VOLUTION

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Georgia, on the other hand, fragmented into
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begin the painful process of rebuilding the
South Ossetia resisted Tbilisi's efforts to bring
Azerbaijan remained in Communist hands
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The question in the Near Abroad was not whether there would be Russian dominance or not but how much dominance and what kind. Once a global power, Russia had become a regional power, as the United States had been in the first half of the nineteenth century, defining its borders and policing its neighborhood to prevent any rivals from establishing influence in its sphere of interest. At the end of 1994 and through 1995 Yeltsin and Kozyrev publicly declared their support for the reintegration of the countries of the former Soviet Union, first economically; but also militarily and possibly politically. But Yeltsin's policy was aimed at voluntary reunion, and he did not respond to the more nationalist voices in Russia who urged the government to carry out an imperial, restorationist policy and "gather" the lands of the former Soviet Union under Moscow's control. Realistically Russia was no longer capable of reconstructing the empire by force. It had neither the military power, the economic capacity, nor the ideological drive to re-create the empire.

With the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, both the first Bush and Clinton administrations maintained the same vision of Russia as a partner in the new world order. They invited Yeltsin to the meetings of the G-7, the economic summit of the most powerful and developed capitalist states. Both Russia and Ukraine joined discussions on GATT, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. And all the states of the former Soviet Union joined the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, later OSCE). In September 1994 President Bill Clinton met with Yeltsin in a summit meeting in Vancouver and pledged increased economic assistance to Russia. The Clinton administration, however, responded positively to the interest of several East European states in being admitted to NATO. Russian politicians, both in and outside of government, vociferously opposed the expansion of NATO to the east. The United States compromised by inviting the states of the region to join the "Partnership for Peace" program, a solution that partially met the security concerns of East European states but did not actually extend the NATO alliance closer to the borders of Russia. Neither side was completely satisfied, however, and the issue continued to smolder. Supporters of NATO expansion believed that the new democracies of Eastern Europe needed Western security guarantees and that Russia should not be given a veto over their military relations. Critics of NATO expansion, both in Russia and the West, pointed out that further extension of the NATO alliance would not only be unacceptable to Russia but was likely to produce precisely the kind of isolated, confrontational Russian state that the West wanted most to avoid. Reluctantly, Yeltsin signed an accord with NATO in May 1997 that accepted expansion with some concessions to Russian security.

THE WAR IN CHECHNYA

Russia's most unstable border lay in the North Caucasus, where local peoples were barely under the control of Moscow, and Russia was faced with a separatist regime in the Chechen Republic, which the nationalists called Ichkeria. An Islamic people

organized into patriarchal clans, the Chechens numbered just under a million in 1989. Active in the anti-Russian resistance led by Imam Shamil in the mid-nineteenth century, they had resisted Soviet power during the Russian Revolution and civil war and fought against the imposition of collective farming in the early 1930s. Ten years later Chechens suffered their greatest tragedy to date when Stalin decided to deport them to Central Asia for their alleged collaboration with the Nazi invaders. In 1956 Khrushchev restored their republic and returned the survivors.

In the last years of the Soviet Union Yeltsin, in a move to secure the support of regional leaders as he campaigned against Gorbachev, publicly advised non-Russian leaders to "seize as much sovereignty as you can handle." This license to gain greater autonomy, even independence, eventually had disastrous effects. At the time of the 1991 coup against Gorbachev a flamboyant officer, Jokhar Dudaev, was elected by a council of elders as leader of Chechnya, and with a small band of armed men he took power from the local party boss. When Dudaev declared Chechnya an independent state, Yeltsin decided to move against the rebels but was restrained by the Russian parliament. After being elected president of the Chechen Republic, in dubious elections, Dudaev defied Russian authority and allowed his republic to become a center for freewheeling economic and criminal activity.

