CHAPTER FOUR

The XXVIII CPSU Congress And The Emergence Of Political Parties
THE XXVIII CPSU CONGRESS

It was against the background of radical changes in the political structure of the Soviet political system, that the XXVIII Congress of the CPSU was convened. The most significant development was the transfer from the hegemony of the CPSU to a multiparty system, and from the dominance of the General Secretary and the Politburo to the newly established Presidential Executive office and the new Presidential Council. As a part of this transformation, the defunct Supreme Soviet was transformed into an effective, representative parliamentary assembly. The government, headed by the Council of Ministers, previously subordinated to the Politburo, was to be made accountable to the Supreme Soviet. The Communist Party's monopoly of political power and the system of rigid internal party discipline were dismantled.

On October 1, 1988 Gorbachev was elected as the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (in succession to A.A Gromyko), as a result of the decision taken following the XIX Party Conference to combine the post of the party leader and the head of the state.\(^1\) A similar combination of posts was organized at the republican and oblast level, requiring party secretaries to gain the mandate of the Soviets for election to this other post. The role of the CPSU, particularly that of the Politburo and Secretariat was redefined. The dominant position of the Politburo over all aspects of policy making was gradually reduced, and its attention focused on internal party affairs. The Secretariat too had its functions drastically reduced.

By the autumn of 1988, the Central Committee had approved six new Commissions, each to be headed by a senior member of the leadership; (i) party construction and cadres policy (G.P. Razumovskii); (ii) ideology (V.A. Medvedev); (iii) social economic policy (N.N. Slyunkov); (iv) agrarian policy (E.K. Ligachev); (v) international policy (A.N. Yakovlev); and (vi) legal policy (V.M. Chebrikov).\(^2\) This was done with the intention to involve the Central Committee membership as a whole in the

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policy formation at the highest level. The Central Committee apparatus was simplified and reduced in size.³

In the spring of 1989 multi-candidate elections were held to the new Congress of People’s Deputies, which there after elected the new Supreme Soviet. In these elections leading party figures in a number of major cities suffered humiliating defeats. In the February-March 1990 Republican elections to the Congress of People’s Deputies and the local Soviets, the growing strength of the new political movements and parties once again demonstrated the strength of the new political movements and parties operating in these areas.

The CPSU was obliged to operate in a political system that was fast changing. On 4-7 February 1990, the CPSU Central Committee Plenum voted almost unanimously to relinquish the Party’s constitutionally guaranteed monopoly on power. The Constitution was amended removing the Party’s ‘leading role’.

On 15 March 1990, Gorbachev was elected by the Congress of People’s Deputies as the first ‘President’ of USSR, in accordance to the recommendations of the Central Committee Plenum of February 1990. Although running unopposed, he received only 1,329 votes, just 206 more than what was required to win, with 495 deputies voting against him. Gorbachev’s failure to seek election to the post of President by popular mandate was seen as a major limitation on his power and failure to gain popular legitimacy for his position.⁴ The new office of ‘Executive President’ was to be assisted by the Presidential Council, its members appointed by the President, and serving as his advisers. A new Council of the Federation, comprising the leaders of the republics, was established to provide a link between the centre and the republics, underlying the latter’s growing political importance. The establishment of the office of the President, indicated a further weakening of the Party’s role.

³ "TsKK PSS", Izvestiya (Moscow), no.1, 1989, pp.89-91.
With the decline in public enthusiasm for *perestroika* after 1988, mounting political difficulties raised serious questions regarding the direction of Gorbachev’s reform programme. These difficulties stemmed from objective factors outside the control of the political leadership and from fundamental errors by the leadership itself. Part of the problem derived from the lack of a sufficient popular base for the reform programme, which was reflected in growing public alienation and dissatisfaction. The most serious failure of the reform programme was in the economic field. The deterioration in the supply of consumer goods and foodstuffs fostered mounting public frustration, and growing labour unrest limited the leadership’s room for manoeuvre. In the field of nationalities policy the eruption of violence in the Trans-Caucasus, the growing separatist tide in the Baltic republics and a mounting tide of nationalist unrest in other republics raised the question of the viability of the USSR. In international policy, gains in improved relations with the West, could not conceal the erosion of the USSR’s previous position as the second major super power.

The effect of these interrelated crises put a question mark on the success of the reform process, with the radicals demanding more speedy and fundamental reform to democratise the system, and the conservatives warning of the danger of anarchy and disorder internally and the loss of the USSR’s position internationally. The crisis was reflected in the wider society and within the Communist Party itself, with growing signs of fragmentation within the Communist Party, falling morale, the exodus of Party members and a dramatic loss in public confidence in its ability to deal with the crisis. It was against this background that the XXVIII Congress met.

The XXVIII Congress was opened by Gorbachev on 2 July in the Kremlin’s Palace of Congresses with 4,657 delegates of the 4,683 elected in attendance. It was preceded by party Congresses in all the republics, provinces, towns and *krais*. At these meetings basic questions of policy were discussed and the delegates to the XXVIII Congress were elected. This Congress was an unusual Congress. It was the first to meet against a background of demonstrators shouting ‘*Down with the CPSU*’. It was the first
Congress, since the XI Congress in 1922, to be placed under the continuous surveillance of its own sociological service.\(^5\)

It was a unique Congress in the sense that the members of the Politburo and the Secretariat accounted individually for their period of office. It was the first Congress at which there was a direct contest for the General Secretaryship.\(^6\) Moreover, it was the most public Party Congress that had ever taken place. Foreign journalists mingled freely with delegates, and the opening and closing sessions were directly televised.\(^7\) With open differences aired by different leaders, the concept of 'monolithic unity' of the Party held no meaning. Factional groupings among the delegates and attempts to form broader coalitions on the Congress floor was another remarkable feature of the Congress. The Congress addressed the fundamental question of the fate of the CPSU, as well as the question of reform in the key areas of the economy, nationalities policy and foreign policy.

The Congress commenced with the election of the leading bodies of the Congress: Presidium (Chairman M.S. Gorbachev), Secretariat (Chairman A.N.Iil'in), Editorial Commission (Chairman V.A. Ivashko) and Mandate commission (Chairman Yu. A. Manaenko).\(^8\) The Congress was dominated by conservative party officials as revealed by Yurii Manaenko, Chairman of the Credentials Commission. Over 40 per cent of all delegates constituted party officials. The poor representation of workers and peasants (11.6 and 5.5 per cent respectively) and of women (344 or 7.3 per cent) was one of the paradoxes of party democratisation. It was as Gorbachev described it, ‘a Congress of officials’.\(^9\)

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\(^6\) Pravda, 11 July 1990, p.3.

\(^7\) Pravda, 12 July 1990, p.3.


In his keynote address, Gorbachev described the cross-roads at which the party and society had arrived:

The issue today is this: either Soviet society will go forward along the path of the profound changes that have been begun, ensuring a worthy future for our great multinational state or else forces opposed to perestroika will gain the upper hand. In that case let us face the facts squarely - dismal times would be in store for the country and the people.  

Gorbachev’s address outlined the familiar themes of perestroika. He spoke of the ‘radically transformed’ political system based upon free elections, a multi-party system, human rights and popular self-government. Gorbachev analyzed in more detail seven major areas of reform - (i) the economy: industry, agriculture and the USSR’s position in the world economic system; (ii) the crises in relations between nationalities in the USSR; (iii) the reform of the political system: relations between the Communist party, the state and the Soviets and the role of the law enforcement agencies; (iv) cultural policy: embracing the arts, science, education and the delicate matter of history; v) foreign and defence policy: relations with the West, and with the Communist and ex-Communist Worlds; (vi) perestroika, ideology and the relevance of Marxism; (vii) the role of the Party: the CPSU’s international organization, and its relations with other political and social organizations.  

Aleksandr Yakovlev, an acknowledged architect of perestroika provided a spirited and impassioned defence of the basic principles of the ‘new thinking’. Declaring that perestroika, was taking place ‘50 years too late’, he called for a ‘left-orientated and rejuvenated party’ to successfully carry through perestroika. If the party could not lead the movement it would be by-passed. He urged for unity to end the ‘civil war’ inside the party’s ranks, but warned that perestroika would progress - irrespective of whether with

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10 Pravda. 3 July 1990.

CPSU or without it. At the same time he appealed to dissidents not to abandon the CPSU but to stay "to struggle to transform and renew the party".  

The pro-reform First Secretary of Moscow gorkom, Yu. A. Prokof’ev, outlined three possible courses open to the Communist party: (i) return to the command economy, which would marginalise the USSR at 'the periphery of world civilisation'; (ii) radical renewal and democratisation of the party, 'to create it anew as a political organism'; (iii) internal fragmentation of the CPSU, on the basis of which new political parties and groupings which would arise. He urged the Congress to choose the second course. In sharp contrast the leading party conservative Yegor Ligachev declared:

> I believe the party will remain Marxist-Leninist. Some people have started talking about perestroika going ahead with or without the party. I think that perestroika without the party is hopeless.

The reports and contribution by the party leaders indicated the main ideological cleavages. Amongst the eleven full members of the Politburo, the reformers included Gorbachev, Eduard Shevardnadze, Aleksandr Yakovlev and Vadim Medvedev. A centrist position was taken by Nikolai Ryzhkov, Yurii Maslyukov, Lev Zaikov, Nikolai Slyunkov and Vitalii Vorotnikov. The conservatives were represented by Yegor Ligachev and Vladimir Kryuchkov although the latter supported Gorbachev. Amongst the seven candidate members of the Politburo Anatolii Luk’yanov, Aleksandr Biryukova, Georgii Razumovskii and Evgenii Primakov were reformers; Aleksandr Vlasov took a strongly conservative stance; Dimitrii Yazov and Boris Pugo represented the conservative tendency but both supported Gorbachev. Amongst the party secretaries were the reformers G.I. Usmanov, A.N.Girenko and I.T.Frolov, the centrist Yu.A.Manaenkov and the conservative O.D.Baklanov.

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12 ibid.

13 Pravda. 6 July 1990, p.6.

14 Pravda. 5 July 1990, p.2.
In addition to these three main currents other lesser tendencies were represented: the radicals by the Democratic Platform (V.N. Lysenko, V.N. Shostakovskii); a hardline tendency represented by figures such as Colonel Viktor Alksnis; and a small leftist current represented by the Marxist Platform.

At the XXVIII Congress a fundamental difference of principle was raised regarding the party’s role and structure. Radicals, desired to see the CPSU transformed into a parliamentary party, competing in a multi-party system and divesting itself of its links with the state apparatus. For the conservative delegates, the CPSU remained a ‘Leninist’ vanguard party, committed to Marxism-Leninism, retaining its base of support among the working class through its cells in the enterprises and preserving its links with the state apparatus including the Armed forces and the KGB.

Gorbachev asked for an ‘updated CPSU’ which would seek to assuage both the conservatives and the radicals. It would be paradoxically both a parliamentary as well as a ‘vanguard’ party, seeking to retain its mandate through the democratic process while at the same time influencing the affairs of work places and regions through the example and persuasive force of its members. It would also be a self-managing party, based upon the freedom of action of branches and the independence of republican communist parties within the framework of the common programme and statutes of the CPSU.¹⁵

The question on what kind of party the CPSU be, provoked the deepest disagreements. Directly challenging the conservatives, Yeltsin declared,

This Congress does not represent the people, or even the party. It cannot decide perestroika’s fate. At most it can decide the fate of the party, or to be more accurate, the fate of the party’s senior apparatus."¹⁶

He warned that failure to undertake fundamental reforms would lead to the CPSU losing power as had happened to its sister parties in Eastern Europe. The initiative was already passing from the party to the Soviets, with the reform process by-passing the CPSU. He

¹⁵ n.11, p.36.
¹⁶ Pravda, 8 July 1990, p.4.
demanded total nationalisation of CPSU’s property, besides it being brought before the courts to answer for its past actions. He proposed that the party should change its name to the ‘Party of Democratic Socialism’, give up its position in the army, the KGB and state institutions, and transform itself into a ‘parliamentary party’ competing on an equal footing with other parties and promoting dialogue ‘with all democratic and socialist forces’, and working towards the creation of a ‘federation of national units’.

Vyacheslav Shostakovskii of the Democratic Platform took a similar radical line when he argued for a parliamentary party, a party of social progress and democracy within a civil society that had been freed of the monopoly of a single ideology.

On the other hand, for Ligachev, a vanguard party was essential for the success of perestroika. The party should remain ‘a genuinely Marxist - Leninist party, free of dogma and stereotypes’, ‘a genuinely revolutionary party’, a party of ‘scientific socialism’ and a party of the working class. He took particular exception to the disseminators of anti-communist views, singling out for criticism the radical historian Yurii Afanas’ev.

The Marxist Platform’s spokesman, A.V.Buzgalin, placed more emphasis than Ligachev on the need for democratisation, but he rejected the call of the radicals for liberal democracy and marketisation. He suggested a way forward, based upon direct contacts between producers, consumers and the centre and (in politics) upon a radical, working class democracy based on revived system of Soviets. Representing the views of those who had initiated the RSFSR Communist Party, A.A.Sergeev of the Higher Party School, denounced those ‘rightist’ elements in the party who were intent on

17 ibid.
18 Pravda. 8 July 1990, p.6.
19 Pravda. 11 July 1990.
20 Pravda, 8 July 1990.
capitalist restoration, declared himself against 'rouble totalitarianism', and argued for the 'Sovietisation of the economy'.

Emphasizing the heroic role of the party during critical moments in the country's history such as the Second World War, Gorbachev stated that there still was the need to critically review the past so as to make the right decisions for the future. The discussion on ideology and party history led to calls from reformers for a fundamental reappraisal of the CPSU's record. In his closing address, Gorbachev, while accepting that the party should accept responsibility for its past actions, repudiated the more outspoken attacks on its record:

Those who demand repentance from the party the settling of accounts, who declare it almost a criminal organization, are simply trying in this way to remove it from political life, and there by strike a blow at the whole cause of the revolutionary renewal of society.

