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BORIS YELTSIN AND RUSSIA'S FOUR CRISES

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As it enters the politically pivotal spring of 1993, Russia finds itself facing no fewer than four interlocking and mutually reinforcing crises: economic, constitutional, political, and federal. This combination, while not necessarily deadly for democracy and market-based reform, is making matters far more urgent than they would be were economic restructuring the sole major concern. For one indisputable fact stands at the center of the current Russian predicament: the Russian polity today is so tattered and frayed that it cannot for much longer withstand the mammoth social pressures that economic reform has unleashed. Unless the three noneconomic crises are quickly and decisively addressed, they will not only continue to hobble economic change and render Russia just barely governable, but may also precipitate a general political collapse with horrifying consequences for Russia and the world.

Of the three crises, the most readily apparent is the constitutional one, which came to a head last December at the Seventh Congress of People's Deputies of the Russian Federation. The roots of this crisis may be traced to yet another of Russia's historic misfortunes: a reforming *ancien régime* that lasted for an unprecedentedly long time. In other postcommunist nations, the transition from totalitarianism to quasi-democratic multipartism lasted from a month (in Czechoslovakia) to two years (in Bulgaria). By the time of the postcoup revolution of August 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev's transitional regime had been in power for over six years.

This historic aberration in turn has engendered two further deviations from the pattern of successful postcommunist transitions. First, the

elections that formed the currently functioning political institutions in all postcommunist nations except Romania and Albania were held *after* the communist collapse. In Russia, however, such elections have never been held. As a result, the inherently transitional political institutions that were in place prior to the decisive anticommunist triumph—these strange hybrids of limited liberties and the very much alive but suspended mechanisms of totalitarian control—had time to solidify and even to spawn vested interests. Chief among such institutions are the Congress of People's Deputies and its smaller standing council, the Supreme Soviet.

The second consequence of the overlong transition has been the most damaging to economic reform. In the countries where they were undertaken in earnest, decisive moves toward markets were preceded by the emergence of new political institutions. In Russia, however, Boris Yeltsin and Yegor Gaidar found themselves forced to launch economic reform within the old political context.

At the time of their first gathering in 1990, Russia's Congress of People's Deputies and Supreme Soviet were by far the most progressive legislatures in all of the Soviet Union. It was these bodies, after all, that elected Yeltsin to the chairmanship of the Supreme Soviet despite Gorbachev's personal and desperate eleventh-hour appeal. Yet great revolutions move at a dizzying speed; less than two years later, both legislatures were behaving in a mostly reactionary fashion.

This was hardly unpredictable. From the very beginning the Congress was divided into three nearly equal parts, comprising respectively Yeltsin's supporters, his opponents, and a group in the middle known as "the swamp." Moreover, Yeltsin's 29 May 1990 victory in the contest for chairmanship of the Supreme Soviet rested on a razor-thin four-vote margin.

In the postcoup glow that suffused the early autumn of 1991, when his stratospheric public-support ratings were comparable only to those that then-U.S. President George Bush had enjoyed six months earlier in the wake of the Persian Gulf War, Yeltsin could have easily called for new nationwide congressional elections. Had one been needed, he would have had an impeccable legal argument ready to hand, for in contravention to even the Soviet Constitution, a sizable segment of the Congress had been chosen in 1990 not by "direct" and "equal" election but through an appointment process controlled by the Communist Party and its affiliated "social organizations."

Yeltsin may have refrained from such a move out of apprehension concerning the inevitable—albeit temporary and at the time easily containable—destabilization that it might have caused, yet there could have been another reason at work as well. One of Yeltsin's central character traits is undying loyalty to those who have come to his aid in times of trouble.[1] To dissolve the assembly that had elected him a year

earlier in the teeth of Gorbachev's opposition; that had responded to his summons during the coup; and whose very building (the "White House") had become the symbol of anticommunist resistance—for such a task the Russian president was not ready. A few months later, after the shine had worn off his postcoup halo, he no longer had the option.