For three years there was a stalemate with Chechnya while Yeltsin successfully negotiated federal relations and treaties with all the other autonomies within the RSFSR. This was one of Yeltsin's more successful efforts at state building and culminated in the Federation Treaty of 1992. The federalists won out against those Russian-nationalists who favored a unitary state. Even Tatarstan, which had claimed to be a sovereign state, agreed to give up its claims to sovereignty for concessions to local authority. Only Chechnya remained a thorn in Yeltsin's side. His agents attempted several times to overthrow Dudaev and set up a puppet government, but all efforts failed. Humiliated and angered, Yeltsin's closest advisors in the Security Council, decided to invade Chechnya without consulting parliament or public opinion.

Russians did not support the Chechnya adventure. On December 8, 1994, the Russian Duma overwhelmingly came out against a state of emergency or a military move against Chechnya. Prominent generals, like the popular Aleksandr Lebed, came out against military action. Even the Communists condemned the president, and their leader, Gennadii Ziuganov, protested, "A year ago they surrounded the House of Soviets, and now they are surrounding a whole republic." On December 11, forty thousand Russian troops were sent into Chechnya. The Russian government was convinced that the victory in Chechnya would come quickly, but its army was ill-prepared. Troops were in disarray, soldiers suffered from low morale, and commanders were unenthusiastic about the war. The storming of the Chechen capital, Groznyi, from late December until early February 1995 left a major city in ruins and tens of thousands of refugees fleeing into the countryside. The war then moved into the hills of Chechnya, and guerrilla bands continued to harass the Russians both inside and outside of Chechnya. Chechnya was occupied by the Russians but not subdued. In the summer of 1996 the Chechens retook Groznyi

from the dispirited Russian troops, and Yeltsin reluctantly gave full powers to General Lebed to negotiate a peace. Lebed won the trust of the rebels and agreed to withdraw Russian troops from the republic, set up a coalition government, and leave the final status of Chechnya undetermined for the next five years. The former superpower had been defeated by guerrillas on its own territory.

TREADING WATER

Even as the American president, Bill Clinton, visited Moscow in January 1994, proclaiming his support for economic reforms and the Russian president, a new political coalition was being formed. Prime Minister Chernomyrdin dismissed Gaidar and invited representatives of the agrarian and industrial lobbies into the new government. The prime minister told the media that the days of "economic romanticism" were over. A period of much more moderate reform began, and the social polarization between the Yeltsin government and the social forces represented in the parliament diminished somewhat through 1994. Yeltsin became less publicly active and to some degree stood above the political fray. After the bloody denouement of the constitutional crisis of 1993, he tried to appear as a moderate and a centrist, distancing himself from the more radical reformers like Gaidar, the chauvinists around Zhirinovskii, and the Communists led by Ziuganov.

The new Russian state apparatus was centered around the president, whose role had been considerably strengthened by the December 1993 constitution. Under the constitution the president nominated the prime minister, who was then approved by the Duma. In essence the government served at the pleasure of the president, not the parliament. The president was also empowered to legislate by decree. An enormous, unwieldy bureaucracy, employing somewhere between 5,000 and 27,000 people, the presidency looked much like the traditional pattern of Russian rulership. The Russian parliament was made up of two houses: the Federal Council, with two representatives from each of the eighty-nine territorial units in the federation, and the Duma with 550 members, half of them elected from national party lists by proportional representation and half elected from single-member electoral districts. A majority of the Duma deputies elected from party lists were from Moscow, underlining the capital-centric nature of the political parties. Much less confrontational than the first Russian parliament, the Duma leaders worked to create an atmosphere of civil discourse that their predecessors never successfully achieved.

Even as the economy moved toward capitalism, the state failed to construct the legal infrastructure that would protect property, enforce contracts, deal with bankruptcy, and suppress the rising criminality. Corruption was widespread, and political influence colored decisions. The court system remained undeveloped and suspect. The Constitutional Court, which had opposed Yeltsin on occasion in the past, was tamed effectively, and in one of its early rulings agreed that the invasion of Chechnya was constitutional. The rule of law, which had been one of the initial goals of perestroika, continued to elude the Russian political system.

