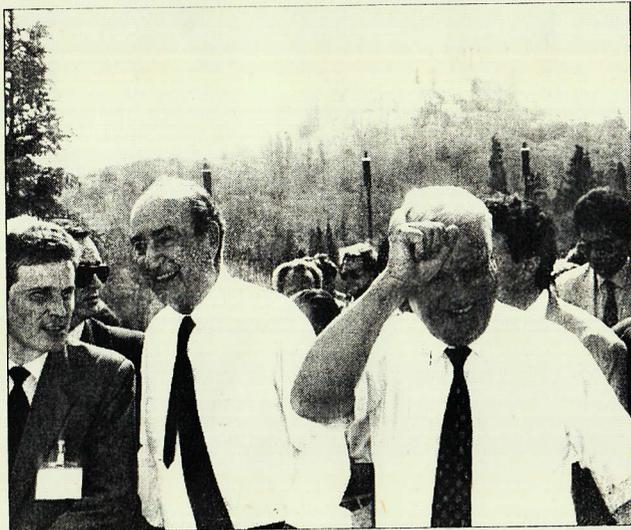


The President's second Oath



The programme of Yeltsin's visit to Greece was rather crowded. This, however, did not prevent him from "unwinding" for a brief period and taking a rest from the domestic political battles.

Vladimir ORLOV

In Athens Yeltsin was received with top honours. Every detail, beginning with an escort of four combat planes in the skies to the traditional twenty one cannon shots at the airport bespoke the importance of his visit for the Greece side. Yeltsin had been awaited for a solid year but the visit was delayed every now and again because the President had been extremely busy. Watching the solemn faultlessly timed, ceremony of the meeting no one could have guessed that but hours before everything had been on the point of failure: the Greek protocol department provided the Russian delegation with but half the requested twenty cars for the motorcade...

The Mercedes carrying Yeltsin sped into Athens suburb of V... g... m... towards Hotel Nathsika Astr...

temporary residence, that Yeltsin met with President of Greece Constantinos Caramanlis. As is customary on such occasions, the first topic was the weather. "We in Yakutia and I was there not long ago, often have plus forty degrees in summer, and fifty six below zero..." said Yeltsin. "If one lives in Russia, the best place is the Crimea, perhaps", Caramanlis demonstrated his knowledge of geography. Yeltsin fell silent. He had once been in such a fix when George Bush proposed a summit in the south of Russia, in Yalta.

The following day the President looked quite refreshed and relaxed, and no one could guess that he had conferred with his entourage far into the night. The first historical site along the route was Acropolis where the Yeltsins were met by Mrs. Bakoyianni, the daughter of the Prime Minister (she is the Minister of Culture). The next attraction was the Pnyx hill where a People's Assembly was called two thousand and five hundred years ago for the first time, thus marking the origin of democracy. It was there and then, also, that the Law on Protection of Democracy was adopted in the fourth century B.C. The Law said in part: "Should anyone try to destroy democracy and establish a tyranny, no punishment shall be..."

Yeltsin said: "I hereby take my second oath as the President of Russia, in this sacred place of the land of Greece". The oath went like this: "Democracy is an absolutely indispensable environment for mankind's development. Those who trample upon it inevitably find themselves by the wayside of history". Yeltsin said further that Russia had firmly set foot on the path of democracy. He had to touch his brow with a handkerchief because it was getting unbearably hot at the Pnyx hill. The members of the Presidential team wore dark sun-glasses, all without exception, and Vyacheslav Kostikov also wore a snow-white cloth-cap. It seemed that Naina Yeltsina alone did not react to the heat of the day. She raised a hand to shield herself against the sun and watched her husband speak.

