

Pluralism in the Komi Republic? Overcoming Executive Resistance

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Political development in Russia's regions has often resembled the creation of political fiefdoms more than the flowering of democracy in a new age. Among the developments has been a centralization by regional elites at the expense of other political contenders.¹ To varying degrees, certain key political leaders across the country represent a continuation of the Soviet-period nomenklatura system of elite privilege and position and its extension into postcommunist Russia in new forms.² The process of regional elite dominance has included attempts to limit the activity of groups and individuals that might impinge on political control; that is, there have been clear attempts by authorities to constrain the evolution of an independent civil society.³ There has also been a concerted effort among regional elites to resist the directives of central authorities.⁴ These conditions are present in the regional fiefdoms that have emerged in post-Soviet Russia's tumultuous political reform and are the targets of federal policy and local political opposition. Among the regions fitting that broad pattern of political development is the Komi Republic, located in the far north of Russia, bordering the western Ural Mountains. Rather than being a font for democratic development, Komi models the difficulties of achieving political reform in a postcommunist society.

The Politics of Pluralism

This article emerges from thoughts concerning the development of pluralism in Russia. If one simply conceives of pluralism as the division of power across society through the presence of autonomous entities,⁵ it is reasonably accurate to argue that at the national level Russia has achieved at least a semi-pluralistic political system, with numerous "national" parties and the clear influence of business interests. Although other groups—including unions and the church—carry varying, and lesser, degrees of influence in national politics, one can say that national-level Russia has moved significantly beyond nascent pluralism. This is especially the case when considering the resistance of regional entities—in particular,

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regional political forces—to central directives and attempts to influence central political decisionmaking. The regions carry significant influence on the center, as exemplified by the power-sharing treaties between the Kremlin and various regional governments emerging since Tatarstan began the process in 1994.

While developments in Russian federalism exhibit pluralistic development from the significantly more unitary Soviet system, developments within the regions have shown much greater resistance to politically liberalizing trends.⁶ Playing on the Kremlin's inability to enforce acquiescence, many regional political leaders have been relatively successful in constructing hierarchical political structures that limit the access and influence of interests not affiliated with the dominant political leader(s). Although many regions have introduced reforms, federal authorities have sought to divide interests within regions, thereby diminishing the influence of the individuals at the very top of the regional hierarchy.

At the center of this policy is the August 1995 federal law directing the establishment of local self-governments throughout the eighty-nine regional entities of Russia,⁷ which was resisted by many regions from the start.⁸ The difficulties of establishing local self-governments have been twofold: getting regional elites to open political processes by relinquishing a degree of control; and determining whether sufficiently strong independent local interests exist, or can be developed, to take advantage of such an opportunity. Nevertheless, by summer 1998 many of the regions have at least to some degree complied with the federal legislation.

The Komi Republic is one of the more intransigent of the regions, having consistently resisted Kremlin efforts to break the lock of republic head Yuri Spiridonov and his political and economic allies.⁹ Federal difficulties dividing local political resources have been mirrored in similar attempts by ineffective local political parties and sociopolitical groups and movements. The struggle is further exemplified by a weak legislative minority in the Komi State Council that has little policymaking influence over the Spiridonov-dominated majority.

In this article, I use the struggle over local self-government in Komi as a vehicle for assessing the strength of pluralism in the republic and examine federal and subregional attempts to break the centralization of Yuri Spiridonov and his allies.

Regionalism in Komi

The first Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic to declare sovereignty from the dictates of the Soviet Union in August 1990,¹⁰ Komi continues to be active in trying to carve out its niche within the Russian political system. The development of center-periphery relations for Komi in the period since 1993 has occurred on varying fronts. On one level, the government of Yuri Spiridonov has avoided compliance with certain central directives, particularly those disadvantageous to his political power. On another, he and his government have sought to cultivate relations with central authorities, often with the direct goal of expanding local powers and control over Komi's significant natural resources (oil, gas, coal, and timber).¹¹ In the tug of war between the Kremlin and Syktyvkar, Spiridonov has generally had a good working relationship with President Yeltsin and Prime Minister Chernomyrdin.¹²

As part of the process of defining its place in the Russian political system, Komi was a signatory to the 1992 Federal Treaty, which recognized national republics as state entities, providing the republics with complete legislative and executive authority over their territories.¹³ With the events of October 1993, however, attempts by the Komi leadership to develop the republic's sovereignty were interrupted by Yeltsin's decree dissolving all regional soviets (including the Komi Supreme Soviet that Spiridonov led) and the eventual publication of the draft Russian constitution in November 1993. Because the draft constitution did not carry the same degree of regional independence found in the Federal Treaty, Spiridonov denounced the document.

