NATIONAL CONFLICT INTERNALIZED: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE FALL OF THE FIRST RUSSIAN REPUBLIC

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Ordinarily the concept of ethnic or national conflict connotes a hostile relationship that has developed between or among different ethnic or national groups. This study, however, concerns a national conflict *within* a single group or, perhaps more precisely, between various groups laying mutually exclusive claims to represent a single nation, Russia. Its focus falls on a particular stage of the ongoing process of national identity construction in that country (roughly from the failed *coup d'état* of August 1991 to the successful one of September–October 1993 that ended Russia's first republic and prepared the way for Boris Yeltsin's constitution and the inauguration of a second one), a process transpiring under conditions fundamentally different from those obtaining in other post-Communist societies. Although Russia might share with them the urge to remove from its national life all traces and reminders of the Communist epoch, it also faces a unique predicament in this respect. For other post-Communist societies, the disassociation of communism from national identity has been facilitated by a background understanding that communism had never been "our" doing in the first place. Ultimate responsibility for the crimes inflicted and the damage done in its name belongs not to the nation itself but to those who had forcibly imposed it—namely, another nation, Russia. Consequently, insofar as communism had been experienced in East European countries or in the non-Russian republics of the former Soviet Union as Russian tutelage, culpability for the past does not rest with the nation itself.

Russia's situation is unique in this respect. There a discourse of national identity would forfeit from the outset the possibility of constructing some *other nation* to which might be assigned the blame for

the immediate past. As a result, this culpability has invaded the code of domestic political communication, infusing it with the Manichaean logic of unqualified nationalism. In this context, the content of quotidian politics—conflict, bargaining, compromise, and so forth—easily becomes entangled with the intractable issue of national identity, as parties to a particular conflict tend to construct their opponents as enemies of the nation, and themselves, by implication, as its saviors. I wish to investigate this contest over national identity as a specific set of discursive practices in which Russian political actors participate. My methodological assumption in this respect runs parallel to that anchoring the new historiography of the French Revolution—namely, that the world of politics is built of language and those within it become the objects not of blind historical forces but of the words that they themselves utter.[1] Analysis of the relevant discursive practices thus makes this world available to us. From the point of view of their structure, these practices appeared remarkably uniform across the Russian political spectrum, amounting to a code that—at least for the period under review—seemed broadly shared. That situation, however, was dissolved by the political violence of October 1993. Although a detailed assessment of the forms of political discourse appearing in Russia in the aftermath of those tragic and traumatic events would be beyond the scope of this study, I shall conclude with a few words on that subject.

In order to provide a bit of substance to a discussion about such imperceptible things as discourse and identity—over which constantly hangs the threat of runaway abstraction—let me begin by introducing two vignettes that might illustrate concretely something of the problem of identity formation as experienced by political subjects in Russia during the period in question.

Sketch 1. A meeting on 8 July 1993—attended by some twenty representatives of the Socialist Party of Working People, the Party of Labor, and the United Social Democrats faction of the Social Democratic Party of Russia—called for the purpose of forming an electoral bloc (tentatively called the United Democratic Left) that will field a slate of candidates in elections expected in the coming months.

First Speaker: . . . The bloc that we create here in Moscow can serve as a model for others in the provinces and as a basis for forming a [new] unified party.

Second Speaker: I agree with what's been said. . . . But the word "democratic" should not appear in the name of the bloc. The people have tired of the word "democracy." It has a bad connotation, like "privatization."

Third Speaker: In the West, everybody knows that "united democratic left" stands for those parties that are insignificant. We shouldn't use that name at all.

Fourth Speaker: . . . Let's face it; what we really have in mind is a democratic socialist party, but the word "socialist" is not attractive to people either.

Fifth Speaker: And the word "party"? That's even worse!

A general discussion then ensues in which all permutations and combinations of the terms—"united," "left," "democratic," "socialist," "party," and so forth—are discarded as unsuitable for attracting voters. The question of what the organization's logo might include is met with baffled silence. The meeting adjourns with the understanding that the bloc has been formed but without a name. A full conference of the three organizations, called for the purpose of ratifying the new union, is tasked with devising a name and a logo for it.

Sketch 2. An interview (15 July 1993) conducted by the present writer with Vladimir Zharikhin, then a member of the Executive Board of the People's Party of Free Russia (PPFR), head of its Department for Public Relations, and coordinator of public relations and international ties for Civic Union, the larger coalition to which the PPFR belonged.

Interviewer: Would you begin by describing the various electoral coalitions that are now forming?

Zharikhin: There are a number of them, but in fact there are only three real political forces in the country: the national-Communist patriotic bloc, Civic Union, and Democratic Russia. I understand that in a normal, developed political situation in Russia there

would only be two—a left-center and a right-center—like the Republicans and Democrats in the U.S. or Labour and Conservative in England. One would accent questions of social security, and the other would lean toward [classical] liberal values. We don't have this because of our radical right and extreme left, which, in my view, would simply not be allowed to exist in a normal, civilized country. It's an exoticism that exists because of Bolshevism. Take the reformers, the radical part of Democratic Russia. Theirs is a Bolshevik mentality.

Interviewer: The reformers?

Zharikhin: Yes. It is a classic variant of the ends justifying the means, destroying everything for the sake of creating a new social order, a purely Bolshevik thing which is not limited to Communist ideology. Ideology itself is not the main thing. In order to achieve their aims, they use liberal ideology but remain Bolsheviks.

Interviewer: Well, you know that Democratic Russia also accuses [your coalition] Civic Union of the same thing. They say that Civic Union has been built on the base of the old *nomenklatura,* not just a part of it, but the very heart of the Communist system, the directors who controlled the entire economy.

Zharikhin: That's funny. If you look at these people [who say that] and the staff of the government and presidential team that they support, you'll see mainly that staff of the [old] CPSU. Yes, many in Civic Union belonged to the CPSU, but that was required at the time to work in their professions. We, too, defended the White House [during the coup in 1991]!

Interviewer: Then what of your opponents on the other end of the spectrum?

Zharikhin: Most of them call themselves Communists, but they're really fascists.

These short vignettes reflect a number of elements typical of political language in Russia during the period between the coups. Each illustrates to some degree the problem of representation. In the first, the members of an electoral bloc are enthused about their new-

found unity, appear to have a clear idea of their aims, but have no vocabulary with which to name their project. They are unable to represent their identity for fear that the other—in this case, the voters—would misconstrue it. They are convinced that if they were able to communicate their "real" program to the public, they would rapidly attract broad support. But they are equally certain that whatever name they might give to that coalition, campaigns for it would repel would-be supporters. So they pass the problem to a full conclave of their respective organizations, which would (somehow) untie that knot, remaining, in the meantime, nameless.

The second sketch involves the converse problem of renaming. In this respect, the projection of a given identity—here "democratic," "reformers"—is routinely rejected by the other to whom it has been directed. In its stead the other supplies a new name. During the first republic, the vogue had been to relabel the other "Communist" (or, with even more invective, "Bolshevik"), thus appropriating and reversing the valence of that seminal marker inherited from the Soviet past. "Communist" functioned as a universal tag of opprobrium used by all against all—except, perhaps, against Communists themselves, for whom other names such as "fascists" or "lumpens" were sometimes supplied—which prevented the formation of political identities. President Yeltsin and his supporters had routinely referred to their opponents in the old Congress of People's Deputies and Supreme Soviet as "Communists," just as the latter had regularly applied this word or its equivalents to the president and those associated with him.[2] The "democrats" called their opponents "Communists," and that favor was generously returned.[3] "Democrats" have stigmatized fellow "democrats" in this way,[4] just as those outside the "democratic" camp have done the same to one another.[5] Even avowed Communists were caught up in this name game, as illustrated by a number of Communist groups that adopted openly religious symbols, thereby disassociating the marker "Communist" from the international proletarian movement and linking it instead to Holy Russia.[6]

Under these circumstances, no political identity was able to stabilize itself. Not only was its self-representation invalidated by the other, who returned it to sender with the cancellation mark "Communist" stamped prominently on it, but also its projection in the first instance would have been conditioned by its claim of dis-

tinction from, and opposition to, all others whom it regarded as "Communist" in proportion to its distinction from, and opposition to, them. Thus projecting their identities against a phantom other—"Communists"—political subjects assumed their own phantom identities. None was anchored in relationships of mutual recognition that might establish and maintain the respective boundaries of their "positive" identities. The absence of such a political matrix within which competing identities could find mooring, the lack of recognized places on a recognizable spectrum of political identities, seemed to have encouraged political subjects to migrate toward that grand cenotaph, Russia, where individual attempts at self-validation could be cast in terms of some greater concept of nation. But the collective product of these efforts actually made matters worse as pragmatic orientations were overwhelmed by mythic notions retrieved from the past and the possibilities for political dialogue became lost in a discordant chorus of claims pitched around competing conceptions of national identity.

