But with the onset of televised debates the KRO's popularity began to decline. Although General Lebed was the most popular KRO leader in every respect, he occupied second place on the party's list of candidates and hardly ever appeared on television. All we saw and heard on our TV screens was Skokov, who was a poor speaker, lacking in interest. With every TV appearance by Skokov the KRO, instead of gaining, lost support. Rumors of behind-the-scenes negotiations between Skokov and Yeltsin, widely circulated by the media, also hurt the KRO among opposition-minded voters.

Although the KRO leaders were confident of success, disillusion awaited us all. The KRO received only 4.3 percent of the vote and

failed to win representation in the Duma. To be sure, Aleksandr Lebed and his brother, Aleksei, were elected as individuals, but the party slate did not make it.

The Agrarians and the Radical Communists

Nearly twenty members of the Agrarian Party were elected as individuals, but the party slate was unable to pass the 5 percent barrier. As a party the Agrarians won only 3.8 percent. Even the party's leader, Mikhail Lapshin, failed to win reelection. This was a big setback and disappointment for the Agrarians.

As for the radical Communists, they had not run in the 1993 elections; they were not allowed to. Many of their organizations were banned in 1993, and some of their leaders, Viktor Anpilov among them, were in prison at the time.

In 1995, the radical Communists decided to take part in the elections—by supporting the Toiling Russia (Trudovaya Rossiya) group. Their debut was relatively successful. Toiling Russia received more than 3 million votes, giving it 4.5 percent of the total. Although none of them won seats in the Duma, the radical Communists could view the results as an undeniable gain.

Success for the CPRF

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) turned out to be the favorite in the elections of December 1995. It was able to win the support of a large percentage of opposition-minded voters. As early as the summer, voting forecasts gave the CPRF 12–13 percent. During the fall this figure kept growing, even though the CPRF hardly ever appeared on television. Of course the Central Electoral Commission did allocate some TV time to the CPRF, as it did to all the competing parties, but the CPRF purchased hardly any separate advertising time—six minutes all together. In contrast, the Rybkin bloc bought 7 hours of TV time, and the KRO, 2.5 hours.

The main CPRF candidates, Zyuganov and Kuptsov, won 22.3 percent of the vote, more than any other group or bloc. By comparison with the 1993 voting results, this was an undeniable success, but it did not indicate a fundamental change of mood among the majority of Russian voters. Subsequent analysis showed that many who in 1993

had voted for the Agrarians or Zhirinovsky, in 1995 gave their votes to the CPRF. Very few voters who had previously held center or left-center positions switched their votes to the CPRF.

In the 1995 Duma elections the votes of all the groups that supported Yeltsin and his government, taken together, added up to about 25 percent, while the votes of those in the "Communist" part of the electorate added up to 32 percent. About 4 percent of the vote went to groups with no clear political coloration. And the remaining 39 percent were divided among a variety of groups—Russian nationalists, "social reformers," and others.

No single group had a controlling vote in the Duma, although the preponderance of the CPRF was obvious—out of 450 seats in the Duma, the Communists and their allies held 186. A member of the CPRF leadership, Gennady Seleznyov, was elected chairman of the Duma, and many Duma committees came to be headed by Communists.

The Duma went into session in late January 1996, but the country's attention was not on Duma activities; it was on the presidential election campaign that was just beginning. By early February more than twenty candidates had declared their intention to run for the office of president of the Russian Federation.

THE 1996 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN RUSSIA: LESSONS AND PARADOXES

These elections constituted what was till then the most important political event in post-Soviet Russian history. They proved to be a central experience for all political parties and movements in Russia, for the individual politicians, and for the people as a whole. Few distinguished themselves in this campaign and far from everyone stood up to this difficult test. Some parties and politicians disappeared from the scene completely; quite a few who had seemed to loom large shrank instead to minor proportions, and some entirely new people appeared on the political scene.

(After reviewing the course and outcome of the election campaign, we will take a closer look at the candidate who emerged as Yeltsin's chief opponent—Gennady Zyuganov—and what he and his party represent.)

The stakes in the elections were high. The 1993 constitution established a strong presidency in Russia. The office of president stood

above all other branches of government. Although the president was not part of the cabinet responsible for current administration of the country, it was appointed by him. Only the prime minister required approval by the Duma; all other members of the cabinet were appointed by the president—and could be replaced by him. He also had legislative powers, unlike the presidents of France or the United States. On matters not covered by existing laws—and their number is still quite large in Russia—the president may issue decrees.

