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ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION (OSCE)

The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the Helsinki process, traces its origin to the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in Finland on August 1, 1975, by the leaders of 33 European countries, the United States and Canada. Since then, its membership has expanded to 55, reflecting the breakup of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. (The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro, has been suspended since 1992, leaving the number of countries fully participating at 54.) As of January 1, 1995, the formal name of the Helsinki process was changed to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The OSCE is engaged in standard setting in fields including military security, economic and environmental cooperation, and human rights and humanitarian concerns. In addition, it undertakes a variety of preventive diplomacy initiatives designed to prevent, manage and resolve conflict within and among the participating States.

The OSCE has its main office in Vienna, Austria, where weekly meetings of permanent representatives are held. In addition, specialized seminars and meetings are convened in various locations and periodic consultations among Senior Officials, Ministers and Heads of State or Government are held.

ABOUT THE COMMISSION (CSCE)

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), also known as the Helsinki Commission, is a U.S. Government agency created in 1976 to monitor and encourage compliance with the agreements of the OSCE.

The Commission consists of nine members from the U.S. House of Representatives, nine members from the U.S. Senate, and one member each from the Departments of State, Defense and Commerce. The positions of Chair and Co-Chair are shared by the House and Senate and rotate every two years, when a new Congress convenes. A professional staff assists the Commissioners in their work.

To fulfill its mandate, the Commission gathers and disseminates information on Helsinki-related topics both to the U.S. Congress and the public by convening hearings, issuing reports reflecting the views of the Commission and/or its staff, and providing information about the activities of the Helsinki process and events in OSCE participating States.

At the same time, the Commission contributes its views to the general formulation of U.S. policy on the OSCE and takes part in its execution, including through Member and staff participation on U.S. Delegations to OSCE meetings as well as on certain OSCE bodies. Members of the Commission have regular contact with parliamentarians, government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations, and private individuals from OSCE participating States.

THE RUSSIAN DUMA ELECTIONS
DECEMBER 17, 1995

This report is based on observations by Helsinki Commission staff in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Tver, and outlying towns and villages. The staff collaborated with the delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Prior to election day, Commission staff attended briefings on the election sponsored by the Parliamentary Assembly with candidates, party leaders, and domestic and foreign political analysts.

The Commission would like to thank Ambassador Thomas Pickering and the staff of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow for advice and assistance rendered to the staff delegation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- On December 17, 1995, Russia held an election to the lower chamber of Parliament (Duma). The election was Russia's second since the breakup of the U.S.S.R., and its first since the December 1993 election that followed the October 1993 destruction of the former Parliament building. Although some analysts had warned of the possible cancellation or postponement of the election, the voting took place without incident or violence. International observers considered the election to be free and fair.
- According to the Central Election Commission (CEC), about 63 percent of eligible voters cast ballots. The figure was higher than had been anticipated, considering the widely-reported malaise and cynicism in Russian society. The high turnout testifies to the electorate's continuing involvement in the political process, despite many disappointments and economic hardships, and to the desire for change.
- Russia's parliamentary election was a multi-party, multi-candidate contest. Forty-three parties fielded party lists totalling 5,675 candidates. Parties needed 5 percent of the national vote to gain representation in Parliament. In the 225 district races, 2,700 candidates entered the lists, an average of 12 per district. All participating parties received an equal amount of free air time on television, and they could buy more.
- The big winner in the election was the Communist Party (CPRF), headed by Gennady Zyuganov. According to the official results, the CPRF won 22.3 percent of the proportional vote, plus another 58 seats in single mandate districts. The CPRF appealed to voters who had not benefited from Russia's experiment with a market economy and were discontented about crime, corruption, and a general sense of "disorder" in post-Soviet Russian society. Zyuganov also advocated the restoration, "by voluntary means," of the Soviet Union. The strong showing by the Communist Party mirrors the electoral revival of communist forces in other former Soviet republics and in Eastern Europe, $3^1/_2$ years after Russian President Boris Yeltsin declared in the U.S. Congress that "communism is dead in Russia." Zyuganov has also become the frontrunner in the race to unseat Yeltsin in the June 1996 presidential election.
- The second big winner was ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky. Although his Liberal Democratic Party's share of the party list vote fell from almost 23 percent in 1993 to a little over 11 percent in 1995, most analysts had expected an even worse showing after 2 years of Zhirinovsky's outrageous antics, threatening rhetoric, and the entry into the 1995 race of other openly nationalist parties. Zhirinovsky now has apparently become an enduring fixture on Russia's political stage with a core group of supporters, and he has declared himself a presidential candidate.
- Among the surprises in the election was the poor showing of the Congress of Russian Communities (KOR). Many analysts had seen KOR's prospects as good, considering the popularity of its star candidate, General Alexander Lebed, another presidential hopeful. KOR did not win representation in Parliament, although Lebed won election in a single mandate district.

