

Civil Society and Political Authority in the Semenov District

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In the early 1990s, most studies of change in Russian politics focused their attention primarily on trends in the higher levels of the national government. The implicit assumption behind those analyses was that the decisive features of reform in Russia would be introduced from the top down by those wielding power in the central institutions. However, though that assumption is consistent with the traditions inherited from tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, the institutionalization of democratic procedures of governing might well require a different approach. A large body of scholarly literature advances the argument that the degree of growth of “civil society,” or independent social activity and organization, is a factor that exerts an important influence on a political system’s potential for realizing and sustaining democratic processes.¹ That literature clearly suggests that building a strong civil society is a gradual process, and that much of the construction of the networks of affiliation and engagement that make up the structure of civil society must proceed not from the top down, but from the bottom up.² It does seem reasonable to expect that much of the initiative for the generation of autonomous social organizations must be exercised within society itself, through the independent efforts of large numbers of citizens. It should also be expected that the policies of the state can either encourage or discourage such efforts by citizens, and thus can either stimulate or inhibit the growth of civil society.

Background

The interaction between the state and society in postcommunist Russia cannot be described fully by studies focused on political competition and policymaking in that country’s central government. During the last few years, an increasing number of researchers have turned their attention to political and economic changes at the level of cities and regions within Russia. Some of the writings produced by those scholars have dealt with trends in the largest cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg, which have the constitutional status of “subjects of the federation,” or constituent parts of the Russian Federation.³ Other scholars have furnished valuable

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reports on recent developments in regional (oblast) governments and cities of medium size, which usually are regional centers.⁴ However, so far no Western writings of which this author is aware have devoted substantial attention to changes at the level of small cities and district (*raion*) governments, and only a few articles by Russian scholars have offered fragmentary information about what is happening at that level.⁵ Thus, there is a lack of knowledge about the growth of civil society and the relationship between social groups and the state in smaller cities and rural areas in Russia.

It should be noted that the Russian Constitution distinguishes between two levels of governing authority: first, "local self-government" (*mestnoe samoupravlenie*), comprising the governing bodies of districts, cities, and villages, and second, the organs of "state power" (*gosudarstvennaia vlast'*) at the regional level and in the central government.⁶ Thus, in constitutional theory, the exercise of authority in districts and small cities comes under the heading of local government in Russia.⁷ There might be reason to hypothesize that at that level rather than in large cities, there would be the potential for the earlier emergence of civil society in the shape of groups of citizens striving to influence government. Before the late 1980s, the pervasive network of social organizations sponsored and controlled by the Communist Party severely inhibited the forming of autonomous groups. It could be hypothesized that after the collapse of the party's power, the appearance of new groups and the growth of linkages among them might come more readily in a small city, because the scale of the groups would be smaller, and familiarity among residents of such a town would be greater, than in a large metropolis. Tamara Kuznetsova, a Russian scholar studying conditions in small cities, contends that the intimacy of a small town "facilitates the creation of definite socially and economically active groups, capable of unification, organization, and the creation of various social-economic formations."⁸ One of the questions to be addressed in this article is the degree of growth of social activity and organization in one district in small-town and rural Russia. What are the preliminary indications of the growth of civil society in a small city and its surrounding district in postcommunist Russia?

Other questions will also be explored. If there has been some indication of the beginning of the emergence of civil society in the district studied here, what mechanisms or channels of representation of social interests have developed? How are the interests of local residents (individuals and groups) articulated to local government? That question pertains to the relationship between society and political institutions. A related question is the distribution of authority within local government. Recent scholarly writings on politics in regions and cities in Russia have concluded that within the government of an oblast or the main city of an oblast, executive leadership usually predominates over the corresponding legislative body.⁹ The authority of the *gubernator* (governor) of a region or the *glava administratsii* (head of administration) or mayor (*mer*) of a large or medium-sized city was strengthened by the Yeltsin government's practice of having the highest executive at each level initially select the principal executive at the level below, so that Yeltsin appointed the governors of the regions and the gover-

nors appointed the heads of raion administrations. (Recently, however, elections of governors have been taking place in the regions of Russia. The practice of electing the *gubernatory* should provide a new basis for their authority.) In addition, at the level of a region, large city, or medium-sized city, the hand of executive leadership has been strengthened because of the chaotic and ineffective operation of legislative bodies. This article will attempt to answer the question of whether the pattern of a dominant executive and a weak legislative body has been reproduced in the government of the district on which this article focuses.

The primary source of evidence in this article consists of July 1994–June 1995 issues of the newspaper *Semenovskiy vestnik* (*Semenov Herald*),¹⁰ published twelve times each month in the city of Semenov, the center of the district with the same name, in Nizhny Novgorod oblast. Semenov is a city of over 26,000 residents, located sixty-nine kilometers northeast of Nizhny Novgorod, near the Volga river, in the Non-Black Earth Zone of Russia. (Nizhny Novgorod, which was called Gorky from 1932 to 1991, is a city with a population of almost a million and a half, and is 439 kilometers east of Moscow.) The city of Semenov first arose in the early seventeenth century as a settlement of Old Believers, and the continued prevalence in that city of craftsmanship in the production of decorative objects made of wood reflects the persistence of some of the traditions of those original settlers. The population of Semenov raion is about 57,000.¹¹ All of the populated points in the district other than the town of Semenov are considered rural settlements.

In the concluding section of this article, as much as possible, impressions drawn from articles in that district's newspaper have been checked against generalizations appearing in Russian scholarly writings about local government in the Russian Federation. However, it should be emphasized that the newspaper articles analyzed in this article give only a limited and partial depiction of the actual operation of social groups and political institutions in Semenov. Further, no claim is made that Semenov raion is representative of all Russian districts of similar population size, or that generalizations concerning society and politics in Semenov can be assumed to apply to such other districts. As one might put it in the jargon of statistical sampling, it would be impossible for a sample composed of only one semi-rural district to be representative of the population of all semi-rural districts in Russia. This study is only the beginning of the investigation of conditions and trends in raiony in Russia whose centers are small cities. This article is intended to suggest tentative and preliminary statements that may later be tested through direct observation and interviews, which ultimately should gather information from a variety of locations.

The chief executive of the government of Semenov raion throughout the period studied was Alexander Fedorovich Glazov, a native of the city of Ivanovo, the graduate of an energy institute, and the former chairman of the executive committee of a city soviet.¹² Glazov had been appointed as the *glava administratsii* of Semenov district by the *gubernator* of Nizhny Novgorod oblast, who had been chosen by President Yeltsin. In October 1993, the district soviet, like all other soviets in Russia, had been abolished by a decree issued by the president. The legislative bodies that replaced the soviets could be given different names in differ-

