

# A MAN OF CHANGE

A STUDY OF THE POLITICAL  
LIFE OF BORIS YELTSIN



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**YELTSIN  
CENTER**

GLAGOSLAV PUBLICATIONS

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## A STUDY OF THE POLITICAL LIFE OF BORIS YELTSIN

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© 2015, Glagoslav Publications, United Kingdom

Glagoslav Publications Ltd  
88-90 Hatton Garden  
EC1N 8PN London  
United Kingdom

[www.glagoslav.com](http://www.glagoslav.com)

ISBN: 978-1-78437-936-0

A catalogue record for this book is available  
from the British Library.

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*“The main accomplishment of my life is done.  
Russia will never return to the past.  
From now on Russia will always move ahead only.”*  
– Boris Yeltsin

Dear reader,

Presented for your attention is the political biography *A Man of Change*, celebrating the life and heritage of Russia’s first democratically elected leader, Boris Yeltsin.

Supported and promoted by The President B. Yeltsin Centre Foundation, this book is a gift to the libraries of the United Kingdom and is the fruit of the combined efforts of a team of researchers whose aim was to compile a comprehensive collection of facts pertaining to the late President.

This book is believed to be of importance to British historians working in the field of Slavic Studies, for it contains details of Yeltsin’s childhood and upbringing, education and ambitious career in politics, and an overview of Yeltsin’s role in the formation of the new state after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The President B. Yeltsin Centre Foundation strives to contribute to worldwide engagement in a pro-active dialogue, facilitating social and political change that would strengthen ties between all members of the international community, including the United Kingdom and Russia. By examining the history of political reforms in Russia under Boris Yeltsin’s leadership and Yeltsin’s influence on international politics, including the policies of the United Kingdom among others, as explored in *A Man of Change*, The President B. Yeltsin Centre Foundation offers a unique opportunity for an intellectual discourse in the best interest of both nations, and hopes to promote the peaceful resolution of issues related to Russia’s interaction with the rest of the world.

Sincerely,  
The President B. Yeltsin Centre Foundation

## FOREWORD

The aim of this book is to study the political biography of the first President of Russia, Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin. The objectives of this study are as follows:

- to reveal a range of historical source material which makes it possible to create a scientific biography of the first President of Russia;
- to analyze the social, economic, political and ideological factors which influenced the formation and development of the political views of Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin;
- to investigate the factors which determined how Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin's world-view evolved
- from his worldview defense of and continuation of the Communist ideology to his gradual rejection of it and transition to an anti-Communist stance.

The authors strove, as far as they were able, to base their conclusions on documentary evidence — both evidence that was already in circulation among academics and evidence that was used to study this subject for the first time.

We analyzed documents related to the history of the Yeltsin family from the late 19th century to the start of the 1930s, up to the period of 'dekulakization' and the family's exile, which are held by the State Archive of the Sverdlovsk Region (SASR) and the Shadrinsk State Archive of the Kurgan Region (SSAKR). The SASR holds documents related to Boris Yeltsin's work as a civil engineer, and about the influence he had, as secretary of the Sverdlovsk Regional Committee of the CPSU, on the activities of numerous government organizations, charities and businesses in the Sverdlovsk Region.

Extremely valuable information about Boris Yeltsin's activities as director of the department of construction, and as secretary and first secretary of

the Sverdlovsk Regional Committee of the CPSU are held by the Center for Documentation on Non-profit Organizations of the Sverdlovsk Region (CDNOSR). This set of documents also contains information on practically every aspect of the activities of the regional committee of the CPSU, as the political and state center for regional government and the implementation of national policy in a regional context.

Information about Boris Yeltsin's activities as director of the department of construction in the CPSU's Central Committee, as secretary of the Central Committee, as a prospective member of the Politburo of the CC of the CPSU and as first secretary of the Moscow city committee was found in documents from the secretariat and Politburo, held by the Russian State Archive of Recent History (RSARH), in the minutes of Politburo assemblies and elsewhere, which reflected the attitude of the country's most senior political leaders toward Yeltsin.

A large number of documents about Yeltsin's practical activities as first secretary of the Moscow City Committee of the CPSU were deposited in the vaults of the Central Archive for the socio-political history of Moscow (TsAOPIM).

Documents containing detailed information about the course of the elections for the Congress of people's deputies of the RSFSR, the activities of the Congresses and the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation, the presidium and the committees and commissions of the Supreme Soviet are held at the State Archive of the Russian Federation (SARF).

His time in office as President between 1994 and 1999 has not been documented nearly as well. Anyone seeking to conduct research into this subject must have recourse to publications containing the directives and orders issued by the President, statistics from the State Statistics Committee, material from the Central Electoral Commission and the President's state of the nation addresses. A significant set of documents about the President's activities, which gives us an important insight into the reasons why decisions were taken, is held by the Archive of the President of the Russian Federation. This material (transcriptions of Security Council assemblies and meetings held by the President and his Administration, analytical notes) cannot yet be accessed by researchers under current legislation.

