and fall back on the familiar methods of the security services. Putin has already placed a number of former KGB colleagues in high positions. In addition to Cherkesov, for example, the new chief of the FSB, Nikolai Patrushev, went to law school with Putin and served with him in the Leningrad KGB. The head of the president's Security Council, Sergei Ivanov, graduated with Putin from the KGB's Red Banner Institute.

Given Russia's increasingly belligerent anti-Westernism, the United States and other Western governments can do little in the short run to influence events in Russia directly. But by acknowledging the implications of having another former KGB apparatchik as Russia's president, U.S. policymakers would at least avoid giving an impression of naiveté that would encourage the Kremlin to be even less inhibited about flouting world opinion than it already is. The fact that almost a decade after the collapse of the Soviet system in 1991 someone like Putin could rise to the top of the political leadership in Russia is a grim reminder that the legacies of police states die hard. ❑

II. Leningrad

by Blair A. Ruble

More than three months after Boris Yeltsin startled the world by resigning in favor of Vladimir Putin, Western analysts are still groping for insights into the new Russian president. They debate the significance of his KGB past and his role in St. Petersburg's democratic movement during the 1990s. They wonder what the Russian war in Chechnya tells us about the heart and mind of the man who prosecuted it while serving as Yeltsin's prime minister. In truth, we are not likely to learn enough about the inscrutable Mr. Putin to predict what he will do as Russia's president. Yet one important and neglected piece in the puzzle of his character undoubtedly resides in St. Petersburg, where he was born and spent many of his politically formative years.

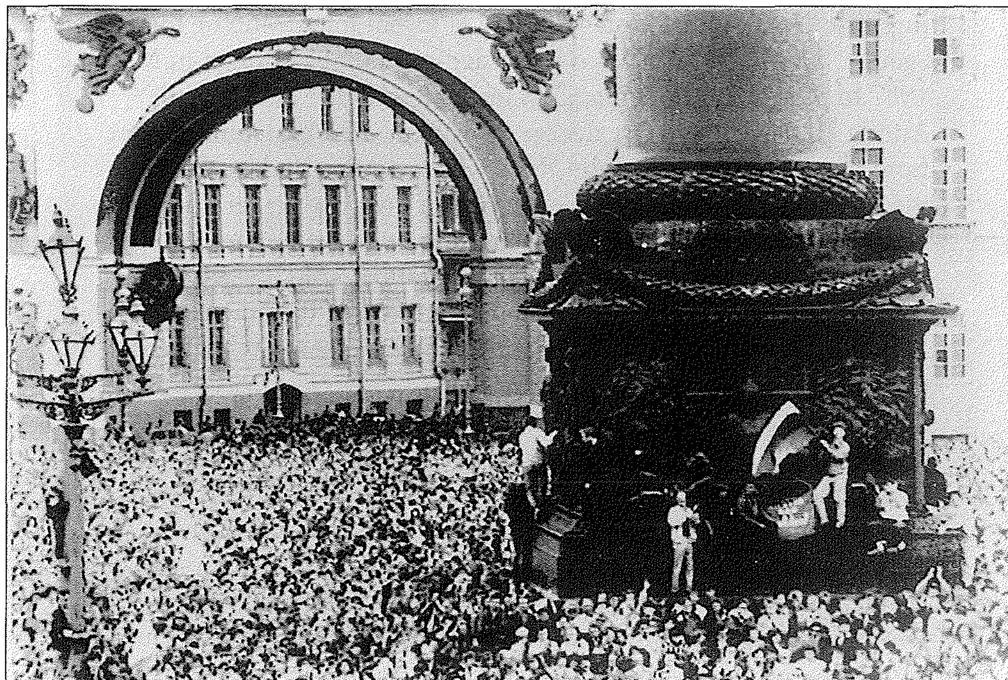
During those years, two distinct realities coexisted within the city's official boundaries. The first, and by far the weaker, was that of the historic city center and the pre-revolutionary values it embodied. This community was known in unofficial shorthand as "Peter." Around it in the years after World War II grew a new Soviet industrial city, representing all the values of the Soviet Union. This sprawling urban center was rightly known in local parlance by the city's official name, "Leningrad."