The president is the commander in chief, and all the "power ministries" are under his control, as are the Foreign Ministry and the Security Council. The administrative bodies under the president have no less authority than the government bodies under the prime minister and other members of the cabinet. Housed in the offices of the former Central Committee of the CPSU, these administrative bodies carry out essentially the same functions that the party's Central Committee apparatus did previously—serving as the country's "guiding and directing force." The president's influence on the government bodies of the non-Russian parts of the Federation is also enormous.

The results of the 1996 presidential elections are well known. Yeltsin remained as president of Russia. But the conditions under which he was to rule Russia from 1996 to 2000 had changed. The hopes, needs, and expectations of the population had changed, and it was dangerous to ignore that.

The most important fact about the elections was that they were held. On the whole, all political forces in the country accepted "the rules of the game." This shows that our new democracy, for all its inadequacies, is not just an illusion or a screen for despotism. Only extreme radicals of various stripes have questioned the results of these elections—the first time in the history of Russia when nationwide popular elections for the head of state have been held.

Of course there was pressure from those in power and pressure from the West to influence the election outcome. Leaders of other former Soviet countries and international financial institutions sought to intervene in our internal affairs. And there were violations of election law. But these were not decisive in the final outcome. Thus, the best thing Gennady Zyuganov did after the elections was to state that he would respect the choice made by the people and to send Yeltsin a telegram congratulating him on his victory.

On July 3, 1996, it was up to the voters of the Russian Federation not simply to select a leader but to decide the general sociopolitical course their country would take in the next few years and what its governmental and economic structure would be. Anyone who believed that Yeltsin's election signified approval of his social and economic policies of 1991–95 would be profoundly mistaken. To be sure, the people of Russia once again confirmed their rejection of the ideas and practices of totalitarianism or a primitive "levelers' " type of communism. But they also rejected the ideas and practices of a chaotic, unregulated market economy, "savage capitalism," a piratical kind of primitive capitalist accumulation, and primitive liberalism.

When Yeltsin began his campaign his ratings stood near zero. He had presided over five years of "shock therapy," unfulfilled promises, constantly rising prices, the hoodwinking of small investors, a declining standard of living, overnight enrichment for tens of thousands accompanied by impoverishment for tens of millions, destruction of the educational system, health care, and science and culture in general, rampant crime of all kinds, a falling birth rate and a rising death rate, the war in Chechnya, the degradation of the army, the decline of industry and agriculture, the weakening of all forms of social protection, unemployment, homeless children, refugees, strikes, and ecological disasters. The list could go on and on.

With Yeltsin loaded down by such baggage, it seemed inconceivable that he would win. In December 1995, opinion polls gave him an approval rating of no higher than 5 percent. The following month his ratings on all questions were significantly lower than those of Gennady Zyuganov, the man expected to be his chief rival. A survey conducted in January 1996 by Moscow's Bureau of Applied Sociological Research gave the following percentages for Yeltsin and Zyuganov in reply to specific questions. (The percentages are of the total number of people surveyed. These results were published in the newspaper *Segodnya*, July 17, 1996.)

In your opinion, which politician, after becoming president, could most quickly stop inflation?

Yeltsin	8.4
Zyuganov	24.8

Which politician, after becoming president, could straighten out the economic situation most quickly?

Yeltsin 7.9
Zyuganov 21.8

Which politician could stop the war in Chechnya more quickly?

Yeltsin 6.1
Zyuganov 15.4

Which politician could solve the crime problem more quickly?

Yeltsin 6.0
Zyuganov 16.0

Which politician could improve health care more quickly?

Yeltsin 8.1
Zyuganov 30.6

Only 15 percent replied that they were living better than before perestroika, while 68 percent said they were living worse or much worse, and 14 percent said there was no significant change in their standard of living. When asked, "Do you now approve the social and economic policies followed by the president and the government since 1992?" an overwhelming *66 percent* replied in the negative.