The researcher is required to consult the press as an additional source of information. The newspapers contain a diverse range of articles about the latest sensational stories that are considered newsworthy at that specific time by the publication in question. The information contained in periodical newspapers tends, as a rule, to reflect the party line — not necessarily in the direct, organizational sense (although such cases are not infrequent).

The press reflects the various shades of public opinion in the country<sup>1</sup> including the differing attitudes toward President Yeltsin. It is also important as a historical source which reflects less concrete facts than stereotypes and notions which were commonly held in society at the time in relation to those in power.

The appearance of a vast stream of autobiographical literature and memoirs, unprecedented in the history of Russia, is an extremely recent phenomenon in historiography. The very fact that those involved in the political process, and the decision-makers in it, feel this need to put on record, in their memoirs, the role they played in the recent past, testifies to their understanding of the importance, and magnitude, of the changes which occurred in our country at the end of the 20th century.

Memoirs had become so much more than a story about the past. They could now be used as a political weapon and form part of a campaign manifesto. This peculiarity of memoirs was exploited by Boris Yeltsin in 1989 when he wrote his book *Against the grain*, but this does not render the author's view of the state the country was in, or his analysis of the crisis in the system in the USSR of the late '80s, any less important; the same can be said of the publication, in this book, of an extremely important document — a letter to Mikhail Gorbachev requesting permission to resign, dated September 1987.

A huge number of memoirs by the leaders of the Soviet government were published in the '90s, after the collapse of the USSR.<sup>2</sup> Given the disparity between many assessments of the recent past, the information provided by those who wrote memoirs gives us a fuller understanding of the position of the Soviet leaders, contrasting as it did with that of the Russian authorities which came to power following the elections in 1990.

The 'Russian assessment' of the events which took place at the end of the 20th century is set out first and foremost in the memoirs of President

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1 This can be seen by comparing publications such as *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, *Zavtra*, *Izvestiya*, *Moskovskiy komsomolets*, *Moskovskiy novosti*.

2 A.N. Yakovlev: *Prologue. Collapse. Epilogue*. M., 1992; L.A. Onikov: *The CPSU: anatomy of the collapse. The view from inside the CPSU administration*. M., 1996; K.N. Brutents: *What didn't work out. A few partisan notes about perestroika*. M., 2005. S. N.I. Ryzhkov: *Ten years of huge jolts*. M., 1995; V.I. Vortnikov: *It was like this...Notes from the diary of a member of the Politburo of the CC CPSU*. M. 1995; V.V. Grishin: *From Gorbachev to Khrushchev*. Political portraits of five general secretaries and A.N. Kosygin: *Memoirs*. M., 1996; A.S. Chernyaev: *Six years with Gorbachev. Based on diary entries*. M., 1993; M.S. Gorbachev: *His life and reforms. Book 1*. G. Shaknazarov: *The price of freedom*. M.: *Rossika*, 1993; V.A. Medvedev: *On Gorbachev's team. A view from the inside*. M., 1994; V.I. Boldin: *The fall of the pedestal. Lines about the portrait of M.S. Gorbachev*. M.: *Republic*, 1995; Y. Prokofiev: *Before and after the ban on the CPSU. The memoirs of the first secretary of the MCC CPSU*. M., 2005; A. Lukyanov: *In the whirlpool of the Russian disturbance. (Thoughts, dialogs, documents)*. M., 1999; Y.K. Ligachev: *Perestroika: ideas, results and defeats and lessons*. M., 2005 and other editions.

Yeltsin<sup>3</sup> as well as in those of members of his Administration<sup>4</sup> *The Yeltsin Era*, which was written by some of President Yeltsin's aides, examines the course of events in Russian political history, starting in the late '80s. The book's authors were directly involved in the events they describe. It provides an insider's view from people who were biased, who did not simply execute orders but had their own distinct position, and were part of a team. They acknowledge and admit oversights and errors made by the executive, and by Yeltsin himself, and express regret about the things they failed to achieve. Of particular interest are the passages about how political solutions were thrashed out, how Yeltsin behaved in particular situations, how he managed to shape his interaction with political opponents, what his style of working was and how the president felt about those in his inner circle.

