

The Communist Movement in Post-Soviet Russia

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The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) was the big winner in the Russian parliamentary elections of 17 December 1995, garnering some 22.3 percent of the party list vote and 157 of 450 seats in the State Duma, or lower house of the Federal Assembly. This represented a gain of 112 seats and a near doubling of the KPRF's share of the party preference vote compared to its showing in the 1993 parliamentary contest. But communist gains were not limited to the KPRF. In contrast to 1993, a group of more radical communist formations fielded a joint party list and candidates in single-member districts: the radical Marxist-Leninist electoral alliance, *Kommunisty-Trudovaya Rossiya-za Sovetsky Soyuz*. Although the radical communist bloc gained only one seat in the new State Duma, it won a surprising 4.53 percent of the party list vote (more than the Agrarian Party of Russia or Russia's Democratic Choice led by Yegor Gaidar), thereby establishing itself as a substantial challenger on the left to the KPRF.¹ An assessment of the political profiles of both the KPRF and its more leftist competitors is therefore of more than academic interest.

One of the most important questions to ask is the extent to which the KPRF has moved beyond the Leninist character of the old Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) toward a West European form of social democracy. Bluntly stated, is its present accommodation to the "democratic rules of the game" a political maneuver or a lasting commitment in principle? Any attempt to address this question is complicated by the fact that the KPRF's rhetoric may be influenced by its adversarial relationship with the more radical and/or traditionalist Russian Marxist-Leninists. Indeed, there is a kind of dialectical interaction between these ultra-leftist communist groups and the KPRF, as all of them vie for the allegiance of a growing constituency of Russian citizens alienated from the government of Boris Yeltsin and increasingly receptive to welfare state programs. The competition among successor communist parties in Russia has led the radicals, for example, to reverse their 1993 policy of boycotting elections, while the KPRF may voice a more orthodox line than it would otherwise espouse.

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The Extra-Parliamentary Communist Parties (CPs) versus the KPRF, 1993-1995

Relations between the KPRF and the more leftist CPs, while never smooth, were not always so hostile. At the KPRF's founding in mid-February 1993, when it declared itself the successor to the Communist Party of the Russian Socialist Federation (RSFSR) at a so-called Second Extraordinary Congress, almost all the leaders of the other neo-communist formations were present. Indeed, each was competing for the political soul of the still undefined, malleable KPRF. Any number of divergent views were expressed, ranging from the assertions by Valentin A. Kuptsov (who headed the RSFSR Communist Party just prior to the August 1991 coup) that "only fools or adventurers" would support the immediate reconstitution of the USSR and that the party must fight against "dogmatism, in particular against the

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absolutization of force," to Richard I. Kosolapov's view that "the party, having purged itself of opportunists, ought to also purge itself of semi-opportunists."² Furthermore, representatives of many outlooks found their way onto the eighty-nine-member Central Executive Committee of the new party under a proviso that permitted dual party

membership for one year. Until the autumn of 1993, therefore, the rivalry among the post-Soviet CPs took place largely behind the scenes as the new KPRF chairman, Gennady A. Zyuganov, sought to mold his party into a distinct political-ideological formation.

This would all change with President Yeltsin's late September 1993 dissolution of the Soviet-era Russian parliament and call for elections to a new Federal Assembly and a simultaneous constitutional referendum the following December. Zyuganov urged KPRF members to shun the use of force in defense of the old parliament and to participate in the elections for the new one. Many of the more radical communists, in contrast, participated in the Russian opposition's armed assault on the Moscow mayor's offices and the mob march on the Ostankino TV station on 3 October 1993 (thereby precipitating the government's bombardment of the parliament building the following day) and subsequently boycotted the constitutional referendum and parliamentary elections held on 12 December 1993. Moreover, two weeks after the KPRF garnered 10 percent (45 out of 450) of the seats in the new State Duma, the extra-parliamentary CPs moved to create a Union of Russian Communists, known as the *Roskomsoyuz*, which was resolutely opposed to any kind of accommodation with the evolving constitutional order. Zyuganov declined to attend the meeting. And in early March 1994 the Roskomsoyuz leadership council declared that "the tomorrow of the Russian communist movement is not tied to the Zyuganov line."³ Thenceforth relations between the KPRF and the Roskomsoyuz group sharply deteriorated.