"Peter" grew out of the city's proud tradition as Russia's imperial capital, the center of its high culture and intellectual life, and its "window on the West." Founded by Peter the Great in 1703—who gave it straight streets and borrowed neoclassical architecture in an attempt to impose European rationality on an addled Russian landscape—it grew to be Europe's fifth largest city by the eve of World War I. After the fall of the Romanovs, the city entered a period of wrenching transformations. The Russian Civil War cost it more than half its population, and it lost its name (which had changed to Petrograd in 1914 and then in 1924 to Leningrad) and its status as the capital city. In the 1930s came Stalin's purges and an influx of peasants fleeing his unfathomably brutal collectivization of agriculture; Hitler's 900-day siege of 1941–44 cost the city more dead than all of its wars together have cost the United States. During the late 1940s, the few members of the local intelligentsia and political elite who survived suffered another round of purges. By the time Putin was born, in 1952 (shortly before Stalin's death), the city of Pushkin, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky was no more.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the city's Communist leaders created a distinctive Leningrad model of development, emphasizing defense and other specialized industries, including shipbuilding, machinery, and precision instruments. The city's economy rested on the increasing integration of a vaunted technical and scientific academic community with leading local industries and the national security apparatus—an especially vigorous presence in Leningrad. The Leningrad model included cultural policies that were even more authoritarian than the Soviet norm. The new economic and cultural policies sharply divided the city's intellectual elite, creating, in effect, two cities. On one side stood the writers, artists, performers, and humanistic scholars who identified with a mythical "Peter" that stood in latent opposition to Soviet power—their more outspoken colleagues having been dispatched to the gulag. On the other stood what the Soviets called the technical intelligentsia—designers, engineers, architects, and the like—who served the Soviet Union's leading regional military-industrial complex. This was Vladimir Putin's city.

Putin graduated from the Leningrad State University Juridical Faculty during the mid-1970s. I was a visiting graduate student at the time, in Leningrad to do research for my doctoral dissertation, and although I don't recall meeting Putin, I well remember the asphyxiating atmosphere of the place. The drear was relieved, ironically, only on Soviet holidays, when some of the faculty members (officers in the

>*Blair A. Ruble is director of the Wilson Center's Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies. He is the author of several books on Russian cities, including* Leningrad: Shaping a Soviet City *(1990).* *Copyright © 2000 by Blair A. Ruble.*



Where's Vladimir Putin? An extraordinary crowd gathered at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg to protest the hardliners' abortive August 1991 coup against Mikhail Gorbachev.

KGB, one student whispered to me) showed up in colorful dress uniforms. Leningrad State, like all Soviet-era law schools, was a prime training ground for the KGB and other security agencies.

The local Communist Party and security agencies were among the Soviet Union's most aggressive enemies of dissent. When I arrived, the law school was in the midst of a crackdown on professors with unorthodox views or Jewish names—the two categories were considered virtually synonymous. Local hostility was forcing many members of the city's once large Jewish population into exile and liberal scholars were being driven underground. Clumsy Communist politicians, resentful of the city's heritage of liberalism and high culture, were hard at work turning their once proud metropolis into a provincial industrial town. Leningrad party chieftain Grigorii Romanov earned a reputation for boorishness even among Brezhnev-era Politburo and Central Committee members, hardly a crowd noted for high standards of refinement. It was in this city at this time that Mikhail Baryshnikov decided to flee to the West, and a young Vladimir Putin decided to cast his lot with the KGB.

Since the demise of communism, a resurgent "Peter" has overshadowed the city's "Leningrad" heritage, assuming a prominent role in post-Soviet Russia's faltering democracy. Their conflict, hidden during the Soviet years, was brought into the open by Mikhail Gorbachev's liberalizing policies during the late 1980s. Fittingly, it was through battles over the preservation of historic build-

ings that "Peter" first found a legitimate forum for advancing the war against "Leningrad." Raucous street demonstrations erupted in March 1987 to protest the city's graceless restoration of the once grand Astoria Hotel and its more déclassé neighbor, the Angleterra. It was from the Astoria bar that John Reed witnessed the 10 days that shook the world in 1917, while at the Angleterra the poet Sergei Essenin, in despair over the emerging face of the Bolshevik regime he had once embraced, took his own life in 1925, scratching a final verse in his own blood. For the first time, local citizens found the courage to publicly reject the economic visions formulated for their city by Soviet planners.