The constitution regularized the relations of the provinces and republics within Russia with the center, reducing the autonomous powers of some that had negotiated greater autonomy in 1992. All eighty-nine "subjects" of the Russian Federation were declared to be equal "in relations with state federal bodies." Federal laws were to be supreme in all fields, and republics within Russia were no longer to be referred to as "sovereign." Several republics, however, maintained constitutions that contradicted the new centralizing moves by Moscow. Tatarstan, Tuva, and Bashkortostan reserved various powers for themselves. Sakha, the former Yakutia, made a lucrative financial deal with the center that allowed it to retain half of its hard currency profits from its diamond mines and all of its tax revenues in 1994. The regions of Russia were at first run by appointed governors, who ruled by decree with little interference from the weak local dumas, but all were to be elected by the end of 1996. Several larger, richer ethnically Russian regions, like Ekaterinburg in the Urals, asserted their wishes for greater local power, and as the economic ties between center and periphery grew weaker, regional economic links were strengthened.

The economic and political crises of 1991 through 1993 had begun a grand process of redistributing wealth and property in Russia and other post-Soviet republics. When the Duma delayed ratifying the government's draft law on privatization and left for its summer 1994 recess, the president enacted the law by decree. Privatization accelerated in 1994–95 with the controversial "Loans for Shares" program. Because the state was unable to collect taxes and pay its bills, banks made loans to the government in exchange for shares in state enterprises. When the state failed to pay back the loans, the assets were auctioned off, and insiders connected to the banks took over billions of dollars of public property in the largest transfer of wealth into private hands in history — a genuinely primitive accumulation of capital. By the summer of 1994 over 100,000 enterprises had been privatized. By the summer of 1995 half the country's labor force worked for privatized firms. A social revolution of enormous dimensions took place that in effect created a new property-owning class. This new Russian bourgeoisie was made up of former state-enterprise managers, well-placed politicians, new entrepreneurs and bankers, and criminal elements who managed to accumulate great wealth. Highly concentrated in the center—80 percent of assets were located in Moscow—Russian capital remained, as it had been before the revolution, closely tied to the state. Taking advantage of their positions, high government officials emerged as some of the richest people in the world. While production of manufactured goods collapsed, the most dynamic economic activity was found in banking, export, trade, and services. Indeed, bankers became the new economic tsars as their institutions bought up much of the assets in privatized enterprises. Ominously, the criminal and semicriminal elements played a key role in the new Russian banking community. Along with state officials, regional governors, and managers of state and collective farms, industrialists and bankers made up the sociopolitical elite of the country. Not only did they have access to politicians, with whom they would make deals, but they were influential in the media as well. A multimillionaire banker controlled his own independent television network, NTV. The largest network, ORT, was owned 51 percent by the state and 49 percent by wealthy individuals close to the Yeltsin government. Russia's second network was wholly owned by the state. Newspapers remained free of censorship, though the vagaries of the marketplace made survival difficult for them. *Izvestiia*, once the organ of the Soviet state, became in the Yeltsin years the most consistently pro-government mouthpiece with a national reach.

After four years of some form of capitalism and some kind of democracy, Russians were exhausted, exasperated, increasingly apathetic politically, and often cynical. Poverty and economic uncertainty, the loss of its empire and superpower status, a general sense of humiliation, and fear of the future affected millions of people. Fewer voters turned out for elections. Many were disgusted with the political infighting in parliament; others were appalled at Yeltsin's bloody dismissal of parliament and the invasion of Chechnya. A majority (65 percent), wished that Russia had a strong leader, and only a quarter of the population had a positive opinion about "democracy," a word that was often snarled by politicians and increasingly became identified with the economic and social disasters that had been visited upon Russia. Nostalgia for the old Soviet Union grew, and in 1994 pollsters discovered that 71 percent believed that its breakup had been a mistake. Many of those who desired the paternalistic protections of the old system and hoped to recover the sense that Russia was a great power voted either for the Communists, their allies, the Agrarians, or the nationalistic Zhirinovskii party.

In December 1995 the second Russian parliamentary elections were held. The biggest winner was the Communist Party, which took 22.3 percent of the popular vote. Zhirinovskii's party won 11 percent, while the government and the reform parties, Chernomyrdin's Our Home Is Russia and Grigorii Yavlinskii's Yabloko, won 10 percent and 6.9 percent respectively. The biggest losers were the moderate centrist parties, which did not gain the necessary 5 percent of the popular vote to win seats in the Duma. Many analysts saw the results as another sign of the political polarization of the Russian electorate between those forces that wanted to continue rapid marketization and those that opposed liberal reform. More than half the voters cast their ballots for parties that were not committed to liberal democracy. The Communists and their allies alone won almost 40 percent of the vote. The only hopeful sign here for the liberals was that the Communist vote was quite geriatric. Over half the party's voters were pensioners.