- President Boris Yeltsin, who represented the status quo, was a big loser in the election. Although not explicitly affiliated with any particular party, he was particularly close to one whose formation he sponsored: Our Home is Russia, led by Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. Known as the "party of power," Our Home is Russia came in third in the proportional voting, with a little over 10 percent. Russia's Democratic Choice, the party of Yeltsin's former Acting Prime Minister Egor Gaidar, who launched Russia's free market reforms in 1992, failed to break the 5-percent barrier.
- The one clearly reformist party to win Parliamentary representation was Yabloko, led by economist Grigory Yavlinsky. A declared presidential candidate, he has been a vociferous critic of Boris Yeltsin. Yavlinsky portrays himself as the only real reformer running for president with a chance of winning. Others, however, see him as a spoiler who has split the democratic movement and who now threatens to ensure Zyuganov's victory. With the June election fast approaching, Yavlinsky will have to decide—in the face of considerable pressure from many sides—whether his candidacy is really viable or whether he should back Yeltsin in an all-out effort to keep Zyuganov from winning.
- Apart from the economic factors that hurt Yeltsin and reformist parties, the election took place against the backdrop of a failed war in Chechnya, with no apparent sign either of victory or negotiations. Boris Yeltsin's numerous critics blasted him for starting the conflict, for the bungled military campaigns and the mishandled attempts at negotiations, though few offered convincing alternative policies. Yeltsin has said publicly that he cannot win reelection unless he resolves the conflict, and the war in Chechnya will loom ever larger as the June election approaches.
- The constitution adopted in December 1993 gives Parliament little power compared to the presidency. More important than the correlation of parties in the legislature or even the resurgence of communism in Russia was what the election showed about the June 1996 presidential election: Boris Yeltsin's prospects for reelection are shaky, and Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov has a good chance to defeat him. In order to remain president, Boris Yeltsin will have to convince voters that reform will benefit them, that he is still a plausible reformist candidate, that he is the only credible candidate in the reformist camp, and that it is better to keep him in office, with all his flaws, than to risk a return to communist rule in Russia.

BACKGROUND

The Russian Federation stretches from Kaliningrad Oblast on the Baltic Sea to the Bering Straits between Siberia and Alaska. The country encompasses over 17 million square kilometers of territory, divided into 89 major administrative divisions, or "subjects," and many more smaller administrative areas. It is a multi-ethnic territory, although the great majority of the country's population of 143 million is Russian (82 percent). There are 21 ethnically-based republics within the Federation, such as Tatarstan and Kabardino-Balkaria. All of them declared "sovereignty" in 1991-1992, and have sought, to varying degrees, better deals with Moscow. Only Chechnya, however, has consistently demanded full independence.

Political Landscape: Between 1991 and 1993, the domestic politics of newly independent Russia revolved around the struggle for power between the executive and legislative branches, represented by President Boris Yeltsin and Speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov, respectively. The inability to resolve that confrontation of personalities and institutions, and the growing opposition to Yeltsin by communist-nationalist forces, culminated in Boris Yeltsin's shelling of the Duma building in October 1993, and the apparent defeat of Yeltsin's foes. After the elections to a new Duma in December 1993,[1] politics calmed down,[2] but basic issues of disagreement over policy remained unresolved.

Communist and nationalist parties, which had won representation in Parliament, blasted Boris Yeltsin and his government for economic reforms that, they claimed, had impoverished the masses but enriched the few and well-connected, including many government officials. Opposition politicians and newspapers kept up a steady of stream of criticism, focusing on crime, corruption and the authorities' inability or unwillingness to address generalized disdain of the law by criminals and *nouveaux riches,* while pensioners were forced to stand on street corners selling their family belongings.

In foreign policy, the criticism focused on Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, seen as an overly pro-Western tool of Yeltsin's policy of accommodating the United States. Kozyrev also drew censure for not defending with sufficient vigor the roughly 25 million Russians in the countries of the "Near Abroad," who allegedly suffered discrimination at the hands of nationalist governments.

Undeterred by these attacks, the government of Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin has pursued the privatization of Russia's industry. More than half of the nation's stores and factories are in private hands[3] (although the hands are frequently those of the former party *nomenklatura*), Agricultural privatization, however, has proven less tractable. Political pluralism continues to develop, and the print media supply a broad range of political views. The electronic media are more susceptible to government pressure and criticism by government officials, but generally manage to cover events as they see fit.

Nevertheless, while the political repression and economic statism of the Soviet system have largely disappeared, hopes for consolidating genuine rule of law, full protection of private property, and a reasonably orderly market economy in Russia have not been fulfilled. Instead, Russia has evolved into a semi-democratic, semi-feudal state where laws, rules, and constitutional authority operate in a colloidal combination with organized crime, entrenched bureaucracy, and political cronyism at all levels. The military establishment, although crippled, is still strong enough to resist genuine civilian control. President Yeltsin's government commission on human rights, headed by Sergey Kovalev, has issued scathing reports on continuing abuses and the lack of institutionalized democratization.