Among the Roskomsoyuz members was a "Leninist position" faction within the KPRF itself, led by Richard Kosolapov (a pre-perestroika establishment scholar and Marxist theorist), as well as four separate neo-communist parties, all formed in late 1991 or early 1992: the intransigently Stalinist All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, led by former Leningrad

school teacher Nina Andreeva; the orthodox Brezhnevite Union of Communists (later to be renamed the Russian Communist Party-CPSU) led by Alexei A. Prigarin; the hardline neo-Leninist, street-wise Russian Communist Workers' Party led by Viktor Anpilov in Moscow and Viktor A. Tyulkin in St. Petersburg; and the militant if more theoretically moderate Russian Party of Communists led by Anatoly V. Kryuchkov.

Initially joined together by a common animus toward the Yeltsin Constitution, the Roskomsyuz members soon focused their wrath on the KPRF, bitterly denouncing the conciliatory role its deputies played during the State Duma's first session (January-July 1994) as well as Zyuganov's ever more outspoken Great Russian nationalism. What was at stake in this growing conflict, in addition to strategic differences, was competition for the allegiance of the 450,000 active rank-and-file communists said to have been represented at the February 1993 KPRF Congress. At that time, this putative membership "pool" was not locked into any one specific neo-communist orientation. By 1994, however, the KPRF's electoral success was beginning to have a bandwagoning effect, with its bona fide dues-paying members increasing and the ranks of the Roskomsyuz parties thinning out.⁴

The radical CPs thus launched a polemical and organizational attack against Zyuganov and the KPRF in the spring of 1994. In an "Open Letter to G.A. Zyuganov" published in the journals of the Prigarin and Kryuchkov parties, one Boris F. Slavin questioned Zyuganov's rejection of the core Marxist tenets of proletarian internationalism and class struggle and his support instead for state patriotism and the nineteenth-century Slavophile notion of *sobornost*, or the "integral unity" of the Russian people. While his arguments were reasoned rather than polemical, his basic point was unequivocal: Zyuganov's views amounted to right-wing opportunism.⁵ Slavin was a key player in the developing intra-communist feud. A co-founder of Kryuchkov's Russian Party of Communists, Slavin had led two-thirds of that party's followers into the KPRF in February 1993 and had himself become a member of its Central Executive Committee. He had hoped thereby to influence the evolution of the KPRF's policies from within.⁶ His decision to attack Zyuganov publicly in May 1994 thus pointed to considerable tension and disagreement within the upper ranks of the KPRF itself.

Meanwhile, Prigarin's Union of Communists, which had ordered its members to renounce their joint membership in the KPRF back in December 1993, sought to split the KPRF's local Moscow organization by creating a rival "Moscow City Organization of the CPSU" in early April 1994.⁷ This organizational challenge, while numerically insignificant (the new city unit siphoned off fewer than 5 percent of the KPRF's Moscow members),⁸ underscored the depth of the escalating rivalry between the KPRF and its ultra-leftist opponents. This, in turn, was reflected in the composition and leadership of yet another neo-communist formation, the Union of Communist Parties-CPSU (UCP-CPSU). As if the Russian communist playing field were not already crowded enough, in late March 1993 Oleg S. Shenin, the last organizational secretary of the CPSU and one of the August 1991 putschists, had spearheaded the creation of the UCP-CPSU as an umbrella organization for all the reemergent communist parties throughout the post-Soviet successor states.⁹ In July 1994 the KPRF became a full member of this group (all the while retaining its policy autonomy), while a UCP-CPSU plenum denounced Prigarin's "schismatic activities" and Shenin invited him to withdraw from the party's Political Executive Committee.¹⁰

The KPRF's Evolving Political Profile: From Marxist Reformism to Great Russian Nationalism to Updated Marxism-Leninism

