

THE YELTSIN REGIME

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Who holds power in Russia? The question seems ridiculous. Since 12 December 1993, the country has had an ultra-presidential constitution and its architect, Boris Yeltsin, supposedly rules virtually unopposed. For a number of reasons that are the subject of fierce controversy in Moscow, he cannot do so. Various explanations have been put forward: his health, his lack of judgement when it comes to choosing his collaborators, or his inability to decide on the right policies. Some are already laying bets that he will not last until his mandate expires in June 1996; others, like Gennady **Burbulis** hope that he will complete his mandate 'with dignity' and then leave the stage. But does Boris Yeltsin himself have any intention of doing so?

The Russian President has surrounded himself with a much larger staff than that of the Central Committee of the defunct CPSU. The President's administration employs 40,000 people and has an annual budget of three billion roubles. It pays the salaries of deputies and senators, the judges of the Constitutional Court and the state prosecutors. Running this little empire is no easy task, particularly in that those who belong to it are not bound together by any party discipline or solidarity. The 'old democrats' who brought Boris Yeltsin to power can be counted on the fingers of one hand. They have been replaced by so-called administrators recruited on the basis of whom they know. Access to 'Tsar Boris' counts for much more than an individual's place in the hierarchy. Those who get to the 'Tsar' first win their case. Better still, they can have a dacha if they need it, or a luxury flat in Moscow. They can travel in planes belonging to the presidential flight and enjoy other privileges, some of them paid in coin of the realm. In 1994 Yeltsin rewarded the Duma for its 'good behaviour' by giving every deputy a holiday bonus of two million roubles; very few of them refused the tip.

Yuri Petrov has long been the most influential man at court.' He was Boris Yeltsin's assistant and then his successor on the CPSU secretariat in Sverdlovsk before becoming the President's chief of staff. Worn out by the

campaigns waged against him by the 'democrats', who resented his friendship with **Fidel** Castro, he opted for the less important but much more promising post of Director General of the State Investment Corporation in 1992. Since then Boris Nikolaevich's timetable has been drawn up for him every morning by Victor Ilyushin, another former member of the Sverdlosk secretariat who has worked with Yeltsin since 1977.² One other man has unrestricted access to the presidential office: General Alexander **Korjakov**, who is responsible for his **security**.³ The former KGB major has not left Yeltsin's side since he became his bodyguard in the late 1980s. He now runs a security service that does not report to any ministry and which has been likened to a presidential mini-army. Korzhakov holds a lower rank than General Barsukov, the Kremlin's military commander, but that does not prevent him from playing a much more important role. The President has surrounded himself with a Pretorian Guard because, as he indicates in his memoirs, his relationships with the minister for National Defence and with the Security Services have not always been idyllic. He has recently been defending Defence Minister General Pavel Grachev tooth and nail. Grachev is very unpopular with the army and is suspected of being corrupt: it is said that Yeltsin is afraid that his possible successor might be less **accommodating**.⁴

This list of the men who **rule** the roost in the Kremlin would be incomplete without the name of another veteran of the Sverdlovsk CPSU: Oleg Lobov, who has become Secretary General of the National Security **Council**.⁵ Originally modelled on the American NSC, the Council is no longer a consultative body that advises the President and has become a sort of super-government made up of a handful of very influential ministers who decide the fate of the country. This small committee has been compared to the old Politburo and, as in the Brezhnev period, it meets behind closed doors and is accountable to no one. Within this context, Oleg Lobov appears to be a more important leader than Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, to say nothing of the presidents of the upper and lower houses, who are mere figureheads.

Be that as it may, more than half of Boris Yeltsin's most eminent collaborators are former apparatchiks from Sverdlovsk. This fact is very much part of the Soviet tradition: it was normal practice for a Secretary General of the CPSU to staff the Kremlin with his own men, who were known, outside the walls of the Kremlin, as his 'mafia'. Some see this continuity in Moscow as a comical paradox. For the West, Yeltsin is the man who 'killed the communist monster'; Russians have the impression that he is in fact the 'saviour of the **CPSU's cadres**', as they still hold key positions both in the centre and on the periphery. Having put their party cards in their back pockets, these privileged members of the 'old regime' can now govern with a clear conscience and under a different name. Their detractors are, **never-**

theless, wrong to conclude that nothing has really changed in Moscow. It is true that much of the old Nomenklatura is still there, but the rules that once governed recruitment and internal promotion no longer exist. They vanished the day the CPSU was dissolved, and nothing has been put in their place. The new government is not based on a Party-State, and that is an improvement, but it has done nothing to stimulate political life or give it a new basis. On the contrary, it is now openly preaching depoliticization and argues that it is essential if society is to be stabilized. The presidential team's new doctrine has much in common with that adopted by the CPSU in its final days, when it relied solely upon the apathy of the population to keep it in power. Political activity is no longer illegal, but there is so little of it that it is difficult to understand what it consists of.