Like the much talked about "gridlock" in the United States before the last presidential election, Russia's constitutional crisis manifests a wide ideological split between the executive branch and the parliamentary majority, though it often masquerades as a petty tug-of-war for jurisdiction and prerogatives. In the absence of a restraining democratic tradition, let alone legal precedent, the wrangling quickly escalates into confrontation. At the Seventh Congress last December, for instance, a constitutional amendment that would have stripped the president of the right to appoint his own cabinet failed by a single vote. Another amendment, however, did pass: it declared the Congress of People's Deputies "the supreme organ of the Russian Federation."

Marxist analysis has finally become applicable to Russia: a powerful class of managers of state enterprises is fighting tooth and nail to protect its economic interests. The influence of this class over the Congress accounts for much of that body's increasingly pointed resistance to the implementation of nearly all the key elements of economic reform: bankruptcy legislation, which is absolutely necessary for a structural overhaul of the economy; liberalization of oil prices, which alone can stop the catastrophic waste, theft, and illegal export of petroleum and stimulate investment in the energy sector; privatization of land, which is vital for the future of agriculture; and tighter controls on the growth of the money supply, which has been ballooning since the first quarter of 1992 because of political pressure for huge credits to large state-owned enterprises in the agricultural and industrial sectors.

Moreover, constitutional gridlock is hampering economic revival on a daily basis in myriad ways. In the words of Aleksandr Yakovlev, who was known as the "godfather of *glasnost'*" under Gorbachev and is still among the keenest observers of Russian affairs, the new entrepreneur must "rush about within a vicious circle of contradictory laws . . . For every new enabling decree there are a dozen old ones that forbid everything, but are still on the books. And it is entirely up to bureaucrats to decide whether to let the entrepreneur be or to strangle him with the letter of the old laws."[2]

The Legitimacy Gap

As severe as Russia's constitutional crisis is, it is only one head of a far larger beast: a general crisis of legitimacy, of trust in any and all political arrangements. All the political institutions operating in Russia today were formed under the *ancien régime*, and their mandate has not

been renewed in the postcommunist era. Only three Russian cities—Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Severo-Dvinsk—have elected mayors. Throughout the rest of the country, the heads of local governments are appointed by Moscow. Although the presidency is a year younger than the Congress and its incumbent is more in tune with national aspirations (Yeltsin campaigned on a platform of political pluralism and free-market reform), it too is rooted in a bygone era.

"Unchecked by voters and unattached to parties, the Russian political class incessantly forms and breaks ephemeral alliances, shadowboxing and bluffing its way toward uncertain and ever-changing goals."

In the absence of political parties whose influence is determined by the latest elections, Russian politics is rent daily by shrillness, irresponsibility, and unrestrained self-promotion. Unchecked by voters and unattached to parties, the Russian political class incessantly forms and breaks ephemeral alliances, shadowboxing and bluffing its way toward uncertain and ever-changing goals. Frequent turns of the political kaleidoscope bring to view this or that group or faction, which suddenly looks brighter and larger than the others and is rumored to command an enormous constituency, but is safely forgotten a few days later.

After seven decades of the near-total absorption of civil society by the state, Russia now finds itself pervaded by intense political anomie. Used by sociologists to describe a condition of relative normlessness in a society or group, this term has a psychological derivation that well describes Russian politics today: "a state of mind of one . . . who has no longer any standards but only disconnected urges, who has no longer any sense of continuity, of folk, of obligation . . . [who is] responsive to no one [and who] lives on the thin line of sensation between no future and no past."[3]

Public opinion polls reveal the Russian citizenry's profound alienation from the political process.[4] By last fall the "negatives" of both the Supreme Soviet and President Yeltsin were enormous: 59 percent and 44 percent, respectively. Almost 31 percent thought that Yeltsin should resign and 37 percent that Congress should be dissolved. The legitimacy of the local "organs of power" was just as low: only 11 percent of the population viewed them "positively," while 53 percent were "against."

At the same time, Russians can hardly be called hopeful about the potential claimants to power. The three political forces most visible prior to the failed coup of August 1991—Democratic Russia (DemRossiya), the nationalists, and the neocommunists—can now count, respectively, on the allegiance of about 4 percent, 3 percent, and 5 percent of the

population. Only the "centrist" and amorphous Civic Union seems to have the support of more than one in five potential voters. All in all, 34 percent of Russians polled said that they would not even bother to vote.