Between the 1993 and 1995 parliamentary elections, the growing strength of communist-nationalist forces, the sinking popularity of Boris Yeltsin, and the rising influence on the president of individuals from the security services, especially Alexander Korzhakov, combined to move policy away from reforms. In foreign relations, Russia has toned down its essentially cooperative policy of partnership with the West and has challenged Europe and the United States in several areas: policy toward Bosnia, NATO expansion, Russian cooperation with Iran, and arms sales to nations unfriendly to the United States, to name but a few areas of contention. In the domestic sphere, the most controversial initiative was the inept and indiscriminately brutal attempt to subjugate the breakaway region of Chechnya by military force. Launched in December 1994, the war has won few meaningful military victories, has cost thousands of casualties (especially among Chechnya's civilian population), has demonstrated the incompetence of Russia's once vaunted army, and has brought terrorism to Russia. Boris Yeltsin's inability to resolve the conflict successfully during 1995 contributed to his single-digit ratings.

Meanwhile, politicians committed to reform quarreled among themselves, unsure whether to continue backing Yeltsin as the lesser evil or to find another, less tainted standard-bearer. Among the Left-Right (also called Red-Brown) opposition, Gennady Zyuganov's Communist Party of the Russian Federation garnered support from the frustrated have-nots and made good use of its organizational structures which survived the end of communism. Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the *enfant terrible* of Russian nationalist politics, adopted a "sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll" persona, cavorting in Moscow night clubs with punk rockers, keeping up a lively flow of

outrageous rhetoric, and offending just about everyone, including many of his former supporters. But he remained the best campaigner in Russia, and when not engaging in fistfights in Parliament, visiting neo-Nazis in Austria, or insulting foreign states, he was busily developing his party organization throughout the country.

As the prospects of pro-government parties sank, analysts wondered openly whether the elections would take place, or if Yeltsin would find some way of postponing or cancelling them. Instead, with a view towards the upcoming December election, President Yeltsin in mid-1995 prompted Prime Minister Chernomyrdin and Duma Speaker Ivan Rybkin to form electoral blocs, Our Home is Russia and the Ivan Rybkin Bloc. The strategem's evident hope was that pro-government blocs run by reputedly moderate, sensible politicians would appeal to the center-left and center-right margins of the Russian political mainstream and undercut the more radical, critical parties that seem poised to score electoral gains in Parliament.

Before the election, President Yeltsin tried to placate the nationalist, communist opposition parties by publicly criticizing Andrei Kozyrev and dismissing Anatoly Chubais, who had directed Russia's privatization program. Yeltsin also pledged to pay workers their wages and made other promises that threatened to undo Moscow's arrangements with international financial institutions. But Yeltsin did not renounce his program in toto; instead, he tried to present himself as the source of reform while punishing those responsible for the abuses that had accompanied reforms and appealing to voters likely to support communists and nationalists. In a pre-election television address, he specifically warned the electorate against voting the communists back into power, reminding Russia's citizens not to confuse nostalgia with the realities of communism and the danger it posed to hard-won freedoms.

The December 1995 parliamentary election, in many ways, was a sort of referendum on Boris Yeltsin and his policies. Indeed, many observers in both Russia and the West viewed the Duma elections less as an exercise to determine the legislative direction of Russia than as a run-up to the presidential elections scheduled for June 1996. For victorious party leaders, the result would serve as a primary to challenge President Yeltsin or his designated successor six months later.

Russian Federation Duma: The Russian Federation Duma is the lower house of the Federal Assembly.[4] Of the 450 seats in the Duma, half are selected from single-mandate geographic districts similar to U.S. congressional districts, and half are selected from a list of candidates submitted by parties and blocs that have won a specified minimum percentage of the total national vote (similar to the system used in many European countries).

As stipulated by Russia's 1993 Constitution, the Duma is elected for 4 years. Any citizen over 21 years old and permitted to vote (i.e., not in jail or legally confined under psychiatric treatment) may be elected. During their terms, Duma members are immune from detention or arrest, except at the scene of a crime (which led some observers and journalists to suspect that some candidates ran for seats as a means of avoiding the law). However, the Duma itself may lift the immunity of a member at the request of the Prosecutor General.

Among the specific functions the Constitution assigned to the Duma are approving the selection of the Prime Minister, votes of confidence or no-confidence in the government, appointment and dismissal of the Central Bank Chairman, initiating impeachment proceedings against the President, and appointment and dismissal of the Commissioner for Human Rights. Like the U.S. Congress, the Duma has formed committees and commissions and established rules and procedures appropriate to its needs.

Although a number of government entities, including the Federation Council, the upper house of the Federal Assembly, enjoy the right of legislative initiative, proposed legislation must first be approved by a majority vote of the Duma and be submitted for consideration by the Council of the Federation. Bills are either approved by the Federation Council or enacted in 14 days should the Federation Council not act. In cases of disagreement, a conciliatory commission (similar to a U.S. Congressional conference committee) may be created to meet and resolve differences.

ELECTION LAW

The election law was passed in July 1995. As in 1993, the law divided the Duma's 450 seats equally between single-mandate districts and party list seats. In the single-mandate races, the candidate with the highest plurality is the winner, regardless of the number of candidates running. The other 225 seats were distributed proportionally among parties fielding lists of candidates. Parties needed 5 percent of the national vote to gain parliamentary representation.

In single-mandate races, candidates were nominated by citizens or electoral associations, which were required to collect signatures by October 22, 1995, from 1 percent of the eligible voters within the candidate's district. Parties needed 200,000 signatures from throughout the Russian Federation, with no more than 7 percent from any one of the Federation's 89 administrative divisions in order to field a party list.

