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Leaving the Past Behind: The Russian Presidential Elections of 1996

by Hugh Phillips

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LEAVING THE PAST BEHIND: THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OF 1996

In 1996, for the first time Russians chose among rival presidential candidates in a relatively free and democratic process.[1] Pro-democracy reformers, led by Boris Yeltsin faced the Communist-nationalist challenge of Gennady Zyuganov. Whatever shortcomings may have existed in the process, Russians were unquestionably free to vote for whomever they wished or even "none of the above." This was important not only for historical reasons but also because the president holds enormous power: Presidential decrees are fully binding, unless they contradict parliamentary laws or the Constitution.[2] As Timothy J. Colton succinctly noted, Russia's choice did not concern "legislators who can make fiery speeches about this or that, but the next thing to an elected monarch."3 And this "king" has his finger on a nuclear trigger second only to the United States in its destructive capability.

Literally within days, western assessments of the election appeared. Michael McFaul and Peter Reddaway spoke before a congressional committee on 10 July, offering well informed, if quite divergent, assessments of the meaning of the election.[4] Daniel Treisman published the first evaluation in *Foreign Affairs*. He wrote that Yeltsin's liberal promises of old-fashion American-style pork carried the president from his abysmal approval ratings to eventual victory. Specifically, Yeltsin doubled the minimum pension, effective 1 May, and ordered compensation for people whose savings had been devoured by the hyperinflation of the last few years. By the end of the campaign it was difficult to find any significant social group that received no promises of presidential largess. Yeltsin's effort to pay overdue wages influenced 38 percent of "voters in his favor- the highest figure for any issue listed."5

There can be no doubt that Yeltsin showered financial promises on the Russians in a fashion grand enough to embarrass even the most cynical western politician. Treisman's analysis, however, overlooks the fact that Yeltsin's chief rival and head of a revived Communist Party, Gennady Zyuganov, promised the same things. At a 17 March rally in Moscow, the Communist leader pledged to "increase wages and pensions, [and] compensate those whose savings were eroded by inflation. ..."[6] A Russian journalist calculated just before the first election that the total costs of Zyuganov's promises for renewed government funding to industry, agriculture, education, health care and social services would be between five and seven times the present national budget.[7] As early as March, western economists p edicted that the Communists' spending promises would devour Russia's foreign currency reserves and lead to the economy's collapse "in a matter of months."B So Zyuganov hardly presented a tight-fisted economic alternative to Yeltsin.

Moreover, Yeltsin never delivered on these promises before the crucial vote and even publicly acknowledged this fact at a May Day rally.9 Well he might because ITAR-TASS had reported on 23 April that the 1996 budget allocated only a fifth of the benefits to which veterans were entitled.[10] On 8 May, after repeated criticism from Yeltsin, Pension Fund head Vasily Barchuk fired back, blaming payment delays on Yeltsin's failure to pay the government's debt to the fund, which totaled 4.6 trillion rubles for the period 1992-1995 alone.[11] Just before the

second vote Yuri Trukhmanov, a retired police colonel and campaign worker for candidate Aleksandr Lebed, stated flatly: "For all Yeltsin's promises, pensioners here have not been paid...for January, February, and March. Teachers have not been paid for April and May, and are now being sent on two months' unpaid holiday."12

If these economic matters wer the pivotal issue, why did Russians bother SWitching to Yeltsin when Zyuganov had already made extravagant financial promises? The answer seems twofold: Yeltsin promised to carry out these pledges in a democratic context and Yeltsin was a "known quantity" as a national leader. People who know him insist that Yeltsin's formidable and ultimate goal is to go down in history as the man who created a modem Russian democracy.13 Viktor Kremeniuk, an analyst at the USA-Canada Institute, asserted that, "Yeltsin has changed from a party apparatchik into a democratic president."14 Zyuganov, however, wanted to spend the money within a reconstructed Soviet system.[15] As the Communists' official platform asserted: "Everything was right in Soviet history (industrialization, collectivization). All sacrifices are justified."16What possible argument could be put forth against a system that was always right? And why should anyone have doubted that, once returned to power, the Communists would have restored so perfect a system? As Alexander Yanov observed just before the election: "Zyuganov is not just a former communist; his party is not even trying to hide its true 'patriotic' colors, nor is it claiming that it has reformed itself. [Moreover] Zyuganov's party belongs not to the liberal pro-Western wing of its alma mater but to its nationalist, openly anti-Western extreme."17

The majority of Russians preferred Yeltsin's democratic framework within which to receive their pork. Even Richard Pipes, one of the Russians' sharpest and most astute observers, pointed out that "judging by elections, referendums, and opinion polls, about two-thirds of Russians – including the vast majority of educated people - favour democracy and the free market."18

But it also seems clear that Russians voted for Yeltsin beeau e they had a fairly good idea of what they would be getting, even if that was hardly exhilarating. Surely memories of Yeltsin's heroic stand in the August 1991 communist coup lingered, however tainted by the violence of October 1993. Boris Nikolaevich had a certain reliable unpredictability but he made it absolutely clear that there would be no going back.

In another assessment of the election, Angela Stent and Lilia Shevtsova argue that a Communist victory could not possibly have meant a return to a "command economy, censorship, and a reinvigorated secret police." "New groups with their own stakes in the system are becoming more powerful and would resist any leader who might seek to impose radical change. The clock cannot be turned back...."[19] Perhaps, but the same argument was made in the 19205: powerful capitalists had emerged in the cities and even more important, the peasants were in control of the land and simply would not allow the state to take it from them.[20] Only a Communist minority seriously contemplated a return to the disastrous postwar policies of central control and the free use of force that had become known as "war communism." No one understood until it was too late that Stalin intended to implement his vision of socialism regardless of the costs. Communist politicians have rarely been "rational actors" and the Rus-

sians know this better than most people. Zyuganov is no Stalin; but he spoke admiringly of Stalin and that was surely sufficient to chill the marrow of millions of Russians.

This paper offers a brief, I hope concise, description and analysis of the Russians' rejection of communism and Yeltsin's concomitant political reincarnation. It is based largely on journalistic and scholarly accounts augmented by personal interviews and discussions I had with Russians especially during May and June, 1996, while in Moscow and the provincial capital, Tver'. I spoke with a many Russians as possible, but most of my conversations were with librarians, archivists, academics, and other professionals. With strangers, for example cab drivers or bar tenders, I would follow a set routine: I would ask who they thought would win the election. If the person was not hostile, I would then ask why he or she felt one or the other candidate would be victorious. Only if the individual seemed agreeable to converse further, would I then ask about their personal attitudes and hopes for the election. This is admittedly an unscientific approach, but is certainly of some value in assessing general attitudes in Russia.

There is no pretense of comprehensiveness; it will be many years before anything like a full story of the 1996 Russian political events can be told. Still it is hoped that this examination may be useful to scholars and students who desire an outline of the most important events. In particular, this paper seeks to describe and analyze Yeltsin's amazing fall and rise in the first seven months of 1996 against the background of crisis, crime, and commmunism resurgent.

The 1996 Russian political year really began with the Duma elections of December 1995 wherein the Communists received about 25 percent of the vote, more than triple the results of the 1993 elections.[21] As 1996 opened, many analyst believed Zyuganov was destined to assume the presidency in the summer. It seemed that history was about to repeat itself: once again a revolution that began as a struggle against tyranny seemed headed for a new despotism. Many Russians feared that haVing ousted the Communists in 1991, they would see the return of their former masters a scant five years later. Others prayed for such an eventuality.

In late 1995, there existed solid reasons for the these concerns. Not only did the December parliamentary elections reveal that large segments of the population would welcome a Communist come back; *The New York Times* reported that in the city of Tambov, about 300 miles south of Moscow, the citizens had already made their choice publicly clear: the red Soviet flag, not the Russian tri-eolor, flew over the city hall and other government buildings. It is important to remember that while the Soviet Communist Party lost its control of the top echelons of power, at the local level, former Communists continued as administrators and leaders, wielding great power. Many of these people clearly longed for the good old days of Soviet socialism. There never was a Stalinist-style purge throughout the state bureaucracy. So in Tambov, they came into the open.

A Communist victory seemed especially likely because all of the various splinter communist groups and many nationalist organizations rallied behind Zyuganov. Of particular significance was the support of Viktor Anpilov's unregenerate Stalinist party that received 5 million votes in the December elections, despite little campaigning and no paid advertising. In addition, several conservative,

patriotic groups expressed their support for Zyuganov.[22] Moreover, a January poll in the military found that 22 percent supported Zyuganov, 18 percent the ultra-nationalist and neo-fascist, Vladimir Zhirinovsky and a mere 4 percent favored Yeltsin.[23]

But several other factors played a much greater role in the Communists' rise in popularity and Yeltsin's plunge. Crime had spiralled dangerously out of control. The USSR, for all its faults, provided its citizens with an almost complete freedom of fear from violent crime, especially on the streets. Statistics for 1995 revealed that Russia's per capita murder rate was double that of the United States.[24] The killings of even prominent politicians, journalists and businessmen had become so common that they hardly elicited much press attention anymore. In early February, Zhirinovsky learned that his close associate, Aleksandr Vengerovsky, narrowly survived an assassination attempt. Had the attack been successful, it would have brought the number Duma deputies killed since the 1993 elections to five. In that year, 21 percent of Russians believed that the mafia actually controlled the country.25 On 26 February 1996, hitmen entered the opulent Nevskii Palace Hotel in St. Petersburg and mowed down two Russians and a Scottish businessman. In 1995, a total of seventy-seven Russian businessmen were gunned down in St. Petersburg alone.[26] Police estimated that in that year, there were at least 500 contract killings in the whole country, with 216 such murders in Moscow, up from 181 in 1994. As of late April, only about 10 percent of such murders had been solved.[27] A Moscow official annoymously told C that murder was how the mafia routinely dealt with businessmen who refused to pay debts or protection money.

Not surprisingly, Russians were deeply worried about the upsurge in crime, a concern that increased as the election neared.[28] ew millionaires eagerly bought armored American-made Humvees, something of a cross between a Jeep and a tank. A Moscow dealership advertised the vehicle as the "ultimate protection from kidnapping and assassination."29 Many of the poor turned to the Communi ts' promise for a restoration of order. A young bookkeeper, who supported Zyuganov remarked that "I want order and security. I've got kids, and I want them to have at least what I had–a calm atmosphere and a stable upbringing."30

A major part of the crime problem is that the police, like almost everyone else, remained grossly underpaid and therefore deeply involved in bribery and kickbacks. In Tver' in 1994, I saw a list compiled *by the police* giving the prices according to crimes that a victim must pay before any action would be taken. For example, to recover a stolen car, the owner had to fork over half the car's value. And when people were arrested, prosecution was difficult. In the St. Petersburg District Attorney's office, almost half of the professional staff had no college training. Finally, the police estimated that organized crime spends about 50 percent its profits to bride judges and pro ecutors. An official at the Butyrka prison revealed that, of the fourteen "thieves of the law," as the criminal elite are called, that had been arrested over the last two years, only one ever went to court.[31] A substantial portion of Russians were near the end of their proverbial patience and many be.lieved that, if nothing else, the Communists would know how to deal with criminals.

But the picture remained murky. A retired Muscovite engineer told me

that crime has always been a major urban problem. The difference in 1996 was the spectacular public killings and the fact that most crime is now fully reported, whereas during the Soviet era the press ignored not only crime but even natural disa ters. When I was a graduate student in Moscow in 1982-83, there was much talk of someone wielding an axe outside the Hotel Rossiia, killing several people, but nothing appeared in the media. And Vasily Aksyonov recently marveled about how news of a 1953 earthquake in Kazakstan that killed at least 100,000 was completely suppressed in Russia.[32] Nevertheless, most Russians clearly believed that crime has risen dramatically and perception is often more important than reality.

The economy remained a problem. While hyperinflation receded, (official inflation ates for February and March 1996 were a mere 2.8 percent) the generally bleak picture persisted. Yeltsin even conceded that "people are on the verge of starvation in some areas."[33] Russia's Gross Domestic Product in 1995 was 50 percent of the 1991 total.[34] The government announced in March that GDP had declined 17 per cent in the last two years; more serious was the acknowledgement that the 1995 harvest was the worst since 1963. Grain production fell a staggering 25 percent below the levels of 1994. Such a ituation was potentially disastrous in a country where about 35 percent of the popu1ation lived below the official poverty line of $69 per month and, therefore, were heavily dependent on bread for survival. On 20 March, Yevgeny Savchenko, the chair of the Federation Council's Agricu1tural Policy Committee, estimated that more than one third of Russia's food needs were m t by imports in 1995 and conceded that the problem was growing.[35]

Yet while in Russia before the election, I saw no increase in the already large numbers of beggars and homeless. Nowhere did I detect food shortages or even complains about a lack of goods.[36] Even the Communist daily, *Pravda*, conceded that the "most important Yeltsin success during his years in office was to fill the shelves of stores in various cities.[37] How the government managed to keep the stores full during (and after) the election warrants further study, although the answer seems to be continued borrowing to purchase foreign goods. Indeed, the crisis of August 1998 showed foremost that Russia had been on a borrowing binge for many years.

