

The Noncommunist Left, Social Constituencies, and Political Strategies in Russia

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Defining and identifying the noncommunist Left in Russia is in many ways an exercise in frustration. Whereas the organizations of the noncommunist Left in Russia are somewhat more permanent than that analogy suggests, the suggestion that we are dealing with tenuous political formations, with few exceptions, very much to the point. There are many such organizations in Russia; some are relatively stable and have a history, many are not; and all of them are relatively small and have problematic constituencies. There are three central questions to address if we are to understand the potential political import of these groups for Russia's political future. First, what are the organizations and parties of the noncommunist Left that have any stature and political salience? Second, what are their actual or potential social constituencies? Third, what are the political strategies of the noncommunist Left, and why does it seem to have such a problem in carving out a political space in contemporary Russia?

Before discussing the specific questions raised above, it is important to situate the noncommunist Left in Russia, and indeed the entire Russian political spectrum, on the conceptual map of political ideologies used in Western social science. Left—historically centered around socialist and communist movements—puts a high value on democracy in the economic as well as in the political realm, on economic egalitarianism, and traditionally views an expansive role for the state and organized social interests in the operation of society as necessary and positive. The Right tends to limit democracy to the political realm, values private property and the right to individual control over it as both natural and a defense against majoritarian tyranny, and traditionally sees the state as a necessary evil that should have as limited a role in society as possible.

While the use of these terms might have been of limited utility during the Sovi-

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et period, in the context of postcommunist Russia they are useful as a basis for comparing Russia's political formations with those of other states. The most useful comparison is with the states of Europe, the region to which most in the West and Russia argue that Russia belongs. In brief, my contention is that the Russian political spectrum is generally more Left than are those of Western countries. While not disregarding either groups that adhere to Stalinism (which I deem to be emphatically *not* a leftist ideology) or those that espouse fascism, the legacies of Soviet socialism and the effects of Yeltsin's neoliberalism have combined to "red-shift" the Russian political spectrum.¹ This implies, for example, that the noncommunist Left in Russia is more left than the noncommunist Left in the West, and that even the center-right and Right in Russia are less attached to hard-line neoliberalism than are conservatives in Europe and the United States. This feature of the postcommunist Russian political spectrum has important connotations for policy issues and constituency questions, and for Western understanding of Russia's political realities and the political implications of particular policies that Western states might adopt toward Russia.

It is in this context that the main organizations and parties that make up the noncommunist Left need to be analyzed. The noncommunist Left can be divided roughly into four groups: social democrats, socialists, laborists, and left-liberals. There are also some hybrid organizations that deserve consideration. While there are programmatic differences among the parties and organizations within each of these groups, all share certain general characteristics that apply to most political formations in contemporary Russia.

First, they tend to be highly personalistic. This is the result of policy choices made by the ruling elite since 1992. The exclusion of social groups from participation in the articulation of economic and political reform under Yeltsin undercut the ability of these groups to present their views, organize, and attract followers. Further, shock therapy and privatization effectively stripped most people and social organizations of the resources necessary for political organizing. This lack of a sustained institutional presence and the "unconsolidated" nature of political parties heighten the role and independence of party and organization leaders.

Second, most political formations in Russia tend to be highly factionalized. In part this is a result of their personalistic nature, with the leaders of various parties and groups using often obscure doctrinal or policy differences to justify spinning off groups within groups. It is also the result of the deeply ideological and theoretical approach to politics of much of the Russian intelligentsia, from which most of the leaders of these movements are drawn. Like the "red-shifted" political spectrum, this is in part a legacy of the Soviet period, although the Left in Russia—communist and noncommunist alike—has a very long history of such factionalism, as does the Left in most countries.

To begin with the social-democratic groups, they are almost too numerous to count, but there are four or five that have been in existence in various iterations for up to eight years. The first is the Social Democratic Party of Russia (SDPR), which was founded in 1990 and then split in 1993 into left and right factions. The main body of the SDPR, associated with the right wing of the party, now oper-

ates politically and in the Duma as part of Yabloko. The party has sixty-six territorial organizations across Russia, but only about 5,000 members nationwide.² This social-democratic formation is one of the few that is not associated with one particular leader.