The KPRF's response to the radical leftists' attacks took several forms. First of all, rather than engaging in explicit, personalized counter-polemics, the KPRF leaders publicly dismissed their leftist challengers as inconsequential sectarians. As Zyuganov put it in his concluding speech to his party's Third Congress in January 1995, the other CPs, except for the Russian Communist Workers' Party, were "simply *kruzhki*"—small isolated circles of like-minded thinkers.¹¹ At the same time, the KPRF tightened up its organization by directing all supporters to re-register as members of this new post-Soviet formation and to pay their party dues accordingly. Only those who did so would be eligible for election as delegates to the party's Third Congress in January 1995.¹² But most important, the process of formulating a party program for approval at the Third Congress was opened up in October 1994 to broad rank-and-file participation, with twenty-six different drafts and hundreds of amendments eventually being collated by the program commission. The end result was a program that differed substantially from earlier drafts, including the one designated at the October 1994 plenum for critical review by the entire party.

Before analyzing the final KPRF program, it should be noted that on certain basic points the KPRF and its more leftist CP challengers have always been in agreement. For example, all successor Russian communists saw capitalist development in Russia, with its vast income disparities between rich and poor and its destruction of the welfare safety net, as a vindication of Marx's writings on the evils of capitalism and the need for socialism. There was likewise agreement that the imperialist West, above all the United States, was turning Russia into a neo-colonial outpost, a source of raw materials and an export market for manufactured goods.

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Furthermore, communist moderates as well as extremists attributed the collapse of both the old communist order and the Soviet Union to the bourgeoisification and betrayal of the CPSU elite, with Gorbachev and Yeltsin the arch villains. These shared views, finally, led to a common set of ultimate goals: the return to

socialism, the elimination of Western and American influence, and the reconstitution of the Soviet Union.

Where the KPRF first diverged from the radicals was in its insistence on the "peaceful" and "voluntary" realization of those goals and its willingness to participate in the democratic process to achieve them. From mid-1993 onward party pronouncements began to warn of the danger of political extremism and the need to observe legality in pressing for its aims. In May 1995 the KPRF's new ideological secretary, Nikolai G. Bindyukov, graphically described what would happen if civil strife broke out in Moscow where more than a half dozen research-purpose nuclear reactors were located: "We would all blow ourselves up!"¹³

But another equally fundamental difference between the neo-communist groups and the KPRF soon turned out to be the latter's eclectic political profile. In effect, it was a composite formation that included at least three major tendencies: Marxist reformers whose programmatic views did not differ substantially from those associated with the Prague Spring of 1968 or the Gorbachev reformers of 1988; left-wing nationalists who rallied to Zyuganov's brand of ethno-

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centric Great Slavic nationalism; and Andropov-era Marxist-Leninists who sought to modernize but not to dilute traditional Soviet ideological canons. A related current of thinking embraced what one might call ecologically correct Marxism-Leninism, that is, socialist economic development that would strike a balance between environmental protection and human needs. There was, finally, a large body of grassroots supporters in the KPRF who yearned for the certainties of pre-1985 Soviet life or whose personal well-being during the post-World War II decades had inclined them to turn a blind eye to the prewar brutalities of Stalinism. Their presence was dramatically illustrated by the large number of Stalin photos carried aloft during mass communist marches on the anniversaries of the Great October Revolution and Victory Day.

At the same time, the importance, or weight, of each of the three main tendencies cited above varied over time. Marxist reformism characterized the KPRF's initial February 1993 documents. Unabashed ethnocentric Slavic/Russian nationalism was the hallmark of the October 1994 version. And a modernized variant of traditional Marxism-Leninism took precedence over reformism and nationalism in the program officially approved at the party's January 1995 Congress.

The contrast between the final KPRF program and the October 1994 draft was striking. On the one hand, the latter depicted Russia through the ages—including the Soviet era!—as a “unique ethnic community” characterized by an innate collectivist ethos and bound together by “a single Slavic nucleus, the Russian people, including the greatrus, littlerus, and whiterus [*sic*].” This view, which could hardly be expected to facilitate the goal of a “voluntary” reconstitution of the Soviet Union, appeared twice in the October 1994 version of the program and was an integral part of Zyuganov's worldview.¹⁴ All such explicit expressions of Russian nationalism were eliminated, however, in the final party program.