In any case, government income on election eve continued to fall. In 1995 oil exports, a source of vital hard currency, dropped by about 5 percent. The head of Russia's Central Bank estimated that a whopping 40 percent of Russian businesses were ignoring the law and paying no taxes. Thus, at the end of March 1996, the Russian Central Bank reported tax arrears totalling about $8.4 billion. The federal authorities charged that businesses, for the most part, avoided taxes through barter and cash trasactions and mu1tiple bank accounts under various names.[38] Businessmen, in turn, responded that because their clientele failed to pay its bills, they were unable to pay taxes. Workers, for their part, believed that the owners are taking profits and investing them in the myriad of fly-by-night and widely advertised "investment companies" that have proliferated all over Russia, offering up to 50 percent returns on one-year investments. Daily, these schemes failed in large numbers: By early March, 25 million investors had been defraud d.[39] Yet, people keep coming back, hoping for lottery-like

success. A month later, the government revealed that its budget deficit for the first quarter of 1996 continued to grow. Only domestic and foreign borrowing enabled the state to meet part of its obligations.[40] Olga Dmitrieva, the head of a subcommittee of the Duma's Budget Committee, sharply criticized both Yeltsin and the Communist-dominated Duma for increasing spending while revenues continued to decline.[41]

The general results of this financial disaster were evident when the government announced that for the year 1995, it owed industrial and public sector workers $2.8 billion in late wages, an increase of 219 percent from 1994. The crisis manifested itself in many ways: some humorous, all tragic. For example, the *Times* of London reported that a textile plant in the city of Bashkortostan, located thousands of miles from the ocean, "paid" its workers with Russian sailor suits. In Voronezh, a machine-building plant gave its employees Chinese bras rather than cash.[42] The situation became so bad for educators in St. Petersburg that the leaders of the university professors' union went on a hunger strike demanding that professors receive their full pay: $128 per month. They should perhaps have been thankful; secretaries at St. Petersburg State University received $19 a month, not even close to the official poverty line. The hospitals and other medical institutes of St. Petersburg were also feeling the pinch. Valery Koryukin, head of the Mayor's Health Committee, told *The St. Petersburg Press* that while 1996 federal funding would meet staff salaries, the money left over could only buy 9 percent of the medicines and 13 percent of the food needed for patients.

Even the prestigious Russian Academy of Sciences felt the pinch. Once a Soviet bastion of privilege and fat budgets, the Academy saw its funding slashed by two-thirds since 1991. Some members eventually joined the strike movement, loudly denouncing Yeltsin.[43]

Also hard hit were coal miners, who on 1 February 1996, Yeltsin's birthday, began a strike that quickly included about 500,000 people and shut down over half of the coal mines in Russia. The miners' strike was unique in that management joined the workers. The stoppage was centered in the western Siberian area known as the Kuzbass. In 1991, these miners were instrumental in sweeping Yeltsin into the Russian presidency. In the 1995 duma elections, they gave 53 percent of their votes to the Communists. After a few days, the strike ended with Yeltsin's promise to begin payments to the miners.[44] Where the money would come from remained a mystery.

In March 1996 even soldiers fighting in Chechnya had not been paid since November. Many of them had only sneakers, rather than regulation boots, to wear. But they were hardly alone. Interior Minister, Anatoly Kulikov, urged Yeltsin to dip into hard-currency reserves, renationalize banks, and increase tariffs to provide the funds necessary to avoid a military collapse similar to the one that was instrumental in the fall of the last Tsar.[45]

In the countryside, the economic picture was equally bleak. Typical is the example of Borodino, scene of the savage 1812 battle with the forces of Napoleon. In June, Father Igor Vostriakov, a young priest responsible for 20 parishes and churches in the area spoke with the *Times*. His parishioners, he said, represented the losers from five years of reforms. The closure of the collective farm two years ago left the elderly virtually destitute, while a

majority of the young have moved on searching for work. Vostriakov said that with a few exceptions- some people who were thankful to Yeltsin for opening the churches- the people of Borodino supported Zyuganov.[46]

The only way for the state and nation to survive was to borrow money and import grain. But the government was already so deeply in debt that even the United States government, hardly a model of fiscal responsibility, publicly urged Yeltsin to balance his books. Moreover, the IMF and other banks made it clear that delivery of a $10.2 billion loan depended upon a continuation of economic reforms. Having little choice, Yeltsin stayed the reform course and on 23 February, the IMF announced its decision to make the loan, with part to be sent to Yeltsin before the June election.[47] But this was largely symbolic; nothing short of an economic miracle could have provided the funds to meet either Ye1tsin's or Zyuganov's campaign promises. But even this deal held potential problems. *The New York Times* reported that, Michel Camdessus, Managing Director of the IMF, explained with a straight face that the loan was granted, after months of haggling, because Yeltsin had kept inflation under control. He added that *not* making the loan "could be interpreted as taking sides" in the election. Of course, all Russians knew that "taking sides" was precisely what the IMF was doing and Zyuganov went all out to portray Yeltsin as the puppet of "imperialist banking circles," asserting that Russia was becoming "becoming directly dependent on foreign international organizations."48 It is doubtful this charge helped Zyuganov: Russians probably did not care where financial aid came from, as long as it came.

Avraham Shama, however, argues cogently that economic matters were (and are) more complicated and better than official statistics indicate. In Russia's "true" economy; the situation is not so bad. The private sector, which comprises more than half of economic activity as of early 1996, is growing "by 15 to 150 percent annually, depending on the industry in question." Moreover, "about 90 percent of private sector income and 40 percent of all wages" go unreported to the government and therefore fail to show up in official statistics.[49] This is without doubt true. Anyone who has recently spent much time in Russia knows that all sorts of goods and services are readily available on a cash and carry basis with no records kept. The attitude often encountered is that the Soviet government stole from the nation for so long, that now i th time to get a bit back by not reporting income. People who thrive in this part of the economy undoubtedly supported Yeltsin.

The president also received enormous good will from the public in 1992 when he transferred ownership of apartments from the state to the residents. Although many Russians have been highly critical of the rampant corruption that accompanied much of the privatization process, people I spoke with in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and rver' said receiving title to their apartment was by far the most popular aspect of Yeltsin's privatization program. A professor proudly told me that his two-room apartment in Tver' would fetch $20,000. This fact must have been on people's minds as the election neared.

In a similar vein, Russia's regional leaders owed Yeltsin a great deal. He had allowed them to become involved in business, although only semi-legally. Many had done quite well as budding capitalists and showed little aversion to corruption. These powerful

figures knew all that could change under a Zyuganov government, especially since the Corrummists never gave any promises to let the regional elites continue business as usual. So these provincial bosses, for the most part, sided with Yeltsin.[50]

Still it is equally clear that the Russian economy had serious problems, a situation that benefitted Zyuganov. Many people believe they will receive no pension upon retirement or that inflation will consume whatever they do receive. All is far from well when a family that includes a physician and a medical school department head must take in boarders and regularly sell blood to make ends meet. Even more distressing, the Russian military reported an increase in suicides among its officers corps, with psychiatrists reporting financial problems as a major factor. In one instance, an officer of the 242nd Infantry Regiment, with responsibility for the psychological welfare of his regiment's officers and soldiers, committed suicide in despair over his hungry wife and children. He had received "no pay for months."[51]

Finally, Yeltsin watched the pro-reform leaders who rallied around him after the collapse of the USSR fall into almost unanimous opposition. In January, Sergei Kovalev, a Soviet-era dissident, nominee for the oble Peace Prize and former member of Russia's Human Rights Commission, wrote a searing and comprehensive condemnation of Yeltsin's policies over the last several months. He was especially harsh on the war in Chechnya and concluded that he could not advise any "decent person" to vote for Yeltsin.[52] Former prime minister, Yegor Gaidar, asserted that the Communists' best hope for gaining the presidency was for Yeltsin to stand for reelection. He sadly observed that Yeltsin in 1996 bore no resemblance to the heroic figure of 1991.[53] Anders Aslund, a Swedish economist who advised Yeltsin in 1992-93, went much further, asserting that "Russia needs a change of government; unfortunately, the Communists are the only alternative."[54]

It would be difficuJt, however, to argue that the loss of these men seriously hurt Yeltsin with Russian voters. Kovalev is certainly a respected man, but of little political weight, while Gaidar remains a widely hated figure, associated with the explosive inflation that accompanied the freeing of prices in 1992.[55] The vast majority of Russians undoubtedly have never heard of Aslund.

Nonetheless, it is little wonder that people seriously considered a return to communism. The argument can be made that the election was Zyuganov's to lose, something he managed to achieve with Yeltsin's unsolicited help.

By the end March, of the major reformers, only Anatoli Chubais publicly backed the president's re-election bid. In April, he joined Yeltsin's campaign organization, working especially in the St. Petersburg area. He was quite famous for his direction of the largest privatization of state assets in history which put most of Russia's retail trade in private hands and is very popular with the bankers and financiers who financed Yeltsin's re-election effort.[56] On the other hand, large numbers of Russians hated or at least mistrusted Chubais for selling government holdings at a fraction of their perceived value. Yet, even his support was essentially negative: He said that Yeltsin was the only person capable of stopping Zyuganov. He added rather extravagantly that a return to Communist policies would lead to civil war.[57]

By March, however, Yeltsin hit the campaign trail. It was irrunediately clear that he had undergone a completely unforeseen physical transformation. A former tennis pro had worked successfully to get Yeltsin into better physical condition, including a 25 pound weight loss; therefore he was able to put in a far more energetic, even hectic, campaign schedule than anyone anticipated. One journalist described him as "full of strength and completely sure of himself."58 Most important, Yeltsin had his notorious drinking under control. Rumors circulated that an aide stayed at the president's side and doled out vodka at levels that prevented obvious drunkenness. In May, he even addressed this issue directly, conceding on television that he "drinks like a Russian," commonly understood to mean "to excess." He added that if he denied his drinking no one would believe him, a point beyond dispute.

On the stump, as Treisman pointed out, Yeltsin promised money and benefits to almost everyone, from students to retirees. Specifically, he promised to eliminate pension arrears and to compensate people who lost their savings during the horrific inflation of 1991- 1995.[59] This was transparently a political move: By all accounts these two socio-economic groups contain large numbers of senior citizens and they were overwhelmingly pro-Communist. To meet these promises, Yeltsin had two basic choices: run the ruble printing presses or spread the payments out over several decades. Andrei lllarionov, director of the Institute for Economic Analysis in Moscow, observed that the former policy would bring back runaway inflation and further alienate the IMF.60 The latter choice would make no real difference for Russians in the short-term, i.e., before the election. In any case, Yeltsin's economic adviser, Aleksandr Livshits, announced on 8 April that the government would make the payments over a long time period, a policy that would prevent another burst of inflation.[61] An early post-election analysis confirmed that government efforts to reduce wage arrears had accomplished little.[62]

In another typical example, on 28 March, Yeltsin tried to appease the technical intelligentsia and the professorate. *Rossiiskie vesti* reported the creation of 100 "presidential grants" worth a total of 6 billion rubles ($1.2 million) to be awarded annually to young scientists. He pledged to provide higher retirement pensions for professors and researchers. Yeltsin also ordered the transfer to higher educational establishments of state-owned buildings they have leased for over 10 years.[63] Without question, the people directly concerned were pleased, but, again, this measure brought little tangible, immediate relief.

Looming over the whole campaign was the bleeding wound of Chechnya, an autonomous republic within the Russian Federation which Yeltsin invaded in December 1994 to stifle an independence drive started in 1991. By the eve of the first presidential vote, the death toll from this war to subdue an area the size of New Jersey reached at least 30,000, more than half the number of Americans who perished in Vietnam. Many Russians believed that the actual number was closer to 50,000.[64] Five hundred and fifty soldiers were listed as missing or hostages of the Chechens. Most of the dead were civilians. Reports of Russian soldiers "fragging," or shooting, their own officers rose, with many of the former spending most of their time in a drug- or alcohol-induced haze. Young civilian men turned to drinking brake fluid to develop stomach ulcers

that would free them from conscription.[65] All candidates denounced the war but the former general and political newcomer, Aleksandr Lebed, had the clearest and most specific plan: he bluntly said the war was unwinnable and a negotiated peace was the only solution.[66] Equally important, Lebed was untarnished by long association with the corruption of Russia's political establislunent.