The far-from-straightforward process of bringing democracy to the country, which was triggered by *perestroika* (the process of 'restructuring'), was described in the works of one of the key Russian politicians between the late eighties and the mid-nineties, Sergei Alexandrovich Filatov. He worked at the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR in the early '90s, before taking charge of the President's Administration, then the public movement in support of Boris Yeltsin in the presidential elections in 1996. The range of subjects discussed by S.A. Filatov is extremely diverse: from general issues of parliamentarianism, to the relationships between politics and economics, the government and the opposition, ties with the regions, the art of governance and maintaining approval in society, to more personal, yet topical issues, such as the work he did in the president's 'team', and so on.<sup>5</sup>

The views of the President's political enemies are set out in a large number of memoirs. R.I. Khasbulatov, who was initially an ally of Boris Yeltsin's but later became one of his most bitter enemies, produced a 7-volume treatise in which he set out his own personal view of the country's development from the '80s onwards.<sup>6</sup>

Khasbulatov has nothing positive at all to say about Yeltsin's activities as head of the Supreme Soviet. When he writes about working with Yeltsin, the

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3 B.N. Yeltsin: *Against the Grain*. M., 1990; same author: *The Presidential marathon*. — M., 2000; same author: *Notes by the president*. M., 2006

4 L.Y. Sukhanov L.: *Three years with Yeltsin. A first adviser's diary*. Riga 'Vaga', 1992; V. Kotikov: *A love-story with the President. Notes by the pres-secretary*. M., 1997; S.A. Filatov: *On the road to democracy*. M., 1995; Same author: *An open secret*. M., 2000; Yeltsin's Era. *Sketches from a political story*. M.: Vargius, 2001 — 816 p. Authors — Yeltsin's advisers, 1992-1998: Y.M. Baturin, A.L. Ilyin, V.F. Kadatsky, V.V. Kostikov, M.A. Krasnov, A.Y. Lifshits, K.V. Nikiforov, L.G. Pikhoya, G.A. Satarov.

5 S.A. Filatov: *On the road to democracy*. M., 1995; Same author. *An open secret*. M., 2000.

6 R.I. Khasbulatov: *The 4th Republic: from Yeltsin's non-state to Putin's state*. In 7 volumes. Vol. 1: *The 'loosening' of the Soviet Empire — the USSR*. M.: A training manual, 2009. — p. 240. Vol.2.: *Operation "Thunder"*. *Preludes to the fall of the USSR*. — M.: A training manual, 2009. — p. 236 (publication not yet banned)

author proves unable to contain the sense of wounded pride and frustrated ambition that has built up inside him.

Of all the memoirs written by Boris Yeltsin's political opponents, the publications of greatest value are probably the diaries of V.B. Isakov<sup>7</sup>. Their value, in our opinion, can be attributed to two circumstances. Firstly, the diary format provided a record of the specific circumstances surrounding the preparations for the first Congress of people's deputies, and the disputes at the presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR. Secondly, V.B. Isakov published a large number of documents in his memoirs related to political history in the period 1990-1993.

The memoirs of A.V. Korzhakov, the head of Boris Yeltsin's personal security team, must also be noted. Korzhakov was close to Yeltsin but from 1996 onwards was among his opponents. Without troubling the reader with an assessment of the ethical qualities of this man who was 'attached' to the president, this 'aide-de-camp', whose professional duties required that he keep the private life of the "protected individual" secret — a requirement to which Korzhakov, without question, fails to adhere — we must observe that his memoirs contain a host of facts which are important for the purpose of reconstructing the political biography of Boris Yeltsin<sup>8</sup>.

An analysis of the potential of memoirs as source material always involves criticism of the source, taking into account all the factors which influenced the authors and how they reached their verdicts on the events of the past.

The authors made the conscious decision to avoid reaching a verdict on the body of historical work on the subject of Boris Yeltsin as a political figure. There is a simple reason for this. Any historiographical essay coming before the main body of the text would be seen as a way of imposing a particular point of view on the authors. We shall therefore confine ourselves to a simple list of the most important studies on this issue, a list which will certainly not include all the books published on this issue, of which there is a vast number.<sup>9</sup> The authors are of the belief that this book will merely open up the

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7 V.B. Isakov: Chairman of the Soviet of the Republic. Parliamentary diaries 1990-1991. Yekaterinburg, 1997

8 A. Korzhakov: Boris Yeltsin: from dawn till dusk. M., 1997

9 Aron L.: Yeltsin. A revolutionary life. N.Y. 2000;

Colton T.: "Moscow politics and the El'tsin Affair" The Harriman Institute Forum 1, no/6 (June 1988), Pp.1-8.;

Colton T.: Yeltsin. A Life. N.Y. 2008;

A.S. Barsenkov: An introduction to modern Russian history 1985-1991 Lecture series. M.: Aspekt Press, 2002;

V. Baryshnikov: Chinese political scientists on the 'Yeltsin era'. The problems of the Far East

academic investigation into the biography of Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin and that new books will doubtless appear which will examine the history of the first President of Russia, as well as a large number of related subjects — to name a few:

- the reasons for the fall of the ideas of communism and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Russia;
- the circumstances which led to the collapse of the USSR;
- the market reforms in Russia: causes and consequences;
- the Soviet and Russian political elite at the turn of the century;
- the fate of the Soviet Army and the security services during the political transformation of the Russian state and society;
- the journey from an atheist state to cooperation with the church. The peculiarities of the ‘Russian concordat’...