My discussion of the particular conditions and consequences associated with the problem of identity formation is divided into three parts. The first concerns the historical-cultural background that frames the question of nation and state in Russia. Here the focus is on the store of cultural "materials" inherited from the past that are available to contemporary political actors endeavoring to (re)construct a national identity. These materials admit to varying, even opposing, interpretations. However, of even greater moment in this process of identity formation appears to be the illocutionary interests of the actors themselves, reflected in the manner in which they have appropriated the language and symbols of the past in order to deploy them against their opponents. The ensuing bouts of blame-laying in the name of the nation thereby foreclosed the possibility for dialogue and, along with it, the possibility of making sense.

The second part explores the social conditions in which these patterns of political communication appear. Schematically this section develops the argument that the system of social representations—suppressed if not extirpated during some seventy years of communism— has remained both weak and confused. In compensation, political actors tend to advance "strong" (but shallow) representations that annex the category "national identity" and displace it onto that of "particular interests." This feature of political dis-

course in post-Communist Russia appears to have followed from the aspects of the communicative code evident during the first republic—in particular, from reciprocal nonrecognition of signifying others and from accusations for what is commonly called national "crisis" or "catastrophe" that are accomplished in the act of renaming the other "Communist." Not only did the reciprocal nonrecognition of identity claims deprive the discursive field of politics of recognized subjects bearing recognized interests, but also in denying recognition to the other, subjects constructed themselves in a particular way. By unmasking others as "Communists," they presented themselves as defenders of the nation, as bearers of the national interest. This form of self-exculpation was secured, then, by demonizing the other, onto whom was projected culpability for the discredited past.

In order to illustrate the function of this code in post-Communist Russian politics, the final part of this study applies the concepts developed at a general level to a specific set of events that culminated in the violent end of the first republic. It outlines how the system of representations in place had split systematically the Russian polity into hostile camps, occluding prospects for compromise among the central players, thus turning disputes on constitutional questions into a full-blown crisis that concluded with an insurrection in the capital and its suppression by military force. My aim in this section is not to provide an exhaustive explanation for the events in question. Nor is it my intention to argue that the constitutional crisis and the ensuing bloodshed have been "caused" by the particular reconstruction of Russia's post-Communist political discourse presented here. Rather my purpose is to provide a perspective on these events that renders them comprehensible by locating them within the phenomenal universe constructed by the discursive practices of political actors themselves. In so doing, it becomes possible to recover a layer of communicative action mediating this phenomenal universe in which instrumental-strategic activities were embedded. In the same way in which communicative action oriented toward reaching understanding—as Jürgen Habermas has shown—enables instrumental-strategic activities (in the extreme case, deception),[7] so it appeared in the Russian context that the root categories of the prevailing discourse have disabled instrumental-strategic activities ostensibly aimed at negotiation, compromise, and consensus. Such

forms of strategic action were systematically subverted by a discourse of identity that binds its participants into a pattern of irresolvable conflict—"irresolvable" because within its categories the instruments of resolution—assemblies, agreements, referenda, and so forth—were reconstituted as weapons for the continuation of the very struggle that they had been summoned to end.

HISTORICAL-CULTURAL BASES OF STATE AND NATION IN RUSSIA

One can scarcely imagine a more contested site for establishing national identity than that bequeathed by Russia's history. Prior to 1991, the Russian people had constituted the predominant group in the empire and, thereafter, in the USSR. In either instance, however, the political unit housing this people was not a nation-state. The question of territorial boundaries, then, has long been ambiguous, with Russia appearing as both larger than the lands on which lived the Russians and at the same time smaller than the multinational state that had included the Russian nation.[8] Moreover, the social construction of the Russian nation has historically paralleled the indeterminacy of the state's territorial boundaries. Beginning at least with Petr Chaadaev's famous *Philosophical Letters* (1830s), in which the author claimed that precisely because Russia was a nation of slaves whose achievements on the plane of world civilization amounted to nil, God and history had in store for this people a special mission of chiliastic proportions,[9] Russian makers of symbol and myth have repeatedly transformed the sense of inadequacy engendered by contact with the West into a profusion of stories about the coming greatness that it portends.[10] Within this cultural context, national inferiority sublimates itself onto something larger, usually the alleged grandeur of empire, thereby displacing the shame of inferiority that prompted the sublimation in the first instance.

Russian national consciousness, then, has taken extraordinary forms. In the words of one commentator, it might best be described as a longstanding "self-delusion" that has been finally interrupted by the collapse of the USSR, which "stripped naked" the nation and triggered an acute crisis of national identity.[11] In the words of another:

> For many centuries the Russian individual has been accustomed [to thinking] that he [lives] within the borders of this huge state [and that] he is the master of this empire. Today we willy-nilly have ceased to feel ourselves to be the masters everywhere, but it seems that we are unable to feel like masters even here at home [in Russia].[12]

These two sets of remarks on the loss of empire proceed from an identifiable "liberal-democratic" perspective. They obviously counsel critical realism as the cure for the identity crisis induced by the collapse of the USSR. The nation, it would seem, can overcome this trauma by reexamining its (false) identification with empire and building a (true) identity for itself in consonance with the precepts followed by any—and here the stock phrases—"normal," "civilized" country. In the view of their political opponents, however, this entire way of thinking about the Russian nation is nothing less than treason. It is based, say those of "patriotic" orientation, on the importation of foreign concepts that would corrode the very core of Russian national culture. Rather than attempting to copy what is "not ours," these voices insist, we need to retrieve what is true and unique in Russian civilization—"the Russian idea."

This notion is as fuzzy as it is emotionally evocative. It generally refers to a sainted nation based on the principle of *sobornost'*—a mystical notion whereby the (vicariously) assembled people (*sobor*) are united by an apprehension of religious truth that molds them into a community united in harmonious variety.[13] This community has a unique and universally valid mission to perform in the world. Having endured great suffering and innumerable selfless sacrifices, the Russian nation allegedly has been marked as the savior of humanity (a characterization that resonates with the messianic claims of communism). Thus the millenarian purpose ascribed to the nation is imprinted on the vehicle of its realization: the state. Of course from a liberal-democratic point of view, this notion is laughed off as obscurantist malarkey. In the words of one commentator:

> The idea of Russian messianism has united into a compact whole all those extremely contradictory orientations and tendencies which have been given the name "the Russian idea." Strictly speaking, no one knows what this [idea] is. . . . [But somehow] it is that which never was and therefore always exists.[14]

But within the various circles of its adherents, the idea occupies the center of their systems of representation, deflecting criticism (which could only come from those ignorant of, or opposed to, "the Russian idea") and commissioning an authoritarian state concept dressed up with sobornost' and aimed at the revival of national greatness via the route of empire.

The interplay of identity-seeking among political subjects tended to produce a common structure for political discourse during this period, even while the narratives issuing from the "democratic," "Communist," or "patriotic" camps respectively differed so markedly according to their surface content. To illustrate, consider the rhetorical postures struck by two of Russia's most prominent politicians during this period: Sergei Baburin, a leading figure among the "patriots," and Gennadii Burbulis, his counterpart among the "democrats."

