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RUSSIA'S REFORMS

MARKET BOLSHEVISM  
AGAINST DEMOCRACY

PETER REDDAWAY  
& DMITRI GLINSKI



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## PREFACE

IN THIS BOOK, we attempt to employ the perspectives of political science and contemporary history to explain some rather complex social phenomena. These two disciplines typically converge in the academic field of area studies, in which scholars who devote themselves to studying entire regions and their countries from a variety of perspectives endeavor to isolate and explain the interrelationships among a country's broad social movements, the distribution of its national resources, and its political institutions. This task, weighty in its own right, is complicated when it comes to isolating a particular set of policies that have strongly affected almost all of these institutions in a country whose political system and language have seemed rather distant—literally and figuratively—and somewhat ineffable to even the most engaged observers in the West. The task is further complicated when the scholar seeks to convey the implications of these policies during and after a profound transformation of the country's political, social, and economic systems.

In all their various branches, disciplines, and subdisciplines, the social scientists who study particular countries try to employ standard methodologies and terms of reference that will sharpen existing analysis and refine the accumulated knowledge about the country. When scholars attempt to convey that knowledge to those outside the discipline—be they students, policymakers, or simply those who have a general curiosity or concern about the subject—selecting language to communicate concepts and examples that are familiar to both their colleagues and nonspecialists can be quite difficult. Hence our purpose in this preface is twofold: First, we seek to provide a frame of reference for the names of the people, political movements, and institutions addressed in this book. The second and related purpose is to provide some background about terminology that we hope will orient the lay reader to the frenetic period of the Soviet Union's dissolution and the re-emergence of the Russian state—a truly historic, kaleidoscopic period. To our academic colleagues who are well acquainted with what follows, we beg your indulgence for a few pages.

Many lay readers will likely encounter in this book Russian names and terms that strike a familiar chord, despite the variations in the translations and transliterations adopted by various Western media outlets and publishers. Because we have wanted to convey the themes and actors in this book to as wide an audience as possible, we have departed from the Library of Congress system of transliterating Russian names, using instead the kind of spellings that lay readers may have encountered in the major Western media. Inevitably this has led to

some minor problems, especially regarding the standardization of spellings used in the text and the bibliographic references. For ease of reference, we have used, in most cases, abbreviations drawn from our own translations of the names of Russian political parties and government agencies.

Regarding the problem of how best to render in English the terms that Russians use to categorize, for example, politicians and political movements, we have tried to avoid straight translation and use words that best convey the meaning to Western readers. Complications arise, however, because of the variety of labels applied to different tendencies within a single broad category. For example, the term “national-patriots” is used by Russians for the broad category of nationalistically minded conservatives; because the latter phrase is clumsy, we usually use the term “national-conservatives.” Then, however, there are variants within this category which we render, for example, as “left-wing conservatives” because, like Gennadi Zyuganov, they are both socially conservative and in some degree socialist; or as “right-wing conservatives” because, as with Aleksandr Lebed and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, their conservatism is combined with economic views not so different from those found in Western conservative parties; or as “radical imperialist conservatives” because, for them, restoring the USSR in a new form is the first priority; or as “conservative traditionalists” because, like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, they are neither radically imperialist, nor particularly left- or right-wing, but focus mostly on reviving what they see as the traditional virtues of the Russian people.

Returning to the broader level, we have decided to categorize informal mass-based political groups with lower-case spellings. This practice reflects the categorization found in much of the Russian (and, to some extent, Western) media at the time. Thus Soviet and Russian “democrats” comprise all segments of the body politic that sought an end to one-party rule and the establishment of more representative political institutions. Similarly, “communists” range from those who have desired a return to the Soviet political order, with its specific institutional apparatus, to those whose values could be described as traditional, social-democratic, or conservative—descriptors that easily can be applied to many members of, notably, the Agrarian Party to the Russian Communist Party to the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF). Conversely, for the period up to about 1989, we sometimes refer to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) simply as “the Party,” thus reflecting the dominance of this political institution during much of the period we cover. When we refer to “Communist(s),” we have in mind specific parties or members of specific parties.

Because this book covers a period during which three different sets of political institutions existed in Russia, readers who are not experts will find the changing terms rather confusing. We therefore spell out here, in simplified form, when and how the changes took place, and how the names changed.

To begin, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was a “socialist federation” consisting of fifteen union republics, of which the Russian republic

(the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, or RSFSR) was its largest constituent member; the RSFSR was further divided into regular regions (*oblasti*) and nominally autonomous, ethnically defined administrative units, as was also the case to a limited extent within other union republics. The latter republics (in Soviet parlance, Soviet Socialist Republics, or SSRs) included those along the Baltic coast (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia); the western republics of Ukraine, Byelorussia (Belarus), and Moldova; the republics straddling the Caucasus mountains to Russia's south—Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia; and, across the Caspian Sea, the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kirghizia (Kyrgyzstan), Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Beneath this territorial division, the “classic” Soviet administrative model that existed until 1989 was based on two exactly parallel hierarchies—that of the state and that of the Party—whose structures were replicated in each of the union republics but were controlled by the federal organs in Moscow. The state hierarchy, which was politically weak but conducted most of the administration, consisted of a pyramid of legislative councils, or soviets, the members of which had been “popularly elected” after running unopposed. Theoretically—and, from 1989, to a considerable extent in practice—the executive governments at each administrative level answered to these councils. At the highest level of the union, the legislature was called the USSR Supreme Soviet; the executive branch consisted of the Council of Ministers, headed by a prime minister, and the ministries that were subordinate to it. Many of the latter ran entire industries, including their various branches in the republics.