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Attempts by Yeltsin to assert federal control over the Russian regions led Spiridonov to delay implementation of Yeltsin's directive to dissolve the Supreme Soviet to set up his own power base. This delaying tactic lasted until January 1995 when a new legislature, the Komi State Council, was chosen by popular vote. In the interim,

Spiridonov was able to legislate the inclusion of the “Head of Republic” position in the 1994 Komi constitution, a post he won in May 1994;¹⁴ and to use the constitution and the Komi Law on Executive Authority (passed by the Supreme Soviet in October 1994) to ensure the election of a State Council dependent on his rule. Thus, in resisting Yeltsin's directive of October 1993 for fifteen months, Spiridonov positioned himself and future heads close to being the sole political influence on Komi policy toward Moscow and the almost unopposed political force in local Komi political affairs. This did not mean, however, that difficulties in relations with Moscow were suddenly resolved (in fact, Yeltsin has actively sought to reclaim some of the power the center has lost in northern regions),¹⁵ nor that opposition groups would abandon their political goals in the republic.¹⁶

Recognizing that neither the Russian nor the Komi constitution fully settled the differences between Syktyvkar and Moscow, authorities at both levels followed the lead of Tatarstan and other regions by signing a power-sharing agreement to codify their federal relationship. Ultimately, the March 1996 agreement codified federal recognition of practices that were already in effect in Komi (tax collection, environmental regulation, and so forth).¹⁷ That agreement provides Komi residents with the measure of local control that they have sought for several years.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the treaty in action has received mixed evaluations from commentators in Komi. There have, for example, been complaints that international trade has been obstructed by rising interference from central authorities.¹⁹ The treaty relationship has not been perfect from the federal perspective,

either, particularly as it relates to a key provision requiring the establishment of local self-government in Komi.²⁰

Creating A Fiefdom

After winning the the post of head of administration, Spiridonov further consolidated his power during 1994, creating a system of executive rule within the republic that parallels the consolidation of executive power in other regions. Evgenii Nazdratenko and Leonid Polezhaev, the leaders of Primorskiï Krai and Omsk, respectively,²¹ have been adept at employing their authority to adapt the political structures and legal environment to their individual needs.

Spiridonov drew on the Komi constitution and the Komi Law on Executive Authority to ensure the election of a State Council largely dependent on his rule. The constitution identifies twenty districts in Komi of regional/territorial importance (Article 70), and the leader of each is included in the executive branch (Article 94). These twenty heads of administration are appointed by the head of the republic (Komi Law on Executive Authority, Article 32) and subject to his direction.

The heads of administration can appoint local administrators in towns and villages, thus ensuring vertical control of the region. Overall, the twenty regional/territorial districts overlap with thirty electoral districts based on population to make up the fifty electoral districts of the current State Council (Komi constitution, Article 71). In the January 1995 elections, thirteen of the administrative heads were elected to the State Council along with others who were, or became, beholden to the head through ministerial appointments to the executive branch. Further, although not as dependent on Spiridonov's rule, sixteen of the "generals" of Komi industry (oil, timber, gas, and so forth) also were elected to the Council.²² In a seemingly corporatist arrangement that has appeared across Russia in various forms,²³ this group has been generally supportive of the head in a mutually beneficial alliance.²⁴ In this fashion, Spiridonov created a dependent, rather than independent, legislative branch. As one local reporter claimed, one-half of the State Council is in the pocket of the head.²⁵

Spiridonov's political dominance in Komi is demonstrated in two telling political events. First, elections to the chairmanship of the State Council in February 1995 clearly strengthened Spiridonov's position in Komi. In that vote, Spiridonov-sponsored Vladimir Torlopov was chosen as chairman over the opposition of the former chairman of the Komi Council of Ministers (a Soviet-era position) and rival of Spiridonov, Viacheslav Khudiaev. Only six of the forty-three deputies who voted supported the candidacy of the former chairman.²⁶ Second, on the basis of relatively favorable economic conditions in summer/fall 1997,²⁷ Spiridonov called for a special election for the headship (held on 30 November 1997) rather than waiting until May 1998 for the regularly scheduled elections.²⁸ While clearly seeking to maximize his electoral chances, it was first necessary for Spiridonov to convince the State Council to amend the Komi constitution to allow him to call for early elections. In this he succeeded, receiving the support of thirty-nine of forty-three deputies present, well beyond the two-thirds needed to pass the

amendment.²⁹ He also succeeded in defeating his main opponent, Communist State Duma Deputy Rita Chistokhodova, by almost a three-to-one margin in the popular vote.³⁰ Spiridonov is a master in using existing laws and the legal system to his advantage. When unable to avoid compliance with Komi and Russian laws, he has been quite willing to employ the former Supreme Soviet and current State Council to simply change the local laws to ensure superficial compliance.