Voters cast two separate ballots: one for a candidate in the local district, and one for a party list. For the election to be valid, 25 percent of eligible voters had to participate.

ELECTION COMMISSIONS

Elections in the Russian Federation are organized and coordinated by five levels of election commissions. The Central Election Commission (CEC) is a permanent body with headquarters in Moscow. Each of the 89 subjects of the Federation has its own election commission (SEC), followed by district election commissions for each of the 225 single-mandate districts. To assist with the counting and reporting, 2,700 territorial (cities, regions) election commissions were added in 1995. Precinct election commissions, i.e., the poll workers, administered the elections at approximately 93,000 polling stations throughout the Federation. Unlike past practice, military personnel voted at civilian, off-base polling stations, except in a few high-security or isolated sites.

CAMPAIGN FINANCING

In theory, financial expenditures by candidates and parties are regulated by the election law. A new provision of the election law required parties and single-mandate candidates to establish temporary election accounts in the Russian Federation State Bank, with all receipts and expenditures to be transacted through these accounts.

Campaign finance restrictions were calculated as a function of the minimum salary in Russia. An electoral association, bloc, or party could spend up to the equivalent of approximately 100,000 minimum salaries, about $1,300,000,[5] on its nationwide efforts. Legal entities (similar to corporate entities in the United States) could contribute up to $26,000 to a party. Individuals could contribute no more than $390. Allocations from a party to an individual candidate could not exceed $19,500.

Single-mandate candidates were permitted to spend up to $13,000 of private donations to their campaign; individual contributors could contribute up to $260 to a single-mandate candidate, and the ceiling for legal entities was roughly $2,600. Foreigners, local governments, state enterprises, military institutions, and charitable and religious organizations were forbidden to make financial contributions to candidates or parties.

According to pre-election reports, Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia led the list of recipients with contributions of 1 billion rubles ($222,000). The Communist Party was next, having received 140 million rubles ($31,000). On the eve of the elections, there were reports that Our Home is Russia was spending money far beyond its believed fundraising success.

ACCESS TO MEDIA

The election law mandated that between November 15 and December 15, both Russian state television channels would devote 2 hours daily to all parties, with time divided in equal measure. Parties and individual candidates could buy additional air time. According to foreign and Russian media specialists reporting to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, "while there were some problems attaining to the standard of impartiality in media coverage on the regional and local levels, few such problems had been recorded regarding national coverage."[6]

CANDIDATES AND PARTIES

A total of 2,700 candidates ran in the 225 single-mandate races, about 12 candidates per district; in one race, there were 27 candidates. Women comprised 10 percent of the hopefuls.

The 43 participating electoral blocs and parties fielded lists of 5,675 candidates. The parties ballot spanned an ideological gamut that embraced highly nationalistic to hard line-communist to supporters of the classic free market, to the gender-based Women of Russia to the seemingly whimsical Beer Lovers' Party. About 2 months before the election, the Central Election Commission barred Yabloko and the Derzhava party (led by former Vice-president Alexander Rutskoi) from fielding party lists for technical violations of the election law. The Constitutional Court later overturned the disqualifications, enabling both parties to participate.

Below is a brief description of the most prominent parties on the national party list, the political figure most closely identified with the party, and major points of their platforms:

Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Headed by Gennadi Zyuganov, the CPRF claimed to support a mixed economy but advocated maintaining energy, transport, and communications systems in state hands. In general, the party focused on the population's social needs, as opposed to market reform, and demanded far greater state control of the economy. The CPRF also urged the restoration, "by voluntary means," of the Soviet Union, and savaged the Yeltsin administration for conducting a pro-Western foreign policy.

Our Home is Russia. Created in mid-1995 and led by Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, Our Home is Russia was widely known as the "party of power." Basing its appeal on the need for stability and sober leadership, the party called for continuing the government's general policies, moderated by anti-crime and corruption reforms.

Liberal Democratic Party. The LPDR is the party vehicle of Duma member and scandal-monger Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who spouts fervent nationalistic rhetoric, wants to "divide the world into spheres of influence," and favors overwhelmingly strong executive power. The LDPR has little personality beyond that of its leader, who campaigned tirelessly throughout Russia. He attacked Boris Yeltsin for not prosecuting an all-out war in Chechnya.

Yabloko. The party of economist Grigory Yavlinsky, Yabloko supports free-market reform, closing tax loopholes on government monopolies, and firm private property guarantees. Yabloko is strongly critical of government policies in Chechnya, calling for a negotiated solution.

Congress of Russian Communities (KOR). Formed originally to protect the interests of Russians in the "near-abroad," KOR gained prominence when it was joined by General Aleksandr Lebed. The former commander of Russian forces in Transdniestria (Moldova), Lebed had openly criticized Boris Yeltsin and Defense Minister Grachev before being forced out of the army and declaring himself a presidential candidate. KOR favors a strong state, is highly critical of government corruption, and demanded the reestablishment of Russian military power.

