

**THE EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1993
AND THE RUSSIAN MEDIA.**

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TO MY PARENTS AND HUSBAND



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CERTIFICATE

This dissertation entitled, "THE EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1993 AND THE RUSSIAN MEDIA", submitted by Ms. KAVITA KRISHNAN, Centre for Soviet & East European Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi-110067, India, for the award of degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY, is an original work and has not been submitted so far, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any University.

This may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

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PREFACE

The arbitrary dissolution of the Parliament on 21 September 1993 and its subsequent shelling on 3-4 October by President Boris Yeltsin, was a step backwards in Russia's attempt to establish democracy. Yeltsin's reputation as a democrat came under a cloud and the nascent institution of democracy in Russian crumbled.

The press which an important tool of any democracy too came under heavy pressure. After the relative freedom of the Glasnost years, the press had to face censorship. This study makes an attempt to analyse the role played by the press during the President-Parliament standoff in September-October 1993.

The study has been hampered by inadequacy of materials. Tentative conclusions have been drawn on the basis of materials available. The research is based largely on Russian language newspapers. The major newspapers taken up are: Pravda, Izvestia, Sovetskaya Rossiya, Nezavisimaya Gazeta, Rossiskaya Gazeta and the weekly Moskovskiye Novosti. Radio and television broadcast as given in the Summary of World Broadcast has also been taken up.

The study has been divided into four chapters. The second and the third chapters deal with the various stages of the Russian media and its functioning during the events of September-October 1993.

This work owes an enormous debt of gratitude to certain individuals, whose unwavering encouragement and assistance have been inevitable for its accomplishment. My supervisor, Professor Devendra Kaushik has spared no effort in rendering his utmost help and consistently giving guidance which has been indispensable to this work. I am infinitely indebted to him.

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I humbly accept the limitation of my work.


KAVITA KRISHNAN

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION: THE PRELUDE TO THE BLOODY OCTOBER

The events leading up to the shelling of the Parliament building by tanks on the order of President Yeltsin on 4 October 1993 are of great significance. The armed conflict starting in the wake of dissolution of the parliament and eventual surrender of the Deputies led by Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi and Speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov was both the culmination of a long drawn-out conflict between the President and the Parliament as also a prelude to the evenful elections of December 1993.

The Russian Parliament which was liquidated on 4 October, was the very same as that which had opposed the August 1991 coup and supported President Yeltsin wholeheartedly. Only a very small minority of the Deputies were the supporters of the old Communist Party. This is contrary to the commonly held view that the Parliament was mainly comprised of Communists and hardliners. The differences after a year long standoff between the President and Parliament reached there climax with the economy and constitution becoming the central issues. The key players in the struggle were the President Boris Yeltsin, Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi, Speaker of the Congress Ruslan Khasbulatov, the liberal reformers represented by former Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, the Chairman of the Constitutional Court Valery Zorkin and the army.

Boris Yeltsin became the first popularly elected President of Russia in June 1991. In August of that year, he opposed the hardliners coup, taking on the mantle of reformer and forcing Mikhail Gorbachev's resignation in December 1991. He initiated a rapid process of economic reform - liberalizing prices, closing down and privatising state industry and advocating 'free market' economy. In this he was aided by Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, Boris Yeltsin emphasised the need for western support for the success of his reforms.

Alexander Rutskoi, 45 years old Afghan war hero, was Boris Yeltsin's choice for the office of Vice-President (his military background and decorations being an asset with the armed forces). Differences between Boris Yeltsin and Alexander Rutskoi cropped over Yeltsin's handling of the economy. Alexander Rutskoi favoured a slower pace of change and a mixed economy. Rutskoi's views on multi-party democracy deviated from Yeltsin's. Rutskoi's stress was on accountability and effective democratic institutions. He asserted that lingering centralisation would only prolong the transition to democracy and free market economy.

The Speaker of the Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov rose to prominence as Yeltsin's right-hand man in the

Parliament. Ruslan Khasbulatov concentrated his criticism on the manner in which large enterprises were privatised. He preferred reforms to be routed through the constitutional democratic framework. His political ambitions were curtailed largely owing to his national origin. Being a Chechen he was handicapped to make it to the top of Russian politics to realise his ambition.

The liberal reformers were represented by Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar who initiated the "Shock-therapy" reform programme that was at the centre of the crisis. He was removed from Prime Ministership in December 1992 to be reinstated as the first Deputy Prime Minister and economic Minister in the middle of September 1993 only.

Valery Zorkin was the chairman of the Constitutional Court. He termed Boris Yeltsin's decree dissolving the Parliament as unconstitutional and proposed the 'Zero-option' that is going back to status before 21 September 1993 followed by simultaneous elections on 12 December for the President and the Parliament.

The army which had been playing a non-political role since August 1991 was drawn into the conflict by both the sides and played to decisive role in resolving the crisis.

The economic reforms proposed by Boris Yeltsin for transformation to a free market economy was the main issue of contention between the President and the Parliament. The differences surfaced soon after the effects of Yeltsin's 'Shock-therapy' reforms became evident. The problems between the President and the Parliament arose not so much over the economic reforms as over their implementation. The differences were over the means rather than the aims of the reforms. The Parliament was opposed to the pace of reforms and the transition to a free market economy without any social safety net. The Parliament led by Alexander Rutskoi and Ruslan Khasbulatov felt that Yeltsin's policies would in the long run not only undermine the economy but also alienate the public from the still nascent institution of democracy in Russia.

The economic 'Shock-therapy' reforms for transition to a free market economy were initiated in 1991. Ruslan Khasbulatov played a key role in persuading the Parliament to give Yeltsin extraordinary powers in November 1991 to control the economic policy. This enabled Boris Yeltsin to rule by decree and push through his reforms for almost a year, at the time there was still some hope that the reforms would work. It was only in the end of 1992 when words like 'free market' and 'democracy' had lost their magic and the full impact of the structural reform programme came to be felt by the

average Russian, that Ruslan Khasbulatov and Alexander Rutskoi began to distance themselves from the policies of Yeltsin and his advisers. President Boris Yeltsin is supported in his efforts to transform Russia into a free market economy by western democracies while the International Monetary Fund, the IMF, is dictating the terms for its transformation. Yegor Gaidar, was the chief architect of the 'Shock-therapy' reform programme.

The shock therapy had been initiated with the liberalisation of prices in January 1992. This resulted in an extremely high level of inflation. This high level of inflation eliminated the savings of groups like pensioners. Real wages fell by about 50 per cent. As a result by autumn 1993 tens of millions were living below the poverty line, while a tiny minority became instant millionaires. This widened the gap between the rich and poor, greatly increasing social tensions. At the same time, Russia was desperately short of resources as there was a flight of capital out of the country amounting to very large sums of money. About 2000 commercial banks formed in the country since 1991 channeled more money out of the country than they invested in Russia. This meant that vast resources which might have been used to

fund the government's budget deficit, stabilise the currency and reduce the rate of inflation were instead sent abroad.

A further source of social tension was the widespread resentment of the privatisation process. Often companies were sold below their value or valuables were transferred to newly created private companies. Small businesses were sold on the open market. Large enterprises were sold by voucher schemes to the workers and the public. This policy led to massive bankruptcies and mass unemployment. Parliament, concerned about the falling standards of living, opposed Yeltsin's proposal to close down large public enterprises in order to cut the budget deficit. As the Parliament's opposition to the government's economic policies increased, the President had to increasingly resort to short-term measures. The vehement opposition by the Parliament to his economic policies, forced Yeltsin to slow down his pace of reforms. The President and the Parliament clashed repeatedly over the economic reform programme. In July 1992, President Boris Yeltsin proposed the abolition of the Congress of People's Deputies and enhancement of the Presidential powers. The Parliament's vehement opposition to this move forced Boris Yeltsin to

replace the reformist Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar who was seen as the chief architect of the shock therapy economic reform policy. In December, following the Parliament's refusal to extend his emergency powers, Yeltsin proposed a referendum as a means of consolidating Presidential powers over that of the legislature. Parliament agreed to a referendum on a new constitution but both sides could not agree on the issues to be voted in a referendum.

In early 1993, problems between the President and the Parliament came to a head, with Boris Yeltsin and Ruslan Khasbulatov calling for each other's dismissal. After pitched battles in the Parliament Boris Yeltsin stormed out of the house in February never to return again.

In March, Yeltsin went on television to announce that the country was under 'special rule' and that he would hold a referendum to decide as to who should rule the country and on his new draft constitution. The existing constitution had been amended several hundred times since 1991. According to the constitution, the Parliament was the highest legislative organ in the country, but it did not clearly set out the separate powers of the executive

and the legislature. Crucial areas which were left ambiguous included control over the budget, the appointment and dismissal of ministers, and the initiation of legislation. The one thing clearly stated in the constitution was that the Parliament could impeach the President if the Constitution Court found that the reasons were justified and the President could not dissolve the parliament. Yeltsin wanted to change this clause. The new constitution sought to reduce the powers of the Parliament giving the President unassailable powers. The new constitution raised the President above the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. Yeltsin's bicameral parliament was to have a lower house, half of whose members were to be directly elected; the other half to be selected from party lists proportionally. The Upper House was to consist of members nominated from the regions by the President. There was provision for a Supreme Judicial Council, three of whose nine members were to be appointed by the President. The new constitution clearly sought to give the President absolute authority. His move to impose "special rule" was opposed strongly by Alexander Rutskoi who went on television to denounce his action. The head of the Constitution Court, Valery Zorking called it unconstitutional. The Supreme Court found that Yeltsin had contravened several clauses of the constitution and the Russian Federal treaty but turned down the move for his

impeachment. The Parliament, however, tried unsuccessfully, over several weeks to oust the President. The President's supporters in the Parliament simultaneously tried to impeach Ruslan Khasbulatov.

This phase ended with the Parliament accepting the need for a referendum; four questions were put to vote concerning:-

- (i) the popularity of the President
- (ii) the popularity of his economic reforms
- (iii) the need for Presidential elections
- (iv) the need for parliamentary elections

The President and his reforms got a marginal 'Yes' vote; 54 per cent of a 64.1 per cent turn out voted for him. This slender majority was almost entirely from the cities. 43.1 per cent of 64.1 per cent eligible voters wanted early parliamentary elections and 31.7 per cent wanted early presidential elections.¹ The referendum made it clear that at least for sometime Yeltsin

1. Byzgalin, A. and Kolganov, A., Krovavy Oktraybr V. Moskve, (Bloody October in Moscow), (Moscow, 1994), p. 15.

would have to work with the Parliament. The referendum did not give the leverage he wanted with the Parliament even though the 'Yes' vote was interpreted as a victory for him and his reforms. The battle gained momentum again with Yeltsin trying to bypass the Parliament. He asked regional heads to form a constituent assembly to pass his constitution, but they turned down his suggestion.