Political Group Influence

Independent political organizations have had little influence on political developments in Komi. Leaders in Komi's weak civil society have tried numerous

strategies to break the stranglehold of the executive branch.

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These include the temporary union of opposition groups and a concerted effort to push for the development of local government institutions as a way to realize “democracy” in Komi. In many ways, these groups see independent local self-government as the only way that they and other Komi

residents will have influence over policymaking within the republic.

The positions of politically active individuals provide a stark example of the personalized nature of Komi politics. In opposing the institution of local self-government, the press secretary to then Syktyvkar mayor Sergei Karakchiev, Andrei Borodikin, presented the administration's position: The division of authority in the republic will create ineffective governing districts. Alluding to Spiridonov's position,³¹ he argued that Komi was not mature enough to implement the institutional changes successfully and that there would not be sufficient funding for many of the new districts to function. He placed the issue firmly in the realm of center-periphery power relations, arguing that a division of authority in Komi would place the republic in a particularly weak position vis-à-vis the Kremlin. In this respect, Borodikin firmly supported Komi's vertical power structure as the most effective means of government, but would not extend the same view toward the center, instead preferring the regional independence under federalism.³²

With a far different view, a journalist and the local chairman of Russia's Democratic Choice, Igor Bobrakov, expressed his frustration with the Komi leadership's intransigence concerning local self-government and the lack of any consistent access for opposition groups to Komi policymaking circles.³³ Over the past several years, Bobrakov and others have argued that only through the development of local self-government could the people of Komi ensure that local executives would fulfill their duties—for they would be answerable to the people rather than the head. As a journalist who had twice briefly been refused accreditation by Komi authorities (Spiridonov has accused Bobrakov of “slinging

mud”),³⁴ Bobrakov had little confidence in the federal system.³⁵ Making certain not to link his position with party leader Yegor Gaidar, Bobrakov argued that Russia’s lack of a federal tradition implies the need for a unitary system like that of France. In particular, a unitary system would allow the Russian president to appoint governors who would responsibly implement directives on local self-government. Bobrakov expressed the rising frustration in oppositionist circles, a surprising comment from a man long active in the democratic movement in Komi.³⁶

The difficulties of opposition groups in attempting to affect policy in Komi went beyond the issue of local self-government and extended into the legislature. Particularly vexing for representatives of the local political parties, none of the deputies elected in 1995 represent national parties, with only three of the fifty seats occupied by deputies having some affiliation with the local Communists. Without any representation, it is difficult for the parties to press their diverse agendas.³⁷

Whether or not political parties achieve representation in it, the Council lacks the attributes of an effective legislature. The immediate stumbling block is the Council’s nonprofessional status, a major victory for Spiridonov during 1994 constitutional debates. As a result, the legislature meets only once a month for two days.³⁸ Because it is difficult for the Council to address the majority of questions brought to each session, the head has greater leeway in running the republic.

Added to this limitation, the Council has little power as a check on the executive. The Komi constitution does spell out certain important oversight functions of the State Council. But according to State Council Deputy Vasilii Kuznetsov, the executive does not follow the law. Kuznetsov argues that that is especially evident in the budgetary process. Whereas the head is required to report to the Council on the execution of the budget, Kuznetsov claims that the executive provides neither sufficient information about the budgetary process nor an adequate accounting of the activities and spending of the executive branch. He claims that the constitution is far too vague concerning the budgetary process and makes it clear that he thinks the head is violating Article 88 of the constitution, which provides for the head’s removal from offices for dereliction of duty. Despite Kuznetsov’s objections, he readily admits that the current composition of the Council limits its oversight capabilities (and power of impeachment) even if the constitutional guidelines were being followed. Attempts by Kuznetsov and an “independent” minority have failed to amend the Komi constitution to put the State Council on a more equal footing with the executive.³⁹

In addition to concerns about the effectiveness of the State Council, temporary political unions such as the Electoral Association of Democratic Organizations (PADORK) have organized to prepare for elections and ensure that the Komi constitution agrees with the Russian constitution.⁴⁰ Since the release of the federal law on local self-government, a primary focus for local political groups, including PADORK, has been establishing local self-government in Komi.⁴¹ Through this process, they have sought access to Komi policy decisions on a number of levels.