The negotiations between Yeltsin and Prime Minister Constantinos Mitsotakis in a villa called Maxim lasted no longer than an hour and a half whereupon the two leaders signed the entire package of the drafted documents, twelve all told, including a Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation. The most important agreement was that on deliveries of Russian natural gas to Greece, to the tune of 1.3 billion dollars. As Yeltsin said later, "we wanted to sign it for twenty-five years, but then decided - for thirty years. But I felt that there was a sort of guarded attitude to the project..." He turned to the Greeks and went on: "Your ecology is in bad shape. It is seen from the plane that Athens is shrouded in a pall of smog, even the marble of Acropolis is crumbling away. So, our gas will serve you a good turn".

Political advances were also in evidence. Yeltsin readjusted somewhat the Russian position on Bosnia and officially agreed to the Serbo-Croatian plan for its division and called on the negotiators to move their talks from Geneva to Athens. It was not fortuitous that he announced this in Greece, of all places, where very nearly every passerby will tell you: "We respect Yeltsin as the leader of the greatest Orthodox country in the world, but what for did he let down the brethren Serbs?" Mitsotakis is the only Western politician maintaining normal relations with the Serbian leader Milošević. And Yeltsin declared that his position on Bosnia "coincides" with that of Mitsotakis.

The Macedonian issue that threatened to cause a cooling of relations

ched upon". Russia did not change its position on recognition of Macedonia, including the very name. But, apparently, Greece did not count on anything else. The public and politicians in Greece were at a loss over Russia's unambiguous support for the US missile attack on Baghdad. Yeltsin retorted briefly and sharply to the journalists that the Russian official statement did not contain the word "support".

But who really received support was Russia. And Greece was the benefactor. The latter will chair the European Community in 1994. The organization, in Yeltsin words, conducts a discriminatory policy vis-a-vis Russia, reluctant to let it into a united Europe. As Vyacheslav Kostikov pointed out, "Greece has undertaken moral and practical commitments to rectify this state of affairs".

Upon the completion of the official part of the meeting Yeltsin and Mitsotakis boarded a yacht and went on a sea voyage in a truly royal fashion. Yeltsin talked most of the time with a group of Greek bankers, and then dined and admired the sea, and but once emerged onto the deck within two and a half hours.

At the meeting with Greek entrepreneurs Yeltsin looked somewhat weary but nevertheless indefatigably pushed the Russian reforms like an ardent propagandist and agitator. He repeated almost word for word his speech before the French businessmen: "There is no other market like that of Russia. Whoever comes first will profit. The next year the Russian economy will stabilize, and you could fail to come in good time. A slowdown in inflation and the structural reorganization permit us to assert that we have scaled the worst peak". The difference between the two speeches is that the Paris address was made a year and a half ago.

After the farewell breakfast, already in the airport, Boris Nikolayevich showed by his demeanour and manner that he was quite satisfied with his visit to Greece and the hospitality of the hosts. Telling later about the results of his visit, that lasted forty hours, he mixed up the sequence of his meetings with the leader of the opposition Papandreou and Premier Mitsotakis and added: "The Greek politicians are clever, it is a pleasure to deal with them". And he said after a pause: "Neither are we fools". And the Russian leader began mounting the passenger ramp.

Comment



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Aid to Russia: Tokyo and after

(Continued from page 1)

nothing. And if they can help us in any appreciable way we should just be grateful.

An analysis of our accumulated experience as to the way Western aid has been used does give cause for concern. Resources have been coming in randomly and erratically and in turn, they have been utilized rather carelessly. They in the West did not have a uniform concept as to how, whom or what to help. Therefore, we have received whatever was profitable for them to give. The criterion of effectiveness has been omitted. We have been taking whatever aid was on offer with little thought as to how to use it. Now, we and the West have found ourselves caught up in a debt trap. The credits we received have largely been eaten up.

It is already clear that the G-7 summit in Tokyo is but a stage towards the elaboration of a new concept of economic interaction between the West and Russia. Now is the time to put forward some key elements.

1. It must be worked out jointly, by Russia and the West, and be based on sufficiently clear-cut criteria. But even before this Russia should formulate a consistent strategy for national development that would be worthy of the name.

2. Economic and intellectual resources should not be allocated to the state but to the ultimate users and consumers, namely: private firms, enterprises, public organiza-