In this connection, electoral arithmetic is of no help. Counting how many 'communists' have handed in their party cards and how many claim to have kept them is a pointless exercise. Two sociologists who work for the weekly *Argument i Faty* have, however, attempted to do so in order to demonstrate that the influence of the CP remained astonishingly stable between November 1917 and December 1993, and has always hovered at between thirty and thirty-five per cent of the vote. In the election to the Constituent Assembly in November 1917, Lenin's list did indeed win thirty per cent of the vote; in 1991, Yeltsin's four communist opponents won thirty-five per cent between them. In the latest legislative elections (**1993**), the CP and its ally, the Agrarian Party, won twenty-two per cent of the vote. The other Communist Parties—there are four—called on their supporters to abstain, but would probably otherwise have taken a further ten per cent (the turnout was very low). Taken as a whole, they probably still represent the strongest party in Russia, but it is estimated that they have no more than **550,00** members in a country with a population of 150 million. Gennady Ziuganov's communists are recruited mainly from medium-sized towns and rural areas? In the autonomous republics of the Caucasus, they won as much as seventy-two per cent of the vote (but not in Chechenia, which refused to take part in the elections). In Moscow and St Petersburg, however, they won only twelve and nine per cent respectively, and that is not enough to influence developments in the metropolitan areas which, in the eyes of the world, are the very incarnation of Russia.

Although biased and partial, the data are enough to demonstrate the fragility of the 'eternal red nomenklatura' thesis. The Nomenklatura has shattered into fragments, and the dividing lines are roughly the same as those that have appeared in the economy. The 'nomenklaturists' have made sure that they have dominant positions in what is now known as 'finance capital' and 'industrial capital', but they have abandoned the strictly political realm. That is regarded as a no man's land that no force is likely to occupy in the foreseeable future. And this may be the specifically

Russian feature of post-communism; in the other Slav republics – the Ukraine and **Bielorussia** – different developments have led to a democratic **handover** of power.

The 'nomenklaturists' who once ran the economic ministries and big factories throughout the entire USSR are in an ideal position to profit from the sudden and chaotic dismantling of the centralized administrative system. What have they replaced it with? They very quickly set up joint stock companies and firms of every possible – and imaginable – kind. They are based on Western models, but are free of the minimal controls that exist in the West, even in deregulated economies. If we look at the structure of any new trading company in Russia, we will find that it is either allied with or owned by a bank. Behind the bank, we will find a group of companies and, behind them, a holding company or a financial-industrial group. The president of the bank is in most cases the manager of the conglomerate. Thanks to their contacts in the Western world, Russian bankers learned very quickly that it is possible to multiply their money effortlessly and at no risk to themselves by means of purely financial deals. They make colossal sums by gambling on interest rates, speculating on the weakness of the rouble and investing their capital abroad. In November 1994, the Kremlin issued a decree banning the purchase of property in the West without prior authorization from the National Bank of Russia. This provoked great mirth in Moscow society: 'the Kremlin has just learned from its vigilant counter-espionage service that, for three years now, our wheeler-dealers have been buying more apartment blocks than anyone else in Western Europe, Florida, California and even the Seychelles.' Russia's financial giants, who are worth trillions of roubles, invest almost nothing in Russian industry because they know that its productivity is poor and precarious. This has greatly disappointed Yegor Gaidar, who promoted radical economic reforms in 1991.⁷ One can well understand his disappointment: his government did the impossible to create 'Russian finance capital' ~~ex~~ *nihilo*. He played that card for doctrinal reasons, hoping to place drastic limitations on the State's economic role and assuming that the banks would pump prime the 'free market'. Something went wrong with the equation.

