

EIR Investigation

Boris Yeltsin's team shows signs of panic

by Viktor Kuzin

The political faction of Russian President Boris Yeltsin is in a deepening crisis. Yeltsin showed frazzled nerves during former U.S. President Richard Nixon's mid-March visit to Moscow, when Nixon met leaders of the opposition to Yeltsin, including Aleksandr Rutskoy. Rutskoy was vice president of the Russian Federation until he resisted Yeltsin's abolition of the Constitution and Parliament last Sept. 21; arrested on Oct. 4, Rutskoy was only just released from prison under an amnesty on Feb. 26. Upon hearing of Nixon's planned schedule, Yeltsin cancelled his own meetings with Nixon and stripped him of Russian government-provided transportation and security; the security-stripping decision was then reversed.

Nixon's approach was encouraging, because only regular contacts with representatives of the whole political spectrum in Russia can show western politicians what is happening there. By the end of his visit, Nixon had conferred with five likely candidates for Yeltsin's job—Rutskoy, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Grigori Yavlinsky, and Sergei Shakhrai, who head other factions in the new Parliament, and Communist leader Gennadi Zyuganov—but not with Yeltsin or members of his government. Yeltsin's staff, meanwhile, announced on March 14 that the President would be absent from Moscow for vacation and medical treatment for stretches of time during the next six weeks.

Ever broader layers of society are realizing that Yeltsin's "October Revolution" of 1993 did nothing at all to solve the problems Yeltsin and his inner circle wanted it to solve. The October bloodshed, when Army troops kept Yeltsin in power by shelling the parliament (Supreme Soviet) which he had

unconstitutionally abolished, brought no political consolidation of society around democratic reforms. In fact, as the elections to the State Duma and the referendum on the Constitution showed in December, the prestige of democratic values has plunged.

Now not only the West, but also the people of Russia are beginning to realize that they have been deceived by the Yeltsin team, and that with the elimination of the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet—the institutions Yeltsin maintained were the main obstacles on the road to reform—the situation in the country has not only failed to improve, it has not even stabilized and is continuing to deteriorate.

The government has virtually no control over economic processes in the country. Minister of Labor Gennadi Melikyan has reported that protests are coming in from many regions, from whole branches of industry, and from numerous enterprises, demanding payment of back wages and threatening decisive reprisals if this demand is not met. A new feature of these recent protests is that they have been endorsed not only by trade union leaders and work collectives, but also by factory directors.

The end of the voucher

While visiting the city of Kaluga early in March, Chairman of the State Property Committee Anatóli Chubais announced that as of July 1, privatization vouchers will cease to be valid. (A voucher was issued to each citizen of the Russian Federation in late 1992, which entitled him to buy shares of stock in newly privatized firms.) From that day on,

enterprises will be privatized for money, through the sale of these companies on the market. Until now, citizens had not rushed to use their vouchers (by exchanging them for shares of stock in privatized companies or selling them), calculating that the very low price of a voucher (10,000 rubles) would have to rise. It did rise almost threefold during the past year, and was at approximately 23,000 on the eve of Chubais's announcement; but this was still very low, considering the real purchasing power of this sum, which is just half the monthly subsistence minimum for one person (40,800 rubles) at the present time.

The voucher, mind you, is the document that was supposed to embody the citizen's right to a share of state property as it was privatized. In other words, Anatoli Chubais let it be known that the voucher would not be honored as an obligation of the state to the citizen, meaning that the majority of citizens will be left with neither money nor property. On the other hand, after July 1, all these enterprises will be for sale, cheap, to the holders of speculative capital (commercial banks, the mafia, bureaucrats who have gotten rich on bribes, etc.).

"There has been a total criminalization of the economy," said Prof. Yakov Gilinsky of the Petersburg Institute of Sociology (Russian Academy of Sciences) at a conference on "The Black Market as a Political System," held at the Russian State University for the Humanities. The conference concluded that "in most countries, organized crime runs only the criminal sources of income: drug traffic, gambling, weapons sales. In Russia it runs *the entire economy*."