In the summer 1993, Boris Yeltsin announced that September would be a very hot month. In early September he reinstated Yegor Gaidar as Prime Minister, an extremely provocative step to be followed by several others. On 21 September, 8.00 P.M., President Yeltsin went on television to announce that he had dissolved the Parliament. He announced that Parliamentary elections would be brought forward, though not the Presidential elections. With this step, President Yeltsin hoped to end 18 months of struggle with the Parliament. The angry Deputies quickly denounced Yeltsin's move as a coup d'etat and set up their own government, led by Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi. Thus the stage for a final confrontation between the President and the Parliament was set.

CHAPTER - II

THE MEDIA: FROM "PARTY'NOST" TO "GLASNOST"

The conflict between the President and the Parliament was closely reported and scanned both by the international and the Russian media. In modern societies the media plays an important role as a source of information and education, which is essential for formation of public opinion on vital issues. For the media to be objectively informative and instructive in an unbiased manner, it has to be really and not just formally free. Modern forms of media, such as the press, radio, television and video magazines have become a major source of information, education and entertainment. They also have a major effect on people's consciousness and outlook and are a significant factor in determining the political action and behaviour of important segments of society. The contents of the communication made by these various forms of the media considerably influence and shape the public opinion.

One of the major roles played by the media is that of communication of information. It helps bridge the gap between the various parts of the world. It informs about the various events around the globe, the political, social and economic developments, news of natural and

man-made calamities, news from the world of sports and entertainment. With the development of the means of communication news travels fast. Newspapers give to their readers detailed reportage on important events, and developments. They cover a gamut of topics ranging from current affairs, science and technology to sports and entertainment. They also act as forum for wide-ranging discussions and debates on issues of public concern, providing a platform for people of various political hues and social and economic backgrounds.

The television is an even more powerful medium as it brings on its screen live images of events across the globe. We see events even as they are taking place. The impact of these live images is even greater than that of the newspapers. Thus one gets live images of the war in Bosnia, elections in the USA, tennis matches played at Wimbledon or the Miss Universe competition at Manila.

While the radio too plays an important role in mass Communication, in the recent years, it has been largely sidelined in urban and semi-urban areas due to the increasing influence of the television. In spite of the information explosion as a result of the coverage on

the television, the reach of the radio still remains unparalleled especially in rural and other inaccessible places all over the world. In countries where media is controlled by the government, as it was in the erstwhile Soviet Union, foreign radio stations were an important source of unbiased information. In the erstwhile Soviet Union, B.B.C. and Radio Liberty were very popular in the absence of a credible media.

While the media is an important source of information, it also helps form and influence public opinion. British Scholar David Lane compares the effect of mass communication to a hypodermic needle. He writes:

"The effect of mass communication has been likened to that of a hypodermic needle. The recipient is "injected" with a message that has a drug-like effect leading even to dependency on the medium."¹

The comparison of the mass media to a hypodermic needle may be an exaggeration, but it is undisputed that

1. David Lane, Soviet Society Under Perestionna (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990, p. 277.

the level of influence the media plays in modern society is quite considerable. It is thus incumbent upon a responsible media to utilise it prudently. However more often than not, media is irresponsible in its communication of information. The media is at times conditioned by the level of commercialization currently taking place. Even in liberal western societies political and commercial considerations are never far behind.

In the west, powerful political and commercial pressures contribute to a certain homogeneity of content in the mass media. Political correctness has to be maintained at all costs, placing limits on mass communication. In the west, for example, anarchists, communists and fascists did not get an equal chance to influence the population. Opinions differing from the widely prevalent points of view were unpalatable and hence commercially unviable and therefore rejected.

The influence of the media was never more evident than at the time of the last general elections in the United Kingdom. The media went all out against the Labour Party and Niel Kinnock. It portrayed the Labour Party and its leader Niel Kinnock as the public enemy number one. The media claimed that if the Labour Party won, it would

push back development by a decade, bringing the economy to ruins. It was blatantly pro-conservative and stopped at nothing to run down the Labour Party, playing a large part in its electoral defeat. This biased reporting by the media was highly irresponsible and in violation of its code of conduct.

Closer home, in India too the media played a similar role when it placed V.P. Singh on a high pedestal as a person of high integrity. This portrayal of V.P. Singh as Mr. clean played an important role in his winning the elections and becoming the Prime Minister in 1989. On discovering that he was just another politician, the media painted him black. This kind of biased media coverage has negative influence on the public opinion leading to its manipulation by the mass media.

The life of the Soviet media can be broadly divided into two stages. The first phase from 1917-1985, that is from the period after the October Revolution and the establishment of the Soviet state till the advent of Gorbachev and his policy of Glasnost. The second period is from 1985 upto the present times.

The first phase in the development of the Soviet media was marked by secrecy, the withholding of even the

most innocuous information from the population at large and especially from foreigners. In the Soviet Union till the advent of Glasnost, the media functioned through state control, linked to the dominant ideology of the communist party. After the October Revolution of 1917, the Soviet system changed the entire norms of the society. One of the first objectives of the newly established Bolshevik government was to eradicate all the existing bourgeois norms and values in the society. The press was one of them. Lenin was of the opinion that the press should remain under the control of the Party, so that non-party press could not publish materials against socialism. Information according to him must serve the interest of the oppressed people. So the Press must play three roles, that of a collective propagandist, collective agitator and collective organizer.

Under Stalin, socialist realism was the doctrine coined to promote socialist and Soviet values. It sought to present societies in the spirit of revolutionary development, to educate and influence the people in the "spirit of socialism". Writers were to be in Stalin's words, "engineers of the soul". Party spirit or party'nost as it was called was to penetrate all communication and

its nature was determined by the party authorities. In the mass media socialist realism became the governing doctrine. It meant staunch support for the current political line, suppression of conflicting opinions and portrayals of the worst aspect of life under the alien social system. The class struggle was given a prominent place in the content of the media. The media was to portray a homogenous and harmonious society. Heroes were positive, imbued with simplistic socialist goals. A black and white world was depicted where all things Soviet were only good and things capitalist and American were bad.

This led to an unquestioning and positive portrayal of all actions and policies of the Soviet government. There were no debates and no alternatives or opinions were allowed. People who dared to voice ideas contrary to the government line were ruthlessly suppressed. As a result instead of a creative intelligentsia, there existed only a socialist activist. Views which were not to the liking of the government were published in underground samizdat publications.

The mass media changed a little under Khrushchev. This period is known as Khrushchev years are known as "the thaw". This "thaw" was restricted largely to the field of literature. Works critical of the Stalin period were published, but the mass media remained unchanged, presenting the same face of official opinion.

Though ideological control remained under Brezhnev, there were a few significant changes. All negative phenomena were ignored and all items which would propagate socialism were promoted, while restrictions on political aspects remained. Transformation gradually took place in the field of entertainment. Western music was heard more often on radio and television. The foreign radio stations like Radio Liberty, Voice of America and B.B.C. were popular, although jamming of Western Russian language programmes was quite frequent.

Glasnost or openness led to major changes in the erstwhile Soviet Union. The system of media control gradually became more flexible. The Soviet media moved from its culture of secrecy towards being more information-oriented. While television and radio were still under governmental control, the print media had achieved some degree of respectability, due to its credibility.

Media started tasting the fruits of democratic freedom and the editors began to understand that they could write and say more than what they had been allowed to before and to participate in political life, in contrast to pre-glasnost period when statements of official policy and socialist rhetoric were the staple diet of the mass media. New debates on political events and a more balanced coverage of world events characterised the Soviet media. While earlier many aspects of internal Soviet life were regarded as state secrets no comprehensive coverage and information was ever published on crime, suicides, accidents, inadequacies of the government, the extent of poverty, major disasters like plane crashes and criticism of political leadership etc. With the advent of Glasnost the quality of Soviet public life came under the scrutiny of the media.

When, Mikhail Gorbachev took the leadership of CPSU in 1985, he introduced the two concepts of Perestroika and Glasnost. Gorbachev himself discussed and answered all the subjects and questions related to sensitive matters of the Soviet society in interviews, congresses and conferences held in Soviet Union and abroad. Glasnost brought under its scrutiny the shortcomings of the leadership and

the quality of Soviet public life in general. One of the first tasks undertaken by the press was the re-examining of the Soviet past. The Brezhnev era was proclaimed as a time of stagnation, corruption and moral decline. Brezhnev's faults of character were spelt out fully in the press commentaries. His love for decorations and greed for applause were widely reported in the press. The corruption of Brezhnev's immediate circle was also exposed. His son-in-law, Yuri Churbanov dismissed from post at the Interior Ministry was arrested in 1987 and brought to trail on charges of corruption on a massive scale.

Khrushchev by contrast was increasingly portrayed as a courageous reformer who had exposed Stalin's crimes. Khrushchev's secret speech at the 20th Party Congress in 1956 making an attack on the Stalinist personality cult was finally published in 1989 after a gap of 33 years. Stalin's crimes were also exposed in the press. The victims of Stalinism were rehabilitated. The quality of public information also improved. Earlier the problems of Soviet public life were simply "resolved" by discontinuing the publications of any information about it. A very different approach to the provision of information began to emerge. Abortion, Suicide, and Crime

were some of the forbidden themes that came under discussion. Another subject that came under discussion was that of drugs. Social and political issues of all kinds were reported under Glasnost.

Yet despite a certain movement in the positive direction of freedom of press, the over-all control of the party and government over the media through appointments of editors and state monopoly over news agencies and radio and television remained largely intact. The newly-won freedom of press was used in a one-sided manner to portray the excesses of Stalin and Brezhnev without being extended to Gorbachev who dismissed several editors for not toeing the official line.

But there were some opponents to the freedom of press. Yegor Ligachev, who was the secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Yuri Zhukov of Pravda, and many hardliners were not in favour of Glasnost. They pointed out that some independent publications, funded by the west, were engaged in publishing anti-communist and anti-Soviet views. They opposed privatisation and commercialization of the press. A disturbing trend that appeared was the publications of pornographic materials in the press. These were published in "Intercontact" a

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publication of the culture department of the Moscow city Soviet.

Glasnost did not mean an unqualified freedom of press. It was possible to be controversial in support of Perestroika but not be against it. The newspapers still continued to function as the organs of the government. The customary speeches and official statements still dominated the press. There were areas in which the press was forbidden to discuss.

