

# Country of Eternal “Pregnancy”

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**M**ore than two years of significant reform have taken place in Russia. The results of such reforms summon various appraisals and judgments in public opinion by observers and analysts around the world. One appraisal says that there has been no serious reform at all, only thoughtless destruction of the old system and imitation of progress. Other critics declare that there has been reform, but that rather than having the character of shock therapy, it has been only shock without the therapy. A third group asserts that it is necessary to stop the reforms before it is too late. A fourth group says that while reforms were indeed conducted, they have come to a standstill. The last group is associated with Yegor Gaidar, the primary architect of economic reform, who has recently evaluated the present situation as a poor balance. The present situation is not catastrophic in his opinion, but is without hope for the foreseeable future. This condition resulted from the government’s decision to start a “strategic retreat from the front of the battle with inflation.”

## **Boris Yeltsin: Party Head**

A basis for these contradictory appraisals exists. In the last two years, there were qualitative changes in the socio-political and economic situation in Russia. The Soviet political apparatus was utterly destroyed. The acceptance of the new constitution marked Russia as a presidential republic. Efforts toward de-nationalizing state enterprises led to the appearance of the private sector, where twenty million Russians now work. Privatization of homes and apartments and of the service sector began. Finally, the ruble slowly started becoming the main criteria for evaluating the quality and quantity of work.

But on the other hand, it is difficult not to agree with those who talk about the destruction of industry and agriculture, the stagnation in scientific and technical progress, the fall of intellectual potential, and the slow death of recently born small and middle-sized businesses.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, big businesses do not feel confident, and the acuteness of the investment crisis has not lessened. For example, not long ago the head of the prominent finance company “Most,” Vladimir Gussinsky, complained that although he had 60 million dollars of usable cash he did not feel free to invest it because no government guarantees existed. The economic price of reform is well known: a 43 percent fall in industrial production in comparison with 1989, and a sharp growth in inflation, the budget deficit, and foreign debt. The national income for 1991-1993 fell by 40 percent.<sup>2</sup> In comparison, in the years of World War II, when a considerable part of the territory of the USSR was occupied by Hitler’s army, national income only fell 17 percent.

The social price of reform has turned out to be catastrophic. According to academic Gennady Osipov, the standard of living has fallen by two-thirds.<sup>3</sup> There is rapidly

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beginning to be a disparity between the property holdings of the population. The ratio of salaries of the 10 percent in the highest paid strata to those of the 10 percent in the lowest paid strata was 26:1 in 1993, as opposed to 16:1 in 1992 and 4:1 in 1989. In comparison, in the United States this ratio is still 6:1, in China it is 3:1, and in the countries of Latin America it is 12:1.<sup>4</sup> The population rate has decreased, and the criminal rate has increased. All of this creates an explosively dangerous social atmosphere, leads to the degradation of character of the citizens, and deforms the spiritual and moral basis of society.

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In the political sphere a most favorable atmosphere for the development of authoritarianism, and even a dictatorship, has been created. On 16 November 1993, Yeltsin, with rare frankness, declared in an interview with *Izvestia*, "I will not deny that the authority of the president in the constitution is really considerable. And what would you want in a country accustomed to tsars and leaders?"<sup>5</sup> It is ironic that while Boris Yeltsin has increased his authority, chaos, corruption, organized crime, and criminality have grown stronger. After the acceptance of the new constitution of Russia, Boris Yeltsin crossed from the ranks of populist leaders to that of the leaders of the *nomenklatura*. He really does not need his own political party, which many political activists counted on (especially those from the movement Democratic Russia and the party of Yegor Gaidar, Russia's Choice). Yeltsin already leads the "party of the government *nomenklatura*," in which he is not only a political, but also an administrative, leader.