What used to be the Russian Social-Democratic Peoples Party (RSDNP) broke apart when its two original leaders, Aleksander Rutskoy and Lipitsky, went their separate ways. Rutskoy went on to form "Derzhava," which focuses more on the "social patriotic" aspects of the RSDNP's original ideology. Lipitsky has gone on to form a new group called the Social Democratic Union, which is based solely around him and a small group of followers mostly located in Moscow and a few other large cities. Yet another social-democratic formation to have broken up is the Russian Social-Democratic Center, the motto of which was "social democracy, centrism, and statism."³ This group was centered around Oleg Rumyanstov, who in July 1998 set up a new organization called the Russian Social Democratic Association. While there are no firm numbers on membership, the association claims to have somewhere between twenty-five and thirty territorial organizations in the Russian federation. According to one source, the main purpose behind the new association is to give Rumyanstov some form of political organization that he can use to increase his visibility in the run-up to the presidential election. His main goal is to join the camp of Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov and gain a position in a Luzhkov-led government.⁴

There are two final personality-based social-democratic organizations worth mentioning. The first is the Russian Party for Social Democracy, which is centered around Alexander Yakovlev. The party has held three congresses since 1995 and has a number of organizations across the country, but it remains mainly a vehicle for Yakovlev's personal political career and does not seem to be expanding its base. The second and more influential is the Party of Self-Management of Workers, led by Svyatoslav Fedorov. While this party, too, is more-or-less grafted to Fedorov as a personality, it does have a following nationwide and receives votes from a wider public because of the Fedorov's reputation.

If the Social Democrats are divided and their organizations often personalized, the socialist parties are in no better shape. There are four self-identified socialist parties of any consequence, and how much consequence is debatable. The Russian Socialist Party, whose organizational committee is led by V. A. Bryntsalov, continues to function but seems to have little in the way of membership or popular support. The Socialist Party of Russia, on the other hand, is important insofar as it serves as an organizational base for Ivan Rybkin and his allies. The two most visible socialist parties, however, are the Socialist Party of Workers, led by Lyudmila Vartazarova, and the Socialist People's Party of Russia, led by Martin Shakkum. Vartazarova's party was founded in 1991 and has since come to serve as an umbrella organization for a number of smaller socialist parties and groups "of socialist orientation."⁵ Shakkum's organization is relatively new and like the other parties is focused centrally around the founding personality.⁶

Among those who see themselves as "laborists," that is, who are interested in organizing around labor and trade-union-oriented policies, splits have led to the

disintegration of their original organization and to the emergence of two groups. The leaders, people such as A. Isaev, Boris Kagarlitsky, and Aleksander Buzgalin, originally were involved in the Party of Labor founded in 1991. Since then, Isaev has gone on to edit the newspaper *Solidarnost'*, while some of the others are now involved in the Union of Labor, which is designed to be a labor party on the British or Scandinavian model. This group is closer to the socialist parties in ideological terms than to the social-democratic formations, but their main concern is building up relationships with the various trade unions in Russia at the national and regional levels.

Finally, one has to include Grigory Yavlinsky's Yabloko Party. While Yabloko, unlike any of the other groups on the left, publicly describes itself as a liberal party, its programmatic statements on the "socially oriented" nature of a market economy and other aspects of its political, economic, and social programs certainly put it more "left" than self-described liberal parties in Western Europe.⁷ In spite of the fact that Yabloko is extremely well organized and has branches throughout the Russian federation, it suffers from the same personalistic problems as most other parties in Russia, on the left or otherwise. Yavlinsky is known as one of the most principled politicians in Russia, but he is also famous for running his party in an almost dictatorial fashion.

Perhaps the most interesting new organization on the noncommunist Left is the Russian Movement for a New Socialism (RDNS). Formed in 1997, this organization brings together a number of parties and movements in the social-democratic camp: the Socialist Worker's Party, the Russian Movement "Union of Realists," Kedr (an environmental group), the Socialist Union of Youth of Russia, the Union of Workers, and Young Social Democrats of Russia. The movement also has connections to Yabloko via some of the participating organizations. It is more-or-less headed by Yuri Petrov of the Union of Realists, but a number of other important figures on the center-left either are involved or are being courted. The latter include Vartazarova, Fedorov, and Vyacheslav Goncharov.

