

Yeltsin Betting Russians Will Stick With Painful Reforms

By Carey Goldberg
LOS ANGELES TIMES

MOSCOW

They feel impoverished, deceived. They don't like the way Russia's reforms are turning out. They have little hope for the near future. But they don't want to go back to the old Communist order.

This, pollsters say, is the Russian electorate — the people who cast their ballots Sunday in a climactic referendum that will decide President Boris N. Yeltsin's political fate.

In a gamble that could force his resignation, Yeltsin is betting that he knows these people well enough to put his future in their hands. In the end, he is wagering, they will support their embattled leader, they will opt to push forward with reforms no matter how painful.

The acid test is the referendum, four questions meant to resolve a paralyzing conflict at the pinnacle of Russian politics. As nearly as he can, Yeltsin is asking Russian voters to choose between him and his nemesis, the more conservative Congress of People's Deputies that he contends is blocking Russia's transition to capitalism.

Along with promising some political peace, the referendum gives the Russian public its first post-Communism chance to formally voice its opinion after 16 months of excruciating economic reform. When they pronounce judgment on

Yeltsin, Russians will also be determining their country's future course — continued radical change or a retreat to slower measures.

Some of the latest polls show that Yeltsin could manage to win the 50 percent backing of voters that he needs on the main question whether the people trust him.

The second question, whether they support his economic reforms, is far more iffy.

But pollsters said that question will carry little weight anyway because it is improper by its nature. "You shouldn't ask a person whether he likes the doctor who's cutting off his arm," observed pollster Grigory Pashkov. "He's doing something necessary and you don't have to like it."

On the last two questions — whether people want early presidential or parliamentary elections — pollsters see public opinion as overwhelmingly in favor of elections for the widely despised Parliament and mixed on the president.

When it comes to a direct contest between Yeltsin and the conservative Parliament, Yeltsin always wins, said pollster Masha Volkenstein, who noted: "Yeltsin's rating has gone up because the Congress is so nasty. It's a natural Russian response. The more they pound on Yeltsin, the more people defend him."

Yeltsin's overall approval rating appeared to be hovering around 60

percent last week, according to various polls. That level of support shows just what an amazing electorate this is, especially compared with American voters, who dumped President Bush largely because the economy drifted downward during his term.

Here, many prices have increased by 150 times — not 150 percent but 150 times — since Yeltsin took office. According to pollster Nugzar Betaneli, of more than 1,000 Muscovites polled by his Institute of Parliamentary Sociology, about 35 percent say economic conditions are unbearable, while a steady 50 percent say things are tough but just about bearable. Another 7 percent or so say they are doing all right and only 2 percent-3 percent say they are doing well.

Deputy Prime Minister Andrei Fyodorov said last week that 15 million people, from kiosk owners to factory shareholders, had benefited from Russia's reforms — impressive, but only one-tenth of the population.

About 70 percent say they are "constantly dissatisfied" with their lives. What they want most is some economic relief, the chance to get through this painful transition and get a shot at "normal life."

"On the one hand, everyone is dissatisfied with everything," Betaneli wrote recently in the daily Izvestia.

Clinton to Unveil Campaign Reform Package Before 100 Day Mark

By Paul Richter and Sara Fritz
LOS ANGELES TIMES

WASHINGTON

Eager to move beyond the debacle of his economic stimulus package, President Clinton next week will unveil a campaign finance reform package that would ban contributions from lobbyists to any candidate for federal office, the Los Angeles Times has learned.

The proposal would also virtually eliminate the so-called "soft money" contributions that are supposed to underwrite grass-roots party activities, but often circumvent the intent of campaign finance laws by benefiting national candidates, according to knowledgeable sources. Both these proposals would likely create a great deal of uneasiness in Congress, where members of both parties will appreciate the plan's voter-appeal but fear the financial sacrifice it will entail.

The campaign finance proposal will be made public next week along with long-awaited details of Clinton's program for a national service program, which will offer young people a chance to work for the country while reducing their college tuition costs.

Locked in a conspicuous losing streak, Clinton is hoping through these announcements to regain some momentum and to beef up his early record for next week's reviews of his first 100 days.

Both were campaign proposals with substantial voter appeal, and last year Clinton hit them hard from the stump. Indeed, if he backs down on campaign finance reform, his 100-day reviews are likely to accuse him again of abandoning key campaign pledges.

Administration officials hope the campaign proposal will win Clinton glowing reviews with campaign-finance advocates by showing he will risk alienating Congress when he will soon need their votes for his economic and health care programs. And, no less, the White House hopes the proposal will score big with another group: The 19 million

Ross Perot voters, whose candidate continues to call for curbs on lobbyist and "soft money."

Currently, special interest lobbyists — like all other individuals — may contribute up to \$25,000 per year directly to a candidate, and unlimited sums to political parties. Many contribute to the maximum, and thus provide candidates one of their principal sources of campaign

fundations, who are not considered to be lobbyists even though they may be seeking favors from the government.

The proposal also calls for lifting the limit on individual contributions to candidates from the current \$25,000 to \$60,000 per election cycle. Within the \$60,000 maximum there would be sub-category limits. Voters could contribute up to one

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funds.

Dee Dee Myers, Clinton's press secretary, Thursday night declined to comment on the campaign finance proposal, saying it is not yet completed. She denied that the two proposals were being prepared to draw attention away from Clinton's first major legislative defeat, noting that Clinton had promised the plans within his first 100 days.

But she added that the unveiling "certainly will have that effect ... I don't think the timing hurts. Everybody is ready to get on with the business that the president was elected to handle."