Power reforms aside, the stress on individual and group interests, the ignorance of national priorities and goals, and the elite leader vision of methods and paths to reform have led to the threat of an almost complete loss of trust in the very idea of reform by the citizens of Russia. The outcome of parliamentary elections in December 1993 was a direct result of this. Moreover, recent sociological polls show that this tendency has grown. The most stable advocates of reform continue to remain in the Communist Party, Zhirinovsky's LDP, and the Agrarian Bloc. Forty percent of those who voted in December for Gaidar's Russia's Choice and 48 percent who voted for Yabloko would vote differently today. The greatest loss would be for the party of Nikolai Travkin and the political bloc "Women of Russia."<sup>6</sup>

The faces on the political chessboard in Russia will gradually cease to be real politicians. Being a politician has come to mean to "seem" a politician—that is, to always be in the public view, to be seen on television, to be present at many political meetings, and to add one's own personal opinions. There is an impression that no one today is interested in reforms, and that stabilization of the crisis is the primary goal for all. No one tries to accept responsibility for the path of transformation in politics and economics, or to make this the criteria of their political success or failure. This condition reflects the somewhat artificial, forced measurements by which politicians evaluate themselves. They demonstrate the effectiveness of their work by the quantity of vouchers used, by the size of "knocked out" favorable credit, by their persistency in begging for Western aid, etc. No one is concerned with how the production of labor has grown thanks to vouchers, or with the fact that many enterprises, at the cost of favorable credit, have raised the competitiveness of their products.<sup>7</sup>

### Yellow "White House"

Just as the cleaning of the White House in the center of Moscow after the tragic events in October 1993 left a yellow tinge to the building, so has Russian political life become meaningless and lost its real political base of support. But it will survive this epoch of decay and development through inertia.<sup>8</sup> One can agree with the conclusion arrived at by the scholars at the Institute of Socio-Political Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences, who in November 1994 reported that, "Russians in the majority are positively receptive to the reformation of society but are more than disapprovingly skeptical about the character, path, and method of the fulfilled reform, which expresses not national, but corporate, interests."<sup>9</sup> Answering sociologists' questions about the change in life after 1991, respondents agreed to the following statements: that people have become more evil, that the possibility for a worthy human existence has decreased, that "democratic" madness was worse than seventy years of Bolshevik madness, that voucher-style privatization was a form of insolent robbery of the people, that the West was more interested in weakening Russia than in helping it, and that after the elections to the new Russian parliament, hope for the improvement of life has lessened. And finally, there is that universal proof—drinking has increased. Americans may not believe it, but a bottle of vodka in Moscow costs one and a half times less than a bottle of Coca-Cola. And although 60 percent of the respondents pointed out that "one can still endure," even cautious analysts say that "developments are even worse than the pessimistic prognoses."

The October 1993 shooting around the Russian parliamentary building, the elections, and the acceptance of the Constitution of the country laid the foundation for a new turn in the political evolution of Russia.<sup>10</sup> First of all, there has been a change in the opposition, which, in essence, has stopped being an opposition. In the parliament and the rest of the government, the overwhelming majority are from the opposition, as with the key positions in the government *apparatus* and in the local organs of power. Only the presidential chair remains unseized. The familiar bipolar scheme of politics, in which clearly drawn coalitions under diametrically opposed flags were the centers of opposition, has survived the crash.<sup>11</sup> This period was interrupted when the Russian organs of state power began to develop along the lines of American models. During the course of 1992-1993, the Russian government attempted to adapt American models to the situation of the country, but many posts with unclear and confused authority, like the positions of government secretary or vice president, were gradually sifted out. Others lost their "American" meaning, as with the post of the secretary of the security council or the head of the president's administration.

As a result, a unique type of dual power began to take shape in Russia. On one hand, there was the government, with Viktor Chernomyrdin as head, and on the other, the president and his *apparatus*, resembling the Central Committee of the CPSU, standing above all and not answering to anyone for its political decisions and actions. In this way, the Russian structure of government power evolved away from the American model, where the president is in charge of the government, and toward the French model in which the president, possessing executive authority, serves as a balance between parliament and government, and plays the role of high political arbiter.