In its final days, the Congress which had manifested throughout a strong conservative mood, underwent a significant change in attitude. The weakening of the conservative onslaught, allowed Gorbachev to recapture the initiative. The battle between the reformers and conservatives was waged in the plenary sessions and in the sections. The Congress continued its work in the seven sections, under their elected chairmen: (i) Party renewal, organizational-political aspect (I.I Mel'nikov); (ii) Party ideological work (I.T. Frolov); (iii) Party relations with the Soviets, social-political organizations and movements (V.A. Kuptsov); (iv) Nationalities policy (A.N. Girenko); (v) Social-economic issues (S.I. Gurenko); (vi) Agrarian policy (Ye.K. Ligachev); (vii) International activity of the CPSU (V.M.Falin). On 7 July the Congress heard reports from the sections presented by their chairmen. The sections saw some of the most heated debates of the Congress.

21 Pravda, 8 July 1990, p.6.
22 Pravda, 14 July 1990.
The strength of the conservative assault in the early days of the Congress soon proved to be deceptive. In spite of the support which Ligachev got in the Congress, no coherent conservative platform emerged. The fear, that a party split would lead to disaster sustained the mood in favour of conciliation. The view that the CPSU was the only force capable of successfully carrying through perestroika and surmounting the crisis was repeated again and again by the conservative spokesman.23

A limited but a significant split did take place at the Congress on July 13, when Boris Yeltsin announced that he was leaving the party entirely. He declared that the party had become increasingly irrelevant:

This Congress cannot decide perestroika’s fate; I am announcing my resignation from the CPSU. I cannot be guided in my decisions by the CPSU alone. I cannot fulfil the instructions of the CPSU alone.24

The decision to quit the CPSU by the leading radical in the CPSU and one of the most popular political figures in the USSR was a major blow to the advocates of reform, but had the effect of compelling the party to seriously appraise its situation.25 Vyacheslav Shostakovskii, followed with a similar declaration on behalf of the Democratic Platform. Gavrill Popov and Anatolli Sobchak, the radical mayors of Moscow and Leningrad, in announcing their resignation from the party, blamed the Congress for its complete inability in offering the country a viable programme of transition to a new society. A press conference held by the five departing members of the Democratic Platform (Vyacheslav Shostakovskii, Anatolli Sobchak, Gavrill Popov, Yurii Boldyrev and Vladimir Lysenko), announced they were leaving to set up a

23 Pravda. 6 July 1990.

24 International Herald Tribune (Hongkong), 14-15 July 1990.

25 n.9, p.28.
democratic party, based on the parliamentary model, and appealed to other party members to join them.\textsuperscript{26}

These developments had a sobering effect on the Congress and encouraged a search for reconciliation. The coalminers strike on July 11 also made the delegates aware of the real dangers threatening the party. The search for compromise was reflected in the Congress' decisions and resolutions. The Congress spent a great deal of its time in approving successive draft resolutions on Gorbachev's Central Committee report, on the new party statutes, and the programmatic declaration \textit{`Towards a Humane Democratic Socialism'}. The Programmatic Declaration, entitled \textit{`Towards a Humane, Democratic Socialism'}, welcomed the \textit{`beginning of democratic changes in the country's life'}. Rejecting both the \textit{`conservative-bureaucratic' current which sought a return to authoritarianism}, and those who disclaimed the \textit{`socialist option'}, it indicated a middle course. The socialist project was to be redefined, placing man at the centre of its concerns. Central priority was accorded to the economic crisis but at the same time the need for the development of civil rights and freedom was stressed. On the question of state organization the programme adhered to the principle of law-governed state which \textit{`excludes the dictatorship of any class, party, grouping or managerial bureaucracy'} and ensured access for all citizens to participate in state and public affairs. Condemning the damage done by \textit{`the ideological and moral degeneration of a number of party leaders'}, the programme stressed the need to undertake the renewal of the party. The party accepted responsibility for past mistakes and the crimes of the Stalin era and sought \textit{`free competition with other socio-political forces'}, retaining for itself a theoretical, ideological and political function but working through its members in state and social organizations. The party had to democratise itself and turn the principle of democratic centralism into

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a reality. The CPSU had to renew its links with the workers, peasants, intelligensia, and young people.27

The commission on drafting the new party statutes was chaired by Gorbachev himself. Urging the adoption of statutes which would organically combine within the party the principle of centralism with the greatest democracy, he was against turning the party into a debating club. Favouring a unitary CPSU with greater independence for the republican Communist Parties, he urged the retention of the party’s links with the armed forces, the KGB and the law enforcement agencies.

The new Party Statutes introduced some significant changes. The principle of democratic centralism, missing in the original draft, was reinstated in both published versions and was retained, after some discussion, in the final and definitive text.28 There was much more emphasis upon the rights of ordinary members and party branches. Members were given greater rights to information about party committees at all levels and the right to ‘evaluate’ their work (Articles 2 & 9). The circumstances in which all party discussions and referenda had to be held were made more precise (Article 6). Branches were to be allowed to express their views on ‘important questions’ before they were considered by the Central Committee (Article 28), and were given the right to retain up to half of their subscription income (Article 40). Other dramatic changes included the explicit right to form ‘platforms’ but not organized factions (Article 16), greater respect for the rights of the minority (Article 13) and official endorsement of ‘horizontal structures’ such as political clubs and seminars (Article 16) of a kind that had so far been regarded as incompatible with democratic centralism.

The Congress adopted a series of resolutions covering aspects of economic and environmental policy, the nationalities question, and military policy. A number of resolutions reflected the party’s concern with society, with particular emphasis being placed on the need to consolidate its links with the working class, the peasantry, the

27 Pravda. 15 July 1990.
intelligentsia, the nationalities and the young people. Adopting a high moral tone, the crisis in Soviet society was presented not simply as political but as a moral and spiritual one.

The New Leadership in the Party

Both reformers and conservative spokesmen spoke of Gorbachev as the only possible choice as General Secretary. O.D. Baklanov and A.I. Tepleniev supported Gorbachev as General Secretary and President. The conservative Yu.A. Peskov spoke for combining the post of General Secretary and President as a safeguard against destabilisation.

On July 10 the Congress elected the new party General Secretary. Nine alternative candidates were nominated from the floor including Shevardnadze and Yakovlev. All candidates withdrew except Gorbachev and Teimuraz Avaliani. Gorbachev won easily securing 3,411 votes to just 501 votes for Avaliani. With votes being cast both for and against each candidate, a significant 1,116 delegates voted against Gorbachev.

The Congress established an entirely new post of that of deputy General Secretary. Nine names that were nominated included Ligachev and Gorbachev's nominee Vladimir Ivashko. The need for unity, ruled out the election of Ligachev, who although popular was considered as a 'divisive' candidate. Ligachev suffered a humiliating defeat, receiving only 776 votes to the 3,642 votes cast for Ivashko.

The election of the new Central Committee underlined the tensions at the Congress. Two separate lists of candidates were drawn. List 1 consisted of 311 candidates who had been nominated by republican, krai and oblast party organizations and by party organizations within the state institutions. List 2 contained 99 candidates.

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29 Pravda, 7 July 1990.
30 Pravda, 6 July 1990.
who had been nominated at the Congress, primarily representatives of central party organs and ministries besides some secretaries of primary party organs. Both lists included the names of a number of rank and file workers and collective farm workers. The General Secretary and the deputy General Secretary were automatically made Central Committee members.  

Gorbachev succeeded in using the nomination process for both lists to secure the election of a number of leading reformers. The results indicated considerable dissatisfaction among the conservative delegates. In List-1 strong votes were cast against leading economic reformers such as Bunich (1,088), Latsis (1,139) and Shatalin (1,100). Pro-reform candidates on List-2 received even heavier protest votes - Kruchina (2,000), the economist Abalkin (1,681), the historian Roy Medvedev (1,875) and the actor M.A. Ul'yanov (1,768).  

The new 412-member Central Committee represented a new generation of leaders. Only 59 were members of the previous Central Committee. The Congress elected a new Central Control Commission, with 165 members, headed by Boris Pugo, previously head of the party Control Committee and a former head of the Latvian KGB.  

The Congress ended on July 13. The new Central Committee met on July 13-14 and elected by secret ballot a new twenty-four member Politburo, and a new Secretariat. Only Gorbachev retained his seat in the Politburo. For the first time not a single member of the government or of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet was in the Politburo.  

The results of the XXVIII Congress was paradoxical. Gorbachev emerged successful from a largely hostile Congress by adopting a strategy which isolated the hardliners and accommodated moderate conservatives. Although a major split was averted

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32 Izvestiya, 13 July 1990.
34 n.9, p.37.
35 Pravda, 13 July 1990.
the Congress revealed deep divisions within the party. The resolutions of the Congress had a provisional, programmatic character and awaited more concrete finalisation by the Supreme Soviet. The democratisation that was taking place in society had already escaped the party’s control. The Congress simply registered a situation that already existed when it called for cooperation and even coalition with the parties and movements that had come into existence outside its ranks. It was clear that although the party had won the battle to preserve its organisational unity, it had lost the war to maintain its dominant position in Soviet political life.

RUSSIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OF 1991

In 1991 Boris Yeltsin became the first elected leader in a thousand years of Russian history. He became not just Russia’s first President but the first leader of any of the Soviet republics (apart from Turkmenia and Georgia, where Gamsakhurdia was subsequently deposed) to secure a popular mandate of this kind. By the end of the year most of the remaining Soviet republics had also moved in the same direction, i.e., towards a presidential system with an elected chief executive; among them the prominent were Kravchuk in Ukraine, Nazarbaev in Kazakhstan and Karimov in Uzbekistan. The Russian presidential elections were accordingly a decisive moment: in shifting legitimacy from the USSR to its republics, from parliaments towards presidents, and from Gorbachev and a still dominant CPSU towards Yeltsin and the grouping of radical democrats that provided his most active supporters.36

Yeltsin had left the Communist Party Politburo in February 1988 following a public disagreement with Gorbachev and his dismissal, in November 1987, as Moscow Party First Secretary. Briefly a minister in the construction industry, his return to political prominence began in March 1989 when he was returned by the Moscow No.1

national territorial constituency of the USSR Congress of People's Deputies. His margin of victory, over five million votes, was so overwhelming that it entered the Guinness Book of Records.\textsuperscript{37} Yeltsin was again successful in the Russian republican elections of March 1990, and at the end of May, after a series of inconclusive ballots, he became Chairman of the newly convened Russian Supreme Soviet. The parliament, under Yeltsin's guidance became increasingly assertive: on 12 June it adopted a declaration of sovereignty in terms of which its own decisions had precedence over those of the USSR as a whole. A series of related legislation placed natural resources, foreign trade and budgetary control under Russian rather than all-union jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{38}

The decision to create the office of the Russian president had not originally been controversial.\textsuperscript{39} At the First Russian Congress of People's Deputies, in May and June 1990, the proposal had the support of deputies from all the parliamentary factions. Yeltsin's most implacable opponents, the Communists of Russia too were in favour of the change and themselves proposed to amend the constitution in this sense. With Yeltsin becoming the parliamentary chairman and (in July 1990) his resignation from the CPSU, the issue of the presidency became more partisan and the question of who might fill the position a bitterly contested one. At the Second Russian Congress, in December 1990, all that was agreed was that the Supreme Soviet and its Constitutional Committee should consider appropriate amendments to the Russian Constitution.\textsuperscript{40} As a constitutional amendment would require a two-third majority in the Congress, Yeltsin's hardline opponents were well placed to resist any change that would be to their disadvantage. It was the decision to call a referendum on the future of USSR, which completely altered the position. On 25 January 1991 the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet proposed

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\item \textsuperscript{37} \textit{Soviet Weekly} (Moscow), 11 October 1990, p.7.
\item \textsuperscript{38} n.36, p.286.
\item \textsuperscript{40} ibid., p.188.
\end{itemize}
an additional question on the establishment of a directly elected Russian presidency: its proposal was approved by the Supreme Soviet on 7 February, and on 17 March Russian voters were asked to express their view. On a 75 per cent turnout, a resounding 69.9 per cent approved the change.\footnote{Izvestiya, 26 March 1991, p.2.}

The outcome of the referendum, and the open expression of public support throughout the republic, influenced the Congress of People’s Deputies in such a way that on 5 April it was resolved that a presidential election would be held on 12 June 1991. The Supreme Soviet was asked to prepare a law on the presidency as well as any amendments that might be necessary to the Russian Constitution. The Russian Government in the meantime, would exercise full law making powers.\footnote{Izvestiya, 6 April 1991, pp.1,3.} The changes concerned were duly approved by the Fourth Russian Congress on 24 April 1991. It was agreed that candidates for the Russian presidency must be citizens aged between 35 and 65, and that they could hold the office for no more than two five year terms. Nominations could be made by political parties, trade unions and public organizations, or other grouping that were able to collect 1,000,000 signatures in their support. The president, for his part, could not be a deputy or a member of a political party; he would enjoy the right of legislative initiative, report to the Congress once a year, and appoint the Russian premier with the consent of the Supreme Soviet.\footnote{For the text of the law see, "Vedomosti S ezda narodnych deputatov RSFSR i verkhovnogo Soveta RSFSR", 17, 1991, art. 512, in n.36.}

The Election Campaign and the Result

From the very start of the election campaign, Yeltsin was the ‘Candidate No. 1.’\footnote{Izvestiya, 23 May 1991, p.3.} In the various interviews that he gave to the press, he claimed that the status of
USSR had been considerably enhanced since his election as parliamentary chairman. There was a Russian radio and television service; the first treaties had been concluded between Russia and other sovereign states; and the central leadership had 'started to take Russia and the other republics into account'. The primary emphasis of his election programme was 'radical reforms' particularly in the economy where he declared the transition to market relations would be pursued more vigorously. Another priority was 'civil peace and stability in society'. Speaking to an election meeting shortly before the poll, Yeltsin condemned the 'totalitarian system' that had brought Russia to its crisis and promised, if it was necessary, to 'fight the Lord God himself' to uphold the republic and its sovereignty.45

Yeltsin's main rival was the former Soviet Prime Minister, Nikolai Ryzhkov. Ryzhkov counted particularly upon the support of the non-Russian areas of the Russian Federation, and upon working people in factories, collective and state farms. He also expected the support of the Communist Party. His own proposals of reform were based upon those the Soviet government had put forward the previous year, involving a 'regulated' rather than an Adam Smith market.46 Yeltsin's 'shock therapy', he declared, would lead to a 'social explosion'.47 Ryzhkov pointed out that he was not the official candidate of the CPSU, although the Russian Communist Party did subsequently give him its official backing.48

The liberal former interior minister, Vadim Bakatin, was in fact understood to be Gorbachev's preferred choice for the Russian presidency. Bakatin had been a regional party First Secretary and a member of the CPSU Central Committee from 1986 onwards. He had also been a member of the Presidential Council that Gorbachev had established

45 Sobesednik (Moscow), 23 May 1991, p.7.
47 Soyuz (Moscow), 21 May 1991, p.12.
48 ibid.
in 1990. Bakatin's manifesto, as explained to the journalists, was based upon 'common sense'. In country the size of Russia abrupt changes were not what was needed: more important was a constructive effort to combine the old and the new so as to avoid a breakdown. He argued that more than a regulated market what was needed was a regulated transition to market relations. He was, he accepted a centrist provided it was understood as 'movement to the left'.