On the other hand, the official January 1995 document went far beyond the October 1994 draft's declarative support for “Marxist-Leninist teaching” and “democratic centralism.” While reiterating these formulations, the final program also used traditional Marxist categories to analyze at some length the nature of contemporary capitalist exploitation, the class structure of twenty-first century socialist society, and the reasons for the Soviet party-state's past errors. Among the latter, the program claimed that the effort to “catch up and overtake” the West had led to the faulty emulation of capitalist production figures rather than the conservation of natural resources and improvements in the quality of life.¹⁵

Allusions to pluralist politics and a mixed economy were also watered down in the final KPRF program. Support for multi-party democracy and a "planned-market," mixed economy in the foreseeable future had been notable in the KPRF's original February 1993 draft program.¹⁶ Such pragmatic moderation was still apparent, if to a lesser degree, in the October 1994 draft's defense of "freedom of association in political parties and social

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organizations” and endorsement of a mixed economy even under conditions of communist participation in a coalition “government of people's trust.” The January 1995 document, however, omitted the reference to a multi-party system and circumscribed the extent and duration of a mixed economy. It did, to be sure, emphasize the use of “legal methods” to establish a

“government of people's trust.” But the function of such a coalition government was to “change the economic course” and implement “emergency measures of government regulation.” And democratic elections and “freedom of speech and political associations” were approved only in the context of explicit reference to Yuri Andropov's limited 1983 initiatives in these directions. Moreover, the “government of people's trust” was viewed as simply the first step in a three-stage transition to socialism, thus suggesting a parallel with the East European “people's democracies” of the mid- to late-1940s.

Reasons for the KPRF's Turn to the Left

Plainly, the KPRF's programmatic profile had shifted to the left. Did this mean that the radical CPs' polemical and organizational campaign against it was strengthening the hand of its Marxist-Leninist modernizers? Or that the party leadership's mobilization of grassroots input into the process of drafting the final program document influenced the outcome in a more traditionalist, neo-Stalinist direction? Or that the party's theoretical evolution reflected the radicalization of the Russian people's opposition in general to the Yeltsin government after three years of unremitting economic stagflation? Could it be that support for Zyuganov's leadership among the party's many currents of thinking was less than unanimous?

Richard Kosolapov—who, significantly, was editor-in-chief of the CPSU's flagship journal *Kommunist* from March 1976 until February 1986—has maintained that he did indeed influence the deliberations on the final version of the program.¹⁷ The KPRF's ideological secretary, Bindyukov, has corroborated his claim, adding that Kosolapov is too distinguished a scholar to remain in a party whose program he does not support.¹⁸ The influence of the Kosolapov wing is further suggested by the *omission* in the January 1995 program of the October 1994 draft's ban on dual party membership (Kosolapov's “Leninist position” group, it will be recalled, was a founding member of the Roskomsyuz) as well as the final program's more conciliatory approach to inter-CP disputes.

Zyuganov himself conceded in his opening report to the Third Congress that the final program was “born amid stormy debates.”¹⁹ According to him,

two concepts set forth in the October draft were particularly controversial: the notion of balanced global economic development and the idea of the historical uniqueness of Russia.²⁰ But other issues, for instance the question of whether to reiterate the Twentieth CPSU Congress's denunciation of Stalin, were also heatedly raised at a number of party forums, including the KPRF's late April 1994 All-Russian Conference. On the latter occasion, an estimated 30 percent of the delegates disagreed on one or another point with the leadership's programmatic theses published a month earlier. By the end of the year, however, the familiar Soviet-era Leninist political culture of discipline and unanimity had once again taken hold at plenary sessions of the KPRF's Central Executive Committee. One member, whose objections in April had elicited the handshakes of fellow delegates, met with silence in December when he pleaded for a reaffirmation of the Twentieth CPSU Congress's line on Stalin.²¹

The new KPRF program, in addition to its orthodox Marxist-Leninist gloss, actually went some distance in rehabilitating Stalin. This occurred in the context of dividing the CPSU throughout its history into two "currents": "the proletarian one and the petty bourgeois, the democratic and the bureaucratic"—in the final analysis, the patriots and the traitors. The petty bourgeois bureaucratic traitors were represented at the start by the Trotskyists and at the end by "Gorbachev and Yeltsin, Yakovlev and Shevardnadze." Without taking into account the ceaseless struggle between these two tendencies, the program intoned, one could not make "an objective evaluation of the role of such leaders of the party and state as I.V. Stalin and V.M. Molotov, N.S. Khrushchev and G.M. Malenkov, L.I. Brezhnev and A.N. Kosygin."²² In short, if the long-vilified Khrushchev was finally given his due, so too was the man he so boldly condemned for "crimes" against the Soviet party-state.