By 1995–96, Russia seemed to be entering a period of stability. The Communists were no longer a threat. They were willing to play by the new, "democratic" rules of the game, even though the collaboration of the mass media with the government had largely determined the outcome. The old polarization between president and parliament diminished after Yeltsin's coup in September-October 1993, but occasionally the old disputes flared up. Yeltsin had forged a system, with himself as an all-powerful leader confronting a subservient parliament, a kind of "elected monarchy." He occasionally referred to himself as "Tsar Boris" and to his advisors as "boyars." The Russian executive was a divided government made up of

Yeltsin favorites, with varying views of policies. The president often met with his cronies and advisors, his tennis partners and drinking buddies, in the *bania* (Russian bathhouse), where lavish meals and much drinking eased the political chatter. Yeltsin ultimately decided things, dismissing those of whom he tired or whose hand had dipped too deeply into the till.

With the power of the presidency enhanced, the personality, political vision, and health of Boris Yeltsin became a principal concern of observers in both Russia and the West. Yeltsin's popularity was at a historic low a few months before the June 1996 election of the Russian president, and there was widespread anxiety in the West and among Russian democrats that the Communists might win the election. This election would be a test of whether Russian democracy would continue—and in what shape. On March 15 the state Duma passed a law renouncing the decision of December 1991 to abolish the Soviet Union! Stunned by this "attempt to liquidate our statehood," Yeltsin contemplated declaring martial law and postponing the upcoming election for two years, a move that would have risked a possible civil war. Several advisors, his daughter Tatiana Diachenko, and even President Bill Clinton in a private letter all worked to persuade him not to sign the decree. Backing off, Yeltsin allied himself with the men whom he had helped make fabulously wealthy, the oligarchs, and, aided by American political consultants, he vigorously campaigned through the country on the slogan "I Believe, I Love, I Hope." The mass media, much of it owned by either the government or the oligarchs, collaborated with Yeltsin and limited the reporting of rival candidates. Yeltsin traveled widely in the country and lavishly bestowed gifts and promises to potential voters. A month after the Chechen leader Dudaev was killed by a Russian missile, Yeltsin hurriedly signed a truce with the new leaders and sealed the agreement with a hasty trip to Groznyi. Presented as folksy, courageous, generous, and the bulwark against the restoration of the Communist system and social unrest, Yeltsin won the most votes in the first round of the election (36 percent), with Ziuganov second (32 percent) and General Aleksandr Lebed third (15 percent). In a shrewd tactical move, the president allied with Lebed, promising him a powerful post as security chief, and swept to victory in the second round in July (54 to 41 percent). What the public did not know was that between the two elections their president had suffered his fourth heart attack. The alliance with Lebed lasted only a few months more before Yeltsin dismissed him as a destructive, uncooperative force within the government. By the end of 1996 Russia's government looked like a listing ship of state with an ill president barely grasping the wheel and pretenders to power waiting below. Factions and competing interest groups kept each other in balance, with no single figure or group able to defeat and eliminate the others.

The lesson of post-Communist Russia (and the other former Soviet republics) appeared to be that in order to make a successful social transition from authoritarianism to democracy and from a state economy to a market economy it is essential to have a viable state authority. The state comes first. Without an authoritative state (not necessarily, one hopes, an authoritarian state), the creation of