The three other candidates attracted less initial attention. Vladimir Zhirinovsky, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of the Soviet Union, was nominated by members of the Fourth Congress of People's Deputies. Regarded by Yeltsin's supporter as a 'clown who must be taken seriously', Zhirinovsky based his appeal upon a promise to restore Russian national greatness and to cut the price of Vodka. The main slogan of his campaign was 'to defend the Russians and the small peoples'. General Al'bert Makashov, Chairman of the Volga-Ural military district, appealed to a rather different constituency: military servicemen and workers who were concerned by the far reaching implications of Yeltsin's economic programme. Speaking to the Russian parliament, Makashov called for 'Sovietisation' rather than the privatization of property. He urged the 'true patriots' rather than 'cosmopolitans' to support him and attacked the 'political prostitution' that was taking place throughout the country. The sixth and final candidate was Aman Gel'dy Tuleev, Chairman of the Kemerovo regional Soviet and a miner himself. His campaign emphasized local autonomy, gradual economic reform and 'social defence'.

49 Konsonol'skaya pravda (Moscow), 31 May 1991, p.1.
50 n.4, p.198.
51 Soverskaya Rossiya (Moscow), 6 June 1991, p.3.
53 n.39, p.199.
The election campaign was widely seen as a contest between Yeltsin and Ryzhkov with one representing an alluring but uncertain future and the other representing a familiar but painful past. The other candidates were seen more as representing intermediate positions on the central election issue of political change. Surveys conducted on the eve of the poll suggested that Yeltsin would succeed in obtaining 44 per cent to 52 per cent of the votes with the rest divided among the other contenders.\(^5^4\)

The results of 19 June saw a decisive win for Boris Yeltsin. A win that had been unprecedented in the history of Russia (Table 4.1). The total turnout being 74.7 per cent, nearly eighty million voters took part, in 88 constituencies throughout the republic. The results from two constituencies were declared invalid because of violations and there were also complaints that during the campaign unfair practices were adopted.\(^5^5\) A tiny proportion of voters (1.9 per cent) crossed out the names of all the candidates and 2.2 per cent of the votes cast were declared invalid. For Izvestiya, the poll outcome was a clear victory for the democratic forces, the evidence being not only the runaway success of Yeltsin but also the victory of the radical historian Yurii Afanas'ev to the Russian parliament in a by-election held on the same day. Another evidence that the newspaper cited was the massive support of the people of Leningrad in favour of the proposal to return to the city's original name of St. Petersburg.\(^5^6\)

\(^{54}\) Pravda, 6 June 1991, p.2.


Table No: 4.1

RESULT OF THE 1991 RSFSR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bakatin, Vadim Viktorovich</td>
<td>2719757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeltsin, Boris Nikolaevich</td>
<td>45552041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhirinovsky, Valdimir Vol'fovich</td>
<td>6211007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makashov, Al’bert Mikhailovich</td>
<td>2969511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryzhkov, Nikolai Ivanovich</td>
<td>13395335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuleev, Aman-Gal’dy Moldagazievich</td>
<td>5417464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalid votes</td>
<td>3242167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total votes casts*</td>
<td>79507282</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The total electorate was 106,484,518.


A report prepared by the Central Committee Secretariat on 24 June 1991 pointed at the regional and social differences in the final outcome of the polls. Communist candidates, taken together had won 30.8 per cent of the vote with Ryzhkov having topped the poll in North Ossetia and Tuva, and Tuleev in his native Kemerovo region. Ryzkhov, in addition had done better than Yeltsin in the army (32.6 per cent compared with 29.8 per cent) and among KGB troops (33.4 per cent compared with 30.9 per cent). In the towns, the working class and the intelligentsia, women and pensioners had all voted solidly for Yeltsin. The Secretariat's conclusion was nonetheless a bleak one: the population as a whole, 'even communists', had little understanding of party policy; a 'major step' had been taken towards the liquidation of socialism and of the CPSU itself.
The party’s leaders had ‘finally lost authority’; and the party itself was left ‘without cadres and without power’.\textsuperscript{57}

The major division between candidates in the 1991 Russian presidential elections was between reform and status quo. Unlike established democracies, the election was fought about basic goals, rather than about the better management of existing structures and in particular of the economy.

THE AUGUST COUP AND THE END OF PARTY RULE

The events that set in motion the final collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics began only two days before a treaty constituting a renewed and thoroughly revamped USSR was to be signed. The situation in the country for the past one year had been tense and gave sufficient grounds for being apprehensive about the reactionary forces trying in every possible way to obstruct any understanding between the country’s leader and the ‘left democratic’ forces. The long standing confrontation between Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin added to the feeling of instability and lack of confidence in the future.

A breakthrough came with the agreement reached between them and other republican leaders at Novo Ogoryovo. The text of the Union treaty devised at Novo-Ogoryovo would have changed the structure of power in the country, by creating a completely new system of relations between the centre and the republics.

The coup, had not come without warning. The first public warning of an impending coup came from Eduard Shevardnadze during his resignation speech as Foreign Minister in December 1990.\textsuperscript{58} Speaking in early August 1991, he hinted at the possibility of an attempt to resolve the country’s difficulties by resorting to a “strong

\textsuperscript{57} n.36, p.290.

hand" policy. 59 In retrospect, the various troop movements in the months preceding 19 August can be regarded as preparations and practice for a coup. In particular, the army, MVD (Interior Ministry troops) and KGB forces had established control points in Moscow in connection with the banning of demonstrations there. An 'Appeal to the people', published in the newspaper Sovetskaya Rossiya in July, called for national and patriotic unity and was signed by two of the conspirators as well as other prominent conservatives. 60

On 17 June the Prime Minister, Velentin Pavlov, one of the coup perpetrators, had attempted to get power from the Supreme Soviet which would have effectively put him and the Cabinet Ministers rather than Gorbachev, in control of the country. Pavlov was supported by the Defence Minister, Marshal Yazov, the head of the KGB, General Kryuchkov, and the Interior Minister, Boris Pugo, all later to become members of the coup's State Emergency Committee (SCSE). Gorbachev had firmly quashed this effort. Speaking a few days before the conspiracy was launched, Aleksandr Yakovlev warned that a 'Stalinist grouping' had become dominant in the party leadership and that it was preparing a 'party and state coup'. 61

These warnings notwithstanding, the attempted coup of August 1991 came as a shock and surprise to the Soviet leader and to the outside world. In the early hours of 19 August a self-styled State Emergency Committee (SCSE) announced that the responsibilities and duties of the President had been assumed by the Vice-President Gennadii Yanaev on account of the President's illness. This Emergency Committee had eight members. Apart from Yanaev there were the KGB Chairman, Vladimir Kryuchkov:

59 Komsomol'skaya pravda, 3 August 1991, p.3.
the Defence Minister, Dmitri Yazov, Valentin Pavlov; and three other members of less prominence, Oleg Baklanov, Vasilii Starodubtsev and Aleksandr Tizyakov.\(^{62}\)

In a series of decrees, the Committee suspended the activities of all parties except the one’s supporting the emergency, banned the publication of almost every newspaper (including Pravda), ordered the surrender of firearms, and prohibited meetings, strikes and demonstrations. The Committee also promised to cut prices and increase wages, and to place food supplies under strict control with priority being given to schools, hospitals, pensioners and the disabled.\(^{63}\) Justifying its action, the Committee in a ‘message to the Soviet people’ pointed at the ‘mortal danger’ being faced by the Soviet people. The country had become ‘ungovernable’ and there had emerged ‘extremist forces’ seeking to break up the Soviet state. The chaotic economic situation had made the possibility of a famine a reality. Crime and immorality were rampant. The Committee without making any reference to socialism promised to reverse these trends, strengthen public order, arrest the fall in the living standards and restore Soviet Union’s international standing.\(^{64}\)

It soon become clear that the coup was poorly planned. The main protest against it came from Boris Yeltsin, the Russian President, who made a dramatic call for resistance of 19 August standing on one of the tanks stationed outside the Russian parliament building. Denouncing the Committee’s action as a ‘right-wing, reactionary, unconstitutional coup’, he insisted that Gorbachev be immediately restored his position and called for an indefinite strike until the Soviet parliament had met and constitutional propriety re-established.\(^{65}\) The following day, huge demonstrations in front of the Russian parliament were addressed by Shevardnadze, Yakovlev, Yelena Bonner (Andrei


\(^{63}\) ibid.

\(^{64}\) ibid.

Sakharov’s widow) and other democrats. In the evening of 20 August about 70,000 Muscovites defied the curfew and assembled in front of the ‘White House’ to defend it against an expected attack by pro-coup forces. Although three men were killed, the attack on the Russian parliament could not materialise. It later emerged that substantial sections of the armed forces had revolted against the coup, and that the elite KGB ‘Alpha’ anti-terrorist group had rejected the order they had been given to storm the building.

By 21 August, the coup had begun to collapse. The Russian parliament met in an emergency session and gave Yeltsin their unqualified support. Media restrictions were lifted, and the Ministry of Defence ordered troops to return to their barracks. The USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium declared the actions of the Emergency Committee illegal, and the Procurator General’s office announced that criminal proceedings for high treason had been instigated against its members. One of the coup leaders, Boris Pugo, committed suicide. By the end of August, fourteen people involved in the coup had been arrested and charged with high treason. In the early hour of 22 August, Gorbachev was flown back to Moscow.

The aborted coup was interpreted differently by different people. For some it was a demonstration of the fact that the people of Soviet Union had at least become politically conscious and were willing to defend their incipient democracy. Others argued that the coup was not the end, but merely a stage in the conflict between conservatives and radicals. It reflected the polarization between the two ideologies seeking to fill the vacuum left by the collapse of Communism.

Aftermath of the Coup

The failure of the coup provoked a crisis for all major institutions of the old regime. Although the members of the State Emergency Committee were arrested, other

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leaders of the military, the KGB and the Communist Party were all implicated. The coup also changed the relationship between Gorbachev and Yeltsin. Gorbachev was the symbol of legality and constitutional legitimacy, but Yeltsin emerged as the force of resistance and the embodiment of elected authority. Yeltsin issued a stream of decrees, many of them transferring control of key institutions from the Central government to the Russian Federation. He suspended the activities of the Russian Communist Party which was soon followed in other republics.

Many officials were sacked, including the whole Soviet government, and radicals began to replace them. Pravda was suspended together with five other newspapers. The head of television and radio, as well as those of the two news agencies, Tass and Novosti were sacked.

There was some surprise that Gorbachev continued to defend the Communist Party, whose role in the attempted coup had been obscure. However, when the complicity of the party leadership became clear, Gorbachev resigned from the General Secretaryship and called upon the Central Committee to take the 'difficult but honourable decision to dissolve itself'. He issued a decree confiscating the Party's property and handing it over to local Soviets for the time being. Another decree banned Party activity in the armed forces, the KGB and all other law enforcement agencies. On 29 August the Supreme Soviet suspended the activities of the Communist Party throughout the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union itself was the greatest casualty of the coup. Ironically, the collapse of the coup dramatically speeded up the very developments it intended to halt. Lithuania had already declared its independence in the spring of 1990 and the other Baltic republics followed its example. By the end of the year all of the republics, apart from

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70 *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (Moscow), 27 August 1991, p.3.
Russia adopted declarations of a similar kind. Some of them in addition had begun to establish their own armies, and had applied to join the United Nations. Finally, in December 1991, the three Slavic republics - Russia, the Ukraine and Belorussia - comprising 70 per cent of the Soviet population, got together on 8th December near Brest and issued the 'Minsk Declaration', stating that the Soviet Union no longer existed. It established a new, 11 member, Commonwealth of Independent States, which was later joined by almost all of the other former Soviet republics, except Baltics and Georgia. The latter was given 'observer status' in the proceedings of CIS at a later stage.

EMERGENCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

In his introduction to an analysis of 'Political Parties in Russia', during the period of the Third Duma in 1912, Lenin wrote:

The names of some parties ... are chosen with a direct eye to advertisement and their "programmes" are quite often written for the sole purpose of hoodwinking the public. The greater the degree of political liberty ... the more shameless, in many cases, is the self advertisement of parties ... The division of any society into different political parties is revealed most clearly of all in terms of profound crises shaking the whole country. For at such times governments are compelled to seek support among the various classes of society; ... the parties strain every nerve and appeal to the masses; and the masses, guided by their unerring instinct and enlightened by the experience of an open struggle, follow the parties that represent the interests of a particular class.71

Five years latter, in a chaotic political situation, resulting out of the collapse of the Tsarist empire, Lenin made an attempt to clarify the then existing political situation and the key platforms of the most important political organizations.72 He divided the party - political groupings into four categories each of which corresponded to a dominant class interest. In the first category, were placed those parties and groups which were to the 'right of the Constitutional Democrats' (The Octobrists and the various nationalist

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72 ibid., Vol.24, pp.96-106.
chauvinist organizations like the *Black Hundreds* and were representative of the interests of 'the feudalist landowners and the most backward sections of 'the bourgeoisie'. The second category, comprised of the Constitutional Democratic Party (the *Kadets*) and kindred groups representing the bourgeoisie as a whole, including the capitalist landowners. Thirdly, there were the Social Democrats, the Socialist Revolutionaries and those groups representing the small proprietors, small and middle peasants and the petty bourgeoisie. Finally, there was Lenin's own *Bolshevik party* representing, in his words, the interests of the 'class conscious proletarians, wage workers and the poor peasantry standing close to them'.