It is not surprising that a number of people in Yeltsin's circle repeatedly urged that the elections be postponed or canceled, even if that meant resorting to the use of force. Others feverishly searched for someone to stand in Yeltsin's place: Chernomyrdin? Nemtsov? Luzhkov? A bloc between Gaidar and Yavlinsky?

In mid-February, when Zyuganov and Yeltsin began collecting signatures for their candidacies, Zyuganov's ratings were as high as 20–22 percent, twice as high as Yeltsin's. When asked what chance Yeltsin had of regaining the presidency, Zyuganov confidently replied: "No chance." The highly experienced Anatoly Lukyanov answered more cautiously: "Yeltsin is a serious opponent."

Yeltsin displayed energy, activity, resourcefulness, even zeal that no one expected of him. He looked hale and hearty. One morning he would preside at a parade in Moscow, and on the same afternoon he would climb a hill to visit the war memorial outside Volgograd, and then the same evening sail down the Volga River to Astrakhan. He

"went to the people," visiting 24 different regions and cities, more than during his entire presidency. But it was not the handshaking on the streets with residents of Yekaterinburg or Krasnodar or the dancing with young people at a stadium in Rostov on the Don, or the concerts with stars of stage and screen that changed the attitudes of millions toward Yeltsin; it was the new social orientation reflected in his decisions, decrees, and promises. It was his campaign to have arrears in wages and pensions paid up, to have scholarships for students and pensions for retired people increased, and to have the first compensation payments made for savings wiped out by inflation.

Prices virtually stopped rising as inflation dropped to about 2 percent per month. Hundreds of billions of additional rubles were spent on science, education, hospitals, and theaters. Decisions were made to give government support for the needs of northern Russia, to expand the Baltic merchant marine and the Novosibirsk subway system, to support suburban truck gardening and the domestic manufacture of airplanes, and on and on.

Yeltsin spoke not just about the market and private ownership, but about a "socially oriented market economy" as he shifted more and more toward the political center. One of Yeltsin's supporters, the economist Pavel Bunich, a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, declared several times that Yeltsin had begun to carry out "a genuinely social democratic program." After Kozyrev's resignation foreign policy priorities also began to change. After Chubais's resignation his ruinous privatization program was stopped. Yeltsin issued a decree recognizing the red banner as one of the symbols of the Russian state, and on Victory Day [May 9—the equivalent of VE day] for the first time in many years the Russian head of state stood on Lenin's tomb to review the armed forces. Important agreements during a state visit to China and new treaties concerning economic integration with Kazakstan, Kirgizia, and especially Belarus—all these were new initiatives taken by Yeltsin, who also included in his election platform, and trumpeted widely, the notion of Russia as a great power that was being humiliated.

Even *Pravda*, on July 9, 1996, admitted that Yeltsin had "succeeded in creating the image of a strict but concerned father of his nation and impressing on an enormous number of people the idea that he represented progress, democracy, and freedom, in contrast to the undemocratic character of the previous Soviet social order."

A CPRF spokesperson, I. Bratishchev, protested: "The party of power has shamelessly appropriated our own economic demands." Zyuganov urged people, "Look at Yeltsin's decrees. Why, he is carrying out 80 percent of our program." But there was nothing in the electoral laws forbidding this. And it makes more sense to ask why so many people trusted Yeltsin rather than Zyuganov on questions of social protection and the needs of the Russian state. Yeltsin went so far as to meet in the Kremlin with leaders of the Chechen separatists and sign a cease-fire agreement with them; later he made a surprise visit to Chechnya and gave a speech to one of the Russian military units there. At that point he had serious grounds to hope for a victory in the first round of the elections.

He did not of course win the first round, or even gain a decisive advantage over his main opponent. By early May, Yeltsin had fully mobilized his own electoral following and won over many wavering "centrists" and doubtful "democrats." But the hopes Yeltsin and his staff had of winning a section of Zyuganov's ideologically consolidated following proved vain. Although Yeltsin did take up many of the Communists' demands, he succeeded only partially in distancing himself from the disastrous consequences of "shock therapy." For most citizens he continued to embody the painful economic course begun in 1992. He remained in this sense a symbolic figure.

Yeltsin's showing in the first round represented an unquestioned gain over the low ratings of January and February. But on the whole, the first round represented a serious defeat for him. On June 16 the overwhelming majority of voters condemned the policies of the previous 4–5 years. Only 35 percent of those voting cast their ballots for Yeltsin, while 65 percent voted against him. About 30 percent voted for Lebed, Yavlinsky, Fyodorov, or Gorbachev, all of whom considered themselves "democrats" but stood as opponents of Yeltsin in the elections.