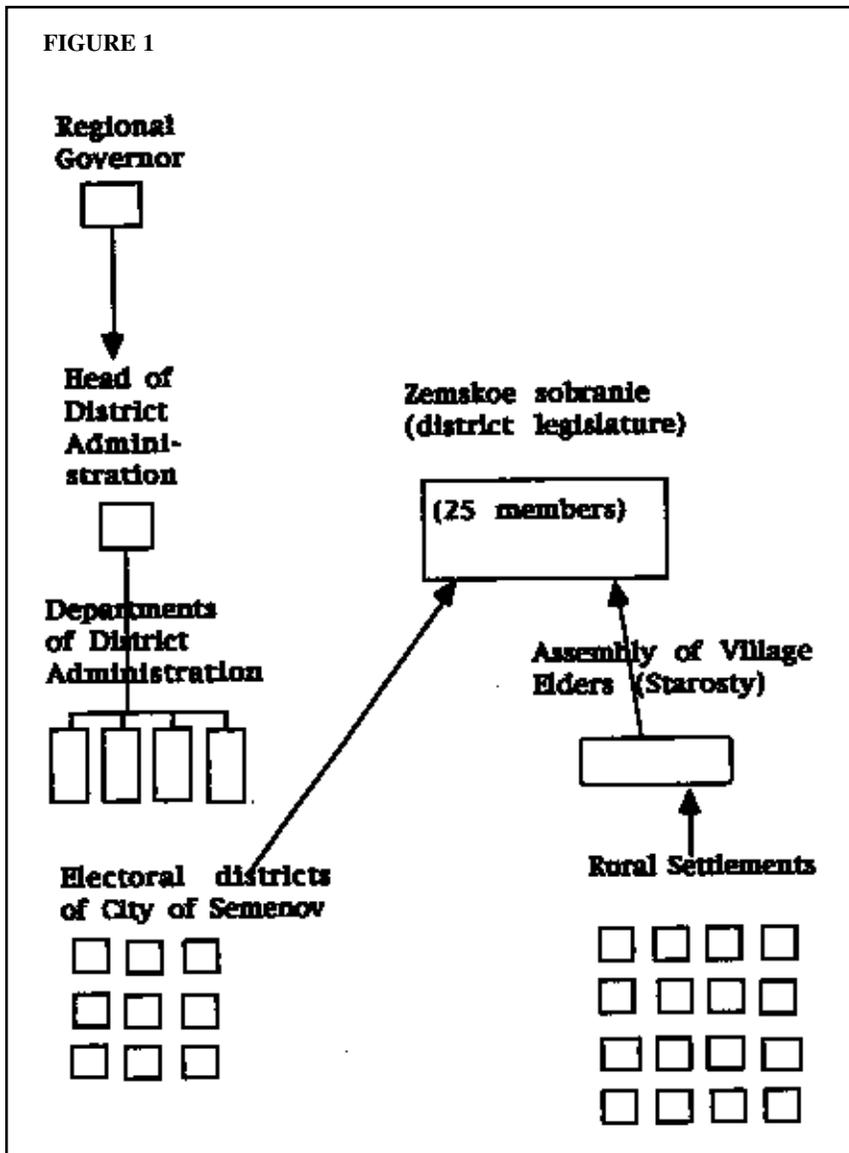
ent areas of Russia. The new representative organ created in Semenov district was the Zemskoe sobranie,¹³ which bore a name reminiscent of the institution of the *zemstvo* in pre-1917 Russia. The government of the city of Semenov was absorbed by the district government,¹⁴ so there was no mayor or elected council for that city, though there were organs of “local self-government” for smaller settlements within the district. Of the twenty-five members of the Zemskoe sobranie, nine were elected from districts (*okrugy*) in the city of Semenov, while the other sixteen were chosen from among the elders or heads (*starosty*) of smaller populated points, selected by a vote of the district assembly of *starosty*.¹⁵ It was reported in October 1994 that the Zemskoe sobranie usually met once each month,¹⁶ but reports in the district newspaper made it clear that sometimes meetings were more frequent.

As figure 1 shows, the head of administration of the district was appointed by the governor of the region. The post of head of administration later was to be filled by an election in the district. Of the twenty-five members of the district legislature (Zemskoe sobranie), nine were elected from districts in the city of Semenov, and sixteen were chosen by the Assembly of Village Elders (*starosty*) from among the members of that body, the elders of rural settlements in the district. The heads of departments in the district’s administration were accountable to the head of administration. Some of those departments were converted into municipal enterprises. The structure depicted in figure 1 was in place in Semenov district during the period studied in this research, which ended in summer 1995.

Social Organizations and Interest Articulation

A number of articles in the *Semenovskiy vestnik* during the period surveyed contained evidence of activity by a variety of social organizations in the raion. There were several notices of forthcoming meetings of the stockholders of joint stock companies, all of which presumably were formerly state-owned enterprises that had been privatized.¹⁷ One article of April 1995 announced that the district council of veterans of military service was selling stamps commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War.¹⁸ Another story published later in the same month noted that the Russian Orthodox Church was building a new cathedral on the site where one had stood in earlier times in a small village.¹⁹ Other organizations that were active in the district were the local Council of Veterans of Afghanistan,²⁰ the Society for the Protection of Nature,²¹ the sports society “Spartak,”²² musical groups,²³ labor unions,²⁴ and street committees of residents taking part in the periodic cleaning of their neighborhoods.²⁵ It seems likely that most of the organizations that were active in Semenov in 1994 and 1995 had been present during the Soviet period, and had been controlled by the Communist Party during that period. It appears that most of the groups that make up the nascent civil society of Semenov have been carried over from the Soviet system.

Some of the associational activity in that district was obviously still sponsored or encouraged by the state in the middle 1990s. The Council of Veterans of the war in Afghanistan seems to have been organized through the initiative of the raion Military Committee (*Raivoenkomat*), though veterans of that war living in the district may have gathered together informally before that council was



formed.²⁶ The local government's executive leadership evidently was the main patron of the Orthodox Church in the months surveyed; the district administration helped to insure that a local brick factory be given land in compensation for its donation of bricks for the construction of the new cathedral mentioned above.²⁷ An Orthodox priest, Father Igor Iudin, "led conversations on the Orthodox religion" in the House of Culture, which presumably was under the authority of the local government, and the reading hall of the central library of the city of Semen-

ov opened a book exhibition on “The Theme of Orthodoxy in the Periodical Press.”²⁸ The street committees that were called on to take part in the general cleaning of the city of Semenov in preparation for the 1 May and 9 May holiday celebrations were mechanisms of social mobilization that were used in campaigns strongly reminiscent of those launched by the Communist Party in previous years, as implied by the newspaper’s characterization of those committees as “non-state helpers” of the municipal enterprise responsible for the provision of communal services.²⁹ It was reported in April 1995 that the street committees had recently been re-created, but that their leaders had not yet displayed the previous degree of activism. That observation was given additional credibility by repeated complaints concerning the slowness of the cleanup efforts and exhortations from high-ranking members of the district administration to speed up the campaign, as the snow melted and the beginning of May approached.³⁰

For most citizens, the main basis of social activity beyond the family seemed to be their workplace or place of study. Most of those who participated in the spring cleaning campaign evidently were mobilized through economic enterprises and schools.³¹ Support for charities by the enterprises had become common, as indicated by the brick factory’s donation of bricks for the building of the cathedral,³² contributions from several enterprises to assist the preparation of a new House of Mercy (*Dom Miloserdya*), including the financing of an icon wall in that building,³³ and business executives’ support for presents for orphans and invalids.³⁴ Labor unions were based in enterprises, of course, and the operation of the unions implied (on the basis of fragmentary evidence) great continuity with the pattern of the Soviet period. The head of the union in one of the largest enterprises in the district, *Semenovskaya Rospis*, had occupied that position continuously since the late 1970s.³⁵ The character of the relationship between the local union branches and the local government was suggested by the publication in April 1995 of information about an agreement (*soglashenie*) between the unions and the district administration.³⁶ Under the terms of that agreement, on the one hand, the district administration would strive to support local agriculture and industry, would assist labor collectives in preventing mass unemployment, and would continue assistance for low-income people, while on the other hand, the unions would be represented in the district committee on unemployment, would participate in the commission on privatization, and would refrain from calling strikes. The fundamental principle of that accord was titled “equal social partnership.”³⁷ The agreement epitomized the usually cooperative relationship between social organizations and the raion administration, which apparently led most of those organizations to continue functioning in the role of support structures for local government.

Although the relationship between local executive organs and social organizations seemed to remain predominantly cooperative, there was an adversarial aspect to that relationship at times, too, as social groups often functioned as mechanisms for the articulation of citizens’ interests, frequently even voicing complaints about the performance of local government. At a meeting of the district Society for the Protection of Nature, there were complaints about multiple forms

of pollution of the local environment, leading to the suggestion that the district Zemskoe sobranie pass a law imposing punishments on those causing pollution.³⁸ Leaders of the city's sports society decried the decline of the sports movement in Semenov, which they implied to be due partly to the lack of sports equipment in the schools.³⁹ The head coach of the city's judo school met with local officials, including the head of the district department of education, to complain of a lack of funding for his school.⁴⁰ A group of teachers at a local school wrote a letter to the *glava administratsii* protesting about their "miserly" wages and extensive delays in the payment of their wages, and threatening to take their grievances to the regional government and the courts.⁴¹ Although the teachers were granted a meeting with the deputy head of the district administration, A. E. Gorokhov, and though Gorokhov promised that the teachers would soon be paid for January with supplementary compensation, they reportedly still went away angry. Problems in the schools resulting from a precipitous decrease in financial support were apparent in a number of articles in the local newspaper. Several directors of schools in the raion complained of lack of funding for repairs for school buildings.⁴² The main state sanitary doctor of the district expressed alarm over the lack of water in one child care center, the lack of heat in a secondary school, and the absence of refrigerators in a technical school.⁴³ The same official joined with the teachers in a rural primary school in revealing the existence of unhealthy conditions and the lack of hot food in that school; the teachers had repeatedly protested to the head of the raion administration about those problems.⁴⁴