The then editor of Pravda, Victor Afanas'ev, pointed out the forbidden areas at the Congress of Journalists in 1987.¹ Soviet space programme, environment etc. were hardly ever touched upon by the press for criticism. There were several failures of Glasnost. The Soviet media failed to report the Chernobyl nuclear disaster that took place on 26 April 1986. After the nuclear explosion was reported in the western media, the Soviet media belatedly acknowledged it only after two days. The first press reports did not highlight the full implications or give

1. White, Stephen, Gorbachev and After (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 98.

details of the scale of the disaster. In spite of its failures, Glasnost succeeded in bringing about openness and credibility to the media. On 12 June 1990, the press law was passed by the USSR Supreme Soviet. "The law of USSR: On the press and other news media" was the first legal act in the history of Soviet media.

The press law, the draft of which was published in December 1989 was adopted by the USSR Supreme Soviet after a long debate in its final form on 12 June 1990. It established the right of all soviet citizens to express opinions and beliefs, to select and receive information and ideas in any form. Censorship was abolished in principle, except for a limited number of cases which included the disclosure of state secrets and appeals for violent overthrow of state and social system. Any media monopoly was prohibited and individuals and political parties as well as state bodies were given the right to establish their own publications. All forms of media had to be registered with the authorities and there were criminal penalties for abuse of freedom of speech or for distortion of information that did not conform with "reality". The state however retained control over printing presses and stocks of paper. The press law provided a platform for a wide range of opinion that formerly never existed in

the Soviet media. About 8000 newspapers and journals were registered under the Press Law in 1991, nearly all of which were new.

In spite of these far-reaching reforms, the press and electronic media entered a new and difficult period. It was particularly difficult for the print media. Paper costs have risen substantially and there had to be a proportional increase in subscription costs. Shortage of newsprint and uncertainty of delivery are added problems faced by the press. The dropping standards of living of the general public have further added to the problems faced by it. With most of the subjects that were forbidden earlier, being openly discussed, the press had nothing new or 'sensational' to offer. The public disenchantment with politics and problems of everyday existence, led to sharp fall in the subscriptions of political journals; newspapers and magazines in the 1990s. Pravda, for instance, was down to 1.4 million subscribers in 1992 compared with 10 million or more than it enjoyed in the late 1980s; it was also forced to cease publication for sometime. Izvestia fell to 3.8 million and the trade union paper Trud, once the best seller, was down from 18 million or more in the late 1980s to 4.3 million.¹

1. White, Stephen, op. cit., p. 102.

The Press Law was adopted by the Russian Parliament in December 1991. The Press Law adopted made it illegal for the journalists to withhold their sources of information. The Russian government began to subsidise its own press organs. Further price liberalisation under the Boris Yeltsin government meant that much of the population could not afford to buy newspapers. In Russia only 1.5 per cent to 2 per cent of population read newspapers.¹ Radio and television became the main source of information for the Russian population. Most of the electronic media was controlled by the government. This was in ample evidence during the bloody conflict between the Parliament and the President in September-October 1993 and later during the parliamentary elections in December 1993. Though the opposition newspapers have been able to maintain a semblance of credibility, they are forced to stop publication frequently either due to lack of funds or due to interference from the government. Pressure is often exerted on the media. They are told to exercise "responsibility" and "self-censorship".

1. Megapolis-Express, no. 40, 20 October 1993, p. 16.

Despite the shortcomings, the mass media in the erstwhile Soviet Union in the 1980s and now in the Russian State is much more vibrant and portrays a pluralism of views which were unknown before Glasnost. Though its still some distance from achieving an unqualified freedom of press, it is a reflection of a society where a precarious balance exists between authoritarianism and reformist sentiment. The authoritarian democracy is reflected in the media which swings from freedom to censorship and vice-versa.

CHAPTER - III

THE MEDIA ON THE OCTOBER CONFLICT

On 21 September 1993, President Boris Yeltsin went on television to announce his decree no. 1400, "On stage-by-stage Constitutional Reform in the Russian in the Russian Federation." President Yeltsin declared that the Parliament had been dissolved and parliamentary elections would be held on 11-12 December 1993. He justified his decree as a final measure against hostile opposition which he claimed acted in variance to the April Referendum. He cited the 'support' and 'will' of the Russian people as demonstrated in the April referendum as the basis for his decree. The decree was announced on television by President Yeltsin at 8.00 P.M. and was met with immediate opposition from the Deputies and their leadership assembled at the Russian Parliament building, the White House. The Deputies numbering about 50 to 60, under the leadership of Ruslan Khasbulatov and Alexander Rutskoi declared the President's action as a coup d'etat.¹ The Parliament called for the dismissal of President Boris Yeltsin and by 22 September announced Alexander Rutskoi as the President of Russia, General Vladimir Achalov, the Minister of Security and Andrei Dunayev was made the Minister of Internal Affairs. Hence

1. Sevodnya, 23 September 1993, p. 1.

by 22 September there were two Presidents in Russia, each of whom claimed legitimacy and the support of the people. On the first day, the crowd of people around the White House numbered about 2000-3000 people. On 22 September, the Constitutional Court under the Chairmanship of Valery Zorkin ruled that President Yeltsin had violated the constitution and could be impeached. The Parliament voted to strip him of his powers. President Yeltsin denied that he would use force. Defence Minister Pavel Grachev issued a statement saying that the President could rely on the full support of the army. The government claimed to have the complete support of the army. At the same time, General Vladimir Achalov issued orders for all personnel to report to the White House with arms. Meanwhile the crowd around the White House kept swelling. In the early hours of 23 September electricity in the Parliament was cut off. Hot water too was turned off although cold water was still running. Telephone communications too were cut off. By afternoon it was clear that the political confrontation was developing into an armed conflict. In the evening the two sides clashed near the Defence Ministry building. The government accused the parliamentary forces of trying to take over the weapons at the Joint Armed Forces building. During

the exchange of fire two persons were killed. By this time, there were about 2000 people in the building, 600 of them armed with assault rifles as well as grenade launchers and machine guns.¹ The funds to the Parliament were cut off and all Supreme Soviet property were transferred to the Government.² Yeltsin also transferred the control of the Parliament's newspaper Rossiskaya Gazeta and the radio and television to the control of the government. On 24 September, President Yeltsin gave orders to the Defence and Interior Ministries to disarm the Parliament's guards and Mayor Luzhkov gave them an hour to hand over their weapons. The Speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov replied that the building would be defended not by force but by the authority and force of law. He said emphatically that the Congress would not agree to any compromises whatsoever, he placed all responsibility for "possible bloodshed" (no matter which side provoked it) on the "criminal authorities". He said that the Congress would make no compromises with the "fascist regime".³ At the same time, Valery Zorkin, the Chairman of the Constitutional

1. Sevodnya, 25 September 1993, p. 2.

2. Izvestia, 24 September 1993, p.2.

3. Rossiiskiye Vesti, 28 September 1993, p. 2.

Court proposed a compromise whereby there would be simultaneous Parliamentary and Presidential election by March 1994, thus calling for the 'Zero-option'. Both the sides rejected the offer. Meanwhile on 27 September, leaders of 39 regional Councils met at St. Petersburg to discuss the political situation that had developed in the country. After two days discussions, 27 of the 39 regions signed a strongly worded appeal both to the President and the Parliament. They demanded that the President and Supreme Soviet schedule simultaneous nationwide elections for the President and the Supreme Soviet. They also demanded that the government should lift censorship of the news media.¹ Meanwhile the crowd around the Parliament grew larger and larger. By the weekend there were about twenty to thirty thousand people assembled in front of the White House. The building was completely surrounded with a perimeter of two to three kilometres of riot police and razor wire.² No one was allowed to enter the White House. The next night there was a big demonstration in spite of the freezing cold and rains.

1. Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 28 September 1993, p.1.

2. Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 29 September 1993, p.1.

The police moved the demonstrators away from the perimeter. They responded by blocking the road in the centre of Moscow and bringing traffic to a halt. Most western countries, including the United States of America, issued statements in support of President Yeltsin endorsing his actions.¹ The Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, speaking on American Television called some of the Deputies and their supporters as drunkards and criminals and mentally disturbed persons. Meanwhile hundreds of people, with a high proportion of women, milled around the perimeter wire arguing with the soldiers. By the end of the day, events took an ugly turn and turned violent. A large meeting near the White House was attacked by the riot police and several hundred people were injured.² The violence continued the following day and became more sporadic and random. Things came to a head with a majority of regional Soviets announcing their support for the Parliament and threatening various sanctions against the Central Government if legality was not restored.³ Meanwhile the Church returned to play its part in Russian politics. The Patriarch of

1. Izvestia, 23 September 1993, p. 4.

2. Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 29 September 1993, p.1.

3. Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 28 September 1993, p.1.

the Russian Orthodox Church Alexei II offered to mediate talks between the two sides. The government and the Parliament accepted Patriarch Alexei II offer. The closed-door talks between the two sides began at the Danilov Monastery in Moscow on 30 September. Meanwhile President Yeltsin stepped up the seige around the White House, even as a meeting of the regional heads in the capital sought to find a peaceful solution to the national political crisis. Eleven armoured personnel carriers were moved overnight around the White House in an attempt to strengthen the cordon around the Parliament building. General Makashov replied that if the cordon was tightened any further, then the guards of the White House would begin shooting.¹

The talks which began between the representatives of the two sides at Danilov Monastery, visibly eased tensions considerably. Two days of negotiations led to a protocol being signed between two sides, which was however rejected later in the day by a section of the Deputies in the White House. The aborted agreement had centred around power, water and telephone lines being

1. Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 30 September 1993, pp. 1-2.

restored to the White House in exchange for the Deputies surrendering arms within the parliament building, overseen by a joint commission consisting of officials from the Interior Ministry and the Parliament guards. President Yeltsin emphasised that the talks would be productive only if the Deputies surrendered the caches of arms that they had with them in the Parliament building. On the evening of 1 October, the lights came on at the White House for a few minutes, only to go off again as a section of the Deputies rejected the agreement. The Deputies argued that surrendering of arms would leave them with no means of self-defence in case Yeltsin chose not to keep his word. Moreover, they argued the main issue of conflict namely the dissolution of the Parliament on 21 September had not been addressed at all.

On 2 October a large demonstration of Parliament supporters at Smolensk Square, a few hundred yards away from the White House turned violent, as they clashed with the riot police. The special riot police under the Interior Ministry OMON charged at the demonstrators. In the resultant clashes one man who was hit on the head died on the spot.¹ Meanwhile the seige of the White House

1. Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 3 October 1993, p.1.

continued. No one including the press was allowed in the vicinity. At the same time, the Chruuch-mediated talks were once again resumed at the Moscow Monastery. The Parliament representatives however said that the talks would not resume unless the government gave the Parliament Deputies access to state-controlled radio and television and safe passage in and out of the Parliament. They also demanded the restoration of telephone lines. The government on the other hand, reiterated that the Deputies should surrender their arms before any negotiations could take place.

