

Boris Yeltsin: President During Tragedy for Russia

by Rachel Douglas

The first post-Soviet President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, died April 23, of heart failure. There quickly followed a wave of appreciations, from politicians and in the media, contrasting the “good, democratic” reforms under Yeltsin (1991-99), to the “bad, authoritarian” regime of current President Vladimir Putin (1999-present). But, the Yeltsin period should be viewed more profoundly, as a tragic time for Russia.

Putin recalled Yeltsin as “a courageous person, a man with a heart and a soul, a forthright and bold national leader.” He said that Yeltsin’s greatest strength was “the population’s massive support for his ideas and aspirations.” Yeltsin’s call to “Protect Russia!” should be remembered, Putin said.

What many Russian citizens will never forget about Yeltsin, is how the reforms he launched demolished their living standards. The process culminated in 1993, when the “democratic” President sent the Armed Forces to crush the elected Parliament, which had resisted the latest package of deregulation and privatization.

Yeltsin had been a genuine maverick, whose fights with other top leaders during the U.S.S.R.’s Gorbachov period in the 1980s nearly ended his political career. When he came forward as Russia’s leader during the murky political crisis of August 1991, many looked to Yeltsin with great hope for a revival of the nation. Their hopes were dashed however, when Yeltsin appointed as his first cabinet, a team of radical liberal economists, groomed by Mont Pelerin Society circles, directly, since the early 1980s, for the role of looting Russia and the Soviet Union. (A Strategic Studies series by Roman Bessonov, in *EIR* of Sept. 6, 1996 and subsequent issues, told how this came about.) These were the so-called “young reformers,” such as Yegor Gaidar and Anatoli Chubais, who administered “shock therapy” price decontrol and privatization policies.

Just as Yeltsin’s government was formed, Lyndon LaRouche issued a warning dated Dec. 28, 1991, titled, “On the Subject of the Threat of Chaos in the Economies of Russia and Its Associated Member-States of the New Community of Independent States.” LaRouche said, “The ironical fact is, that in the present stage, the only likely source of a nuclear crisis coming out of the former area of the Soviet Union today, aside from a special situation in the Transcaucasus region, is

the danger that Boris Yeltsin, the President of the Russian Federation, might follow, to some degree or other, the pathway toward bankruptcy which the Polish government pursued for a while, up until most recently, at the instruction of Harvard’s lunatic professor, Jeffrey Sachs. If Yeltsin, for example, and his government, were to go with a reform of the type which Sachs and Sachs’s co-thinkers demand—chiefly from the Anglo-American side—then the result in Russia would be chaos. In such a case, the overthrow of Yeltsin, or somebody, by a dictatorship and the restoration of a form of what is called totalitarianism would probably occur. In that case, then we have a strategic threat. So therefore, the trick is, not to pressure Moscow to go with the Sachs model; to warn Moscow against the insanity of the Sachs model, and to assist those in the former Soviet Union . . . in discovering mechanisms which might avoid the chaos and potential dictatorship lodged within the Sachs lunacy, so-called free market lunacy.”

LaRouche’s warning was not heeded, and the devastating outcome has been documented in such publications as LaRouche’s own article “Russia’s Liberal Reforms: Anatomy of a Catastrophe” (*EIR*, Feb. 21, 1997), and the 1998 book *Genocide*, by Sergei Glazyev. Most recently, *EIR* News Service has brought out Prof. Stanislav Menshikov’s *The Anatomy of Russian Capitalism*: It shows how, during Yeltsin’s tenure, Russia was locked into a model of “oligarchical capitalism” that has harmed the national interest.

In the Summer of 1993, less than two years after the breakup of the U.S.S.R., Russia had suffered under 2,600% inflation for a year; people’s savings were wiped out; industry was shutting down; and the country’s physical wealth was being carted abroad by the truckload in sweetheart deals; secured by now freely operating criminal elements. The Supreme Soviet, or Parliament at that time, was smeared in the Western press as “red-brown” (communist-fascist), because of its opposition to reforms that merely opened the door for more and more looting of the Russian economy. On Sept. 21, 2003, Yeltsin put an end to the Supreme Soviet’s opposition by a decree that abolished it, along with Russia’s Constitution. Members of the Parliament, joined by then-Vice President Alexander Rutskoy, defied Yeltsin’s order and made their stand in the Supreme Soviet building. On Oct. 3-4, 2003, Army tanks sent in by Yeltsin opened fire on the Parliament, putting an end to the resistance.

In the Preface to the English edition of Menshikov’s book, LaRouche writes of the Yeltsin period as “the demographically murderous, greatest carpetbagging swindle in history,” and warns the world, just as he warned Yeltsin’s Russia in 1991: “What happened to Russia, as [Menshikov] recounts that, not only could happen to us; it is, in effect, now happening to us in the U.S.A., and to most of the world besides. The disease, which Professor Menshikov has described in these pages, is, in effect, now an economic global pandemic which we must all join to defeat.”