Apparently, local medical institutions were not faring much better. A district conference of medical workers also aired indignation concerning interruptions of wage payments, and added criticism of the inferiority of rural medical facilities. The head of the local medical workers' union and the chief doctor of the central hospital were said to "have found it necessary again to knock on the door of the district administration" to present such grievances.⁴⁵ In that instance, the local executive officials took a conciliatory line in response to the criticism, and promised to attempt at least a partial satisfaction of the demands that were presented; those officials assured the medical workers that the district administration "knows their needs and is trying within the limits of the possible to remove the sharpness of problems that have accumulated." In that case, as was often true, the articulation of interests came out of workplaces, was channeled through the administrators of such organizations with assistance from union leaders, and was directed to the *glava administratsii* of the district and the heads of departments under his authority. Such expressions of interest could lead to open conflict between economic enterprises and the district administration, as exemplified by a letter to the newspaper from a lawyer for the Semenov Armature Factory sharply criticizing a statement by the director of the municipal heating network and denying that the factory still shared responsibility for the boiler houses that it formerly had controlled.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the district executive organs could be openly critical of local enterprises. In January 1995, the first deputy head of the raion administration complained of debts run up by some institutions and enterprises that had not been paying their heating bills and gave deadlines for making payments.⁴⁷

Reading articles in the *Semenovsky vestnik* over several months revealed that one of the main channels for criticizing the local government and pressing demands on those in authority was the local newspaper itself. On many occasions, local residents voiced their grievances through the newspaper. Near the end of January 1995, the newspaper reported that its offices had received a large number of telephone calls complaining about the loss of heat in homes on some streets in the city of Semenov. The district administration reportedly had run out of funds for fuel for the boiler houses in that neighborhood, so A. F. Glazov, the *glava administratsii*, traveled to Nizhny Novgorod to petition the regional governor for assistance.⁴⁸ In April, the newspaper reported that it had received a letter from a local resident who bemoaned the lack of heat and hot water in homes on Zavodskaiia Street during a number of days in March, and criticized the district administration for its lack of response to the pleas of people living on that street.⁴⁹ A man living in another village sent a letter to the *Semenovsky vestnik* expressing dissatisfaction with high prices for bus tickets for local routes, and criticizing the district and regional governments for empty promises of assistance for veterans and retired people.⁵⁰ Another local resident sent a letter to the newspaper to complain of delays in repairing the telephone line to his home.⁵¹ Still another resident criticized the inadequacy of bus service and telephone service for the village in which he lived.⁵² Thus the newspaper could serve as a channel for the articulation of the interests of unorganized citizens as well as enterprises and organized groups.⁵³

In some cases, the staff of the *Semenovsky vestnik* took an active role in investigating the basis of criticisms and seeking satisfaction for demands by local citizens and organizations. After a bus driver complained to the editorial staff about poor conditions in city streets and rural roads in the district during the winter, a reporter rode in the driver's bus to verify the information given.⁵⁴ When an elderly woman wrote to the newspaper expressing frustration because she had been unable to document that she was the mother of a soldier who had died in the Great Patriotic War and therefore had been told that she could not qualify for a benefit payment, a reporter visited the district department of social defense to pursue her case.⁵⁵ When another woman complained to the newspaper about the inconvenience caused by the requirements for paperwork for medical laboratory analysis, a reporter took her letter to the head doctor in the district hospital and inquired about the justification for the required routines.⁵⁶ On another occasion, a journalist interviewed the director of the municipal water enterprise to gain a response to a letter criticizing the rates charged for water for homes and questioning the necessity of water meters.⁵⁷ Thus, at times journalists functioned virtually as ombudsmen in relaying citizens' complaints and questions to local officials.

The newspaper also served as a channel for criticism moving in the other direction, when journalists served the interests of the district administration by bringing attention to shortcomings in the performance of economic enterprises. For example, a reporter of the *Semenovsky vestnik* accompanied the head agronomist of the raion administration and the head of the state inspection department of the district on a visit to three local farms in May 1995, and afterward wrote an article exposing a lack of discipline, theft of farm property, and delays in the spring sow-

ing.⁵⁸ It may be inferred that the article was intended to bring pressure on the management of the farms to clear up problems that had been noticed by local government executives. In another case, the newspaper itself was the target of criticism from local citizens. In December 1994, members of the district council of veterans of military service were granted a meeting with the editors of the *Semenovskiy vestnik*. The meeting gave the veterans' leaders the opportunity to accuse the newspaper of "being oblivious to the achievements of socialism" in Russia and generally failing to promote patriotism.⁵⁹ The veterans were offered the opportunity to publish essays in the newspaper periodically in order to propound their favorite themes. In that instance, the newspaper gave coverage to criticism and demands that were directed toward its editors. Most of the newspaper's coverage of complaints by citizens described the expression of demands on government, however.

The Head of Administration

The central focus of most demands from citizens and the main locus of authority in Semenov district clearly appeared to be the office of the chief executive of the district government, the *glava administratsii* of the raion. The vast majority of the complaints against government that were reported by the district newspaper were laid at the door of the *glava administratsii* and the departments responsible to him, while far fewer complaints were directed to the district legislative body, the Zemskoe sobranie. That fact is not surprising, since the head of administration seemed to make most of the decisions that shaped public policy in the district. The local chief executive even possessed a considerable part of the legislative authority of the raion, as implied by the report in February 1995 that A. F. Glazov, the head of administration, had approved a decision (*postanovlenie*) to reduce the staff of the district administration by 40 percent.⁶⁰ The vertical line of authority leading to the raion administration was indicated by the statement that Glazov's decision was made on the basis of a corresponding order (*rasporiazhenie*) by the regional governor. There was no suggestion that the district legislature had been involved in the process of making a decision that could be expected to have a major impact on the local government. Another example of legislation by executive decree in Semenov raion was provided by an article about an order by the head of administration limiting residents' payments for housing and communal services as a percentage of personal income for different levels.⁶¹ The subsidies required to implement that decision obviously would entail the allocation of funds from the district government's budget, but there was no suggestion that the chief executive had sought the district legislature's approval for the decision.

The head of administration had a wide scope of responsibilities, including responsibility for attempting to coordinate the activity of economic enterprises. The *glava administratsii* and his lieutenants seemed to involve themselves deeply in overseeing the activity of local farms and encouraging growth in output from agriculture, or at least limiting the decrease in production. In May 1994, the head of administration announced a decision to create a staff for carrying out the spring sowing.⁶² That mechanism was in operation again during the spring of 1995. In April 1995, at a "working conference" of the heads of collective farms, which was

held in the office of the *glava administratsii*, the main subject on the agenda was “the preparation of the farms of the district for the spring sowing.” The head of administration informed the heads of the farms that the regional government had promised to provide funding to assist the farms with the acquisition of gasoline and oil.⁶³ Glazov continued to play an active role in attempting to stimulate success in the spring sowing. Around the middle of May he led “a meeting of the operational staff on questions of the sowing campaign,” to which the leaders of the district’s farms were invited.⁶⁴ At that meeting, Glazov noted the contraction of sown land in the district and the main agronomist of the raion highlighted shortcomings in the spring sowing, including poor organization of work and weak leadership of farms.⁶⁵

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The administration’s involvement in overseeing, criticizing, and cajoling management and seeking financial assistance for enterprises seemed to be greater in relation to agriculture than in relation to industry.⁶⁶

The district administration did show concern for the well-being of both agriculture and industry, and did make some efforts to move beyond a tradi-

tional mobilizing approach. In January 1995, the *glava administratsii* took part in a meeting of heads of local farms to explore the prospects for developing the small-scale processing of agricultural products in the district.⁶⁷ In that instance, the executive leader apparently sought to promote innovation by local economic enterprises. On another occasion, the district administration attempted to serve as a broker between farms in the district and a large industrial enterprise outside Semenov raion. In June 1995, representatives of local farms met with representatives of the GAZ factory of Nizhny Novgorod. The factory offered to supply machinery and spare parts on a regular basis in exchange for agricultural products from the farms. It was reported that if the farms accepted those terms, the intermediary facilitating the fulfillment of the bargain would be the district’s department of agricultural machinery (*Sel’khoztekhnika*). Direct intervention by the district administration to aid local industrial enterprises was rarely mentioned in the local newspaper. The administration did address problems in the Semenov Armature Factory at one point, however, reportedly reacting to urgent pleas for assistance from the management and union of that factory. A. F. Glazov’s response was to pledge to help finance the payment of back wages for workers in the enterprise.⁶⁹ The head of the raion administration also engaged in some efforts to facilitate exports by industrial enterprises in the district and to attract investment from abroad. A newspaper article of June 1994 disclosed that Glazov had visited France to promote sales of the products of the enterprise *Khokhlomskaia Rospis’*, and had met with a delegation of business executives from Yugoslavia to discuss a proposal to construct a plant in Semenov for processing agricultural products.⁷⁰ A statement

of principle concerning the executive leadership's objectives for productive enterprises in the district was furnished by V. A. Abakumova, head of the department of economics and forecasting of the district administration, who declared at a meeting of the Zemskoe sobranie that in order for the district's economy to escape the "crisis situation" in which it found itself, it was necessary to expand the production of goods "profiting from demand and standing up to competition in the market."⁷¹ She did not describe the strategy that the district administration had chosen in order to achieve that objective.⁷²