While PADORK brought together the self-proclaimed democratic opposition in Komi, in 1996 the Council of Public Organization of the Republic of Komi

(SOORK) brought together opposition groups ranging from the local branch of Democratic Choice of Russia to the Communists and LDPR. Mirroring the democratic pretensions of opposition groups, irrespective of professed ideological preferences,⁴² this organization sought a consultative role in the policymaking process of legislative and executive authority. Although an agreement requiring the Council to inform and consult the group about prospective bills and bills in process was signed by State Council Chairman Vladimir Torlopov, it is not clear whether executive authorities were willing to participate.⁴³ Given SOORK's accusations of executive arrogance and legislative dependence on the executive, scarcely two months after the agreement was signed, it appears to be an ineffective agreement.⁴⁴

There are numerous examples of resistance by Komi authorities to political parties, sociopolitical groups, and even subregional legislatures. However, the most effective means of interest articulation appears to be court cases brought by the communist-leaning Popular Patriotic Union of Russia (NPSR) in the Komi Supreme Court and Russian Constitutional Court. In March 1997, the Komi court ruled that Komi laws concerning local self-government were clearly in violation of federal laws. A January 1998 ruling of the Russian Constitutional Court stated definitively that the Komi constitution and Komi Law on Executive Authority both violate the stipulations of the federal constitution and laws.⁴⁵

The Legal Arena and Legislative Politics

Although the reform of legal standards in post-Soviet Russia has been a slow and uneven process,⁴⁶ there are signs that the legal system is becoming more coherent. Just as the courts are often the final arbiter of legal conflict in the United States, so too have the courts been playing an important role in resolving the struggle over establishing local government in Russia. Unmoved by edicts from the Kremlin and local pressure, Komi authorities have reacted to legal decisions, even if that reaction has often been manifested in further delaying tactics. The broad process has brought Komi ever closer to the actual implementation of federal directives concerning local self-government.

The first half of 1996 saw the Spiridonov regime active in republic and federal courts. In seeking to avoid local government elections by 1 March, as mandated in the federal law, Spiridonov complied with a "directive" from the State Council to bring suit in the Russian Constitutional Court claiming that provisions of the federal law were in violation of the Russian constitution.⁴⁷ Although Komi lost the battle before the Constitutional Court in May, Spiridonov was successful in delaying local elections past the original deadline, which had already been extended nationally by Yeltsin.⁴⁸

Even as this case moved forward, however, other important events were occurring in the legal arena. In a potentially important precedent, the Council of Deputies in Vorkuta (the local legislature) beat back a challenge by Spiridonov in the Komi Supreme Court over its right to form an advisory presidium.⁴⁹ Spiridonov had claimed that the council's move violated the Komi constitution and would interfere with the executive authority of Vorkuta's appointed head of administration. Although Spiridonov lost the case, he simultaneously maneuvered

to keep his hold on Komi political affairs and ensure continued loyalty in the State Council. He did this through a legislative end-run to avoid complying with federal laws restricting civil servants from also serving in regional legislatures. His successful tactic was simply to change the legal definition of civil servant so that it did not include the appointed heads of administration.⁵⁰ Although two council deputies still met the official definition,⁵¹ their conflicting roles have been ignored to this point.

The court rulings that have apparently carried the most weight within Komi governing circles were those in 1997 and 1998 involving the Komi affiliate of NPSR. The March 1997 ruling of the Komi Supreme Court stated simply that the Komi laws relating to local self-government did not meet the federal standards on any level. As a result, the court set 19 October 1997 as the last possible date by which elections could be held.⁵² With this ruling, the State Council began to work feverishly on a bill to identify the administrative divisions in which local government institutions were to be set up (that problem has plagued other regions as well).⁵³

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There were three initial proposals concerning the level at which elections would take place: in villages, settlements, and cities; in districts and cities subordinate to the republic;⁵⁴ or in districts, cities, villages, and settlements, and districts and cities subordinate to the republic. After a stormy debate, the deputies agreed on a proposal by the head’s representative to establish local self-government at the level of village, settlement, country village, and parts/sections of the cities and districts subordinate to the republic.⁵⁵ This compromise position ensured that the head would continue to name the twenty heads of administration spelled out in the constitution. However, it was widely criticized for the potential of dividing functioning administrative districts into subdistricts with inadequate tax and service bases.⁵⁶