But such a situation in Russia will not last long. With the bitter and tangled political opposition in the country, Yeltsin cannot succeed in fulfilling the role of such an arbiter. In

the expression of one Russian journalist, the president "does not have enough strength to majestically stand above the fight." Besides, too many political miscalculations and mistakes have been committed, and too often the president has lost control over the situation, especially in crisis moments. Furthermore, the bureaucratization and corruption of his *apparat* run too deep—too much effort was wasted by members of Yeltsin's team on securing personal fame and fortune. As a result, governmental power in general and presidential power in particular has begun to weaken. Therefore, the question that is heatedly discussed by political scientists and journalists all over the world—who will be the next president of Russia?—although it remains sufficiently important, may be better asked after the question of what type of presidential chair there will be in the future political construction of the country, and which functions will the head of the government constitutionally possess?

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### **The "Pie of Power" Has a Limited Number of Pieces**

The majority of observers believe that Yeltsin's chances at reelection are limited. They arrive at this conclusion because, in the first place, he has repeatedly declared that he would not run for election a second time, and changing his mind would intensify the constant questions about his sincerity. Secondly, according to the calculations of a series of leading Russian economists, the next peak of inflation and economic crisis will occur during the election campaign, and this would weaken Yeltsin's position. Third, and most importantly, by the middle of 1994 it became clear that the real power was concentrated in the hands of Prime Minister Chernomyrdin. The president does not currently have either the physical or the legal ability to control the pace of present-day matters. This is true even where these matters were initiated by his own orders or decree—under which the government forms its normative base and its mechanism of realization and control. In fact, presidential decrees may be immediately discarded. Therefore, if Chernomyrdin decides to participate in the pre-election struggle, even with competition from Yeltsin, his chances can be evaluated as good.

What will happen to the posts of president and prime minister of Russia? Here are two possibilities: there can be the election of a "pocket," puppet president—a protégé of Chernomyrdin and completely controlled by him—or the election of Chernomyrdin himself as president of the country. The first possibility seems unlikely because of the extremely tense political situation, the large quantity of political parties and organizations that focus on the struggle for the presidential post, and the noticeable societal interest in the coming elections. In the second scenario, Chernomyrdin will face a choice of actions. First, he could give the post of prime minister to his proxy; second, he could retain the post for himself in conjunction with the presidential chair; and third, he could liquidate the post of the head of parliament, introducing a change in the Constitution of Russia and subordinating the Cabinet of Ministers directly to the president.

The possibility of a proxy prime minister seems unlikely, since that post currently encompasses all governmental direction. One Russian political observer says in

*Nezavisimaya Gazeta* that if he abandoned it, Chernomyrdin: “. . . like both high governmental actors of our time (Yeltsin in 1991, and Gorbachev in 1989), will depart to a vacuum, after leaving the working mechanisms of power to his successor. In order for that successor not to immediately plot against his patron, in order for him to retain simple loyalty, not to mention subordinancy, he must be absolutely foreign to the developing system of power.”<sup>12</sup>

The appearance of such a man in an already entrenched ruling elite is practically impossible; they will not allow just any daredevil into the “pie of power.”

The possibility of abolishing the post of prime minister also seems unlikely, as it involves changing the Constitution and it would not pass through parliament. This partially contradicts the “Agreement on Civil Accord,” signed in April 1994.<sup>13</sup> With this situation, a more realistic solution would be the construction of a Russian system of governmental administration based on the American model, that is, to combine in one man the posts of president and head of government. At least this variant can give the greatest effectiveness to the present system of power in Russia.

There exist a series of obstacles to this type of political evolution for the country. One must consider the Russian political tradition and the personalities of the participating politicians, including the charisma of Boris Yeltsin. In addition, until recently, Victor Chernomyrdin did not show any clear signs that he wished to enter the struggle for the presidency. A definite obstacle is the already mentioned “Agreement on Civil Accord,” which it seems does not allow the prime minister to conduct his own electoral campaign.