Being a third-generation 'nomenklaturist', Yegor Gaidar knew all about the official economy and nothing at all about the shadow economy that had been developing since at least 1970. He therefore failed to foresee that, by giving existing banks the green light, he would trigger an extraordinary proliferation of two to three thousand banks of all kinds. They are subject to no controls. Many are not registered with the Ministry of Finance and they are involved in all kinds of speculation. The wheeler-dealers of the 'grey economy' initially had an estimated capital of seventy billion 'old regime' roubles (at a time when the dollar was worth five roubles on the

black market, and not four thousand, as at the end of 1994). Many of them were intelligent men and, in their own way, they were brave. They defied the laws of a totalitarian regime by organizing a whole parallel trade system with the help of corrupt officials and, of course, the criminal underworld. It is not surprising that, when the free market came into being, they should have abandoned their favourite activity (commerce) and gone into banking. In Yeltsin's Russia, no one asks anyone about how they made their fortunes. Indeed, such questions are regarded as 'totalitarian'. There was therefore no legal obstacle to prevent 'the bosses who lay down the law for thieves' - *воры в законе*, as they say in Russian - from transforming themselves overnight into respectable bankers and businessmen. According to official statistics, twenty-two per cent of these parvenus have done lengthy vocational courses in prison, and twenty-five per cent have had more or less serious dealings with the police. But money can open any door, even the door that leads into the Kremlin's offices and that is so well guarded by General Alexander Korzhakov.

We know, however, that the ways of the 'shadow economy' and the underworld have always been rough and even violent. They soon permeated into the new financial world. Before long anyone who wanted to recover a debt or settle a more dubious score was recruiting henchmen and taking direct action. A law passed as early as 1992 authorized the formation of 'agencies to protect people and their property', and these spread like mushrooms after a shower of rain (there are reported to be over twenty-six thousand in Russia). It goes without saying that they have the right to arm their recruits, who are also numbered in their thousands. As a result Russia, which was once regarded as a country with a poor criminal culture where people were killed with knives, has taken a qualitative step forward into sophisticated crime. Scores are now settled not only with fire arms of all calibres, but even with bazookas and surface-to-surface missiles.⁸ Moscow and St Petersburg already figure amongst the most violent cities in the world.

So-called 'popular' privatization, which took the form of distributing vouchers to the population at large, has made these bloody gangland killings more serious still. Investment funds have begun to buy vouchers, and to send sackloads of them to towns where factories are about to be privatized. To cite only one example which caused a scandal, one such fund bought Severyba, a huge fishing company in Murmansk, for a song - ten million roubles or so. Its real value is estimated at five billion dollars. Such purchases are planned like military operations. Razviedchiki (reconnaissance patrols) are sent out in advance, and are then followed by shock troops who take out the potential competitors. If *Izvestia* is to be believed, the mafia bosses have gained control of the entire aluminium industry. It is, after hydrocarbons, Russia's second biggest exporter.

On 14 June 1994, Boris Yeltsin signed Decree no. 1226, which provides for 'exceptional measures to protect the population from banditry and organized crime.' It allows suspects to be held for questioning for thirty days. Premises can be searched without a warrant and unannounced checks can be made on bank accounts. The Duma refused to endorse this 'liberticide' decree, but the President stood firm. The problem is that nothing has happened since then. And yet in Moscow it is increasingly a matter of common knowledge that the crucial financial sector is falling into the hands of the mafia, and that the situation is dangerous. Having relied solely upon 'the power of money' to introduce the market, the government is now powerless against the criminals who are running the economy. The West, which was initially very tolerant of Russia's *nouveaux* riches, is in its turn beginning to have doubts about their 'dirty money'. There is more and more talk of the 'threat posed by the Russian mafia', which could become even larger than the international drugs mafia, and that is saying a great deal. It has therefore been suggested that the Russian government should do something, if only to give Russian banks a minimal credibility abroad and to save what can still be saved of an economy that has been selling everything off for three years. But how is the government to go about doing this? There is talk of setting up a Russian FBI, but such a body is unlikely to become operational in the months to come.

The approach of the 1996 elections makes things more complicated still. The court in the Kremlin would not survive Boris Yeltsin's defeat, and it is not a body that is designed to hand over power should it be defeated. A good part of the present elite would be likely to find itself in Lefortovo prison, so flagrant are the abuses of power and the accumulation of illicit wealth. Vladimir Chumeiko,⁹ who is already wanted for embezzlement, has suggested that the elections should be postponed for two years, but this proposal has been violently rejected by the opposition and by most of the public. Being a cautious man, Yeltsin did not support the proposal, but he is capable of doing so as 1996 comes nearer. What is more, the opposition is sadly lacking in charismatic figures, and it is well known that it is divided.