Baburin began his political career in Omsk, where he quickly earned a reputation as that city's most radical democrat. He successfully campaigned for national office in 1990 on the Democratic Russia list, but, having been passed over for a key committee assignment in the Supreme Soviet, his political direction banked steeply rightward.[15] As leader of the deputies' faction Russia in the now defunct Congress of People's Deputies, head of the political party Russian Popular Union, and a leader of the groups Russian Path and subsequently People's Power in the State Duma, Baburin has become a principal spokesperson for the patriotic tendency in national politics. His statements on the questions of nation and state are richly embroidered with the various threads running through "the Russian idea"—fear of the corrupting influences stemming from the West, scorn for those fifth-columnists calling themselves "democrats" who would subvert Russia's authentic cultural-political institutions, rejection of democracy itself in favor of the Russian *narodnovlastie*—a mystical form of "people's power" roughly equivalent to sobornost'—and so forth. What is more, Baburin is convinced that restoring to the Russian state its proper principles is coextensive with the reestablishment of that state's proper territorial boundaries—namely, those of the former USSR. From his perspective, the entire collection of events and processes that resulted in the Soviet Union's collapse amounts to a "political crime" and "a provocation to war." Popular referenda endorsing the goal of independence in

the former non-Russian republics he regards as "the biggest lie, for even in a referendum the will of the people can be falsified [when] it is expressed as a decision that leads to their own ruin." On his calculus, non-Russian self-determination has been but "a violation of the Russian people's right to self-determination."[16]

At the other end of the political spectrum, Gennadii Burbulis began his political career in Sverdlovsk, where he had been a lecturer in Marxist-Leninist philosophy. He stood for office in the national elections of 1989 and won a seat in the USSR's Congress of People's Deputies. Burbulis took an active part in the opposition bloc formed in that institution and, through close association with Boris Yeltsin, rose to a leading position in the "democratic" camp. In November 1991 he became Russia's first deputy prime minister and arguably was then the most influential individual in Yeltsin's cabinet. After leaving government service, he took the lead in organizing a "pro-presidential" political party, eventually called Russia's Choice, on whose list he was elected to the State Duma in 1993. Unlike Baburin, Burbulis explicitly speaks the language of liberal democracy. He eschews the dream of empire as a dangerous delusion and instead projects a future for Russia that includes the familiar shibboleths of his political wing—"normal," "civilized," "democratic," and based on a market economy. Following some four months of an economic policy known in the vernacular as "shock therapy," which would allegedly deliver such a future to Russia, Burbulis participated in a "popular assembly" at which about a thousand prominent figures from the worlds of politics, letters, and the arts rallied in support of continuing the shock treatment. In Burbulis's view, this popular assembly represented a rather magnificent example of sobornost'. "This sort of philosophy," he later remarked, "is generated by the whole of society, and mostly by those who are not practically involved with power relations and who can accumulate experience in the sphere of culture," which can be employed to shore up the authority of the government.[17]

The juxtaposition of Baburin and Burbulis reveals a number of features characteristic of Russian politics in the first republic. First, there was the tendency to disassociate oneself from one's political past by assuming a hostile posture toward that which was connected to it. Burbulis, the former lecturer in Marxism-Leninism turned "democrat," is as inclined toward explicit anticommunism as

Baburin, the radical democrat reborn as patriot, is given to condemning the treasonous activities of his former comrades-in-arms. Second, in the discourse of each, elementary logic disappeared behind cultural categories capable of creating strong semiotic effects. In the same way that Baburin regarded the restoration of empire as the exercise of Russia's right to "self-determination," so Burbulis viewed the reenactment of traditional Russian political rituals—through which authority is consecrated by mass acclamation—as fully congruent with a policy ostensibly designed to bring into being a new, "civilized" Russia based on political democracy and economic freedom. Of course Burbulis's orientation is by no means unique among those professing an outwardly reform-oriented ideology. As Yurii Afanas'ev has argued, unthinking lapses into the inimical categories of their opponents seem to be a kind of second nature for Russia's self-professed "democrats."[18] Representations, as noted above, tend to be strong but shallow, pitched on semantic bases easily infiltrated by incongruous elements. Take, for instance, the "democrats'" common term for themselves—"the democratic part of the population." The pronounced oxymoronic element here suggests a sort of semantic masquerade, in certain respects reminiscent of Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of carnival.[19] Despite the shallowness of this conception, like many comparable ones, it derives its strength by the deployment of an adjectival construction capable of devouring its respective noun. Here "democratic" swallows "part." Yet "part" remains as a trace signifying the existence of some other "undemocratic" part of the population, necessarily opposed to the people, their rights to expression, self-rule, and so forth. This formulation then functions in a way analogous to "the Russian idea," in the face of which other ideas would be opposed to that which is "Russian," that which is "ours."

Relatedly, it is possible to detect in the narratives of Baburin and Burbulis a counterpart to the standard practice of nonrecognition of assertions of identity, as discussed above, in which the speakers appear to be quite oblivious to their own contradictory utterances. Given their professional training—Baburin in law and Burbulis in philosophy— this would be particularly puzzling, unless we consider the context in which they are constructing themselves as political subjects. Were it the case that a political dialogue with a recognized other were under way, then contradiction would dimin-

ish the persuasive effect of argument. Accordingly, each speaker might be expected to tidy up his statements, either by means of reflexively monitoring his own utterances or on the basis of that which his partner in dialogue might point out about them. This is obviously not the case for either Baburin or Burbulis. The manner of self-constitution via denying the other's self-representations appears to account for this phenomenon. In the absence of dialogue, narratives come to resemble that I-I form of autocommunication described by Yuri Lotman in which messages are encoded *against* the other (already redefined in the discourse as alien, evil, treasonous, and so forth) and are in fact directed back to their (collective) sender.[20] Within this speech situation, contradiction can be converted into another element of what Lotman has described as hyper-semiosis, a communicative orientation aiming to realize itself in one "great word." In political struggle, it takes the form of a verbal weaponry aimed at the annihilation of the other via the incantation of certain words possessing magical properties—"the Russian idea" and its synecdoches on one side of the spectrum, "reform," "democracy," and like terms on the other.

CULTURAL CODE AND SOCIAL CONDITION

At this point, a methodological proviso might be in order. Namely, in the investigation of a phenomenon as ramified as "identity," the analyst is in principle unable to situate himself on any epistemological terra firma. No appeals to theory, established fact, special knowledge, or anything else can disguise the troublesome condition that every statement made about identity is itself conditioned by the identity of its maker. To follow William Connolly's formulation, assessments of the other made on the basis of one's own system of representations inevitably involve a devaluation of the object, inasmuch as the other will invariably fail to measure up to the standards of value embedded in that same system of representations.[21] As far as the present analysis is concerned, Russians appear as "other," and their "failures" from the standpoint of my cultural standards are already apparent in the sort of "pathological" communication patterns that I have been describing. Judgments im-

plicit or explicit in my account resonate with any number of similar statements made by Russians themselves, who frequently resort to tropes such as "political theater of the absurd" or "political zoo" in order to describe their present situation. Nonetheless, if we take Connolly's point seriously, it remains the case that characterizations made by those within a given cultural system are not equivalent to those offered from without, regardless of surface similarities. On the other hand, however, even a successful attempt to shed my own cultural perspective and enter into that of the object of analysis would fail to solve the problem. For what could be learned from *inside* that cultural system could not be communicated back to others in my own—myself included. How might we then proceed?

It seems to me that two things can be done that would enable the analysis to continue in the face of this conundrum. First, the particular discourse(s) with which we are dealing can be reframed by isolating what Frederic Jameson has referred to as "the absent cause," that social condition that sets discourse in motion but is not thematized explicitly in discourse itself.[22] Second, on the basis of this reframing, a new understanding of the dynamics underlying communication can be developed by relating social texts back to their socio-cultural context. As such, the ostensible referent of a given text is bracketed and "the absent cause" is inserted in its place. If the second-order statement thus derived still "makes sense," this can be taken as (imperfect) confirmation that the reframing, bracketing, and substitution are not merely an arbitrary imposition of meanings from without, but analytic devices enabling us to recover a layer of meaning that resides within the cultural system of representations itself, whether or not it has been adequately thematized by those participating in the system. Obviously analyses proceeding within the cultural system in question can provide important information about "the absent cause" and how it appears/disappears in the cultural code. We begin with some of these.