The list of problems seems almost endless.

We have no doubt that this book will provoke arguments and debate.

What we are presenting is our own vision of this political biography. It is founded on the approaches and principles of professional historical science.

We hope that those who follow in our footsteps will remain true to these principles as well.

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No. 1. 2001 D. Boffa: *From the USSR to Russia. The story of an incomplete crisis. 1964-1994.* M., 199 Y. Gaidar: *Days of defeats and victories.* — M., 1996;

A.D. Kirillov: *The Urals: from Yeltsin to Yeltsin (a chronicle of political growth, 1990-1997).* Yekaterinburg, 1997;

A.D. Kirillov, N.N. Popov, B.A. Kirillov: *The political Urals: history and the modern era: Parties. Elections. Deputies.* Yekaterinburg, 1999 A.L. Litvin: *The Yeltsins in Kazan.* Kazan, 2006 B.D. Minaev: *Yeltsin.* M., 2010;

O. Moroz: 1996: *How Zyuganov didn't become president.* – M.: OJSC Rainbow Publishing House, 2006. *Perestroika. Ten years on. (April 1985 – April 1995).* M., 1995 R.G. Pikhoya: *Moscow, the Kremlin, power. 40 years after the war.* M., 2007;

R.G. Pikhoya: *Moscow, Kremlin, power. Russia on the cusp of the new millennium. 1985-2005.* M., 2007; R.G. Pikhoya: *The Soviet Union: a story of power. 1945-1991.* Novosibirsk, 2000;

R.G. Pikhoya, A.K. Sokolov: *The story of modern Russia. The crisis of communist power and the birth of the new Russia. The late 1970s — 1991* M.: ROSSPAN, 2008; V.V. Sogrin: *The political history of modern Russia. 1985-2001: from Gorbachev to Putin.* M. 2001;

V. Soloviev, Y. Klepikova: *Boris Yeltsin. Political metamorphoses.* M.: VAGRIUS, 1992 L. Shevtsova: *The Boris Yeltsin Regime.* M., 1999 V.N. Shevchenko: *Day-to-day life at the Kremlin under the Presidents.* M., 2005;

A.V. Shubin: *The paradoxes of perestroika. The USSR's missed opportunity.* M., 2005

## PART I. THE URALS

### Chapter I Childhood. Landowners

The Yeltsin clan hails from the Trans Urals region, from the southern areas of the Tobolsky district, land that was occupied during the second half of the 17th century, mainly by peasants from the Verkhotursky district.<sup>10</sup> In terms of their social make-up, they were emancipated black-*sokha* peasants from the 17th century who were later attached to state-owned plants, and from the start of the 19th century — state peasants who never experienced serfdom.

“These lands are fertile, generally speaking..., both districts, (Kamyshlov district and Shadrinsk — *author*)” — wrote P. Slotvsov, a man who conducted research into Siberia in the early 1840s, “Shadrinsk more so than Khamyshlov, hover between lofty, merry valleys... These districts are deemed to be suitable places in which to house factories, and when the harvest fails in the Western districts of the province of Tobolsk, they are separated from their surplus...Consequently, the harvest there has at times, both now and in the past, been 7-10 higher than the crop.”<sup>11</sup>

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10 A.A. Preobrazhensky: The Urals and Western Siberia in the late 16th century and early 18th century. M., 1972. pp. 78-81

11 P. Slotvsov: A historical survey of Siberia. Second volume, 1742 to 1823. Spb., 1844. P. 250. The fertility of areas 7 and 10 in the Shadrinsk and Kamyshlov districts, with a typical sowing rate of 2 centners per hectare of sowed field, was between 14 and 20 centners per hectare.

A. N. Zyryanov, a reporter for the Russian geographical society during the reform years who lived in the Shadrinsk district, observed that this district was predominantly used for agricultural purposes: “it has been famed since days of yore for its fertile soils and the richness of the land...bad harvests are a rarity here, and are merely the exception that proves the rule. The fertility of our land can doubtless be attributed to the clumpy, crumbly soil which predominates in all the localities in the town of Shadrinsk. ...The soil here is of such good quality that despite a century of being worked by agricultural laborers, it has not lost any of its strength, and has thereby particularly caught the eye of its owner”<sup>12</sup>.

There were Yeltsins in several villages near the town of Basmanovo, in the Shadrinsk district, around the settlement of Butka, which was founded in 1676.<sup>13</sup>

There were many Old Believers among the people living in this district, as befitted a place where all the characteristic traits of traditional farming have been preserved<sup>14</sup>. There were 22,127 Old Believers in the Shadrinsk district in 1913, out of a relatively small overall population.