Russia's Democratic Choice. Led by former Acting Prime Minister Egor Gaidar, the party arose out of Russia's Choice, which spearheaded the reformist cause in the December 1993 election. Russia's Democratic Choice is strongly pro-free market and supportive of private property; unabashedly pro-Western, it is also one of the few voices in Russia not horrified by the prospect of NATO expansion in Eastern Europe.

Agrarians. Led by Duma member Mikhail Lapshin, the party represented collective and state farm interests. It opposed market reform in the agrarian sector, resisted the privatization and sale of land, and sought continuing government subsidies for agricultural interests.

Communists and Working Russia for the Soviet Union. Headed by Viktor Anpilov, the party called for a return to Soviet-style socialism, renationalization of production, and state control of foreign trade, under a reestablished U.S.S.R..

Forward Russia. Led by renowned eye surgeon and entrepreneur Boris Fyodorov, the party favors the free market, and proposed a contract of 15 measures signed by candidates (modeled on the Contract with America of 1994 Republican Congressional candidates) to guarantee adherence to all laws and eliminate privileges of the *nomenklatura*.

VOTING

Tver, Tverskaya Oblast: Tver is one of Russia's oldest towns. The population of the city is around 450,000; the oblast population is more than 1.5 million. Urban polling places generally serve around 2,500 voters. In the villages, including adjacent hamlets, there are approximately 1,000–1,500 voters per polling station.

In 1993 Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) gained 2 percent over his 23 percent national plurality;[7] the reform parties, about 1 percentage point lower than their national average; and the Communists, about the same in the oblast as they did nationally. The only party that bucked the trend was the Agrarians, who pulled in around 14 percent in the oblast, as opposed to 8 percent nationally.

The delegation observed no serious attempts to influence or manipulate the results, and the local poll workers appeared to be carrying out their duties conscientiously. Nor, during the final count, were there any egregious efforts to disqualify ballots without proper reason. There were no attempts, seen occasionally in the past, by heads of families to come in with the passports of the entire family and vote for each member.

Most polling places, especially in the city of Tver proper, were pictures of controlled confusion. The number of persons admitted to vote frequently outnumbered, usually by two or three, the number of available voting booths. Moreover, the unwieldiness of the large party bloc ballot, which opened to the size of a tabloid newspaper, made maneuvering into the booth physically difficult, so many voters simply marked their ballot on a nearby table or windowsill. On the other hand, some couples crowded into one booth. In one building that combined two precinct stations, an adjacent movie auditorium permitted voters to sit down and mark their ballots far from the madding crowd. This situation was conducive to "consultative voting," and many voters would discuss the parties and candidates before casting their ballot.

While the large number of choices on the ballot confused some voters, most appeared to understand how to vote and voting instructions were posted in all polling stations. Ballot security *per se* appeared adequate. Ballot boxes were securely sealed and openly visible. However, at some large polling sites in Tver, the size of the crowd presented problems for anyone trying to monitor closely the whereabouts of ballots en route between the registration table and the ballot box. If individuals wanted to walk out with their ballot, if only to throw off the final count, and—possibly cast the entire election into doubt—they could easily have done so.

The delegation observed the final count in Chernaya Gryaz', a village in the Moscow Oblast between Moscow and Tver. Initially, the chairwoman of the precinct commission insisted that observers sit across the room from where the precinct workers were counting ballots. This position precluded a clear line of sight to the count, and eventually the observers prevailed in gaining more reasonable access. The conduct of the count gave no reason to suspect irregularities. In the party list count, the CPRF came in first with 40 votes; Our Home is Russia received 31; the far-left Communists—the Tulkin-Anpilov group—and Yabloko tied at 20.

The delegation encountered only a handful of domestic observers, almost exclusively in the city of Tver. Domestic observers present were from the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the Congress of Russian Communities, and Yabloko. In the town of Torzhok, north of Tver, the only observer was a young woman in her early twenties—representing the CPRF.

Contrary to published reports that a large proportion of young people had become indifferent to political issues and would stay away from the polls, young people appeared adequately represented in Tver. In rural areas, there were fewer young voters, which may well have been a function of demographics more than evidence of disdain by the younger generation for the electoral process.

Moscow Oblast: In Moscow, where Commission staff observed balloting in about 15 polling stations, voting was orderly and turnout was impressive. The mechanics of voting paralleled those described above for Tver. No irregularities were seen or reported. Most striking was the ubiquitous presence of Communist Party observers—usually elderly, and often more than one—and the absence of any observers from reform parties. The number and representation of Communist Party observers testified to the organizational capacity of the CPRF, as well as to the dedication of its supporters.

IRREGULARITIES AND ELECTION LAW VIOLATIONS

As noted above, the observer group did not witness irregularities or conscious attempts to alter the election count or unduly influence voters. A U.S. State Department official called the voting "basically free and open despite some violations of the election law." The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly called the election free and fair.

There were, however, some minor criticisms. For example, a Moldovan member of the OSCE observer delegation stated that he had been refused accreditation in Smolensk by an election official who declared that [CEC Chairman] "Ryabov isn't my boss." Eventually, he was allowed to visit polling stations. According to this legislator, a poll worker was threatened by the obstreperous official with loss of his job when the poll worker attempted to fulfill his duties in registering the observer. Another complaint concerned Prime Minister Chernomyrdin's television appearance twice on election day, with the logo of his party in the background, which prompted calls of unfair advantage from some rivals.