### **The “Agreement on Civil Accord” in an Absence of Civil Accord**

This accord will influence the political evolution of Russia in the near future in several ways. Its strength is that it cuts off practically all radical opposition that threatens to encroach upon real political life. All political powers already represented in the power structure and in the new parliament, from the communists to the liberals, are interested in this accord. They do not want a new distribution of power.<sup>14</sup>

The group most interested in the compact is the president and his team, since it creates a reputation for them of being peace workers, striving for stabilization of the present situation and a lessening of bloodshed; it also provides a possibility for placing the political opposition within guided limits, influencing them significantly, splitting them into pieces, and forcing them and their electorate to serve the presidential team to some extent. The compact also allows Yeltsin to share the consequences of unsuccessful initiatives and decisions with his political opponents, all the more so since its text does not stipulate that the president has any sort of special responsibility for conducting politics. It does not regard anything above the usual functions of an office holder as his personal duty, but it does not in any way limit his power.

Yeltsin’s team not only receives guarantees that the status quo will be maintained until 1996, but also a two-year pause, which is sufficient to work out countermeasures against any unexpected events at the elections and to prepare another candidate for president, aside from Yeltsin himself. Not long ago the president declared that he is selecting a candidate to be his successor, and as was said in his interview with his former close advisor, Victor Iliushin, Yeltsin conducts this work personally. One can guess that one of the candidates being considered by the president is his advisor on national security, lawyer Yuri Baturin. As far as Boris Yelutin’s political opponents are concerned, they signed the compact

because it provides them with the chance to establish a reputation as supporters of stabilization and civil peace in the country; it gives them the opportunity, through "conciliation work," to have influence on the political process, including even those groups not represented in the official power structure, and representatives of regional political groups. In all, the accord became proof that the president and his supporters are not able to uphold a normal political process in the country without an opposition, especially for the next two years. On the other hand, it proved that among the opposition there is neither the power nor the ability, without the compact, to win sufficient sympathy and support from the people, to call forth a change of the ruling team, or to initiate special elections and secure victory for themselves in those elections. The compact, therefore, shows political weakness on both sides. "A bad peace is better than a good quarrel" is the ideology of modern Russia's bases of political power.

The government will also support the accord since it is interested in its own stability, especially because the economic duties that are fixed in the compact have an extremely general, non-binding character. It is noteworthy that the "Agreement on Civil Accord" practically excludes the army from political life by prohibiting the signatories from drawing politics into their power struggle.

In this manner, the accord constitutes its own type of framed agreement, fixing the rules of the political game and the number of participating teams. In this regard, Yeltsin's idea of signing the compact works in full force, and the compact in general fulfills its function regarding the consolidation of the

power elite. On the other hand, one can convincingly establish that this accord will not in any way make social agreement possible. First, because the very elite do not reflect or represent the full variety of existing social positions. Second, the representatives from differing political streams have no clear and agreed upon idea of what the country really needs, and third, and most importantly, not only does the "Agreement on Civil Accord" not affect society itself in any way, but totally and decisively cuts it off from real participation in the political life of the country, including even elections.

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### **How Can One Live When It's Impossible to Live?**

When talking about the long-term prospects for Russia's political evolution, one can quickly describe several of the most likely possibilities. There is the possibility of development by inertia. The economic situation does not improve, yet gradually the bases for market relations and privatization are created (certainly with monstrous mistakes) until they encompass all of the basic spheres of the economy. It is a mistake to believe that the withering of the economy, once passing a determined point, will automatically result in a social upheaval. How many of these proposed borders have already been crossed in the past three years! "It is impossible to live this way," everyone says to each other, yet they continue to live just the same.<sup>15</sup> As a result, our own manner of economics *à la russe* is formed, characterized in particular by an extremely sickly social situation. In the political sphere, during a lengthy period of time the struggle of parties and movements continues (including that of the nationalist sect),<sup>16</sup> and the democratic achievements of the previous

period will be found to be unstable.<sup>17</sup> Strengthening of regional separatism is extremely probable in this scenario, as is the creation of large territorial unions that are connected for the most part not by politics, but by economics and geography.

Another possibility is the creation of a post-industrial society. The crisis, which has been deepening for several years, finally begins to decline and gradually is surmounted.<sup>18</sup> The economy, represented at its base by important monopolies and financial groups, will slowly emerge from the chaos and be included in the international market.<sup>19</sup> In politics, a curtailment of the entire line of democratic institutions, liquidation of several parties and organizations, and the limitation of free speech is fully possible. Already several observers believe that in order to maintain

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his power, Yeltsin could turn to the curtailment of democracy and attempt to establish a cruel authoritarian regime, which would include the limitation of economically and politically autonomous regions.