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Some communist deputies in the State Duma have argued that the program's ambiguity in this regard was intended only to placate the party's "Stalinists," who were said to comprise some 15 percent of the total membership.²³ According to this interpretation, the KPRF's real public policy agenda was set forth in Zyuganov's keynote report to the January 1995 Congress. But Zyuganov's congress report was not particularly reassuring either. For he reaffirmed his vision of the historically distinctive character of Russia, of her innate "socialist predisposition," hailing some thirty ardent Russian nationalist writers, intellectuals, and artists as representatives of his land's "authentic patriotic intelligentsia."²⁴ His foreign policy views, moreover, went far beyond the official program's support for an "independent foreign policy serving the national-state interests." Indeed, Zyuganov expressed regret for the passing of the bipolar "balance of power," and he called for the "reestablishment of traditional alliance ties in all regions of the world."²⁵ It is difficult for the outside observer to see why such ideas would not appeal to older "Stalinists."

The Parliamentary Election of 1995

In early September 1995 the KPRF published its electoral platform, "For our Soviet Homeland."²⁶ This document was more striking for what it omitted than for what it said. There was no reference whatsoever to socialism or to Marxism-Leninism. Lenin's name appeared only once, directly after that of Peter the Great, in a paragraph extolling the defenders of Russian territory from the Teutonic and Mongol invasions through World War II. The existence of a separate party program was mentioned merely in passing, while the platform focused on the policies of a "people's-patriotic majority" in parliament before the June 1996 presidential elections and those of a

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"government of people's trust" thereafter. These two steps taken together, however, were just the *first* stage in the KPRF program's three-stage transition to socialism. In other words, the party's electoral platform said one thing, its program quite another.

Demagogic populism and appeals to wounded national pride constituted the platform's central ethos. The following excerpts should suffice to convey its flavor.

Supporters of the Yeltsin government were dubbed the "party of national betrayal . . . the party of Trotsky and Beria, Vlasov and Yakovlev, Gorbachev, and Yeltsin." The foreign policy roots of Russia's present misfortunes were described as "the subjection of the country to the interests of the West, the illegal forced dissolution of the Soviet Union, the loss of strategic allies."

The new "people's-patriotic majority" in parliament would seek to abrogate both the Belovezhsky Forest Agreements and those "international treaties and agreements that infringe upon the interests and dignity of Russia." The eventual "government of people's trust" headed by the victorious presidential candidate of the "people's-patriotic" bloc would undertake a "new economic course" including "extreme measures of direct government regulation." It would restore the social safety net, crack down on crime and corruption, upgrade science and education, curb privatization, and introduce a government monopoly on foreign trade. "As stated in the KPRF Program," continued the document, "the task of the communists is not to liquidate property-holders but to transform all citizens into real property-holders, co-owners of the general national wealth." Everyone would receive for his work as much as he actually earned, "without the old leveling of incomes but also without the new capitalist racketeering." The platform concluded on a threatening note: one could either save the state and national destiny, while there was still time, by ballots rather than the sword, or face the alternatives of a "kingdom of criminals" or a country-wide civil war on the pattern of Chechnya.