In the days following the election, there were charges that the count had been rigged, at least at some polling stations, by election officials in connivance with poll workers who surreptitiously disqualified ballots of "undesirable" candidates. According to the daily *Monitor* (January 2, 1996), election analyst Aleksandr Sobyanin alleged that "many votes were added to the Zyuganovites in Tambov, Pskov, Smolensky, Lipetsk, Ulyanovsk, Bryansk, Volgograd, and Penza oblasts." Sobyanin based his charges on comparisons of similar precincts in specific regions, i.e., some precincts showed voter turnouts and results that more or less coincided with the regional norm, with other precincts registering uncharacteristically high turnouts and correspondingly higher totals for the Communists.

According to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (Europe and Asia Report, January 15-January 26, 1996), the Women of Russia political party requested a recount of ballots by the Central Election Committee, but "[t]he Women of Russia Representative found no abnormalities in the tabulative process."

RESULTS

As reported by the CEC, 67,884,200 votes were cast out of a total number of 107,496,558 registered voters, for a 63.15 percent turnout. Predictably, the Communist Party did well in the party list voting, receiving 22.3 percent for 99 seats, and adding 58 more party members from the single-mandate seats, for a total of 157 seats. Vladimir Zhirinovsky's LDPR captured 11 percent of the vote, or 50 seats from the party list, but only one single-mandate seat for a total of 51 seats. Our Home is Russia took almost 10 percent on the party list, or 45 seats, and an additional 10 single-mandate seats for a total of 55 seats. Completing the party list qualifiers was Yabloko, with almost 7 percent of the vote, which led to a gain of 31 seats, and an additional 14 single-mandate seats, for a total of 45.

A handful of seats went to prominent politicians whose parties themselves did not cross the 5-percent threshold, such as General Alexandr Lebed (Congress of Russian Communities), Ivan Rybkin (Ivan Rybkin Bloc), Sergei Kovalev (Russia's Democratic Choice), and Konstantin Borovoi (Party of Economic Freedom). Apart from Russia's Democratic Choice, with nine single-mandate seats, other parties that had been represented in the 1993-1995 Duma but did not break the 5-percent threshold for party list representation were the Agrarians and Women of Russia. They captured 20 and three single-mandate seats, respectively. Twenty-two other parties that failed to surmount the 5-percent threshold managed to elect at least one single-mandate representative. Around 80 independent candidates were elected.[8]

Of the new legislators, 157 members of the 6th Duma served in the 5th Duma, and 15 are former members of the Federation Council. The number of women members is 46, twelve fewer than previously.[9]

The two single-mandate deputies elected from the Tver Oblast were from the Communist Party of the Russian Federation.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Democratization: Russia's second post-Soviet parliamentary election was a multi-party, multi-candidate contest, with opponents of the government free to participate and to criticize Boris Yeltsin and his policies. The positive assessment of international observers about the conduct of the election speaks well of the state of democratization in Russia, even if the results were unpalatable to supporters of reform and Western governments. Russia has shown that it is capable of holding free and fair elections, despite the clear and worrying tendency away from democratic reforms over the last 2 years. Moreover, the surprisingly high voter turnout—belying predictions that the turnout would continue the downward trend of the last four national elections—indicates that Russia's electorate is not so disillusioned and dispirited as to have given up on the political process. It would appear that popular sovereignty, in the form of regular, democratic elections, has struck roots in Russia. In this connection, it would be extremely difficult for Boris Yeltsin and his entourage not to permit the scheduled June 1996 presidential election to take place, despite the many forecasts of such a scenario.

Executive-Legislative Branch Relations: The Russian Federation is governed, insofar as it is governed, by a presidential system, not a parliamentary system. The Duma does not have the power that the legislative branch has in other countries, and President Yeltsin's right to issue decrees and his control of the bureaucratic power structures will give him an upper hand in determining government policies and execution of laws. As long as he is in office, therefore, he will be able to defend his policies and programs from legislative attack.

However, regional and local officials do not necessarily observe decrees or laws issued by the executive or legislative branches in Moscow. The Russian Federation is experiencing "spontaneous federalism," both territorially and psychologically. To one degree or another, political leaders in Russia's components frequently operate independently of Moscow. Moreover, although Russia's Constitution attempts to delineate power between the central government and the Federation's subjects, Moscow has also signed separate power-sharing treaties with six of these subjects. Such derogation of authority away from the capital is not necessarily a negative phenomenon, but the lack of clearly defined or consistent federal powers and the ability of regions to avoid or resist Moscow's rules undermine the relevance and importance of the national legislature.

Third, the correlation in forces among parties and factions in the Duma will be defined as time passes. While several analysts and media reports, for instance, have sometimes categorized Yabloko and Our Home is Russia under a single "reform party" heading, Yabloko has occasionally cooperated with the Communists in defeating government policies and initiatives associated with Prime Minister Chernomyrdin. In accepting the presidential nomination from his party, Grigory Yavlinsky expressed a willingness to work with Russia's Democratic Choice *and* the Congress of Russian Communities. And, of course, individual issues can generate different and changing coalitions of support.