As described in a lengthy article in the opposition press the week after its adoption, the law underlines the determination of the head to keep the vertical power structure in existence, even if it means continuing to violate federal law and various court rulings.⁵⁷ With the law falling far short of developments in pluralism envisioned by federal authorities and local opposition, Spiridonov again avoided holding elections when the Russian Constitutional Court decided to examine the constitutionality of two articles relating to local government in the Komi Constitution.⁵⁸ In October, however, a plebiscite on the size of municipal districts was suggested by representatives from Vorkuta who doubted the effectiveness of the State Council law passed in the spring. The plebiscite accepted by the State Council for inclusion on the November ballot—oddly, without opposition from the

executive branch—asked Komi voters: “Do you think that the formation of municipalities in the Komi Republic should include the entirety of the republic’s subordinate districts and cities along with their entire territories?”⁵⁹ The plebiscite was approved overwhelmingly by 72.6 percent of the voters, with a 48.5 percent turnout.⁶⁰ However, given changes in the movement toward establishing local self-government in Komi, what this plebiscite could mean for the eventual formation of local institutions is unclear.

When the Constitutional Court on 15 January 1998 overturned the Komi law on local government, Spiridonov’s initial response was to denounce the court’s decision and proclaim his intended resistance. He claimed that the ruling violated provisions in the power-sharing agreement giving the republic the right to determine its local institutions independently and that the court did not consider provisions of the Federation Treaty.⁶¹ Spiridonov appears to have backed off from his resistance to that ruling, however, and the State Council scheduled local self-government elections for February 1999 (to coincide with State Council elections). At the time of this writing, whether the head will continue his delaying tactics remains to be seen. However, it would seem that the necessity to comply with the federal court is becoming inescapable.

Conclusions

The preceding discussion should make it clear that the development of pluralism within Komi has been retarded by the consistent resistance of executive authority to more open political processes. Spiridonov’s dogged refusal to implement the law on local self-government and other federal directives has allowed the head to construct a disciplined organization of executive power to run the political arena. Through careful formation of the 1994 Komi constitution and legal and legislative maneuvers, Spiridonov has also been rather successful in creating a legislature that offers little opposition to his political program.

Although my discussion has largely ignored group activity beyond the struggle over local self-government, such activity cannot be dismissed. For example, there has been at least one instance of pensioners successfully suing Komi bureaucrats. One of the most active leaders of a sociopolitical group in Komi has been Olga Sevast’ianova, chairperson of the local affiliate of Women of Russia. Her group has been fortunate enough to receive free office space in a Komi government building.⁶² Although the group only had thirty members in Syktyvkar in summer 1997, they were relatively successful in petitioning for donations from local businesses.⁶³ Sevast’ianova has also been one of the more outspoken critics of the Spiridonov government. As the chairperson of SOORK she has been public in her disappointment with Komi authorities and has called for an open dialogue. She and other local opposition leaders link the development of competitive politics in Komi to the future of local self-government.

What is the future of local self-government in Komi? Judging by the recent court rulings, it would seem that elections will be held early in 1999. However, Spiridonov has capably maintained vertical power relations in Komi despite numerous challenges in the past several years. In two February 1998 legislative

decisions, he seems to have worked his magic once again. The first ruling changed the law on state service that requires retirement at age sixty, thus allowing some of Spiridonov's team who are approaching, or have passed, sixty to continue working. Perhaps more significant, a constitutional amendment was approved "rescinding the prohibition of the president or his deputies to hold posts in commercial and civic organizations."⁶⁴ This ruling seemingly removes the *de jure* legal separation between the state and private sectors, perhaps allowing Spiridonov to further concentrate authority prior to the initiation of functioning local self-government.

As if the process of change were not already difficult to follow, the March 1998 dismissal of Prime Minister Chernomyrdin led Spiridonov to sign a cooperation agreement with the heads of the various public movements, parties, and organizations. The agreement was designed to present a unified Komi front toward the central authorities. It would appear to revive the oppositionist unity of Yeltsin's Russia prior to Soviet dissolution and that of Komi authorities prior to the president's orders to dissolve local soviets in fall 1993. How this will play out in local policymaking, particularly with the reappointment of Chernomyrdin as prime minister, will be interesting in light of the lack of success of earlier agreements.⁶⁵

NOTES

1. For examples of this phenomenon, see Peter Kirkow, "Regional Warlordism in Russia: The Case of Primorskii Krai," *Europe-Asia Studies* 47, no. 6 (1995): 923–47, and Neil J. Melvin, "The Consolidation of a New Regional Elite: The Case of Omsk 1987–1995," *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 4 (1998): 619–50.