The chaotic political situation of Post-Communist Russia, not being entirely dissimilar from the Russian of the early years, can be analysed in a similar fourfold classification based on the existing realities of the time. The first three classifications relate to the standard ideological terms of differentiation as commonly used in the West. The 'Mainstream Centre' classification broadly includes all those parties and organizations who are avowed supporters, to one degree or another, of all the usual accepted attributes of a free market economy and a structure of politics essentially liberal-democratic in nature. This broad classification offers much scope to parties to differ on such things as the speed of transition to a free market economy and private property rights; the extent to which the state should promote welfare guarantees; the kind of demarcation of powers that should exist between the executive and the legislative branches of government; and on the attitudes to the internal administrative structure of the new Russian Federation and its place in a wider Union or Commonwealth.73

The 'New Right' classification incorporates those parties which were somewhat 'traditionalist', 'fundamentalist' or 'reactionary' in nature. These are forces which are opposed to the Westward direction of the recent socio-economic and political changes and are obsessive espousers of an extreme chauvinistic form of nationalism. Here too, parties

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differed with each other depending on the nature and extent of their hostility to Western values, their understanding of a past which they sought to recreate and their discriminatory basis of nationalistic fervour. Consequently, one found here a fusion of neo-Stalinist, religious orthodox and monarchist sentiments. 74

The 'New Left' classification encompassed those parties which were deeply critical of a largely unregulated, private property based market economic system and which placed considerable emphasis on the participatory devolved aspects of a new democratic political system. This classification too covered a wide spectrum of groups and organizations differing in extent to their hostility to the 'free market' and their understanding of anti-statist forms of political organization. 75

The fourth and final classification is "Post-CPSU". This classification analyses the nature of the groups and organizations that have been emerging in the aftermath of the failed August coup attempt and which claim to be the ideological and/or legal successor to the disbanded Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Since the last couple of years of the CPSU's existence, internal factions openly existed covering the whole political ideological spectrum of beliefs and values thus complicating the post-CPSU succession struggle. 76

The Law on Public Associations

Political parties have been allowed a de jure existence in Russia since the enactment of the Law on Public Associations, which was ratified in October 1990. 77 Association, the law clearly stated, was an "inalienable human and civil right". The Law covered public associations of all kinds, including trade unions, women's and veterans

74 ibid., p.5.
75 ibid.
76 ibid., p.6.
77 ibid.
associations, sporting societies, and creative unions as well as political parties. Associations could be created for a variety of purposes, including the "exercise and protection of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights and liberties", provided that their objectives did not extend to the "overthrow of or violent change in the constitutional system or the forcible violation of the unity of the USSR, the union and autonomous republics, or other autonomous formations; propaganda of war, violence, or cruelty; the stirring up of social discord, including class as well as racial, national or religious discord; or the commission of other criminally punishable acts". 78 The creation of military formations was prohibited, and associations whose activities were detrimental to the health, morality, rights, or interests of other citizens were liable to prosecution. All associations had to operate within the framework of the Constitution and Soviet law.

At least ten citizens were required to establish an association under the Law; they were then required to hold a founding Congress or Conference at which their statutes were adopted and executive bodies elected. An all-union party or trade union had to have a minimum of 5000 members. The statutes of an association had to be registered at this point, with supporting documentation and a fee with the USSR Ministry of Justice or its counterparts at other levels of government. Registration could be refused, if the objectives of the association appeared to conflict with the law, but this decision could in turn be appealed against up to the Supreme Court. Political parties, in particular, were supposed to have the basic goal of participation in bodies of state power and administration; their programmes, had to be published for general information, and they had the right to nominate candidates at elections, to campaign on their behalf and to form organized groups in the bodies to which they were elected. They were not, allowed to

receive financial or other material assistance from foreign states or citizens, and they were legally liable for their actions up to their possible abolition.\textsuperscript{79}

With or without the law giving them a legal basis, there was no shortage of parties. A reference guide published in late 1991 listed over 200 of them, including nine anarchist parties, 17 different monarchial groupings, and no fewer then 53 "national-patriotic" parties. Some restored the names of pre-revolutionary parties, like the Constitutional Democrats or \textit{Kadets}, while others took names like Liberal Democrats or the Social Democratic Party. There was a \textit{Humor Party}, founded in Odessa, and an \textit{Idiots' Party of Russia} with its persuasive slogan "\textit{give the people beer and sausages}".\textsuperscript{80} There were at least two thousand applications for registration on this basis and in the Russian Federation itself about 25 parties had formally registered by the summer of 1992 (Table 4.2). By late 1992, as many as 1200 parties or movements were in operation on a Russia-wide basis.\textsuperscript{81}


\textsuperscript{80} ibid.

Table No: 4.2

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, 1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Registration</th>
<th>Name of Party</th>
<th>No. of Members at Registration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 March</td>
<td>Democratic Party of Russia</td>
<td>28,608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social-Democratic Party of the Russian Federation</td>
<td>5,089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republican Party of the Russian Federation</td>
<td>over 5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 April</td>
<td>Peasant Party of Russia</td>
<td>2,143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 June</td>
<td>Russian Christian-Democratic Movement Party</td>
<td>6,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 September</td>
<td>People’s Party of Free Russia</td>
<td>5,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 September</td>
<td>Russian Christian-Democratic Party</td>
<td>2,356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People’s Party of Russia</td>
<td>1,318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constitutional Democratic Party</td>
<td>2,079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 November</td>
<td>Russian Bourgeois-Democratic Party</td>
<td>1,771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 November</td>
<td>Russian Party of Democratic Transition</td>
<td>637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 November</td>
<td>Socialist Workers’ Party</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 December</td>
<td>Russian Party of Free Labor</td>
<td>1,734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russian Christian-Democratic Union</td>
<td>1,395</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## The Mainstream Centre

The Democratic Union, with its undoubted reputation of being the most virulent anti-Communist, anti-CPSU political force around, was the very first alternative force claiming the recognised status of a party. Set up in May 1988 it emerged out of the old human rights organizations "The Group to Establish Trust Between the USA and USSR" and the "Seminar for Democracy and Humanism". Led initially by former prominent

### Table: The XXVIII CPSU Congress and the Emergence of Political Parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Party Name</th>
<th>Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 January</td>
<td>Russian Communist Worker's Party</td>
<td>over 6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 January</td>
<td>Conservative Party</td>
<td>1,399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Party of Constitutional Democrats of the Russian Federation</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National-Republican Party of the Russian Federation</td>
<td>5,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 January</td>
<td>European Liberal-Democratic Party</td>
<td>5,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 January</td>
<td>Free Democratic Party of Russia</td>
<td>1,696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 February</td>
<td>'New Left' Political Party</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 March</td>
<td>Republican Humanitarian Party</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 March</td>
<td>Russian Social-Liberal Party</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 March</td>
<td>Russian Party of Communists</td>
<td>over 2,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 June</td>
<td>Party of Economic Freedom</td>
<td>662</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

dissidents Valeriya Novodvorskaya, Igor Tsarkov, Yuri Skubko, Eduard Molchanov, Sergei Skripnikov and Yevgeniya Debryanskaya, this platform clearly stated its desire of introducing a replica of a typical Western liberal democratic state.\textsuperscript{82}

The Democratic Party of Russia (DPR) was another key component of the broad liberal-centrist mainstream. Established in May 1990 and led by Nikolai Travkin, a former student of the CPSU's Moscow Higher Party School, it was backed by prominent newly formed organizations like the alternative writers' movement "April", the anti-Stalinist "Memorial" society, the independent Trade Union "Shield" and the industrial workers' "Confederation of Labour". This, according to most estimates was one of the largest of the new parties with about 40,000 members in early 1993.\textsuperscript{83}

Guided by its motto, "For a Society of Equal Opportunities", the party's main platform rested on a firm commitment to free market economic principles and denationalisation of state control. Favouring the restoration of an independent Russian state within a voluntary union of republics, it called for the convocation of a brand new Russian Constituent Assembly. One of the most unique aspect of this party was that; it saw itself as nothing more than a "transitional party" with its declared task of consolidating the democratic forces of the Russian Federation into a single mass party.

This party was characterized by infighting with its first split taking place in May 1990 (at its very foundation) when a group of delegates led by Marina Sal'e of the Leningrad Popular Front and Lev Ponomarev of the Moscow Voters Association, walked out over their opposition to Travkin's way of functioning. Two months later, they established their own party, the Free Democratic Party. In the party's Second Congress in April 1991, an even bigger split took place, when two prominent members of the party's Presidium, World chess champion Garry Kasparov and Arkady Murashev along

\textsuperscript{82} n.73, pp.8-9.

with 100 delegates resigned and established the *Liberal Conservative Union*.\(^{84}\) At the Party’s Third Congress held in December 1991, three issues dominated the proceedings. First, a new version of the party programme was adopted stipulating the party’s ideological stance as ‘liberal-conservative’. Secondly, the Congress devoted considerable attention to the process of reform carried out in Moscow by the city’s Mayor Gavrill Popov. It was feared, that Popov’s way of functioning was leading to the re-establishment of the administrative command type system. The third and the most contentious issue under debate at the Congress concerned the party’s stance on the internal administrative structure of Russia and the question of a future Union. Voting overwhelmingly in favour of Gorbachev’s plan for a new Confederative Union of Sovereign States, the party hoped that such a union would lead to the defusion of inter-ethnic and socio-economic problems.\(^{85}\)

The withdrawal of the *Democratic Platform* from the CPSU (set up by Travkin as the liberal reformist wing of the CPSU) after the 28th Party Congress, led to the establishment of the *Republican Party of Russia (RPR)*.\(^{86}\) Its founding Congress, officially inaugurated in November 1990 brought together 230 delegates from 50 different republics, territories and regions of the Russian Federation. A Coordinating Council at the head of the party was set up with three former prominent members of the Democratic Platform, Vladimir Lysenko, Vyacheslav Shostakovsky and Stepan Sulakshin installed as co-chairman. Speaking at the November inaugural Congress, Shostakovsky stated that the party would be “post-Communist” rather than “anti-Communist” with human rights being high on its agenda along with support for gradual constitutional reform.\(^{87}\)

Proposals of a merger of the *RPR* with the *Social Democratic Party of Russia*, although

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\(^{84}\) n.73, p.10.

\(^{85}\) ibid., p.11.

\(^{86}\) n.83, p.30.

\(^{87}\) ibid.
accepted in principal at a joint conference of the parties in January 1991, did not find much favour in some of the larger local RPR organizations. Nevertheless within the ambit of parliamentary coordination, some branches of the RPR and the Social Democrats worked very closely together.88

Among all the parties that emerged in the liberal-social democratic mainstream of thought, the Social Democratic Party of Russia (SDPR) was one such party which was keenly followed by seasoned observers both in Russia and outside. Speaking at its inaugural Congress, in May 1990 Aleksandr Obolensky remarked:

We are here to revive Russia’s Social Democratic movement. We accept the legacy of the best traditions of the Narodniki and the Russian Social Democrats from the end of the last century and the beginning of this one. We also aspire to adopt the experience of the century-old international social democratic movement.89

The founding Congress, attracted the biggest number of foreign representatives, with delegates coming from as far as the USA, Germany, Czechoslovakia and Mongolia. The Congress was dominated by a vigorous debate about the nature of the draft party rules. The main dispute concerned two of the variants: one championed by delegates from Leningrad, and the other by delegates from Moscow. The former in true "Menshevik" style did not envisage a registered membership besides empowering the local organizations with the right to overrule the decisions of the centre. The latter, in true "Bolshevik" style argued for a form of organizational structure closely akin to democratic centralism. Eventually a compromise formula was found.90

At its Second Congress in Sverdlovsk at the end of October 1990, the party formulated a 68 page official party programme titled, "The Path to Progress and Social

88 ibid.
89 The Guardian (London), 5 May 1990.
"Democracy". This document owed much to the theoretical influence of Eduard Bernstein and to the practical influence of the Scandinavian type of social democracy. In essence, the programme attempted to combine, what the party leadership regarded as the best in socialism and liberalism. The SDPR was fully committed to the creation of a 'new middle class'.

Besides the above mentioned parties, which were the most important component parties of the centrist mainstream, there were other new parties aspiring to join them. Chief among them was Georgi Deryagin's Constitutional Democratic Party. This party had a long heritage claiming to be the successor of the pre-revolutionary Kadets. Founded in May 1990, the party adopted the programme of the old Kadets originally drawn up in March 1918.

Another party worthy of mention was the Party of Free Labour established in December 1990 and led by Vladimir Tikhonov, Artyom Tarasov and Igor Korovikov. With its everincreasing links with the country's new entrepreneurs, this party was expected to be a significant force in future Russian political life. The Peasant Party of Russia, established in March 1991 and led by Yuri Chernichenko, was primarily geared towards the denationalisation of land and the return to small private peasant plots. Thirdly, there was the People's Party of Russia which was established in May 1991 and led by the popular investigator Tel'man Gdlyan and Oleg Borodin. Fourthly, there was the Bourgeois Democratic Party established in November 1991 and led by Yevgeny

91 n.73. p.15.
92 n.90.
93 n.83. p.31.
94 ibid.
95 n.79. p.186.
Butov. It was primarily devoted in articulating and defending the new needs and rights of businessmen engaged in small and medium-sized operations.

Finally, there was the Russian Christian Democratic Movement which was established in April 1990 and led by three deputies of the Russian parliament, Gleb Anishchenko, Viktor Aksyuchits and Vyacheslav Polosin. The organization prided itself on being the first ever Christian Democratic Party in Russia's history. Having brought together a whole range of Samizdat organizations, formerly illegal Christian clubs, orthodox communes and unofficial charity centres, the party enjoyed a wide support base. This movement was primarily governed by three guiding principles: consistent anti-Communism, the Christian faith and 'enlightened patriotism' which was defined as an attempt to take on broad Christian values from Russia's culture without the usual accompaniment of nationalistic arrogance, extremism and chauvinistic aggression.