The party's two lists of candidates for the State Duma (one for the party preference vote, the other for the single-member districts), published at the same time as its electoral platform,²⁷ were structured to maximize the drawing power of nationally or regionally prominent figures while also rewarding lesser known activists. The federal party list included the

permissible twelve central names as well as twenty separate regional groupings of candidates. The political profile of the first half-dozen central list candidates is suggestive of the party's overall approach. Zyuganov, of course, headed the list, followed by Svetlana P. Goryacheva and Aman M. Tuleev. Each was nationally known and also an experienced legislator. Goryacheva, a lawyer from Vladivostok, was a member of the former Russian Congress of People's Deputies who resigned as speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov's deputy in October 1991 in an early gesture of protest against the Yeltsin government. Tuleev, likewise a former Russian Congress deputy and subsequently a member of the Federation Council from the Kemerovo region, ran for president in June 1991, coming in fourth after Yeltsin, Nikolai I. Ryzhkov, and Vladimir V. Zhirinovskiy, with 6.81 percent of the total vote. Both Goryacheva and Tuleev, moreover, were among the deputies who occupied the Russian parliament building from 21 September until 3-4 October 1993. The next three among the KPRF's twelve central candidates were chosen by virtue of their specialized competence rather than their proven vote-getting ability. They included Valentin V. Chikin, editor-in-chief of *Sovietskaya Rossiya*; Yuri D. Maslyukov, former chief of Gosplan; and Valentin A. Kuptsov, the KPRF's first deputy chairman and head of the Duma fraction's *apparat*.

The selection of the candidates for the twenty regional party lists bespoke the same attentiveness, especially with regard to the top three persons—those whose names would appear on the local ballots along with the all-national troika of Zyuganov, Goryacheva, and Tuleev and who had the best chance of winning a shot at the 225 Duma seats allocated according to the party preference vote. In some cases, the top slots went to prominent politicians who were running simultaneously in single-member districts. In this way the KPRF could take advantage of their widespread name recognition but assign their party list seat (should they win the local contest) to a lesser known candidate. This category included such figures as Pyotr V. Romanov, Federation Council member and director of the Krasnoyarsk chemical plant *Yenisei*; Alevtina V. Aparina, Duma deputy and long-time party leader from Volgograd; and Anatoly I. Lukyanov, Duma deputy and the last speaker of the Soviet Union's Supreme Soviet.

In other cases the top names on the regional lists were key party activists with no specific local base of support, such as Alexander A. Shabanov, KPRF deputy chairman and Zyuganov's alter ego in the party *apparat*, and Gennady N. Seleznev, KPRF Secretariat member and editor-in-chief of the party weekly newspaper, *Pravda Rossii*. Finally, such national celebrities as theater director Nikolai N. Gubenko and Army General Valentin I. Varennikov occupied the number one position on their respective regional party lists without being burdened with candidacies in single-member districts. (Since in the final tally the KPRF won ninety-nine seats in the party list vote, all of the above-named individuals were slated to enter the new Duma.)

There were, in addition to the central and regional party lists, over 160 KPRF candidates in single-member districts. They included, aside from the first category discussed above, current Duma deputies who enjoyed strong local support but ranked somewhere in the middle of the regional party lists. In other words, the party leadership was not prepared to guarantee them a Duma seat in the event of a big win in the preference vote. There were also, of course, many other local candidates judged to have high voter appeal in

their home districts. (In the end the KPRF won a total of fifty-eight seats in these local contests.)

The KPRF thus headed into the fall 1995 election campaign armed with a platform full of populist promises and a star-studded slate of candidates. The political center dissolved under the impact, with the pro-government and the democratic blocs reduced from over 160 to about 110 seats in the new State Duma. The Gaidar ticket did not even muster 4 percent of the popular vote, a reflection not only of the negative public image of "shock therapy" but also of faulty campaigning. For example, the TV spots of Russia's Democratic Choice, with their emphasis on comparative Duma voting records, were too detailed to make

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And the last-minute debate late in the evening of 15 December between Gaidar and KPRF candidate Yuri P. Ivanov, a Moscow lawyer with a facile tongue who ranked ninth on his party's central list, was devastating: in response to Gaidar's technical analysis of the Russian economy, Ivanov charged him with being a new

Russian millionaire who knew nothing about the plight of the common man.