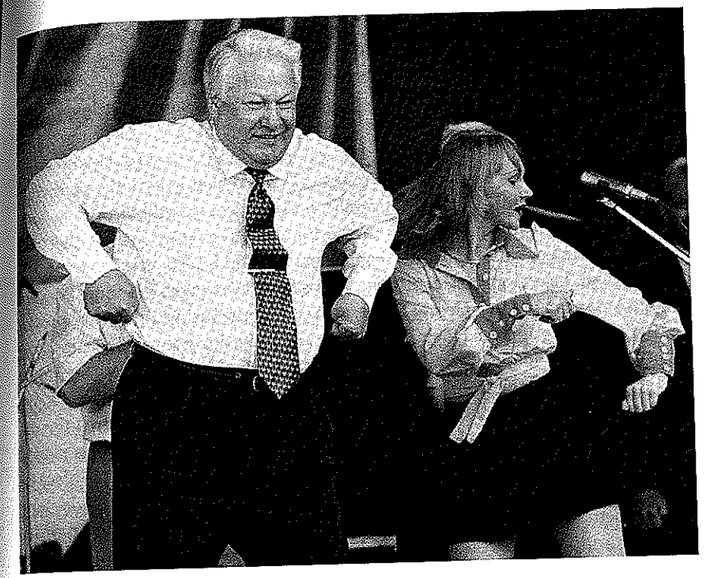

Figure 20.3 Democracy Russian-style. Yeltsin does the frug (Reuters).

modern democratic institutions based on the rule of law, a market system with protected property and enforcement of contracts, and a minimum of social order is impossible. After more than five years of social and political turmoil the Russian state remained fragile and unable to exercise some of its basic tasks, such as maintaining civil order, collecting taxes, and guarding its borders (the Russian state had not even been able to decide on words to its national anthem). Extrastate forces—entrenched old elites, parvenu criminal mafias, and more legitimate entrepreneurs—filled the space left by the retreat of the state. Russian leaders had seen the old state as the major impediment to the reconstruction of the social order, and in their revolutionary fervor they accelerated the dissolution of state authority left by Gorbachev. Russia's transition was a genuine revolution that brought down a state and an empire. But it had yet to show that it could also create a new state, the essential first condition for establishing the rule of law, a market economy, and a democratic polity.

THE DECLINE AND ABDICATION

Russia's government in Yeltsin's second term (1996–99) combined a strong presidency with a sick and volatile man at the top. Outsiders tried in vain to discern

who was in charge: the "Family," made up of daughter Tatiana, who held the office of "image advisor," and leading oligarchs like Boris Berezovskii; the oligarchs as the power behind the throne; or Yeltsin himself. Hospitalized eight times with serious illness in the three years before he retired, Yeltsin stopped drinking and socializing with his old pals. He grew distant from the everyday running of government, met infrequently with his ministers, and removed anyone who seemed to threaten his power. In fact Yeltsin was not dependent on the plutocrats but saw them as useful allies. The oligarchs, however, competed both for government favors and with one another in the highly unregulated market that one Yeltsin appointee called "bandit capitalism. In mid-1997 the government auctioned off the regional telecommunications firm *Sviazinvest*. Vladimir Potanin and his American partner, George Soros, won; Vladimir Gusinskii and Berezovskii lost in the bidding and used their newspapers and television networks to attack the way the sale was handled as well as the government's role. Yeltsin let the public feud fester. With no clear rules as to how to do business, whether or not to pay taxes, or how to influence friends in power, Russian capitalism was a free-for-all, at least for the biggest players. Both the oligarchs and government officials played dirty, using compromising information about wrongdoing (*kompromat*) to blacken reputations and weaken opponents. At one point the Kremlin released a videotape of the procurator (the chief state prosecutor) in bed with two prostitutes in order to force him to resign. Tycoons and politicians worked together but in a vicious state of nature, while most Russians watched from a distance, increasingly disillusioned with what had become of democracy and the free-enterprise system.

Fearing that his longtime prime minister (1992–98), Viktor Chernomyrdin, had presidential ambitions, Yeltsin fired him and appointed a young economic reformer, Sergei Kirienko. A liberal with no following in parliament or in the country, Kirienko faced serious economic problems. Russia's well-being depended, as it had for decades, on world oil prices. They had fallen for Gorbachev and recovered somewhat for Yeltsin, but in 1998 they were heading downward. Combined with fallout from the Asian financial crisis that had begun the year before and Russia's chronic problems, prospects for economic revival were slim. The economy had shrunk by 40 percent since the collapse of the Soviet Union; life expectancy had fallen (for men, from 64.2 years in 1989 to 57.6 years in 1994); contagious diseases like tuberculosis and AIDS were rampant; and suicides were up. Soviet social programs had been largely eliminated, yet the state budget continued to run in the red in order to pay public-sector workers, pensions, and other programs. People did not pay their taxes, and the superrich salted their money abroad. The ruble was losing value even as it was propped up by the government. Suddenly, on August 17, the government decided to let the ruble float freely, and in two weeks it lost half its exchange value. Kirienko declared Russia bankrupt, and the government defaulted on its loans. Panic ensued. Banks failed. People lost their entire savings.

