

Constitutional options provide an opportunity

On the other hand, the recent third congress of Yabloko revealed deep divisions between the roughly equal liberal and social-democratic wings of the party. While members of the latter, headed by Yavlinsky's deputy Vyacheslav Igrunov, are prepared for a "historic compromise" with Zyuganov's CPRF (not unconditional, of course), the liberals are scared by the prospect of cooperation with any communists, on any basis, in principle, preferring to seek partnership with such groups as the remnants of Gaidar's "Russia's Choice," which has been definitely rejected by the electorate. But the uniting factor that works, is the goal of saving the Presidential elections as such from any attempt by the bankrupt Yeltsin regime to postpone them, foil them, or forge their results. On that, Yabloko and CPRF are together.

According to the Constitution, the Duma cannot be dissolved by the President during its first post-election year, and it is highly improbable that the Yeltsin regime, with its social base reduced to almost nothing, would try again (as in 1993) to overrun parliament with tanks; or, putting it differently, the Russian military, if given such an order, is most likely to turn them in the opposite direction.

A key question in the run-up to the June elections is whether Zyuganov will be able to demonstrate that his party is really prepared to cooperate with other political forces in a democratic way and adhere to the principles of the division of power. Two most obvious ways to do so is to support an amendment of the autocratic Yeltsin constitution (for this a two-thirds majority is needed, which is attainable) to give more real power to the Duma and to cooperate with "Yabloko," whose leading economists are known and trusted in the world as qualified proponents of a socially oriented market economy, in the drafting of economic reforms.

After 10 years of national catastrophe, Russia's only real choice is to mobilize all its remaining human potential to fight for survival as a nation, as a country, as a people. The change of power, necessary for survival, can be achieved through the ballot-box or through the gun.

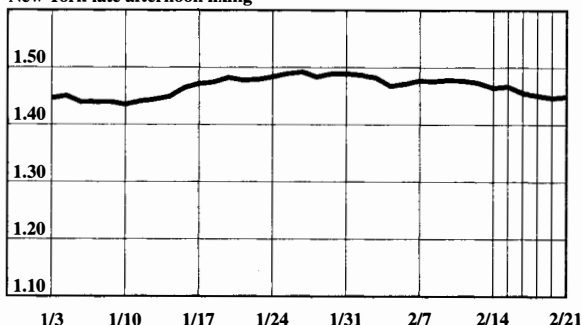
The only viable peaceful and legal way to start at last the process of putting Russia's house in order, seems to be the victory of an opposition candidate (most likely Gennadi Zyuganov) in the summer Presidential elections. Victory in a fair election accepted by all sides. And today only the Communist Party of the Russian Federation has the necessary muscle, the mass political support, and the organizational structures all over the country that provide an opportunity for peaceful change in all vital spheres of national life, in cooperation with small parties of democratic intelligentsia not associated with the current regime.

It should be kept in mind that the alternative is a transition to a military, terrorist dictatorship (whether by the current regime, incapable of retaining power by other means, or in the wake of a bloody revolution/coup) based ideologically on ultranationalism and chauvinism.

Currency Rates

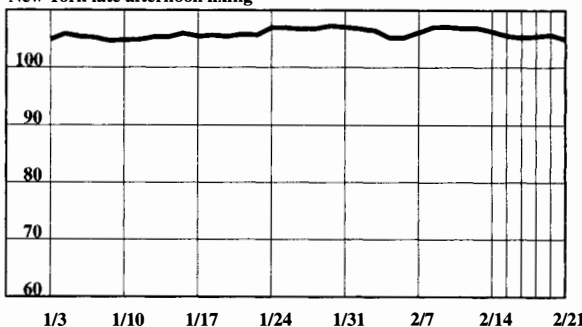
The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



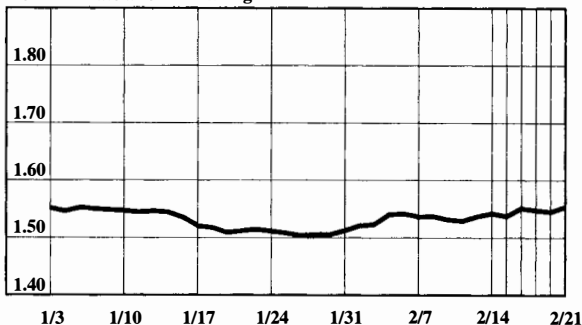
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