The Need for Federalism

As grave as the two crises just outlined are, neither can match the federal crisis for novelty, scope, uncertainty of solution, and sheer relentlessness. This crisis is likely to hold center stage for most of 1993 and produce the most striking alterations in the Russian political landscape. The overhaul of the intra-Russian federal structure—with its 21 republics, 10 autonomous districts, and a lone autonomous province—has emerged as the most urgent task of the day.

Like India, the United States, and China, Russia is too big and too diverse to be both democratic and unitary. The last four centuries have shown most convincingly that a unitary Russian state is possible only under authoritarian rule. Every time the center has collapsed—most spectacularly during the so-called Time of Troubles between Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, and later during the period of war, revolution, and famine between Nicholas II and Lenin—Russia has rapidly disintegrated into a collection of semi-independent regions. Conversely, a democratic Russia can survive only as a truly federal state with a much weakened center and strong localities.

In the past two years, centrifugal movement has assumed the form of a legal "upgrading." First, in December 1990, the Russian Constitution was amended and all former "autonomous republics" became "republics." Six months later, the Supreme Soviet adopted decrees granting republic status to four out of the five "autonomous provinces." At this writing, at least six of Russia's ten "autonomous districts" are lobbying to become "autonomous provinces," while four of the republics have declared various degrees of independence from Russia—Tatarstan, Chechnia, Tuva, and Buriatia.

Yet in the long run, the greatest threat to Russia's current federal arrangement is posed not by the ethnically based, non-Russian "autonomies" (which, after all, account collectively for only a relatively small percentage of Russia's population and territory) but by the regions populated by ethnic Russians. For as regards national character, economic interests, history, tradition, and ways of life, there is as little similarity between Siberia and the South, or between the Far East and the Great Russian heartland, as there is between Russia as a whole and Ukraine.

Ethnically Russian areas have been demanding and receiving the status of "free economic zones," as in the case of Kaliningrad, Kemerovo, Chita, Sakhalin, and Novgorod. "Additional economic rights" have been granted by presidential decree to the Murmansk, Irkutsk, and Tver' regions. Krasnoyarsk province has declared itself a "subject of

federation." In a further demonstration of the Russian provinces' political muscle, the Seventh Congress of People's Deputies last December abolished the jobs of the presidential representatives who for over a year had been, at least nominally, the chief executives of the provinces and Moscow's eyes and ears on the ground.

In addition to these formal steps, Russia's provinces have been moving away from central control in informal but even more significant ways. Many local governments are refusing to hand over tax revenues to Moscow, are ignoring federal laws or subordinating them to local legislation, and are carrying on foreign trade in the manner of quasi-independent countries.

The largest step taken so far toward the institutionalization of political and economic regionalism came at the 5-6 February 1993 meeting in Volgograd of the leaders of the eight geographic "associations" that cover the entire Russian Federation. The leaders agreed to work on "draft laws" that would govern the relations between their respective regional associations and the "federal authorities." They further decided to create an "investment corporation" that would set priorities among "regional tasks." Some Russian observers believe that the Volgograd session could result in "the emergence of new state formations on the territory of Russia."[5]

If Russia is not to become a unitary state reminiscent of the Soviet Union or disintegrate into a congeries of ministates or confederations, there must emerge a truly federated state featuring a clear demarcation of rights and responsibilities between strong localities and the center, and in which regions would be granted autonomy in most economic, political, and social matters. Unlike the extreme alternatives of recentralization or disintegration, this process will not occur quickly but might take several decades to complete. It is likely to proceed in three stages, which have been identified by two Russian scholars as "controlled disintegration," "gathering," and "regeneration."[6]

So far, Yeltsin's federal policy appears to have been guided by the recognition and acceptance of this scenario and by the overall strategy of allowing "disintegration" with at least some elements of "control": a sort of consensus-based, nonviolent codification of the centrifugal process, with minimal resistance from the center. This strategy involves temporizing in hopes that the economic and political situation will stabilize, allowing for the smooth and gradual transfer of political and economic power from the center to the localities.