Although Petrov is the titular head of the Movement for a New Socialism, the real power behind the organization seems to be the mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov. By most accounts, Luzhkov plans to use the organization as a springboard to the presidential election campaign; this helps to explain his presence and warm reception at the congress of social-democratic organizations in March 1998. While the Communist Party originally was rather dismissive of the organization,⁸ its attitude has changed since 1997. The umbrella organization, the Peoples' Patriotic Union of Russia, the main sponsor of which is the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), attempted through the movement "Derzhava" to come to an agreement with the Movement for a New Socialism on a cooperative arrangement during future election cycles.⁹ The rationale for this proposed alliance was that the KPRF saw the possibility that Luzhkov will emerge as the leading candidate for president and may end up in a run-off against Lebed in the next election. If Zyuganov loses in the first round, the KPRF wanted a back-up plan for maintaining its influence over the final outcome. This plan for an alliance fell apart in November 1998, and Luzhkov immediately announced the formation

of yet another new political movement, called Otechestvo, that will attempt to link the center left in Russia.¹⁰ At the end of 1998, it remained unclear how the RDNS would respond to Luzhkov's new organization, but recent trends suggest that it will remain allied to Luzhkov as he attempts to use the new organization to broaden his base.

The apparent coalescence of many social-democratic groups around Luzhkov has continued recently with the addition of allies such as Andrei Nikolaev and his Union of Labor and Popular Power and Ivan Grachov's Party of Small and Medium Business. Nikolaev is close to Luzhkov, has a good reputation as an uncorrupt political figure, and has good relations with the military. Grachov's party is made up of people who have money, although the party was formed only in September 1998, so that it is difficult to tell whether it will be important in the future. The real question for all of these organizations is just what kind of leader on the national level Luzhkov will turn out to be. He has aligned himself with the social-democratic and other center-left formations in Russia and has taken what for many seems to be a social-democratic approach to policy in Moscow. For example, he has passed laws providing for free public transport for veterans, has paid teachers, and has provided subsidized medicine and housing for veterans and some other categories of Muscovites. However, there is a concern among some in social-democratic groups that Luzhkov might turn out to be more a figure of the Peronist type than a social democrat when he makes the jump to the national stage. With the popular Luzhkov as their national leader, organizations on the noncommunist Left would gain an entrée to political power that they have always lacked. There is no firm evidence, however, that Luzhkov is politically wedded to social democracy or any other left orientation in spite of his recent overtures to the social democrats. Many see Luzhkov as a technocratic manager at best and a political opportunist at worst. This puts the noncommunist Left in a difficult position.

Luzhkov's chameleonlike political persona is difficult to miss. He appears as the able yet compassionate leader of Moscow at the social-democratic congress, as the fiery Russian nationalist when talking about Ukraine and the Crimea, and as a well-connected friend of big business through his links to the vast financial, commercial, and media holdings of Vladimir Yevtushenkov, which are collectively known as "the System."¹¹ Luzhkov plays the Russian political system with consummate skill, courting figures from across the political spectrum. In the words of Sergei Kornilov, writing in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, "the left hand of Luzhkov shakes the right hand of Zyuganov, while the right hand of Luzhkov shakes the left hand of Chubais."¹² Phrased this way, the dilemma of the non-

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communist Left is evident: Luzhkov plays equally to the communist Left and the neo-liberal Right, and one may question his commitment to social democracy. But being to the right of Zyuganov and the left of Chubais locates Luzhkov somewhere on the center-left. Determining whether Luzhkov is their best chance or is simply using social-democratic groups to gain power is going to be a central issue for the noncommunist Left organizations as the 2000 presidential elections draw near. As political strategies go, this one is promising but dangerous.

The problem with competing organizations, the question of their relationship to Luzhkov, and in fact all issues relating to organizational and elite politics pale in comparison to the problem noncommunist Left groups face in terms of their appeal, or lack thereof, to social constituencies in Russia. The strength of social-democratic, socialist, and labor parties has historically derived from their broad, grassroots organization and from their appeal among particular, identifiable groups: the working class, women, disadvantaged minorities, and what might be termed the “progressive intelligentsia” of teachers, students, and some professional groups. In the Russian case, the noncommunist Left has so far failed to develop a strong and consistent following among any of these groups in spite of a generally left-of-center attitude on the part of most Russians on a series of economic and social issues.