Other Christian organizations included Aleksandr Ogorodinkov's Christian Democratic Union of Russia and Aleksandr Chuev's Russian Christian Democratic Party.

The New Right

The most important party in this category was the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia founded in March 1990 and led by Vladimir Zhirinovsky. It claimed to uphold the pre-revolutionary traditions and espoused the traditional liberal beliefs in a law governed state, a multi-party system, a market economy, regulated only by taxation and a complete de-ideologisation of Russian society.

A lawyer and an international affairs specialist by profession, Zhirinovsky left his mark on the country by his participation in the Russian Presidential elections in June

96 ibid.
97 n.90.
98 n.79, p.187.
1991. Three planks of his election platform were in particular seen as highly controversial.

First was his belief that the USSR (including the Baltic states) should revert to the old name of "Russia" and that the ethnic frontiers of Russia should be ended to be replaced by the old system of provinces. As a Presidential candidate, he stated:

... I should very much like to see the new President of Russia be not only President of Russia, but President for all Russians living on the territory of the USSR and all Russian speakers and take under his protection all the small peoples.\(^99\)

The second controversial plank of his platform related to his proposed economic policies. He argued that the best way of overcoming the dissolving state of the old economic structure was to give all republics and regions total economic sovereignty. He believed that the chaos that would follow, would force them to ask the 'centre' to intervene again. And thirdly, as a means of obtaining additional revenue for the state, Zhirinovsky suggested various foreign policy options. He argued that the country should move from a West-East relationship to a North - South relationship. By "North" and "South" he meant North America, North Europe and Japan - the three richest areas of the world. In a piece of advice to the military, he put foward a plan of using the Soviet armed forces under the UN flag in different parts of the world in return for large payments in foreign currency.\(^100\)

Though ridiculed in his election campaign by his opponents, Zhirinovsky made a mark by capturing the third place behind Yeltsin and Ryzhkov with a poll of 7.8 per cent (representing some 6 million Russian voters).\(^101\) In the aftermath of the failed August coup, the "Zhirinovsky phenomenon" grew from strength to strength. Zhirinovsky made no bones about the fact that he supported a rigid authoritarian

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\(^100\) Ibid.

\(^101\) Refer to Table no.4.1 for comparative figures.
approach to the problems besetting Russia. His chauvinistic form of Russian imperial nationalism had led many commentators regard him as a new Hitler-in waiting.

Besides the LDPR, there were other parties in the new Russian Right, one of them being the Rebirth Party. Led by the former member of Estonia’s Russian-sponsored "Inter-movement", Yevgeny Kogan, its inaugural conference took place in December 1991. In this conference, Kogan openly spoke about the need for Baltic Russians to consider the ‘Northern Ireland scenario’ in the new situation pertaining in the former Soviet republics.

In a similar vein, the Russian Party (formerly the Russian National Democratic Party) set up in May 1991 and led by Viktor Korchagin, constantly promoted the vision of a new Russian state firmly unitary in structure where Russians could live without fear and humiliation freely enjoying their civil and political rights.

There were other groups too, which with their reliance on anti-semitism could be regarded as offshoots of the Pamyat. The prominent among such groups were Dimitri Vasilev’s National Patriotic Front; Igor Sychev’s Russian Popular Front and the Popular Orthodox Movement.

If a narrow, reductionist form of patriotism be taken as the guiding creed of the new Right in Russia, one could include here two other tendencies as well. The first was "Bolshevism", which in Nina Andreyeva had found its most persistent purveyor. The second trend related to the continuing attempts being made to pave the way for a monarchist revival in Russia. Here, the Orthodox Monarchist Union Order (Pramos), led by Sergei Engelhardt - Yurkov was the most prominent group. Considering the Western democratic type system to be ‘Satanic’, it advocated a return to an autocratic

102 n.73. p.21.
103 ibid.
104 ibid.
105 ibid., p.22.
monarchical system and a complete restoration of the privileged position of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Another party falling in the same category was the Rus Monarchist Party founded in April 1991 and led by Aleksei Brumel. This alternative monarchist organization demanded a more constitutional form of Tsarism, somewhat like the post-1905 revolutionary settlement.

The New Left

The Socialist Party, closely associated with the Moscow Council deputy, Boris Kagarlitsky was founded in June 1990. This party was formed on the basis of such prominent informal organizations as the "Club of Social Initiatives", the "Federation of Socialist Clubs", the "Moscow Committee of New Socialists" and the "Moscow Popular Front". Characterizing the years of state dominated perestroika as "market Stalinism", Kagarlitsky argued that the only real ideological force which could save Russia from this harsh reality was democratic socialism resting on three main pillars. Firstly, a decentralised power structure based on a thoroughly reorganized, less bureaucratic local and regional Soviets. Secondly, an economic system which though subject to competitive requirements of basic market forces would be based primarily on self-managing workers collectives with exclusive rights over matters which directly affected them. And thirdly, a greatly strengthened emphasis on the provision of universal welfare rights in such fields as education, health-care and child-care.

The original nine member executive committee elected at the party's First Congress, included apart from Kagarlitsky two other Moscow Council deputies Vladimir Kondratov and Aleksandr Popov as well as Viktor Komarov from Leningrad and Oleg Voronin from Irkutsk. With its emphasis on the municipal level of power organization,

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106 ibid.

the party sought greater links not only with established independent Trade Union organizations like the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions but also with a number of established Anarchist organizations, most notably the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists 108 which was established in May 1989 and was led by Andrie Isayev, Aleksandr Shershukov, Aleksei Koralev and Aleksandr Shubin. It was the product of a successful amalgamation of a whole range of anarcho-syndicalist, anarcho-communist, anarcho-democratic and anarcho-pacifist groupings, all of whom shared a basic common allegiance to the ideological teachings of Mikhail Bakunin. 109

The Socialist Party had also been in the forefront of attempts to establish firm links with a whole range of ecological and environmental organizations including the first ever official Green Party of Russia. 110 Led by Ivan Blokov, Vladimir Gushchin and Valentin Panov, the party was established in Leningrad in February 1990, with a programme giving primary importance to ecology, civil self rule and direct democracy. Like most parties, the Socialist Party was also plagued with infighting resulting in the creation of a new faction called the Labour and Republic Club. 111

Finally, the new Left in Russia also witnessed the emergence of a new party closely aligned with the Trotskyist Fourth International. It was the Marxist Workers Party established in March 1990 and led by Yuri Leonov, Vladimir Zerkin and Nizami Lezgin. 112 It strongly advocated the full political rehabilitation of Trotsky and called for the re-creation of society based on working class principles and traditions. Divisions

108 ibid.
109 n.90.
110 ibid.
111 n.73, p.25.
112 n.107, p.497.
within the party gave rise to a number of smaller Marxist-oriented parties, most notably the Democratic Workers Party (Marxist) led by Aleksandr Khotseem.\textsuperscript{113}

Post - CPSU Phase

Holding the CPSU responsible for the August 1991 events, Yeltsin felt himself perfectly vindicated in disbanding the CPSU and the Russian Communist Party (RCP). At the time of the CPSU's demise, numerous political and ideological factions were competing among themselves for a place of supremacy within the CPSU and not surprisingly these different factions are prominent in organizing official or unofficial post-CPSU organizations and parties.

Without doubt, the most prominent party claiming to be the legal and moral successor (though not the ideological successor) to the CPSU was the People's Party of Free Russia led by Russian Vice-President Aleksandr Rutskoi.\textsuperscript{114} Its roots can be traced to the establishment of the internal CPSU/RCP faction known as Communists for Democracy at the beginning of 1991. At an inaugural conference at the beginning of August 1991, the group officially declared itself to be the Democratic Party of Communists of Russia, though formally it had not broken from the CPSU. According to one leading member of the group, Grigory Vodolazov, the question of a clear cut political and ideological demarcation within the party had become paramount:

\begin{quote}
We believe that we are now in a state of political transition and after this monster disappears, this organization of the CPSU as a part of the totalitarian system, the normal formation of political parties will then begin.\textsuperscript{115}
\end{quote}

After the failed coup and the banning of the CPSU, the party finally declared itself independent and was registered as such with the Russian Ministry of Justice as the People's Party of Free Russia. Classifying itself as a party with a 'left-democratic'

\begin{footnotes}
\item[113] ibid.
\item[114] n.79, p.188.
\end{footnotes}
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orientation, its conference resolutions saw the party’s immediate main concerns as being to help create the framework for a ‘civilised’ market economy with some guarantees for the ‘under privileged’. On the question of its relationship to the CPSU, the delegates at the inaugural Congress in October were informed that the party would press its claim to be the only legitimate successor to the CPSU on the territory of the RSFSR. Regarding the relationship of the party with President Yeltsin, while most delegates and party documents expressed unconditional support for the general political and economic line taken by the President, there were numerous warnings that the party should not be allowed to turn into a simple ‘pocket party’ of support for Yeltsin.\(^ {116}\)

Nina Andreyeva’s attempt to establish a post-CPSU organization took the form of an All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks).\(^ {117}\) The name of the party dated back to the formal name adopted by the original revolutionaries in 1918. This party was the logical successor of two previous organizations with which Andreyeva was actively involved: the “Unity” group for the promotion of “Leninist and Communist Ideals” and the Bolshevik Platform set up in July 1991. Regarding itself to be the true heir to the cause of the 1917 Revolution, it called for a return to a Stalinist-like “dictatorship of the proletariat”, a centrally planned economy, internationalism abroad and patriotism at home based on the watch words of ‘Motherland or death! Socialism or death’.\(^ {118}\)

The Russian Communist Party of Workers likewise held its inaugural Congress in November 1991 in Sverdlovsk.\(^ {119}\) Largely seen as carrying on the hardline traditions of Ivan Polozkov’s Russian Communist Party, the programme of this new organization was similarly based on a continued adherence to Marxist-Leninist principles, a form of organization based on democratic centralism and a set of goals aimed at strengthening

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\(^ {116}\) n.73, p.27.

\(^ {117}\) n.107, p.493.

\(^ {118}\) n.73, p.29.

\(^ {119}\) n.107, pp.493-94.
the power of the working class. Its founding conference was attended by 500 delegates.
and two of its most prominent members were Aleksei Sergeyev and General Albert
Makashov. Both these figures professed support for the August coup, and figured
prominently in the former CPSU faction "The Movement for Communist Initiative". This
party maintained that the CPSU had not really disintegrated. Having suffered a number
of blows from "democrats" and "pseudo-communists" it was simply compelled to
splitter somewhat.\footnote{120}

The new Socialist Party of Workers (SPW) led by the former political dissident
Roy Medvedev was formally set up at the end of October 1991.\footnote{121} Firmly believing
that the ideological and philosophical foundations of socialism and communism would
continue to attract the Russian people, the primary aim of the new party was to extricate
Russian society from its existing economic, political and cultural crisis. Declaring that
this party would be strictly of the parliamentary type, Medvedev stated that the
construction of socialism should occur through a recognition of the attributes of a mixed
economy and by means of a political and cultural diversity in society. He further stated
that the party would not be averse to a process of constructive cooperation with other like
minded political parties. The Constitutional Democrats (Kadets), the Republican Party
of Russia and the Social Democrats were all parties that the SPW regarded as potential
working allies.\footnote{122}

Another organization which emerged out of the old CPSU was the New League
of Communists, established in November with delegates from 5 former Soviet republics
and led by Aleksei Prigarin\footnote{123}, a former prominent member of the Marxist Platform
of the CPSU set up in early 1990. The programme of the League was strongly

\footnote{120} TASS, World Service, 10 December 1991.
\footnote{121} n.107, p.496.
\footnote{122} ibid.
\footnote{123} For details see Laura Belin and Robert W. Ottung's, "Parties Proliferate on Eve of Elections", Transition: Open Media Research Institute (Prague), vol.1, no.17. 22 September 1995.
anti-capitalist, anti-CPSU in its old *nomenklatura* form and based around the old revolutionary slogan of "All Power to the Soviets."

The above mentioned organizations were not the only organizations that emerged in the post CPSU era. Besides them, a profusion of new parties and blocs crowded the Russian political scene from 1993 onwards. Among the Democratic Parties, the most prominent ones were Boris Fedorov's *Forward, Russia* founded in February 1995, Yegor Gaidar’s *Russia’s Democratic Choice* founded in June 1994, and Grigorii Yavlinskii’s *Yabloko* founded in October 1993.\(^\text{124}\) The new Centrist Parties were Viktor Chernomyrdin’s *Our Home is Russia* founded in May 1995, Yekaterina Lakhova and Alevtina Fedulova’s *Women of Russia* founded in October 1993. The Left opposition parties included Mikhail Lapshin’s *Agrarian Party of Russia* founded in February 1993 and Gennadii Zyuganov’s *Communist Party of the Russian Federation* founded in February 1993 after a 30 November 1992 Constitutional Court decree partially overturned Yeltsin’s November 1991 decree banning it.\(^\text{125}\) Among the Nationalist Parties were included Yurii Skokov and Aleksandr Lebed’s *The Congress of Russian Communists* founded in 1993 and Aleksandr Rutskoi’s *Derzhava* founded in April 1995.\(^\text{126}\)

### Attempts Towards the Creation of Cohesive Political Blocs

The erosion in power of the CPSU had led to the creation of a vacuum, which was only partially filled by a number of dominant individual personalities. The new political parties that came into existence had by itself neither the will, the strength nor the popular support to fill this vacuum. Consequently, various efforts were made by all sides of the ideological/political divide to create a cohesive bloc of political forces which

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124 ibid.

125 ibid.

126 n.73; p.33.
could attract greater appeal from society and would eventually emerge as a single, fairly
homogeneous political entity articulating a well defined set of social interests.

One of the first such attempts came in the guise of the Centrist Bloc established
in June 1990 under the overall chairmanship of Vladimir Voronin.\footnote{ibid., p.34.} This bloc united
17 specific groups and parties of a conservative, nationalist and orthodox nature but
survived for less than a year, before breaking up into various component parts.