Yeltsin took the first step on the road to a new Russian federalism a month after he was elected chairman of the Supreme Soviet in May 1990. Traveling in what then was called the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, Yeltsin called upon the non-Russian ethnic regions to "take as much independence as you can digest."[7]

Since November 1991's abortive attempt to bully the small republic

of Chechnia into rescinding its declaration of independence, Yeltsin has consistently pursued a policy of gradually lengthening the leash connecting the provinces to the center in order to keep the link from snapping altogether. In November 1991, as he chaired the Congress's Constitutional Commission, Yeltsin told *Izvestia*:

> I think our project for a new constitution has found a felicitous solution [for a future Russian state]: German-like "lands" (*zemli*). Each "land" would have its own legislative and executive organs. I have visited three German *Länder* and found that the division of functions [between the *Länder* and Bonn] is very strict. And there Chancellor Kohl does not meddle in their lives by telling them what to do. [If he did] he would be told: "Sorry, but this is our business." I think we will come to this too.

Last April, however, the Congress refused to adopt a new constitution that contained provisions for a "lands" system.

The element of "control" in the inexorable process of Russian decentralization appears strengthened in the wake of the 14-15 October 1992 conference that brought Yeltsin together with the leaders of nearly all the constituent republics of the Russian Federation in Cheboksary, the capital of Chuvashia, where it was agreed that a council of heads of republics would be established. The gathering further resulted, at least on the declaratory level, in precisely the sort of compromise that Yeltsin had worked for: he called for an "expansion of the powers of the republics beyond those outlined in the Federal Treaty," while the leaders of the republics "expressed support for the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation." In his speech to the Seventh Congress of People's Deputies on 1 December 1992, the president reaffirmed the Cheboksary accord by supporting the right of the republics to "decide their internal problems themselves" and to "expand their economic independence." He added that "transregional cooperation" was the "best cure for separatism" and "would do more for the unity of Russia than any state power structure."[8]

Compromising with the Congress

From the moment that Yegor Gaidar's free market reform plan went into effect in January 1992, the creation of a protected zone of political space around the reform emerged as Yeltsin's paramount task. Early in the game, faced with the choice of either taking on the increasingly reactionary Congress directly or attempting to reach some compromise with it, Yeltsin chose the latter course. The president's consensus tactics were first unveiled at the Sixth Congress of People's Deputies in April 1992, when he rejected the advice of his most vigorously reform-minded supporters, who were urging him to give economic "shock therapy" a strong political push by confronting Congress with a proposed new

constitution and a choice between approving it or submitting it to a national referendum.

In the months following the Sixth Congress, Yeltsin continued to tread the path of compromise with those opposed to radical reform by bringing into the government three deputy prime ministers from their camp. Soon multibillion-ruble loans began to flow to state enterprises, and a decision was made to continue with ruinous controls on oil prices. By the late fall, however, it had become obvious that political space around the reform was diminishing steadily, and perhaps fatally. The overriding question that the Seventh Congress had to answer was whether a safe political perimeter for the reform program might be reestablished or whether the political muscle of the reform had deteriorated beyond hope of repair.

Yeltsin's 1 December 1992 opening speech at the Seventh Congress trod a fine line between tactical compromise and strategic retreat. He endorsed some of Civic Union's calls for protectionism, increased arms exports, and even "state orders" for some enterprises, but rejected proposals that would have spelled the end of reform: the so-called "dual exchange rate" for foreigners and natives; a wage-price freeze; reinstallation of central controls over the economy; and cheap credits to large state enterprises.

This balancing act, however, was not enough to keep the so-called centrist blocs, Civic Union most prominent among them, from joining forces with the hard-liners to create an antigovernment majority. When the deputies rejected Yeltsin's nomination of Gaidar to the premiership on December 10, the president responded by denouncing Congress and appealing to the people to decide in a January 1993 nationwide referendum whether they would "support the president's line—the course of reform—or the line of the Congress, the Supreme Soviet, and its chairman [Ruslan I. Khasbulatov]—the course directed at curtailing reform." Even though Yeltsin backed speedily away from this appeal for a snap vote and instead announced plans to talk with the Congress about holding a constitutional referendum at some indefinite future date, he had, as they say, "changed the debate" by giving Russian politics a new central question, one that defines its configuration and momentum today.