The Yeltsins (the surname is spelt Ельцин in Cyrillic; the alternative spellings Елцын and Ельцын crop up in the archives prior to the 1930s) are mentioned in records books and tax inspectors' reports from the mid-eighteenth century onwards as residents of the town of Basmanovo in the district of Shadrinsk. There were Yeltsins in several villages around the town of Basmanovo, in the Shadrinsk district, 20 versts (just over 21 km in today's terms) from the settlement of Butka.<sup>15</sup>

There is not a great deal of information about the Yeltsins to be found in the documents held by the State Archive of the Sverdlovsk Region, which holds data about the local self-governance of the reformed town of Basmanovo.<sup>16</sup>

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12 A.N. Zyryanov: Providence in the Shadrinsk district of the Perm governorate. Shadrinsk, 1997.

13 Address book-calendar and commemorative book for the Perm governorate for 1905. Perm, 1905. P. 74

14 Sketches from the history of the Old Believers in the Urals and the adjoining territories. Yekaterinburg, 2000. P. 109. In the Butka Sloboda and the villages around it there were mass self-immolations by Old Believers in the mid-18th century. See: N.N. Pokrovsky: Protests against feudalism by the Urals-Siberian Old Believer peasants in the mid-18th century. Novosibirsk, 1974. P. 235, 237, 242-243

15 D.A. Panov: Generational paintings by the peasant clans of Yeltsin and Starygin. 1996. Manuscript. P. 2-4. (From the collection held by the B.N. Yeltsin Urals Center).

16 This is a typical problem for Russian archivists — the ‘recycling campaigns’, when sources which seemed unimportant were destroyed on mass; studies of the Yeltsin family are rendered all the more difficult by the fact that in the 19th century the village of Basmanovo was constantly changing its administrative status. In 1918 Basmanovo was the center of Basmanovo town in the Shadrinsk district of the Perm governorate; in July 1919 it was in the Shadrinsk of

The earliest recorded information about Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin's forefathers that I discovered was contained in the lists of officials in the town and village council for the town of Basmanovo for 1893.<sup>17</sup> They include references to Ignat Yekimov Yeltsin, aged 28, who would later become the grandfather of the future President, and Ignat Yeltsin's cousin Pyotr Savvin Yeltsin, aged 25.

It is worth mentioning that the petty officer for the municipality, his deputy (and prospective replacement), the chairman of the municipality and the eight municipal judges were all illiterate.<sup>18</sup>

More detailed information about Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin's relatives is contained in the list of home-owners in the Basmanovo village community. A total of 324 houses were recorded in the village.<sup>19</sup> The village assembly documents from 1908, containing the names of home-owners who were entitled to vote, listed Yekim Savvich Yeltsin and his son, Ignaty (Boris Yeltsin's grandfather), Pyotr Savvich Yeltsin, Pyotr Lukich Yeltsin and Ilya Lukich Yeltsin, Viktor Yevdokimovich, Mikhail Yevdokimovich and his son Pyotr, and also Andrei Mitrofanovich Yeltsin and Mikhail Grigorievich Yeltsin.

The Urals village experienced the revolution and the civil war, suffering heavy losses as it did so. The area of land on which crops were sown in 1922 was 68% smaller than it had been in 1916, the number of horses had fallen by 48%, there was 63% less large cattle and 68% less small cattle, and the number of pigs had fallen by no less than 90%. The structure with which areas of land were sown had changed and deteriorated and less wheat was grown.<sup>20</sup>

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the Yekaterinburg governorate. In late 1923 the Shadrinsky district was abolished and part of its territory joined the Shadrinsk district in the Urals Region. A section of the old Basmanovo town became part of the Butinsk district. Basmanovo became the center of the Basmanovo Village Council for the Shadrinsk district of the Urals Region. Under a Central Executive Committee directive dated 1934, the Urals Region was split into three regions — Sverdlovsk, Chelyabinsk and Obsk-Irtysh, and Basmanovo village became part of the Okunevsk district of the Chelyabinsk Region. In October 1938 Basmanovo village, by then part of the Butka district, was handed over to the Sverdlovsk Region. Basmanovo, along with Butka, later became part of the Talitsky district of the Sverdlovsk Region. For historians and archivists this means that legal documents about the agricultural family of the Yeltsins, covering a relatively short period, turn up in at least three regions, due to the policy of collectivization: the Sverdlovsk, Kurgan and Chelyabinsk Regions, as well as the Kazan, Perm and Berezniki Regions and a host of Moscow archives. See: The administrative and territorial dividing up of the Kurgan Region (1917-2004), Kurgan. 2005. P. 10-12, 14, RSFSR. The administrative and territorial dividing up as of 1st January 1972, M., 1972, p. 291

17 The State archive of the Sverdlovsk Region. Hereinafter — GASO, f. 203, op. 1, d. 388, l. 28.

18 Same ref., l. 44-45

19 Same ref., l. 19-22

20 Material on the dividing up of the Urals Region into districts. Tome 4. Long-term five-year plans for the development of the core sectors of the economy in the Urals Region, 1922-23 — 1926-27, Yekaterinburg, 1923. P. 4.