The war was especially tragic because the Chechens have very good reasons to be angry and vengeful toward the *Soviet* government. Under Stalin, they were deported from their native land into Asia and not allowed to return until Gorbachev's era.[67] But, as former U.S. Ambassador to Moscow, Jack Matlock, Jr., has pointed out, *everyone* except the Communists suffered under the Soviet regime.[68] So it perhaps made little sense for the Chechens to take out their vengeance on the post-Soviet leaders.

It is more important, however, that by the beginning of 1996, everyone blamed Yeltsin for this fiasco; in March, even his own Presidential Council publicly denounced his Chechen policy. This criticism was well-deserved: Many ofYeltsin's own defense and security specialists warned him against an invasion. Still, few seemed to remember that in December 1994 Russians were strongly united in the feeling that something had to be done about the regime of Dzokhar Dudayev. This Chechen "government," which seized power in a 1991 coup that lacked any significant popular support, had openly provided safe haven for people committing crimes, usually violent and drug-related, in Russia.[69] Many Russians rejected the use of force to deal with the problem, but even among them there was a strong feeling that the army would effortlessly crush the Chechens, showing the world that Ru sia could take care of itself. Especially forceful for this point of view was Defense Minister Pavel Grachev.[70] But even a thoroughly west rnized and humane university professor agreed with Grachev, saying just before the war began, "A few battalions and a few weeks and it will all be over." Instead, Russians saw their military humiliated, their citizens ubjected to all but invincible terrorists and their image further tarnished in the eyes of the world.

The crisis deepened dramatically in mid-March as approximately 1,000 Chechen rebels slipped into the already devastated capital, Grozny, and made it a liVing hell for about a week. Within a few days, the Russians and their dwindling Chechen supporters held only a small fortified area in the center, while only yards away rebels strolled openly with their automatic weapons. During this same month, a tragicomic, paralytic confusion reigned in Moscow as Grachev announced that, breaking with past policy, he was willing to meet face to face with Dudayev.[71] The very next day, he retracted his statement, saying it is "time to forget about Dudayev," whom he described as a "murderer."n Nevertheless, Yeltsin himself believed that only by ending this fiasco, did he have any hope for re-election.[73]

On 31 March, Yeltsin unveiled a new policy to end the war. Hope soared. All Russian troops were to withdraw from areas where peace prevailed, but they would continue to fight "terrorists." In a dramatic move Yeltsin sent a telegram to Dudayev, promising he was sincere in his desire for peace and proposing negotiations. But Yeltsin refused to meet directly with the fonner Soviet Air Force general; instead, he appointed Kazakhstan's respected leader, Nursultan Nazerbayev, to that task.[74]

A pro-reform presidential candidate, Grigory Yavlinsky, who favored direct negotiations with the Chechen separatists, dismissed Ye1tsin's plan, saying the fighting would continue. As it turned out Yavlinsky was right: in the following weeks, combat raged as before. In mid-April, Chechens ambushed a poorly-protected Russian convoy, killing 93, according to the independent television network, NTV. In exasperation, Grachev offered to resign; Yeltsin ordered a halt to further troop withdrawals. So the war dragged on and the bitterness in Moscow was palpable. But in late April, the Russians finally killed Dudayev, the victim of a rocket attack in the Chechen countryside. Yeltsin's camp acknowledged that Dudayev's killing was done to win votes.[75] It was also widely known that Yeltsin detested Dudayev and therefore his removal was a significant step toward ending the war.[76]

Yet perhaps the war in Chechnya was not as important as some polls or individual Russians indicated. As the fighting dragged on, Yeltsin's popularity continued its slow climb. VTsIOM announced that over the course of March the president's popularity rate grew by 13 percent.[77] By mid-April only one percentage point separated Yeltsin and Zyuganov in one opinion poll.78 And Yeltsin's negative rating declined (from 43 to 39 percent) while Zyuganov's almost doubled to 26 per cent.[79] Zyuganov simply failed to cash in on Yeltsin's liability in Chechnya and present a clear alternative to the president's policy. Throughout the campaign, Zyuganov clearly stated that Chechnya was within Russia's "vital interests," as was all of the former USSR. He had no intention of letting the Chechens establish independence. Indeed, speaking before the Duma, Zyuganov declared it was time to get "tougher" with the "gangsters" in Chechnya who refused to lay down their *arms.*[80] His policy, therefore, was virtually indistinguishable from Ye1tsin's. In effect, Zyuganov endorsed the existing policy of war.[81] Meanwhile, Yeltsin presented himself as a man striving to achieve peace. One of the strongest impressions I gained in 1996 was Russians' anger and shame over the Chechen debacle.

Beyond Chechnya, broader foreign policy concerns loomed large on election eve, at least among the intelligentsia. While most Russians remained overwhelmingly preoccupied with just getting by day to day, almost half of Russia's voters hoped the next president would "restore Russia's status as a great power."82 Several times in 1996, I heard Russians express anger and resentment at Americans crowing about the U.s. as the "only" superpower. Many would point out that Russia still had about 20,000 nuclear warheads, more than even America.[83] Zyuganov's supporters warmly applauded his frequent promise to restore the might of the Russian state and its status in the world.[84] In January, Yeltsin responded to this frustration when he replaced his pro-western foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, with the Soviet veteran, Evgenii Primakov. The latter immediately asserted that Russia had become "excessively pro-western" after the demise of the USSR and that he intended to restore Russia's "great power" status. To underscore Primakov's point, the Minister for Atomic Energy, Viktor Mikhailov, announced in early March that Russia would continue developing new nuclear weapons whose ultimate purpose is to overcome any anti-nuclear defense system.[85] A few weeks later, *The New York Times* reported Mikhailov's announcement that Russia intended to construct and

deploy new nuclear weapons in violation of the 1987 INF agreement.

Moscow justified this forward policy in part as a reaction to the United States' insistence upon forging ahead with the expansion of NATO into the states of the former Warsaw Pact. Secretary of State Warren Christopher publicly called expansion "non-negotiable," enraging Yeltsin and Primakov. When former vice president, Dan Quayle, spoke in April before the Russian Academy of Sciences, the academicians made abundantly clear their anger with NATO expansion although the topic was not on the meeting's agenda. No U.S. policy could have been better calculated to further damage Yeltsin in the eyes of Russians and reinforce the perception of a need for a "strong man" to deal with the Americans. The pro-reform newspaper, *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, wondered if Clinton "understands how much [NATO] expansion helps the Conununists." Similarly, George Kennan, the dean of America's Russian specialists, publicly deplored Clinton's forward policy on NATO as ill-conceived and dangerous.[86] In an effort to lessen the damage, British Prime Minister, John Major, assured the Russians that enlarging NATO would proceed "slowly and cautiously," taking into account Russia's interests.[87]

But this issue simply failed to resonant with large numbers of voters. The Communists' efforts to cash in on NATO expansion did not appreciably broaden their support. Valentin Kuptsov, first deputy chairman of the party, declared in late May: "The choice could not be greater. We will determine whether Russia is turned completely into a western vassal controlled by the U.s. or reacquires its status as an independent, great power."[88] Yet Zyuganov's ratings continued to fall or stagnated. Yeltsin realized there was little to be gained by his denunciations of NATO expansion and quietly dropped the matter in early May.[89]

Domestic affairs remained paramount and in late March, Yeltsin made a dramatic move that significantly helped his campaign and may some day alter Russia beyond recognition. He issued a presidential decree on land ownership that permits people to buy and sell land for the first time since the Conununist revolution. In fact, the only people who have enjoyed the full right to land ownership in all of Russia's history were the pre-revolutionary aristocracy and a minority of the peasantry. Yeltsin's order transformed people who rented land from the state into outright owners of their plot. The millions of people who live on farms that were state-run can henceforth sell their shares at will; no longer must they get the almost unattainable permission of their neighbors and colleagues. The only restrictions are that foreigners cannot buy land and urban land is off limits.[90]

Of course, opposition was immediate and vociferous. Nikolai Kharitonov, a leader of the pro-Communist Agrarian faction in the Duma, said that you "can't just turn the farmlands of Russia into real estate."[91] Zyuganov asserted that he would never permit the buying and selling of farmland and said Yeltsin's approval of such policies was "killing" state and collective farms.[92] So if the Communists had won, this measure would have been revoked or perhaps become another piece of "superfluous paper," that has so richly littered Russia's past. Russia's farmers understood this: After the issuance of this decree, Yeltsin enjoyed a "sharp rise" in popularity in the countryside,[93] calling into question the common assumption that the farmers were atisfied with the kolkhoz system.

But fear remained strong in Yeltsin's camp. It appears that the president considered a preemptive strike by declaring martial law and suspending presidential elections, using Chechen terrorism as justification. In late March, Ye1tsin's top legal advisor, Mikhail Krasnov, formally announced that elections might be suspended if a "crisis emerges in the country." But how this could have been done was unclear because the Duma has never passed a federal law on "emergency situations."[94] When a Yeltsin aide renewed such talk in May, ITAR-TASS commentator, Tamara Zamiatina, blasted the idea and pointed out that "not a single publication," even the most pro-Yeltsin or anti-Zyuganov, supported postponing the election.[95] Such talk continued, but Yeltsin and Zyuganov consistently rejected a postponement.

In early April, Yeltsin presented a more polished and clearer campaign strategy and style. He even plunged into southern rural Russia, impoverished and Communist-inclined. He criticized himself harshly and asked people to forgive the fact that life had become so difficult for all but the 10 percent known as the "new Russians," as the *nouveau riches* are called. In a more positive, if vague, vein, Yeltsin emphasized "broad themes of family, fighting crime, ending the war in Chechnya and strengthening CIS integration."[96] But Yeltsin hammered away most effectively at exposing the Communists. He placed before the people visions not of order and security and superpower status, but of Stalinism and fear and a repressive police-state with long lines for most goods when they were available at all.

This effort began to show results, but people were still nervous. Another April poll indicated that 40 percent of Russians definitely opposed a Communist comeback. Similarly, only 23 percent believed Zyuganov could beat Yeltsin in a runoff election.[97] At the same time, however, wealthy Russians flooded the Foreign Ministry with visa requests to "vacation" in, say, Poland until after the election. And, of course, these "tourists" intended to take their money with them.[98] The State Property Committee reported a dra tic decrease in the privatization rate for the first months of 1996, creating further revenue headaches for the government. The cause for the slowdown was investors' fears of a possible Communist victory with a subsequent renationalization of properties.[99] Even more alarming, rumors flew around Moscow about the organization of Communist para-military units, reminiscent of the revolutionary Red Guards of 1917. One report asserted that the Communist had 2,000 armed volunteers in Moscow alone. The Communi t head of the Duma Committee on Security, Viktor lliukhin, strongly denied this charge, but suspicions lingered.[100]

In the middle of April, Yeltsin received more good news. For the first time the prestigious VTsIOM's poll of 1,600 people over 18 years of age showed only 1 percentage point separating Zyuganov and Yeltsin, with both hovering just under 30 percent. The same organization found, however, that the Russian public remained deeply divided and confused. Asked "If you were proposed a list of candidates to the presidential post, whom would you pick out?" the results gave Zyuganov 26 percent to Yeltsin's 18 percent. However, when you added to Yeltsin's vote, Lebed's and Yavlinsky's 10 percent each and those who favored other marginal but anti-communist candidates, the result was about a 50 percent vote against Zyuganov.[101] Thus if a run-off occurred Yeltsin had a

reasonable chance for victory *if* all the other candidates endorsed him or simply did not adamantly reject him. This poll, combined with the death of Dudayev, sent the Moscow stock market soaring by 13 percent in one week. Under strong pressure from Chubais, a reluctant Gaidar reversed himself and endorsed Yeltsin.[102]

At the same time Yeltsin did well on his China trip and signed a potentially lucrative petroleum deal with Kazakhstan and Oman, which involved several U.S. oil companies. If successful this deal could break a deadlock of the past few years on exploiting central Asian oil.[103] Even more good news arrived from Paris as April turned to May.[104] Eighteen creditor nations granted Russia an extra seven years to repay its $40 billion debt. Specifically, the deal meant that Russia would only have to pay $2 billion in 1996, rather than the cheduled $8 billion. The Russian negotiators then flew to London to talk with other western bankers about the rescheduling of $25.5 billion in other loans. Thus, Yeltsin had more to spend domestically, although still not nearly enough to meet obligations that grew with each presidential campaign speech.