That Russian political institutions urgently need some sort of renewed popular mandate is beyond doubt. So precarious and worn out are Russia's current political arrangements that the question of who comes to power is becoming less important than the very existence of legitimate power itself.

A properly arranged referendum might not only resolve the constitutional crisis, but could help to give form and structure to the inchoate Russian polity. Issues involving relations between higher and lower institutions (as well as central and local authorities) could be settled. The experience of a referendum campaign, moreover, might help

to forge national parties capable of competing in genuinely multiparty elections.

With his usually unerring instinct for avoiding political quicksand, Yeltsin must know that time is on the side of the Congress, and that a referendum offers him his best chance of retaining political viability. Gorbachev's fate is Yeltsin's nightmare: a political death by a thousand cuts, a tired presidency gradually drained of power and turned into an empty shell to be tossed about or crushed. This is the presidency that the Congress appears to be bent on creating.

The Example of the Fifth Republic

As he strives to arrange a resolution of Russia's political crises through an act of popular will, Yeltsin should be cheered by the example of the last great nation to undergo such a trial. That nation, like Russia today, was ravaged by rampant inflation, torn apart by political infighting, nearly unable to govern itself, and on the verge of civil war. Such indeed was France in the spring of 1958, under the moribund Fourth Republic.

Amidst decidedly inauspicious circumstances, the referendum of 28 September 1958 laid the foundation for the most stable so far of France's five Republics and secured for the nation the longest period of relative political tranquility since before the Revolution of 1789. For Russia in 1993, the lesson of France in 1958 lies in the three key ingredients that made for the referendum's success: speed, simplicity, and the very short run-up to postreferendum parliamentary and presidential elections.

On 1 June 1958, Charles de Gaulle presented the French National Assembly with the key elements of a new constitution, every one of which is likely to find its way into a new Russian constitution: universal suffrage as the source of legislative and executive power; separation of the legislative, executive, and judicial powers, with each fully empowered to discharge its own responsibilities; a government responsible to the parliament. Four months later, the referendum was held; parliamentary and presidential elections followed within another three months.

There were no special arrangements for familiarizing the electorate with the text of the proposed constitution—an issue which today greatly preoccupies Russian politicians. The organizers of the 1958 referendum, correctly, counted on people's ability to discern the general direction of the document without having to memorize all of its 78 articles, which were published in newspapers by mid-August. At the end, voters faced one simple question: "Do you approve the Constitution proposed to you by the government of the Republic?"

Finally, when he finds himself tempted to listen to hotheads in his own camp who call for "direct presidential rule," Yeltsin may find it

useful to consult no less a hater of "party regimes" than General de Gaulle:

> I disapprove of [the exclusive regime of parties]. But . . . a dictatorship by force . . . would certainly end in disaster. . . . First [dictatorship] takes on an appearance of dynamism, contrasting with the anarchy that had preceded it. But the risks, the efforts gradually become excessive. In the end, the spring snaps. The grandiose edifice crumbles in misery and blood. The nation finds itself broken in two, in a worse state than it had been before the adventure began.[9]

Confronted, unlike de Gaulle, with a legislature hostile to the idea of a referendum, President Yeltsin, in effect, withdrew his appeal for a speedy, single-question referendum and chose instead the painstaking search for compromise, punctuating his efforts to get Congress to make a settlement with warnings that he would call a referendum should negotiations fail.

This is a very risky strategy. The invocation of popular sovereignty, while potentially a most potent weapon in a leader's arsenal, is also the most fragile and least suited for repeated brandishing.

The Centrality of Yeltsin

As is always the case in times of political precariousness, the character of a country's leading political figure is key. The strategic decisions of both Yeltsin's supporters and his foes will depend, in great measure, on how they and the public at large perceive the president's strength, his intentions, and his chances of success. Since last December, these have become hard variables to measure, for Yeltsin enters the crucible of this spring following twelve months of the most uneven performance of his political career since he surfaced as Russia's first democratic politician in 1989.