The noncommunist Left’s failure to gain significant support among labor is perhaps most important, given the size and therefore the potential voting strength of the Russian working class. The organizational and structural problems discussed above are partly responsible, but the dynamics of labor politics in the post-Soviet period have significantly contributed to the continued separation of labor from noncommunist Left groups. The ideological perspective of the labor movement at the beginning of the post-Soviet period, socioeconomic and political processes affecting labor from 1992 to 1998, and conflicts within the labor movement all played a role in this separation and continue to influence relations between labor and the noncommunist Left.

At the beginning of the post-Soviet period, the guiding ideological perspective of the most active and respected elements of the labor movement, as well as of much of the rank-and-file, was anticommunist and supportive of Western-style democracy and market economics. In spite of the hardships of the period, there was also a great deal of optimism in the early post-Soviet years that neoliberal reforms would bring prosperity and well-being. This perspective made it doubly difficult for organizations of the noncommunist Left to build bridges to the labor movement: On the one hand, many within labor dismissed anything that seemed related to “socialism,” and the noncommunist Left had a difficult time differentiating what it meant by socialism or social democracy from what had gone under that name in the Soviet period.¹³ This problem was exacerbated by the tendency of neoliberal advocates to paint the entire Left as communist. On the other hand, it was difficult to convince workers of the need for a strong, labor-based political movement to counter the effects of neoliberalism, when many workers saw neoliberal reform as their economic salvation.

As the negative effects of neoliberal reform became more evident to workers

and trade unions, particularly after 1994, this ideological perspective began to change, albeit slowly, in ways more amenable to an alliance with the noncommunist Left. By then, however, Yeltsin's policies had created other problems for labor in terms of political organizing and influence. In spite of the important role that the independent labor movement, and the mine workers union (NPG) in particular, played in Yeltsin's victory over Gorbachev, after 1992 the Russian government effectively excluded labor from participation in the reform program. The system of "social partnership" initially proposed by Yeltsin and in theory embodied in the Tripartite Commission was never taken seriously by the government and did not give labor a genuine voice in the reform process.¹⁴ More damaging still to labor's position in postcommunist Russia has been the country's economic implosion since 1992. While the need for effective organizations to defend workers' interests has increased, inflation, unemployment, wage arrears, and general insecurity have combined to strip workers of the resources and energy they need to effectively organize within the existing political system.

Any possibility of labor allying itself in a united front with any political movement has also been undercut by conflicts within labor itself, primarily along the fault line between the "independent unions" and the "official" unions represented by the Federation of Independent Russian Trade Union (*Federatsii nezavisimikh profsoiuzov Rossii*, or FNPR). Much of the trade unions' time and effort on both sides has been given over to struggles over membership, control of pension funds, access to factories and enterprises, and the property of the old Soviet trade union organization (VTsSPS). In this struggle, the independents generally sided with the Yeltsin government in an attempt to convince Yeltsin to effectively dismantle the FNPR, while the FNPR tended to align itself with the parliamentary opposition in an attempt to retain its structural advantage over the independents.

The political affiliations of both wings of the labor movement were dictated more by their internal struggles than by programmatic considerations that might have led labor more quickly toward alliance with groups on the noncommunist Left. The crisis of neoliberal reform in Russia in 1998 did much to alter the views of labor leaders on questions of political affiliation. The NPG and its leader Aleksander Sergeev finally broke with the Yeltsin government, and FNPR leader Mikhail Shmakov has been actively engaged in discussions with Yuri Luzhkov about political strategies for the presidential campaign. But it remains an open question whether labor can unite and construct some kind of alliance with forces on the noncommunist Left—particularly because they are not the only forces courting labor: the KPRF and various nationalist and regional organizations are also vying for labor's support.

The noncommunist Left has had similar problems courting two other groups that are potentially important constituencies: the progressive elements of the intelligentsia and the professional classes. Many of the leading lights of the noncommunist Left, such as Roy Medvedev, Boris Kagarlitsky, Aleksander Buzgalin, and Svyatlov Federov, are well-known members of the Russian intelligentsia. The real problem lies not in the leaders, but in the second tier of the intelligentsia,

especially the younger generation and students. A comparison with the current ruling elite is instructive. While the “Party of Power” has its leading figures, such as Yegor Gaidar, Boris Nemtsov, and Anatoli Chubias, there is also a cohort of younger people who occupy positions within the state and governmental, media, educational, and business apparatuses that have benefited from the existing system and have some ideological attachment to it. Likewise, for the past six years students have been more apt or to support the political and economic positions articulated by the current ruling elites than those of the Communists, the far Right, or the noncommunist Left.¹⁵