The center-right and far-right nationalists did not fare much better. Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party fell from about 23 percent to 11.18 percent of the preference vote and from sixty-three to fifty-one Duma seats. Contrary to the expectations of many observers, the Congress of Russian Communities did not reach the 5 percent threshold, partly because its leading candidate, General Alexander I. Lebed, bombed on TV with his poker face and muffled voice. And Alexander V. Rutskoi's *Derzhava* movement fizzled out with a mere 2.59 percent of the vote.

On the left, however, there occurred a kaleidoscopic realignment of forces as well as a surge of support for the KPRF. The generally pro-communist Agrarian Party of Russia fell from about 8 to 3.78 percent of the party list vote and from fifty-five to twenty seats in the Duma, with many previous supporters shifting their allegiance either to the KPRF or to more centrist groups. On the other hand, several entirely new formations made their appearance on the electoral scene. The first was the Party of Workers' Self-Government headed by the famous eye surgeon, Svyatoslav N. Fyodorov, and joined by the now ex-communist Boris Slavin, who ranked number eight on its central party list. Basically a social democratic party, it won a startling 3.98 percent of the preference vote. A second new leftist group was the Power to the People bloc led by former Soviet prime minister, Nikolai Ryzhkov. While it gained nine Duma seats in single-member districts, it won less than 2 percent of the party list vote, thus making it less significant in terms of the presidential election scheduled for June 1996.

But the *Kommunisty-Trudovaya Rossiya-za Sovetsky Soyuz* bloc was the most important new formation. It united the KPRF's radical challengers—the Russian Communist Workers' Party, the Russian Party of Communists, and the Union of Communists—in an electoral alliance headed by Tyulkin, Kryuchkov, and Anpilov. Its tally of 4.53 percent of the popular vote was all the more striking given the brash maneuvers of local KPRF campaigners who warned crowds at election rallies to urge their friends and relatives *not*

“to throw away their vote” by supporting it.²⁸ Although the 5 percent threshold worked against any substantial representation in the Duma by either the Party of Workers' Self-Government or the radical CPs' bloc (each gained just one seat), it is all but certain that their voices will be heard in the forthcoming presidential race. Each will be quick to criticize the KPRF and each could become a pole of attraction for disenchanted members from the various tendencies within the Zyuganov party.

In conclusion, the KPRF was successful in the parliamentary elections because, on the one hand, its relatively eclectic party program held its disparate tendencies together while, on the other hand, its electoral platform broadened its appeal to alienated but non-communist voters. In looking toward the scheduled June 1996 presidential contest, however, KPRF policymakers will have to contend with some difficult choices. If they stick to the populist rhetoric of autumn 1995 while projecting the public image of a responsible opposition in the State Duma, they risk being accused of duplicity by democratic centrists and betrayal by the radical leftists. If they try to rebut the centrists' charges of duplicity by emphasizing their democratic credentials, they may lose some support among their more traditionalist and orthodox cadres. If they play up the Marxist-Leninist facets of their program, they may undercut the radical leftists but simultaneously weaken their appeal among protest voters, that is, those people who oppose Yeltsin but also reject the past. Most likely, the KPRF will continue to straddle the fence, calculating that its network of grassroots organizers will be able to counter at the local level its opponents' focused attacks in the press, over radio, and on TV.

In the final analysis, the authoritarian trends taking hold within the Yeltsin administration in early 1996 augur well for victory by an opposition “people's-patriotic” front headed by the KPRF. But in the event of victory, the party leadership will be compelled finally to clarify its political profile. The West can only hope that, given Russia's rapidly democratizing political culture, Marxist reformism will once again become the dominant tendency within the KPRF.

Notes

1. For final results of the 17 December 1993 election, see *The New York Times*, 30 December 1995, A5.

2. *Glasnost*, 7, 18-24 February 1993, 2-3.

3. *Golos Kommunista*, 3 (March 1994); quoted in *Raznogolositsa*, 11, 21-27 March 1994, 3.

