
Post-Soviet Russia

POST-SOVIET RUSSIA

A Journey Through the Yeltsin Era

Roy Medvedev

Translated and Edited by George Shriver



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Translator's Note

Much of this translation derives from a manuscript version of Roy Medvedev's *Kapitalizm v Rossii?* [Capitalism in Russia?] (Moscow: Prava Cheloveka [Human Rights Publishers], 1998. The author's work on the Russian book was completed in January 1998, although much of the text was written in 1995–96. The book investigates in depth the attempt to create a capitalist system in post-Soviet Russia during the 1990s. In this English version some of the chapters have been abridged and some appear in an order different from that followed in the Russian book. A certain part of the Russian manuscript, which we have included in this translation, was published in Russian in the pamphlet by Roy and Zhores Medvedev, *Rossiia i Zapad v kontse XX veka* [Russia and the West at the End of the 20th Century] (Moscow, 1997), but not in *Kapitalizm v Rossii?*

A special feature of this English version is Part 3 (chapters 9 and 10), which covers the critical events of 1998, and the “Postscript” on the further upheavals of 1999 through the December elections to the Duma (parliament) and the resignation of Russian President Boris Yeltsin.. The English version also contains an analysis of the 1995–96

elections that is more detailed than in the Russian book. This analysis pays special attention to Yeltsin's chief opponent in the 1996 elections, Gennady Zyuganov, and his Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), including excerpts from the writings of Zyuganov and campaign literature and related material of the CPRF.

In effect this book reviews the entire "Yeltsin era" which is now coming to an end—from Boris Yeltsin's rise to dominance in the wake of the unsuccessful coup attempt of August 1991, through "liberalization" of prices, "shock therapy," and privatization of state-owned industry to the tank bombardment of the Russian White House and dispersal of the Russian Supreme Soviet in October 1993, the elections of December 1993, then those of 1995–96, and finally, the crises of 1998, which resulted in the premiership of Yevgeny Primakov. The "Postscript," as we have said, takes the story through the end of 1999.

In all this material the author's consistent theme is that imported schemes for creating a particular type of "neoliberal" capitalism in Russia cannot work. In his view, given Russia's specific social, political, and economic characteristics in the twentieth century, a mix of government planning and market mechanisms seems more likely to be effective.

The book provides telling thumbnail sketches of many new figures who have trod the boards of Russian public life during the 1990s—some only briefly, others for a longer time: among them, Gaidar, Burbulis, Chubais, Chernomyrdin, Rutskoi, Khasbulatov, and more recently, Nemtsov, Kiriyenko, Lebed, Primakov, and Putin.

NOTE ON THE SPELLING OF RUSSIAN NAMES

The more familiar and readable system of Russian transliteration has generally been used, omitting diacritical marks (such as hard signs and soft signs) and in most cases using *y* rather than *i* or *j*, or *-ii* or *-ij*. (Thus, Gennady Zyuganov, not Gennadii Ziuganov, and Boris Yeltsin, not Boris El'tsin or El'cin.) Names of tsars are usually Anglicized. Titles of books or periodicals are sometimes given in the Library of Congress form of transliteration as an aid to readers wishing to locate them in a library catalogue.