The first round was not a victory for Zyuganov either. He, too, had campaigned with great energy, traveling to many parts of the country and drawing large audiences. He could not issue any decrees, of course, but his criticisms of the Yeltsin regime were persuasive and his promises attractive. He tried to avoid orthodox Communist slogans and promised to renounce revolutionary measures or even any sharp turns in the economic field. Still, he was only partially able to distance himself from the disastrous results of Communist policy in the USSR

from 1917 to 1991. In the eyes of millions of Russian citizens he embodied both the significant achievements and the many crimes of Communist rule. He too remained a symbolic figure.

One poster seen on the walls of buildings proclaimed, "The Communist Party has not dropped its name: it will not abandon its methods." Zyuganov did not wish to take his distance even from the worst crimes of Stalinism. He frequently referred to Stalin and quoted him. This was attractive to extremists like the Anpilov group, but it repelled the best elements among the intelligentsia. One Moscow University professor said to me: "How could I vote for Zyuganov? I was at one of his demonstrations. Thousands of people were marching along Tverskaya Street, carrying portraits of Zyuganov and Stalin."

Zyuganov got a large vote in the countryside, but he didn't win the sympathy of most workers. Even striking miners in the north and unemployed textile workers in Ivanovo-Voznesensk voted mostly for Yeltsin. Zyuganov's program and demands were good in many respects. But the Communists had been in power not long before, and voters preferred to judge this party by its deeds, not its words. How many attractive Communist programs had been heard since 1917! But which promises had been kept and at what cost? It's no wonder that all of Zyuganov's attempts to portray the CPRF as a completely new Communist Party failed. He won 32 percent of the vote in the first round. That means that 68 percent quite definitely voted against him, and for the CPRF leader this was a serious defeat.

For Grigory Yavlinksy the first round of voting also represented a major setback. His name was well known, but almost nothing was known of him as a real player on the political stage. "Intelligent, handsome, knowledgeable, self-assured"—these are not political definitions. It was unclear whether he stood on the left or the right, or in the center. Refusal to compromise is a good quality in a scientist but not in a politician. It was not only Chernomyrdin who asked, "What has he done for the country? What can he do?" His movement, with its exotic name Yabloko (Apple), never acquired clear outlines or a clear program. That seems to be why the vote for Yavlinsky has steadily declined from election to election, from 1993 to 1995 to 1996.

The 1996 elections brought defeat to Zhirinovsky as well. The time for political clowning and tightrope walking had passed. Chauvinism

had little resonance either. Had Zhirinovsky accomplished anything useful for Russia while in the opposition? Few seemed to think so. He lost three-quarters of the votes he won in 1993.

The Russian press had little comment on the crushing rejection of Gorbachev. Not even one percent voted for him. He was able to attract some attention of course, but not sympathy. It is obvious that the voters charged the disastrous situation in Russia to Gorbachev's account even more than to Yeltsin's.

In regard to General Aleksandr Lebed, much has been said and written, both during the election campaign and especially afterward. In the first round nearly 15 percent voted for him—a big victory for a man who had just started a political career, one who, besides, had been relieved of his military command only a year earlier, in June 1995. None of the pollsters had predicted anything like this. Even his campaign staff was surprised. They later admitted that the most they expected was 8 percent.

People on Zyuganov's campaign staff, and also Gorbachev in an article in *La Stampa* (Rome), charged that Lebed's "15 percent blitzkrieg" had been organized and funded by Yeltsin's campaign. Material published in the newspaper *Kapital* shows that Lebed received funds from the Electoral Commission and from several thousand supporters. Among these were several financial and commercial entities. There was no money from Yeltsin's campaign staff. On the other hand, no one placed any obstacles in the way of Lebed's frequent appearances on television.