However, parallel to these state structures was the exactly parallel and politically much more powerful Party hierarchy, headed by its general secretary; the holders of this position in the post-Stalin era were Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, Konstantin Chernenko, and, finally, Mikhail Gorbachev. At the top of this hierarchy stood the Party's Central Committee and its two main decision-making bodies, the Secretariat and the Political Bureau (Politburo).

In order to make sure that the central government's decisions were implemented throughout the fifteen republics that made up the theoretically voluntary union, this Party hierarchy prescribed all the basic policies to be adopted by the hierarchy of soviets. It then monitored how well or badly the hierarchy of soviets passed the relevant laws and implemented them. Where necessary, the Party intervened; through its apparatus of trusted officials, it could do this easily because, first, membership of the party apparatus and the legislative/executive hierarchy overlapped heavily and, second, the main job of the committees that made up the party apparatus was to steer and monitor, though not actually administer, the different branches of government.

By the time of Gorbachev's ascension to the post of general secretary, enough of a consensus had formed in the Soviet leadership that the accumulation of economic and social problems (which visibly manifested themselves during the Brezhnev period's “stagnation”) was reaching the point of systemic crisis.

Gorbachev and his associates decided that this system was too bureaucratic and inert to “get the Soviet Union moving again.” Hence in early 1989, they began to create a new system in which the party apparatus would largely disengage itself from government (and focus on ideological and strategic planning issues), and the hierarchy of soviets would start to take full responsibility for governing the country.

To launch this new system, first the old Supreme Soviet was abolished, and then two-thirds of the members of a new superlegislature called the Congress of People’s Deputies (CPD) were popularly elected—with a real choice of candidates, in many cases—and a third were nominated by big organizations, such as the CPSU and the trade unions. The 2,250 members of the unwieldy CPD parliament had sessions twice a year and elected a much smaller working parliament called the Supreme Soviet, to which the Council of Ministers was in certain ways democratically accountable. In 1990, the same set of institutions was set up in each of the union’s fifteen republics, including the RSFSR.

At this point, the problem of dual power started to arise, partly because the RSFSR had a population more than half that of the whole country and therefore possessed potentially enormous political weight. Sitting in the same city as the union’s government, Moscow, Russia’s government duly began to assert its autonomy under Boris Yeltsin: first, Yeltsin was the leader of Russia’s parliament; then, from June 1991, he was its president. Which parts of Moscow were under the RSFSR’s jurisdiction, which parts under the union’s? What happened if Russia did not hand over to the union government all the tax and other revenues the union thought were its due? The answers were not clear.

What was clear, though, was that Russia had parallel governments—the Soviet Union’s and Russia’s—competing for authority on a poorly demarcated field. As Yeltsin’s popularity rose and Gorbachev’s declined, Russia’s government gradually got the upper hand, and the personal antagonism between the two men sharpened. When the hard-line coup of August 1991 aimed to restore full union control over all the republics, and ignominiously failed, the USSR was virtually doomed. Four months later, the presidents of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus secretly initiated a process that quickly led to the splintering of the Soviet Union on December 25. Its fifteen federated republics became fifteen independent countries, even though most of them were far from ready for independence.

In Russia, opposition to the Yeltsin government’s economic policies of “shock therapy,” which were launched on January 2, 1992, quickly became focused in the country’s legislature—the Russian CPD and Supreme Soviet. A year and a half of unceasing conflict between the executive and legislative branches—caused at first by the former repeatedly trying to impose its policies on an unwilling parliament, and exacerbated by the unsuitability of the Soviet-era constitution, which was constantly amended—ended in October 1993, when the Yeltsinites dispersed the parliament by armed force. They then rammed through (in an apparently rigged referendum) a new constitution that created the “Russian Federation”

and gave extensive powers to the executive—especially the president—and few to the new parliament. The latter, elected in December, was made up of a lower house (the Duma) of 450 members, who represented voters largely through their parliamentary factions, and an upper house (the Council of the Federation), whose members, much like the United States Senate, represented Russia's eighty-nine "subjects of the federation"—its regions and ethnically designated republics and other units—each of which had two deputies. The Duma's powers differed from those of the Federation Council and, in general, caused the government more problems.

In October 1993, Yeltsin also dissolved by decree the regional and lower levels of Russia's soviets and then replaced them with unicameral counterparts of the federal legislative institutions. The chief executives of most of the regions were now called governors, but the twenty autonomous republics (for example, Chechnya and Tatarstan) continued to have presidents.

P. R.



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