There is some evidence that this is beginning to change, at least as far as students are concerned. In May 1998, student demonstrations were held across Russia in response to a number of factors, including nonpayment of stipends and government plans to privatize education.¹⁶ Students have also begun to come out in support of striking workers in various regions of the Russian federation, replicating features of what have been important alliances in other socialist and social-democratic movements. These events clearly open some new ground for organizing on the noncommunist Left, but as yet there has been no noticeable push on the part of existing organizations to capitalize on the growing radicalization of this sector of the population. Similarly, the noncommunist Left has so far been unsuccessful in rallying progressive members of the professional class—teachers, doctors, lawyers, media employees, and so on—in spite of the fact that many, particularly teachers and doctors, have gone on strike, have organized themselves, and have become more radical over the past six years.

The question remains why they have not been more successful in recruitment and organization. This is particularly strange in light of the ongoing socioeconomic crisis in Russia, the discrediting of the neoliberal reform program and by extension those who promoted it, and the ideological baggage still carried by the communist opposition, which limits the appeal of the KPRF. The answer to the question has three parts. The first two I referred to above: the structure of Russia’s political system, and the lack of material resources, caused by the economic policies of the Yeltsin period, on the part of political groups and their constituencies. The third concerns the political, social, and economic programs of noncommunist Left organizations.

There are three elements of Russia’s political system that work against the noncommunist Left. First, the concentration of power in the office of the president and the executive generally at the national level and in the offices of governors at the regional level undermines the rationale for party organizing and participation. Most of the activity of parties takes place in or through national and regional legislatures, and if those are powerless, the impulse to control them through party representation is diminished. And even if there were a reason to organize to elect a president or regional leader, once the election is over the political structures make the executive apparatus central to governing and the role of parties superfluous.

Second, the fact that the Russian president and many other leaders are not party figures further reduces the salience of parties. Leaders not affiliated with partic-

ular parties are not bound by party loyalty, and who they pick for advancement is not determined by party membership. As a result, according to Andrey Meleshovich, "one of the most important functions of a political party in a democratic society, i.e., the channeling of career opportunities and determining access to power, remains underdeveloped in a system with the above-party presidency."¹⁷ This is also the case at the regional and even the local level, and is especially important in view of the fact that for nascent parties organization building from the ground up is crucial for success at higher levels. It is particularly important for the noncommunist Left, whose strength must derive from broad-based membership rather than money.

Third, Russia's combined majoritarian and proportional representation electoral system at the national level makes it possible for individuals on the noncommunist Left to be elected but very difficult for the political parties on the noncommunist Left to gain representation. Russia's electoral law established a threshold of 5 percent of the vote nationally for a party to gain seats on the party list vote. Given the relative "youth" of most of these organizations, lack of resources, and problems with programmatic content, breaking this barrier remains highly unlikely. Further, electing individual leaders without their parties' being represented only reinforces the personalistic nature of the Russian political scene, further undermining the logic of partybuilding.

Political activists on the noncommunist Left and their supporters have neither the wherewithal nor the time to engage in sustained political organizing. Whatever else one might say about the Soviet system, it did provide the population with a certain level of material security. When the system finally began to open up under Gorbachev, people began to engage in politics because they wanted to do so and they were able to, given the employment and welfare supports of the Soviet system. After the abolition of the Soviet Union and the introduction of neoliberal economic policies, including price liberalization and privatization, increasing numbers of people had decreasing levels of material support. As wage arrears, unemployment, and prices increased and social protections decreased, fewer and fewer people had the money, time, or inclination to continue such engagement with politics. The trade unions are a case in point, where membership has dropped significantly, fewer dues are collected, and increasing numbers of workers resent those dues that are deducted from their pay. For established parties such as the KPRF or the "Party of Power," which were able to either retain or acquire large amounts of property during privatization or which have rich financial backers, this problem is not so acute. But for organizations that rely primarily on small-scale support, the economic policies of the last six years have been ruinous.

In addition to the institutional and material barriers to the political consolidation of the noncommunist Left, the various organizations cannot seem to find ways to differentiate themselves significantly either from one another or from their competitors of the left and center. Not only are many of them basically only the creatures of their leaders, established to preserve the leader's political career, but most organized political forces on the Left in Russia today speak in quite sim-

ilar terms on a host of issues. That includes the KPRF, which enjoys a much stronger structural position within the Russian political system and a much better organizational position in terms of the party system, such as it is.