On 3 October heavy fighting broke out between government troops and the Parliament supporters as they broke the police cordon surrounding the White House. Thousands of men, women and children, estimated to be around 20,000 to 30,000 stormed the cordon around the White House and freed the Deputies who were holed in the building for over a week. Soon after the White House was taken, Alexander Rutskoi ordered that the people, peacefully, without any arms, should take over the building of the Moscow Mayor opposite and Ostankino television company.¹

1. Sevodnya, 5 October 1993, p.2.

At the same time, Ruslan Khasbulatov called for Kremlin to be taken by next morning. By 5.00 P.M. the Mayor's office was taken and the Parliamentary supporters moved next towards Ostankino television, which was viewed as an organ of the government because of its pro-government broadcasting. At 6.00 P.M., President Yeltsin issued a decree declaring a state of emergency in Moscow. Heavy firing took place at the Ostankino television centre with both sides suffering casualties. Meanwhile, in the early hours of 4 October thousands of Moscovites gathered outside the Moscow City Soviet in response to Yegor Gaidar's televised speech to support the President.

The Church mediated talks were suspended amid growing anxiety. In the early hours of 4 October, the government took action to take over the White House. Around 500 people were killed in the battle for the White House as armed forces loyal to the President flushed out opposition supporters from the Parliament building in a bloody battle that lasted over eight hours. Alexander Rutskoi and Ruslan Khasbulatov along with the Deputies and their supporters surrendered after being assured by western embassies that they would be guaranteed the security of their lives.

In a televised speech, after the surrender of Alexander Rutskoi and Ruslan Khasbulatov and the Deputies, President Yeltsin accused the Parliament for the innocent loss of life.¹ Meanwhile the arrested leaders of the Parliament Alexander Rutskoi and Ruslan Khasbulatov were kept in the Lefortovo Prison in Central Moscow.

At the end of the 10 days of bloody crisis around 120 people died, several hundreds injured and thousands were arrested.² President Yeltsin called for parliamentary elections to be held on 12 December and banned several opposition newspaper. Pravda, Sovetskaya Rossiya and D'en were among the newspapers that were banned. The Constitutional Court was suspended and the Chairman Valery Zhorkin was forced to resign.

These events were closed scanned and reported by the Russian Media. It was divided over the events that took place during September-October 1993. These sharp differences were especially evident in the print media. This was in contrast to the unanimity usually displayed by the Russian Media in the past. The news

1. Rossiiskiye Vesti, 5 October 1993, p.1.

2. Sevodnya, 7 October 1993, p.1.

items hardly ever differed in their content and there were no debates on political issues. The press only carried statements issued by the government and the Party. The reforms initiated in the Glasnost period were showing results. The Press was finally playing its true role, that of communicating to the masses.

The reporting and the comments on the September-October events in the press showed wide divergences. While one section supported the President whole-heartedly, others had some reservations, while yet other supported the Parliament. However the electronic media, the radio and the television, were completely controlled by the Government. Hence it presented the opinions and views of the Government only.

On the evening of 21 September 1993, President Yeltsin went on television with his address "On Stage-by-stage constitutional reform of the Russian Federation." This was relayed by the Ostankino Channel 1 TV and on 'Russia' TV channel. The radio channels too reported the Presidential address. The next morning the national papers gave prominent coverage to the 21 September decree of Boris Yeltsin dissolving the Parliament and the subsequent developments.

Rossiiskiye Vesti published the complete text of Boris Yeltsin's decree on the front page. In this decree Yeltsin stated:

"In the past few months Russia has been going through a profound crisis of statehood. Literally all state institutions and political figures have been drawn into a fruitless struggle headed for destruction."

He further added, ".... outright opposition to the implementation of social and economic reforms, open and daily obstruction in the Supreme Soviet of the policy of the popularly elected President of the Russian Federation and attempts to directly exercise the function of the executive branch of the Government in place of the Council of Ministers are very obvious indications that a majority in the Russian Federation Supreme Soviet and a segment of its leadership have openly set out to flout the will of the Russian people as expressed in the referendum of 25 April 1993. This is a flagrant violation of the law on referendum according to which decisions adopted in Russia-wide referendum have supreme legal force, need no confirmation and are binding throughout the Russian Federation."

The President accused the Parliament of working at variance with the federal nature of the Russian state. He justified the elections for the Congress of People's Deputies, on the ground that the Russian Federation was a new state.

Yeltsin in his decree continued,

"Seeking to eliminate political obstacle that is preventing the people from deciding their own fate; in view of the fact that work of the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of Russian Federation People's Deputies does not meet parliamentary standards; considering that the security of Russia and its people is a higher value than formal conformity to contradictory norms created by the legislative branch of government, in order to preserve the unity and integrity of the Russian Federation; extricate the country from economic and political crisis; ensure the security of Russia as a state and as a society; restore the authority of state power, on the basis of Articles 1,2,5 and 121.5 of the Russian Federation Constitution and the results of the referendum of 25 April 1993...."¹

1. Rossiiskiye Vesti, 23 September 1993, p.1.

By the decree, the President sought to make changes in the constitution, providing for a new supreme legislative body - the Federal Assembly - elections to which were to be held on 11-12 December 1993. On the basis of the decree, the Congress of Russian Federation People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet were to cease performing legislative, administrative and oversight functions. Until the Russian Federation's new bicameral parliament - the Federal Assembly - began its work and assumed the appropriate powers, the country was to be guided by the decrees of the President and the resolution of the Russian Federation Government.

There were also certain discrepancies in the Russian and English versions of the Decree. While the Russian version of the decree as reported by the ITAR-TASS news agency said:

"Pt. 9 - The powers of the People's Deputies who are Russian Federation's delegates at Plenary meetings of, and who are representatives in the commissions of, the interparliamentary Assembly of member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States, are confirmed by the President of the Russian Federation.

Those People's Deputies of the Russian Federation

who are members of the Constitutional Commission of the Congress of People's Deputies of the Russian Federation can continue their work in the Commission in the capacity of experts."¹

While the English version stated:

"The powers of the People's Deputies - delegates of the Russian Federation to the Plenary meetings and of representatives in Commissions of the interparliamentary assembly of the member states, the Commonwealth of Independent States can continue their work in commissions as experts."²

By 23 September the divisions in the press became more evident. On 23 September the Rossiikaya Gazeta, which was the parliament's paper, published the speech of Ruslan Khasbulatov with the heading "The President is trampling on the Constitution: In the hour of trial, rise to the Defence of Democracy."

1. SWB, 24 September 1993, p.6.

2. SWB, op. cit., p. 2.

In his speech, Ruslan Khasbulatov accused the President of staging a coup and called his actions unconstitutional and hence illegal and invalid.

The Rossiskaya Gazeta also published the texts of decrees issued in the Parliament by Ruslan Khasbulatov. The Speaker issued three decrees on 22 September. The first dealt with the "Ousting of Yeltsin as President."¹ The decree stated that since the President had violated the constitution by issuing the decree "On the stage-by-stage Constitutional Reform in the Russian Federation", he was terminated from the office of President according to Article 121.6 of the Constitution.

The second decree made Rutskoi the President. The third decree termed the actions of President Yeltsin as a coup d'etat and forwarded the Russian Federation President's decree no. 1400, dated 21 September 1993, "On stage-by-stage Constitutional Reform in the Russian Federation" to the Russian Federation Court.

The Rossiskaya Gazeta also published the text

1. Rossiskaya Gazeta, 23 September 1993, p.1.

of the statement of the chairman of the Russian Federation Constitutional Court, Valery Zorkin declaring Yeltsin's decree and televised address to be at variance with the constitution and as grounds for removing the President from office.

In his statement, Valery Zorkin suggested possible measures to overcome the constitutional crisis. He called for simultaneous early elections for both the Parliament and the President.

The edition of the Sevodnya of 23 September carried an article on what the Russian Federation Supreme Soviet did on 21-22 September. Though the article was not outright critical of the Supreme Soviet the headline was - The "Coup" - A chronology of events. On 23 September the Rossiskiye Vesti wrote that the decree of President Yeltsin had been accepted by the Russian Federation Council of Ministers unconditionally and that it considered the decree as the only possible solution to the political crisis. The article stated that the decree was the only way to halt the high-handedness and de-facto sabotage on the part of the Supreme Soviet. The Supreme Soviet and Vice-President were clinging on to power, the paper asserted.

It also felt that the government was in complete control of the situation and hoped that the people of Russia would support and understand the actions of the President and Government.

On the other hand, on 23 September Nezavisimaya Gazeta, a liberal newspaper, said that most parties and newspapers considered the President's actions unconstitutional. The paper commented that the decree of the President was a violation of the constitution which met the approval of only the democratic parties and movements. The President's unconstitutional actions were stirring dissatisfaction in the democrats camp, added the paper. According to Nezavisimaya Gazeta, most of the provinces of the Russian Federation like Tatarstan, Boshkortostan, Yakutia, Karelia, Adygeya were against the Presidential decree. Most of the former republics of the erstwhile Soviet Union issued statements supporting Boris Yeltsin, the paper reported.

An article in the Sevodnya on 23 September said that the top military leadership unequivocally refused to obey the newly appointed "illegal leadership of the country" and declared its allegiance to the Russian Federation, Minister of Defence, General Pavel Grachev and President Boris Yeltsin only. General Achalov who had

been appointed as the new Minister of Defence by Alexander Rutskoi, was called an extremist by General Grachev. It quoted General Grachev - "The Army is not going to get mixed up in political actions."¹

The Nezavisimaya Gazeta quoted Sergei Filatov, Yeltsin's chief of staff at a press conference held by the Russian Federation, on 23 September, "at present dual situation in the country is no longer dual power but who knows what." He said that chief administrators of Amur, Bryansk, Lipetsk and Novosibirsk Provinces had refused to support the President's decree. Whenever the executive authorities remove themselves from the authority of the President, they must be replaced, Filatov asserted.

The Izvestia reported that the world community supported Boris Yeltsin unconditionally. According to the Izvestia, the President of U.S. and Russia had a 15-minute long telephonic conversation.

The next days issue of the Pravda criticized

1. Sevodnya, 23 September 1993, p.1.

the 'wholehearted' support of the world community to President Yeltsin. An article by the political commentator said that the West was burying democracy in Russia. The leaders of the "civilized" countries were congratulating Boris Yeltsin for dissolving the Parliament and the Congress. This article made a scathing attack on the Western Democracies for supporting an undemocratic act. The article stated:-

"Only yesterday the west, was foaming at the mouth, was denouncing the Soviet Union as the "evil empire", and an "out-law" state. But today Russia, to applause, is eliminating the institution of the legislative branch, an action that is seen as quite natural and does not draw even a smidgen of protest....

Western Leaders are obviously pleased with the made-up story about the "illegitimacy" of the current "Communist" parliament that is being obligingly spread by "their man" in Moscow Kozyrev....

One can imagine what would happen to Clinton were here to decide to dissolve the Congress...."