It was clear that in a time of a sharp decline in production in Semenov raion, as in most other areas in Russia, the executive leadership of the district government did devote a great deal of energy to trying to maintain a minimum of services to citizens and sought diligently to make those citizens aware that it was distributing benefits to them. Though the *Semenovskiy vestnik* frequently printed criticism of the district administration, the newspaper also often publicized the benevolence of the administration. When the only bread factory in Semenov closed, the head of the district trade department reassured the local population in an interview in the newspaper that an ample amount of bread would continue to be available, since the leaders of the raion administration "attentively" looked after the process of supplying bread from bakeries in Nizhny Novgorod to shops in Semenov.⁷³ The district government also was said to be responsible for subsidizing communal services for housing people with low incomes, as described by F. V. Maiov, head of the housing-communal department of the raion.⁷⁴ The raion administration also furnished assistance for medical services for the local population, as indicated by the announcement of a decision by the *glava administratsii* guaranteeing that the district government would cover 50 percent of the cost of eyedrops for people with glaucoma or cataracts.⁷⁵ Assistance for diabetics in paying the costs of food products was also instituted. Perhaps the clearest gesture of benevolence by the head of administration was its adoption of an order (*rasporiazhenie*) in December 1994 that decreed funding for at least one New Year's present for each child in the district, to insure that orphans and children in families with low incomes would not go without presents on the coming holiday.⁷⁶

Various articles in the newspaper portrayed the district executive organs as committed to supporting social services for local residents. In October 1994, the head of the district department for the "social defense of the population" discussed plans for the opening of a House of Mercy in the town of Semenov that would house one hundred elderly people.⁷⁷ In December of the same year, Boris Nemtsov, governor of Nizhny Novgorod oblast, was present for the official opening of the House of Mercy. The local newspaper's article on that ceremony pointed out that the construction of the building had been financed by the regional government and supervised by district officials.⁷⁸ An article published in March 1995 described the conditions in that home in glowing terms, clearly implying that the district administration was determined to provide care for the elderly.⁷⁹ About the same time, there was an announcement of plans to open a center to house orphans and children taken from their parents, where, it was promised, those children would be looked after, fed, and clothed.⁸⁰ An article of June 1995 praised the work

of the Center of Creativity of Young People in Semenov, which was said to be successful in offering opportunities for young people to take part in artistic activities and sports.⁸¹ The newspaper also published a letter from a pensioner commending the district library for serving as a center of cultural and literary activities.⁸² In a time of severe budgetary problems for government on all levels, the district administration obviously wanted to assure local citizens that it was doing all it could to maintain services for them, with special consideration for the needs of the most vulnerable groups in the population.

The District Legislature

According to Russia's Law on Local Self-Government of August 1995, elected representative bodies on the level of "local self-government" should have impressive powers in the areas of legislation, taxation, control of budgets, municipal planning, control of municipal property, and monitoring the work of local executive officials.⁸³ In accordance with that law, the district legislature (*Zemskoe sobranie*) of Semenov raion supposedly adopts the basic statute (*ustav*) of the district, confirms the budget of the district government, institutes local taxes and fees, approves programs of development for territories within the raion, and oversees the activity of the head of the district administration.⁸⁴ However, in practice the *glava administratsii* appeared to be the dominant force in the government of the raion, while the *Zemskoe sobranie* seemed to play a role in decisionmaking only sporadically. In examples of complaints by citizens such as those cited earlier, the focus of grievances and therefore of interest articulation usually was the administration rather than the district legislature. On one occasion, the *glava administratsii* felt it necessary to state defensively, "There is no basis today to say that the *Zemskoe sobranie* is placed in relation to the administration in the position of a younger brother."⁸⁵

Glazov's disclaimer was a response to one deputy's criticism of an alleged lack of supervision of spending by the *Zemskoe sobranie*. Evidently there were even lapses in that body's adoption of annual budgets. At a meeting of the *Zemskoe sobranie* in June 1994, one of its members revealed that it had not yet approved the district budgets for 1992 and 1993. He also charged that the *Zemskoe sobranie* had no mechanism for monitoring the execution of budgetary decisions by the district administration.⁸⁶ The formal adoption of a budget for each year probably had been discouraged by the deep slump in the local economy and the resulting deficits sustained by the district government. Evidently, the district legislature became more careful to exercise its fiscal authority in 1995, however; the *Zemskoe sobranie* formally approved the budget for that year in April.⁸⁷ Even before that time, the administration had regularly reported to the legislative body on budget fulfillment, usually presenting bad news.⁸⁸

Though the *Zemskoe sobranie* generally played a passive role in shaping budgetary policy, at times it was called on to assert its authority in that area. For example, a resolution of that body authorized the allocation of funds for the purchase of a video camera by the district police.⁸⁹ A more momentous step was taken by the *Zemskoe sobranie* in December 1994 when the assembly adopted a

new tax on the profits of local enterprises to support communal services for homes in the district, including the provision of coal, heating oil, and natural gas.⁹⁰ The addition of that tax seemed to have been viewed by the members of the Zemskoe sobranie as a distasteful step that was necessary to assure adequate heating for homes in the area during the rest of the winter. Soon the district legislature freed several local enterprises from paying the new tax, evidently in response to protests from the managers of those enterprises.⁹¹

At the same time, however, the Zemskoe sobranie approved a new retail sales tax, which was to prove even more unpopular. That tax had been recommended by a newly created Economic Committee of the Zemskoe sobranie, chaired by the head of the department of economics and forecasting of the district administration and including the chairman of the budget committee of the Zemskoe sobranie, the main economist or accountant of each of several local enterprises, representatives of a trade organization and a construction organization, and the heads of the district's financial department, tax inspection department, and commercial bank.⁹² Despite the obvious effort to gain broad consent for the sales tax, soon after its adoption the editors of the *Semenovskiy vestnik* received a letter with eighty-four signatures objecting to that levy.⁹³ The newspaper recounted that publishing the resolution on the introduction of the sales tax "had evoked a wave of protest from the population," prompting a "very serious discussion in a meeting of the Zemskoe sobranie," in which the tax was cut from 3 percent to 1 percent.⁹⁴ Within a few weeks, the Economic Committee proposed that the Zemskoe sobranie consider instituting a tax on the right to conduct trade in the district.⁹⁵ Issues concerning taxation occupied a prominent place on the agenda of the legislative body's meetings.

The Zemskoe sobranie also considered other types of issues. In one of its sessions, that body approved a resolution mandating the reorganization of the district's consumer society.⁹⁶ In the same meeting, the Zemskoe sobranie decided to turn to the governor of the region for help in funding the extension of natural gas connections to more homes in the district.⁹⁷ The legislative body also was responsible for adopting the basic law (*ustav*) of the raion. In February 1995, the Zemskoe sobranie formed a commission of ten people to prepare a draft of the district's *ustav*.⁹⁸ The Zemskoe sobranie also was consulted by those who were working on a basic law for Nizhny Novgorod oblast. A representative of the region's Legislative Assembly presented a draft of a new basic law for the oblast at one of the meetings of the district legislature, stimulating considerable discussion about basic principles of the relationships between different levels of government and between separate institutions within the district government.⁹⁹

One of the deputies of the Zemskoe sobranie objected to the draft law's provision proposing to combine the post of head of administration within each raion with the office of head of local self-government. That deputy wanted the chairperson of the legislative body to continue to serve as the head of local self-government. It might be added that the name of the presiding officer of the Zemskoe sobranie appeared in the district newspaper far less frequently than the name of the *glava administratsii*. In March 1995, a meeting of the organizing committee

for the preparations for the 9 May (Day of Victory) celebration was held in the office of chairman of the Zemskoe sobranie, V. G. Borin.¹⁰⁰ However, within a few weeks the administration of the district had taken over the task of organizing city employees and the members of street committees for the most time-consuming work in preparation for the anniversary celebration, the cleaning of streets and yards.¹⁰¹ The chairman of the Zemskoe sobranie did not seem to play a central role in the making or execution of policy in the district.