Jadwiga Staniszkis has provided a very useful starting point for our analysis by applying Claude Lévi-Strauss's concept of *bricolage*, or "indifferent variety," to the ensemble of social relations prevailing under state socialism.[23] The crux of her idea consists in a situation in which the repression of communication by the party-state prevented individual and collective identities from circulating in society. None could name himself openly; none could encounter the

other as the other might wish to represent himself; consequently there was no interaction among subjects qua subjects, just the presence of manifest differences (variety) toward which each subject—absent interaction—remained "indifferent." Let us call the first dimension of our "absent cause" the absence of social interaction—indicating, thereby, an historical background that has precluded the formation of collective identities anchored in a system of cultural representations marked by mutual recognition.[24]

If that is what had been absent, then what was present? A kind of submersion, it seems, in which individuals disappeared into "collectives" and "collectives" into the all-embracing state.[25] The results and implications of this long-standing arrangement have been especially topical in Russian social commentary. The following remarks by Vladimir Pankov (a deputy editor of the journal *Rodina*), are perhaps characteristic of one current in this discussion:

> The Russian spirit has been made ill above all by collectivism, and stripped of all its features by an incipient degeneration. It [collectivism] has become our moral mirage, behind which we hide our own egoism in the most vulgar sense. For a long time we have lived apart from one another and nothing higher than us unites us. Our "collectivism" is not brotherhood, not a selfless service to the good, but a dictatorship of indifference, a revelry of dependence, a cowardice of consciousness.[26]

Pankov then goes on to locate in these circumstances the sources of millenarian thinking, which he sees as imprinted on the Russian consciousness by the long experience with communism—a tendency to embrace sweeping, absolute solutions that dissolve practical problems and real responsibilities, and a countertendency to discard these same solutions just as readily as they were embraced when individual utilities so dictate because their actual function has never been to compel belief but to provide a hiding place for the self.

These tendencies toward strong but shallow representations have been amply apparent, for instance, in debates on the floors of both the Soviet and Russian parliaments. As a number of studies analyzing the language featured in these legislative fora have vividly demonstrated, speakers evince a proclivity to leap over specifiable constituencies in order to construct themselves as vessels from which flows an alleged general will. Speakers usually do not refer

to the interests of their respective districts or to those associated with some definable social group. Rather they rely on constructions such as "the people [*narod*] are sick and tired of . . ." or "the people demand . . . ," thereby enveloping their own thoughts on a given matter in the urgency of national purpose (strong representations) while substituting slogans, catch phrases, and emotionally charged absurdities (shallow representations) for persuasive argument.[27]

The two principal "solutions" that have been on the table in Russia—"radical reform" or a return to "the Russian idea"—appear to be reminiscent of what Pankov describes and accordingly can be reframed along the lines of his argument and of that advanced by Staniszkis. In this respect, we notice that neither directs attention to practical matters in the world "as it is." Rather, each points somewhere else—"reform" toward some place (the West) where people allegedly live "normal," "civilized" lives; "the Russian idea" toward some suitably idealized Russian past. By shifting attention away from the immediate world of practice, neither conception permits practical matters to be discussed as practical matters. Accordingly we can regard both of them as hypersemiotic constructs emerging on a particular field of communication wherein separate interests, lacking a socially recognized medium for expression, sublimate themselves as unqualified claims to represent not merely interests, but also some genuine *national identity,* colliding all the while with others doing the same.

It is at the point of collision that denial and renaming occur. As we have noted, during the first republic the word "Communist" reverberated around all projected identities. At one level, the frequency of this mutual accusation would follow from the fact that the number of former Communists in Russia's political class far exceeds critical mass. Since each has been busy confecting a new identity for himself, it seems reasonable to suppose that he has little difficulty in spotting the same process in the other. But at another level, there appears to be an exculpatory moment in this process as well, and it may be that herein lies its uncompromising urgency and irresistible force. For one's own association with the discredited past, one's own responsibility for the calamity that has befallen Russia, could be canceled via the projection of past/discarded identity onto the other. The exculpation would be then completed by the other's annihilation.

Behind the scenes of this dramatic clash of identities, another process has been transpiring in post-Communist Russia that concerns the more prosaic matters of power and property. This might be regarded as the third dimension of our "absent cause." Who decides what forms of property will be instituted in the economy, which portions of the state sector will pass to private hands, which state offices will retain or acquire economic functions—in short, who will determine who gets what? Here we remind ourselves of the fact that in the former state socialist countries the first act in the sequence known as "privatization" involves the creation of the juridical fiction of "property," effected by some organ(s) of the state laying hold of the physical objects of the economy, establishing monetized values for them, and setting the terms and conditions for their sale to other parties, including the state itself. Even under optimal conditions of effective governmental bodies scrupulously observing strict legality, those in control of the relevant organs, along with their respective networks of associates, would obviously be in a position to rewrite the book on insider trading. In Russia, however, the creation and distribution of title—nothing less than the genesis of a new political and economic order—have been processes transpiring among legal structures that are not only rudimentary (at best), but also politicized by the struggle raging *within* the state.

Moreover, considering the economic structure inherited by the Russian state from its Soviet predecessor—an integrated network of monopolies functioning on the basis of commands issuing from a single economic center—it has become apparent that the economic course pursued since the USSR's collapse has amounted more to the projection of an imaginary liberalism onto existing economic relations than to an instrumental-rational program for improving performance by stimulating investment and clearing away obstacles to market competition. The institutional context presupposed by a policy of economic liberalism has simply not been present. Undeterred by this stubborn fact, however, liberal "reformers" would use their control of state offices to free prices and introduce a form of privatization that would somehow summon this very context into existence. What happened instead, of course, was that economic actors tended to behave in time-honored liberal fashion rather than according to the liberals' plan. Calculating their own interests, they responded to the new mix of incentives before them by slashing

production and jacking up prices.[28] As part of the same bargain, organized crime saw tremendous opportunities for profit-making and inserted itself into the legal economy on a massive scale. These outcomes have been characterized by the liberals as "Communist revenge" or "sabotage." Conversely, their opponents would portray them as the intended results of a deliberate policy of treason, aimed at eviscerating a once great world power and consigning it to the status of a satrapy of rapacious Western capitalism. Hence the root issue surrounding a national economy "up for grabs"—which in itself would seem altogether sufficient to set off a political struggle of enormous intensity— has been compounded by the particular (hypersemiotic) way in which this issue and attendant interests have been mediated in the communicative code characteristic of present-day Russian politics. As we see below, the system of representations functioning in the political arena has tended to magnify rather than diminish the divisions there. It has not only encumbered the prospects for solution, but has also animated conflict potentials present at other levels of the system that have compounded the crisis at the center.

Assembling these three dimensions of the "absent cause"—the collectivist forms of social organization, their attendant modes of identity signification ("indifferent variety"), and state action undertaken to promote what is referred to as "privatization" and "marketization" —into a single figure, we can grasp it as the profound disruption and impending extinction of an entire way of life. The security provided by collectives to their members has been disappearing in the same way that the extended networks of personalized relations linking these primary units in the social order in more or less stable and predictable ways themselves have come under threat. Moreover, the system of representations inherited from the past, as Katherine Verdery has pointed out, is both reinforced by the unfolding conditions and at the same time inadequate to the task of mediating their traumatic consequences other than by reproducing them through its antidialogic categories of we/they, "the people"/"the enemies," and so forth.[29] These conditions, then, would appear to underlie and to trigger the discourses on national identity that prevail in effectively all post-Communist states. However, in Russia the aggressive, blame-laying edge of this discourse was perforce turned inward, thus polarizing political forces into mutually antagonistic

formations. Each formation, not without reference to the activities and perceived/assumed intentions of the other, undertook its own "defense"—in the name, of course, of the nation itself—by refitting those institutions of the state that had passed under its control into weapons with which it would destroy the other.

IDENTITY CRISIS AS CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

In order to account for the fate of the first republic, I interpret some of the major events in question on the basis of the categories developed above. I begin with what appears to have been the first unambiguous manifestation of constitutional crisis in post-Communist Russia—namely, the conflict over state authority that erupted at the seventh sitting of the Congress of People's Deputies in December 1992. My overall purpose in this respect is to demonstrate that the difficult political problems confronting the country—the question of property and its ownership as state enterprises pass to private hands, the constitutional question concerning the delineation of executive and legislative spheres of authority, and the issue of defining the relations between the central and regional governments in the federal system—were aggravated rather than mediated by the communicative code in which they were thematized.