On the other hand, Zyuganov's campaign presented a picture of confusion, almost incoherence. The Communists' basic, and insoluble, problem was to retain their core following of about 30 per cent of the electorate, while somehow appealing to voters who intensely disliked Yeltsin, yet feared even more a return of the old regime.[105] The result often seemed like a deliberate attempt at obfuscation. In a 21 April TV interview, Zyuganov said all forms of property would be respected but refused to give specific guarantees about private property. He added that dome tic industrial production should be revived and the tax collecting system improved, but gave no specifics on how these universally acknowledged needs could be met. He also denied that he felt any pressure from "leftist parties," presumably meaning people like Anpilov.[106]

In a May radio address, Zyuganov again struck a conciliatory tone. He specifically pledged to support a "mixed economy" and rejected a renationalization of privatized enterprises as long as they "pay their taxes honestly and properly." He added that "If you start taking things away tomorrow, then I can assure you the result will be turmoil worse than in Chechnya." There would be no persecution of political opponents under a Communist government. He asserted that "proper democratic development is impossible without political competition and opposition. The [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] rotted and fell apart because it just could not remove from office a general secretary who sold it out and betrayed it."[107]

But in general, his claim that the Communists had "reformed" was unconvincing. His disparaging remark about Gorbachev indicated that Zyuganov wanted the bureaucratic, command form of socialist dictatorship developed under Brezhnev. Moreover, he favored a "voluntary" restoration of the Soviet Union,[108] whereas in reality such a move could only be accomplished by force. Zyuganov even publicly rebuked Yeltsin on election eve for his "loss" of Ukraine. The men around Zyuganov assured their domestic audiences that any talk of "soci31-democracy" was for export only: The party intended to restore the Soviet Union and its centralized state-owned economy *if* elected.[109] Zyuganov flatly added that "western European-style social democracy stands no chance in

Russia."[110] Anatoly Lukhianov, the Communists' top legal expert and the man slated to have become Zyuganov's attorney-general, asserted: "We are the same Marxist-Leninist party." The published party program called for the "end to the blackening... of the teachings of Lenin."[111] For good measure, Lukhianov accused Yeltsin of "genocide" for the violent clashes in September and October 1993 between the president and the Supreme Soviet.[112] As early as March, a high-ranking party member (and conspirator from the failed coup of August 1991), Valentin Varennikov, asserted that the party had a secret "maximum program" which would be unveiled and implemented only after Zyuganov was in the Kremlin.[113] A week before the first vote, in a stunning blunder, Zyuganov spoke admiringly of Stalin, the greatest mass murderer in Russian and western history, asserting that the dictator had died too soon; had Stalin lived "five or six years longer, the Soviet Union would have been undefeatable for ages."[114] Zyuganov also claimed that under Stalin *"fewer"* than a million people were killed, suggesting that such slaughter was acceptable.[115] With a Zhirinovsky-like disregard for the truth and in an awkward attempt to court the Orthodox vote, Zyuganov publicly put forth the bizarre notion that one of Hitler's goals in Russia was to establish Protestantism. Yet Zyuganov's version of Hitler had its good points: he publicly declared that in the 1930s, Jews held a "controlling interest in the entire economic system of western civilization."[116]

But most revealing and troubling of all, Igor Bratishchev, a party economist openly revived one of the Bolsheviks' original goals: The global establishment of socialism in the next century. And his vision of socialism is dreadfully familiar to Russians: The nationalization of "enterprises, shops, companies, subsidiaries of those companies, equipment, buildings, patents, shares, and stocks."[117]

In early April, and after protracted fighting among the party and its allies, the Communists finally published a summary of their economic program.[118] As in 1917, there were promises of guaranteed employment, cheap housing and consumer goods, and elimination of capitalists' "excessive profit "by means of a confiscatory tax on the rich. As in Stalin's time, the chief empahisis was on heavy industry, which the Communists intended to restore to 1990 levels by protective tariffs and higher governent investment. Private land ownership would be strictly limited to small garden plots, with retention of the remarkably inefficient collective farms. Profits of private businesses would be strictly limit d and prices of industrial, agricultural and consumer goods would also be controlled, begging the question "what's left unregulated?" Rent and utilities would also be set by the government and could cost no more than 5 percent of a leaseholders' salary. Families of retired srevicemen would recieve free housing. Jobs would be guaranteed for university graduates in their chosen speciality. Foreign companies would be closely supervised and could not hold controlling interests in "key industries of the basic branches of the economy." A state monopoly would be established for "strategically important export goods," meaning petroleum and gas. Finally the Communists called for the "certification of harmful intellectual output," whatever that means. The funds for this massively expensive program would come not from the IMF but the reestablishment of export tarriffs on oil and gas.[119]

Many Russians told me it was highly unlikely such a policy could *raise* sufficient revenue to meet its goals. Duma member, Irina Khakamada, said that Zyuganov's plans meant "government monopolies on international trade, strict state control of banks, more attempts at renationalization of property."[120] In the 1920s the Communists faced a simliar problem with insuffficiet capital; Stalin "solved" this delemma thourgh forced labor and terror. On the stump, Yeltsin guaranteed that Russians remained acutely aware of this fact.[121]

A serious problem with Zyuganov's economic plan was its general vagueness, especially in the area of privatization. The Communists pledged absolute respect for all privatization accomplished "without Violating the law." But, as *The St. Petersburg Times* asked, what does this mean? "Privatization was largely accomplished not by law but by presidential decreee." Had the Communists won, they might well have ruled that Yeltsin's decrees were null and void because he had carried out a "coup d'etat" in September 1993 and therefore all his subsequent actions were illegal. Or they could have argued that privatization was illegal because it had never been confirmed by the Duma.[122] These were quite serious matters and, judging from conversations with Russians, many people feared a Communist regime might well renationalize most private property. Others were not so sure: A restaurant owner in Tver' told me that such a drastic action was unlikely because private business and apartment ownershop were too well-esatablished. Still the fear on his face was real. It was impossible to say with confidence what the Communists might do and Zyuganov's ambiguity only exacerbated fears of the worst.

Another effort on 27 May to elucidate the Communists' policy positions yielded nothing concrete. Rather the platform simply contained trite promises to do things like "accelerate modernization" and give priority to the interests of "Russia and labor...."[123]

Andrei TIlarionov said that Zyuganov's economic platform constituted a "common set of modern myths" that reveal d either the Communist's ignorance or his effort to position himself for the office of prime minister.[124] More bluntly, Viktor Linnik, the former editor of *Pravda,* pointed out that too much of Zyuganov's campaign was simply negative, "childishly anti-Yeltsin," in his words, and that the Communists "proved weak on the positive signs which finally limited his voter appeal."[125]

Finally it is important to note that the Communists never successfully backed away from this extreme, reactionary program. Indeed, if anything their stance toughened as the first vote neared. And the press pounced: the historian, Yevgenii Anisimov, wrote a devastating critique of the Zyuganov program in mid-May that must have caused a shudder in most readers.[126]

In short, the Communists believed that the rural and senior citizen vote would be sufficient to win the presidency. Thus they failed to reach out to groups that might have been their allies: "skilled workers, youth, the intelligentsia and residents of the largest cities." The Communists *talked* of new people and new methods; at one point, Zyuganov spoke of the serious need to reach "young people and many who are skilled laborers in high-technology" parts of the economy.[127] But in the end they relied on the groups that had voted for them in 1995.[128]

By mid-April, the Communists had clear warning that their fortunes

had plunged considerably from the heady days of December 1995. In regional elections in Sverdlovsk province, the pro-Yeltsin Eduard Rossel's organization triumphed, with the Conununists receiving only 16 percent of the vote. In other recent regional contests, Corrunu-nists had lost ten seats in the Altai territory's legislative assembly. And this despite (or because of), Zyuganov's visit just before the vote. In Omsk the Communist failed to win a single seat in the regional assembly. Most ominous, these areas had traditionally been areas of Conununist support.[129]

Nonetheless and fearing the worst, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and French Premier Jacques Chirac publicly and vigorously endorsed Yeltsin. More important, they quietly poured substantial sums into Yeltsin's election coffers. Michael McFaul, a senior analyst at the Carnegie Endowment's Moscow office supported this largess. Regarding a possible Communist victory he said, "I think the west is right to panic."[130] The Clinton administration's efforts were far milder and largely nullified by its stance on NATO expansion.

As the campaign wore on, Yeltsin moved to counter Communist and nationalist nostalgia for the former USSR. He met with the presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Belarus on 16 May. They signed an integration agreement that dealt mainly with tariff regulation, the unification of foreign currency control, and statistical accounting. The next day, the four presidents gathered with the other CIS leaders to discuss further integration measures. At the end of the meeting, the other presidents indirectly endorsed Yeltsin, declaring their "support of the democratic process in Russia."[131]

At the same time, on 16 May, Yeltsin completely reversed himself on the issue of conscription. In a bid for the youth vote, he decreed the gradual transformation of the Russian military into an all-volunteer force, with an end to conscription by 2000. In a separate decree, Yeltsin also ordered that only volunteers be sent to combat zones, like Chechnya. Boris Gromov, a former deputy defense minister active in Yeltsin's campaign, claimed these moves were unrelated to the impending election, an assertion only the most purblind could have believed.[132] Whatever the motivation, the gesture was probably not necessary. A poll of students at Moscow State University and the city's various institutes of higher education, revealed an overwhelming majority favoring Yeltsin. Only at the Federal Security Service Academy did Zyuganov obtain a plurality of 49 percent; among students at Moscow State's Department of Economics, the Communist leader received not a single vote.[133]

Meanwhile, Yeltsin continued strewing extravagant fiscal promises. He signed a decree authorizing the payment of compensation to depositors over eighty years old who lost their savings to inflation. Compensation is to be on a sliding scale up to 1/000 times their initial deposit, with a maximum payment of one million rubles ($200). While this policy immediately affected only a small number of voters, it was a group strongly in the Communist camp. And it had a ripple effect: In general Yeltsin's ratings among the elderly rose "notably higher."[134] Also, a new Federal Social State Fund for the Defense of Depositors and Shareholders was formed at the beginning of May. The IMF forked over $31 million to be used to compensate investors.[135]

As if to compound the state's monetary problems, Yeltsin issued a decree on 21 May promising to freeze

the number and level of taxes as of January 1997. The president also exempted firms from the 10 trillion rubles ($2 billion) in penalty payments owed as a result of late payment of taxes. Finally, he cut the daily penalty for future tax arrears from 1 percent to 0.3 percent. With a revised Tax Code languishing in the Duma, Yeltsin's decree carried the weight of law and was extraordinarily popular with business. It also showed a fiscal irresponsibility that would embarrass even most western politicians.[136]

Continuing his policy of lavish promises, on a late May trip to the far north, Yeltsin flatly declared, "I've come with full pockets....Today a little money will be coming into Arkhangelsk Oblast'." In Vorkuta, Yeltsin announced 133 billion rubles ($26.6 million) for the Pechora coal basin. More telling, the head of the Independent Miners' Union said that 78 billion rubles in back wages arrived just before Yeltsin. In addition, the president promised other benefits for the miners, including "subsidized summer holidays for thousands of children, grants for the construction of retirement homes in warmer regions, and a 40-60 percent reduction in railroad tariffs on coal from Vorkuta./I[137] Similar promises would continue from a government already deeply in debt.

Yet, few journalists asked Yeltsin the tough and obvious question: Where will the money come from?[138] The reason for this attitude was that the media, especially television, unabashedly favored Yeltsin. Daily he received only positive coverage from most reporters. Without a doubt, Yeltsin's camp used its full powers of incumbency to win over the media. On 6-7 May, the government's regional press agency opened an all-expenses paid "seminar" for 80 television and 60 radio journalists. Meetings with top government officials highlighted the event. Yeltsin pointedly asserted that "I am not calling on you to campaign on [my behalf], but I expect from you a responsible attitude toward what is happening in Russia./I Procurator-General Yuri Skuratov promised he would devote "special attention to protecting journalists' rights in cases when the victim of a crime, or the accused, is a journalist." On 7 May, State Press Committee Chairman, Ivan Laptev, advised the journalists on obtaining legal tax and customs privileges under the law on state support for the mass meclia.[139]

The media's *bias* was sufficiently blatant that in the Moscow apartment building where I stayed in June, a resident Zyuganov supporter became so furious that he climbed to the roof and destroyed the television antenna for the building. Yasen Zasursky, dean of Moscow University's journalism school remarked that "the old heritage of partisanship is still there./I[140] Mikhail Gorbachev told an audience in Kazan that "You are under a complete information blockade."[141] In a similar vein, Yavlinsky said that the whole campaign had revolved around "to what extent Zyuganov [is] worse than Yeltsin."[142] Simply because the press was no longer under government control did not mean it was impartial.