Conclusions

The Growth of Civil Society in Semenov

The information that has been examined in this article constitutes only indirect and partial evidence of social and political trends in the city and district of Semenov, so any conclusions reached here can have only a tentative character. With that reservation in mind, one point that could be made is that the reports summarized in this article imply that most of the social organizations in which citizens participated in Semenov in 1994 and 1995 were structures inherited from the Soviet system. Among the organizations that were active in that locale were labor unions, veterans' groups, sports clubs, a society for the protection of nature, and the Russian Orthodox Church—all of which look very familiar to those who have studied Soviet society. Scholars discussing the potential for the emergence of civil society in Russia have tended to discount the potential value of such organizations.¹⁰² A large number of newer, more independent organizations—the “informal” groups—came into being rapidly in large cities in Russia during the late 1980s, serving as vehicles for social activism and the articulation of political interests.¹⁰³ In contrast, very few new groups seem to have been formed in Semenov by the middle of the 1990s.¹⁰⁴ Yet, I would argue that, in view of the absence of a substantial number of groups created by the independent efforts of citizens, it is not necessary to write off the prospects for the growth of civil society in Semenov.

It would have been unrealistic to expect the entire network of social organizations inherited from the Soviet period to collapse when the old Communist Party ceased to function. The primary form of movement toward the development of independent social organizations in Semenov by the mid-1990s may well have been the adaptation to new roles of social groups and organizations that previously had been the transmission belts of control by the ruling party. We should recall that, although the primary function of social organizations within the Soviet system was to implement the directives of the Communist Party, such organizations also (to a limited extent, to be sure) did perform the secondary function of expressing the interests of their members.¹⁰⁵ The social groups that survived the disintegration of the Soviet system may have had the potential, to varying degrees, to serve as channels of more open interest articulation. Nevertheless, in the intertwining of elements of the old and the new produced by the persistence of inherited structures in a changed setting, features characteristic of the Soviet system often predominated.

In Semenov, labor unions usually still seemed to display a high degree of docility in their relations with the management of their enterprises, and the unions

entered into a cooperative agreement with the leadership of the local government.¹⁰⁶ The street committees played a traditional mobilizing role in a campaign for cleaning the city, including the familiar *subbotniki*, though that campaign evidently failed to inspire much enthusiasm from citizens. The reluctance of citizens to participate in the spring cleaning campaign shows the effect of the termination of Communist Party supervision of those social organizations that almost exclusively had played the role of mobilizing mass participation to achieve the objectives set by political leaders.

On the other hand, the disappearance of the Communist Party apparatus created the potential for more independence and assertiveness by other pre-existing social groups. The evidence

reviewed in this article suggests that in Semenov by the middle of the 1990s, the leaders of social groups, enterprises, and public institutions¹⁰⁷ frequently expressed demands for financial resources and often engaged in open criticism of the performance of the leaders of local government.

That evidence implies considerable validity to Richard Rose's argument that in postcommunist societies the construction of organizations enjoying trust from their supporters is more likely to be successful when there are face-to-face relationships between the average members and the officers of such organizations.¹⁰⁸ That degree of familiarity between followers and leaders is easier to achieve in a small city or rural area, and thus it may be hypothesized that the intimacy of a small-scale community is a factor enhancing the potential of social groups previously controlled by the Communist Party to undertake more independent efforts to protect the interests of their members.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the development of independent social organizations in Semenov during the period studied seemed to be very much in its formative stage.

An important institution of local civil society, playing an important role in articulating citizens' interests during the period studied, was the local newspaper, the *Semenovsky vestnik*. That newspaper often voiced complaints by local residents and sometimes investigated the basis of their criticism of local government, so that the publication evidently served as a channel for the articulation of the demands of local citizens, both as individuals and as the members of organized groups.¹¹⁰ The newspaper had a mixed relationship with the local administration, because it often printed information favorable to the executive leadership, but at times tried to increase local officials' accountability to the public. Thus, the relationship between the local press and the local administration was partly cooperative and partly adversarial. The role of the newspaper in voicing complaints from citizens is almost surely a role that, in part, has been inherited from the years of

“However, in practice the glava administratsii appeared to be the dominant force in the government of the raion, while the Zemskoe sobranie seemed to play a role in decisionmaking only sporadically.”

the Communist Party's hegemony. The use of newspapers to air some dissatisfaction from rank-and-file citizens in order to pressure lower level officials to perform more effectively was a familiar feature of the Soviet system. Thus, the operation of the newspaper in the mid-1990s also showed the adaptation of an institution inherited from the Soviet period, heightening the importance of a function that institution had performed in a more limited fashion in the previous era.¹¹¹

The Zemskoe sobranie

The concept of civil society, as employed by Eastern European dissidents in the past and by Western scholars in recent years, assumes that the state and social organizations are independent of each other, and that there is a degree of implicit antagonism between political authority and society, or at least that the relationship between them is primarily adversarial. The evidence presented in this article suggests the need to qualify that assumption to a significant extent.¹¹² In Semenov raion, the Zemskoe sobranie may be viewed as an institution combining elements of social organization with elements of the authority of the state. That body is a quasi-state and quasi-social organization, all the more so because of the absence of a tradition of the institutionalization of independent social organizations in Semenov. The Russian conception of "local self-government" implies a synthesis of social and political organizations at the local level, and that notion seems to apply to the Zemskoe sobranie. That body operates in a setting in which there is probably little social distance between most citizens and their legislative representatives, and in which political parties do not serve as intermediate links between voters and legislators.¹¹³ The meetings of the local legislative body would not seem to be frequent enough to require its members to leave their primary occupational roles and become full-time, professional legislators. Small rural settlements have been given direct, institutionalized representation in the local legislative body through the inclusion of some village starosty among the members of the Zemskoe sobranie.¹¹⁴ The representatives of economic enterprises have been included in committees of the Zemskoe sobranie, and the chief managers of those enterprises may routinely attend meetings of the district legislature.¹¹⁵ On the other hand, since it makes some of the district's laws, formally approves the budget of the government of the raion, and imposes taxes on local citizens and enterprises, the legislative body possesses a share of the authority of the state.

The Head of Administration

If the Zemskoe sobranie is a forum for the representation of civil society and is a mechanism for the integration of local society, the head of the district's administration and his lieutenants appear to fall more clearly within the realm of the state. Newspaper reports on politics in Semenov convey the sense that the glava administratsii of the district constitutes the lowest level of the authority of the centralized state, perhaps partly because that role for the local chief executive fits Russian and Soviet tradition, and partly because the occupant of that position was initially appointed by the chief executive of the level of administration immediately above, the governor of the oblast.¹¹⁶ It is possible that over time the effects

of electing the head of the administration of the raion might change that official's relationship with his constituents, but it is unlikely that any conceivable change in the style of operation of the head of administration would erase the implication that such an official exercises state authority. Nevertheless, during the period studied, the *glava administratsii* of the district took pains to remind citizens that he was striving to serve their interests by maintaining essential services and manifesting benevolence to the most vulnerable members of society, and often by petitioning the regional governor for help in meeting the needs of local citizens.¹¹⁷ The chronic deficit in the budget of the government of Semenov raion, frequently compelling the head of administration to seek financial assistance from higher levels of government, substantially diminished the authority of the Zemskoe sobranie and reinforced the credibility of the notion that the *glava administratsii* of the district belonged to the vertical line of authority within the state.