CRISIS AND "COMPROMISE"

The crisis that broke out at the seventh Congress was initiated by a battery of constitutional amendments designed in the immediate sense to strip the president of most of his control over the executive branch and to transfer those powers to the legislature.[30] In the longer term, the political forces animating the legislature had set their sights on canceling the constitution's provision for a separation of powers by relocating all governmental authority in the Congress and its full-time organ, the Supreme Soviet.[31] Over the previous year, a realignment in the political orientations of many deputies had produced a substantial anti-Yeltsin majority that would fall in line behind its most militant elements, represented by the Front of National Salvation (FNS), which accounted for over 290 of the 880 depu-

ties voting at the Congress.[32] From a detached point of view, this contest between president and parliament might be regarded simply as a power struggle over very high stakes. But it would take on an altogether different character within the phenomenal world of the actors themselves. In the discourse shared by the FNS and many other opponents of the president, the Yeltsin administration in Russia constituted a "regime of occupation" by means of which foreign powers were systematically exsanguinating the Russian nation. Framing their presidential opponent in this way, those participating in this discourse would correspondingly connote a particular identity for themselves—namely, saviors of the nation obliged to enact their role by ridding the country of the alien regime on its soil. The amendments under consideration would have accomplished that legally.

Outflanked by opponents in a legislature that through its powers of amendment had taken full possession of the country's constitution, Yeltsin counterattacked with "the people." This response put in place those binary oppositions—president/legislature, people/constitution —that would structure the contending discourses throughout the crisis. Although Yeltsin's first tactical moves proved incapable of reaching their strategic targets—paralyzing the legislature by means of a deputies' walkout large enough to remove the quorum,[33] then calling a national referendum intended to dissolve the Congress once and for all—the "compromise" that they evoked would become the condition for expanding the crisis in the months that followed. The president's side would cleave to its shibboleth for national identity—"the people"—and deploy it against the Congress (or Supreme Soviet), which it would label "antipopular." The anti-Yeltsin majority in the legislature would base its own claims to authority on an analogous usurpation of "nation"—rendered here as "the constitution"—and so stigmatize its opponent, the Yeltsin government, as "anticonstitutional." Since each side was constructing its own identity in opposition to a renamed and vilified other, it was simultaneously sublimating its partisan interest in power onto a grander plane of duty before the nation. These discursive practices provided small space, if any, for a negotiated resolution of the crisis. Rather they tended to ensure from the outset that each ostensible compromise reached by the contending parties would be quickly subverted.

The first such "compromise" came on the initiative of Valerii Zor'kin, then chairperson of Russia's Constitutional Court, which, by beginning a pattern of direct involvement of the court in the political process, would disqualify the singular institution capable of assuming a neutral position for arbitrating the conflict between the executive and the legislature. According to the agreement worked out by the court, the president, and the chairperson of the Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov, the recently enacted constitutional amendments would be suspended along with the right to referendum by popular initiative. Hence the presidency would have its powers temporarily restored while the legislature would not have to fear a popular referendum that would (almost certainly) result in a resounding vote of no confidence. Instead a national referendum on the extant constitution, scheduled for 11 April, would somehow resolve the dispute between the two branches. Perhaps the least of the problems with this constitutional compromise was the fact that it was itself patently unconstitutional.[34] Of more import was the regard shown it by the parties themselves. For the presidential side, it meant that the Congress of People's Deputies would fail the test of popular approval and perish; on the opposite side, Khasbulatov was assuring all concerned that the Congress would continue as before, regardless of the results of the referendum.[35]

Within weeks, however, this compromise was being jettisoned by two of the parties to it, Khasbulatov and Zor'kin. The former set about devising a list of twelve questions to be placed before the voters that would confuse rather than clarify the constitutional issue;[36] the latter began a public campaign against the very idea of staging the referendum (that he had himself sponsored a short time earlier) by means of a series of "roundtables" at which selected "experts" and politicians would denounce the idea as a threat to Russia's fragile stability.[37]

By February, Khasbulatov was explaining to seminars of local soviet officials that eliminating the presidency entirely was indeed the current goal of legislative power across the country and that its present stage amounted to stripping that office of all functions save the nomination of the prime minister.[38] At the same time, the ad hoc roundtables sponsored by the Constitutional Court were converted by the Supreme Soviet into its "permanently acting organ."[39] This roundtable, sharing little with its namesakes elsewhere, was em-

blematic of the manner in which Russia's political division has been mediated through an extended series of duplex forms that widen the very divide they ostensibly claim to bridge. The roundtable itself included over one hundred participants from various political parties, movements, trade unions, and public organizations—a number large enough to preclude the possibility of finding any accord. Indeed at its first session, some 80 percent of those in attendance were not afforded an opportunity to speak at all.[40] Moreover, since the enabling documents of this new institution both assigned quotas to participating organizations and designated by name who their spokespersons would be without any approval in most cases from the very organizations these participants allegedly represented,[41] serious questions immediately erupted regarding the representative character of this assembly. Within days after its first session, the Supreme Soviet's roundtable was denounced by four participants as a sham whose actual purpose was to isolate the president.[42] Similarly, seventy-two political parties, movements, and unions who had either been excluded from the roundtable, had chosen not to take part in it, or had decided to cease their participation after its first meeting issued a manifesto impugning the representative character of the Supreme Soviet's new "organ." Utilizing the auspices of Moscow's mayor, this group then organized its own "roundtable from below" as a rival to that sponsored by the Supreme Soviet. A number of important groups on Russia's political scene were included on it—Democratic Russia, the Russian Movement for Democratic Reform, the cinematographers' and writers' unions, the Independent Miners' Union, and others.[43] As might be expected, this competing roundtable endorsed the April referendum as the country's only alternative to disaster while the other regarded it as the recipe for same.

By this juncture, the split in Russian political society had reached a new stage. One camp, arrayed around the legislature, possessed "its" constitution and its version of national consensus in the form of its own "roundtable." The other, grouped around the presidency, claimed the support of "the people," which it would attempt to parlay into its own constitution and organ of national consensus. In March legislative leaders summoned the Congress of People's Deputies into an extraordinary (eighth) session that revoked the December compromise, canceled the scheduled referendum, and pro-

duced the predictable plethora of tragicomic invective against the president.[44] A few days after the Congress had had its word on the matter, Yeltsin appeared on television to have his. His claim to have issued an executive order instituting direct presidential rule, while spurious,[45] and his announcement of a unilaterally initiated referendum on the constitution set for 25 April were sufficient to provoke his opponents in the legislature into calling the Congress back into yet another extraordinary session and those on the Constitutional Court into a series of self-discrediting judicial debacles.[46]

At its ninth (extraordinary) session, the Congress voted to dissolve both the Federal Information Center (which influenced television and radio programming) and the institution of presidential representatives in the regions (whose formal duties were to ensure that local authorities implement certain national policies in the manner preferred by Yeltsin's administration). Since the executive was, and thereafter fully remained, prepared to ignore these decisions, constitutional crisis deepened. And the decision by the Congress to institute legislative censorship via "councils of observers," who would oversee television and radio programming at national and regional levels, deepened it further. But in its most significant act, the Congress acquiesced to Yeltsin's call for a referendum on 25 April, with the stipulation, however, that the legislature would compose the questions. It composed four: whether the voter had confidence in the president; whether (s)he supported the government's policies; whether new elections should be called for the presidency; and whether new elections should be called for the Congress. Given the hardships inflicted by some sixteen months of economic "shock therapy," this stratagem seemed guaranteed to produce a "no" vote on the second item. Perhaps this "no" would influence the voters' decision on the first question as well. At any event, Yeltsin's approval ratings in opinion polls at the time, hovering around the 25 percent mark, would have appeared to indicate that his opponents could expect to win on this item too. The final two questions on early elections would remain moot. Not only was there no implementation clause in the referendum, but also the Constitutional Court set an impossible condition by ruling that these were constitutional issues and therefore required the approval of two-thirds of all *eligible* voters. Once again, it would seem that the mechanism ostensibly designed to overcome division would instead aggravate it.

To the surprise of all concerned, Yeltsin scored victories in the 25 April referendum on all four questions. Since Yeltsin had been touting his interpretation of the proceedings as a referendum on something that had not appeared on the ballot—the constitution—he used the occasion of his success to institute a new process that would take constitution-making out of the hands of the legislature and award it to a constitutional assembly that he summoned in June.[47] By early July, this assembly had crafted a new draft constitution, merging the president's project with the most recent version produced by the Supreme Soviet's Constitutional Commission.[48] But the details of this process are not as important for our concerns as are the political divisions that it deepened and the centrifugal forces that it unleashed in the federation. Let us take up these two related problems by locating the federal question within the framework of the constitutional crisis.