Undoubtedly, the events at the Seventh Congress have exacted a heavy political price. Among the president's losses, the prodemocratic and always perceptive *Nezavisimaya gazeta* counted the fading of his image as a "superauthority, condescendingly observing the battle from a celestial height," and the diminution of his reputation for "imperviousness to outside pressure."[10] Yeltsin made undeniable tactical errors: he gave Congress control over the cabinet portfolios for Security, Defense, and Internal and Foreign Affairs; he sacrificed Gaidar when the latter could have continued as acting premier for another three months; and, most glaringly, his halfhearted appeal for a referendum has damaged its chances.

As Yeltsin's supporters review their 1992 strategy and the less than sterling results that it produced, they can identify several major

miscalculations. Their first mistake was to draft most of the best and the brightest democrats into the all-Russian executive bodies in Moscow, leaving critical grassroots ramparts undermanned.

On a deeper level, Yeltsin's reform-minded supporters committed an error commonly made by parties in power. By blending in with his administration, they largely vacated that portion of the political spectrum from which Yeltsin might have been criticized for not moving fast enough in the direction of free markets and political decentralization (the very space from which Yeltsin had once assailed Gorbachev). Partly as a result of this, Yeltsin's December 10 appeal for a referendum drive entered Russian politics not as a clarion call to well-trained and eager battalions, but rather as a muffled cry heeded by only a few willing but scattered and disoriented scouts.

The president's uncharacteristic hesitancy over the referendum issue might be partly attributed to his critics' incessant harping on his alleged "strong authoritarian tendencies." Very sensitive to the charge, Yeltsin acted with circumspection bordering on fear.

The president is also palpably uncomfortable with the nitty-gritty of democratic politicking. Having used up most of his political resources building a wall around Gaidar's reform effort, he felt little inclination to expend the rest of them on the everyday cultivation of grassroots political support. Brilliant in open battle but occasionally bumbling in the intrigues of the court, Yeltsin may be the type of the heroic but not very flexible political persona described by Isaiah Berlin:

> There are those who, inhibited by the furniture of the ordinary world, come to life only when they feel themselves actors upon a stage, and, thus emancipated, speak out for the first time, and are then found to have much to say. There are those who can function freely only in uniform or armor . . . see only through certain kinds of spectacles, act fearlessly only in situations which in some way are formalized for them, see life as a kind of play in which they and others are assigned certain lines which they must speak.[11]

Ironically, some of the public's disenchantment with Yeltsin is a natural byproduct of his success, for as Russia's civil society continues to come out from under the long shadow of the state—a process that Yeltsin has done much to encourage—politicians are no longer uniformly seen as saviors (or devils). Economic reform means less statism and more individual initiative, self-reliance, even "empowerment," to use the increasingly familiar term. In the process, the state and its leaders will lose some of their prestige and claim to popular attention. It is not that Yeltsin has lost his charisma, argues the popular weekly *Novoye vremia*, but that the people themselves have abandoned their search for a political savior or miracleworker: "During the grim ordeal of 1992, the people have changed—and in that change lies the promise of our recovery."[12]

As de Gaulle noted of a similar post-Liberation normalization of French society: "The current of popular enthusiasm which had been poured so generously on me was now channeled in various directions."[13]

Yet in a broader and ultimately more important political context, the support for Yeltsin's policies remains impressive. The most important evidence of his success is what has *not* happened: many predictions to the contrary notwithstanding, there have been no explosions of mass social unrest. Total estimated losses due to strikes in 1992 were less than 82 percent of the 1991 level, and while state employees in health care and teaching were more willing to strike in 1992 than previously, there was a sixfold diminution of idle time in the most critical sector, industry.[14] Although as 1992 came to an end 37 percent of Russians polled reported that they could "no longer bear" their "disastrous state," fully half stated that "life is difficult but possible to bear."[15] In January 1993, in a country where the standard of living was still declining and the monthly inflation rate was close to 30 percent, almost 4 in 10 Russians still supported the president.[16]