2. Olga Kryshstanovskaya and Stephen White, "From Soviet *Nomenklatura* to Russian Elite," *Europe-Asia Studies* 48, no. 5 (1996): 711–33; James Hughes, "Sub-national Elites and Post-communist Transformation in Russia: A Reply to Kryshstanovskaya & White," *Europe-Asia Studies* 49, no. 6 (1997): 1017–36; D. V. Badovskii and A. Iu. Shutov, "Regional Elites in Post-Soviet Russia: Aspects of Political Involvement," *Russian Social Science Review* 38, no. 3 (May-June 1997): 32–5.

3. Marcia A. Weigle, "The Construction of an Independent Public Sphere in Russia's Regions," *Demokratizatsiya* 5, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 239–62; Badovskii and Shutov, "Regional Elites in Post-Soviet Russia"; Kirkow, "Regional Warlordism in Russia"; and Hughes, "Sub-national Elites and Post-communist Transformation in Russia."

4. Lynn D. Nelson and Irina Y. Kuzes, "Interest Representation in Sverdlovsk and the Ascendancy of Regional Corporatism," *Demokratizatsiya* 5, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 222–37; Greg Poelzer, "Devolution, Constitutional Development, and the Russian North," *Post-Soviet Geography* 36, no. 4 (1995): 204–14; Vladimir Lysenko, "Problemy Razvitiia Federativnykh Otnoshenii v Sovremennoi Rossii," *Kentavr* (March-April 1995): 24.

5. Frank L. Wilson, *Concepts and Issues in Comparative Politics* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1996), 14–15.

6. Dmitry Babich, "Iron Fist of Local Bosses," *Moscow Times*, 15 April 1998. As appeared in *Johnson's Russia List*, 15 April 1998 (davidjohnson@erols.com).

7. "Zakon Rossiiskoi Federatsii 'ob obshchikh printsipakh organizatsii mestnogo samoupravleniia v Rossiiskoi Federatsii,'" *Obshchee delo 1* (Syktyvkar: Komi Respublikanskaia tipografiia, 1996): 69–78.

8. Peter Kirkow, "Local Self-government in Russia: Awakening from a Slumber?" *Europe-Asia Studies* 49, no. 1 (1997): 48–49.

9. *IEWS Russian Regional Report* (Internet Edition), 5 February 1998.

10. Interview with Valerii Potolitsin, director of the Committee on Legislation and Deputy Ethics (Komi State Council), 1 July 1997.

11. In accordance with Philip Hanson's contentions, Komi's possession of natural resources makes it one of the stronger candidates for weathering the storm of economic reforms. While prices on the international market vary, oil and gas are particularly valuable as a means for acquiring foreign currency, a fact that is more pressing with the summer 1998 devaluation of the ruble. See, "Samara: A Preliminary Profile of a Russian Region and its Adaptation to the Market," *Europe-Asia Studies* 49, no. 3 (1997): 407.

12. S. Morokhin, "Viktor Chernomyrdin and Yurii Spiridonov obshchalis' na 'Ty'," *Molodesh severa*, 13 November 1997, 1. In this particular meeting in Syktyvkar less than three weeks prior to Komi executive elections in fall 1997, it was clear that Chernomyrdin's visit was timed to support Spiridonov's candidacy.

13. Vladimir Shlapentokh, *From Submission to Rebellion* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 99–100.

14. This followed the failure of a December 1993 referendum to create a presidency in Komi.

15. Poelzer, "Devolution, Constitutional Development, and the Russian North," 208.

16. According to Marcia Weigle, although obstacles to civil society activity have diminished some aspects of popular participation, there continues to be a vibrancy among groups that is a credit to their tenacity in an unfriendly political environment in many regions of Russia. See "The Construction of an Independent Public Sphere in Russia's Regions," 239–40.

17. Interview with Igor Bobrakov, assistant editor, *Molodesh Severa*, 4 July 1997.

18. James Alexander, "Political Culture in Flux," Ph.D. dissertation, 1996, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

19. Interview with Sergei Gusiatsnikov, state council deputy and deputy agriculture minister, 4 July 1997.

20. "Dogovor o razgranichenii predmetov vedeniia i polnomochii mezhdu organami gosudarstvennoi vlasti Rossiiskoi Federatsii i organami gosudarstvennoi vlasti Respubliki Komi," 20 March 1996.