Of course the Yeltsin campaign tried to calculate what the possible voting results might be and what might be gained by making a bloc with one or another "third force" candidate. In May, Yeltsin met with Yavlinsky and Fyodorov, and twice with Lebed. And this was only natural. I do not exclude the possibility that Yeltsin's campaign might have given some money to promote Lebed in June. If so, it would have been strange for Lebed and his staff to refuse. But Lebed's success was not primarily due to financing. In December 1995, enormous sums were of no help to Rybkin or Gaidar. And in June 1996 the billionaire Bryntsalov's wealth was no advantage. As for fame, that hurt Gorbachev more than it helped. The weak candidate Shakkum could have appeared five times more often on television; he still would not have reached the one percent mark.

Lebed's image and his slogan "Justice and order" simply coincided

with, and corresponded closely to, the needs and aspirations of many voters.

Thus, Yeltsin and Zyuganov faced each other in the second round of voting. Their chances were about even. Each of them had exhausted his opportunities as a single candidate, and everything now depended on some kind of coalition based on compromise. There were other factors at work as well. The example of St. Petersburg was indicative. There, in gubernatorial elections, Anatoly Sobchak had received the largest number of votes in the first round, but he lost in the second round.

An alliance with Zhirinovsky was not desirable. Zyuganov or Yeltsin could lose more among his own supporters than he would gain by such a move. Yavlinsky's conditions for an alliance Yeltsin considered excessive. They weren't in keeping with the modest extent of Yavlinsky's electoral support.

Zyuganov proposed a very broad coalition. He was willing to include not only Tuleyev in the next government of Russia, but also Lebed, Fyodorov, Glazyev (a former minister of foreign trade), Luzhkov (the mayor of Moscow), Yegor Stroyeva (governor of Saratov province), Rakhimov (the head of Bashkiria), Yavlinsky, and others. This proposal was not very realistic, and it was made public rather late in the game, on June 25. Not until then, apparently, did Zyuganov realize that an alliance with extremist "orthodox Communists" such as Anpilov, Makashov, and Terekhov repelled more voters than it attracted.

Yeltsin was more decisive and acted more quickly. He reached an agreement with Lebed on June 17 and announced it on June 18. Lebed was appointed secretary of Russia's Security Council and assistant to the president for national security affairs: he was promised considerable power and authority in the government. Defense Minister Pavel Grachev, the most unpopular man in Yeltsin's entourage, was retired to "the reserves." Three others in Yeltsin's inner circle were dismissed: General Barsukov, the chief of the security police (FSB), Aleksandr Korzhakov, head of the presidential guard, and vice premier Oleg Soskovets. Seven more generals linked with Grachev were soon dismissed as well. Lebed expressed his satisfaction. A program drawn up by the group around Lebed, entitled "Main Directions of Activity for the Security Council of the Russian Federation in the Present Period," was made public before the July 3 second round. Of all the programs known to me it was at once the most radical and the most realistic for

bringing Russia out of its present crisis. "He laughs best who shoots first," said Lebed at a press conference on July 2.

Yeltsin's political alliance with Lebed was greeted with unconcealed anger both by the CPRF and by the radical "democrats." Voices in the Communist Duma group could be heard defending the dismissed generals. Zyuganov predicted that Lebed would experience the same fate as Rutskoi, who also began an anti-crime campaign but ended behind bars himself.

The Yeltsin-Lebed alliance was a conjunctural agreement and, though advantageous to both sides for the moment, was not stable. During Lebed's first days as secretary of the Security Council it became clear he would not be just another official in Yeltsin's administration. He was given a significant amount of autonomy and power. At his first press conference he declared: "Eleven million voters believed that I could restore order and guarantee security. I am an officer and must carry out these orders. Having finished third, I am assuming these difficult duties. I think that no less than 80 percent of the voters will understand me and follow my lead" (*Krasnaya Zvezda*, June 19, 1996).

The commentator Mikhail Leontyev wrote later, in the newspaper *Segodnya* (July 10, 1996): "The position and powers of the Security Council are determined by the presence of the 'first nationally elected secretary of the Security Council' and by the personality of this secretary. . . . He will not be able to exist in the structures of power at a position lower than No. 2 man in the government. . . . It is another question to what extent an adequate embodiment of this situation will be found."

Some Communist newspapers wrote at the end of June that voters would be repelled by the Yeltsin-Lebed alliance and the departure of "patriotic" generals from the Kremlin and that those who had supported Lebed in the first round would not vote for him in the second.