Of particular interest was the slick and free "newspaper," *Ne dai bog* (God forbid), which was almost entirely devoted to bashing Zyuganov. It first appeared in Zyuganov's home region, Orel province, left free of charge in the mailboxes of practically all newspaper subscribers. It had a daily run of 10 million and usually featured a doctored, full page color photograph of a hideous Zyuganov, making him appear insane or devilish or both. Anti-Communists loved it and delighted in

showing it to foreigners. The government issued instructions that no one was to interfere with the distribution of *Ne dai bog.*[143] On election eve, the state owned television network, aRT, broadcast a four-part serial on the writer Maxim Gorky, that stressed the brutal excesses of the Stalinist regime. The film ended with a solemn voiceover: "Now, at the end of the century, Russia is once again in danger of losing its way, and turning toward this evil system."[144]

On the other hand, Zyuganov received favorable press only from *Pravda* and *Sovetskaia Rossiia.* It is, however, important to note that these newspapers were readily available throughout Russia. And OSCE observers *said* that legal provisions about free TV and radio time for candidates were followed with "scrupulous fairness."[145]

On all other fronts, Zyuganov constantly faced questions about the horrors of Soviet communism, especially the purges, the anti-church campaigns, and the crushing of dissent. An exasperated Zyuganov accused the national media, particularly television, of conducting an "information blockade" of his campaign. Political commentator, Andrei Cherkizov, shot back that "there is a Communist press to build up Zyuganov's image."[146] Cherikizov had a point. In late March, Moscow-based sociologist Boris Grushin analyzed almost a month of campaign coverage and found not one of *Pravda's* 56 stories about Yeltsin was favorable.[147]

The reason for this bias was obvious: To a great extent, the media owed its freedom to Yeltsin. Journalists felt that to have been impartial to Zyuganov, who clearly intended to reintroduce censorship, would have been foolish and suicidal.[148] As Nikolai Svanidze, a Russian television director, said on 1 May 1996: "I am not sure that people in the West understand that a political fight is going on here that has no rules. And if the Communists win, then the media will lose their independence. There is no choice."[149]

Similarly, Igor Golembevsky, editor of the pro-reform *Izvestiia,* remarked that "Naturally the people who work here are democrats and that influences their stories. There is a political struggle going on here that peaks on 16 June, and it is not like the West, where there is no danger of democracy being destroyed."[150]

However, one should be careful in assessing the media's role in the election. For obvious reasons, the former citizens of the Soviet Union are quite cynical about veracity in the press. In most of the twentieth century, it has been the tool of the ruling clique and is still viewed with great skepticism. Moreover, its power is cleady limited: Professor Zasursky pointed out that during the 1995 parliamentary elections, two of the main television channels, aRT and RTR, clearly favored Prime Minister Viktor Chemomyrdin's Our Home is Russia. That failed to prevent the Communists from outpolling that party by more than two to one.[151]

Then in early May, the prestigous Institute of the Sociology of Parliamentarianism dropped a genuine bombshell: it announced that a poll of 6,000 people across Russia showed Zyuganov's support at between 38 and 47 percent. If accurate it appeared possible that the Communists could win outright in the first ballot. What made the news especially Significant is that this institute was virtually alone in predicting a strong showing by Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party in both the 1993 and 1995 elections.[152] In the 26 May *New York Times Magazine,* Alessandra Stanley wrote from Moscow: "IjYeltsin makes it into

the second round," he still might fail to pick up enough support to beat Zyuganov." (Italics added).

But almost simultaneously, C and *The Moscow News* released a poll indicating that Yeltsin was pulling ahead in the presidential race, having opened a significant lead over Zyuganov. The poll gave Yeltsin an advantage over his opponent with 27.7 percent of respondents favoring the president, contrasted with Zyuganov's 19.3 percent. Twenty percent were undecided. A VTsIOM poll gave Ye1tsin a more modest 28 to 27 percent advantage.[153] The deputy director of The Institute for Comparative Social Research, Anna Andreyenkova, predicted that the president would continue his rise in popularity. "We have been monitoring Yeltsin's progress constantly," she said. "Since mid-April he has been gaining in popularity at a rate of 1 to 3 percent per week. Zyuganov's support is absolutely stable, he is standing in place." Andreyenkova added that "Ye1tsin is waging a very effective campaign, if not completely openly. He is constantly on television, constantly traveling, creating the impression of the balanced, moderate master of the country, something we haven't seen much of for the past two years. Yeltsin's most effechve tactic has been to say 'I may not be great, but I'm the best of a bad lot'. That is what he is doing now."[154]

Yeltsin continued his ascent from the depths and some believed a victory in the first round was possible, Yeltsin included. The economy did its bit to help the incumbent: inflation remained very low.[155] Optimism gripped the business community. On 29 May, Moscow stock markets reached record-setting highs, with *The Moscow Times* index soaring 18.96 points, continuing a rally that raised stock prices 74 percent in dollar terms in just two months. *The Moscow Times* ruble-adjusted index leaped to an all-time high of 233.50. One exhausted trader exclaimed "We hit the record number of deals we've done. All our clients are calling in at the same time. The dealers are on the phone constantly."[156]

In early June, Russian eyes temporarily focused on St. Petersburg's mayoral run-off between incumbent Anatoly Sobchak and his breakaway First Deputy Mayor, Vladimir Yakovlev. The final Gallup poll gave Sobchak a solid ten point lead and a poll by the Academy of Sciences gave Sobchak an eleven point lead.[157] But in a major upset, Yakovlev won 47.9 percent to Sobchak's 45.8 percent, with 6.3 percent voting against both candidates.[158] Moscow was abuzz with speculation about the implications for the presidential race (and the reliability of Russian polls) because Sobchak had tried to link his quest to remain in power to Yeltsin's struggle with the Communists. Aleksandr Yerofiyev, a researcher for Gallup in Russia, said the ultimate national effect depended on who would be able to put his spin on events. "The Communists will probably try to create the myth that the defeat of Sobchak signals a defeat for Yeltsin. If they can perpetuate this myth then the results will hurt Yeltsin."[159]

As it turned out, the Communists never got a chance to try to exploit Yakovlev's upset. The day of his election the new mayor said "There are today no alternatives to Boris Yeltsin, and people that I respect, like Yavlinsky, should understand this and confirm it."[160]

Meanwhile, Yeltsin continued his hectic pace. In Perm, on 31 May, he strolled around the city talking with pensioners and teenagers alike, reinforcing his vigorous, yet smooth,

image. Even when an elderly woman berated him on her wholly inadequate pension, Yeltsin remained cool and promised that minimum pensions would eventually equal the minimum standard ofliving.[161] But the crowds were mostly sympathetic. In his afternoon speech, he promised a landslide victory in the first vote and an end to "civil and ethnic unrest in Russia," a reference to Chechnya.[162]

In the week before the first vote, Yeltsin put in a murderous schedule, accented by his continuing largess, that soon led to an undisclosed heart attack. He spent Monday, the 10th, criss-crossing Russia from Siberia to the Black Earth region. Wednesday saw a whirlwind tour of St. Petersburg, where he promised 350 billion rubles ($70 million) to the Baltic Shipbuilding Factory for the completion of an icebreaker. He also issued a series of decrees on 7 and 8 June that included the transfer of 3.8 trillion rubles ($790 million) to pay for teachers' annual leave, instructed Chernomyrdin to submit a bill within twenty days to the Duma that would give civil servant status to health and ducation specialists and raise their salaries. Yeltsin also gave residents of Russia's Far East a 50 percent di count on rail or air fares to central regions once every two years. Finally, he proposed a bill that would raise child allowances for single mothers and reduce taxes on families with several children. On Friday he returned to his hometown, Ekaterinburg.[163] There the vodka began to flow unabated once again.

However, before the party began Yeltsin had a final problem to tackle. Aware of an opinion poll which claimed that almost 60 percent of Russians felt ending, not winning, the war in Chechnya was of paramount importance, he worked hard at just that.[1M] In late May, he signed an agreement with the rebels that called for a complete cease-fire and cessation of hostilities as of midnight 31 May. On the 29th, Yeltsin made a well-televised visit to the troops near Grozny creating a mostly favorably impact.[165] Even a few Communists admitted that the president's trip was a brilliant political stroke. Reactions varied and many people were Simply bewildered, but mo t seemed favorably impressed. Even the strongly anti-war *Izvestiia*, found praise for Yeltsin, but lamented that he had should have taken similar steps earlier.[166] On 10 June, Yeltsin obtained an agreement to end the 18-month war. The deal provided for a Russian troop withdrawal by the end of August and for the Chechens fighters to disarm. Once Russia's troops had left, local elections were to be held, seemingly removing an obstacle that had been blocking agreement. The arrangement, however, failed to deal with the future status of Chechnya, an issue that had wrecked previous agreements.[167] Non theless, the military approved Yeltsin's peace initiative: A poll in January gave him only 4 percent support among Russia's soldiers; in the June election a majority of the military supported him and a whopping 82 per cent of those fighting in Chechnya voted for Yeltsin.[168]

As it turned out, this agreement had little affect on events in Chechnya. The press continued to report violations of the ceasefire. Still, despite the opinion polls, there is no evidence that the fighting hurt Yeltsin significantly or that the Communists were able to benefit from it.

Meanwhile, Zyuganov kept an equally active travel pace, especially since he had completely eschewed any national advertising campaign. Instead, he relied on grassroots activism, something Zyuganov called "man to man, heart to heart" canvassing. But in

the week before the first balloting, Zyuganov speeches remained entirely negative: he spoke of the hungry Russians who, if placed one after another, would stretch from Moscow to the Ural Mountains; the unemployed from Moscow to the Volga River and those swindled in the no-holds-barred investment companies, from Moscow to Lake Baikal, north of the Mongolian border. A western reporter covering the Communists, observed that "Zyuganov said he would change the country, restoring the Russia of old. He did not explain how. He just said he would...." [169]

Even more telling were the remarks of Valentin Romanov, first secretary of the Samara city Communist Party committee. Speaking before a secret party plenum on 18 May, he characterized Zyuganov's campaign statements as "insipid" and described his platform as "nothing but slogans." There was no dissent from Romanov's remarks.[170] Clearly many Communists were already prepared for the coming defeat.

At a final Moscow rally, the atmosphere was positively bizarre. A few hundred young people, brought in especially for the occasion, mixed a bit uneasily with the far more numerous elderly rank and file with their posters of Lenin and Stalin. The speakers gave forth a wholly muddled "message." Zyuganov said, "We will lead the people not to the past but to the future. We will rely not on concentration camps, not on an Iron Curtain, not on prison labor but on modem culture, the best Russian and Soviet traditions." Zyuganov then quoted extensively from the Bible, comparing Yeltsin to a "beast from Hell" and making a strong pitch for the nationalist vote. Viktor Anpilov followed, crying that "We will win because Lenin is with us, Stalin is with us, and Russia is with us." [171] Russians are certainly unsophisticated in western-style political campaigning, but surely they can spot such blatant incoherence.

Just days before the election, a bomb ripped through a metro car killing four and injuring twelve. Yeltsin blamed it on unnamed elements attempting to destabilize the nation at that important time. However, Yeltsin's friend and supporter, Moscow mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, was less political. "The explosion was carried out by those who doubt their success in the elections and want to aggravate the situation in order to cancel voting. The terrorist act is backed by the forces which want to bring the country back to 1917, the 1930s, the postwar year, the years of queues, shortages, limited freedom and limited consciousness." Once again, Zyuganov stumbled badly. His response to this vitriolic attack showed either remarkable restraint or an inability to take off the gloves politically. In neither case, did it net him political points. He told a gathering of students near Moscow University that "This [bombing] is the latest ymptom of several years of free-for-all politics," presumably referring to the often messy nature of emergent democracy. He then offered his standard attack on rampant crime. "We demand that the authorities take effective security measures and fight those who commit such atrocities." [172] Thus, having been charged practically with terrorism, Zyuganov responded with an ordinary campaign speech.

At a final press conference, Zyuganov predicted a Communist victory in the first round. "Mr. Yeltsin claims that his rating has grown from 6 to 50 percent. Only bamboo in the tropics grows at such a rate," Zyuganov quipped in rare effort at humor. "We are confidently going to

the polls, and I can say that we have won because the latest opinion polls say that two-thirds of the country's citizens support the ideals of popular patriotism and social justice," he said.[173]

There were little grounds for Zyuganov's optimism. On the election's eve, a final poll showed that while only 36 percent of the respondents intended to vote for Yeltsin on the 16th, a whopping 57 percent believed Yeltsin would ultimately be re-elected. In January, only 14 percent thought Yeltsin could win a second term. Indeed, of the people who definitely intended to vote in the second round, 53 percent favored Yeltsin with only 36 percent for Zyuganov.[174] This VTsIOM poll shows clearly the deep division and sense of resignation that gripped Russia in the late spring and what a remarkable comeback Yeltsin had managed. While only about a third of the electorate had a reasonably favorable opinion of Yeltsin, a solid majority shrugged and expected his victory. Clearly, the feeling was there was no viable alternative.