21. Kirkow, "Regional Warlordism in Russia," and Melvin, "The Consolidation of a New Regional Elite."

22. Igor Bobrakov, "Partiia vlasti zakonchila reformu vlasti," *Molodesh Severa*, 2 February 1995, 4.

23. Kirkow, "Regional Warlordism in Russia," 926, 940; Hughes, "Sub-national Elites and Post-communist Transformation in Russia," 1031; Melvin, "The Consolidation of a New Regional Elite," 627; D.V. Badovskii and A. Iu. Shutov, "Regional Elites in Post-Soviet Russia," 33; and Darrel Slider, "Privatization in Russia's Regions," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 10, no. 4 (1994): 377.

24. Gusiatsnikov interview, 4 July 1997.

25. Bobrakov interview, 4 July 1997.

26. Igor Bobrakov, "Po davnomu izvestnomu tsenariu proshla pervaiia sessiia Gossove-ta Respublika Komi," *Molodesh Severa*, 9 February 1995, 1–2. After a year of unemployment following the "loss" of his ministry, Khudiaev would eventually join Spiridonov's "team" as the Komi director of road construction. In this way, Khudiaev models the degree of pragmatism in Komi politics. Rather than an issue of ideology—or political commitment—personal success comes to the fore.

27. "Pervyi taim oni uzhe otygrali," *Molodesh Severa*, 4 September 1997, 4. It appears that it was less a situation of positive economic conditions in summer/fall 1997 than the expectation that certain coming state policies—for example, the re-denomination of the ruble—would have adverse effects on the economic situation in Russia prior to the original election date. As the incumbent, Spiridonov did not want to take a risk that he could avoid.

28. Nazdratenko has also been actively involved in “directing” electoral processes in legislative and executive elections. See Peter Kirkow, “Regional Warlordism in Russia,” 930, 935–36.

29. Igor Bobrakov, “Glava skazal: ‘Nado!’, Gossovet otvetil: ‘Est’!,” *Molodesh Severa*, 28 August 1997, 2.

30. “Predvaritel’nye itogi gososovaniia na vyborakh Glavy RK 30 noiabria,” *Molodesh Severa*, 4 December 1997, 2.

31. Yuri Spiridonov, “Mestnoe samoupravlenie. Programma i prognoz na 1996-1997 gg.,” *Obshchee delo 1* (Syktyvkar: Komi respublikanskaia tipografiia, 1996), 12. In his March 1996 speech to the State Council, Spiridonov spells out his perspective on the implementation of federal laws requiring the implementation of local self-government in the regions. He argues that implementation of the law would worsen the situation in Komi, claiming they neither have the normative base nor the finances to implement such a program. He believes that such a transition should be carried out gradually.

32. Interview with Andrei Borodikin, chief of the mayor’s press center, Syktyvkar, 14 July 1997.

33. This type of a closed system is also apparent in Omsk oblast’. See James Hughes, “Sub-national Elites and Post-communist Transformation in Russia,” 1031.

34. V. Turkin, “V ‘krainikh’ khodiat zhurnalisty,” *Krasnoe znamia*, 27 June 1997, 1.

35. In this way Spiridonov has not been as severe as Nazdratenko, who has been known to suspend media outlets critical of his regime. Peter Kirkow, “Regional Warlordism in Russia,” 937.

36. Bobrakov interview, 4 July 1997.

37. The limited local activity of national parties is an additional deterrent to the expansion of a popular role in civil society creation and vitality. See, Marcia Weigle, “The Construction of an Independent Public Sphere in Russia’s Regions,” 239–40.

38. Interview with Valerii Potolitsin, director of the Committee for Legislation and Deputy Ethics in the State Council, 1 July 1997.

39. Interview with Vasili Kuznetsov, director of the Committee for the Budget, Taxes and Economic Policy in the State Council, 14 July 1997.

40. A. Lisov, “Demokraty ob’edinilis’ na vremennykh usloviakh,” *Molodesh Severa*, 8 June 1995, 2. Members included Russia’s Democratic Choice, the Party of Economic Freedom, Beer Lovers Party, Democratic Russia, and other socio-political movements.