Judging by the documents that have survived, the Yeltsins did not fight either for the reds or the whites. Ignat Yekimovich Yeltsin's large family was quite well-to-do. In a list published in 1920 of people who paid the state natural tax in the Shadrinsk district of the settlement of Basmanovo, in the village of Basmanovo, there is a record of Yeltsin, Ignaty Yekimov, whose family consisted of 7 people. I.Y. Yeltsin had planted crops on 6 tithes and had to pay 20 poods of rye in tax, or 15 poods if he elected to pay in wheat. The amount of tax owed by I.Y. Yeltsin was among the highest of all the taxpayers in Basmanovo. I.Y. Yeltsin<sup>21</sup> had to pay full tax and was categorized as 'well-off'. The material status of I.Y. Yeltsin — the grandfather of the future President — was roughly equivalent to that of the average Siberian peasant family at the turn of the century. According to the calculations made by a historian from Novosibirsk named L.M. Goryushkin, 35.1% of peasants had between 4 and 9 tithes, whilst 26.7% had 9 tithes or more.<sup>22</sup>

Heads of household had to sign to confirm that they had been made aware how much tax they owed. I.Y. Yeltsin was illiterate. One of his fellow-villagers, Ivan Bersenev, signed the document on his behalf.<sup>23</sup>

Later, in 1934, the chairman of the Basmanovo Village Council, in response to a request from the OGPU (the Associated State Political Directorate — the precursor to the KGB), reported that Ignat Yekimovich Yeltsin, father to Nikolai and Andrian Yeltsin, who had been arrested in Kazan, had once owned a watermill and a windmill, a threshing-machine, a reaping-machine, five working horses and four cows, owned 5 hectares of land and had leased and cultivated up to 12 hectares. He also stated that in 1924 Ignat had divided the estate into three parts — in all likelihood for his two eldest sons, Ivan and Dmitry, with one part for himself.<sup>24</sup>

There is indirect evidence suggesting that in around 1924 Ivan Yeltsin began to manage some land of his own, separate from that of his father. The minutes of the presidium of the Butka district executive committee, for the Shadrinsk district of the Urals Region, in 1925, contain the names of dozens of agricultural laborers who were fined for chopping down trees in the forest without permission. Among them were Feoktist Yekimovich Yeltsin, Ivan Yeltsin's uncle, and Ivan Ignatievich Yeltsin himself. The fact that the data about the division of property by Ignat Yekimovich Yeltsin coincides with the information about his son Ivan chopping down trees in the forest may be interpreted as a sign that this was when Ivan began building his house.<sup>25</sup>

21 Thenceforward the surname Ельцын was spelt Ельцин in official documents.

22 L.M. Goryushkin: *The Siberian peasantry at the turn of the century. The end of the 19th century — start of the 20th century.* Novosibirsk, 1967.

23 GASO, f. p.-718, op. 1, d. 14

24 A.L. Litvin: *The Yeltsins in Kazan.* Kazan, 2006. Pp. 24-26

25 The Shadrinsk state archive of the Kurgan Region. Hereinafter — SSAKR. F. P-209. Op. 1. D. 329. L. 363-365

Also of note is the fact that Ivan Yeltsin worked for the Village Council between 1924 and 1928 and even served as its acting chairman when the man who held this position went on holiday in 1926.<sup>26</sup> He had managed to procure himself an initial education.

Thus, in the years following the revolution, the affairs of Ignat Yeltsin and his family were going decidedly well.

The sizeable Yeltsin clan included the following residents of the Basmanovo settlement: Vasily Petrovich Yeltsin, a member of the town council, an illiterate, poor man who tilled the land, was not a member of the party and had been employed since 9th November 1923<sup>27</sup>; in the village of Porotnikovo, Fyodor Stepanovich Yeltsin, Stepan Nikolaevich Yeltsin, Kiprian Spiridonovich Yeltsin, Nikita Ivanovich Yeltsin, Stepan Dmitrievich Yeltsin and Yakov Mikhailovich Yeltsin; in the village of Konovalovo, Stepan Dmitrievich Yeltsin, Filip Vasilievich Yeltsin, Yeremey Ivanovich Yeltsin, Alexander Spiridonovich Yeltsin<sup>28</sup> and Ivan Mikhailovich Yeltsin.<sup>29</sup>

The material status of the clan's various members varied considerably. Among the residents of the Porotnikovo Village Council, Nikita Ivanovich, Stepan Dmitrievich and Alexander and Fyodor Stepanovich Yeltsin had the right to vote taken away from them, but it was returned to them in October 1925, when Yakov Mikhailovich Yeltsin had the right to vote taken away from him as well.<sup>30</sup>

In the time of the New Economic Policy, elements of local self-governance which were rooted in the past continued to be part of life in the Trans-Urals village. These traditions had now been adapted to suit the Soviet way of doing things, however. There was a practice of holding assemblies of the Butka district executive committee *in situ*, with dozens of local residents attending the meetings. At one of these meetings, held on 19th December 1926 in the village of Porotnikovo, 67 people from the "disorganized population of the village of Porotnikovo" — of 'society', as the chairman of the Butinsk district executive committee, Ovchinnikov, described them in the old style — were present, in addition to the district bosses and members of the Porotnikovo Village Council.