The article concluded:

"Alas, Gorbachev's promising spring of Perestroika has been replaced by Yeltsin's autumn of deformed democracy. Now we have the first cold shape of the coming winter of

dictatorship."¹

Though the Minister of foreign economic relations, Sergei Glazyev resigned in connection with his disagreement with the President's decree, the Izvestia said that the resignation was a result of resumption of duties of his vehement opponent in government Vladimir Shumieko, as the first Deputy Prime Minister. The Izvestia also reported that in accordance with the decree Boris Yeltsin had transferred the Supreme Soviet's property to the government. This included the monetary assets, the Parliamentary newspapers Rossiskaya Gazeta, Yuridicheskaya Gazeta Rossii (Legal Gazette of Russia) the magazine, Narodny Deputat (People's Deputy) the RTV-Parliamentary television and radio channels and the Izvestia Sovetov Narodnykh Deputatov Rossiiskoi Fedaratsii (News of Soviets of Russian Federation People's Deputies) publishing house. The Izvestia also reported that both channels of RTV-Parliament was suspended until the election of the Federal Assembly's State Duma. The "Russia" television channel briefly reported that the Rossiskaya Gazeta staff disapproved the decision of the government to suspend the publication.

1. Pravda, 24 September 1994, p.1.

By the end of the week, debates in the press became more sharp and strident. The division in the Press was among pro-Yeltsin and anti-Yeltsin camps. Newspapers like Izvestia, Sevodnya and Rossiskiye Vesti joined the pro-Yeltsin camp, while Pravda, Nezavisimaya Gazeta, Moskovskiye Novosti were against Yeltsin and his actions. Although these newspapers did not completely endorse the actions of the Parliament, while Rossiiskaya Gazeta was under the control of the Parliament, it acted as its mouthpiece. But after its take over by the Government, it ceased to function as an organ of the Parliament. The government had complete control of the electronic media. The reach of the electronic media is much larger, hence its influence and impact was much more. Television and radio broadcast information which would favour the President. On 23 September, ITAR-TASS news agency stated the results of an opinion poll. It claimed that President Yeltsin had 62 per cent of Moscovites' support while 72 per cent disapproved of Alexander Rutskoi.¹

On 25 September, Yeltsin went on Ostankino television channel 1 claiming that the parliament was on its last gasp.

1. SWB, 27 September 1993, p.10.

Ostankino television also telecast statement from the Moscow Mayor's office appealing to the people to stay away from the White House and blamed the supporters of the parliament for the tragedy on Leningradsky Prospekt where two persons killed in an exchange of fire. "Russia" television channel telecast an interview with Constitutional Court judges A.L. Koronov and E.M. Ametisov who stated that the Constitutional Court ruling that Yeltsin had acted unconstitutional was itself unconstitutional as the due procedure had been ignored, no witnesses had been called and the text of the decree dissolving the parliament had not been examined.

On 26 September a conference of the representatives of the Russian Federation Council opened in St. Petersburg. 39 regions participated along with Ramzan Abdulatipov, Chairman of the Soviet of Nationalities of Russian Federation Supreme Soviet and Sergei Shakhrai, Deputy Premier of the government to discuss the political situation in the country.

The outcome of the meeting according to the Nezavisimaya Gazeta was that 27 of the 39 regions signed a strongly worded appeal to the President and the Congress.

They demanded that the President revoke his 21 September decree. They also demanded that the Congress agree to schedule simultaneous nationwide elections for the President and the Supreme Soviet for 12 December. The St. Petersburg gathering also issued an ultimatum that if their demands were not met by 28 September, economic and political sanctions would be imposed.

The Nezavisimaya Gazeta pointed out the quantitative make up of the signatories emphasising that the more influential of the regions, politically or economically did not constitute the 27 regions opposing the President. The Pravda quoted the Deputies as saying that the conference at St. Petersburg was a step backwards. The Rossiiskiya Vesti wrote that the conference left a painful impression because of its secrecy and "extremely ill-assorted make up" It also called the conference irrelevant and untimely.

On 27 September, President Yeltsin issued a statement on television rejecting the possibility of simultaneous elections for the President and the Parliament. The following day, the Rossiiskiy Vesti justified the Presidential stance. It said, "The President's position is clear. Unlike the regional leaders, unlike the Chairman

of the Constitutional Court, and especially unlike politicians of various persuasions, he bears responsibility not just for a strictly defined sector of work, but for the entire country and therefore he must be guided above all by the country's interests. Today those interests are tranquility, order and normal conditions for continuing reforms...." The article further claimed that only Yeltsin was responsible for the entire country and added: "Argue as much as you like whether Yeltsin is right or wrong but at least bear in mind that in a country called Russia he is the first, and so far the only person in its entire history who has not simply gone through the crucible of a nationwide vote but has gone through it twice and been successful...."¹

Further support to this view was provided by the Sevodnya which claimed that Boris Yeltsin was the only guarantor against the restoration of communism.

At the week progressed, the support for the blockaded Parliament grew with more and more people

1. Rossiiskiye Vesti, 27 September 1993, p. 6.

joining the ranks of the demonstrators at the White House. The government grew more and more diffensive, issuing statements against the quantity of arms inside the White House.

On 28 September, the Izvestia alleged that the activity of the Russian Supreme Soviet had been paralysed. According to the paper:-

"Of the 384 people who used to work there on a permanent basis to date 76 have agreed to switch to jobs in the executive branch structures. Another 114 people are willing to negotiate on job placement. Thus, today there are between 170 and 180 deputies there, which is not enough to adopt any decisions."¹ Further it quoted official sources that 600 guns had been distributed in and around the White House and that machine guns had been set up in the windows. The paper quoted the President's Deputy Chief of Staff, that not only weapons, but also money was being distributed. The Izvestia stated that access to White House had been restricted to prevent arming of more people as also as a step to prevent an epidemic from breaking out. The cutting off of water supply had led to unsanitary conditions.

1. Izvestia, 28 September 1993, p.1.

On 29 September the Nezavisimaya Gazeta reported that the supporters of the Supreme Soviet, People's Deputies, employees of the Supreme Soviet Apparatus and numerous journalists all continued to face a ring of internal troops, Policemen, OMON special units, water cannon and coils of razor wire. On 28 September at 6.00 P.M. operations had begun to block all access to the White House.

On 30 September the Pravda claimed that 113 People's Deputies had been unable to gain admittance to the House of Soviets and had set up a coordinating committee outside. The article accused the government of human rights violations. It also charged the government with pro-Americanism.

"There you have it. Only American journalists are being allowed into the House of Soviets on special passes. Well, the dictatorship is being defended - everyone is being driven to the same opinion...."¹

The Nezavisimaya Gazeta echoed the same thoughts

1. Pravda, 30 September 1993, p.2.

on 29 September, "The post-factum news agency reports that, nevertheless, American journalists were let into the White House at midday by agreement with the U.S. embassy - something that apparently will add to the anti-Yeltsin opposition's collection, another piece of evidence that this regime is on the payroll of the American Administration."¹

As the week drew to a close the accusations in the press and by the press grew more strident. On 30 September, the Nezavisimaya Gazeta accused the first Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Mikhail Yegorov of favouring 'rapid' resolution to the conflict. His plan it alleged called for infiltrating provocators who would begin shooting from the White House and thus provide justification for its subsequent storming. Most news agencies reported General Albert Makashov as having said that if the ring of blockade was tightened, the White House defenders would open fire and shoot to kill.

On the evening of 29 September, the Church entered into the efforts to mediate and diffuse the

1. Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 29 September 1993, p.1.

situation. Patriarch Alexei II of the Russian Orthodox Church offered to mediate, which both sides accepted. Each side supported the appeal of Alexei II for peaceful settlement of the conflict. But with daily escalation of violence the Church failed to get the opposing sides to come to any agreement after two days of mediation.

Meanwhile the army was being more and more drawn into the conflict. The debate whether the army should maintain a neutral role and not get drawn into the conflict had been going on since the beginning of the crisis. Each side appealed to the army for support. The army largely managed to stay neutral but as the crisis reached its climax it was evident the army would have to choose sides. Divisions in the army would push the country into a civil war. The army played a decisive role in the conflict, tipping the scales in favour of the side it supported.

On 30 September, the Sevodnya quoted General Grachev as saying, "the people are being provoked to disobedience, and, as a military man, I view this as the distant approaches to a major, bloody conflict. This is realistic possibility. If provocators do not calm down, they could bring about a civil war. The city

of Moscow's agencies for the protection of law and order must stop these actions."¹

General Achalov had been appointed as the Minister of Defence by the Supreme Soviet. By 30 September the divisions became clear with Boris Yeltsin claiming complete support of the army. Boris Yeltsin issued an ultimatum for the surrender of the Deputies by 4 October. By the weekend tension was mounting further with both sides arming themselves. On 2 October, the Sevodnya reported that the Supreme Soviet guards departments alone had 1600 assault rifles, more than 2000 pistols, 18 machine guns, 12 grenade launchers and 10 sniper's rifles. The Sevodnya also stated that the Supreme Soviet had amongst its defenders, ex-serviceman with service records in Afghanistan, the Dnesti region, Abkhazia and Ossetia.

Last minute attempts to diffuse the situations failed. The Nezavisimaya Gazeta reported on 2 October that after 10 days of threats and ultimatums the two sides finally made sincere efforts to diffuse the situation. The Government proposed complete surrender of arms by the Supreme Soviet in exchange for restoration of water supply and electricity. Though this was initially accepted by the Deputies, later it was declared invalid.

1. Sevodnya, 30 September 1993, p.1.

The Sovetskaya Rossia on 2 October directed an attack on the government for its blockade of the Parliament. According to the Sovetskaya Rossia the cordon had been reinforced with armoured equipment. It called the actions of the governments as a flagrant violation of human rights. It also accused the official media of distorting the situation in the White House.

'Russia' television channel 1 and the Ostankino channel 1 television reported on 2 October that President Yeltsin stopped near the Supreme Soviet building and spoke to the militiamen standing on the cordon line. There he again reiterated that the way out of the crisis was the surrender of weapons in the White House and spoke of negotiations being held at the Danilov Monastery.