The most serious attempt to unite the political forces on the Russian Right came
from the Soyuz (union) organization.\footnote{ibid.} Originally established in February 1990 as an
all-Union parliamentary force, at its Second Congress in April 1991, the Soyuz leadership
took a key decision to transform itself into a fully fledged mass movement with branches
throughout the USSR. Rejecting communism and capitalism on equal terms, the Soyuz
declared itself as a non-partisan third force. It declared that it was only an
all-encompassing ‘Russian patriotism’ which could save the country from its approaching
self-destruction. It called for the establishment of a "National Salvation Committee" and
the declaration of a state of emergency which would impose a ban on all political parties,
all industrial strikes and all kinds of public demonstrations.\footnote{ibid., p.38.}

In the mainstream centre, two separate attempts not entirely unconnected were
made to forge a cohesive bloc of forces. The first attempt came with the official
foundation of the Democratic Russia Movement in October 1990, which originally united
18 socio-political organizations and 9 political parties (the important ones being SDPR,
RPR, DPR, Free Democratic Party, the Russian Christian Democratic Movement, the
Party of Constitutional Democrats, the Constitutional Democratic Party and the Party of
Free Labour). This movement achieved widespread acclaim following its official backing
and organizational support for Yeltsin’s candidacy during the Russian presidential
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Although the movement did enjoy a high degree of popularity in its initial stages but as a force able to provide a real sense of unity and identity to a whole range of disparate forces, it failed miserably.

The second political bloc which emerged was the Movement for Democratic Reforms set up in July 1991. Its members included a number of prominent names like Eduard Shevardnadze, Aleksandr Yakovlev, Vadim Bakatin, Arkady Volsky, Ivan Lapter, Stanislav Shatalin, Nikolai Petrakov and Ivan Silayev to name just a few. The names of Gavrill Popov, Anatolii Sobchak and Aleksandr Rutskoi too could be added to this list. The primary importance of the new Movement, argued Yakovlev, was the fact that:

by its very nature, it was a movement from which new, bigger and closer spiritual and social relationships and communities could emerge, rather than one in which old ones blow apart and crumble ... Despite the many natural and inevitable differences they will have between themselves, its participants must be devoted to a common objective - the establishment in the country of democratic foundations of life and a democratic mentality, giving this objective unconditional priority over any differences of view. At least until democracy is firmly on its feet.

The attempts by the democratic Russian Left to forge some kind of broader political unity in opposition to the likes of Soyuz and Democratic Russia had been minimal, belated and some what ineffective till then. It was felt at many quarters, that to engage itself in the key political struggles of the day, the Left would have to articulate the genuine concerns of many sections of the population with a view to seeking a positive way out of the crisis.

Although one can easily point to the existence of a competitive political process in simple, quantitative terms, in qualitative terms this competition seemed to be very unstable and had hardly done much to enhance an arena of citizen participation based on a well defined, mutually shared set of interests. There was no natural intrinsic linkage


between the existence of a plurality of parties and a genuine existence of democracy. Gorbachev recognised it long ago, when he stated during his January 1990 tour of Lithuania:

... A multi-party system is not a cure all. Democracy and openness are the main things, (as too are) realistic participation and involvement of the people in all political and social processes and institutions. Otherwise, parties may mislead people by (playing political games and leaving) the people -- the principal character of history - outside the framework of the political process and genuine government by the people.\footnote{132}

THE RUSSIAN NATIONAL ELECTIONS OF DECEMBER 1993

The national elections of 12 December 1993 was the first democratic direct national elections to be held under the aegis of the reconstituted Russian Federation. Held in the wake of the dissolution on 21 September of the old Russian legislature chaired by Ruslan Khasbulatov and the crisis of 3-4 October\footnote{133}, the elections took place against the background of a deeply divided society.

Yeltsin's decree No. 1400 of 21 September, 'On Gradual Constitutional Reform in the Russian Federation', dissolved the old Russian legislature and transferred its powers to a new bicameral Federal Assembly\footnote{134} simultaneously suspending the operation of the old constitution.\footnote{135} While elections to the new lower chamber, the State Duma was to take place on 12 December 1993, the existing Federation Council was to be vested with the functions of the upper chamber of the Assembly. The decree No. 1400 was also accompanied by acts establishing the framework for the forthcoming

\footnote{132}{Izvestiya, 22 September 1993, p.1.}

\footnote{133}{For details see, Stephen White, Alex Pravda, Zvi Gitelman (eds.), Developments in Russian and Post-Soviet Politics (London; Macmillian, 1994), pp.63-65.}

\footnote{134}{For reference, see 'Appendix C' at the end of the Thesis.}

\footnote{135}{Izvestiya, 24 September, 1993, pp.3-5.}
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The first version of the electoral law, recommended a mixed proportional and majoritarian system for what initially would have been 400 seats in the State Duma. One-third of the seats (130) were to have been elected from party lists by proportional representation, and the remainder (270) were to have been elected from one-member constituencies. With the acceptance of the demands of the pro-reform parties, on 30 September 1993 Yeltsin changed the terms of his decree on elections to the Lower House. Half the seats of the State Duma, which would now have 450 seats, would be elected from single-member constituencies, and the remaining seats would be chosen on a proportional basis from federal party lists. To stand, a party or bloc required at least 100,000 nominations (earlier version had called for 200,000), with no more than 15000 signatures drawn from any one of Russia’s 89 regions and republics, so that the bloc or party had to have demonstrable support in at least seven regions or republics.137 It was hoped that this provision would stimulate the creation of a national party system and at the same time force the creation of larger blocs to overcome the fragmentation of Russian political life. For Viktor Sheinis, one of the main architects of the new electoral law, the aim of this provision was to ensure that the local leaders did not exercise undue influence on the elections.138 A 5 per cent hurdle incorporated into the “list” system, intended to prevent the proliferation of small parties.

With the appointment of Nikolai Ryabov as the head of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), Russia’s regions and republics were requested to send nominations for its membership within five days.139 District (Okrug) electoral commissions were

137 The Guardian, 8 October 1993.
139 Decree of 11 October, Rossiiskaya Federatsiya, 13 October 1993, p.17.
to be established with representatives of the local executive and legislative authorities, but the de facto abolition of local Soviets rendered the latter requirement void. The CEC included numerous deputies and experts from the former Supreme Soviet, including Ryabov himself, who had until recently been a deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet. The demarcation of the constituency boundaries was to be over by mid-October 1993.

Unlike the old Law on the Election of Russian Federation People’s Deputies, which stipulated that 50 per cent turnout of the eligible voters was required for elections to be valid, the new provisions reduced this limit to 25 per cent. In contrast to the earlier practice, the elections were to be held in one round. To be elected to the Federal Assembly a candidate had to poll, not as before, the majority of votes (50 per cent plus one) but simply gain more votes than rivals as long as the minimum turnout requirement was met. Another change affected the Federation Council. It was decreed that the representatives from each component of the Russian Federation would be elected instead of being nominated, as provided in the constitution.140 Even the duration of the new legislature was reduced to two years from the earlier duration of four years.

The early days of the campaign were marked by uncertainty over whether there would be pre-term presidential elections. Although Yeltsin in his decree of 21 September had stated that the question would be decided by the new Federal Assembly, his confrontation with the Supreme Soviet made him concede the date of 12 June 1994. However, on 6 November Yeltsin indicated that he favoured allowing his term of office to run its full course to 1996.141 Early presidential elections had been offered as an inducement to the parliament to hold its own elections, a condition that was no longer relevant after 4 October. Thus the voters were faced with up to five choices in the election of 12 December: whether to support the new draft constitution; to vote for the 178-seat Upper House of the Federal Assembly, the Federation Council; two separate

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140 Stern (Washington), 6 November 1993.

votes for the Lower House, the State Duma - for the 225 single mandate seats and the 225 places from party lists; and in some places in local elections.142

A new decree of 15 October, asked the voters to participate in a plebiscite on the new constitution. Unlike the 1990 referendum law, this decree clearly stated that the adoption of the constitution no longer required the support of the majority of the registered electorate but simply 50 per cent of those who voted.143 As expected, the draft constitution published on 10 November, proposed a presidential system.144 The limited time allowed for discussion of such a crucial document attracted widespread criticism.145 Moreover, during the campaign, Yeltsin warned party leaders against criticising the constitution.146 Vladimir Shumeiko, a leading government official insisted that the constitution was not negotiable and the politicians campaigning against its adoption would be banned from the elections altogether.147 The question placed on the ballot paper on 12 December was a simple one: ‘do you support the adoption of the new Russian Constitution’?

For the Federation Council, two seats were available in each of Russia’s 89 republics, regions, federal cities and other federal areas. In all, 494 candidates fought directly in the 178 seat Upper House. About 40 per cent of the candidates contesting for seats in the Federation Council were leaders of executive authorities and 16 per cent were heads of legislatures. Nearly a quarter were involved in economic or financial matters, including managers of large enterprises, shareholding companies and commercial banks. About 8 per cent of the candidates were teachers in higher and other educational

142 Rossiiskaya gazeta, 2 December 1990.
143 Rossiiskaya gazeta, 10 November 1993, pp.3-6.
144 Nezavisimaya gazeta (Moscow), 4 November 1993, p.2.
146 Izvestiya, 30 November 1993, p.2.
establishments and between 1 per cent and 3 per cent were journalists, lawyers, health workers, agronomists and other specialists. Just over 13 per cent of the candidates had been deputies to the old Congress of People’s Deputies.  

For the 225 single-mandate seats, the candidates required a minimum of 1 per cent nominations to enter the contest unless they had been officially nominated by one of the party blocs, in which case the necessity of obtaining what on an average was 4000-5000 signatures was waived. In all, 1586 candidates contested the elections in Russia’s 225 single-member constituencies.  

The remaining 225 seats in the State Duma were distributed to the parties on a proportional basis. The whole country being considered as one giant constituency, to win a seat, a party had to clear the minimum 5 per cent threshold of the national vote.  

Although by September 1993, 37 political parties and over 2000 public organizations had been officially registered in Russia, the CEC issued a list with only 91 all-Russian political and social organisations having the right to nominate candidates to the State Duma. In the absence of a law on political parties in Russia, the USSR Law on Public Associations adopted on 9 October 1990 remained in force. To stand in the elections, electoral associations had to be registered with the CEC at least six weeks before the election, after having provided the minimum 100,000 signatures. Groups allied to the National Salvation Front, which had played a central role in the insurgency of October 1993 were banned from participating in the election. So was Viktor Anpilov’s militant Russian Communist Workers’ Party (RCWP) and two other mainstream parties - the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) and Vice

148 ibid.  
150 Rossiiskaya gazeta, 14 October 1993, p.3.  
151 Pravda, 16 October 1990.  
152 Izvestiya, 14 October 1993, p.4.
President Aleksandr Rutskoi’s People’s Party of Free Russia. However, subsequently the Ministry of Justice allowed the CPRF and individuals from the other banned groups to contest the elections.¹⁵³

Some 31 associations scrambled to form electoral blocs in time for the deadline, and 21 sought to find the required list of nominations. There were many accusations that the authorities hindered the signature campaign and the police confiscated the signatures collected by some groups. Sergie Baburin and Nikolai Pavlov - Yeltsin’s bitter opponents and the leaders of the Russian All-People’s Union (ROS), claimed that the police had raided its offices and stolen some 20,000 signatures and impeded their campaign in other ways too.¹⁵⁴ In sum, eight out of the 21 blocs were turned down by the CEC after the documents were checked; 13 ‘electoral associations’ (the official name given to them by the CEC) were allowed to proceed, fielding a total of 1717 candidates, giving a grand total of 3797 candidates in all categories.

The 13 associations have been grouped under the following heads, with the number of signatures, in its favour, in brackets.

Liberal and Reformist

*Russia’s Choice* (150 000), which put forward a list of 234 names of which 16 (7 per cent) were women was headed by Yegor Gaidar, First Deputy Prime Minister and author of radical economic reform in Russia, Sergei Kovalev, a well known human rights campaigner and Chairman of the Presidential Commission on Human Rights, and Ella Pamfilova, Minister for Social Protection. This bloc which came together in July 1993, included *Democratic Initiative*, the Peasant Party of Russia and above all the Democratic Russia Movement (DRM), represented the official face of the government while trying to build a mass political base. It was one of the few political organizations with a presence having branches in over 80 of Russia’s regions and republics. Its status was


formalised at a founding conference attended by over 1000 delegates from 84 regions of Russia on 16-17 October, with plans to turn it into a fully fledged party after the elections.155

Russia's Choice was the only group fighting the elections on the basis of its performance in the government. It represented liberal Westerners, favouring radical marketising reforms and Russia’s unequivocal integration into the world economic and political community. The bloc’s programme rested on the formula ‘Freedom, Property, Law’, promising a continuation of radical economic reforms. However, the bloc suggested that democratic values could not be carried to an absurdity and that the principle of separation of powers would be applied ‘with due consideration of the political situation.’156

The Yavlinsky - Boldyrev - Lukin Bloc (170000), headed by the three names in the bloc title was formed in late October 1993. It took out a list of 172 candidates, of whom 23 (13 per cent) were women. Grigori Yavlinsky had come to prominence in 1990 as the author of the ‘500 Day Plan’ for the USSR’s rapid transition to the market. He remained a Deputy Prime Minister for three months before becoming an adviser to the local administration at Nizhny Novgorod on both small and large privatisation. Yurii Boldyrev had been the former Inspector - General, overseeing Russia's regions, whose attempts to stem the tide of corruption in the government were halted by his summary dismissal. Vladimir Lukin was the popular Russian ambassador to the USA and a skilled politician who had survived the October crisis. This bloc managed to gain the allegiance of some of the smaller parties like the Republican Party of the Russian Federation, The Social Democratic Party as well as the Russian Christian Democratic Union.

This bloc, favoured radical reforms but criticised Gaidar for having left the state monopolies intact and called for ‘reform from below’. They favoured close links with the former Soviet republics and criticised Yeltsin’s pro-Western foreign policy.

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155 Moscow News (Moscow), no.43, 22 October 1993, p.2.
156 ibid.
The Party of Russian Unity and Accord (Partiya Rossiiskogo Edinstva i Soglasiya (PRES)) \(^{157}\) (22000), held its founding conference in Novgorod on 17 October 1993. It was headed by Sergei Shakhrai, a Deputy Prime Minister, Aleksandr Shokhin, the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for external economic and financial relations, and Konstantin Zatulin, leader of Entrepreneurs for a New Russia. In addition, the Union of Small Cities and the Association of the Cities of Central Russia cooperated with PRES. This bloc presented its 193-strong list of candidates, six (3 per cent) of which were women.