The local head of administration has taken on a large part of the role previously played by the head of a raion Communist Party organization, who was described by Western specialists on Soviet politics as in effect the "prefect" or governor of the district, the official responsible for everything that happened within the raion, including the performance of economic enterprises and the satisfaction of consumers' needs.¹¹⁸ During the period studied in Semenov, the chief executive of the district government attempted to coordinate the activity of all local organizations. In the mid-1990s the head of the administration of Semenov district had a wider sphere of responsibility than the chief executive on a corresponding level of government in a Western country, because the *glava administratsii* of Semenov had inherited the responsibility for stimulating the performance of economic enterprises, which formerly was assigned to the local Communist Party chief.¹¹⁹ The head of administration probably did not have as much control over the management of such enterprises as a Communist Party secretary had in earlier times; indeed, there was ample evidence that he often felt frustrated by the independence and stubbornness displayed by those executives.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, the *glava administratsii* and his assistants periodically drew economic managers into meetings that seemed to have both a consultative and a mobilizational function, and frequently criticized the executives of enterprises whose performance was not satisfactory. The local administration even attempted to provide detailed guidance for the spring sowing in the farms of the district, clearly emulating the role earlier played by the head of the Communist Party in the raion.¹²¹ At the same time, the administration of the district government was also accountable for the delivery of services to local residents, and in general was expected to play a key role in protecting the standard of living of the local population. Thus it may be said that the first secretary of the district Communist Party, as the "Soviet prefect," had been replaced by the head of the district governmental administration, the new Russian prefect, though surely the new prefect lacked some of the levers of control that the old prefect had manipulated.¹²²

The above generalization also needs to be qualified in at least one other respect. The supervision of ideological indoctrination is one role that formerly was assigned to local Communist Party officials, but has not been passed on to local government officials in Semenov. The *glava administratsii* of the district does

encourage the dissemination of patriotic and religious values, but his responsibility in that sphere is only a shadow of the former ideological role of Communist Party secretaries. In contemporary Russia, no single organizational hierarchy has a monopoly on the teaching of patriotism, and though the Russian Orthodox Church's activities have expanded during the last several years with encouragement and support from government, that church's influence is still far less pervasive than was that of the Communist Party. There is no structure on any level that has comprehensive responsibility for the level of personal ethics and public spirit in the society. In that sense, even though there are echoes of moral paternalism by government (which are weaker than the continued tradition of economic paternalism), the situation in Russia has come closer to that in Western pluralist systems.

The evidence examined in this article implies that within the government of Semenov raion, the authority of the *glava administratsii* is much greater than that of the district's legislative body, the *Zemskoe sobranie*. In other words, power is concentrated much more in executive leadership than in the local legislative body. Nevertheless, the *Zemskoe sobranie* had to be reckoned with by the local executive leadership to some degree during the period studied. The head of administration sought approval for some major decisions in the legislative forum, where at times there was criticism of the actions of the executive. Some members of the *Zemskoe sobranie* openly expressed their dissatisfaction with the weakness of that body's authority. It is possible that after a series of elections of representatives to the district legislature, it will assert its power more forcefully. The key question influencing the possibility of such a trend may well be whether funds at the disposal of the *Zemskoe sobranie* will be greater than the funding controlled by the head of the local administration. It seems likely that a major factor inhibiting the growth of the authority of local representative institutions in Russia is the lack of adequate financial resources to assure the degree of independence for local government promised by the country's Constitution and laws.¹²³

NOTES

1. A large number of scholarly writings support that general conclusion. Two recent examples are Larry Diamond, "Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation," *Journal of Democracy* 5 (July 1994): 3–17; and M. Steven Fish, "Russia's Fourth Transition," *Journal of Democracy* 5 (July 1994): 31–42.

2. Richard Rose, "Postcommunism and the Problem of Trust," *Journal of Democracy* 5 (July 1994): 29.

3. A listing of the subjects of the federation, including the republics and *oblasti* of the country, is provided by *Konstitutsiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (Moscow: Izvestiia, 1993) Article 65, 22–23. Recent studies of politics in St. Petersburg and Moscow are Robert W. Ortung, *From Leningrad to St. Petersburg: Democratization in a Russian City* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), and Timothy J. Colton, *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 1995).

4. Jeffrey W. Hahn, "Developments in Local Soviet Politics," in Alfred J. Rieber and Alvin Z. Rubinstein eds., *Perestroika at the Crossroads* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1991), 75–101; Jeffrey W. Hahn, "Local Politics and Political Power in Russia: The Case of Yaroslavl," *Soviet Economy* 7 (October–December 1991): 322–41; Daniel Berkowitz and Beth Mitchneck, "Fiscal Decentralization in the Soviet Economy," *Comparative Eco-*

nomic Studies 34, (Summer 1992): 1–18; Blair A. Ruble, “Reshaping the City: The Politics of Property in a Provincial Russian City,” *Urban Anthropology* 21 (Fall 1992): 203–33; Theodore H. Friedgut and Jeffrey W. Hahn, *Local Power and Post-Soviet Politics* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1994); Beth Mitchneck, “An Assessment of the Growing Local Economic Development Function of Local Authorities in Russia,” *Economic Geography* 71 (April 1995): 150–70; Josephine Andrews and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, “Regionalism and Reform in Provincial Russia,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 11 (October–December 1995): 384–406; Blair A. Ruble, *Money Sings: The Changing Politics of Urban Space in Post-Soviet Yaroslavl* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1995); the essays by Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, Jeffrey W. Hahn, Blair A. Ruble, and Aleksandr Postnikov in *Democratization in Russia: The Development of Legislative Institutions*, Jeffrey W. Hahn, ed. (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996); and John Gibson and Philip Hanson, eds., *Transformation from Below: Local Power and the Political Economy of Post-Communist Transitions* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 1996).

5. Those writings are reviewed by Alfred B. Evans, Jr., “Problems of Small Cities in the Russian Federation,” paper presented at the annual conference of the Rocky Mountain Association for Slavic Studies and the Western Social Science Association, Reno, Nevada, April 1996. Most of the Russian scholars now studying small cities in their country consider a small city to be one of under 100,000 population. A detailed discussion of the established definition of a small city in the Soviet Union may be found in Alfred B. Evans, Jr., “The Development of Small Cities in the Russian Republic of the Soviet Union,” paper presented at the annual conference of the Rocky Mountain Association for Slavic Studies and the Western Social Science Association, Oakland, California, April 1995.

6. Hahn, “Local Politics,” 335; *Konstitutsiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 4, 52; Federal’nyi Zakon “Ob obshchikh printsipakh organizatsii mestnogo samoupravleniia v Rossiiskoi Federatsii,” *Sobranie zakonodatel’stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 35 (28 avgusta 1995 g.): 6541–6564.

7. Governments in larger cities (other than Moscow and St. Petersburg) and in rural settlements also come under the heading of “local self-government” in constitutional theory.

8. T. E. Kuznetsova, “Malye goroda Rossii: kharakteristika naseleniia,” *Ekonomicheskie i sotsial’nye peremeny* 6 (1994): 117.

9. Jeffrey W. Hahn, “The Development of Local Legislatures in Russia: The Case of Yaroslavl,” in Hahn, *Democratization in Russia*, 173–74, 178.

10. I was also able to obtain a few issues of the newspaper published in 1994 before July, providing some information concerning the structure of the government of the district. I was unable to obtain some issues of the newspaper that were published during the primary period studied.

11. *Goroda Rossii: entsiklopediia* (Moscow: Bol’shaia Rossiiskaia entsiklopediia, 1994), 416; *Semenovskiy vestnik* (hereafter cited as *SV*), 24 September 1994, 2. The latter source estimates the city’s population in 1994 at 26,700, and the population of the *raion* as 57,400.

12. *SV*, 26 March 1994, 2. Glazov was reported to be forty years old when that issue of the newspaper was published.

13. *SV*, 22 October 1994, 2.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *SV*, 16 April 1994, 1, and 22 October 1994, 2. The office of village elder (*starosta*) also goes back to a corresponding institution of pre-1917 Russia.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *SV*, 16 March 1995, 1; 1 April 1995, 2; 4 April 1995, 2; and 29 June 1995, 4.

18. *SV*, 6 April 1995, 1.

19. *SV*, 15 April 1995, 1.

20. *SV*, 8 June 1995, 1.

21. *SV*, 15 December 1994, 2.