Given this void, analysts think that a candidate supported by the big banks, such as Yuri Lukyov, the mayor of Moscow,¹⁰ would stand the best chance of winning the election. His only dangerous rival would be Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, who can rely on the financial support of Gazprom, which has a monopoly on gas exports and handles billions of dollars. But, blinded by 'the power of money', the same analysts failed to predict the breakthrough made by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's far-right party in the 1993 legislative elections, and fail to take into account military candidates like the eminently charismatic General Alexander Lebed, who might be able to win on a 'law and order' platform without any help from the

banks." Russia is, as Solzhenitsyn has said, ruled by an oligarchy which lives from day to day. Its policies serve only its own interests, and it is allowing the country to go to the dogs. That, however, has not resigned it to accepting what can only be a negative verdict from the electorate.

It is in this context that we have to situate the war that was launched against Chechenia on 11 December 1994. It is not for me to explain here the complex history of the small Caucasian republic (population: 1.2 million) that declared itself independent at the end of 1991. From then onwards, it was 'a small thorn in the foot of the Russian elephant', as the saying goes. Russia seemed to be willing to live with it. The National Security Council's sudden decision to use extreme military measures to extirpate the 'Chechen thorn' was totally unexpected by the public. That the 'war party' – Generals Grachev, Korzhakov and **Lobov** – was convinced that a Blitzkrieg in Chechenia would restore the Russian President's tarnished reputation and allow him to regain his lost popularity, provides only a partial explanation. They were also relying upon the **anti-Chechen xenophobia** of sectors of the population that are already furiously hostile to the Caucasians because they are supposedly all in the mafia. The enemy was, then well chosen. Unfortunately for Yeltsin and his allies, the enemy also proved to be capable of stubborn resistance and very difficult to defeat. A war which, according to General Grachev, should have lasted for a few hours threatened to set the whole Caucasus ablaze and last for years.

For many in both Russia and the West, the invasion of Chechenia has revealed the dictatorial nature of the Yeltsin regime. In a democracy, a President – even one with extensive powers – cannot declare war without consulting his government and without getting the go-ahead from his parliament within a reasonable space of time. In Russia, Yeltsin acted like an all-powerful Tsar, and provoked protests even from those who, like Gaidar, Burbulis and Poltoranin, were prepared to guarantee the democratic nature of his regime only a year before. What is more, many military men – and important ones at that – are becoming rebellious because they take the view that the army should not be used on Russian soil against a population that is, officially, Russian. This makes for a highly explosive mixture, and suggests that the tragedy that is being played out in Chechenia will have its epilogue in Moscow. The Russian army does not have a Bonapartist tradition and is afraid that internal divisions might lead to a fratricidal war. Even so, the prestige of 'dissident' generals like Boris Gromov, former commander in chief in **Afghanistan**,¹² or Alexander Lebed, who commands the Fourteenth **Army** in Dniestr region is infinitely greater than that of the generals in command of the Chechen expedition. The latter have been discredited both by their military incompetence and their politics. It is therefore not impossible that the entire army will rally to

generals hostile to Yeltsin, and that would signal the end of his reign.

Western attitudes towards Boris Yeltsin are a perfect illustration of the saying that 'Victory has a host of fathers, but defeat is always an orphan.' Once his Blitzkrieg in Chechnia was halted, neither Washington nor Bonn looked so favourably on Yeltsin. Nor does the London-based *The Economist*, which constantly sang his praises for so many years. On 7 January 1995, the cover of the famous British weekly that is the Bible of the neo-liberals, featured a photograph of a rather doleful Russian President and the legend: 'The Wrong Man for Russia.' This sudden change of heart was not the result of humanitarian concerns, nor is it a protest against the bloodbath in **Grozny**. It is the result of some very down to earth thinking: this man is surrounded by a clique that is out of control; he is becoming bogged down in the Chechen quagmire, and might turn his back on 'reformist' policies overnight. And so, they begin to dig out the **CIA's** confidential reports on the President's entourage, which is dominated not by 'real reformers', but by apparatchiks and military men. Now all the individuals mentioned by the CIA – from General Korzhakov to Viktor **Ilyushin** – have long been familiar figures in Moscow and elsewhere. It was with their help that Yeltsin dissolved the Supreme Soviet on 21 September 1993 and then shelled it on 4 October of the same year. Russian's democratic experiment ended then, with the blessing of the West. And the West would have done the same if the invasion of Chechnia had ended with a rapid victory.