More specifically, if the LDPR were to ally with the Communists (which is not certain, given Zhirinovsky's tendency to support Yeltsin on crucial votes in the 5th Duma) and the small number of clearly leftist independent deputies, the anti-government forces would be able to muster around 250 votes, fifty fewer than necessary to

overturn a Yeltsin veto. Even this effort would require an exceptional level of party unity and coordination. On the other hand, the pro-democratic parties could unite on certain questions with the "retrogrades" to defeat a government initiative.

Finally, regardless of who has the majority in the Duma, unexpected things can happen in Russia, with serious consequences for the rest of the world. Questionable nuclear safeguards, cash-on-the-barrel-head arms sales and technology transfer abroad, the war in Chechnya, President Yeltsin's health and the loyalty of the Russian military are just a few of the variables that could render legislation much less important than presidential responses to unfolding events and crises.

Likely Policy Courses: According to several analysts,[10] the elections served as a polling device to allow the Kremlin to read the popular mood and act accordingly. Prime Minister Chernomyrdin's assertion that the reform path would continue despite the election results is open to doubt. More illustrative was President Yeltsin's statement "that the main task for 1996...is that the poor should live better," which was an immediate, obvious response to the election results. Last year, the main task, according to President Yeltsin's State of the Nation address, was the fight against crime. The victory of the Communists and the poor showing of the reform advocates (counting Our Home is Russia as a reform party) will probably produce the following results before the June presidential election:

ECONOMIC REFORMS: Legislatively and rhetorically, economic reforms will probably slow down, although the Communists and nationalists would be hard pressed to produce a two-thirds majority to override a Presidential veto of clearly reactionary legislation. In early January 1996, the "last reformer" in Yeltsin's cabinet, Minister of Privatization Anatoly Chubais, was eased out of office and replaced by a Soviet-era automobile factory director critical of economic reforms. With communists chairing relevant Duma committees, there will be pressure to renationalize some privatized enterprises, which could lead to resistance from new owners. Their fight to retain their property will show how rooted ownership of property has become and how the still shaky legal system deals with such fundamental challenges.

In theory, communist criticism of government corruption and the legal uncertainty of commercial transactions, if translated into policy, might lead to the curtailment of "*nomenklatura* privatization" by the most politically connected claimants, and promote more consistency in commercial law. However, local officials and bureaucrats, catching the anti-reform *zeitgeist*, might simply become more obstructionist and demand higher bribes.

THE CHECHEN WAR: The Communists' unsparing criticism of Yeltsin and general public distress over the war might incline the Kremlin toward a solution less dependent solely on military force. But the Communists are also strongly nationalistic, highly supportive of Russian territorial integrity and of the Russian military, and would have to tread carefully. With the exception of a few war profiteers, everyone wants the bloodshed to stop, but no Russian politician wishes to be accused of "losing Chechnya." Unfortunately for any Moscow policy maker, the Russian brutality of 1994-1995 may make independence the only solution acceptable to many Chechens. In any case, as long as Boris Yeltsin remains in office, the Communists in Parliament will use the war against him.

FOREIGN POLICY: Under Boris Yeltsin and the previous Duma, Russia had already been taking a more assertive, frequently anti-Western, anti-U.S. position in foreign affairs. The enlarged Communist presence in the Duma should bolster this tendency. While Russia is militarily unable to confront the United States over most of the globe, Washington will probably face greater challenges in areas that Moscow considers within its sphere of

influence, such as the countries of the CIS and of Eastern Europe. Moreover, as long as Russian exporters are able to find a buyer willing to pay in hard currency, U.S. importunings not to sell arms and technology to regimes unfriendly to the United States are not likely to have much effect.

None of Russia's neighbors can be particularly happy about the election results. The Communist Party has long denounced the December 1991 Belovezha Accords formalizing the end of the U.S.S.R. The communist faction in Parliament will likely raise the issue of denouncing or actually retracting the agreement, which other CIS states would see as a threat to their independence, even though their independent status is based on referendums they held in 1991.[11] Zyuganov's platform of a "voluntary" restoration of the Soviet Union is unlikely to reassure Moscow's anxious neighbors.

In general, the strong showing of communists and nationalists will probably lead to intensified Russian pressure on other CIS countries with respect to Russians and Russian-speakers. To date, only Turkmenistan has accommodated Moscow's desire for legislation introducing dual citizenship. With the communists resurgent and openly calling for a reestablishment of the Soviet Union, dual citizenship may come to seem like a more palatable alternative than before in other CIS capitals.