22. *SV*, 4 May 1995, 2.
23. *SV*, 29 April 1995. The groups referred to here seemed to be made up of young people interested in performing and listening to rock music.
24. *SV*, 31 January 1995, 1; 4 April 1995, 4; and 18 April 1995, 2.
25. *SV*, 24 January 1995, 2, 4; and 2 April 1995, 1.
26. *SV*, 8 June 1995, 1.
27. *SV*, 15 April 1995, 1.
28. *SV*, 29 June 1995, 2.
29. *SV*, 24 January 1995, 4.
30. *SV*, 6 April 1995, 1, and 20 April 1995, 1. The latter article complained that by late April most of the cleanup that taken place had been carried out by municipal enterprises and employees of departments of the municipal government.
31. *SV*, 2 April 1995, 1.
32. *SV*, 15 April 1995, 1.
33. *SV*, 28 January 1995, 1.
34. *SV*, 19 January 1995, 1. That support was mentioned in connection with the distribution of presents from the Red Cross in the district.
35. *SV*, 31 January 1995, 1. Most of the larger enterprises in the city (and many independent craftsmen) are engaged in the reworking and painting of wood to create brightly colored plates, bowls, cups, lamp stands, and other decorative objects. Those objects collectively are known as *Khokhloma*.
36. *SV*, 4 April 1995, 4, and 18 April 1995, 2.
37. That principle emulates the policy of the central government under Yeltsin toward relations between labor and management.
38. *SV*, 15 December 1994, 2.
39. *SV*, 4 May 1995, 2.
40. *SV*, 16 February 1995, 1. No increases in funding for the judo school were promised.
41. *SV*, 11 February 1995, 1. Frequent suspensions in the payment of wages have been very common in Russia during the last few years.
42. *SV*, 30 July 1994, 1.
43. *SV*, 7 February 1995, 2.
44. *SV*, 2 February 1995, 1. Another article reported a lack of heat in the main building and the dormitory of a technical school; *SV*, 10 December 1994, 3.
45. *SV*, 2 February 1995, 2.
46. *SV*, 1 April 1995, 1. However, the tendency toward compromise was evident again in that case, as the lawyer for the factory promised some financial support for the boiler houses. In the city of Semenov, boiler houses (*kotel'nye*) are the main source of heating for residents' homes. The maintenance of boilers and the supplying of fuel for them appear to be questions of great importance for local citizens and the local government. Those issues received considerable attention in the meeting of the district *Zemskoe sobranie* that this author visited in July 1995. The question of how to prepare for and make it through the winter with a minimum of discomfort (*kak zimovat'*) seems to be almost an obsession for the residents and leaders of Semenov, for understandable reasons.
47. *SV*, 19 January 1995, 2.
48. *SV*, 26 January 1995, 1.
49. *SV*, 8 April 1995, 1.
50. *SV*, 18 May 1995, 3.
51. *SV*, 23 May 1995, 1.
52. *SV*, 29 June 1995, 1.
53. Obviously, the newspaper played a role in the articulation of interests by social organizations, enterprises, and public institutions by helping to gain public recognition for those demands.
54. *SV*, 4 March 1995, 1. The same article also reported that drivers and representa-

tives of the local bus enterprise had met with the first deputy head of the district administration to complain of the decline in revenue for their enterprise and of a lack of money for gasoline, delays in the payment of their wages, and a shortage of spare parts for buses.

55. *SV*, 15 April 1995, 2. The reporter learned that the woman would have to go to court to seek redress.

56. *SV*, 20 April 1995, 1.

57. *SV*, 18 May 1995, 1.

58. *SV*, 16 May 1995, 1.

59. *SV*, 10 December 1994, 1. The chairman of the district *Zemskoe sobranie* presided over that meeting.

60. *SV*, 4 February 1995, 1. The decision was also reported by an article appearing on 11 March 1995, 1.

61. *SV*, 17 January 1995, 1.

62. *SV*, 2 June 1994, 2.

63. *SV*, 8 April 1995, 1. The credit granted through the regional government was also reported on 27 April 1995, 1.

64. *SV*, 18 May 1995, 1. The use of the word "campaign" implies strong continuity with the traditions of the Soviet system.

65. In a review of the results of the spring sowing campaign, the head of the district agricultural administration said that the heads of farms had met twice with the district staff, and that on those occasions some farms had been subjected to "sharp criticism." *SV*, 1 June 1995, 1. That speech obviously reflected the mobilizational approach to the spring sowing that was implied by the statements of other executive officials in the district.

66. *SV*, 24 September 1994, 1. A. F. Glazov emphasized the high priority that the district administration placed on resolving "the task of financial support for the producers of agricultural production."

67. *SV*, 28 January 1995, 1. The growth of subsidiary operations of agricultural enterprises, created for the purposes of processing and marketing the products of those enterprises, has also taken place recently in other areas in Russia. Iurii Evstifeev, "Derevnia bez deneg," *Moskva*, 8 (1995): 148–49.

68. *SV*, 8 June 1995, 1. The *oblast* government may also have been involved in trying to broker the deal; this report does not make that point clear.

69. *SV*, 2 June 1994, 2. The management and the union leaders of the factory had complained (whether justly or unjustly) of "indifference toward the position of workers of industrial enterprises on the part of local organs of power." It might be noted that in this case the intervention by the district administration served the purpose of protecting the living standards of some local citizens rather than directly trying to stimulate production.

70. *SV*, 18 June 1994, 1–2.

71. *SV*, 30 June 1994, 2.

72. I hope to seek the answers to those questions through interviews of government officials and economic executives in Semenov.

73. *SV*, 27 April 1995, 1.

74. *SV*, 20 December 1994, 2.

75. *SV*, 2 February 1995, 1.

76. *SV*, 20 December 1994, 1.

77. *SV*, 1 October 1994, 3.

78. *SV*, 15 December 1994, 1.

79. *SV*, 21 March 1995, 1.

80. *SV*, 18 March 1995, 1.

81. *SV*, 8 June 1995, 1.

82. *SV*, 16 March 1995, 3–4.

83. Federal'nyi Zakon "Ob obshchikh printsipakh organizatsii mestnogo samoupravleniia," 6549–50.

84. *SV*, 22 October 1994, 2.

85. *SV*, 22 April 1995, 2.

86. *SV*, 30 June 1994, 2.

87. *SV*, 13 April 1995, 1. "On April 11, the *Zemskoe sobranie*, after a long discussion, adopted the district budget for 1995."

88. *SV*, 8 December 1994, 1. It was related that the head of the district's department of economics and forecasting, in her report on budget fulfillment, "had nothing joyful to say." The district government's revenue for the first ten months of 1994 had reached only 44.7 percent of the projected level.

89. *SV*, 26 January 1995, 2. It is surprising that a relatively minor budgetary decision had been referred to the *Zemskoe sobranie*.

90. *SV*, 8 December 1994, 1.

91. *SV*, 9 February 1995, 1. The newspaper's coverage of this and other stories on the adoption of new taxes did not associate the name of the *glava administratsii* with those controversial decisions. One might speculate that he had foreseen the possibility of controversy over the introduction of those taxes, and thus had sought to have the *Zemskoe sobranie* assume the responsibility for those measures.

92. *SV*, 7 February 1995, 1.

93. *SV*, 16 February 1995, 1.

94. *Ibid.* The *Zemskoe sobranie* also adopted some measures designed to placate veterans of wartime service, who were said to have expressed especially great resentment against the new sales tax. The district assembly promised the refurbishing of local monuments and informed the veterans that it planned a major celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory in the Great Patriotic War.

95. *SV*, 30 March 1995, 1.

96. *SV*, 13 April 1995, 1.

97. *Ibid.*

98. *SV*, 2 February 1995, 1.

99. *SV*, 7 February 1995, 2.

100. *SV*, 18 March 1995, 1.

101. *SV*, 15 April 1995, 1.

102. Fish, "Russia's Fourth Transition," 34: "Pieces of the old party-state apparatus are, by reason of their origins, insufficiently autonomous or rooted in societal interests to serve as the building blocks of a civil society." Fish's statement is an empirically testable generalization. Tests of that generalization may yield different results with respect to different organizations in various settings.

103. Hahn, "The Development," 186, observes that new groups appeared in Yaroslavl, a city with about 650,000 residents. The number of informal groups that sprang up in Moscow and Leningrad/St. Petersburg was far larger.

104. Of course, it is impossible to infer when some groups in Semenov were formed. The groups that appear most likely to have been created in recent years are music groups, which during 1994 and 1995 apparently were attracting more participation by young people than sports groups.