41. A. Lisov, “Litso k litsu,” *Molodesh Severa*, 7 September 1995, 4.

42. Matthew Wyman, Stephen White, Bill Miller and Paul Heywood, “Public Opinion, Parties and Voters in the December 1993 Elections,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 47, no. 4 (1995): 591–614.

43. A. Lisov, “Zakonodatel’naia vlast’ respubliki podruzhilas’ s liderami obshchestvennykh ob’edinenii,” *Molodesh Severa*, 4 May 1996, 2.

44. A. Grigor’ev, “Sovet obshchestvennykh ob’edinenii sovetuet,” *Molodesh Severa*, 18 July 1996, 2.

45. “Postanovlenie Konstitutsionnogo suda Rossiiskoi Federatsii,” *Respublika*, 3 February 1998, 10–12.

46. Kathryn Hendley, “Legal Development in Post-Soviet Russia,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 13, no. 3 (1997): 228–51.

47. “O federal’nom zakone ‘Ob obshchikh printsipakh organizatsii mestnogo samoupravleniia v Rossiskoi Federatsii,’” *Obshchee delo 1* (Syktyvkar: Komi respublikanskaia tipografiia, 1996), 79.

48. It was also during this period (20 March 1996), that the power-sharing agreement between the Kremlin and Syktyvkar was signed.

49. In contrast to Nazdratenko’s rule in Primorskii Krai, Spiridonov appears to have significant less influence over the local courts. See Peter Kirkow, “Regional Warlordism in Russia,” 928.

50. "Zakon Respubliki Komi 'O gosudarstvennoi sluzhbe Respubliki Komi,'" *Respublika*, 9 April 1996, 3–6. Since that time, the Russian Constitutional Court has ruled that heads of administration do not fit the criteria for civil servants, thus permitting their election to regional legislatures. See "Local Government Executives can Serve in Regional Legislatures," *IEWS Russian Regional Report* (Internet Edition), 12 March 1998.

51. Igor Bobrakov, "Kontekst nedeli," *Molodesh Severa*, 7 March 1996, 2.

52. *Ibid.*, 27 March 1997, 2.

53. Peter Kirkow, "Local Self-government in Russia," 47.

54. This means regions that currently have a head of administration named by the head of republic.

55. Igor Bobrakov, "Cherepash'im shagom k mestnomu samoupravleniiu," *Molodesh Severa*, 29 May 1997, 2.

56. Igor Bobrakov, "Vmesto dvoinykh vyborov - vybory s plebistsitom," *Molodesh Severa*, 9 October 1997, 2. The local councils of Syktyvkar and Ukhta passes laws in summer 1997 that divided the cities into twelve and eighteen parts, respectively. Peter Kirkow discusses the general issues of taxation and services in local self-government in "Local Self-government in Russia," 50–51.

57. Igor Bobrakov, "Samoupravstvo nad samopravleniem," *Molodesh Severa*, 5 June 1997, 4

58. Igor Bobrakov, "Glava skazal: 'Nado!', Gossovot otvetil: 'Est'!"

59. Igor Bobrakov, "Vmesto dvoinykh vyborov - vybory s plebistsitom."

60. Igor Bobrakov, "Narod okazalsia umnee narodnykh izbrannikov," *Molodesh Severa*, 4 December 1997.

61. "Komi President Refuses to Obey Constitutional Court Ruling on Local Government," *IEWS Russian Regional Report* (Internet Edition), 5 February 1998. See also, "Discusses Local Elections and Complying with Constitutional Court Ruling," *IEWS Russian Regional Report* (Internet Edition), 5 February 1998. During the period before the 1993 constitutional referendum, Spiridonov pointed to the absence of provisions from the Federation Treaty as his reason for opposing the document's acceptance.

62. This raises notions of "patronage" civil society—in which groups are at least nominally dependent on authority for resources—that I have seen in both Syktyvkar and Kirov over the past several years. See James Alexander, *Political Culture in Flux*. Marcia Weigle discusses the apparent cooptation of economic groups across Russia through the provision of state funds. See "The Construction of an Independent Public Sphere in Russia's Regions," 254.

63. Interview with Olga Sevast'ianova, director, Komi Division of Women of Russia, 7 July 1997.

64. Yuri Shabaev, "Komi Republic Legislature Confirms President's Appointees?" *IEWS Russian Regional Report* (Internet Edition), 26 February 1998.

65. Yuri Shabaev, "Komi Republic Concerned over Russian Government Reshuffle," *IEWS Russian Regional Report* (Internet Edition), 9 April 1998.