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIPS

From the perspective of communications, a federal system might be regarded as one in which discourses concerning national and subnational identities are intertwined. Within such an arrangement, the category "nation" would always carry some trace of the subnational units that comprise it, just as the respective identities of these units would always connote, among other things, their membership in a larger whole. Conflicts involving the issue of identity at either national or subnational level would therefore ramify through the other. Viewing the politics of federalism in Russia from this vantage, it appears that disputes concerning the status of the federation's members and the respective spheres of authority proper to national and subnational governments would involve more than contests over the control of material resources. For intermeshed with these struggles over resources has been a process of identity formation transpiring in Russia's regions, signaled by declarations of sovereignty, the adoption of constitutions and other symbols of statehood, the elections of presidents, and so on. If politics (to repeat the celebrated phrase) concerns the question "Who gets what?," then federal politics in Russia would render both of these pronouns as subject to dispute. In this respect, the constitutional crisis at the

center escalated contentions surrounding each. On one hand, it compounded the problem of identity formation for subnational actors by blurring that baseline distinction—the Russian nation as represented by its state institutions—in accordance with which regional identities might be coherently formulated. Not knowing to which "Russia" one belonged—that of the president or that of the Supreme Soviet—how might (say) Tatarstan or Krasnodar discern the limits, terms, conditions, and so forth structuring the projections of their political identities? On the other, each party to the constitutional crisis would seek to enlist the support of the regions for its cause by tendering to them various concessions and inducements. Competitively bidding up the offers that they were prepared to make, the central actors thus would encourage regional elites to stake out political identities for themselves commensurate with their expanding opportunities to control resources.

Federal relations, already a difficult issue prior to the constitutional crisis, became a crisis unto themselves in the wake of Yeltsin's decision to convoke a constitutional assembly. In anticipation of its first meeting in early June, the Supreme Soviet began in mid-May to organize its own equivalent institution, drawing into a preliminary conference in Moscow about one-half of the chairpersons of regional soviets.[49] The declaration issuing from this assembly denied any legitimacy to the constitutional convention proposed by the president, affirmed the resolve of those present to consider the Congress of People's Deputies as the only institution entitled to undertake constitutional change, and condemned Yeltsin's draft constitution as fundamentally incompatible with the rights of the country's "sovereign republics."[50] Having stanched an internal movement proposing participation in the president's Constitutional Convention,[51] the Supreme Soviet's leadership began enlisting regional leaders and representatives from those "opposition" and "centrist" factions in the legislature that had been active in its roundtable to form its own rival institution, whose nucleus convened on 25 May.[52] Over the following two months while the Constitutional Convention was in session, the Supreme Soviet's leadership advertised its own incipient assembly as a place where the country's regions—more and more assuming the role of some "third force" capable of deciding the battle at the center—might shop for a better constitutional bargain should they be dissatisfied with what Yeltsin had on offer.[53]

For his part, Yeltsin was issuing overt assurances to the republics that his Constitutional Convention would fully respect their "sovereign" status, a condition which they had named as the price of their very participation.[54] While Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Shakhrai, Chief of the Administration of the President Sergei Filatov, and presidential adviser Sergei Stankevich blitzed the hinterlands lobbying for regional support,[55] their colleagues preparing for the Constitutional Convention in Moscow drew leaders from some ten key regions into the workings of its inner circles.[56] To little avail. At the convention's first session, the entire section of the constitutional draft pertaining to federal relations had become such a contentious issue that it was withdrawn from consideration.[57] At the convention's second session (ending 12 July), which approved a final draft, the ambiguous wording of the articles pertaining to sovereignty failed to mollify the bulk of the regional representatives. Although the draft was approved by 74 percent of the 558 delegates taking part in the vote, the missing quarter of support was composed almost entirely of delegates from regions.[58] Since the draft could not be ratified convincingly—regardless of the forum in which this might eventually occur—without the approval of at least a majority of the regions, regional authorities would continue to hold the trump card. The major questions remaining at this time, then, would be on whose behalf—the president's or the Supreme Soviet's—they would play it and, relatedly, what concessions would induce them to do so.

The impasse reached at the convention reflected the way in which disputes between central and regional governments over their respective spheres of authority have been ratcheted ever upward in the face of a divided center. In order to capture some of the complexity of this process, we remind ourselves that the Federal Treaty concluded by Moscow with the regions in March 1992 established two different statuses for the "subjects of the federation" who were party to it. On the one hand, some sixty-eight of these appear as simple administrative-territorial units (*oblasts* and *krais*), while on the other, the remaining twenty have been juridically constituted as "sovereign" republics in deference to the ethnic/national claims of their leaders (Tatarstan, Sakha, Kalmykiya, and so on). For the latter, "sovereignty" has functioned as a presumed right to abide by national laws, pay taxes to the central government, and so forth as the republics' authorities see fit. Not unexpectedly, this advantage has not

gone unnoticed by the former, many of whom began demanding by fall 1992 an upgrade in their status commensurate with that accorded the "sovereign" republics.[59] In addition to consistently pressing the demand for a single standard of rights for all subjects of the federation,[60] many regions that lacked republic status have been solving this problem unilaterally by staging referenda on this issue and using the uniformly favorable results to declare themselves "sovereign" republics.[61] Threatened by equality, most of the original twenty sovereign republics no less consistently maintained that they had no intention of agreeing to a new constitutional order whose provisions fail to incorporate their special (privileged) standing.[62]

The divided center thus became a veritable thoroughfare through which regional authorities channeled particular demands and were rewarded according to either the political loyalty that they individually professed to the Russian government or the threat that they posed to the maintenance of its nominal jurisdiction.[63] The pattern of ad hoc concessions from Moscow, thereby induced, resulted in a situation in which the economically advantaged regions would contribute taxes to the central government at drastically reduced rates—when taxes were not withheld altogether (as in the case of at least four of the sovereign republics)—while the poorer regions shouldered the additional burden. Moreover, a province's ability to garner state subsidies and special allocations of scarce resources correlated negatively with its readiness to pay taxes to Moscow.[64]

But taxes were only part of the picture. Ownership and control of property have seemed the grander prize, and both parties to the conflict at the center had been extending these considerations to would-be supporters in the regions to purchase their support. The process by which regional elites—often fragmented and in conflict prior to the failed coup in August 1991—began finding mutual accommodation and the capacity to unite around regional interests in opposition to the central government was accelerated by Yeltsin's astonishing victory in the April referendum.[65] Sensing a loss of leverage should Yeltsin employ his national majority to score a quick victory on the constitutional front, regional elites closed ranks and dug in their heels. Simultaneously Yeltsin's opponents in the legislature began amending the law on privatization in such a way as to lure these elites to their camp by confining the transfer of state property to a process involving regional state officials only.[66] With this variant

in place, those who "possessed" state enterprises under communism could look forward to owning them collectively under capitalism.[67] Although the government's State Committee on Property, which superintends the process of privatization, explicitly refused to abide by the new legislation, it was itself busy pursuing a comparable transfer of jurisdiction to regional authorities, portending an outcome in which the "single economic mechanism" of the former USSR would be succeeded in post-Communist Russia by eighty-eight diminutive, state-centered economic complexes, each with its own customs regulations, trade and investment policies, and tax laws.[68]

The inability of Yeltsin's camp to broker an arrangement for midwifing constitutional change by enlisting the "third force" of Russia's regions and republics would appear in retrospect as the prelude to the decision to use force against the opposition legislature. In late August, the Supreme Soviet dealt the first blow to the president's plan for a peaceful settlement by rejecting a proposal whereby the assembly of regional and republic representatives (the Council of the Federation) would convene under the co-chairpersonship of Yeltsin and Khasbulatov in order to formulate some solution to the crisis. Indicatively, the reasons advanced by the majority of the Supreme Soviet's leadership for ruling out this option conformed to the same dyadic proliferation of institutions—roundtables, constitutions, and so on—that had characterized the crisis from the start. In this instance, the particular Council of the Federation in question—that which had been summoned by the president during an earlier round in his contest with the legislature—was deemed illegitimate. Rather than utilizing this forum—which included one representative from the executive structure in each region and one from the corresponding soviet—the Supreme Soviet proposed an alternative one—namely, "its" Council of the Federation, which contained only the heads of regional and republic soviets.[69]

The second blow to the president's plan was dealt by "his" Council of the Federation. In the same way that Yeltsin had invited the regions to assume the role of national actors by proposing that ("his") Council of the Federation take on the functions of an interim—and possibly permanent—legislative body, thus decommissioning the Congress and Supreme Soviet, so the regional representatives on the council responded by steadfastly eschewing deliberations on national issues and maintaining that the council

was no more than an advisory body.[70] By the time that it convened on 18 September, most members had already stated their intentions to cease participation in the council, even in an advisory capacity.[71]

"CORRUPTION"

Within the context of a divided political discourse reproducing itself within the structures of the Russian state as a series of mutually opposed institutions, the category "corruption" became the phenomenal form taken by the disintegration of the state. In view of the fragmentation of central authority and the concomitant tendency among regional elites to pocket as much as they could of the resources belonging formally to the state sector, the appearance of corruption on a massive scale would not be surprising. Our interest in this phenomenon, however, would concern not so much its extent but the way in which it has fed back into and ramified the national crisis at the center of Russian politics.

