

Prime Minister

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Soviet Election Results

I attach a note written within the Assessments Staff giving a first reaction to the Soviet elections of 26 March. A considered Assessment of the results and their implications will be made in mid-April when all the results have been received and studied.

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PERCY CRADOCK

31 March 1989

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SOVIET ELECTION RESULTS: FIRST IMPRESSIONS

1. The full results of the Soviet Elections will not be published until 5 April. But enough information has come in to indicate that, in a high turnout, the voters have used the freedom denied them for 70 years to deliver a stinging rebuke to the Party establishment. This has been particularly striking in the 3 major cities, where all the top local Party and Soviet figures who stood for election were defeated.

- In Moscow, Eltsin's victory over a factory director with nearly 90% of the vote (over 5 million votes) far exceeded expectations. Moreover, those of the city's leading political figures who stood, lost. Two Politburo members who should have stood in Moscow (Vorotnikov, President of the Russian Republic, and Zaikov, Moscow Party leader) escaped defeat only by standing (respectively) in the countryside and on the Party list.

- In Leningrad, the three leading Party and Soviet figures all lost, including the most senior head to roll, the Leningrad regional Party leader, Soloviev, a Candidate Member of the Politburo. He had stood unopposed, but failed to amass the necessary 50% of the votes cast. (The voters used the option, always theoretically open to them, but rarely used in the past for fear of reprisals, of simply excising the single name on the ballot sheet).

- In Kiev, the local Party and Soviet leaders, both standing unopposed, also failed to get 50% of the votes. The Ukrainian Party leader,

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Shcherbitsky, who ought to have stood in Kiev, escaped to his home base of Dnepropetrovsk, where, standing unopposed, he gained 75% of the votes.

2. Scattered results from around the country show that a number of other regional Party leaders, particularly in the Ukraine, and mostly standing unopposed, failed to be elected. At least 5 senior military commanders have also been defeated, a number of them by more junior officers.

3. In the Baltic states, the results show that the Popular Fronts, not the local Communist Parties, call the shots: the Popular Fronts won almost all the seats they contested. The Party leadership got through by and large only where the Popular Fronts deliberately held off. In other Republics the results have been uneven. In Kazakhstan most of the Party leaders seem to have got through unopposed. In Armenia there was a near boycott.

4. In general, the population showed greater activity than anyone had expected. Prompted in many cases by the local intelligentsia, they humiliated in particular those Party leaders who had best manipulated the pre-election process to stand unopposed or against only token opposition. The results took the leadership by surprise. A Politburo meeting was convened on 28 March to discuss them. Gorbachev summoned media chiefs on 29 March. He took the predictable line that the results showed support for *perestroika* and that the electorate's rejection of individual Party leaders indicated that *perestroika* was moving too slowly. Their defeat was "no tragedy", but cause for reflection. He did not imply that their jobs were at stake in the immediate future. He again rejected any talk of a multi-Party system as a result of the elections.

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5. Gorbachev's feelings are probably mixed. He has succeeded handsomely in what we judged to be his two principal aims: to involve the population in politics and to put the entrenched apparatchiks on their mettle. Gorbachev now has something of a popular mandate to press on with perestroika and weed out those who resist it. But success on this scale will generate a new set of problems. In particular:

- Whatever explanations are offered, the results will be seen as a vote of no confidence in the Party's rule. This will shake morale in the Party, through whom Gorbachev still has to govern. Those Party apparatchiks who have been thrown to the wolves will be less than ever enamoured of Gorbachev, particularly as he himself escaped facing the electorate through being elected on the Party slate.

- Pressure for some sort of organised opposition, either the sanctioning of factions within the Party or a multi-Party system, will increase. Gorbachev currently wants neither.

- The scent of victory may arouse unfulfillable expectations among the population;

- The elections will further fuel nationalist movements, particularly in the Baltics.

6. Next steps. In a total of 275 constituencies the elections were inconclusive. In 76 of them, where there were three or more candidates, and none received 50% of the votes, the top two will have a run off on 9 April.

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In the other 199, where no more than two candidates stood and none reached 50%, the whole process of nomination, registration and election will have to be gone through again, with new elections on 14 May.

7. The new Congress of 2,250 People's Deputies should have gathered for its first annual meeting at the end of April, but this has now been postponed until after the second round of elections. Its two tasks will be: to elect a Chairman of the Supreme Soviet (Gorbachev can still expect to get the job, albeit probably not with a unanimous vote); and to elect a Supreme Soviet of 542 Deputies, divided into two Councils, of the Union and of Nationalities (one fifth of whom are to be renewed annually). Little thought seems to have been given as to how to do this fairly. The process will offer Party officials an opportunity to attempt to recoup their losses by excluding awkward Deputies; it will be watched keenly by the now politically aware Soviet public.

8. Conclusion. The vote was against the Party establishment rather than for reform. Gorbachev can draw some immediate satisfaction from it, but the ultimate message is that the Party cannot hold on to its present monopoly of power for ever.

31 March 1989

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SOVIET VOTE YELTSIN TAPS ANTI-PARTY MOOD

Moscow Maverick Makes Comeback

TOR

Tuesday, February 21, 1989

By Paul Quinn-Judge

Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

MOSCOW

BORIS YELTSIN'S face flushes, then contorts with rage when his old rival, Yegor Ligachev, is mentioned. His booming voice becomes even louder:

"I don't understand why they don't remove him," the ousted Moscow Communist Party boss bellows to his supporters. "I know everything about this man and his scheming."