Yeltsin was forgiven everything because, as he himself put it when he was in Washington, he had 'killed the communist monster' and because he was going to bring the lost Russian sheep back into the capitalist fold. But as we entered 1995, doubts were arising as to his ability to keep that promise because all he has created is a market with a high crime rate, and that is not what serious Western investors want, and because he is politically unpredictable. That is why Moscow's 'democrats', who remain faithful to the market at all costs, are being strongly advised to find another candidate for the Russian Presidency and to drop 'the wrong man for Russia.' There is no proof that if the right candidate did come to power with the help of the West, he would be acceptable to the Russians. Indeed, the odds are that he would not.

One of Moscow's most important bankers, Vladimir **Gussinski**, who became a billionaire in the space of three years, has argued that dynamic businessmen like himself – five per cent of the population – must be put in command if the remaining ninety-five per cent is to work efficiently." He is saying aloud what the neo-liberal shock-therapists are thinking to themselves. That is why they had no qualms about robbing the entire population of its savings and handing them on a plate to the sharks of the Nomenklatura and Russia's Wild West in January 1992. The Supreme

Soviet protested against this unauthorized redistribution of wealth, but was accused of wanting to restore the old regime and was then dispersed by gunfire. Since then, social inequalities in Russia have reached Latin American proportions, and even the ultra-rich (five per cent of the population) do not find this climate of general lawlessness to their liking. Vladimir Gussinski for example, has chosen to seek shelter with his family in London. In a society ruled by the law of the jungle, everyone defends themselves as best they can, falling back on their clan or family, or relying on their own resources. Hence the increase in centrifugal forces, Chechenia being only one example amongst many. The **Chechens** – and the other people of the Caucasus – have undeniable historical claims on Russia, but they would not have taken such a savagely intransigent form if Russia had offered them a decent life and civilized relations. Boris Yeltsin has failed to understand this basic political truth. In October 1993, it took only five tanks, and five very well **paid** tank crews, to launch an assault on Moscow's White House. But he does not have enough tanks, or enough money to pay their crews, to restore order in the Caucasus, or in Moscow, when the time comes. The blame for his disaster lies with Yeltsin and his team. There is no doubt about that, but the West – G7, the IMF and the World Bank – are also partly responsible for encouraging them to take a road that leads only into the abyss.

Paris, December 1994

NOTES

1. Having succeeded Boris Yeltsin as the head of the **CPSU's** regional secretariat in Sverdlovsk in 1986, **Yuri** Petrov became the USSR's ambassador to Cuba in 1990. On his return to Moscow, he took up the post of head of the President's administration in 1991. His pro-Castro statements unwittingly triggered a campaign on the part of the 'democratic' press, which accused him of being pro-communist. On Petmv's sixtieth birthday in May 1992, Yeltsin himself suggested that he should choose another post that would leave him less exposed to press criticisms.
2. The forty-eight year old Viktor **Ilyushin** comes originally from the **Urals** and has spent almost his entire career in Boris Yeltsin's shadow. He started his career in a modest post in the party apparatus in Sverdlovsk and then served as Yeltsin's 'aide' in Moscow in 1991–92. Since May 1992, he has been 'the president's principal collaborator', but that does not make him his chief of staff.
3. Not a great deal is known about General Korzhakov, whose entire career has been spent in the KGB. When Boris Yeltsin came to Moscow in 1985, Korzhakov was only **thirty-five** and held the rank of major. When Yeltsin fell from grace two years later, the young officer remained in touch with him and has been very generously rewarded for his loyalty since 1991. In 1992, Korzhakov, promoted to the rank of general and now in command of the President's mini-army, was accused in the press of having asked journalists for large sums of money in exchange for **arranging an** interview with the President. This scandal, like so many others, was quickly hushed up.
4. The forty-seven year old General **Pavel** Grachev was appointed Defence Minister in May 1992. At that very time **Bolduriev**, the President of the State Control Commission, was severely attacking him over the **corruption** prevailing amongst Russian troops stationed in

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Germany. **Grachev** therefore owes Yeltsin everything, and yet in 1993, he hesitated for a long time before obeying the President's written orders to attack Parliament with his tanks. Since then the two men, who live in the same building and share a taste for vodka, seem to have grown very close, but we do not know who the dominant partner is.