Although parties and organizations of the noncommunist Left emphasize different elements of their political, economic, and social programs, the contours of those programs are markedly similar. On the major issues of the structure of the political system, the nature of democracy, the type of economy, and the forms of social protection, there is little that differentiates the organizations; the one exception on some of these issues is Yabloko, which is generally considered toward the center of the center-left.¹⁸ The differences among the organizations are mainly in the realm of theory, and the niceties of the distinctions seem destined to be lost when translated into popular political programs.

Virtually all of the organizations view the existing political system as overly centralized in the hands of the executive, controlled by financial interests, and marked by unchecked corruption that debilitates the system as a whole. Thus Yabloko's program states that "it is obvious that the institution of the presidency in all the post-soviet states is developing in such a way that great power is quickly and uncontrollably being concentrated there."¹⁹ The Social-Democratic Party of Russia argues that it is necessary to "tear the government from the hands of the big bosses who have privatized it and to transform it into an institution for the realization of popular sovereignty."²⁰ As a way of returning power to the people, the Russian Socialist Party wants to limit candidates for the presidency to representatives of parties elected to parliament (without transforming the system into a strictly parliamentary one, according to the rather confusing language of the party program). Finally, the Socialist People's Party of Russia, while supporting a strong presidency and rejecting a parliamentary form of government, argues the need for social control of the government to protect society from the petty tyranny of the *chinovniki* (officialdom).²¹ The operative phrase for all of these organizations is *sotsial'noe gosudarstvo* (socially responsive state), yet the specific structures through which that will be achieved remain underdeveloped. All of the parties involved are on record as favoring representative democracy, the acquisition of power by peaceful means, and a legally codified division of powers that establishes a balance among the various branches of government within each level and among jurisdictions.

In a similar fashion, all of the parties and organizations involved support what is generally termed a *social market economy* that rejects the radical market reforms of the neoliberal period under Yeltsin. Among the common themes of the programs are support for domestic production over (but not excluding) foreign-owned businesses; redesigning and controlling the process of privatization; rooting out economic corruption and crime; and guaranteeing full employment as well as on-time payment of wages. Yabloko is distinct in not including the full employment plank in its platform, but it does make strong representations on the issue of social guarantees for those who are unable to work.²² Yabloko is also an exception on the controversial issue of land reform: while Yabloko wants to push the privatization of land, all of the parties on the noncommunist Left exhibit seri-

ous reservations about, if not outright opposition to, the sale and private holding of land, at least in the short term.

To add to the confusion as to what differentiates these parties and groups from one another and from groups that are not part of the noncommunist Left, almost all of them exhibit a pronounced nationalist bent in their program statements. Although it is less true of Yabloko, for example, than of the Socialist People's Party of Russia (which is quite aggressively nationalistic), they all focus on the need to rebuild the power of Russia and preserve the unity of the Russian state. This is a theme that has also become a mantra among leading figures such as Luzhkov and Lebed, as well as among the right-wing nationalist groups that populate the Russian political landscape. Many of these latter groups also speak the language of social and economic populism. It is perhaps then not surprising that some workers and trade union locals have become involved at times with neo-fascist organizations such as Russkoe Natsional'noe Edinstvo, even when those workers and unions explicitly disavow such ideologies.

In sum, the lack of cohesive organizations stems in large part from the nature of the political system and the lack of resources of the parties and their potential constituencies, in addition to the absence of clear programmatic differences. This is, of course, a vicious circle. Parties can not collect resources without strong organizations, and they can not build strong organizations without resources. The nature of the political system keeps parties weak, but without strong parties there is little likelihood that the political system will change. Finally, strong programs that provide clear choices for the potential constituencies of the noncommunist Left would help the organizations to recruit and organize, but it is difficult to know what a strong and popular program on the Left would look like without having strong, organized constituencies that could work together to articulate such a program and draw more people into the process.