The bloc called itself the 'Party of Russian Statehood' and favoured a decentralised federation, strong links with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), increased priority to state industries and 'sensible protectionism'. It campaigned in favour of market reform, effective social security, federalism and local self-government under the slogan 'house, family, Motherland, tradition and continuity'. \(^{158}\)

Both PRES and Russia's Choice were composed of government ministers and presidential officials, and revealed once again the fatal inability of reformist groups to unite. The emergence of these two group, revealed the depth of the divisions within the government and the overweening ambitions of various personalities.

The Russian Movement for Democratic Reforms (Rossiiskoe dvizhenie demokraticheskikh reform - (RDDR) (135000), the final bloc in this category, was established in 1992 on the basis of the older Inter-Regional group in the Soviet legislature headed by Gavrill Popov. It presented a 153-strong electoral list of whom 20 (13 per cent) were women. It was led by the major of St. Petersburg, Anatolli Sobchak, and included the former mayor of Moscow, Gavrill Popov, the 'architect of perestroika' Aleksandr Yakovlev, and the former head of CIS military forces Marshal Yevgenii

\(^{157}\) Moscow News, no.45, 5 November 1993.

\(^{158}\) n.141, p 202.
The XXVIII CPSU Congress and the Emergence of Political Parties

Shaposhnikov. The group favoured reform but sought to shift the emphasis from finance to production, to modify the privatisation programme and to cut taxes and the state budget in half. The bloc united independent democrats who sought to remain aloof both from the infighting and radicalism of the Democratic Russia Movement and the perceived excesses of Gaidar’s shock therapy while remaining loyal to a vision of democratic marketising reform.

Centrist

The Civic Union for Stability, Justice and Progress (Grazhdanskii Soyuz vo imya Stabil’nosti, Spravedlivosti Progressa) (150,000) was established in October 1993 on the basis of the old Civic Union. It comprised of Aleksandr Vladislavlev’s All-Russian Union ‘Renewal’, Nikolai Travkin’s Democratic Party of Russia and Rutskoi’s PPFR. This new body was led by Arkadii Vol’sky, the representative of the directors of state-owned industry. The founders of the new organization included the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs headed by Vol’sky, the ‘Renewal’ Union and the Social Democratic Centre headed by Vol’sky besides political scientists Aleksandr Tsipko and Fedor Burlatsky, Nikolai Bekh, the director of the Kamaz truck plant and Vasilli Lipitsky one of the leaders of the PPFR. Out of the 184-strong list of candidates only 3 per cent (five) were women.

This bloc brought together the directors of state factories and banks and called for subsidies to maintain Russia’s industrial potential and for generous social policies. The bloc also called for an active policy in the CIS and the protection of rights of Russian

159 Nezavisimaya gazeta. 10 November 1993.
161 Rossiiskaya gazeta. 7 December 1993, p.2.
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minorities, and insisted that Russia's new military doctrine should reflect the country's geopolitical interests. 162

The Democratic Party of Russia (DPR) (109,000), which presented a 167-strong party list was headed by the party's leader, Nikolai Travkin, the film producer Stanislav Govorukhin and the economist Oleg Bogomolov. It also included Sergei Glaz'ev, the former minister of foreign economic affairs. The DPR favoured a federal Russia, the establishment of parliamentary limits to the powers of the presidency, restrictions on land sales and a protectionist foreign economic policy. The DPR decided to fight the elections independently believing that it was the only way they could retain full control over their programme. Travkin urged his supporters to vote against the draft constitution arguing that it would establish a dictatorship of the President.

The Future of Russia - New Names (Budushchee Rossii - novye imena) 163 (109,000) was established in October 1993. It was led by Vyacheslav Lashchevsky, the head of the Russian Union of Youth. Its list included Oleg Sokolov, the head of the youth organization 'Free Russia', and Vladimir Mironov, director of the Institute of Politics. On a 95-strong list, women numbered only six (6 per cent). The policies of this bloc was very much close to those of the Civic Union, which was also one of the sponsors of the organization. It urged the president to cancel the referendum on the constitution.

Corporatist and Interest Groups

A number of lobbies too were represented in the centre of Russian politics. The first was the Constructive Ecology Movement (Konstruktivnoe Ekologicheskoj Dvizhenie Rossii - KEDR, the Russian word for CEDAR) (150,000). 164 This organization which was established in March 1993, fielded 44 candidates of whom 9 (20 per cent) were

162 n.141, p.203.
163 ibid.
164 Izvestiya, 2 December 1993, p.2.
women. On 7 October 1993, its leader, Anatolii Panfilov, signed a cooperation agreement with environmental and other organizations. Lyubov' Lymar of the Soldiers' Mothers Association headed the list of this bloc. This movement distanced itself from some of Russia's more radical environmental movement and sought to ensure the health of the people on the basis of constructive, realistic and democratic policies.

The Women of Russia (Zhenshchiny Rossii) (127,000) movement was established in October 1993 with its 36 female candidates list being headed by Alentina Fedulova, the leader of the Russian Women's Union, Ekaterina Lakhova, Presidential Adviser on Women and Family Affairs, and Natalya Gundareva, a well known actress. This group shunned the feminist tag and insisted on being a movement rather than a party.165

Their call for a slower pace of economic reform was balanced by demands for greater social welfare education.

The Dignity and Charity Movement (Dostoinstvo i Miloserdie) (130,000)166 was established by the All Russian Council of Veterans of War and Labour, the All-Russian Society of Invalids, and the Chernobyl' Society, on 20 October 1993. Its 58-strong list of candidates, of whom three (5 per cent) were women, was headed by Academician Konstantin Frolov and included Nikolai Gubenko, a theatre director and a former Soviet Minister of Culture, and Aleksandr Dzasokhov, the last head of the Central Committee's International Department. Under its slogan, 'reforms for the people, and not at the expense of the people', this bloc campaigned in favour of an effective scheme of social protection.

Neo - Communist Parties

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) (187,000) which put forward 151 candidates was led by Gennadii Zyuganov, former Secretary of the CPRSFSR Ideology Department. Out of the total 151 candidates 15 (10 per cent) were

165 n.141, p.204.
166 Pravda, 2 April 1993, p.2.
women. This party which had been briefly banned after the October events was refounded at a Congress on 13-14 February 1993. Its list included Anatolii Luk’yanov, the last Speaker of the USSR Supreme Soviet who was indicted for his participation in the coup of August 1991. The party, claiming 600,000 members\textsuperscript{167}, considered these elections illegal and unconstitutional but nevertheless participated on the grounds that a boycott would be counter-productive to the development of an opposition. The CPRF called for 'the return of civil peace and legality' in a three-stage process involving the restoration of legality, the election of a new representative body and a new constitution. While formally committed to the continuation of reforms, the party called for the end of shock therapy and a return to some of the aspects of the old state-run economy. In his election programme Zyuganov tried to present his party as a reformed social democratic party. The Communist Party with its formidable network of party cells and local organizations, and a reserve of skilled and experienced politicians was by far the strongest party.

The Agrarian Party of Russia (APR) (500,000) formed on the basis of the Supreme Soviets' Agrarian Union came into existence on 23 February 1993.\textsuperscript{168} It was headed by Mikhail Lapshin, one of the leaders of the opposition in the old legislature, and put forward a list of 145 candidates of whom seven (5 per cent) were women. Their list included Vasili Starodubtsev, the leader of the Kolkhoz movement who helped lead the coup attempt of August 1991, Aleksandr Zaveryukha, the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for agriculture, Vladimir Shcherbak, the First Deputy Minister for Agriculture, and the writer Valentin Rasputin. Although this party claimed to represent the interests of all rural and town dwellers, their main concern was to preserve the old system of collective and state farms. They called for a state-regulated transition and a socially oriented market.

\textsuperscript{167} n.141, p.205.

\textsuperscript{168} ibid.
Nationalists

The Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) (153,000) was the first political party registered in the Soviet Union being established in June 1989. It was again re-registered as a Russian party in December 1992, at which time the party claimed a membership of 80,000-100,000. Led by the charismatic, extreme nationalist, Vladimir Vol’fovich Zhirinovsky, the party presented a 147-strong list of candidates of whom nine (6 per cent) were women. Zhirinovsky took a very dim view of the CIS and called it an ‘artificial formation’. In his book, The Final Push to the South, he argued that Russia’s arrival on the shores of the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean would signal the salvation of the Russian nation.169

The LDPR believed that it was possible to build the economy in a very short time by strengthening the state sector, limiting privatisation, banning unemployment, reducing taxes on producers and retaining state ownership of land although allowing its renting and inheritance. It also declared that it would bring about an end to foreign aid, halt conversion, increase the sale of weapons on the world market and suppress organized crime through the implementation of special laws. In Zhirinovsky’s words, the LDPR was ‘a centre right moderate conservative party, standing on a patriotic platform’. He promised every nationality and faith all ‘legal freedoms typical of the civilised world’.170

The political characteristics of the various blocs were reflected in the profile of the candidates themselves. The 225 proportional seats were contested by the 13 party lists containing initially 1,756 candidates. Out of the total of 161 (9 per cent) women candidates, fewer than 100 had been members of the old legislature. Ninety-nine of the candidates (6 per cent) were aged 20-29; 395 (22 per cent) 30-39; 723 (41 per cent)

169 Yuridicheskaya gazeta (Moscow), n.40-41, 1993, cited in n.141.
40-49: 429 (24 per cent) 50-59 and 106 (6 per cent) were 60 and over. The relative youthfulness of communist candidates, at 48 only three years older than the average Russia's Choice candidate, reflected the emergence of a new generation of communists. Russia's Choice was marked by the high proportion of its candidates employed in government and politics (88 or 42 per cent), followed by 55 (26 per cent) in academic life. A slightly different pattern was followed by PRES, with top place again occupied by government workers (78, or 40 per cent), followed by 59 candidates (31 per cent) in business with academics (36 or 19 per cent) being pushed into the third place. In contrast, academics were way ahead in Yabloko, numbering 79 or 46 per cent of the list. Business people made up 86 (47 per cent) of the Civic Union list but only 22 (15 per cent) of the Communist list, which was dominated by workers (55 or 36 per cent) and academics (46 or 31 per cent). The single largest proportion out of all the party lists was made up by the 75 academics under the LDPR flag, comprising 51 per cent of its candidates, followed by 23 workers (16 per cent), 15 in business (10 per cent) and 12 from the military (8 per cent), the single largest number of military candidates standing in any association.171

These blocs represented the third wave of party formation in Russia: the first accompanied the insurgency phase of the democratic revolution up to August 1991 which was marked by the predominance of movements, popular fronts and other loose forms of organization; the second lasted from August 1991 to October 1993, during which numerous 'pseudo-parties' mutated and reformed with extraordinary rapidity,172 and the third wave followed the October events as the country prepared for the elections. Very few of the first or second-wave parties made it through to these elections, notably Travkin's DPR, Zhirinovsky's LDPR, and the reformed Communist Party.

The Election Campaign

The election campaign although short marked a significant stage in the development of programmatic divergence. The election was marked by the lack of clarity over what its political consequences would be. Except for a recorded broadcast on 9 December appealing for support for the new Constitution, Yeltsin maintained a dignified distance from the campaign. 173

The three weeks of campaigning was dominated by the television, which for 85 per cent of the population was the main source of information. 174 Although, all parties were promised free and equal access to the media, it could not ensure that political reporting and news management remained unbiased, and neither did it take into account paid political advertising or regional broadcasts. 175 In the total absence of political commentators, the candidates formed a monologue with views, thus avoiding any serious interviews or probing questions. With blocs being allowed to purchase as much paid advertising as they liked, Russia’s Choice took most of the time on the two main channels (‘Ostankino’ and ‘Russia’) at 224 minutes, followed by PRES at 154 and the LDPR at 149. 176

Although a small number of parties (above all, unreconstructed Communists) boycotted the elections accusing the President of "seeking to get a pocket parliament at all costs and in so doing, not particularly caring for democratic decorum," 177 the majority committed themselves to the electoral process. Attempts to impose a boycott by some heads of administration and local legislatures were strongly condemned by the CEC, which insisted that ‘voters in the Russian Federation had the right to express their


175 Izvestiya, 10 December 1993, p.4.

176 Moscow News, no.43, 22 October 1993, p.2.

opinion independently'. On the day of the poll, all public agitation was forbidden, and some 50,000 observers from political parties and public movements took part in supervising the voting. On Yeltsin's invitation, some 1030 foreign observers from 58 countries and 20 international, parliamentary, human rights and other large groups from the European Union (EU) and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) were accredited by the CEC to monitor the elections.

The Election Results

For the constitutional referendum to be valid, out of the 106.2 million registered citizens, 50 per cent had to turn out, unlike the Federal Assembly where only a 25 per cent turnout would serve the purpose. Official figures show that the constitution was supported by 32937630 people or 58.43 per cent of the vote; while 23431333 or 41.6 per cent voted against it. Only 30.7 per cent of the total electorate voted for the constitution, and in 17 republics and regions the constitution was rejected. While the draft constitution was supported by the majority of the republics, even though their claims to sovereignty were excluded, it was feared that the closeness of the vote would undermine the constitution's legitimacy. With its publication in the Russian media, the constitution officially came into force on 25 December 1993.