In considerable measure, corruption was abetted by the power struggle at the center. Not only were favors passed out to supporters of one side or the other, but also the ethic of protecting "our team" while accusing and (when possible) leveling criminal charges against the opposing side became a preoccupation for the branches of government.[72] As the executive-legislative conflict spiraled to new levels in the aftermath of the April referendum and consequent summoning of a Constitutional Convention, "corruption" was deployed as a kind of heavy artillery by each side against the other. In this respect Lyliya Shevtsova probably has been correct to note that in the past corrupt practices all around had acted as a stabilizing factor in politics, as long as each party refrained from public accusations of the other for fear of retaliatory strikes on behalf of or by those accused.[73] However, this threshold was crossed by the opposition to the president when it appeared in spring that he had gathered sufficient momentum to impose a constitutional settlement on his opponents.[74] The result was wave on wave of charges and countercharges, a public discrediting of all the institutions of government, and yet another spiral of constitutional crisis initiated on 1 September, when Yeltsin "temporarily" suspended the authority of then Vice-President Aleksandr Rutskoi pending an investigation of

certain charges made against him (charges which subsequently have been determined to have been based on fabricated evidence).[75]

Perhaps as much as anything else, "corruption" underscores how the dominant code through which identity and interest were publicly mediated in Russia functioned to exacerbate political divisions. Indeed as the apparently inflated, always sensational, and often confected nature of the most serious allegations would indicate, those making charges of "corruption" were borrowing the guise of legality simply in order to strike political blows against their opponents.[76] Since actual evidence for charges leveled was of lesser moment in this spectacle than the impulse to construct an image of the enemy as "unclean," the casualties in the "battle with corruption" tend not to be the accused state officials—until the eleventh hour of the constitutional crisis, no criminal proceedings were initiated against any of the principals[77]—but public confidence in government, respect for law, and so forth. Russia's struggle against itself was manifest in the arena of "corruption" by two separate prosecution teams, each working on behalf of one of the antagonists in the country's divided center, hurling allegations at members of the other camp. Both sides had been publicly blackened long before any criminal proceedings had been undertaken.[78] Corruption, then, would appear as something that was both rampant and practiced with impunity, publicly condemned yet tacitly approved within the ranks of each opposing group. It has followed the pattern of the I-I model of autocommunication that we noted in the rhetoric of Baburin and Burbulis. The category "corrupt" in the discourse of each party would not refer to malfeasance or criminality per se. Rather it functioned as another way of signifying "them."

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The influence of the I-I form of communication was present at every turn in the constitutional crisis that ended in the destruction of Russia's first republic. It manifested itself as two rival constitutions, two mutually inimical assemblies of "national accord," two opposing prosecution teams rooting out "corruption," and, prior to the storming of the Russian parliament, two presidents directing two

national governments. All of these instances would indicate that protagonists and antagonists were underscoring their resolve to communicate only with themselves. When this form of discourse dominates political life, calamity follows.

Does the character of political discourse exhibited in Russia's second republic warrant similar concerns? In certain respects, the answer would be "no." Despite all too frequent sallies into bombastic political rhetoric and the tendency to indulge in eschatological themes, the major political actors have also evinced a steadily growing capacity to communicate with one another in more "civilized"—I would say "instrumental-practical"—ways. This is especially true of the State Duma, which, despite the unflattering images of that institution recklessly employed by those enjoying the use of the television airwaves, has been developing into a genuine political institution in which representatives of the country's various political tendencies are finding something of a common language, overcoming obstacles to collaboration, and—even more important—learning to disagree with one another on a number of critical questions while remaining at least potential partners on other issues. The mutual accommodation induced by this experience in the legislature is of inestimable value for a country such as Russia, which until recently has lacked a political life, despite the fact that these actual steps toward civil accord appear neither on the economists' tally sheet nor in the calculus of some "expert" counseling the use of a "strong [executive] hand" in order to accomplish more "reforms." Slowly the experience in the State Duma is beginning to show that democratic practice—however untidy, cumbersome, and imperfect—represents a real alternative to those technocratic-utopian visions that have dominated the course of Russian politics, producing one disaster after another.

But in other respects, the old problem remains, albeit in new forms. Any foreign observer who reads Russian newspapers and listens to the country's political and governmental leaders could easily draw the (false) conclusion that the Russian people are experiencing a painful and debilitating loss of national identity. However, as Aleksei Kara-Murza has pointed out, things are just the reverse. That is, the explicit attention directed by most of the country's organized political forces to the issue of national identity does not signal an identity deficit (the assumption latent in the thinking of

the would-be providers of a national identity), but a surfeit of conflicting claims, each labeled "unacceptable" (or worse) by the others.[79] Consequently it is impossible to conclude at this writing that the elusive "stability" of which Russian authorities so often speak is imminent. As long as national identity remains a contested issue in the country's political discourse, the possibility that some party or movement could actually succeed (somehow) in defining it and thus effecting a strategy *va-bank* to install its own brand of politics, while excising opponents as traitors, remains open. Particularly disturbing in that respect is the process set in motion by Yeltsin, following his reelection, in which a team of presidential counselors has been tasked with formulating a new national idea. Despite the intentions of the president's men to develop a mild, benign, or innocuous concept not conducive to inspiring new crusades against "enemies" at home or abroad, it is important to note the dangers freighting such an enterprise. On one hand, any definition of the nation by those in control of state power is inherently problematic. The precedent that it sets or, in the case of Russia, reestablishes means that a dangerous threshold has been crossed; the state has arrogated to itself the right to tell its citizens who they are or who they should be. Russia's history in this century provides ample illustration of this problem. On the other hand, NATO's eastward expansion saddles the Russian state with dreadful problems in the area of foreign policy, problems that could easily invade domestic politics at a time at which the state has taken on the burden of supplying the country with a new "national idea." The confluence of those factors—acute foreign threat, continued widespread material suffering, and national political doxa backed by state power—would seem a recipe for fundamentalism and the repressive practices that invariably accompany it.

NOTES

1. The seminal work in this field is François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Others include Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); William Sewell, Jr., *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994).