Third, there is the possibility that if the second variant does not come to pass, then the government, seeing its inability to resolve cardinal contradictions in the country, may break the constitution and hand power over to the military.<sup>20</sup> That is, a military dictatorship would be established. In relation to society, the dictator would be sufficiently lenient, since Russia has a conscript army that is incapable of mobilizing to perform cruel acts against its people.<sup>21</sup> But in relation to the power structure, this regime could turn out to be extremely harsh. The problem is that after some time the military would become convinced of its own inability to cope with the situation, and would begin to search for a civilian government to which they could hand over power. The question could again arise as to who is able to reliably control the situation in the country, which at this time would undoubtedly be worse.

The fourth variant of possible developments involves the coming to power of criminal groups in Russia.<sup>22</sup> The criminal situation in Russia is worrying the world community more and more, in particular the administration and the public in America. And there is good reason for this: in Russia, a true criminal revolution is taking place. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss this problem in more detail.

As in Dante's hell, Russian crime is organized into three large circles. The first is street fighting and gangsterism. In Russia today, according to data of the former prosecutor general of Russia, Alexei Kazannik, around 15,000 organized crimes occur about which the law-enforcement sector knows nothing. More than 1,000 groups constitute 155 criminal unions, with up to 300 active participants each day. Over 1,000 unions have solid international ties. In Russia there is already the means for extracting money from the industrial production base.<sup>23</sup>

Russians run up against these circles practically every day. According to a recent poll, 91 percent of all Muscovites experience real fear in their lives, and every third resident of the capital fell into a life-threatening situation within the past year. Security is the most important factor in the appraisal of the government and the president. The results of the December 1993 parliamentary elections indicate, in part, a complete disbelief in Yeltsin,

who in the beginning charged Vice President Rutskoi with the fight against crime and took a personal oath to eliminate these evils. The convincing victory of the Liberal Democrats headed by Zhirinovskiy, and of the Communists, was predictable: on one side is Zhirinovskiy's assurance that this is a problem to be dealt with by force, and on the other are fresh memories of safe streets and yards during the period of communist rule.

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The police are not agile and are poorly equipped and prepared. They are interested in concealed incidents and Russians consider them "on the take" with the leaders of the criminal world. Criminal elements are demonstrably unafraid of the police.<sup>24</sup> Corruption, bribery, murder, destruction of evidence, sale of information, etc., flower in splendid color. Therefore, when a police uniform appears at the site of an incident, the victim often seems to disappear faster than the criminals, or else runs the risk of a new danger.

The second circle of crime constitutes well-organized groups who aim higher than the banal street robberies or apartment thefts. Their goal is to be found in the sphere of shady economics; sale of strategic resources, raw materials, arms, and narcotics, both at home and abroad. The slogan of these people is "Seize the moment, enrich yourself." And the sooner the better, for there is nothing better. This criminal group is excited by the future of the country in no small degree. They are not interested in the stabilization of the country. Anarchy organizes them like nothing else. These are people of "instantaneous business." They are unconcerned with the contracted and planned development of things. To seize is better in the short run than to transfer money to foreign banks and to hide themselves behind it or to lie low and to live a just and comparatively clean life. Several of these people even end up in politics. According to expert opinion, one-half of businessmen and almost 70 percent of commercial structures were involved in criminal dealings, and more than 40,000 enterprises are under the control of criminal organizations.<sup>25</sup>

The corruptibility of officials causes deep distrust of authority, law, and government, even in the honest merchants. As a consequence, criminal statistics do not include 80 percent of embezzlement and 90 percent of fraud. The injured simply do not declare these crimes.

All of these people are closely bound with the first group, actively availing themselves of its services, feeding and defending them in times of critical need. And similar services exist for them. According to official data, more than 30 percent of the groups make use of the support and services of corrupt officials of lower and middle ranks, who as a rule have good relations with the police when their informers are located. That is, 1,000,000 people take part in the whole process, tied by criminal relations, but having plenty of money and legal cover. According to official statistics, approximately 800,000 men are in prisons and jails. Although in Russia there is still not a single center of organized crime, and conflicts between various groups exist, a common language has already been found between shady business economics, the traditional criminal world, and the bureaucracy.