A weakened and demoralized Yeltsin had clearly lost control of events, and the Duma, led by the Communists, called on the president to step down.

Floundering, Yeltsin tried to bring Chernomyrdin back, but parliament rejected him. In desperation, Yeltsin appointed the sixty-nine-year-old Evgenii Primakov, an experienced Soviet apparatchik and a man who had been close to Gorbachev and who had served Yeltsin as foreign minister. Primakov was pragmatic, competent, and very popular. He formed a coalition government, which included both liberal reformers and Communists. Laying out one of the most liberal budgets in Russia's history, with controlling spending and inflation a priority, he oversaw a stunning recovery. Cheap rubles made Russian oil and other exports a bargain, and, as luck would have it, world oil prices more than doubled in the next two years. The weak ruble made it difficult to buy goods from abroad, which encouraged domestic producers to supply what consumers wanted. Polls indicated that Primakov was the most popular politician in Russia. But after only nine months in office he was fired. For Yeltsin Primakov had become too powerful and had talked about "reforming the reform" (that is, reversing some of the effects of privatization that had impoverished so many and enriched so few).

Yeltsin was playing "prime ministerial poker," trying to find someone who would ultimately succeed him but also protect his legacy, not to mention make sure that the first president of Russia would be immune from criminal prosecution. First he chose Sergei Stepashin, a loyal follower who, like Primakov, had headed the FSB (Federal Security Service, the successor to the KGB). But even before he nominated him Yeltsin "knew he would fire him." He already had his eye on a young man whom he had just named to be head of the FSB—Vladimir Putin. On August 2, 1999, two thousand Chechen rebels invaded the neighboring republic of Dagestan. In the midst of the crisis, Yeltsin announced Putin as the new prime minister. A month later explosions tore apart several apartment buildings in Moscow and two towns in the south, killing hundreds. As panic gripped the population, the former KGB operative immediately demonstrated he was tough and decisive, his public style very different from that of the tottering Yeltsin. He took charge of the response to the Chechens. In late September Russian troops moved into Chechnya, beginning the second Chechen war. This war, unlike the first, was extremely popular with most Russians, and Putin reaped a bonanza of popular support from his ruthless pursuit of victory over the rebels.

Vladimir Putin was a man who straddled both the Soviet and post-Soviet eras. Born in 1952 in Saint Petersburg, he grew to be a champion athlete (sambo and judo) and long dreamed of becoming a spy. He later wrote, "I was a pure and utterly successful product of Soviet patriotic education." He served as a counterintelligence officer in East Germany for over fifteen years and watched from afar as his country disappeared from the map. Back home, he worked with the liberal reformist mayor of his hometown before being called to Moscow, where he advanced at lightning speed. He was appalled by the weakness of the state and its military and saw the crisis in Chechnya as "a continuation of the collapse of the USSR." His program became the revival of state power, reunification of the country, and greater centralization of political power in Moscow. The country was still deeply divided, and in the December 1999 parliamentary elections a

nationalist bloc, Fatherland—All Russia, supported by Primakov, Iurii Luzhkov, the powerful mayor of Moscow, and Gusinskii and other oligarchs, campaigned against Yeltsin, "the Family," and political corruption. Putin supported an opposing progovernment coalition, Unity, backed by Berezovskii. The Communists came in first once again, but Unity outpolled Fatherland—All Russia. Putin put together a working parliamentary majority and a government that, like Primakov's, was a broad coalition that included both liberals and Communists. In contrast to Yeltsin, who had developed an allergic hatred toward everything Soviet, Putin sought to bring together older traditions and practices with preservation of the capitalist system.

