

Aid to Russia is in best interest of U.S.

America's future lies in the hands of a president who must overcome a hostile congress and a disquieted populace in order to promote his agenda for economic recovery. But his name isn't Bill.

Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin is the man of the hour, and, as much as America's future hinges on his ability to act, so to does his future depend upon America.

Yeltsin's presidency is undergoing perhaps its darkest hour as holdover communist apparatchiks are attempting to thwart his free-market reforms and remove him from power.

If Yeltsin were to be removed, he would likely be replaced by a communist puppet dictator who would ensure Russia's power and wealth remained in the hands of those who have so successfully raped the country for the past 70 years.

To be certain, Yeltsin is not the poster child for capitalism. Yet he is one of a few men in Russia who not only possess some understanding of free-market economics, but also knows how to roll the loaded dice of Russian politics.



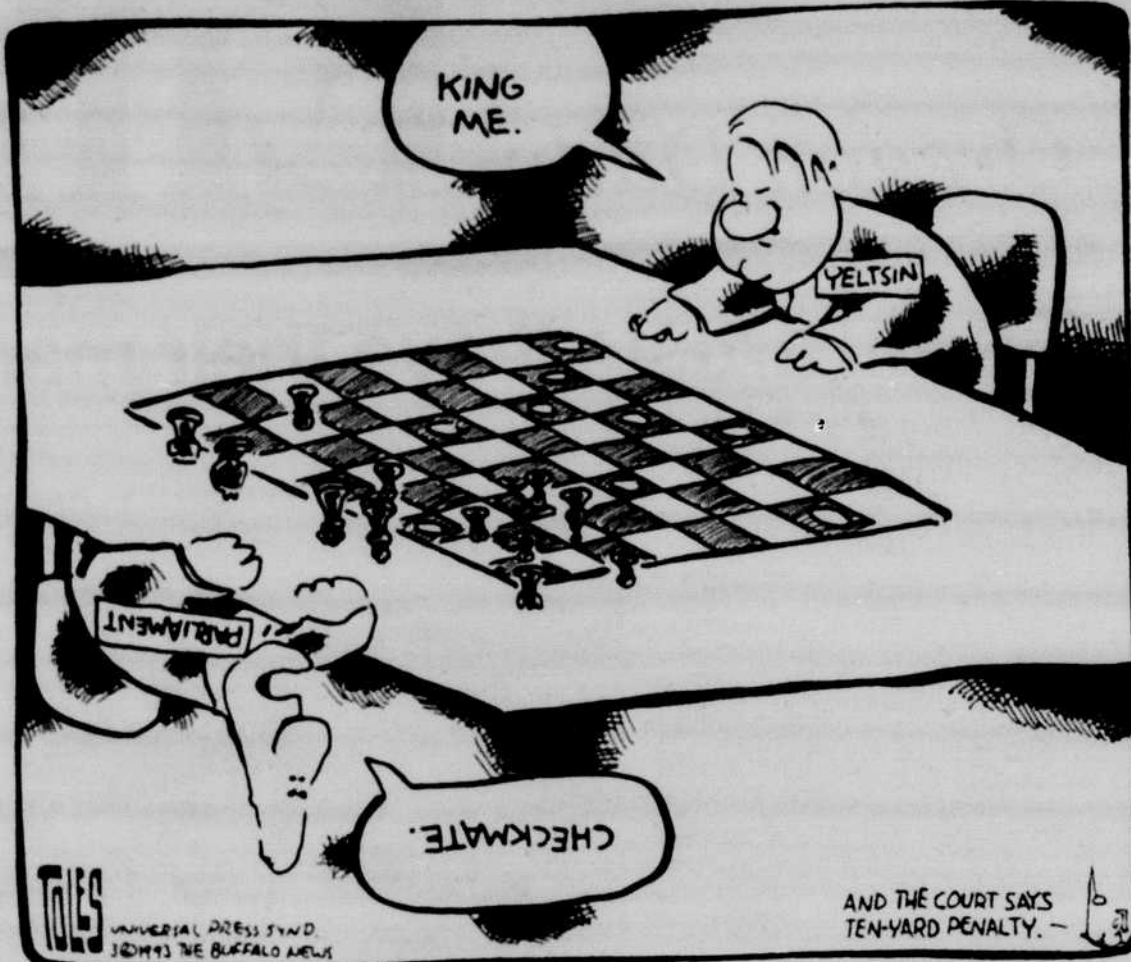
Yeltsin has survived the most recent attempts at removal primarily because he still commands the support of the Russian people, but that support is dwindling along with Russia's economy and may vanish by year's end.