Finally, the third circle comprises the mafia and corrupted officials, making their headquarters in Russia and having resolved to be "real Russian" businessmen. They are wholly interested in the evolution of democracy and the free market in the country. Yet



before this occurs, they avail themselves very successfully of the legislative and legal vacuum, the confusion of society, and the corruption of today's officials of higher ranks. However, in the final analysis their interests do not coincide with the interests of the representatives of the first two groups. They are not interested in the total plunder of the country. Although they do make use of the services of certain members of "instantaneous business" and common criminals, a collision between the groups within the not-too-distant future is unavoidable. These people need Russia, but more precisely, they need "their own Russia" where they themselves will be in control.

Today they are beginning to actively seek power. They understand the limited possibilities for centralized power. They know that to a large degree the new "openness" is for societal control and foreign monitoring. For these reasons they are fighting for regional power and are doing so with quite some success. They are assisted in their efforts to gain control by a variety of factors. First and foremost, they are aided by the ongoing radical changes occurring in the system of power and in the positions of the regional elite. As is well known, one of the principles of Stalin's politics was the changing of the *nomenklatura* leadership from region to region on an average of every two to three years. This was considered to be a necessary method of resisting local authority and a guarantee against the creation of corrupt structures. It also placed local leadership in full dependence upon the center.<sup>26</sup>

Now the situation is changing. Moscow does not have the power to change and interfere with regional leaders. Every Russian politician today understands that his political

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strength lies within his own region. For this reason, he tries to involve himself within every major sphere of local social influence, including the mafia. On the other hand, one of the fundamental characteristics of the communist system of power is appearing again; the merging of its representative and law-making parts. This saves administrators from the danger of falling beneath the courts. There once were, and will exist again, a number of mafia members in the

upper echelons of government. Problems of the administrators will be solvable without the assistance of the court and within their own circle of influence. A clear example of this ongoing process is the dismissal of a recently named prosecutor-general. The dismissal was approved by Yeltsin in spite of the recently accepted Constitution and the meeting of Parliament. After his resignation, Alexei Kazannik declared that President Boris Yeltsin needed a puppet general prosecutor who would permit anything, including the illegal orders of the president and of certain administration clerks.

In addition, as the result of local elections and a systematic disregard for the presidency, a significant portion of legislative positions are occupied by people who have seized full control of local election systems. With this control, there has also been an increase in the theft of state properties by various groups of bureaucrats. Through their connections, it has been possible to define certain "rules of the game" and to divide potential territories of criminal interest. This form of government theft has proven to be very profitable.

The mafia and the regional political leaders in Russia do not simply need each other. They are gradually merging into one powerful structure which is able to ensure the success of its "own" politicians and to decrease the amounts of "unorganized" crime and unemployment. They are, thus, better able to provide their own region with products and organize their political interests in the upper levels of government. Police, the courts, and prosecutors: all of these strong structures are being placed in a position of dependence on the mafia-tied elites with regional and local power. The political system of the country resembles a "mafia-bureaucratic democracy" more and more—but it is a democracy only so far as it provides the necessary procedures of agreement for achieving the interests of the local elite. Recently resigned Minister of Social Issues Ella Panfilova announced, in an interview on the reasons for her departure, that "in comparison to present day abuses, the crimes of the former era [the period of communist power] are like childish pranks. There is so much discussion going on about the fight against corruption in the upper echelons of the elite, but it is all words, words, words."<sup>27</sup>

Those in power are gradually becoming more and more criminal. It is conceivable that these organized power groups, having seized control over a majority of regional structures, with the help of this or that branch of *nomenklatura* will attempt to obtain federal authority. This way they will be able to achieve their goals in a legal and democratic way, at least in a technical sense. The remaining questions are which regional branch of the mafia would be victorious, and whether or not they would gain control of their country's nuclear arsenal. The possibility for such a scenario would increase if the country's economic situation continues to decline. Of course, political decisions are made and will continue to be made based on the economy—and the key to today's economy is, a large degree, already held in the hands of the more serious mafia structures.