As 1998 drew to a close, some signals began to emerge from organizations and individuals on the Left, noncommunist and Communist alike, that the gravity of these problems and the seriousness of the socioeconomic crisis in Russia necessitated new approaches to organization and political action. The main indicator has been the tendency toward greater coalescence among the multitude of groups that constitute the noncommunist (and at times the Communist) Left. The umbrella groups such as the Russian Movement for a New Socialism and the newly founded organization Otechestvo, under Luzhkov's leadership, may be the harbingers of a new stage in Russia's political evolution. In addition, some of the organizations are paying greater attention to the issue of organizing at the local and regional levels in response to lackluster results on the national level.²³ One must always recall, however, that such alliances and organizational initiatives have been tried many times before in postcommunist Russia but have fallen victims primarily to Russia's ongoing systemic crisis.

NOTES

1. For a more detailed discussion of this position, see Paul T. Christensen, "Socialism After Communism? The Socioeconomic and Cultural Foundations of Left Politics in Post-

Communist Russia," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* (December 1998).

2. Interview with Sergei Magaril, one of the SDPR's political analysts. Also see "Chego khotiat rossiiskie sotsial-demokraty" (Moscow: SOTSIIUM, 1992).

3. "Levee Tsentra," *Solidarnost'* 15 (1994): 8.

4. Personal communication with Sergei Magaril, August 1998.

5. See "Rossiia sotsialistichna po svoei prirode," *Realist* 32, 3 December 1997, 4.

6. For example, see the article by Shakkum, "Novyi sotsializm dlia budushchei Rossii," *Sotsialisticheskaia Rossiia*, 14–20 January 1998, 1, 4–10.

7. *Reformy dlia bol'shinstva* (Moscow: EpiTSENTR, 1995).

8. Anatolii Baranov, "V Moskve ob"iavilis' novye sotsialisty so starymi nomenklaturnymi litsama," *Pravda* 9 (1997): 1–2.

9. Sergei Dunaev, "Samaia nezahidannaia koalitsiia sezona," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* (electronic version), 4 July 1998.

10. "Luzhkov Forms New Political Movement," *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 2, No. 221, Part I, 16 November 1998, 2.

11. Sergei Kornilov, "Pretendent-2000," *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (electronic version), 19 August 1998 (NGA-No. 151), document reference www.ipres.ru/news/ng/98/08/data/n151-36.html

12. Ibid.

13. Interviews with Sergei Magaril of the RSDP and with independent political analyst Boris Kagarlitsky, June 1994 and December 1996. From the labor side, similar arguments were made by trade union leaders during interviews spanning the period 1992–96; see Paul T. Christensen, *Russia's Workers in Transition: Labor, Management, and the State Under Gorbachev and Yeltsin* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press), forthcoming 1999.

14. For an analysis of the "social partnership" idea and the Tripartite Commission in particular, see Walter D. Conner, *Tattered Banners: Labor, Conflict, and Corporatism in Postcommunist Russia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 23–63.

15. See statistical data in *Ekonomicheskie i sotsial'nye peremeny: monitoring obshchestvennogo mneniya*, VTsIOM Intertsentr 2 (March/April 1996) and 3 (May/June 1996).

16. Boris Kagarlitsky, "Students Radicalizing in Russia," *Johnson's Russia List*, 8 May 1998, 7.

17. Andrey Meleshevich, "Political Institutionalization of Party Systems in Transitional Countries," Ph.D. Dissertation, Syracuse University, 1998, 271.

18. Yabloko describes itself as a *liberal* party, but the content of its programs puts it closer to the center-left, in my view, than to the center-right, which is where a truly liberal party traditionally would be located.

19. *Reform dlia bol'shinstva*, (Moscow: Ob"edinenie "Yabloko", 1995), 41.

20. "Programma Sotsial-demokraticeskoi partii Rossiiskoi Federatsii," 6 February 1998, working draft, 4.

21. V. A. Bryntsalov, "Programma Sotsialisticheskoi Partii," undated text courtesy of Sergei Magaril; Martin Shakkum, "Novyi sotsializm dlia budushchei Rossii," *Sotsialisticheskaya Rossiya*, 14–20 January 1998, 7.

22. See *Reform dlia bol'shinstvo*, 167–88; "Programma Sotsial-demokraticeskoi partii Rossiiskoi Federatsii," 1, 3, 5; "Programma Sotsialisticheskoi Partii," 2–3; Shakkum, "Novyi sotsializm klya budushchei Rossii," 7–9.

23. Interview with Sergei Magaril of the Russian Social Democratic Party, September 1998.