Yeltsin has not succeeded in dumping the blame for this on the Supreme Soviet, which he disbanded, since everyone knows that the Supreme Soviet harshly criticized Yeltsin's policies for robbing the population and encouraging organized crime, including in the highest echelons of power. Consequently Yeltsin and his closest supporters bear the responsibility.

A recent poll surveyed how residents of Moscow think their lives have changed since 1991:

- 82% think that "people have become meaner"
- 54%—"there are fewer opportunities to live properly"
- 54%—"we have taken even further leave of our senses"
- 53%—"vouchers will be used by the minority to rob the majority"
- 45%—"it is in the West's interest to weaken us"
- 25%—"the West has an interest in helping us"
- 29%—"Russia should try to restore the [Soviet] Union"
- 7%—"there is more hope for things to get better, after the Dec. 12 elections"
- 44%—"there is less hope for things to get better, after the Dec. 12 elections and the changes in the government."

This survey of 2,000 citizens of Moscow, the city where Yeltsin has always had his greatest support, clearly shows people's negative reaction to the results of his so-called re-

form policy. On several points their responses went well over the 50% mark.

Leaving a sinking ship

Yeltsin is in a panic. He and his cronies are afraid of being swept aside by a powerful social explosion and being held responsible for what they have done.

The more prescient members of Yeltsin's group are trying to distance themselves from him. These include former Deputy Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar and former Finance Minister Boris Fyodorov. Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov came flat out and told an audience of *Afgantsy* (Afghanistan war veterans) that he "never was a democrat."

It was fear of having to take responsibility for the mass murders done on his orders in October, that prompted Yeltsin to accept the State Duma's amnesty of those arrested on Oct. 4 and thereafter for resisting his *coup d'état*. The *quid pro quo* was that there will be no parliamentary investigation of those events.

Yeltsin also proposed that all parties sign an agreement on civic peace and accord; he wants to draw them all into one vicious circle with himself. But this is a trap, since it is not any party or parties that make people oppose Yeltsin's regime, but rather the unbearable conditions of life. Parties that sign such a document will be compelled to support Yeltsin's punitive actions against the people or risk being accused as opponents of civic peace. How absurd!

Yeltsin's immediate entourage is now comprised of pronounced careerists, cynical people with no principles. Prosecutor General Aleksei Kazannik had something to say about them in a recent interview with *Moskovskiy Novosti*. Talking about the President's national security aide Yuri Baturin, presidential aides Georgi Satarov and Aleksei Ilyushenko, the chief of the President's security service Aleksandr Korzhakov, and Minister of Internal Affairs Viktor Yerin, he said: "If I had such advisers, and if they even once gave me advice like the advice these people give, I would tell them: 'God be with you—and the door is over there. I don't need advisers like this.'"

These advisers had in effect urged Kazannik to ignore the law on amnesty, to violate the Constitution—and this time it's not the Constitution slandered as "red-brown" and abolished, but Yeltsin's own new Constitution. Kazannik resigned, rather than follow their advice to violate the law.

This all speaks eloquently to the point that the question is not the Constitution, but the essentially lawless bent of Yeltsin's people. It is not to be excluded that there is an intense fight going on for influence over Yeltsin, among various groupings within his apparatus, one of which was using Kazannik against the others.

One thing is certain, and that is that Yeltsin has manifested no intention of departing from his policies, even though he has publicly admitted that they do not correspond to the

interests of Russia or the majority of its citizens.

The ruinous impact of these policies on the nation and the people provokes a self-defense reaction in the form of growing popularity for patriotic leaders, which Yeltsin has noticed. He is trying to adopt and exploit their slogans. Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev has done this. Even that ideologue of corruption, "shock therapy," and "globalism," former Moscow Mayor Gavriil Popov, has lately come out as an opponent of all these things. This is the latest ploy of a certain segment of the pro-Yeltsin "democrats." They are waiting in the shadows, feigning criticism of the regime, making themselves out to be friends of the people, so that tomorrow, at the next elections (less than two years away) they might come to power disguised as oppositionists and in reality continue the line of the International Monetary Fund in Russia.