105. The major Western scholarly research on popular participation in politics in the USSR concluded that, even within that authoritarian political system, there were means for a limited degree of advocacy of citizens' interests. Theodore H. Friedgut, *Political Participation in the USSR* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979); Jeffrey W. Hahn, *Soviet Grassroots: Citizen Participation in Local Soviet Government* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988). See also Nicholas Lampert, "Patterns of Participation," in Stephen White, Alex Pravda, and Zvi Gitelman, eds., *Developments in Soviet Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 126, for the argument that "a number of channels have been established through which individuals can submit proposals and complaints to the authorities." In that statement, Lampert referred to channels established before Gorbachev came to power.

106. When a union organization within an enterprise or other workplace vigorously

asserted demands by workers, those demands were usually directed to executive officials of the local government, and the management of the workplace usually participated in the articulation of the demands. Such interest articulation seemed to occur when problems in conditions within a place of work gave rise to a grassroots rebellion. In such instances, management and labor within the workplace apparently engaged in a cooperative relationship, seeing themselves as having a common adversary in the local government.

107. Public institutions would include primary and secondary schools, technical schools, medical clinics, and the district hospital.

108. Rose, "Postcommunism and the Problem of Trust," 29.

109. That hypothesis is offered with the full awareness that there may also be countervailing factors discouraging the independence of social organizations in small cities and rural areas. One factor that might work against the achievement of greater independence for organized groups in smaller cities and rural settlements would be the strength of patron-client ties in such settings. The newspaper articles examined in this research do not permit an assessment of the importance of such ties in the politics of Semenov *raion*.

110. Complaints aired in the local newspaper express the demands, first, of associational interest groups, such as sports clubs and veterans' groups; second, of institutional interests such as schools and medical care facilities; and third, of anomic (unorganized) interests such as the residents of a particular neighborhood or those who ride the buses operating on a certain route.

111. The degree to which the range of the newspaper's criticism of local officials has broadened since 1991 (or since 1985, after Gorbachev came to power) is not known.

112. The assumption also needs to be qualified in relation to Western pluralist democracies (and perhaps even more in relation to Asian democracies), because a considerable amount of social activism and organization is stimulated by the state in such systems, and interest group organizations are often granted institutionalized representation within the state, in some cases even sharing in the exercise of the authority that formally belongs to the state.

113. The local newspaper occasionally published statements by local members of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and the Agrarian Party (focusing primarily on national issues), but there was no indication that those parties or any others played a role in the sessions of the district legislature.

114. It seems likely that the *starosta* of a village of a few hundred residents may accurately be viewed as the head of a social organization as well as an official within the state, so the office of *starosta* may be a point of linkage or fusion of social organization and the structure of the state.

115. The heads of the largest enterprises in the district were present at the meeting of the *Zemskoe sobranie* that this author visited in July 1995. The heads of departments within the executive branch of the district government were also present. The chairman of the *Zemskoe sobranie* presided at that meeting, though the head of administration also played a prominent role in the proceedings.

116. Some Russian scholars contend that the national government of Russia has sought to enforce the principle that the local head of administration occupies the lowest level in a hierarchically organized system of executive power. M. Strongina, "Mestnoe samoupravlenie i razvitie territorii," *Voprosy ekonomiki* 5 (1994): 136–37. The basis of the authority of executive and legislative officials in district governments may change as a result of elections to choose such officials. Regulations concerning the elections of legislative representatives and heads of administration at the local level are reviewed by Vsevolod Vasil'ev, "Po kakim zakonam budem izbirat'?" *Rossiiskaia Federatsiia* 17 (1996): 19–21.

117. Examples of efforts by the head of the district administration to seek assistance in the form of funding from the regional governor have been given earlier in this article. That type of activity was described briefly in *SV*, 8 December 1994, 1: "Therefore, the administration of the district addressed the regional department of finance for help. There is hope

that it will be extended.” The local newspaper described the *glava administratsii* as seeking assistance from above much more often than it described the *Zemskoe sobranie* as engaging in that activity.

118. Neither the term “prefect” nor the title of “governor” was used by official Soviet sources, of course. The classic description of the role of the regional or district first secretary, in which the term “prefect” was first applied to the role of that official, may be found in Jerry F. Hough, *The Soviet Prefects: The Local Party Organs in Industrial Decision-making* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), 5–6, 212–13, 235. Textbook descriptions of the role of the local first secretary are furnished by Stanley Rothman and George W. Breslauer, *Soviet Politics and Society* (St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing Co., 1978), 172; Jerry F. Hough and Merle Fainsod, *How the Soviet Union is Governed* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 497; and Gordon B. Smith, *Soviet Politics: Struggling with Change*, Second Edition (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 107.

119. A chief executive in local government in a Western country would be concerned with the success of enterprises in the local area, of course. However, such a leader in local government would probably not attempt to exercise as detailed guidance of those enterprises as does the chief executive in the government of Semenov district.

120. Most crucially, under the nomenklatura system, the local head of the Communist Party apparatus had the power to approve the appointment of the directors of enterprises within the district, and there is no evidence indicating that the *glava administratsii* inherited that power. Also, it might be expected that the privatization of industrial enterprises will give the managers of industrial enterprises growing independence from local political officials. How much that will prove true for any enterprise may depend partly on the degree of its independence from financial assistance by government. A changed relationship between local political leadership and economic enterprises is suggested by a report from another small city in Russia. Tamara Aleksandrova, “Neprazdnye progulki po Perekavliu—Zalesskomu,” *Rossiiskaia Federatsii* 13 (1996): 48, which argues that though the local administration does not have the right “to interfere in the affairs of enterprises,” it is called on “to create favorable conditions for their activity, express the interests of various social groups, and unite their efforts, working out a strategy of development of the self-governed territory.” That interpretation implies movement toward an economic role for local government more resembling that found in Western countries, but it does not completely accord with the evidence from Semenov.

121. Another tradition of the Soviet system was that the first secretary of a *raion* Communist Party organization carried out more detailed guidance of decisionmaking for collective and state farms than for industrial enterprises. The actions of the head of administration in Semenov *raion* in the mid-1990s showed striking continuity with that tradition.

122. The general pattern of dominance by executives over legislative bodies in local government in contemporary Russia is described by V. I. Fadeev, *Munitsipal’noe pravo Rossii* (Moscow: Iurist, 1994), 72, and N. V. Postovoi, *Mestnoe samoupravlenie: istoriia, teoriia, praktika* (Moscow: Fedorov, 1995), 120. Jeffrey W. Hahn observes that at the oblast level, power has become so concentrated in the hands of the governor that “it is possible to speak of a new ‘Russian prefect’ similar in stature to the obkom first secretaries of the Soviet period.” Hahn, “Democratization and Political Participation in Russia’s Regions,” revised version of paper presented at the Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies, November 1995, 37. The findings in this article parallel Hahn’s conclusion in a striking fashion.

123. A report on the budget of Semenov *raion* in SV, 22 April 1995, 2, makes it clear that over half of the district’s budget was dependent on financing from the oblast government. The inadequacy of the district’s own sources of revenue reflected not only the limitations on its tax base, but also the deep slump in production in the district, as noted in SV, 5 January 1995, 1. The lack of financial independence of local governments in Russia has been emphasized by many scholarly sources in that country, including P. I. Shlemin

and V. I. Fadeev, *Mestnoe samoupravlenie: Rossiiskii variant* (Moscow: INION RAN, 1993), 53; E. V. Miroshnichenko, "Mestnoe samoupravlenie v Rossii: teoriia i praktika," *Gosudarstvo i pravo* 6 (1993): 144; Fadeev, *Munitsipal'noe pravo*, 104; and Postovoi, *Mestnoe samoupravlenie*, 158. The allocation of financial resources for city governments had been highly centralized within the Soviet system, as described by William Taubman, *Governing Soviet Cities: Bureaucratic Politics and Urban Development in the USSR* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 39, and James H. Bater, *The Soviet City: Ideal and Reality* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1980), 52. In addition, during the last few years, responsibility for maintaining a great deal of housing and communal services has been transferred from enterprises to local governments, further intensifying the financial problems of those governments. V. A. Kirpichnikov (interviewed by Iu. A. Beliaev), "Mestnoe samoupravlenie i finansy," *Finansy* 12 (1994): 30–33; Viacheslav Sosonkov, "Sotsial'naia sfera: Ch'ia zhe ona?," *Rossiiskaia Federatsiia*, 8 (1995): 41; Leonid Chernyshov, "S ruk na ruki. Vmeste s dolgami," *Rossiiskaia Federatsiia* 4 (1995): 41. That the same process has occurred in Semenov is attested by *SV*, 31 January 1995, 1.