Among Russia's neighbors, the big losers in the Duma elections may have been the Moldovans, who are still unwilling hosts to about 5,000 Russian soldiers in Transdniestria. Despite an October 1994 agreement between Moscow and Chisinau to withdraw the troops by October 1997, the previous Duma had voted to "suspend" troop withdrawals. As of January 1996, there has been little withdrawal, and the Kremlin may use Duma recalcitrance as an excuse to abrogate the agreement.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES: With Communists presenting themselves to the West as remodeled social-democrats, they are unlikely to try formally to curtail the human rights and civil liberties that are codified in the Russian Constitution or have emerged with the fall of communism. But the purported devotion of the Communists to the Russian Orthodox Church may prompt further attempts by the Duma to restrict activities of foreign churches and missionary groups.[12] Moreover, as long as they are in the opposition, the communists will defend the rights of free speech and assembly.

However, recent legislation has given law-enforcement agencies greater powers and the potential to violate more easily civil liberties in the alleged pursuit of criminals. New measures in this regard are quite possible with a communist plurality in the Duma, as the issue can appeal to voters weary of crime, corrupt police, and courts that often appear ineffective in the face of organized criminality.

THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE: The elections did not so much "winnow out" losers as create the impression that the presidency of Russia was up for grabs. *Izvestiya* reported (February 17, 1996) that 31 candidates had been nominated for President as of February 14.

Nevertheless, despite the plethora of hopefuls, after the election results, many analysts see Gennady Zyuganov as a leading candidate for the June 1996 presidential race. His stolid, uninspiring persona does not prevent him from claiming the mantle of opposition leader, and most communist-leaning parties, apart from those on the outer fringes, will probably back his candidacy.[13]

Vladimir Zhirinovsky remains a perennial candidate[14] and has already thrown his hat into the ring. Other well known opposition politicians, including General Alexander Lebed, can also be expected to challenge Boris Yeltsin. Their candidacies would split the solid front Zyuganov will try to forge, and he will probably offer them deals to stay on the sidelines and await their reward from him as president.

For pro-reform political activists and voters, the main question is whether to support Boris Yeltsin, who declared his candidacy in February, or to find another candidate to hold back the communist tide. Yabloko's Grigory Yavlinsky has announced he will run, but his entry in the race would fracture the pro-reform or "lesser evil" bloc of voters, leaving him and them with a tough choice. With Prime Minister Chernomyrdin refusing to run, President Yeltsin must make the case to voters that reform, however painful, is necessary and will benefit the electorate. Moreover, he must present himself as a plausible reformer, despite Chechnya and widespread corruption, and as the only reform candidate who could defeat Zyuganov. Ultimately, the core of his campaign will be the argument that however flawed a president and candidate he might be, the Zyuganov alternative is even worse.

RESULTS OF 1995 RUSSIAN DUMA ELECTIONS*

Party		*Party List Seats*	*Single Mandate Seats*	*Total Seats*
Communist Party of the Russian Federation	(22.3 percent)	99	58	157
Liberal Democratic Party of Russia	(11.18 percent)	50	1	51
Our Home is Russia	(10.13 percent)	45	10	55
Yabloko	(6.89 percent)	31	14	45
Agrarian Party	(3.78 percent)		20	
Power to the People	(1.61 percent)		9	
Russia's Choice	(3.86 percent)		9	
Congress of Russian Communities	(4.31 percent)		5	
Ivan Rybkin Bloc	(1.11 percent)		3	
Forward Russia	(1.94 percent)		3	
Women of Russia	(4.61 percent)		3	
Pamfilova-Gurov-Lysenko	(1.60 percent)		2	

Seventy-seven independents were elected; eleven party representatives gained one seat apiece.

** Based on totals provided to the Commission by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems*

ENDNOTES

[1] See the CSCE report, *Russia's Parliamentary Election and Constitutional Referendum*, Washington, D.C., January 1994.

[2] Politics became calmer in the sense that there were no more open, violent battles among the various branches of power. Within the legislative branch, however, engaging in politics became a dangerous occupation: four members of the 1993 Duma were murdered during their terms. Two other Duma candidates were murdered during the run-up to the December 1995 election; and the respected leader of the Christian Democratic Union, Vitaly Savitsky, died in a suspicious automobile accident in St. Petersburg.

[3] "Yeltsin Fires Official Who Slowed Privatization," Washington Post, January 25, 1995.

[4] The parliament's upper house is the Federation Council, which has 178 seats, representing Russia's 89 "subjects." It has not yet been decided whether these legislators will be elected or appointed, and these seats were not up for election in December 1995.

[5] All dollar figures in the text are approximate.

[6] See the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's *Preliminary Report on the Russian Elections*, December 22, 1995.

[7] Statistics provided by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, in *Previewing Russia's 1995 Parliamentary Elections*, edited by Michael McFaul and Nikolai Petrov, 1995.

[8] See the report by the International Foundation for Election Systems, *Russia Election Results Supplement.*

[9] OMRI Daily Digest, January 17, 1996.

[10] See, for instance, the commentary of Paul Goble before a Helsinki Commission briefing on the Russian Duma elections (November 29, 1995) and Grigory Yavlinsky's election night interview with Yevgeny Kisselev on Moscow NTV.

[11] Belarus, which has sought ever closer integration with Russia, might be an exception to this trend.

[12] To his credit, President Yeltsin has consistently rejected such moves.

[13] Aleksandr Barkashov, head of the Russian National Unity party and an admirer of Hitler, has announced his candidacy.

[14] He has been running for president since 1991.