In fact, neither candidate called it correctly for the first round. In the June 16th balloting Yeltsin got 35 percent to Zyuganov's 32. In all, democratic-centrist candidates garnered 60 per cent of the vote and most observers correctly believed they would rally around Yeltsin, if only because of their distaste for Zyuganov. While the first round showed clearly that many Russians longed for a return to communism,[175] a solid majority were anti-Communist.[176] onetheless, Yeltsin could not be complacent. A poll of 1,500 people in fifty-six cities and villages conducted by the All-Russian Public Opinion Centre on 18- 19 June revealed that only 47 percent definitely intended to vote for Yeltsin.[177]

Most surprising was Aleksandr Lebed's third place finish with 15 percent.[178] The iormer general, paratrooper and boxer, ran on a no-nonsense anti-crime and corruption platform.[179] Moreover, his intention to end conscription and create a professional army appealed to many young voters. According to one specialist, the Yeltsin camp had been in touch with Lebed since March and in April a deal was struck that included giving Lebed access to Yeltsin's financial backers and promised him a prominent post in Yeltsin's next govenunent.[180] After the June vote, Yeltsin's people presented the general with $20 million to finance a last minute media blitz.[181] As the ballot count was still under way, Yeltsin and Lebed began discussions that quickly led to the latter's appointment as Ru sia's new security minister.[182] Within hours, Grachev was sacked and promptly went into a vodka-soaked depression.[183] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, citing "a well-informed source in the Kremlin," asserted that Yeltsin intended to make Grachev the "main culprit for the failure of the federal forces in Chechnya, the collapse of military reform and the calamitous situation in the army." Yavlinsky had also made it clear that Grachev's head was his price for supporting Yeltsin in the run-off election.[184]

Yet Lebed kept his distance. Speaking of the choice between Zyuganov and Yeltsin, he growled to reporters: "1 faced two ideas, an old one which caused much bloodshed and a new one which is being carried out very poorly. I chose the new idea."[185] An individual clo e to Lebed flatly stated that: "We've got to emphasize that Lebed is joining the administration so as to reform it, get rid of the corrupt element, and keep Yeltsin up to the mark."[186] The emphasis was more

on fear of Communism, than positive support for Yeltsin.

An All-Russian Public Opinion Center on 19 June announced that of Lebed supporters 39 percent favored Yeltsin while only 14 percent would vote for Zyuganov. But 39 percent also had yet to make up their minds.[187] ot surprisingly, Lebed voters felt little zeal come election day. As Yuri Andreyevichy, an engineer, said: "1 voted for Lebed because I believe he would try to do something against crime and corruption. Now he's with Yeltsin, I suppose I'll vote for Yeltsin, but I'm afraid Yeltsin's regime may simply stifle him, or sack him again, and nothing will change."I88

On the evening of the 19th, there occurred a bizarre affair wherein members of the Federal Security Service arrested two Yeltsin campaign aides and interrogated them at gunpoint for eleven hours, before charging them with the attempted robbery of $500,000. Zyuganov painted this as another example of the sleaze around the president, while the press called it an attempt to thwart democracy and prevent the final round of voting.[189] However, Yeltsin and Lebed quickly turned the affair to their political advantage. Aleksandr Korzhakov, presidential security chief, Lev Soskovets, first deputy prime minister and Mikhail Barsukov, head of the FSB, the successor to the KGB, all lost their jobS.[190] Korzhakov had been Yeltsin's most trusted aide and long-time drinking companion. But many Russians and western reporters sawall three as closer to the Communists than reformers: The *Times* asserted that they disliked the press, westerners and intellectuals, had protectionist views on the economy and considered elections as an evil to be avoided if necessary.19l Yeltsin was cleaning house again, but this time the opponents of reform were being shown the door.

With Lebed on board, it looked like things would go smoothly: A poll from CNN/ Moscow News gave Yeltsin 50 percent to Zyuganov's 24.8. Therefore, even if Zyuganov got all of the 13 percent who remained undecided, YeItsin would still win. Then Yeltsin disappeared for the week before the runoff. Officially he had a cold and laryngitis; unofficially, all fears were on his heart and drinking. The concerns were well-founded: the *Times* reported that between the two elections Yeltsin let himself go in a grand manner, guzzling vodka and neglecting his medication. First reports indicated Yeltsin had suffered a mild stroke.[192] (In fact, Yeltsin's condition had been quite serious. His heart was able to pump only one-third of the usual blood flow and doctors stopped his heart attack only by the injection of a clot-dissolving drug.) [193]

YeItsin's camp was in a near frenzy, the main concern being a low turnout that would benefit the Communists, who, with their greater dedication would be at the ballot boxes *en masse*. Even with a good turnout, Yeltsin supporters were nervous. Deputy Chairman of the All-Russian Movement for the Social Support of the President, Vyacheslav Nikonov, said he expected a turnout of 64 percent and that Yeltsin would squeak by with 50.8 percent, while Zyuganov would receive 46.8 percent.[194] Good weather was a major concern: younger, Yeltsin-inclined voters might take the day off and head for their dachas. A turnout under sixty percent was viewed as potentially diastrous.[195]

Some consolation came in the form of Yavlinsky's backhanded endorsement: he urged his supporters not to vote for Zyganov or "again t both." Zhirinovsky's position was equally lukewarm. On the eve of the final vote, Chemomyrdin said "We are

not in the grip of euphoria at all. There is a general feeling of concern."[196]

But the Communists were also scared. On 24 June, Zyuganov proposed a pact between himself and Yeltsin that would guarantee that no matter who won the runoff vote, the Communists would not be shut out. One-third of the new government's members would be Zyuganov supporters, one-third from Yeltsin's people and the final third from other factions represented in the Duma. With Lebed in Yeltsin's camp, the president had little reason to take Zyuganov's offer.[197]

Finally, Yeltsin won 54 percent to Zyuganov's 40 percent, with a 69 percent turnout. In the most general terms, Yeltsin carried most districts in the Far East and Siberia and his native Urals region and secured more than 70 percent of the vote in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Zyuganov carried districts south of Moscow in the Communist "Red Belt" and in Siberian mining districts. Yeltsin's top campaigner Sergei Filatov called it a difficult victory, adding that "We now see that our people are not thoughtless machines but are civilized personalities."[198]

However that may be, a close analysis of Russia's electoral geography in 1996 revealed a highly complex picture. Contrary to expectations, voters did not choose a candidate based on their socioeconomic status: They did not "vote according to their stomachs." One example should suffice: Yeltsin swept Ivanovo province which also had some of Russia's highest unemployment rates.[199] What seems to have been of most importance in 1996 was an urban versus rural political culture; the former identified most with the reformist tendencies of Yeltsin and the latter looked more to the Communists and "traditionalism, especially 'red' traditionalism."[200]

Just after the election, while there were reports of some infringement of electoral laws, there were no "gross violations," according to the *Times*. The elections were conducted in a fair and open fashion. This was largely due to the Communists, who conducted themselves with laudable honesty at the polls. Possessing by far the largest political organization in Russia, they could easily have used intimidation and stuffed or destroyed ballots. There is no indication they did so; by all accounts people were free to vote as they pleased.[201] On the fourth, Zyuganov conceded defeat but the Communists were not about to give up. Zyuganov's top aid, Anatoly Lukianov, remarked ominously that "even God cannot defeat the idea of communism."[202]

Unfortunately, gross violations did indeed occur. Russia's electoral law limited each candidate to a spending limit of approximately $3 million. According to the *Washington Post* and Peter Reddaway of George Washington University and a veteran Russian observer, the Yeltsin team violated this limit by perhaps as much as 17,000 percent. It is easy to imagine how loudly any western politician would have protested such a staggering violation of the rules. Yet, Zyuganov remained largely quiet on this issue probably because he felt unsure of his ability of rule a Russian many believed on the "edge of financial and economic crisis."[203]

Comparing the 1996 election with the previous years' parliamentary elections, a few facts stand out. Electoral turnout was high in both campaigns. About 65 percent of the electorate turned out in December 1995; the number was slightly higher about six months later. Apathy played little role in the contests. In 1995, the Communist faction received 32.2 percent of the

vote and in June 1996, they actually dropped to 32 percent. In a head-to-head fight with Yeltsin, Zyuganov only managed to increase his total by 8.3 percent; meanwhile Yeltsin moved from 35.3 percent in June to 53.8 in July. And this despite the fact in the interval between presidential voting rounds Yeltsin virtually vanished, Chemenko-like, from public view.[204]

But a close look at the political landscape in 1995-96, also revealed the terrible divisions among the "liberal-democratic" groups and factions. One specialist, V. L. Sheinis, put the number of such national groups at seven, and noted that after the elections they had shown no propensity toward cooperation. Indeed, these organizations fought to maintain their independence, which can only weaken Russian democracy. Furthermore, Sheinis believes that the democratic forces must look beyond Russia's new middle class and address the problems faced by Russia's wage earners, who still constitute a majority and are not enthusiastic with simplistic slogans about "Less government!"[205] Nonetheless in 1996 these democrats had "nowhere to turn but Yeltsin."[206]

From discussions with Russians and a reading of the contemporary literature, it is clear that Yeltsin won because of a Widespread fear of communism and a desire to stay the course within a fledgling and imperfect democracy. The Institute of Social and Political Studies of the Academy of Sciences conducted a poll in June 1996 that revealed some basic facts. First the vast majority of Russians believed that their political leaders, at all levels, did not care about the concerns of "ordinary people," but were responsive to the desires of "other interests much more powerful." Yet 80 percent voted because it was the only way for these ordinary people to "convey their attitudes towards the policies of the leadership."[207] The clear lesson here is that if the leadership fails to respond to the voters' needs, they will perhaps abandon the ballot box in favor of more traditional, and violent, means of Russian political action.

But a problem remains: what needs, or simply attitudes, did the voters express in the final round? Both candidates had promised much the same: increased social spending, law and order, some sort of end to the Chechen war. But there were differences: Zyuganov stressed Russia's loss of its "superpower" status and its "humiliation" before the western capitalists. Apparently only a decided, if sizable minority, cared. More important was history. Zyuganov was unable to shake off the heritage of seventy years of communism, not that he tried very hard to do this. Many people voted "purely in order to prevent Communist revenge."[208]

Russians were still not very enthusiastic about the future after the election. A VTsIOM poll asked: "In What Way Will the Political Situation in Russia Change after the Election?" The results was that 30 percent thought the situation would become "more quiet and stable;" 19 percent thought it would "become worse;" 39 percent thought there would be no change and 12 percent were undecided.[209] In other words, a majority believed things would get worse or remain the same. And few Russians were happy with the status quo in 1996. Indeed, one poll found 92 percent believed that "ordinary people do not receive a just share of the national wealth."[210] And in polls from 1994 through 1996, a solid majority of Russians asserted that "the rich will get richer, and the poor, poorer."[211]

Without question, Yeltsin's extravagant financial promises were

important (and utterly reckless) and he used the power of incumbency to the utmost, but, as noted, Yeltsin had failed to deliver much by the final vote and Zyuganov also promised a financial cornucopia. But foremost, it must be kept in mind that the Russians endured over seventy years of Communist rule and the memories simply refused to go away. The majority of Russians with whom I spoke recalled the Soviet era with fear and loathing. Americans usually forget that Stalin had to kill literally millions of Russians to impose his grisly vision of socialism on the country. Russians remember this all too well. And Yeltsin quite sensibly hammered away mercilessly on this point. Zyuganov's ill-advised response that Stalin made the USSR a superpower and maintained "order," Simply failed to appeal beyond his existing core of supporters.[212] On the eve of the first vote, a World War II veteran exclaimed to a group of Communists in Perm, "You want Zyuganov, you want to go back to the time of the Soviet Gestapo? You must all be mad!"[213] The elderly ballerina, Maya Plisetskaia, remarked "I will vote for Boris Yeltsin. We cannot allow a repetition of a Stalinist, Communist, socialist, or whatever name you call it, regime."[214] Natalia Saprykina, a student who voted for Yeltsin said that Zyuganov, "is mostly supported by former Communists. They're used to living under that regime and they're not comfortable now. I don't wish anything bad for them, but it's time for us to live."[215] The issue was Soviet-style communism[216] versus an emerging democracy, whatever its imperfections. Yeltsin and Zyuganov were primarily the symbols of these two alternatives. Their personalities or "charisma" meant little. The Russian election was above all a battle of principles, something uncommon in western elections and therefore often misWlderstood outside Russia.