Meanwhile the crowd gathered at Smolensk Square swelled to about 4000-5000 according to radio reports in the afternoon of 2 October. The peaceful demonstration turned violent as it clashed with the OMON forces stationed outside the White House. While ITAR-TASS stated that eight militiamen were injured in the clash, Russia's radio mentioned this figure as twelve militiamen had been injured, two of them gravely.¹ By the end of the day

1. SWB, 4 October 1993, p. 13.

ITAR-TASS report at the end of the day stated that 24 OMON policemen had been wounded, while five demonstrators had been injured. It also reported that by 2200 hours there were only a few hundred onlookers left. It stated that about 2000 people had participated in the clashes. An RIA news agency report said that the riot police had killed one person and injured a foreign reporter. This however, was not reported by any other news agency. ITAR-TASS reported that the situation was returning to normal. While according to Mayak radio reporting on the morning of 3 October at 1000 hours local time, Moscow was "Sunny, calm and Sunday like."¹ There were no demonstrations, only the militia. Demonstrators after attending a rally at Leninsky Prospekt moved towards Smolensk Square where they confronted the OMON troops. They forced their way through the cordon. RIA news agency reported that demonstrators numbering 3500-4000 used pointed objects, sticks and stones to break through the cordon. The clashes occurred at the Krymsky bridge at 1500 hours Moscow time. ITAR-TASS news agency reported that demonstrators broke through the cordon and advanced right up to the White House and by 1700 hours had taken over the Moscow Mayor's office. At 1745 hours Ostankino channel 1 TV reported that there were about 300 demonstrators outside the building while RIA

1. SWB, 4 October 1993, p. 16.

news agency reported about 1000 White House supporters outside the Ostankino TV centre. ITAR-TASS reported by 1815 hours that several hundred persons broke into the Russian TV company and had blown up the entrance of the building. Almost all TV and radio broadcast were stopped. "Russia" TV channel reported that 2234 hours the Ostankino TV centre was retaken by the government forces, but it did not say how this mission was accomplished nor was there any mention of the number of casualties. ITAR-TASS claimed that the situation changed on late 3 October night when about 20000 Yeltsin supporters gathered around Kremlin. It also reported that armoured personnel carriers approached the White House at 0700 hours on 4 October. Submachine and machine gun firing could be heard and smoke rose in the sky. Intense fighting continued the whole day before Ruslan Khasbulatov and Alexander Rutskoi surrendered in return for guarantees of personal safety and were taken to Lefortovo prison.¹

The various news agencies differed over the figures of casualties and detainees after the bloody

1. SWB, 6 October 1994, p. 2.

clash. The figures for the number of persons dead varied from 18 according to Mayak radio to 59 according to ITAR-TASS. The later also stated that there were about 1500 detainees.

The reaction of the print media towards the events of 3 and 4 October widely differed. On 5 October the Izvestia was critical of the deposed parliament and defended President yeltsin's attack on it. It called the Parliament supporters as reactionaries.¹ Blaming the People's Deputies for the seizure of the Mayor's office and the subsequent storming of the Ostankino television, the Izvestia questioned the unpreparedness of the authorities to deal with the events.

On 5 October most of the newspapers gave the chronology of events of the last three days. On 4 October President Yeltsin made an appeal on television to the people of Russia, calling the defnders of the White House as "communist revanchists, fascist ring-leaders, he stated, "Those who brandish red flags have once again stained Russia red with blood."²

1. Izvestia, 5 October 1993, p. 1.

2. Rossiiskiye Vesti, 5 October 1993, p.1.

Almost all newspapers immaterial of whom they supported earlier were critical of the President and the bombing of the Parliament which led to loss of innocent lives.

The Nezavisimaya Gazeta, in a scathing article criticized the "Creative intelligentsia" for its support to the President. The article stated:

"....An appeal to the law, a natural desire for norm that establishes the possibility for a person to exercise his right "not to be dependent on the inconstant, uncertain, unknown and autocratic will of another person (Locke), is an utterly unbearable thing for a member of the progressive intelligentsia. That is because it greatly constricts (if only mentally, in one's imagination) the space for maneuvering - pragmatic maneuvering, revolutionary selfless maneuvering, maneuvering that has a distant target or that has a near-term interest...."

It is with bitterness that I am forced to say that during these days the creative intelligentsia has chosen for itself the role of provocator and instigator. And it is performing it eagerly and with pleasure. But it should have chosen a different role."¹

1. Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 9 October 1993, p. 2.

The Izvestia too came out with articles that were critical of the President. An article on 9 October called the bloody days of September-October the 'Accursed Days'. The article stated:

"The talk about 'dual power' was only a tale for idiots. There was no dual power in the country. In all provinces, territories and republics, power belonged to Presidential structures. And the real power was wielded by criminal structures or the mafia, as we have become accustomed to calling them...

The 21 September decree was the beginning of the tragic events in the country. Every last victim on both sides is on the conscience of the authors of that decree."¹ The author continued in the same tone:

"The truth cannot be concealed. You will learn it sooner or later. At 10.00 A.M. on 4 October, I watched as the Parliament was fired upon. We now know that many women and children were inside the building. We onlookers were standing on the bridge, from which everything was plainly visible. I can testify that no one

1. Izvestia, 9 October 1993, p. 8.

White House defender could have fired on the attackers: Crowd of onlookers were standing directly behind the chain of soldiers, pressed close to them (that's why they had not broken up). The tanks that fired point-blank were behind us.

A 120 mm gun was fired. The shell exploded inside the building. The crowd on the bridge began shouting excitedly, "Way to go, way to go! Let them all burn up in there, the scum!"

Another gun hit its target. A little further back from the crowd, two old men had stopped (I talked with them later; they were veterans who had fought on the front lines when Kaliningrad was taken). One of the old men said:

"They have shot down Russia. We can go home."

Remember: The accursed days in Russia began the day Parliament was dispersed in January 1918.

Once again, a dark night has descended the country.

Accursed days have begun in Russia."¹

1. Izvestia, 9 October 1993, p. 8.

The Moskoveskiye Novosti levelled harsh criticism against the government. It stated:

"...The victors, although reluctant to talk about a victory, are behaving themselves according to "the rights of the victor." They are dictating their own terms not only to the vanquished but also to those who tried to maintain neutrality....

....But again and again the authorities demand that every state servant make the same choice. Are you for the Whites or the Reds? And in order to make the choice easier, new decisions are made everyday about more and more benefits and priviledges for those who make the "right" choice. Can people be put in such a position? When this is going on, can we talk seriously about building a deideologised state and creating a civilized civil service, not a neo-party system of state service?

...The fact that society has been reduced to such a state, and that as in soccer, it is rooting for "its sides", regardless of the methods it uses - that is truly a victory for the President's team. But this victory is not over the "Partocrats" but over all of us, over society, which is already willing to go too far in halting the enemy - needless to say, for the sake of

hastening as much as possible the advent of the new, which thus comes increasingly to resemble the not-yet-forgotten old."¹

Censorship of press was imposed on 5 October. Nezavisimaya Gazeta and Sevodnya, among others, came out with blank spaces. This move of the government was met with opposition from all sections of the press. On 7 October, the authorities lifted the ban and called on the journalists to exercise self-censorship. However, a number of opposition newspapers were banned. Pravda, Sovetskaya Rossiya, Glasnost, Molinya, D'en, Nasha Rossia, Krasnaya Presnya, Put, Rabochaya Tribuna were among these banned newspapers on 13 October.

Thus, just as opposition forces in the Parliament were silenced by tanks, the opposition press was silenced by censorship and suppression.

CONCLUSIONS

The reasons for the failure of both sides - the Parliament and the President - involved in the September-October 1993 conflict to evoke any strong response from the people in marked contrast with the opposition to the August 1991 coup merit a serious scrutiny and analysis. The abortive coup by the communist hardliners was a major victory for Boris Yeltsin who then donned the mantle of a democrat. In 1991, people took to the streets as a mass movement to oppose the coup. However, the events of September-October 1993 left the people of Russia groaning under the pressure of hyper inflation largely unconcerned over the outcome of the struggle between the Parliament and the President. The conflict drew the attention and active participation of only a very small section of the population and was highly localized in character. It saw the participation of only the political elite and political activists. The average man on the street rather watched the events with the cold indifference even though both sides tried to exploit the slogans of 'threat to democracy' etc. Yeltsin and his supporters loudly proclaimed themselves as 'Democrats', dubbing the parliamentary opposition as murderers of democracy.

The main issues in the conflict were democracy, economic reforms and the constitution. Although economic

reforms and democracy were major issues, the violation of the constitution too drew serious attention.

Although economic reforms and democracy were the starting points for the stand-off between the Parliament and the President, the constitutional question in course of time became the main issue of contention. This explains the low level of popular participation from both sides.

The two sides in the conflict differed over the manner in which reforms were being undertaken to transform the Russian economy into a free market economy. The other issue was the unconstitutional manner in which Boris Yeltsin dissolved the Parliament. As both these sides failed to evoke the response from the public at large, Ruslan Khasbulatov and Alexander Rutskoi tried to broaden their base of support. They also tried to appeal to the nationalistic feelings of the people. This move attracted the ultra-nationalists and some unlawful elements to their support which eventually only alienated the public from this stand-off between the Parliament and the President. The Parliament decided to arm its supporters in the early stages of the conflict while a largely indifferent public acted as passive

onlookers. The stage for an armed conflict was stepped up, with both sides extremely unconciliatory in their positions. Most of the people disapproved Yeltsin's dismissal of the Parliament as also the Parliament's subsequent actions. Although the initial differences between the two sides had been over the pace of the reforms, the constitutional question was given more attention. In the process economic reforms got sidelined. In the popular perception the conflict became a power struggle between the two political groups. After the failed August 1991 coup, Yeltsin had been supported whole-heartedly by Ruslan Khasbulatov and Alexander Rutskoi. These were the very same people who helped him rule by decree in order to push through his economic policies for transition to a free market economy. This fact could not yet be erased from the memory of the people. To most of the people, the conflicting sides did not differ much, and were engaged in a power struggle not beneficial to the country. "Plague in both your houses" - was a phrase often heard during the days of the September-October crisis.¹

1. Buzgalin, A., and Kolganov, A., op. cit., p. 128.

Life returned to normal soon after 4 October, with the charred building of the White House as the only evidence of the ten days of seige which ended in a blood bath in the centre of Moscow.

The success of President Boris Yeltsin in crushing the Parliament after 10 bloody days, set the stage for future course of events in Russia. The inhuman crushing of the Parliament supporters was described by the western media as a victory for democracy and a defeat for resurgent forces of Communism. In October hundreds of people were killed and symbol of nascent Russian democracy, the White House was shelled. While the western media applauded the President, the Russian media was not so generous in its praise of the President. Soon after the October events several opposition newspapers were banned and censorship was reimposed. The press and the public opinion were clearly manipulated during September-October. The electronic media was completely controlled by the government and gave no live coverage to parliamentary sessions or even its decisions. Most of the news items by the electronic media were pro-Yeltsin and aimed at alienating the people from the Parliament. The

situation for the opposition became worse as most Russians get their news from the television. Price liberalisation had deeply affected the capacity of the people to buy newspapers. While the print media presented both sides of view, it was out of reach for majority of the population. The print media also had to face censorship. The Parliamentary newspaper, Rossiskaya Gazeta was taken over by the government, depriving the Parliament of its means of communication with the masses. The government used the media to manipulate public opinion, which contributed largely to its success in crushing the Parliament supporters successfully. Immediately after 4 October, a number of opposition newspapers were banned. This made President Boris Yeltsin's task easy in going ahead with his plans. After 4 October, 'Tsar' Yeltsin was able to follow a course of authoritarian democracy without any hinderance. With his main opponents in the Parliament defeated and the media firmly under his control, he was able to rule by decree.