Yeltsin was the man who made Putin president. In mid-December he summoned the young prime minister to his Kremlin office and told him that he planned to resign before the new year. According to the constitution, Putin would then become acting president, and a presidential election would follow a few months later. "You know, Boris Nikolaevich," Putin replied, "I don't know if I'm ready for this or whether I want it, because it's a rather difficult fate." Yeltsin brushed his doubts aside: "When I came here, I also had other plans. Life turned out this way. I, too, didn't strive for this, but in the end circumstances forced me to fight for the post of president.... Our country isn't so huge. You'll manage."

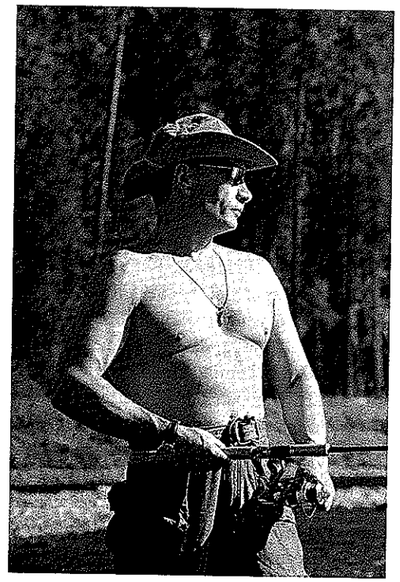

Figure 20.4 Russian President Vladimir Putin visiting the Republic of Tuva (RIA Novosti).

On December 31 Yeltsin addressed the nation and asked for their forgiveness. "Forgiveness for the fact that many of the dreams you and I shared haven't come true, and that what we thought would be easy turned out to be agonizingly difficult.... I believed in myself. It seemed as if we could overcome everything with one surge forward. It didn't happen. In some ways I was too naive." By resigning Yeltsin ensured that Putin would be his successor and guaranteed that the Yeltsins would not be punished for any crimes or corruption. "To call things by their real names," writes political analyst Lilia Shevtsova, "the process was a conspiracy by the Kremlin entourage to hand over power to a specific person and to ensure his success." Putin's first decree as acting president was to grant Yeltsin and those around him immunity from prosecution. After a final lunch and toast, Yeltsin passed into retirement, to long days of intense reading and of writing his memoirs. More than anyone responsible for the final dissolution of the Soviet Union and the relatively non-violent passage into fifteen independent states, he was the first top Russian leader since medieval times to leave office voluntarily. Boris Yeltsin died peacefully at age 76 on April 23, 2007, and was buried in the same Moscow cemetery as an earlier reformer, Nikita Khrushchev. One writer who had been a critic of Yeltsin suggested, "He asked our forgiveness — so let's forgive him!"

REVIVING RUSSIA

In the presidential election of March 2000, Putin received 53 percent of the vote, to the Communist Ziuganov's 29 percent. Liberal reform candidates and Russian nationalists did extremely poorly. The power elites backed Putin as their best hope to maintain their wealth and power, and ordinary people, sickened by Yeltsin, wanted a strong leader and a strong state. People voted primarily for stability and order. Their decade-long experience with democracy had soured most Russian citizens, and, though they still thought positively about democratic values, they had long given up any confidence that Russia was democratic. Putin promised them security and a return to greatness and set out to build a broad consensus behind his vision. "Either Russia will be great or it will not be at all," he told his constituents. He skillfully bridged the polarized extremes of Russian society. He proposed the double-headed eagle for the seal of the new Russian state but brought back the old Soviet national anthem, with new post-Soviet words by the same author. Along with the white-blue-red flag of old Russia, he resurrected the red flag of the USSR as the standard of the Russian armed forces. To a nation pulled apart from one side by those with nostalgia for the USSR and from the other by those who despised the Soviet past, he expressed his own view: "Anyone who does not regret the collapse of the Soviet Union has no heart; anyone who wants it restored has no brain." Capitalism would be maintained but with a greater role for the state, and that state would embrace the forms of democracy but without as much of its content. Like the Potemkin villages of old, Russia became a "façade democracy."