It is also important that Yeltsin's health and his alcoholism, which fascinated the western media, aroused little interest in Russia.[217] A retired nurse who voted for him remarked that "I or anyone of us could drop dead tomorrow." An advertising executive probably spoke for many Russians when he asserted that flit's the court that makes the king."[218] A Muscovite named Gleb emphasized that: "We are voting today to keep the Communists from coming back to power. We have no choice but to vote for Yeltsin. It is irrelevant if he is healthy or sick, *alive or dead."*[219]

Few people were wildly enthusiastic about either candidate. But as the election neared, and people realized they had to make a final and irrevocable choice with enormous, incalculable consequences for the future, they rejected communism. A Russian physician and professor summed up a feeling I often encountered just before the election: "I hate Yeltsin and I hate Zyuganov. But I'm voting for Yeltsin." When I asked him why, he replied that a return of the Communists was "unthinkable."[220]

Nevertheless, it is an historical fact that the Russians have never experienced democracy, at least for any appreciable length of time. Therefore, it is difficult to argue that most Russians understood fully what they meant when they voted for such a system. An elderly citizen of the Siberian city of Akademgorodok eloquently addressed the burden of Russia's past and the political backwardness of its citizens. Speaking with a western reporter she said: "Its not our fault, you knOw. For 70 years we were slave in a totalitarian regime. It will take a long time for us to be able to think for ourselves. Pray for US."[221] Nonetheless,

in 1996 Russians voted to stay on a course that allowed them to elect their own leaders: to think for themselves.

Also it seems that the Communists' historical penchant for religious persecution hurt them. Zyuganov tried to persuade people that was all in the past, but few uncommitted voters were convinced. Often, over the past several years, Russians of all types (even some Communists) have told me that the root of their country's continuing crises is a loss of spiritual values. Only under Gorbachev, when it was too late, did the Communists cease their systematic harassment and abuse of religious believers. Zyuganov was simply "unable to attract true believers to his bloc."[222] A retired engineer conceivably spoke for many older Russians when he said that the Communists had irreparably damaged what he believed is one of Russia's great historical strengths: its religious piety.[223]

That the election simply took place is of great historical significance. Russia's political culture has always emphasized such notions as "he who is not with us, is against us" and "if the enemy will not submit, he will be annihilated." The Soviet regime fully institutionalized this attitude.[224] But in 1996, rather than annihilation or force, Russians had a choice. And the victors and losers accepted the nation's verdict.

It is important to note that the typical Zyuganov supporter is fifty-five years old and lives in the countryside.[225] Russia is now a mostly urban society and with life expectancy at about 60–65 years and falling, this was probably the Communists' last throe, especially if they fail to remodel themselves along social-democratic lines, as many east European communists have done.[226] But it was almost certainly Yeltsin's last major political fight. Despite his recovery from triple bypass surgery and the new energy he has shown at least on occasions after the election, Yeltsin's remarkable political career is over. It is too early to tell if he will indeed be remembered as he man who brought democracy to Russia.[227]

Finally, not only democracy but the institution of the state itself is again in serious trouble in the spring of 1999. The previous August, the economy took a serious nose dive, the value of the ruble dropping from 6 to the dollar to 24 in early May. The government's hard currency reserves have fallen to about $15 billion. In other words, Bill Gates' personal fortune is about three times that of the Russian state. With the NATO attack on Yugoslavia, nationalists and communists and just about everyone else have indulged in an outburst of anti-western rage that could quite easily turn into anti-democratic and anti-capitalist movements. It seems that only the "do nothing and hope" strategy of Prime Minister Evgenii Primakov is holding the country together. In the summer of 1990 as perestroika entered its death throes, the *dezhurnaia* on my floor of Moscow's University Hotel told me "I don't know what the future holds; I only know we can't go on like this." The same holds true for Russia just a year before the next presidential election in 2000.

Notes

1. Yeltsin's election as president in June 1991 was different, having been conducted within the old Soviet system.

2. Christian Science Monitor, 11 September 1996. An apt comparison is to the "de Gaulle-era French constitution." David Remnick, *Resurrection: The Struggle for a New Russia* (New York: Random House, 1997),94. It must be noted, however, that local authorities often block or delay implementation of presidential decrees.

3. Timothy J. Colton, "Russians Get Real about Politics," *Demokratizatsiya* (Summer 1996): 373.

4. Russia's Election: What Does it Mean? Hearing before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 10 July 1996 (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1996.)

5. Daniel Treisman, "Why Yeltsin Won," *Foreign Affairs,* (September/ October 1996): 67-69.

6. Open Media Research Institute, *Daily Digest,* 19 March 1996. He also denounced the dissolution of the USSR. This now defunct source was an invaluable tool for researchers on the World Wide Web, who lack access to major research libraries. It consisted of information gleaned from a number of Western and Russian sources. Hereafter cited as OMRI. Presently, the online service of Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty fulfills a similar need.

7. The *Times,* 14 June 1996.

8. The Sunday Times, 31 March 1996.

9.0MRI, 2 May 1996. A few days later in Yaroslavl', Yeltsin blamed local authorities and enterprise directors for the failure to pay salaries on time. OMRI, 6 May 1996.

10. OMRI, 3 May 1996.

11. OMRI, 8 May 1996.

12. The *Times,* 28 June 1996.

13. The Sunday Times, 23 June 1996.

14. The Sunday Times, 23 June 1996.

15. The Communists and their allies created quite a stir in March when they formally denounced the Belovezhaskaia agreements of December 1991 that effectively dissolved the USSR.

16. Cited in Alessandra Stanley, "The Hacks are Back," *New York Times Magazine,* 26 May 1996. Historians are still calculating the total "sacrifices" involved in the Soviet experiment; but the numbers of dead are in the tens of millions.

17. Alexander Yanov, "The Puzzles Of Patriotic Communism: Gennadii Zyuganov, The Russian Milosevic?" Boston University, Institute for the Study of Conflict, Ideology and Policy, Publication Series Number 12, 1996, <http://www.bu.edu/iscip/pubseries/GennadiZyuganov.Pub12.htmI>.

18. Richard Pipes, "Russia Finally Buys Freedom," *The Sunday Times,* 30 March 1997.

19. Angela Stent and Lilia Shevtsova, "Russia's Election: No Turning Back,"

Foreign Policy, (Summer, 1996): 92.

20. In fact, "Communists were rare birds in the countryside of the 1920s." Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants,* (New York, 1994), 26.

21. Of the 450 seats in the Duma, the Communists won 157, Our Home is Russia 54, the Liberal Democrats 51, Yabloko 45 and the Congress of Russian Communities, 5. Minton F. Goldman, *Russia, the Eurasian Republics and CentrallEastern Europe,* 6th ed. (Guilford, Connecticut, 1996),72.

22. OMRI, 18 March 1996.

23. OMRI, 4 April 1996.

24. On 5 ovember 1996, *The New York Times* reported that the Moscow daily murder rate was almost twice that of New York. The occasion was the murder of an American businessman, who took 12 machine gun slugs in the back outside the Radisson-Slavianskaia.

25. Stephen White, *Current History,* October, 1993. Probably Zhirinovsky's anti-Semitism hurt him in the summer elections: an April poll by the American Jewish Committee found that only about 16 per cent of Russians harbor anti-Semitic feelings. Morning Edition, National Public Radio, 16 April 1996.

26. St. Petersburg Press, 5-11 March 1996. In the middle of the campaign this newspaper changed its title to the *St. Petersburg Times.* Available online, it is a great source for current events.

27. OMRI, 29 April 1996.

28. Segodnia, 18 April 1996. Source was a VTsIOM poll conducted from 4-10 April.

29. The Sunday Times, 18 February 1996.

30. The Christian Science Monitor, 1 December 1995.

31. St. Petersburg Press, 1 January-5 February 1996.

32. Interview with Vasilii Aksyonov, NPR, "All Things Considered," 19 September 1996.

33. Segodnia, 16 February 1996.

34. Segodnia, 28 February 1996.

35. OMRI, 22 March 1996.

36. A VTsIOM poll in May found that only about 5 percent of Russians were concerned about a "lack of foodstuffs and basic commodities." *Segodnia,* 15 May 1996.

37. Pravda, 9 July 1996.

38. OMRI, 10 April 1996.

39. Nezavisimaia gazeta, 17 February 1996. Moscow Metro cars, for example, were liberally plastered with advertisement for these "investment" companies. Zyuganov tirelessly attacked such fraudulent operations but to no apparent avail. See for example, *Pravda Rossii,* 12 January 1996. This was the weekly supplement to *Pravda.*

40. OMRI, 23 April1996.

41. *Segodnia,* 20 April 1996.

42. The Sunday Times, 3 March 1996.

43. St. Petersburg Press, 30 January- 2 February 1996.

44. Kommersant-Daily, 6 February 1996.

45.0MRI, 12 February 1996. Despite Yeltsin's promises, Russia's General Confederation of Trade Unions reported in late September that wage arrears had actually increased to $9 billion for the first eight month of 1996. Moreover, unemployment totaled 8 million, or six percent of the employment-age population. Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 30 September 1996.

46. The Sunday Times, 9 June 1996.

47. Segodnia, 23 February 1996.

48. OMRI, 20 April 1996.

49. Avraham Shama, "Inside Russia's True Economy," *Foreign Policy,* (Summer 1996): 111-127.

50. Nezavisimaia gazeta, 6 June 1996.

51. Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 30 September 1996.

52. Izvestiia, 24 January 1996.

53. Nezavisimaia gazeta, 24 January 1996.

54. New York Times, 13 February 1996.

55. Goldman, *Russia,* p. 75.

56. New York Times, 11 September 1996. Russia now has a smaller state sector than (EU and OECD member) Italy. *St. Petersburg Press,* 23-29 January 1996.

57. St Petersburg Press, 16- 22 April 1996.

58. Kommersant-Daily, 9 April 1996.

59. Rossiskaia gazeta, 24 February 1996.

60. OMRI, 14 February 1996.

61. OMR1, 9 April 1996; Ibid., 8 July 1996.

62. Treisman, "How Yeltsin Won," p.69.

63. Rossiiskie vesti, 29 March 1996.

64. Jeremy Bransten estimated that 30,000 died in the Chechen war. May 28, RFE/ RL Online Report. On 3 September, Russia's Security Minister, Aleksandr Lebed, reported that 80,000 had perished in Chechnya. OMRI, 4 September 1996.

65. The Sunday Times, 14 April 1996.

66. For an excellent, concise portrait of Lebed see S. Frederick Starr "A Russian Politician to Reckon With" in *The Christian Science Monitor,* 15 December 1995.

67. John M. Thompson, *A Vision Unfulfilled: Russia and the Soviet Union in the Twentieth Century* (Lexington, Massachusetts, 1996), 337.

68. Jack F. Matlock, Jr., *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York, 1995), 23.

69. Bill Keller, who covered Russia from 1986 to 1991 observed that "the Chechens exploited their position within Russia to raise the money for their war of independence. This included siphoning off oil, swindling the Russian state in a series of bank frauds, transforming Grozny into a great black-market emporium and serving as home base for Moscow's toughest network of gangsters." *The New York Times* book review of *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus,* by Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal.

70. Goldman, *Russia, the Eurasian Republics, and Central/Eastern Europe,* 6th ed., p. 70; 84-85.

71. OMRI, 4 March 1996.

72. OMRI, 5 March 1996.

73. Segodnia, 9 April 1996. Sound reasons existed for Yeltsin's attitude about the necessity of ending the war if he was to win an extremely close race. In late 1995, when Ye1tsin's poll numbers were in the cellar, the All-Russia Center for Public Opinion Research found that fifteen percent of Russians said they "could support" Yeltsin if he "stopped the fighting in Chechnya." Yuri Levada, "Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears the Crown," *New Times,* March 1996: 4-5. In mid-April, Natalia Zorkaia of VTsIOM attributed much of Yeltsin's problems to his failure to find a peace settlement. *Moscow Tribune,* 17 April 1996. In May, voters in one poll placed "ending the Chechen war" as the top national priority. *Segodnia,* 15 May 1996. The paper's source was a VTsIOM poll.

74. The *Times,* 1-2 April 1996.

75. Michael Kramer, "The People Choose," *Time,* 27 May 1996.

76. Segodnia, 24 April 1996.

77. Komsomolskaia pravda, 10 April 1996.

78. ational News Service, Moscow, d. Web site: < nns.ru/e-elects/e-president/e-oprosI4.html>.

79. OMRI, 27 March 1996.

80. Segodnia, 8 February 1996.

81. Christian Science Monitor, 30 May 1996.

82. Segodnia, 18 April 1996. The newspaper's source was a VTsIOM poll.

83. New York Times, 20 September 1996.

4. Izvestiia, 3 February 1996.

85. OMRI, 6 March 1996.

86. PBS News Hour, 19 April 1996.

87. The *Times,* 20 April 1996. Clinton's NATO policy greatly accelerated an improved Sino-Russian relationship as seen in Yeltsin's visit to China in late April wherein he and Chinese leaders implicitly complained of America's "attempt to monopolize international affairs" and China denounced the eastward expansion of NATO. The two countries also signed substantive economic and military agreements. OMRI, 25 April 1996.