After months of news blackouts, Boris Yeltsin is back in the limelight. He is running hard for election to the new Soviet parliament, which, Soviet Leader Mikhail Gorbachev promises, will have real power. If it does, Mr. Yeltsin wants part of it.

His supporters hope to see him "at the very top of the leadership, alongside Gorbachev." Yeltsin is more tactful, but admits to planning a bloc inside the new parliament. Yeltsin has not yet decided where to run. But he seems to be most tempted by a special territorial district that embraces the whole of Moscow. The slate here will be decided today. By Thursday Yeltsin will have to declare his preference. Then the real electoral campaign will begin.

The official press still ignores him, but meeting after meeting in Moscow confirms his appeal. His ideas are hazy, his delivery is poor, he seems to have trouble thinking on his feet. But his supporters don't care. Yeltsin is a true Russian knight," says a retired Army colonel at one elec-

tion meeting. He is "upright and straightforward," says another. "He was the first person here to tell us what's what," a third speaker says.

Yeltsin is tapping a deep current of anti-party feeling. The campaign for March 26 elections has shown a remarkably high degree of popular hostility toward



BORIS YELTSIN

the Communist Party apparat, or bureaucracy. Yeltsin's supporters are consciously making him the symbol of anti-apparat feeling.

A recent unpublished public opinion poll showed Yeltsin as the second most popular political figure in the country - and, given the tendency of many respondents still to be polite about the top leader, he may be the most popular.

The poll divided Soviet society into six categories, from supporters of radical reform to conservative Russian nationalists. Yeltsin did poorly among radical reformers, largely people with the equivalent of university education. But

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his popularity matched Mr. Gorbachev's in most other political groups, and overtook the Soviet leader in two: Russian nationalists and those most concerned about the declining living standards.

Cautious in conversation with foreign journalists, he is more open, in chats with delegates to the meetings being held to finalize a slate of candidates in each electoral district.

The meetings are nine-hour marathons. During breaks, Yeltsin's admirers gather round to listen to their hero. Most are awestruck by his imposing presence: his larger than life features, his shock of white hair, his deep and slightly thick voice. He prefers talking to listening, and sometimes puts a firm hand on a listener's arm if he shows any desire to interrupt.

But the brief conversations, coupled with his short official presentations at the electoral meetings, slowly build up a picture of his views. He says he is "100 percent" behind Gorbachev on foreign policy, and differs with him only on tactics on most other questions. But he has a tendency to be all things to all men:

- He wants to organize a "left revolutionary bloc" in the new Supreme Soviet. This would probably consist of about 30 percent of the approximately 440 members of the standing parliament, he says. Lapsing into the military jargon favored by party officials, Yeltsin describes them as the "forward reconnaissance" of perestroika (restructuring).

His admirers ask him about a multiparty system. Gorbachev has just described the idea as "rubbish." Yeltsin says it is premature: We're "not ready organizationally or psychologically" for more than one party. There should be a nationwide discussion of the idea.

- The leadership should have concentrated first on improving living standards and only then moving onto political changes. That's like saying let's patch up the house before we pull it down, objects an elector at one of the meetings. Yeltsin and most of the audience ignore the criticism.

- During one break, a military officer asks whether "all these cuts and the declassifying of military information" aren't harming

the country. Yeltsin nods sympathetically. "We have to be very careful how we approach this; he says. And we have to look after all the officers who are going to be demobilized in the troop cuts. They need help too. So do the bureaucrats who will lose their jobs in the reforms, says a policeman. They're human after all. Yeltsin nods sympathetically.

- There should be 90 percent cuts in the internal strength of the KGB, the security and counterintelligence organization, he says during one intermission chat. Its external intelligence gathering activities should not be touched.

To a large degree Gorbachev and Mr. Ligachev have made Yeltsin what he is today. The speech which led to his dismissal from the Communist Party Politburo, a still-unpublished impromptu address to the Central Committee in October 1987, could have been a simple act of political self-destruction. Instead, party leaders organized a brutal and well-publicized meeting which dismissed Yeltsin from his position as Moscow party chief.

This turned him into a national hero. The "coarse, indecent attacks" on Yeltsin by members of the Moscow party establishment, one elector said, showed how badly Yeltsin had scared the leadership. A subsequent news blackout seems to have confirmed rank-and-file feelings that Yeltsin was indeed their man. So did an emotional speech by Ligachev at the 19th party conference last summer.

Complaints at the conference that Yeltsin arbitrarily fired Moscow officials reinforced pro-Yeltsin feeling. "So he made life miserable for the bureaucrats," a Muscovite said immediately after the conference, "They make life miserable for us all the time."

Soon after fall from the top, Yeltsin put out feelers to radical intellectuals. He was a founding member of the anti-Stalinist organization "memorial," he and other founders unsuccessfully invited Alexander Solzhenitsyn to become a member.

Radical intellectuals are now slightly leery of Yeltsin. "He's rough, tough, and honest," says the writer Yuri Koryakin. But like Ligachev, Mr. Koryakin adds, Yeltsin inclines toward solving things by reinforcing discipline.

Prime Minister
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