The United States can take a significant step toward ensuring Yeltsin's survival and boosting Russia's economic recovery with a substantive aid package. The most basic argument in favor of aid is that a short-term investment now will be less expensive than the long-term expense of a renewed Cold War.

But throwing money at Russia is not the answer. Rather, freeing up credit to Russian businessmen, providing advanced production technology and technical and professional support are among the more important requirements for any aid package.

Currently, Russia has no legitimate banking system that can support businesses, and Russian production methods are grossly inefficient and outdated.

But America should by no means attempt to turn Russia into USA East. Although Russians have been looking intently at the West as a model on which to build, they should take heed of Western deficiencies and learn from our mistakes.



OPINION

Rough sailing back into the U.S.



Write Angles

People going to Mexico are always warned about "the water," but coming back from that country Saturday, I found U.S. waters to be much more unfriendly.

Initially after getting off of my first flight Saturday at the Los Angeles airport, everything was fine. The first stop was to get my passport and customs card stamped, and the only difficult thing about that was waiting in line.

"Welcome back, sir," an agent said, stamping my documents.

Wow, that was probably the first time I had ever been addressed as such outside of a restaurant. I almost felt like giving him a tip; it felt so good to be back.

A short walk later, I saw my two items of luggage circling the carousel. This seemed like it was going to go pretty fast. Smooth sailing.

That's when I met the Hoover Dam, in the form of an overbearing, overbellyied customs agent. Meeting him was worse than my one day of Montezuma's Revenge — but both were part of equally bad waters.

While looking around for the person I was supposed to give my customs declaration card, I walked by her. The guard in question, who resembled Disney's Sheriff of Nottingham, verbally signaled me to give my card to the woman, who soon returned it to me.

She witnessed, smiling from her stool, a session of "20 Questions."

Sheriff of Nottingham: "How long were you Mexico?"
Covering me: "A week."
Sheriff: "Are you traveling

alone?"

Me: "Yes."

Sheriff: "What was the purpose of your trip?"

Me: "Pleasure."

Sheriff: "What's your occupation?"

Me: "Student."

Sheriff: "Where do you attend school?"

Me: "The University of Oregon."

Sheriff: "What do you study?"

Me: "Journalism."

Sheriff: "Please step to the yellow line."

Great, at least I wouldn't have to deal with that guy again, right? Well, meet a woman who is the equivalent of the Sheriff's little sister, who, though appearing much more friendly, ran me through the same line of questioning. She even asked me if I packed my own bags and if that meant that everything that was in there should be there.

Little Sister also gave my bags a thorough check. My sleeping, dirty underwear and toiletries bags all received inspection.

When she was done — with my items randomly laying all over the counter — she politely informed me in her monotone voice and manner that I was welcome to put my things back in my bags. The sleeping bag, which had been packed tightly, took forever to get back into its duffle bag.

Although I realize that the agents were just doing their jobs, they did not have to do it in such an unfriendly manner.

During my check, a young Mexican man had been receiving the same treatment, but appearing not to know the English language well, he was going along with it. I felt bad for him because his country had treated me so much better.

After all, the customs agent that met me upon my arrival in Mexico City a week before (with me wearing the same outfit, carrying the same luggage and walking right by the same person I was supposed to hand the

Mexicans, in general, could teach the U.S. people a lot about manners.

card to as in Los Angeles) allowed me to pass freely through, with instructions (in Spanish I didn't understand) to press the button for the green light. I didn't, but it went unnoticed, and I went on my merry way.

Looking back, this showed me that there are two ways to do such a job: be a jerk (the American way) or be cool (the Mexican way). I saw in that instance, and in others, that Mexicans, in general, could teach the U.S. people a lot about manners.

A little common sense would have been nice, too. Why would I attempt to sneak any controlled substances (such as drugs or alcohol) through a federal checkpoint when I could more easily find anything I wanted in Eugene?

After asking a young Mexican woman I met what she thought of the United States, she responded with the three words (English version) "modern," "technological" and "liberal." She added that many Mexicans believed that views of her people in the United States were of "slow-minded," "lazy" people.

If "slow-minded" and "lazy" mean being more friendly and more sensible than a "modern" and "liberal" country that has rude and insensible customs agents with inflated egos, then someone start a fund-raiser for my ticket back to Mexico City. My bags are packed — and nothing's illegal about them.

Welcome back sir. Yeah, thanks.

Jake Berg is the news editor of the Emerald.

Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 3155 EUGENE, OREGON 97403

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co. Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

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