4. By January 1995 the KPRF claimed 530,000 members representing all 88 regions of Russia and 20,000 primary party organizations. By late 1994 the Russian Communist Workers' Party's membership had fallen from 80,000 to 40,000 representing 51 regions (*Pravda*, 21 December 1994), that of the Union of Communists from 10,000 to some five to seven thousand (author's interview with Alexei Prigarin, 3 November 1994); the other CPs had even fewer members than Prigarin's group. More concrete data are unavailable. With regard to party size, however, the distinction between dues-paying members and unaffiliated sympathizers is important to bear in mind since the latter outnumber the former. For example, on Victory Day, 9 May 1995, in Moscow alone some 300,000 people paraded under one or another communist party banner in the so-called “alternative” march (author's first-hand assessment and consultations with informed observers.) Western news

services, preoccupied with the official celebration on Red Square and the military parade on Poklonnaya Gora, reported an opposition turnout of only some 30,000.

5. *Golos Kommunista*, 6 (May 1994) and *Mysl*, 10 (1994). See also B. Slavin, "Otkaz ot marksizma pogubit kompartiyu (otkrytoe pismo Zyuganovu G.A.)," *Alternativy/Alternatives* 3 (Moscow, 1995): 168-74.

6. Author's interview with Boris F. Slavin, 16 May, 1995.

7. *Golos Kommunista*, 5 (April-May 1994).

8. Author's interview with Prigarin's close associate, Sergei Chernyakhovsky, 3 November 1994. In autumn 1994 the KPRF's Moscow organization had about 19,000 members, the new city unit of the Prigarin-Chernyakhovsky group some 1,500, many of whom had never belonged to the KPRF.

9. By late 1994 the UCP-CPSU included communist organizations from almost all former Soviet republics, among which the United CP of Georgia claimed 132,000 members, the CP of Kazakhstan 30,000, and the CP of Tajikistan 70,000; membership figures for the others were unavailable (*Glasnost*, 24-25, 3-17 November 1994, 4). Most Russian CPs were also affiliated with the UCP-CPSU.

10. *Glasnost*, 12-13, 29 July-11 August 1994, 3-5; also, author's interview with Prigarin, 3 November 1994.

11. Text in KPRF Duma fraction's *Informatsionnyi Biulleten*.

12. *Materialy IX Plenuma Tsentralnogo Iсполnitelnogo Komiteta KPRF* 41.2 (Moscow, 1 February 1995): 23-30.

13. Author's interview with Nikolai Bindyukov, 26 May 1995.

14. Text in *Materialy IX Plenuma*, 46-63.

15. Text in *III S'ezd Kommunisticheskoi Partii Rossiiskoi Federatsii: Materialy i Dokumenty* (Moscow: Informpechat, 1995): 96-118.

16. "Politicheskoe zayavlenie," *Sovietskaya Rossiya*, 2 March 1993.

17. Author's interview with Kosolapov, 22 May 1995.

18. Author's interview with Bindyukov, 26 May 1995. On 22 January 1995, the new KPRF Central Committee (called the Central Executive Committee between the 1993 and 1995 congresses) and Central Control Commission elected Zyuganov as party chairman, Kuptsov as first deputy chairman, and Alexander Shabanov as deputy chairman. The plenum also elected a Secretariat of five and a nineteen-member Presidium that included six deputies of the State Duma. Of the Presidium members, only I.I. Melnikov, V.P. Peshkov, and S.A. Potapov were also members of the Secretariat; the fifth secretary was G.N. Seleznev, editor-in-chief of the new KPRF weekly newspaper, *Pravda Rossii*. Bindyukov and Seleznev were also Duma deputies.

19. Text in *III S'ezd: Materialy i Dokumenty*, 26.

20. *Ibid.*, 27-28.

21. Author's interview with Boris F. Slavin, 14 December 1995; see Boris Slavin, "Pochemu ya porval s KPRF," *Partiya Samoupravleniya Trudyashchikhsya: Informatsionnyi Byulleten*, 7 (November 1995): 1-2.

22. *III S'ezd: Materialy i Dokumenty*, 105-08.

23. Author's interviews at State Duma, May 1995.

24. *III S'ezd: Materialy i Dokumenty*, 28, 35, 38.

25. *Ibid.*, 19-20.

26. Text in *Pravda Rossii*, 16 (7 September 1995): 2.

27. *Ibid.*, 1, 3, and 4; also *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 14 September 1995, 5-6.

28. Author's observations at local KPRF election rallies in Moscow.