88. Michael Kramer, "The People Choose," *Time,* 27 May 1996.

89. Speaking before the Council of Europe, Primakov soothingly said that Moscow would like to see the council as the "cornerstone" of a new all-European security system "without dividing lines or blocs." OMRI, 5 May 1996.

90. New York Times, 7 April 1996. As of April 1999, this measure existed, for the most part, only on paper.

91. New York Times, 7 April 1996.

92. OMRI, 28 March 1996.

93. Treisman, "Why Yeltsin Won," p.66.

94. OMRI, 22 March 1996.

95. Nezavisimaia gazeta, 17 May 1996; OMRI, 29 May 1996.

96. Segodnia, 9 April 1996.

97. Chicago Tribune, 18 April 1996.

98. The Sunday Times, 31 March 1996.

99. OMRI, 22 April 1996.

100. Moskovskii komsomolets, 12 April 1996.

101. National News Service, Moscow, Internet Service, "Campaign '96," Nd. This invaluable source can be accessed on the web at: <http://www.nns.ru/engind.html>.

102. Moskovskie novosti, 28 April-5 May.

103. Rossiiskie vesti, 26 April 1996.

104. OMRI, 29 April 1996.

105. Nezavisimaia gazeta, 26 April 1996.

106. OMRI, 23 April 1996.

107. OMRI, 15 May 1996.

108. OMRI, 18 March 1996.

109. Christian Science Monitor, 23 April 1996.

110. Chicago Tribune, 18 April 1996. For more details on Zyuganov's anti-western attitudes, see his book, *I Believe In Russia*.

111. The Moscow Times, 25 May 1996.

112. The Sunday Times, 31 March 1996.

113. OMRI, 17 May 1996.

114. OMRI, 11 June 1996.

115. The Moscow News, 25 May 1996. Italics added. In his recent biography of Stalin, the late Dmitrii Volkogonov asserts that 1.75 million were officially executed in 1937-38 alone.

116. From Zyuganov's, *Beyond the Horizon,* cited by Stanley, "The Hacks are Back," p. 45.

117. Stanley, "The Hacks are Back," p. 46.

118. Izvestiia, 13 April 1996.

119. *The New York Times,* 5 April 1996; *Izvestiia,* 13 April 1996; *Zavtra,* 1996, 1:1-3. *Zavtra* is a sharply anti-Yeltsin weekly.

120. *The New York Times,* 5 April 1996.

121. In late May, Zyuganov elaborated more bluntly on his economic plans. He stated that the "state must take care of all forms of ownership useful to Russia." *The Times,* 15 June 1996.

122. *St. Petersburg Times,* 26 May-1 June. This information came from a commentary by Sergei Markov, a senior associate at the Moscow Carnegie Center. *Nezavisimaia gazeta* ran a similar article on 12 May.

123. *Sovetskaia Rossiia,* 28 May 1996.

124. *Nezavisimaia gazeta,* 31 May 1996.

125. The *Times,* 14 June 1996. Minton Goldman agrees that Zyuganov's vague and negative campaign limited his voter appeal. Goldman, *Russia,* p. 74.

126. *Komsomolskaia pravda,* 16 May 1996.

127. *Pravda Rossii,* 18 January 1996. This was the weekly supplement to *Pravda*.

128. Boris Kagarlitskii, "O prichinakh porazheniia levykh," *Svobodnaia mysl' 1996,* 9: 3. Kagarlitski is a political scientist with the Russian Academy of Sciences.

129. *Nezavisimaia gazeta,* 17 April 1996.

130. *The Sunday Times,* 31 March 1996.

131. OMRI, 17 May 1996.

132. OMRI, 17 May 1996.

133. *Moskovskii kornsomolets,* 12 May 1996.

134. Treisman, "Why Yeltsin Won," p.67.

135. OMRI, 17 May 1996.

136. OMRl, 22 May 1996.

137. OMRI, 27 May 1996. Well might Yeltsin address the issue of wage arrears: 42 percent of Russians rated it one of their main complaints against the government. *Segodnia,* 15 May 1996. The source was a VTsIOM poll.

138. Regarding Communist promises for a plethora of new spending programs, the majority of journalists were merciless in asking how they would be funded. For example, see the extensive analysis and condemnation of the Communist economic program in *Kommersant-Daily,* 13 April 1996.

139. OMRI, 9 May 1996.

140. *Christian Science Monitor,* 26 April 1996.

141. *The Times,* 6 June 1996.

142. *Nezavisimaia gazeta,* 7 June 1996.

143. *Time,* 27 May 1996.

144. *St. Petersburg Times,* 17 July 1996.

145. Ron Synovitz, 1996 *In Review: Election Roundup II - Russia, Romania, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Moldova,* Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. ND.

146. OMRI, 10 April 1996.

147. Christian Science Monitor, 26 April 1996. *Pravda* has not fared well since the election: In late May, its Greek owners decided to turn the newspaper into a tabloid. They said the paper consistently lost money, its staff were drunks, and it printed nothing of interest. The *Times,* 31 July 1996.

148. Zyuganov's platform specifically called for "public control of state radio and television." *Kommersant Daily,* 16 February 1996.

149. The *Times,* 2 May 1996.

150. Christian Science Monitor, 26 April 1996.

151. Christian Science Monitor, 26 April 1996; *Izvestiia,* 12 April 1996.

152. The *Times,* 1 May 1996.

153. Izvestiia, 14 May 1996.

154. St. Petersburg Times, 26 May- 1 June 1996.

155. Segodnia, 7 May 1996.

156. St. Petersburg Times, 10-16 June 1996.

157. St. Petersburg Times, Ibid.

158. St. Petersburg Times, Ibid.

159. St. Petersburg Times, Ibid.

160. St. Petersburg Times, Ibid.

161. Rossiiskie vesti, 1 June 1996.

162. The *Times,* 1 June 1996.

163. St. Petersburg Times, 16-23 June 1996; OMRI, 10 June 1996.

164. Segodnia, 15 May 1996; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Daily Report, Russia, 28 May 1996.

165. Segodnia, 28-29 May 1996.

166. Izvestiia, 29 May 1996.

167. The *Times,* 11 June 1996.

168.The soldiers voted as they did on orders from their superiors, with Defense Minister Grachev leading the way in bringing the military in line. *The Sunday Times,* 2 June 1996. It would be Grachev's last service to Yeltsin, who fired him after the June 16 vote. Part of the explanation for Yeltsin's success with the soldiers is that in April Grachev denied a request from Communist Party campaign organizer Valentin Kuptsov to allow Zyuganov to meet with servicemen.

169. The Sunday Times, 9 June 1996.

170. *Kommersant-Daily,* 21 May 1996.

171. The *Times,* 10 June 1996.

172.The *Times,* 13 June 1996.

173. Segodnia, 14 June 1996.

174. Segodnia, 13 June 1996.

175. V. O. Rukavishnikov, T. P. Rukavishnikova, A. D. Zolotykh, and Iu. Iu. Shestakov, "V chern edino 'raskolotoe obshchestov'?", *Sotsiologicheskii issledovanii,* 1997,6: 89.

176. Interview with Aleksei Salmin, President of the Russian Social-Political Center. Nd. This interview occurred between the first and second votes. <http://www.nns.ru/res2/salmin.htm1>.

177. <http://www.nns.ru/e-elects/e-president/eopros51.html>.This is from the Russian language web site of the Russian ational News Service. Hereafter cited as NNS after the web site citation.

178. "Results of Presidential Elections-1 Round," National News Service, Moscow, Internet Service, nd.

179. Trud, 4 June 1996.

180. Michael McFaul, *Russia's* 1996 *Presidential Election: The End of Polarized Politics* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1997),50-51. Mcfaul gives no source for this specific information. His prediction that 1996 meant the end of polarized politics has not proven true.

181. *The Sunday Times,* 23 June 1996.

182. e *Times,* 17 June 1996.

183. The Sunday Times, 23 June 1996.

184. St. Petersburg Press. Petersburg Times, 26 May- 1 June 1996.Yavlinsky received 6 percent of the vote.

185. Christian Science Monitor, 19 June 1996.

186. The *Times,* 28 June 1996.

187. <http://www.nns.ru/e-elects/ e-president/ eopros52.html>. NNS.

188. The *Times,* 28 June 1996.

189. The Sunday Times, 23 June 1996.

190. Izvestiia, 21 June 1996.

191. Besides the *Times* account of the events of 19 June, the reader can consult the *Christian Science Monitor,* 24 June 1996.

192. The Sunday Times, 6 July 1996. Subsequently, the Kremlin admitted Yeltsin had suffered a mild heart attack.

193. The New York Times, 13 December 1996.

194. OMRI, 26 June 1996.

195. Christian Science Monitor, 28 June 1996.

196. Christian Science Monitor, 2 July 1996.

197. Christian Science Monitor, 25 June 1996.

198.Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 4 July 1996.

199. Andrei Maximov, ed. *Maximov's Companion to the* 1996 *Russian Presidential Elections* (Moscow: Maximov Publications, 1997), 200; V. A. Kolosov and R. F. Turovskii, "Elektoral'naia karta sovremennoi Rossii: Genizis, struktura i evoliutsiia," *Polis,* (1996) 4: 41.

200. Kolosov and Turovskii, "Elektoral'naia karta sovremennoi Rossii: Genezis, struktura *Polis*, (1996) 4: 42.

201. At a Moscow press conference on 4 July, international election observers from the OSCE, the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament, declared that the 3 July runoff had been "free, unbiased, and *fair,"* Russian and Western agencies reported. "Russian Presidential Elections, *'96,"* OMRI, 4 July.

202. St. Petersburg Press. Petersburg Times, July 8-17, 1996

203. Peter Reddaway's Testimony before the U. S. House Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 10 July 1996. Some of Zyuganov's own supporters doubted that he really wanted to take power because he "would not know what to do with *it." Moskovskii komsomolets,* 25 July 1996.

204. V. L. Sheinis, "Proiden li istoricheskii rubezh?" *Polis,* January 1997: 96. Sheinis is a economist and member of Yabloko's Duma faction.

205. Sheinis, *"Proiden,"* 95.

206. John Lloyd, "Nowhere to Turn but Yeltsin," *Demokratizatsiya,* (1996) 4:325-329.

207. V. O. Rukavishnikov, et al, *"V* chern edino 'raskolotoe obshchestov'?", *Sotsiologicheskii issledovanii,* (1997) 6: 90.

208. Kommersant-Daily, 1 March 1996.

209. Moskovsky Komsomolets, 18 July 1996.

210. V. O. Rukavishnikov, et al, *"V* chern edino 'raskolotoe obshchestov'?", *Sotsiologicheskii issledovanii,* (1997) 6: 91.

211. "Monitoring obshchestvennogo mneniia," *Sotsiologicheskii Issledovanie, (1997)* 1:153.

212. Even *Pravda* conceded this point in its 9 July issue.

213. Ibid., 1 June 1996.

214. The *Times,* 13 June 1996.

215. Christian Science Monitor, 28 June 1996.

216. By this term I mean foremost, a political dictatorship directing a command economy through force and threats. Or even better is Academician Tatiana Zaslavskaia's blunt statement that the "Soviet system was profoundly *criminal." Trud,* 1 March 1996.

217. In 1994, a Russian university professor, when telling me of Yeltsin's inability to sober up sufficiently to meet the Irish prime minister some months earlier, was unable to contain his laughter at what western observers saw as a major blunder.

218. New York Times, 4 July 1996.

219. The *Times,* 4 July 1996. Italics added.

220.Interview with Dr. Anatoly Sokolovsky, Tver, Russia, 15 May 1996.

221. The Sunday Times, 9 June 1996.

222. Pravda, 9 July 1996.

223. Interview with Albert A. Tsvetkov, Moscow, 2 June 1996. Mr. Tsvetkov is a retired military engineer.

224. I. G. Chaikovskaia, "Sovremennye politicheskie protsessy (Aktual'nye problemy I obshchie tendentsii), *Vestnik Nauchnoi Informatsii,* (1997), 6:7-8.

225. Even among Russians over-55 Zyuganov's margin of victory was not huge: 41 percent to 34 percent. *Segodnia,* 26 July 1996.

226. Writing in 6 October 1997 *The Washington Post,* Fred Hiatt noted that Zyuganov's party "hasn't followed its Eastern European cousins into social-democratic respectability...."

227. As of April 1999, Russian democracy was on the ropes. Following the August collapse of the ruble, Yeltsin appointed a government headed by Evgenii Primakov with a large number of Soviet-era bureaucrats. However, Communist calls for a general strike in October 1998 failed and th re is little evidence that Russians desire a return of the Soviet system.