Ovchinnikov spoke to the people about the technical agricultural measures which had been introduced, and added that the residents had a sufficient number of horses and cattle, but that most of the horses were elderly and the cows were not very mobile; he said that there were not enough agricultural

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26 SSAKR. F. P-209. Op. 2. D. 51. L. 79. See also: The Autobiography of N.I. Yeltsin. 22nd March 1953 From the collection of documents held by the Urals Center for B.N. Yeltsin.

27 SSAKR. F. P-209. Op. 1. D. 73. L. 46

28 SSAKR. F. P-209. Op. 1. D. 205 l. 309-310

29 SSAKR. F. P-209. Op. 1. D. 205. L. 143

30 SSAKR. F. P-209. Op. 1. D. 329. L. 24-27

implements, because such things were expensive, and that it was essential that long-term loans be secured in the district so that machinery could be procured. Ovchinnikov warned that “our district ranks almost first in terms of the amount of forested land, and also ranks first in terms of the amount of forest stolen. Particularly in the Porotnikovo Village Council, in the village of Konovalova,” and he added that the community must hire someone to guard the forest. According to Ovchinnikov, the horse-breeding exhibition, at which 18 horses had been exhibited, had not been a success.

He reported that the lending partnerships were not doing a good job, and were too small.

Other members of the ‘community’ contributed to the discussion. They complained about the shoddy work done by the medical orderly, and the lack of funding for refurbishment of the school in the village of Konovalovo.

A Deputy in the Village Council named S.D. Yeltsin said: “I would be interested in finding out what the discount was on agricultural tax for dead crops, and how it was applied? Because some citizens were given a discount, whilst others weren’t. As regards the common agricultural tax of 43 rubles per tithe. ... As I see it, that’s not quite the right way to do it. Take the Smolinsk and Kataratskiye lands, for example — they give a much bigger harvest than ours, in the Porotnikovo Village Council. In future, it is essential that the agronomist conduct an inspection of the soil in our arable land to find out how fertile it is (in comparison) with other Village Councils.”

Another member of the district executive committee, S.K. Samokhvalov, also spoke about the flaws in the taxation system. “I must comment on the fact that the same agricultural tax is imposed on all craftsmen, which does not seem quite right, since craftsmen earn more from their crafts than agricultural laborers earn from working the land.” He expressed support for what Yeltsin had said: “Some citizens in the Porotnikovo Village Council are upset by the fact that their land is not bringing in much profit. I share their views, and I would add this: it’s quite true that the land in Porotnikovo will never provide the same sort of harvests as those enjoyed by the citizens of the Kataratsky Village Council.”<sup>31</sup>

Life went on as normal in this Trans-Urals village, with its back-breaking agricultural labor and its occasional moments of happiness. In 1925 the Urals region produced and handed over to the state more bread than was supplied by all the other regions of the country with the exception of Ukraine. Nikolai Ignatievich Yeltsin was involved in this feat — he was the director of the grain-reserves shops (the stores) in the Basmanovo Village Council from 1926 to 1928.<sup>32</sup>

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31 SSAKR. f. P-209. Op. 2. D. 51. L. 66-67

32 Personal staff records sheet of N.I. Yeltsin. 11th October 1948. From the collection of

But this life was to come to an end.

*A new policy: the elimination of the Kulaks as a class*

In December 1927 the 15th congress of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks (VKP(b)) was held; the congress voted in favor of a policy of collectivization. A huge number of books have been written about the circumstances which led to the government altering its attitude toward the countryside. First and foremost I would highlight the studies and extremely important publications of documents by V.P. Danilov.<sup>33</sup>

The 15th congress of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks set itself the objective of launching an attack on the Kulaks, the ‘grasping fists’. At this stage, the main form in which this attack took place was the new system of taxation. For the so-called Kulak-owned areas, a progressive tax of between 5% and 25% of income was introduced. The Kulaks were supposed to pay 8 times more than the poor or ‘middling’ for a single hectare of land, 21 times more for a hired laborer, and 30 times more for their own land.

This change to the taxation system brought about the start of a degradation of the economy in the countryside. Large land holdings began to shut down production due to the impossibility of making a profit. Production of agricultural produce began to decline almost immediately.