The Year of Decision

It is likely that 1993 will be the decisive year for democracy and market-based reform in Russia. This year, the Russian economy is expected to hit bottom, after which, as in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary after two years of reforms, the first signs of growth are expected to become apparent. Leading Russian economists predict a 30-to-40-percent drop in the GNP (compared to 1989) and a 50-percent shrinking of industrial production (comparable to the drop in the United States during the Great Depression of 1929-33). Unemployment, which remains under 1 percent, is negligible by world standards (and certainly by the standards of even relatively successful postcommunist states like Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic), but is bound to increase dramatically in 1993 if reform continues. In such a year, the forging of a polity capable of coping with the immense pressures and dislocations caused by the four crises of transition is a paramount practical necessity.

Russia has never lacked reformers who may broadly be called "liberal" because they favored some sort of checks on centralization and statism. But from Mikhail Speransky and Alexander II to Peter Stolypin, Alexei Kosygin, and Evsei Liberman, all failed when their political protection disappeared. Their plans never quite made the leap from offices and drawing rooms in Moscow and St. Petersburg to the villages, towns, factories, and farms where ordinary Russians live and work. The reformers did sometimes succeed in bringing about change, but they did not manage to create self-perpetuating institutions and daily realities that could engage and hold the vested interests of millions of ordinary people, thus making reform irreversible.

In the long run, the ability to protect reform is the sole strategic definition of Yeltsin's success—and the basis of his claim to the title of founding father of democratic Russia. By all portents, 1993 will reveal what the verdict is to be for both Russia and its president.

NOTES

1. During a research visit to Yeltsin's home town of Ekaterinburg, I met a long-retired Communist Party functionary who in the early 1960s had protected Yeltsin, then a young civil engineer, from being fired by an unstable boss. Thirty years later, the man was regularly invited to visit Yeltsin in Moscow.

2. Aleksandr Yakovlev, "Sem vitkov po spirali" ["Seven Circuits Along the Spiral"], *Moscow News*, 3 January 1993.

3. R.M. MacIver, as quoted in Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 215-16.

4. All polling figures are from I. Kliamkin, E. Petrenko, and D. Chubukov, "Vlast, oppozitsia, i rossiyskoye obshestvo osen'u 1992 goda" ["Power, Opposition, and Russian Society in the Fall of 1992"] (Moscow: Public Opinion Foundation, n.d.). It should be noted, however, that Kliamkin et al. found approval of the president to be four times higher (28 percent to 7 percent) than approval of the Supreme Soviet.

5. *Kommersant* (Moscow), 9 February 1993.

6. Tatiana Yarygina and Grigoriy Marchenko, "Regionalnye protesessy v byvshem SSSR i novoy Rossii" ["Regional Processes in the Former USSR and a New Russia"], *Svobodnaya mysl* 14 (1992): 27.

7. Even before he got in a position to influence events, Yeltsin gave a preview of things to come in the fall of 1989 when he called for a division of Russia into seven semiautonomous "states." The plank was later dropped at the insistence of his advisors, who thought that it would make their candidate even more vulnerable to his opponents' charges that he was "selling out Russia." Indeed, claiming that the seven states were meant to represent "the seven candles of a menorah," the ever vigilant ultranationalists of Pamyat' saw proof of Yeltsin's participation in yet another Zionist plot. (Pamyat' experts, after all, have discerned the Star of David in the map of the Moscow subway system.)

8. *RFE/RL Daily Report*, 2 December 1992.

9. Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 2 vols. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), 2:120, 130

10. *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (Moscow), 8 December 1992.

11. Isaiah Berlin, "Winston Churchill in 1940," in *Personal Impressions* (New York: Penguin, 1980), 3.

12. Leonid Vasiliev, "Yeltsin Sans Charisma," *Novoye vremia* 3 (January 1993): 9.

13. Lacouture, op. cit., 2:113.

14. *Rossiyskie vesti*, 11 February 1993.

15. *Izvestia*, 30 January 1993.

16. Data from the All-Union Center for Public Opinion Research, January 1993.