5. The fifty-eight year old **Oleg** Ivanovich **Labov** was born in Kiev but worked in **Sverdlovsk** for a long time, and is the only real politician in Boris Yeltsin's entourage. During the anti-Gorbachev putsch of August 1991, Yeltsin even entrusted him with a mission to go to the Urals and form a government there. **Lobov** later became Deputy Prime Minister, and has been Secretary General of the National Security Council since 15 April 1993.
6. The fifty-year old Gennady Ziuganov is from **Orel**, one of the central-Russian cities that have remained very loyal to the Communist Party. Before becoming a CPSU official, he taught mathematics and did not hold an important post until 1990. He became a member of the Politburo of the Russian CP, which was founded at the end of the Gorbachev era. Elected to the Supreme Soviet, he left the White House before the events of 4 October 1993. As the coordinator and then the leader of the new Communist **Party** of the Russian Federation, he refused to boycott the elections in December 1993, and his success strengthened his position. He is not, however, popular with everyone within the CP leadership, or even within his own parliamentary group. He is thought to take too conciliatory a view of the Kremlin and to be too timid in general. Ziuganov claims that his cautious line will win him the next legislative elections, but he does not appear to wish to be a candidate for the Russian presidency.
7. The thirty-nine year old Yegor Gaidar is the grandson of a 'red commissar' and the son of an admiral, and won a certain audience as an economic analyst working on *Kommunist* and *Pravda*. In late 1991, Yeltsin put him in charge of the economy. It was therefore Gaidar who applied the 'shock therapy' that was supposed to reform society. Removed from his post by the Supreme Soviet in December 1992, he was given the position of deputy Prime Minister on 14 December 1993 – a week to the day after the dissolution of the Supreme Soviet. After the events of October 1993, he launched his 'Russia's Choice' movement in the hope of winning the elections with a large majority. He won only fourteen per cent of the votes cast. He still remained loyal to Yeltsin, and it was only when the Chechen adventure got under way that he distanced himself from him.
8. This detail about scores being settled with bazookas and surface-to-surface missiles seemed to me to be exaggerated, but it appears in an article about crime in Russia published in *Izvestia* on 26 October 1994.
9. Currently president of the upper house, the fifty-year old **Vladimir** Chumeiko was involved in a very compromising scandal involving the import of 'table football' games from Switzerland in 1993. Although duly paid for, they never reached Moscow. Yeltsin had to relieve him of his post as Deputy Prime Minister, but he was restored to grace when the Supreme Soviet was abolished. Very closely involved with Russia's financial sharks, he has suggested that the presidential elections due to be held in June 1996 should be postponed, hoping that this will save Yeltsin and perhaps even allow him to stand himself.
10. Yuri Lukyov, fifty-eight, 'inherited' the position of Mayor of Moscow in July 1992 after the resignation of Gavril Popov, who had been elected by universal suffrage and who was critical of Yeltsin's new nomenklatura. Well regarded by the 'business community', Lukyov did not stand in the 1993 parliamentary elections and has therefore not been adversely affected by the defeat of the 'democrats'.
11. Born in Novocherkask, the capital of the Don Cossacks, the forty-four year old Alexander Lebed won his general's stars with a paratroop regiment in Afghanistan. In June 1992, he took command of the Fourteenth Army in Transnistria and gained immense popularity when he succeeded in bringing the war between the Moldavans and the Russian population to an end. While paying tribute to his qualities as a paratrooper, Yeltsin remarks in his memoirs that the general is very 'sharp-tongued'. General Lebed, who is also famous for his sobriety, did not mince his words when he **criticised** both the Russian

President— a 'useless specimen' in his view — and the war in Chechenia.

12. The fifty-two year old Boris **Gromov** was the Soviet Army's commander in chief when it pulled out of Afghanistan, and he is no political novice. In **1990**, he was Deputy Minister of the Interior, and in **1991** he stood for the Vice-Presidency on the ticket of Nikolai Ryzhkov, then Mikhail Gorbachev's Prime Minister. Under **Yeltsin**, he became Deputy Minister for national Defence. he was relieved of his functions in January **1995**, but that has not led him to leave the army.
13. **The** forty-two year old Vladimir **Gussinski**, an obscure theatre director from the provinces, founded the 'Most' bank in **1992**. He enjoys the protection of the mayor of Moscow and has become spectacularly rich through speculative property deals and thanks to murky banking operations. In the hope of becoming Russia's Berlusconi, he launched NTR, the country's first private television station, and the daily *Sevodnia*. His ambitions eventually began to alarm the Kremlin, which disarmed his 'army' of bodyguards (between one and three thousand men) and thus forced him into exile in London.