After the events of the bloody October, President Yeltsin announced the elections to the Parliament for 12 December 1993. The President also called

for a referendum on the new constitution to be held alongwith the elections. The existing constitution specified that any change in Russia's constitution required the support of 50 per cent of the registered voters. However, Yeltsin decreed that this would not apply and instead a simple majority would be sufficient to approve his new constitution in a vote in which a minimum of 50 per cent of the electorate had to participate. This, in effect, halved the proportion of the electorate necessary to approve the constitution from 50 per cent to 25 per cent.¹

The President also suspended the Constitutional Court and pressured its Chairman Valery Zorkin to resign. A Presidential decree also disbanded all the Soviets. Opposition parties like the Communist Party were banned from the election to the Parliament in the initial stages. The Central Election Commission was formed by President Boris Yeltsin. Pressure was applied on various opposition parties in different ways. Media was manipulated from the very beginning of the election campaign. As television was and still remains the most

1. Brennan, Mary, Attack on Russian Parliament, Profile of Democracy and Human Rights in Russia, Mainstream, June 11, 1994, p. 17.

popular media in Russia, election campaigns were mainly carried through this forum. The government allowed political parties television time for election campaign. However, there were discrepancies in the number of hours allowed to various parties. The time allocated to different political parties varied according to their closeness to the establishment. While pro-government parties were allowed upto four hours of free telecast time, the Centrists were given only about two hours and the left parties got just one hour. Parties were also allowed to buy unlimited advertising time; an option which was mainly used by the pro-President party called Russia's Choice led by Yegor Gaidar and the Liberal Democrats led by Vladimir Zhirinovsky. These parties had at their disposal large sums of money, making it possible for them to buy unlimited advertising time. The Left parties were greatly handicapped by paucity of funds at their disposal which made it difficult for them to buy advertising time and put their ideas across to the people.

The television coverage of the election was extremely biased and pro-Yeltsin in content. President

Yeltsin had threatened early in the campaign that if opposition parties opposed his new draft constitution their access to television time would be abolished.¹ The President also stated that those who criticised the new Constitution could be deemed to have opted themselves out of the electoral race.

A considerable amount of pressure was brought to bear on the print media. Various opposition newspapers were either banned or suspended. The publication of the Parliament's organ Rossiiskaya Gazeta was stopped. It was allowed to come out only few days before the elections. Pravda was also banned, although the ban was lifted later. But it had to stop publication for the three weeks due to financial problems.

Most of the opposition newspapers faced financial crunch, forcing them to stop publication. However, pro-Yeltsin publications did not face any such difficulties. They received large subsidies. On 13 October 1993, the Russian Federation Ministry of the Press and

1. Brennan, Mary, op. cit., p. 19.

Information issued a decree which stopped the publication of the newspaper D'en and 14 other opposition newspapers and the broadcasting of the programme "600 seconds", and started criminal proceeding against them. The decree charged that the content of their material contributed significantly to destabilizing the situation in September-October. It also stated that the editors of Pravda and Sovetskaya Rossia had been removed from their positions.¹

Television too forced censorship. All television programme had to toe the official line and no deviations were permitted. Political commentaries on television on economic and social problems were manipulated in such a manner as to project a positive view of the government.

The First Deputy Prime Minister and the minister of the Press and Information, Vladimir Shumeiko told the press that they should exercise 'responsibility' and

1. Rossiskaya Gazeta, 15 October 1993, p. 2.

'self-censorship' or they would run the risk of being closed down.¹ The election campaign was held under these restrictions even though Yeltsin repeatedly assured the Western countries that elections would be held in a free and fair manner. The Russian electorate cast their ballot papers on 12 December for elections to the Parliament and the referendum on the new constitution. There were a lot of discrepancies in the results. While the authorities took more than a week to disclose the results of Parliamentary elections, it took only two hours after the polls closed to declare the victory for the new Constitution. The results of the referendum was highly debatable as most parties made accusations of foul play. The parliamentary elections clearly showed an anti-government vote. The government-supported Russia's Choice under Yegor Gaidar came second while the Liberal Democrats came first. The Liberal Democrats obtained 22.8 per cent of the vote, Russia's Choice 15.4 per cent, the Community Party of Russian Federation 13 per cent, the Agrarians 16 per cent, the Women of Russia about eight per cent and the Yavlinsky, Boldyrev

1. Megapolis-Express, No. 41, October 20, 1993, p. 16.

Lukin bloc six per cent, Sergei Shakhrai's Party of Russian Unity and Consensus six per cent and Travkin's Democratic Party of Russia 5.5. per cent.¹

The results showed that even the Communists and their allies had done fairly well. The most surprising thing was the emergence of the Liberal Democratic Party led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. Though the election results did not go in Yeltsin's favour, he still had the right to dissolve the parliament under the new Constitution.

With the help of the new constitution, President Boris Yeltsin has increasingly built a pyramidal structure of power with the bureaucracy at the base and the President at the top. There has been over-centralization of power. According to a political commentator of Izvestia, "Russia had not been striving to create a democratic government, but to create a variant of the old Communist Party Politbureau."² It is this kind of atmosphere that the media is

1. Brennan, Mary, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

2. Izvestia, 1 February 1995, p. 1.

functioning today. The media is constantly threatened by the government. The freedom of the press has been largely curtailed.

The future of the media in the present political scenario does not look very bright. Under Glasnost and Perestroika the Russian media experienced freedom of press, even though it was limited. The Press Law adopted in June 1990 by the Soviet Parliament and in December 1991 by the Russian Parliament were landmarks in the history of the Russian media. The Russian media got used to functioning as an independent body with limited governmental interference. In the initial stages the Yeltsin government supported the freedom of press but as the popularity of Yeltsin and his government declined the control on media increased. This was demonstrated vividly during the September--October conflict and soon afterwards during the elections when several newspapers were banned. As the popularity of the government plummeted the censorship of media increased. This trend is quite likely to continue in the near future. The popularity of President Yeltsin has been steadily decreasing over the past year with a large majority of the population disapproving his economic policies.

Since the elections in 1993, President Yeltsin has consolidated and recentralised power. At present a non-accountable and non-elected Security Council on the lines of the Communist Party Politbureau of the erstwhile Soviet Union is taking all the decisions in Russia. President Yeltsin has the power to impose censorship of press. The semi-authoritarian regime of Yeltsin is similar to the old Soviet governments which functioned in a similar arbitrary manner.

The media will find it difficult to function independently unless democratic institutions take root in Russia. If the present system of government continues, the media will never be free of governmental interference. For the media to be completely free the authoritarian regime at the centre will have to change. Yeltsin and his government will have to learn to live with a critical media if it wants to prove its democratic credentials.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX - 1ON STAGE-BY-STATE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM IN THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The political situation that has come about in the Russian Federation threatens the security of the country as a state and as a society.

Outright opposition to the implementation of social and economic reforms, open and daily obstruction in the Supreme Soviet of the policy of the popularly elected President of the Russian Federation and attempts to directly exercise the functions of the executive branch of government in place of the Council of Ministers are very obvious indications that a majority in the Russian Federation Supreme Soviet and a segment of its leadership have openly set out to directly flout the will of the Russian people as expressed in the referendum of 25 April 1993. This is a flagrant violation of the Law on Referendum according to which decisions adopted in Russia-wide referendums have supreme legal force, need no confirmation, and are binding throughout the Russian Federation.

The Congress and the Supreme Soviet are making systematic and increasingly active efforts to usurp not only executive but even judicial functions.

At the same time, to this date not only have they failed to create a legislative basis for implementation of the Federal Treaty, but the decisions they have adopted are often directly at variance with the federal nature of the Russian state.

Constitutional reform in the Russian Federation has come to a standstill, for all practical purposes. The Supreme Soviet is blocking the decisions of Congresses of Russian Federation People's Deputies on the adoption of a new Constitution.

In its everyday work, the Supreme Soviet systematically violates its rules of order and procedures for preparing and adopting decisions. Casting votes for absent Deputies has become a common practice at its sessions, a practice that in effect does away with popular representation.

In this way, the very principles of the Russian Federation's constitutional system - People's rule, separation of powers, federalism - are being destroyed. Without ever having fully emerged or becoming consolidated, the very principle of parliamentarism in the Russian Federation is being discredited.

Under these conditions, the only means befitting the principles of people's rule, of ending the confrontation between the congress and the Supreme Soviet, on the one hand, and the President and the government, on the other, as well as of overcoming the paralysis of state power, is to elect a new Russian Federation parliament. Such elections are not early elections for the Congress of Russian Federation People's Deputies or the Russian Federation Supreme Soviet and do not violate the will of the people as expressed in the referendum of 25 April 1993.

The need for elections is also dictated by the fact that the Russian Federation is a new state that has taken the place of the Russian SFSR within the USSR and has become the internationally recognized successor of the USSR.

In the view of the fact that the existing Russian Federation Constitution provides no procedure for adopting a new Constitution, political parties and movements, group of Deputies, participants in the Constitutional Conference and representatives of the public have repeatedly proposed that the President of the Russian Federation immediately schedule elections for a new federal parliament.

Seeking to eliminate the political obstacle that

is preventing the people from deciding their own fate;

in view of the fact that the work of the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of Russian Federation People's Deputies does not meet parliamentary standards;

considering that the security of Russia and its peoples is a higher value than formal conformity to contradictory norms created by the legislative branch of government;

in order to preserve the unity and integrity of the Russian Federation; Extricate the country from economic and political crisis; ensure the security of the Russian Federation as a state and as a society;

restore the authority of state power on the basis of Articles 1,2,5 and 121.5 of the Russian Federation Constitution and the results of the referendum of 25 April 1993.

I decree that;

1. The exercise of legislative, administrative and oversight functions by the Congress of Russian Federation People's Deputies and the Russian Federation Supreme Soviet is to stop. Until a new bicameral Russian Federation parliament -

the Russian Federation Federal Assembly - begins work and assumes the appropriate powers, the country is to be guided by decrees of the President and resolutions of the Russian Federation government.

The Russian Federational Constitution and the legislation of the Russian Federation and of members of the Russian Federation are to remain in force, insofar as they are not at variance with this decree.

The rights and liberties of Russian Federation citizens as established by the Constitution and laws are to be guaranteed.