"Against this background," wrote *Sovetskaya Rossiya* on June 22,

> the actions of Zyuganov rise to new heights. Despite all the mudslinging accompanying the election campaign, Zyuganov remains an unbesmirched politician, who has conducted the struggle with the use of methods that are exceptionally clean, honest, and legitimate. At the finish of the presidential race, when passions it seems are at their height, Zyuganov demonstrates a high level of political culture, coolness, and restraint, and the voters cannot help but see this and appreciate it.

> After the unseemly events of June 19–20 [the ouster of Korzhakov, Barsukov, and Soskovets], there can no longer be any doubt of Zyuganov's victory.

This was obviously an expression of the Communists' wishful thinking, not the reality.

After June 23, Yeltsin's health failed him. He pulled back from his intense participation in the election campaign, canceled his scheduled trips and meetings, and made only some brief television appearances. In contrast, Zyuganov continued a very energetic campaign, holding a press conference every day. But he was not able to spruce up his image or show new faces on his team. He no longer had much hope of winning, but he expressed confidence that, whoever the victor, the margin of victory would be small. Yeltsin's campaign staff feared that would be so.

The results were a surprise to both sides: 67.3 percent of the electorate took part, with 53.7 percent voting for Yeltsin and 40.4 percent for Zyuganov. Only 5 percent voted for "none of the above." Most of the Russian press greeted the results with enthusiasm. However, Yeltsin's was not a triumphal victory; it was won at great cost, both literally and figuratively. Opinion polls showed that many had voted not so much for one candidate as against the other. Many who voted for Yeltsin did not like him, but they disliked the Communists more. Many who opposed Yeltsin voted for Zyuganov, although they didn't particularly like him either. Both groups were voting for the lesser evil. Yeltsin's staff understood this. One of his campaign slogans was: "I'm no Communist. Communism's worse than me." Of Lebed's supporters, 75 percent voted for Yeltsin; of Yavlinsky's, 80 percent. About 70 percent of Zhirinovsky's supporters voted for Zyuganov. All these facts placed a limit on Yeltsin's freedom of maneuver, as did the 40 percent vote for Zyuganov. Yeltsin had to take these forces into account, and he could not ignore the simple fact that in the first round only 46 out of 89 administrative units of the Russian Federation gave him more votes than Zyuganov.

Analysts in the CPRF camp, it seems to me, were unable to evaluate correctly the reasons for their defeat. They pointed to many factors that, in my opinion, were secondary. The 1996 presidential elections showed how strongly most citizens of Russia oppose any return to power by the Communists, who were unable to draw a clear line between their past and the present and future.

Yegor Ligachev (the former Politburo member) wrote that the election results were a success. "The CPRF has existed just a little more than three years. It was founded after the CPSU was banned and has been working under conditions of moral terror. The CPRF and its candidate, Zyuganov, were in fact denied access to central television and radio, and they did not possess one tenth of the financial resources spent on Yeltsin's campaign" (*Pravda*, July 30, 1996).

This view is too superficial. Of course Yeltsin had many advantages, but his position also had many weaknesses. Some other opposition party might have taken advantage of those, but it was difficult for the CPRF to do so. Only in a formal sense had it existed "little more than three years." Those who voted for the Communists or withheld their votes from them undoubtedly thought about not just the last three years but the many decades of Communist rule. Even in the elections of 1989–91 the Communist regime had not given its opponents as many opportunities as the CPRF was given in 1996.

Yeltsin remained president, but the situation in Russia did not improve. Numerous promises were waiting to be kept. Talk about "completing the reforms that have been started" covered up the real need for fundamental corrections. Russia actually needed a new reform program, but Yeltsin did not have the strength or energy to start anew or make a fairly sharp about-face.

As I have written elsewhere, Yeltsin is a politician whose main objective is to stay in power. He is willing to change his image, his policies, and his advisers to achieve that end. In the Sverdlovsk province committee of the CPSU he was a despotic boss. As secretary of the CPSU's Moscow city committee, and after breaking with Gorbachev in 1989, he took the stance of a tough fighter against party privilege and corruption. From 1989 to 1992 he was a pro-Western democrat and liberal. Riding to power on the wave of an amorphous "democratic movement," he soon pushed the "first wave" of democrats out of government, figures like Yuri Afanasyev, Gavriil Popov, and Galina Starovoitova. In 1992–93 he began to get rid of a second line of "democrats"—figures like Burbulis, Gaidar, and Shakhrai. Later, in 1994 and after, Chubais, Kozyrev, and others had to go. In their place came professionals from the party and state apparatus of the 1980s, men like Chernomyrdin, Primakov, Kadannikov, and Yegorov.