This was the beginning of the city's rise to prominence in prodemocratic Russia. In the historic Supreme Soviet elections of 1989, Leningrad voters turned every senior local Communist Party leader out of office, effectively breaking the party's back in much of the Soviet Union. When a Communist coup threatened Russia's new government in August 1991, Boris Yeltsin's defiant display of bulldog tenacity riveted the world's attention on Moscow. But in Petersburg, a genuinely revolutionary moment occurred as one-third of the entire local population crowded into the historic square in front of the Hermitage Museum to oppose the coup. Local voters have remained Russia's most liberal electorate, right down through the parliamentary elections of December 1999.

Yet "Leningrad" continues to lurk just beneath the surface of Petersburgian democracy, much as "Peter" hid in Leningrad's shadows during the Soviet decades. Vladimir Putin appears to embody all of the contradictions between the two. After service in the KGB that took him to East Germany and Leningrad, Putin threw in his lot with the reformers in the 1990s. He was St. Petersburg's deputy mayor from 1991 until 1996, working closely with the city's high-toned reform mayor Anatoly Sobchak (who had been one of Putin's law school professors). In 1998, after two years in the Yeltsin government, Putin was named head of the Federal Security Service, the successor to the KGB. In August 1999, Yeltsin named him prime minister.

Sobchak's Petersburg circle produced an impressive number of Russian leaders, from Yeltsin's promarket "gray cardinal," Anatoly Chubais, to national privatization honchos Sergei Belayev and Alfred Kokh. These and other prominent St. Petersburg politicians—including the assassinated democratic politicians Mikhail Manevich and Galina Starovoitova—had all rejected "Leningrad" during the Soviet era. The depth of their commitment to free markets and free elections varied, but at some level all shared the status of outsiders, talented professionals who had felt unjustly ignored merely because they lived in the Soviet Union's second city. To some of them, at least, the democratic movement of the late 1980s offered an opportunity for rapid upward mobility while also having the virtue of being virtuous.

This singular blend of cynical calculation and idealism is one of the distinctive qualities of the politicians the city has bred.

The city continues to struggle with the legacy of the Leningrad model of development. The approach emphasized the centralization of decision making, rationalization of the links between research and development and industrial production, and the streamlining of lines of command in order to force existing institutions to operate more efficiently. The tanks coming off the assembly lines at Leningrad's Kirov Factory, the nuclear power stations built by Elektrosila, the high-grade plastics being turned out by Plastpolimer, and the precision optics produced at LOMO deluded Leningraders into thinking that their economy was world class.

The 1990s revealed the folly of Leningrad's economic and political strategies. The city's Soviet inheritance has been a deadweight, sinking nearly every effort to drag it into the global economy. In pegging the city's fortunes so closely to the Soviet military-industrial complex, its leaders failed to confront its underlying economic handicaps: a peripheral geographic location, a harsh climate, a lack of natural resources, and the absence of an economically active hinterland. Despite numerous behind-the-scenes proposals to remake the city as a high-tech center, Leningrad's Soviet planners never made the sorts of adjustments that would have converted a hierarchically managed industrial-age metropolis into a flexible, horizontally organized postindustrial leader. Instead, they squeezed enough out of the existing system to create the illusion of success.

Leningrad never confronted the central issue facing Russia today: how to generate and sustain economic creativity and growth. That will require the establishment of legal and credit structures that encourage small business and entrepreneurship. It means encouraging bottom-up initiatives rather than rule by top-down decree. It means, in effect, calling upon "Peter" to help make the future work.

There may be something of "Peter" in Russia's new president, but there is undoubtedly a good deal of "Leningrad" in him as well. Putin seems to favor using the strong hand of government overseers to prod the existing Russian economy to function more effectively. It is true that authoritative government will be needed if Russia is to succeed, but that is not what Putin seems to mean. In a statement released only days before he succeeded Yeltsin as acting president last December, Putin tipped his hat to the values of democracy and capitalism even as he observed that "the public looks forward to the restoration of the guiding and regulating role of the state to a degree which is necessary, proceeding from the traditions and present state of the country." These words are as full of contradiction as the city that bred their author. Putin's efforts as Russia's president may bring some improvements, but in assessing them it will be worth recalling the Leningrad legacy of surface achievement at the expense of more profound long-term gains. ❑