2. The Constitutional commission and the Constitutional conference are to present, by 12 December 1993, a single agreed upon draft Russian Federation constitution in accordance with the recommendations of the Constitutional Commission's working group.

3. Pending the adoption of Russian Federation Constitution and a law on elections to the Russian Federation Federal Assembly and the holding of new elections on the basis of this law, the following interim actions are to be taken: the statute 'On Federal Bodies of power during the Transitional period, "prepared on the basis of the draft Russian

Federation Constitution approved by the Constitution Conference on 12 July 1993, is to be put into effect; the Council of the Federation is to be invested with the functions of a chamber of the Russian Federal Federal Assembly, with all the powers specified in the statute "On Federal Bodies of Power during the Transitional period." The exercise of the indicated powers by the Council of the Federation is to begin after elections to the State Duma are held.

4. The statute "On Elections of Deputies to the State Duma", worked out by Russian Federation People's Deputies and the Constitutional Conference, is to be put into effect.

In accordance with the indicated statute, elections to the State State Duma of the Russian Federation Federal Assembly are to be held.

The Federal Assembly is to consider the question of an election for President of the Russian Federation.

5. Elections for the State Duma of the Russian Federation Federal Assembly are to be scheduled for 11-12 December 1993.

6. A Central Electoral Commission for Elections to the State Duma of the Russian Federation Federal Assembly is to be

formed and is to be instructed, in conjunction with lower level electoral commissions, within the bounds of their jurisdiction, to organise the elections and to ensure the voting rights of citizens of the Russian Federation during the elections to the State Duma of the Russian Federation Federal Assembly.

All state agencies and officials are to provide necessary assistance to the electoral commissions for elections to the State Duma of the Russian Federation Federal Assembly and are to put a stop to all acts or actions intended to disrupt the elections to the State Duma, whatever their source.

Persons who obstruct the exercise of the right to vote by citizens of the Russian Federation will have criminal proceedings instituted against them in accordance with Article 132 of the Russian SFSR Criminal Code.

7. Expenditures associated with holding the elections to the State Duma of the Russian Federation Federal Assembly are to be defrayed by monies in the Russian Federation's Republic Budget.

8. The powers of the representative bodies of power of the members of the Russian Federation are to be preserved.

9. No meetings of the Congress of Russian Federation People's Deputies are to be convened.

The powers of Russian Federation People's Deputies are hereby terminated. The rights of citizens who have served as Russian Federation People's Deputies, including their labour rights, are guaranteed.

The powers of People's Deputies who served as Russian Federation delegates at plenary meetings of the Interparliamentary Assembly of Member-States of the Commonwealth of Independent States and as representatives on the Assembly's commissions are to be confirmed by the President of the Russian Federation.

Russian Federation People's Deputies who are members of the Constitutional Commission of the Congress of Russian Federation People's Deputies may continue to work for the Commission as experts.

Employees of the Russian Federation Supreme Soviet's apparatus and service personnel are to be placed on paid leave until 13 December 1993.

10. The Russian Federation Constitutional Court is to be instructed to convene no meetings pending the beginning of work by the Russian Federation Federal Assembly.

11. The Russian Federation Council of Ministers (government) is to exercise all the powers specified by the Russian Federation Constitution, taking into account the changes and additions made by this decree, as well as by legislation.

The Russian Federation Council of Ministers (government) is to ensure the uninterrupted and coordinated activity of bodies of state administration.

The Russian Federation Council of Ministers (government) is to take under its jurisdiction all organizations and institutions subordinate to the Russian Federation Supreme Soviet and is to conduct their necessary reorganization, the intention being to rule out the duplication of similar governmental structures. Necessary measures are to be taken to find employment for laid-off employees. The Council of Ministers is to exercise legal succession with respect to the powers of the Russian Federation Supreme Soviet as a founder in all spheres in which founder status is specified by existing legislation.

12. The Central Bank of the Russian Federation, pending the beginning of work by the Russian Federation Federal

Assembly, is to be guided by decrees of the President of the Russian Federation and resolutions of the Russian Federation government and is to be accountable to the Russian Federation government.

13. The Russian Federation Prosecutor General is to be appointed by the President of the Russian Federation and is to be accountable to him, pending the beginning of work by the newly elected Russian Federation Federal Assembly.

Agencies of the Russian Federation Prosecutor's office are to be guided in their activity by the Russian Federation Constitution, as well as by existing legislation, taking into account the changes and additions made by the decree.

14. The Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to inform other states and the UN Secretary-General that the holding of elections to the State Duma of the Russian Federation Federal Assembly is dictated by a desire to preserve democratic transformations and economic reforms. This decision is fully in keeping with the principles of the Russian Federation's Constitutional system, above all the principles of People's rule, the separation of powers and federalism, and is grounded in the will of the Russian Federation's People as expressed in the referendum of 25 April 1993.

15. The decree "On stage-by-stage Constitutional Reform in the Russian Federation" is to be submitted to the Russian Federation Federal Assembly for consideration.

16. This decree is to be gone into effect the moment it is signed.

I hope that everyone to whom the fate of Russia and the interests of its citizens' prosperity and well-being are dear will understand the need to hold elections to the State Duma of the Federal Assembly in order to extricate the country from its protracted political crisis in a peaceful and legitimate way.

I ask the citizens of Russia to support their President at this crucial moment for the fate of the country.

Boris Yeltsin
President of the Russian Federation

The Kremlin, Moscow
21 September 1993,
8.00 P.M., no. 1400.

APPENDIX - 2

IN THE HOUR OF TRIAL, RISE TO THE DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY -

Speech by Ruslan Khasbulatov, Chairman of the Russian Federation Supreme Soviet. Esteemed fellow citizens!

I am speaking to you at a very grave time for our fatherland. You have just heard the televised speech by Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation. Ten minutes ago, I received a decree from the President that contains the text he read on television.

In short, what this means is that the numerous threats to overthrow the constitutional system have been carried out in this decree. In accordance with the President's decree, the activity of the Congress of People's Deputies as the supreme body of power in the Russian state has been terminated and eliminated... The activity of the Supreme Soviet has been terminated, and in accordance with the decree, all power is to be transferred to the hands of the President. This is a coup d'etat. A coup that, as I have already said, has been attempted many times, in particular on March 20....

I want to appeal to the Soviets at all levels and to (local) administrations: Convene sessions immediately, assess what is happening, and support the Supreme Soviet in the struggle against the putschists. The President's

actions are unconstitutional. Consequently, they are invalid, illegal and unlawful.

I appeal to servicemen and personnel of internal affairs agencies, the police and security agencies, to everyone who has anything to do with the special services: Do not carry out orders based on the President's illegal decree. You know that, in accordance with the laws of the Russian Federation, illegal orders are not to be carried out, and those who do carry them out are not exempt from liability.

The Supreme Soviet guarantees safety for individuals who, after receiving illegal orders, do not carry them out.

As far as the Supreme Soviet is concerned, we are organizing a defense. We have received information that armed detachments are now being moved into Moscow evidently some sort of units, probably special units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs' troops, possibly in order to intern, right here, the leadership of the Supreme Soviet, the Constitutional Court, the Prosecutor General's Office and the opposition parties, and trade union leaders. In

general, all those who have criticized the President's policy in one way or another.

We urge all our fellow citizens to rise to the defense of democracy, for you are now in danger.... In this hour of trials that have befallen us, I...insistently appeal to you to rise to the defense of the people's elected representatives.

I appeal to the Russian Federation Deputies:
Come to Moscow immediately. We will hold an extraordinary Congress.

APPENDIX - 3THE CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS AND POSSIBLE MEASURES TO
OVERCOME IT -Statement by the Chairman of the Russian Federation

Constitutional Court. The country's top leadership has come very close to a point beyond which are a loss of control over the development of events, a paralysis of power, and chaos and anarchy in a vast country that is still a nuclear superpower. This situation will not last long and will inevitably lead to a dictatorship by one side or the other, with everything that goes with it.

In its finding, the Constitutional Court states that the President's decree does not conform to the Russian Federation Constitution. At the same time, in the main I share the assessments of the situation in the country and in the top echelons of state power that were given in the decree's preamble, as well as the goals that the President is setting for himself.

However, the methods that he has proposed to achieve those goals are devaluing constitutional and general legal principles in the public consciousness, principles that have taken insufficient root there as it is. By placing himself above the Constitution, the

President is creating a precedent and is exempting all other participants in political life from following its provisions, something that will inevitably entail a wholesale flouting of legality.

Under these conditions, I, as Chairman of the Constitutional Court, see the following legitimate way out of the situation....

1. The Congress of Russian Federation People's Deputies adopts a decision on simultaneous early elections for both parliament and President, for which purpose a Law on Elections and a Law on Bodies of Power During the Transitional Period are adopted (before the adoption of a new Constitution). After this, the Congress terminates its activity.

Working places on the commissions set up to draft the afore-mentioned laws must be open and accessible to specialists from all branches of government, as well as to participants in the Constitutional Conference and the Council of the Federation.

2. The Congress of People's Deputies instructs the present Cabinet of Ministers to perform its duties during the

transitional period, working under conditions of broad glasnost and with the Supreme Soviet's oversight functions retained. The President retains his constitutionally established powers with respect to the government.

3. After adopting the proposed decisions, the Supreme Soviet suspends its lawmaking activity and remains the guarantor of the observance of the legality during elections.

4. The Russian Federation Constitutional Court is recognized as the guarantor of the agreements that are reached, at this stage terminating its functions as mediator in the political confrontation, and continues its usual work....

V. ZORKIN

Moscow,

22 September 1993.

APPENDIX - 4

LAW OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION:
ON MAKING CHANGES IN AND ADDITIONS TO THE RUSSIAN
SFSR CRIMINAL CODE.

Articles 64.1 and 70.2, with the following content, are
to be added to the RSFSR Criminal Code:

"Article 64.1. Actions aimed at forcibly
changing the constitutional system.

"Actions aimed at forcibly changing the
constitutional system of the Russian Federation are
punishable by deprivation of freedom for a term of six
to 12 years, with or without confiscation of property.

"The same actions, if they entail grave
consequences or are committed by an official, are puni-
shable by deprivation of freedom for a term of 10 to 15
years, with or without confiscation of property, or
by the death penalty, with or without confiscation of
property."

"Article 70.2. Hindering the activities of
lawful bodies of state power.

"Hindering legally stipulated activities of
Russian Federation bodies of state power is punishable

by deprivation of freedom for a term of up to five years or by corrective labour for a term of up to two years.

"The same actions, if they entail grave consequences or are committed by an official, are punishable by deprivation of freedom for a term of five to 10 years, with or without confiscation of property."

Article 2. - This law goes into the effect of the day it is signed.

A.V. RUTSKOI

Acting President of the Russian Federation

The Russian House of Soviets,
MOSCOW,
22 September 1993.
No. 5789-1.

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