It is questionable whether it is necessary to try to prevent such a course of events. Everyone is interested in the political situation in Russia, as was demonstrated by the quick and unconditional support provided by leaders of the West to President Yeltsin during the October 1993 uprising. Western leaders are interested not only in preserving the present level of democracy, but also in ensuring a course of events that will remain relatively stable. A weak government in control of a nuclear arsenal is too dangerous for the entire world. As paradoxical as it may sound, if Yeltsin's team is not able to gain control over the present situation in the country (which is entirely possible), would it not be reasonable for the West to turn serious political attention to those who do have the power to achieve control? What kinds of mafia groups would be involved and what role would they play? At the very least, it would be important not to ruin relations with those who may well soon rule over Russia.

Social opinion within the country might not favor such a course of events. Russian relations to the mafia are complicated. On the one hand, those in power accept them as their own. Some feel that all the "true businessmen of the West" achieved their own success through illegal means. In Russia the more difficult it becomes to achieve success without breaking the laws, the more this idea is entrenched within the consciousness of the people. Numerous articles about the difficult and dangerous life of "people of business" even create compassion for their way of life.

Russians worry about the spread of crime and the growing power of criminals and corrupt bureaucrats and officials, especially as these people are closely involved not only in the activities of the criminal world, but in the stabilization of the economy, the prevention of armed conflicts, and the sale of national resources abroad. The hope for a solution to

these problems is not entirely dependent on the Yeltsin government. A majority wish to continue toward democracy and a market economy. Many assume, however, that in order to preserve his power, Yeltsin might move away from democracy and install a strict authoritarian regime.<sup>28</sup> If this is not successful, the government might recognize its own inability to deal with opposition in the country, and might break with the Constitution and turn power over to the army, with all the ensuing difficulties discussed previously.

### Will There Be a Successful Birth?

What conclusions can be drawn? They are contradictory, just as is Russian reality itself, as is all of Russian history. For more than a millennium, Russia has had a cruel central state, and all attempts to change it have come from above with the use of force; civil initiative was ruthlessly suppressed. Not one reform was completed. Even the most urgent and the most well thought out beginnings turned out to be unsuccessful. The country is pregnant with reforms and will never survive the process of their birth, being beset by miscarriages. One crisis follows after another. In the years of Bolshevik domination, and especially during the apogee of Stalinist domination, the people's autonomy was destroyed and to this day it is not clear whether it will be able to recover.

Thankfully, it seems that nearly eleven centuries of authoritarian regimes are coming to an end. The process of democratization and glasnost begun by Mikhail Gorbachev may have, unbeknownst to him, not only destroyed the system of state power and economy, but also the whole country. As a result, Russia is currently on the edge of what is likely to be the deepest abyss in its history. It has drawn close to the critical line of complete disintegration and disappearance, due to attempts at dictatorship or to nuclear catastrophes. Any such outcome would result in serious upheavals for the entire world, with no one remaining on the sidelines. It is in the interests of all to avoid such an outcome, to maintain the fetus of reform, and to help Russia be reborn after surviving the full and deep metamorphosis from the most authoritarian state in history to a modern democratic republic.

### Notes

1. See, for example, "Small Business is Developing Slowly" *Financial Times*, 20 October 1994, 2; "World Prices: Mirage? No, Drug!" *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 20 October 1994, 3; Boris Khoev, "Russia: 'Record' After 'Record,'" *Pravda*, 19 October 1994; "Deep Economic Crisis in Former USSR," *Izvestiya*, 26 October 1994.

2. Anatoly Lukianov, "Power Field," *Pravda*, 30 November 1994.

3. Report of Socio-Political Institute, Russian Academy of Science in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 May 1994, 3; Interview with the Russian Minister of Labor G. Melikants, *Argumenty i Fakty* (1993): 47, 4.

4. *Argumenty i Fakty* (1993): 47, 4.

5. *Izvestiya*, 16 November 1993.

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