The menace of collapse

The complete collapse of Russia as a nation, however, may breed a fascist dictatorship sooner than that, since people who experience nothing but hatred and despair, history shows us, will succumb to that. There are indications of the preconditions for establishing a fascist dictatorship, both from the President's camp and in the extreme opposition. Both are exhibiting a growing tendency to criminal thinking and behavior, and a potential to move in the direction of the armed seizure of power.

Thus Gen.-Col. Vladislav Achalov, recently freed from Lefortovo Prison in the amnesty, spoke openly about the option of seizing power by force. "Today we have a situation," he said, "where [presidential guard chief] Korzhakov, [Defense Minister] Grachov, and [Internal Affairs Minister] Yerin might remove Yeltsin from power" (*Moskovskiye Novosti*, March 6-13). Former Prosecutor General Kazannik, meanwhile, told the Spanish paper *El País* that Yeltsin's close associates "might ignore the law, issue illegal decrees, adopt blatantly criminal decisions, and impose them on Yeltsin" (*Sovetskaya Rossiya*, March 15). It is noteworthy that here we had approximately the same evaluation published on the pages of newspapers representing quite opposed political orientations.

Aleksandr Barkashov is leader of Russian National Unity, whose swastika-clad cadre acted as provocateurs during the September-October crushing of parliament. *Sovetskaya Rossiya* of March 5 reported his remarks after his release from jail in amnesty: "The fighters have become tougher. There is an influx of new people into our organization. A lot of young people. Workers from a lot of the Moscow factories sympathize with our views, and we're setting up our first RNU factory cells. . . . We have comrades in arms among the ex-generals, too." Barkashov is not putting it on this time. Even a casual observer can see steady growth of interest in the publications and activity of his and other such organizations in Moscow.

A colonial system

by Stanislav Govorukhin

The author is a prominent Russian filmmaker, known for his documentaries on the impoverishment of Russia under the Communist regime in the 1980s and now under Boris Yeltsin. His latest film is The Great Criminal Revolution, under which title he also published a book (Andreyevsky Flag, 1993). It deals with the looting of Russia's economy during the past two years, the rapid rise of a new criminal class, and the violent destruction of the Russian Parliament by Yeltsin's forces. Having completed The Great Criminal Revolution just after the Oct. 4 burning of the Parliament but before the Dec. 12, 1993 elections (when Yeltsin was stunned by high votes for Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party, the communists, and independent opposition figures), the author wrote the present article in February as an epilogue for the second edition and for foreign-language editions. On Dec. 12, Mr. Govorukhin was elected to the Duma, the lower house of Russia's new Parliament, on the Democratic Party of Russia slate. We are printing this chapter of The Great Criminal Revolution as a guest commentary, with the author's kind permission. It is slightly abridged and subheads have been added. Rachel Douglas translated it from the Russian.

Thank God, I was wrong. The new Parliament is not two-thirds made up of the henchmen of organized crime. The party whose base is the new class of "men of property" lost at the polls. Despite having all the money, all the mass media, all the power in their hands, they lost big!

They were all set to win. My evaluation was not off the mark. But as I've said, my book was written before Oct. 4. I made my evaluation without taking into account the events of that day.

Oct. 4, the Parliament in flames. . . . That upset all calculations. It was a boon for some and for others a misfortune.

A month before the elections, the result could be foreseen. People who toured the country and met with voters could see it. They saw how the population had changed, consolidated in its united loathing for the murderers. But the murderers themselves did not see it. They understood their country and their people not at all. Two weeks before the elections, their sociologists were still publishing prognoses that in Moscow [the pro-Yeltsin slate] Russia's Choice would get 37%, in St. Petersburg 38%, in Mukhosransk over 50%. A lavish television show, a real Political Ball, was organized