OPINIONS

bogeyman – Yeltsin

Yeltsin — the popular alternative

seemly extreme. It is not just bad principles, it is bad politics. There may be a Yeltsin in our future.

The crisis of Gorbachev's authority is illustrated by the economic panic in response to yet another half-measured "market" plan and now Yeltsin's election. It made sense to do everything we could to support Gorbachev when something worse — some neo-Stalinist strongman — was the more likely alternative. But Yeltsin's victory indicates that now may be the moment for something better. Perhaps the only moment. Moreover, given Gorbachev's weakness and the chaos he has engendered, the status quo is untenable. If persisted in, it must give way to something worse.

Only reformers with popular authority can survive, let alone reform. *Perestroika* is sinking because there is no chance of reform without a mandate, and Gorbachev does not have one. The Russian democrats do. Gorbachev can save himself and *perestroika* only with a liberal alliance. If Gorbachev waits, economic and social conditions will get worse. The chance then of unreconstructed dictatorial elements taking over radically increases. (Whether Gorbachev or a replacement will get to play Deng is immaterial.)

Gorbachev's choice is clear: either a clean break with the autocratic past and a clear move toward the liberals as represented by Yeltsin or a future of repression and chaos. Gorbachev cannot stay put. The status quo will not hold. He must choose.

The most important thing that President Bush can do at the summit is repeat to Gorbachev what he said to the world in his inaugural address: The day of the dictator is over. Your future is with the liberals. Embrace Yeltsin and the democratic forces. If you do, the outpouring of Western help, even Western concessions, will astonish you and benefit us both.

# of promises unkept

mer cabinet members, Charles Taylor. T rebels reportedly control large sections the country. So much instability now exi that the UN secretary general has orde all UN personnel out of the country.

The developments in Liberia come a bad time for Africa. Opponents of one-m one-vote in South Africa are sure to po to Liberia and see it as proof that bla cannot govern themselves.

Even though the Doe government ca into power with a lot of blood on its han it was by no means doomed from the st What Doe really represents is an oppor nity lost. A part of the blame has to fall the American government. The U.S. h tremendous influence over Doe. He h been trained by Americans and he court the relationship. But no pressure was on him to live up to the promises he ma when he came into office. And bit by Doe kept stepping backward. In time, proclaimed himself a general and, like predecessor, he began to govern as a dic tor and took to the high style of living. cracked down on dissent. Newspap were closed or taken over. Opponents were killed. Doe had presented himself to the U.S. as one who would stand against the advances Libya was making in the area. The government of the U.S. saw that and little else.

The special relationship the U.S. has with Liberia goes back to when the country was founded as a haven for freed American slaves in 1822. Even now, Liberia uses American money as its currency. Even the Liberian flag is patterned after the American flag, except Liberia's has but one star.

In a way, what is surprising is that Doe has lasted 10 years. And while he may be losing his grip, questions are being asked of rebel leader Charles Taylor. Where does he get *his* support? Are Khadafy and Libya behind his movement?

As for Samuel Doe, he is seen now not as a hero but a pathetic figure typical of those dictators who have led many African countries to ruin. And Liberia becomes another country on the continent of Africa without hope and waiting now for a new generation of leadership.

HT TAKES