The consequences of this were as might have been expected. A process of ‘self-dekulakization’ began. (See table 1)

**Table 1. Agricultural production levels in the Urals region, 1926-1929.<sup>34</sup>**

As a % of the previous year	1926-27 agricultural year	1927-28 agricultural year	1928-29 agricultural year
Total area sown	107.1	99.1	95.3
Total cattle (large)	106.1	102.8	101.6

Statisticians from the Urals Region observed: “the past year, 1927-1928... has been marked by the emergence of a series of negative trends: slowdowns,

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documents held by the Urals center for B.N. Yeltsin.

<sup>33</sup> V.P. Danilov: The evidence is in the documents. From the history of the countryside before and during collectivization, M., 1989. (Co-editor and co-writer); The collectivization of agriculture in the USSR // The history of the USSR. 1990. No. 5; The Soviet countryside as seen through the eyes of the VChK-OGPU-NKVD. 1918-1939. Documents and material in 4 volumes. / V.I-3. M., 1998 — 2003. (Co-editor and co-writer); The tragedy of the Soviet countryside. Collectivization and de-kulakization. Documents and material in 5 volumes. 1927-1939. / Vols.I — 5. M., 1999-2004. (Co-editor and co-writer).

<sup>34</sup> Control figures for the economy of the Urals Region for 1928-1929, Sverdlovsk, 1929. P. 17

growth coming to a standstill, and even reductions in grain production.” Reductions in the area of land on which crops were planted were observed primarily on those holdings which had 8 hectares or more. The biggest reduction in the area of land on which crops were sown in 1928 took place in the central and southern Trans-Urals region — a reduction of 8.3%, statisticians observed<sup>35</sup>.

“The area of land used for crops and large horned cattle has fallen in the last two years, and the main explanation for this is the fall in production among the richest people in the countryside and the generally unfavorable market conditions for grain production and butter-making,” the authors of the statistical report concluded.

In order to overcome the growing negative trends in the village, and the shortage of grain, which was growing worse, the authorities dramatically strengthened repressive measures against the peasants. In January 1928 Stalin set off in person for Siberia to take part in the grain production process. His visit only served to strengthen his belief that the difficulties being experienced in grain production could be put down to resistance on the part of the Kulaks - to ‘Kulak saboteurs’. In a telegram from the Central Committee dated 14th January 1928 on the strengthening of grain production measures, signed J.V. Stalin, he demanded: “we must strike out against the hoarder and the grasping-fists at once, we must arrest the speculators, the little Kulaks and all the others attempting to bring disorder to the market and the pricing policy we will be unable to isolate the speculators and the Kulaks in the market, unable to achieve a decisive turning-point on the front-line of grain production.”

The so-called Urals-Siberian method of self-taxation was introduced by the tax services from the spring of 1929 onwards. Its introduction was to be accompanied by direct supervision and pressure from local party agencies and Soviet agencies, but was disguised using decisions made by local assemblies and the demands of the poor and ‘middling’ peasants. In parallel to this, wealthy peasants were denied the right to vote and expelled from their co-operatives and from the local Soviet agencies<sup>36</sup>.

The Trans-Urals countryside was not exempt from the things that were going on in the rest of the countryside.

On 16-17th February 1929, the Shadrinsk district committee of the VKP(b) held an assembly for the district’s party activists.

Grain production was the main item on the agenda. The annual plan for 1928 was only 55% fulfilled as of 11th February. The situation was even worse

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35        Review of the state of farming in the Urals region, 1927-28. Sverdlovsk, 1928. P. 1-2, 19  
36        N.Y. Gushchin: ‘Dekulakization’ in Siberia (1928-1934): Methods, stages, socio-economic and demographic consequences. See: [memorial.krsk.ru/Articles/1996Guscshin/02.htm](http://memorial.krsk.ru/Articles/1996Guscshin/02.htm)

*A Man of Change* is a gift from the The Foundation of the First President of Russia B.N. Yeltsin, produced in cooperation with Glagoslav Publications and distributed with the aim to preserve the knowledge and memory of Russia's first President.

Boris Yeltsin will be remembered as the fierce, daring political leader who fought for democratic ideals of his nation during an unprecedented crisis when the Soviet empire had already fallen apart and new emerging nations had not yet firmly established themselves in the region. Russia took over from the previously mighty union of nations, but the country had to be rebuilt and its leadership needed to be reaffirmed.

During the years when others were abandoning the sinking ship, Boris Yeltsin showed a remarkable strength of character and took it upon himself to salvage the nation despite unfavorable odds. Yeltsin created a stronghold for the new Russian governance, and this book is about a man who worked until it was his time to go, and kept his promise to his native land.



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Glagoslav Publications

ISBN: 978-1-78437-936-0

London

ISBN 978-1-78437-936-0