It remains unclear how the administration intends to define lobbyists, and that may be a key provision of the proposal. But eliminating their contributions would by no means eliminate special interest money and influence in elections.

Political action committees could continue to operate under Clinton's plan. Indeed, by cutting lobbyists out of the picture, the proposal guarantees that Congress may never take the much debated step of eliminating PACs entirely, for fear of cutting off too much of their sources of campaign funds.

Furthermore, the proposal would do nothing to curb the massive amounts of money that pour into campaign coffers from executives and employees of big corpo-

specified amount for candidates; up to another for political parties, and a third for grass-roots activities, such as voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives.

Structuring the proposal in this way is intended to head off criticism that "soft" money reforms would could prevent legitimate political purposes.

The proposals would presumably hurt Democrats more than Republicans, since lobbyists give most to incumbents and there are far more Democrats than Republicans in Congress. The soft money proposal would have a marked effect on the Democratic National Committee, which now employs about 160 and pays 40 percent of their salaries from soft money.

Rep. Bill Thomas, R-Calif., who is closely involved with campaign finance as the ranking Republican on the House Administration committee, said Clinton's timing in releasing the proposal looked "a little suspicious."

He said the White House might be planning to offer a package that looks good and wins him credit for toughness, but would be defeated in Congress.

"Then they could say 'we tried' and the Republicans would get the blame," said Thomas. And Democrats in Congress would keep their funding sources, he added.

Huge Number of Gay Activists Expected for Washington March

LOS ANGELES TIMES

WASHINGTON

Gay activists began lobbying Congress and gay veterans fought the American Legion over a wreath-laying at Arlington National Cemetery Thursday as participants in Sunday's march for gay rights flowed into the capital, filling hotel rooms as far as 100 miles away.

March organizers predict that more than 1 million people will join in the demonstration, urging action on a range of gay and lesbian issues, including legal protection against discrimination and an end to the military's ban on homosexuals.

Although organizers insist that politicians friendly to the gay cause have not intentionally headed out of town for the weekend, the list of those scheduled to participate in the march and rally is rather short.

As activists launched a lobbying campaign, Rep. Henry A. Waxman, D-Calif., chairman of a House subcommittee on AIDS research and other health issues, received so many requests for meetings that he scheduled a single session with about 100 people Friday. passed it, 301-114.

U.Va. Votes to Bar Sex With Students

THE WASHINGTON POST

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA.

University of Virginia faculty members who engage in sexual relations with students attending their classes could be dismissed under a policy adopted Thursday evening by the school's Faculty Senate.

The policy, which applies to teachers and any other school employees who oversee students, will be forwarded for review to university president John T. Casteen III.

If the proposal receives final approval, Virginia will join a growing number of universities nationwide and in Virginia that have imposed or are considering similar policies in an effort to discourage relationships between professors and students.

Some students said afterward that they supported the resolution. "This will hopefully make faculty members think before approaching amorously a student," said Sarah Alexander, 24, a second-year student from Reston, Va.

The final proposal also met the approval of the university's Committee on Women's Concerns, which had drafted a more restrictive version that would have banned all sexual relationships, including consensual ones, between undergraduate students and faculty, including teaching assistants.

But Ann J. Lane, the school's director of women's studies and one of the backers of the stricter ban, said the compromise was strong enough because it could be broadly interpreted to cover relationships between most faculty members and students.

"It's now on the agenda. This has become a national debate on what professional responsibility is," Lane said.

The adopted policy says that teachers, supervisors or evaluators "shall not engage in amorous or sexual relations with, or make amorous or sexual overtures to, any student over whom he or she holds a position of authority." Violators "will be subject to sanctions ranging from a letter of reprimand to dismissal."

Clinton Leads Dedication Of Holocaust Museum

BALTIMORE SUN

WASHINGTON

On a day of biting cold and burning memories, President Clinton on Thursday led foreign leaders and thousands of Americans in an outdoor dedication of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, a national monument to one of the darkest episodes in human history.

Assisted by Nobel Peace laureate Elie Wiesel and memorial council chairman Harvey M. Meyerhoff, Clinton lit the eternal flame of remembrance for the millions of Jews and others who died in the genocide of Nazi-occupied Europe.

An estimated 10,000 people, many of them Holocaust survivors and World War II veterans, braved the cold, wet weather to attend the two-hour ceremony. Some were moved to tears at times by the emotional speeches and accounts of bravery and survival.

A few dozen demonstrators, protesting the Holocaust as a lie and denouncing the use of American tax dollars for the museum, gathered across a street from the ceremony and behind police lines. After shouting slogans and waving banners for about 30 minutes, they dispersed.

Ross Perot Assails North American Free-Trade Agreement

THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON

Former presidential candidate Ross Perot has told members of Congress that he plans to mount a major public campaign against the North American Free-Trade Agreement including a number of paid television presentations, sources said.

Perot, who opposed the free-trade pact in last year's campaign, appeared Thursday at a Senate Banking Committee hearing to denounce the pact in his strongest terms yet. The treaty, signed last year, is awaiting House and Senate consideration later this year.

"Last time I testified on this agreement, they said I wasn't specific enough," Perot said. "So let me try to be specific: Just don't do it. It's not in our country's best interests."

The Texas billionaire has been telling supporters at his Unite We Stand rallies that he wants to speak to the country about NAFTA.

"We are thinking about it," said a spokesperson for his organization. "It's more an educational campaign about NAFTA than a campaign against it."