Meanwhile there was little change in economic policy, and the country continued its downward spiral. By the end of 1995 the Yeltsin

regime's social support consisted only of the following: commercial and financial capital, backed by Western capital, the comprador bourgeoisie (business people working for foreign capital), corrupt bureaucrats, a section of the officer corps, a section of the regional elite, and a section of the intelligentsia in the capital, plus criminal and semi-criminal elements. Things were heading toward a social explosion. To hold onto power and extricate Russia from its crisis, Yeltsin needed to find mass support in the ranks of the working class and wider strata of the intelligentsia, within the army, and among the masses of the rural population; also among students and retired people, among the new national bourgeoisie, and among the owners of small and medium-sized businesses.

The political shifts Yeltsin made from January to June 1996 were only the first necessary steps in the right direction, but they were not continued after the election. Many of the social programs announced in the spring and summer were discontinued in the fall of 1996. Of all the campaign promises Yeltsin made, he kept only one: the war in Chechnya was finally ended. But this was mainly the work of Lebed, with little obvious help from Yeltsin or Chernomyrdin. After the election, the return of privatization mastermind Chubais to a high post in Yeltsin's administration canceled many of the hopes held by those who voted for the Russian president.

Explaining the reasons for his bloc with Yeltsin, General Lebed contrasted "the old idea," which no longer inspired anyone, to "the new idea," which was being put into practice poorly, but which he preferred. The Russian people did reject the idea of totalitarianism and the primitive "leveling" type of orthodox Communism, but it also rejected the even older idea of an unregulated market economy, "savage capitalism," criminal-dominated "primitive capitalist accumulation," and crude laissez-faire liberalism. Neither Communist fundamentalism nor Western liberalism is foremost in the thinking of most Russians today. Instead, uppermost in their minds are some ideas that for Russia are truly new—political liberty and social justice, democracy and order, individual initiative and government regulation, protection of citizens' social rights and their equality before the law. This spectrum of ideas is customarily linked with the social democratic movement. It is no accident that in addition to the Socialist Party of Working People, which in 1996 observed its fifth anniversary, a goodly dozen social democratic parties and groups have made their appearance in Russia in recent years.

Ideas relating to a strong Russian state (*derzhavnost*) and defense of Russia's national interests have also taken on much greater urgency.

New shifts in public opinion have not found adequate expression in the policies of those in power nor among those in opposition. Many CPRF leaders understand the importance of pluralism and a mixed economy, a combination of public and private ownership. But when the CPRF was founded in 1990, and when it was reestablished in 1993, it was by no means based on the most progressive sections of the CPSU. From the party of the retrograde Ivan Polozkov, Zyuganov has inherited not only a conservative ideology but also a large part of the active party membership. Thus, after the party's failure in the 1996 elections it is no accident that attempts to reorganize a National-Patriotic Assembly along less radical lines have been combined with increased adulation of—Stalin. At his first press conference after the elections Zyuganov admitted that he had not known how to adequately oppose the concentrated pressure of the "party of power," exerted through all the mass media. "However," he commented, "if in the face of such pressure on the voters and such use of the media, Generalissimo Stalin had been running in the election, he would have won" (*Pravda*, July 6, 1996).

The attitude of the West toward the Russian presidential elections is a separate subject, too big to go into here. The general attitude was summed up by one English newspaper, which asserted that Yeltsin's victory made Westerners happy, but that his health was cause for concern. Official circles in the West were also troubled by Lebed's rapid rise. Some were inclined to regard his program for strengthening Russia's national security as a "throwback to the Cold War." There was no shortage of caustic comments in the Western press to the effect that a "tank division had been brought in to hold a single department store," and there were frequent references to Lebed as a "loose cannon." An influential American newspaper advised Yeltsin "to cast Lebed aside after a decent interval" and place his reliance on Chernomyrdin, who had proven himself to be a "most loyal servant to the head of state." Yeltsin followed this advice almost to the letter, but that was hardly to his advantage.