The paucity of the women candidates on the party lists was reflected in the low number of those elected. A total of only 32 women got elected, 21 of whom were

183 Byulletin, TsILK, 12, 1994, pp.82-105, cited in n.141.
members of the Women of Russia bloc.\textsuperscript{184} In the State Duma as a whole there were just under 50 women, 13 per cent of the total intake, and in the Federation Council there were only nine (5.3 per cent). Although 29 nationalities were elected to the Federation Council, Russians comprised 76 per cent and in the State Duma 82.5 per cent. All but two deputies had completed higher education, and 55% were between the ages of 25 and 50.\textsuperscript{185}

In the elections to the Federation Council which was successfully held in 85 out of the 89 two-member constituencies, a total of 171 out of the potential 178 candidates got elected. Only 49 of these successful candidates had been members in the former legislature. Chelyabinsk Oblast and the Tatarstan and Chechen republics failed to return their two deputies, and the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug returned only one.\textsuperscript{186} With 84 per cent of the deputies to the Upper House declaring to be without party affiliations\textsuperscript{187}, it became difficult to fit the results into the pattern of bloc politics. Among the rest, eleven senators declared themselves as members of the CPRF\textsuperscript{188}, six as members of Russia’s Choice\textsuperscript{189}, while the DPR claimed one member with four others as sympathisers.\textsuperscript{190} With 40 senators supporting ‘Russia’s Choice’, 23 classified as moderate reformers, 36 part of the centrist opposition, and 15 supporters of the

\textsuperscript{184} ibid., p.31.
\textsuperscript{185} Rossiiskaya gazeta, 21 December 1993, p.1.
\textsuperscript{186} Byulleten’, TsIK, 12, 1994, p.31, cited in n.141.
\textsuperscript{187} Sovetskaya Rossiya, 28 December 1993, p.3.
\textsuperscript{188} Byulleten’, TsIK, 12, 1994, p.31, cited in n.141.
CPRF, the assembly reflected an overall reformist balance.\textsuperscript{191} The occupational pattern was a more traditional Soviet one with 50 per cent of the senators occupying senior posts in the executive branch followed by directors of large state enterprises (some 10 per cent) and former heads of the legislative branch.\textsuperscript{192}

In the 225 single mandate constituencies, only 219 deputies were elected. No elections were held in the Chechen Republic constituency, and the elections in Naberezhnye - Chelny in Tatarstan were postponed until March 1994 in the absence of enough registered candidates. In the four other Tatarstan constituencies, the ballots were invalid because the turnout was less than 25 per cent.\textsuperscript{193} Nearly half of the victorious candidates received less than 30 per cent of the votes out of which only one fifth receiving an absolute majority. An astonishing 17 per cent of votes were cast against all the candidates running in any particular constituency, while over 7 per cent of the ballots were declared invalid.\textsuperscript{194}

In the proportional part of the election, only eight of the parties and groups cleared the 5 per cent barrier.\textsuperscript{195} Table 4.3 highlights the seats won by each party in the 225 seats decided on a party basis, along with seats won by members standing individually in the 219 constituency seats where voting took place. Of the latter, 141 individual candidates officially were not affiliated with any party or bloc, but later the majority of them aligned themselves with various fractions in the parliament. Another eight seats were won in single constituency seats by party members whose parties failed to achieve the 5 per cent threshold.

\textsuperscript{191} n.141, p.212.

\textsuperscript{192} Rossiiskaya gazeta, 28 December 1993, p.2.


\textsuperscript{194} Byulleten', TsIK, 12, 1994, pp.52-66, cited in n.141.

\textsuperscript{195} Nezavisimaya gazeta, 3 February 1994, pp.1-4.
Table No: 4.3

SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF ELECTIONS TO THE STATE DUMA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTY/BLOCK</th>
<th>PROPORTIONAL</th>
<th>CONSTITUENCY</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>SEATS</td>
<td>SEATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia's Choice</td>
<td>15.51</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDPR (Zhirinovsky)</td>
<td>22.92</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist Party</td>
<td>12.40</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrarian Party</td>
<td>7.99</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yabloko (Yavlinsky)</td>
<td>7.86</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women of Russia</td>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRES (Shakhrai)</td>
<td>6.76</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPR (Travkin)</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Union</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDDR (Sobehak)</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dignity &amp; Charity</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Names</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedar</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against all</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoiled ballots</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>141</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postponed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>225</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Although Russia's Choice became the single largest group in the Duma by gaining far more seats in the single-member constituencies than any other bloc, its relative failure was the greatest surprise of the election. A little under 16 per cent of the total electorate supported Russia's Choice, suggesting the rejection of 'shock therapy'.\(^{196}\) With its support falling below 10 per cent in 17 federal units, and exceeding over 25 per cent only in five units, its performance in Moscow city with 33.89 per cent support was by

\(^{196}\) Byulletin', TsIK, 12, 1994, pp.52-66, cited in n.141.
far its best result. Its weakest showing was in the border areas and the republics, where neither the ‘titular’ nationalities nor the ethnic Russians saw Russia’s Choice as advancing their interests. Russia’s Choice’s appeal to the middle class values in a country with negligible middle class, made its campaign very inappropriate. Moreover the universalism espoused by it seemed to be very distant from the day to day concerns of the common people. With the abolition of the traditional second round, when the democratic forces could have combined in support of the front-runners, Russia’s Choice lost further ground.

The Yavlinsky, Shakhrai and Sobchak blocs failed to convince the electorate about their ability to provide a credible democratic alternative. All shades of the democratic spectrum appeared to have lost touch with the popular concerns, which they had earlier so effectively mobilised against the Communist regime. The majority of voters who had twice cast their vote for the President, in the June 1991 presidential election and the April 1993 referendum, were forced to chose between at least four ‘democratic’ blocs. That the divisions within the democratic camp were real and not tactical, was obvious by the election results. Shakhrai’s Party had bid for the federalist vote, and PRES overcame the 5 per cent barrier in four-fifths of the country’s regions and republics and won decisively in Tuva with 43.38 per cent of the vote, in Kabardino-Balkaria with 31.53 per cent and in the Altai Republic with 26.55 per cent. The poor PRES showing, barely overcoming the 5 per cent barrier, suggested that strengthening federalism was not the main issue affecting voting behaviour. On the other hand, the strong support for Zhirinovsky’s party advocating the abolition of ethno-federalism and

its replacement by the unitary *guberniya* system of administrative provinces, and for the CPRF, also representing a centralised form of government, suggested that there were not many takers for a decentralised federalism as claimed by its advocates. Support for Zhirinovsky in those republics where titular nationalities were in a majority like Mordovia, Komi, Marii El and Karelia, reflected the concerns of the Russian majorities and their potential for the counter-mobilisation of non-titular populations in Russia’s 21 ethno-federal republics.

One of the marked feature of the results, was the weakness of the centrist blocs. The long standing problem of the Civic Union in gaining a steady identity and purpose was now shared by other groups that sought to plant their standard on centrist ground. The DPR, lost votes as a result of feuding between its Moscow and regional organizations. In the Federation Council, some 60 deputies supported the centrist policies of Chernomyrdin, with views close to those of the Civic Union.

The October events had greatly simplified the Russian political spectrum with the banning of those groups and movements which had allied with the banned National Salvation Front. The banning of Anpilov’s RCWP and others, and the elimination from the electoral race of Aksyuchits’ RCDM, Baburin’s ROS and Mikhail Astaf’ev’s Constitutional Democrats, left the field clear for the CPRF, APR and LDPR.

The developments of October, fuelled by public unease over the deaths at the White House, the liberalisation of bread price, continued economic decline and the fear of unemployment, strengthened the position of the CPRF. Taking advantage of its political experience and its network of party cells, the CPRF reached its maximum level of potential support in these elections. Certain groups like the pensioners tended to support the Communists, though the relative weakness of the Communist vote among the military was unexpected. Of all the major groupings, support for the CPRF was the most

201 *Russkaya mysl’* (Moscow), no. 4011, 6-12 January 1994, p. 3, cited in n. 141.

stable, with 68 per cent of its voters having committed themselves within a week of the starting of the campaign.²⁰³

Both the CPRF and the APR increased their representation in the State Duma, and did well in some of the republics.²⁰⁴ While the reformers on the whole maintained their support in the cities, the CPRF and APR gained their main support in small towns and rural areas. The elections saw the relegitimation of the Communist Party, appearing as a force of stability and rationality when compared to Zhirinovsky's LDPR. Soon after the elections, Gaidar suggested that the CPRF would make a useful ally with Russia's Choice to counter the fascist threat.²⁰⁵

LDPR's success, which was described as a 'bolt from the blue', by one commentator was one of the major surprises of this election.²⁰⁶ Zhirinovsky's share of the vote nearly trebled rising from 7.81 per cent in the presidential elections of June 1991 to 22.92 per cent, although the increase in the actual number of votes cast for him had only doubled from 6.2 million to 12.32 million.²⁰⁷ Although the LDPR had won only five constituencies out of the 66 it contested and had almost no support in the Upper House, Zhirinovsky had clearly gained by the abolition of the two-stage electoral system, and by the increase in the proportion of those elected by party lists to the State Duma to 50 per cent.²⁰⁸ The failure of the reformist and the neo-communist camps to provide a single leader matching Yeltsin's popularity was to the advantage of Zhirinovsky who filled this void in charismatic leadership. The relative success of the LDPR took place

²⁰³ *Byulleten', TsIK, 12, 1994, pp.52-54, cited in n.141.
²⁰⁷ n.141, p.216.
not only at the expense of the democrats but also at the expense of the Communists and the Agrarians.209

The LDPR came first in the party lists in every Oblast' except Chelyabinsk, Perm', Sverdlovsk, Tomsk and Yaroslavl', and notably even in those regions in Central Russia which had traditionally supported Yeltsin or the Communists. The LDPR were far ahead with 43.01 per cent of the vote in Pskov Oblast, and in Voronezh Oblast' a Communist stronghold, the latter took only 14.54 per cent compared with the LDPR's 30.63 per cent. The results were more or less the same in regions like Belgorod, Smolensk and Tambov, the very heartland of the Communist opposition.210 Espousing a policy of national capitalist development and the restoration of empire, the LDPR garnered the votes of Russians alienated by economic decline, the end of superpower status and the perceived hostility of the former Soviet republics.211

The December 1993 elections were unique in many ways. It revealed the political geography of Russia to be fractured along several axes, with divisions between metropolitan areas and the countryside, and between the North/North-West and the South/South-West. The Communist support was the greatest in the central 'Black Earth' region to the South-West of Moscow, whereas the LDPR's strongest support was in the new Russian border areas and those in proximity to national conflicts. Those places, which had benefitted from the reforms (Moscow and St. Petersburg), supported the democratic platforms, in contrast to the South-Western part of the country, including regions like Voronezh with a strong concentration of military and engineering plants, which was the strong hold of Zhirinovsky and the Communists.212

209 Byulletin', TsIK, 12, 1994, pp.52-66, cited in n.141.
212 Segodnya, 10 February 1994, p.2.
The 12 December elections marked the first stage in a continuing electoral process that lasted till the spring of 1994. New professional legislative bodies were established in the 68 regions (the 21 republics were allowed to make their own arrangements), and elections to 64 of them were to be held in March and three in April 1994.213 In the results of the elections to the Moscow Duma on 12 December 1993, *Russia’s Choice* triumphed (taking 19 out of 35 places) on a relatively high turn out with nine independent candidates. Once the electoral process moved into the provinces, representatives of the old communist and managerial elites, including former Communist Party officials, chairmen of collective farms, Enterprise Directors and former Soviet deputies, triumphed.214 However, the turnout figures was very low, falling on 20 March 1994 below the prerequisite 25 per cent threshold in Kamchat, Orenburg and Murmansk regions and the city of St. Petersburg215, that the elections had to be postponed. In most regions, a turnout of 30-40 per cent was recorded and new Dumas were elected. The return to power of the party and economic *nomenklatura* at the local level led Nikolai Medvedev, head of the Presidential Administration for Work with Geographical Areas, to warn of the creation of a ‘red belt’ around Moscow woven out of regions with anti-reformist and anti-presidential sentiments.216

THE 1995 DECEMBER PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

The elections to the Russian Duma was largely considered as the first full-fledged exercise in consolidating the democratic framework of the Russian Federation after it came into existence in December 1991. As the interim constitutional measures pushed through by President Yeltsin between 1991 and 1993 occurred in the first flush of the

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political transformations engineered by him, this election was seen more as a litmus test of how far the Russian society had accepted the legitimacy of the political structures that had been put into place.

On the eve of the elections, the Russian political scene witnessed a profusion of parties and blocs. By August 1995, the Justice Ministry had already recorded 259 political parties, movements and associations that had officially registered to collect the 200,000 signatures necessary to compete in the December parliamentary elections. With the exception of the Democratic Party of Russia (which had apparently split), all the parties that had won representation in 1993 announced plans to seek re-election. A number of new parties which had their founding Conferences after December 1993, were also in the fray.

The results of the 17 December 1995 elections proved beyond doubt that the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) led by Gennadii Zyuganov was the leading political force. The Communists led both in the half based on party lists, as well as in the direct single constituency elections. On their party list the CPRF secured 22.3 per cent of votes cast, the turnout being about 65 per cent of the electorate. This brought the CPRF 99 deputies while on the half represented by direct single constituency elections, the party won 58 deputies. In a house of 450, the CPRF's tally is 157.

One of the surprises in the elections was the Agrarian Party, an ally of the Communists, which failed to cross the 5 per cent threshold. However, in the direct single constituency elections, the Agrarian Party won in 20 constituencies. The other parties which have won deputies proportional to the votes polled on their party list were: Nationalist Party of Zhirinovsky; governmental party of Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin, Our Home is Russia; and Yabloko of Yavlinsky. Next to the Communists, it was Zhirinovsky's Nationalist Party which won the highest number of deputies.

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218 ibid.
Receiving 11.2 per cent of the votes, but very few wins in direct elections its total strength is 51 deputies. Prime Minister Chernomyrdin's party stood third with a modest 10.3 per cent of votes on Party lists, its total strength being 55 deputies. Yabloko has in total 45 deputies - 6.7 per cent of votes on Party lists, and 14 deputies elected directly. Former Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar's Party Democratic Choice of Russia which had 76 deputies in the former State Duma won only 9 seats in the direct elections besides failing to cross the 5 per cent threshold. Popular wrath against the party was reflected in Gaidar's own defeat in direct elections.

The true significance of the Duma election lies in that it was a preview of the presidential elections slated in June 1996. It served to mobilise public opinion and to help prepare the electorate for what would be possibly the most important vote in the history of post-Soviet Russia. The December elections also served to sort out serious political parties from those who hovered mockingly on the fringe and those who simply had no chance. The Duma elections were also significant as a vote against the government and status quo. The significance of the Communist gains in Russia's parliamentary elections cannot be underestimated.