2. For instance, on a single page of one number of the daily *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (11 June 1993, p. 5), one can read an essay by the leader of the Russian Christian Democratic Movement, Viktor Aksyuchits, accusing Boris Yeltsin of being a Communist and another by the liberal journalist Aleksei Kiva that applies the same epithet to everyone who does not support Yeltsin. Similarly, a UPI dispatch of 12 March 1993 quotes Yeltsin's arch-opponent—Ruslan Khasbulatov, then chairperson of the Supreme Soviet—describing the entire executive branch as "genetically linked with Bolshevism," while *Izvestiya* on the following day quotes Yeltsin's press secretary's remarks on Khasbulatov that accuse him of attempting to return the country to a Communist regime and (according to ITAR-TASS [19 March 1993]) the entire Congress of People's Deputies of staging a "Communist inquisition."
3. For a case in point, see Andrei Golovin's remarks in an interview in *Nezavisimaya gazeta,* 15 July 1993, p. 6. For an extended discussion, see Michael Urban, "Contending Conceptions of Nation and State in Russian Politics," *Demokratizatsiya,* no. 4 (1993): 1–13.
4. Among others, Aleksandr Tsipko, "'Demokraticheskaya Rossiya' kak bol'shevistkaya i odnovremenno pochvennicheskaya partiya," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 9 and 13 April 1993, p. 5; Andrei Shisov, "Vopros 'chto delat'?' ostaetsya otkrytym," *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 5 June 1993, p. 3.
5. Evgenii Krasnikov, "Front umer, no delo ego zhivet," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 27 July 1993, p. 2.
6. Indira Dunaeva, "Anpilov byl blagorzumen," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 April 1993, p. 2.
7. Jürgen Habermas: *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon, 1975); *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston: Beacon, 1979); *The Theory of Communicative Action,* vol. 1 (Boston: Beacon, 1984).
8. In a perceptive essay, Rogers Brubaker has demonstrated that the Russian state emerging from the USSR contained no mutually recognized institutional parameters—territory, state structure, and demographic composition—thus all but inviting political contests over their definition (see "Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutionalist Account," *Theory and Society* 23 [1993]: 47–78).
9. Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Origin of Russian Communism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), pp. 25–27; Michael Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 212–26.
10. In a fascinating study, Julia Brun-Zejmis has shown how the themes sounded by Chaadaev in the 1830s have reverberated through many of the foremost accomplishments of Russia's *samizdat* literature in the 1960s and 1970s (see "Messianic Consciousness as an Expression of National Inferiority: Chaadaev and Some Samizdat Writings of the 1970s," *Slavic Review* 50 [Fall 1991]: 646–58).

11. Sergei Panarin, "'My' i 'oni' glazami russkikh," *Nezavisimaya gazeta,* 2 November 1991, p. 5.
12. These remarks were made by S. Gannushkina in a roundtable moderated by G. Koval'skaya, "Chto znachit byt' russkim?" *Demokraticheskaya Rossiya* 32 (3 November 1991): 14. A reflective analysis of this same question can be found in Dmitrii Ol'shanskii, "Politicheskaya psikhologiya raspada," *Nezavisimaya gazeta,* 16 January 1992, p. 5.
13. For a discussion of "the Russian idea" as it appears in contemporary political discourse, see Urban. For an example of this political orientation today, see the essay by Viktor Aksyuchits and Gleb Anishchenko, co-chairpersons of the Russian Christian Democratic Movement, "Printsipy khristianskoi politiki v Rossii," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 30 July 1993, p. 5.
14. Yurii Buida, "Russkii chelovek dorozhe russkoi idei," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 14 May 1993, p. 2.
15. Interview given by Aleksei Kazannik to Oleg Bondarenko, *Segodnya,* 16 July 1993, p. 11.
16. Interview given by Sergei Baburin to Vladimir Todres, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 9 January 1992, p. 2. For a fuller representation of Baburin's views, see *Za edinuyu velikuyu Rossiyu: Istoriya rossiiskogo obshchenarodnogo soyuza v dokumentakh 1991–1994* (Moscow: Novator, 1995).
17. Interview given by Gennadii Burbulis to Len Karpinsky, "ABC of Russia's Revival," *Moscow News,* no. 14 (5–12 April 1992): 6–7.
18. For a discussion of the proclivities among Russia's "democrats" to reproduce in their own thinking those deep cultural patterns of authoritarianism *cum* popular acclamation that they readily detect and condemn in their opponents, see Yurii Afanas'ev, "Nomenklatura na 'skhode vechevoi'," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2 April 1992, pp. 1–2.
19. A full development of this point would require an entire study in itself. Here I wish to do no more than call attention to the striking similarities between the elements of carnival—especially as these have appeared in Bakhtin's description of the related literary genre, Menippean satire—and a number of features found in contemporary Russian political life. In addition to the playful masquerade characteristics displayed in each case, a short list might include Bakhtin's remarks on the dialectical relation between "fantasy" and "truth"; the combination of the incongruous; the fixation with "ultimate" questions; and importance in each of scandalous, oxymoronic, and utopian elements. Bakhtin's analysis can be found in his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (New York: Ardis, 1973), esp. pp. 87–103.
20. Yuri Lotman, *The Universe of the Mind* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1990), pp. 27–47.
21. William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), esp. pp. 40–45.
22. Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), pp. 82–83.

23. Jadwiga Staniszkis, "Forms of Reasoning as Ideology," *Telos,* no. 66 (Winter 1985–86): 67–80.
24. Rachel Walker has also contributed to this line of analysis in "Language and the Politics of Identity in the USSR," in *Ideology and System Change in the USSR and Eastern Europe,* ed. Michael Urban (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 3–19.
25. A tendentious but nonetheless insightful and informative analysis of the nature of "the collective" in the Soviet system can be found in Aleksandr Zinov'ev, *Kommunism kak real'nost'* (Lausanne: Editions l'Age d'Homme, 1981).
26. Vladimir Pankov, "Propoved' o nashikh grekhakh," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 25 December 1991, p. 5.
27. A. N. Baranov and E. G. Kazakevich, *Parlamentskie debaty: Traditsii i novatsii* (Moscow: Znaniie, 1991), esp. pp. 16–30; Nikolai Biryukov and Viktor Sergeev, *Russia's Road to Democracy: Parliament, Communism and Traditional Culture* (Aldershot, UK: Edward Elgar, 1993); J. Gleisner et al., "The Parliament and the Cabinet: Parties, Factions and Parliamentary Control in Russia (1990–93)," *Journal of Contemporary History* 31, 3 (1996): 427–61; Nikolai Biryukov, Jeffrey Gleisner, and Viktor Sergeev, "The Crisis of *Sobornost'*: Parliamentary Discourse in Present-Day Russia," *Discourse and Society* 6, 2 (1995): 149–71.
28. Michael Spagat, "The Disintegration of the Russian Economy," in *Russia's Future: Consolidation or Disintegration?*, ed. Douglas Blum (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994), pp. 47–67.
29. Katherine Verdery, "Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-Socialist Romania," *Slavic Review* 52 (Summer 1993): 179–203, esp. 189–96.
30. *Izvestiya*, 4 December 1992, p. 2.
31. Vladimir Shumeiko, "Zachem nuzhen referendum," *Izvestiya*, 27 February 1993, p. 4.
32. Mikhail Malyutin et al., "Sedmoi S'ezd Nardeputatov: Rozhdenie i Gibel' Konstitutsionalizma v Rossii" (Moscow: Parliamentary Service of the Legislative Faction Smena—Novaya Politika, December 1992); Aleksandr Sobyanin and Eduard Gel'man, "Politicheskie pozitsii i sostavy deputatskikh fraktsii na VII S'edze" (Moscow: Independent Information-Analysis Group, February 1993). I am indebted to Eugene Huskey for this latter reference.
33. Some 400 deputies would have been required to walk out in order to achieve this result. The actual number doing so on 10 December in response to Yeltsin's initiative is a matter of some dispute. Eye-witness observers (Mikhail Forin and Vladimir Todres) put the figure at about 100. Nikolai Travkin, leader of the Democratic Party of Russia, has stated that 53 deputies left the hall (interview given to Vladimir Dyudin, *Rossiiskaya gazeta,* 19 January 1993, pp. 1–2), while Malyutin et al. (p. 22) cite only 40.

34. See Yurii Feofanov, "Skhvatka vlastei na fone predstoyashchego referenduma," *Izvestiya,* 28 December 1992, p. 3.
35. *Ibid.*
36. The twelve questions devised by the Supreme Soviet on the matter of Russia's constitution spanned the space bordered by irrelevancy, on one end—"Do you agree that the state should guarantee a right to housing?"—and acclamatory ambiguity on the other—"Do you agree that the system of state power in the Russian Federation is based on the principle of a division among legislative, executive, and judicial [powers]?" The twelve items can be found in "Osnovnye polozheniya novoi Konstitutsii Rossiiskoi Federatsii, vynosimye na vserossiiskii referendum 11 aprelya 1993g.," *Narodnyi deputat,* no. 3 (1993): 4.
37. Anna Ostapchuk, "Konstitutsionnyi sud sobiraet politikov," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 16 January 1993, pp. 1–2; interview given by Valerii Zor'kin to Leonid Nikitinskii, *Izvestiya*, 27 January 1993, p. 5.
38. *Izvestiya*, 9 February 1993, p. 1.
39. *Ibid.; Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 6 February 1993, p. 1.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Rossiiskaya gazeta,* 9 February 1993, p. 1; *Izvestiya*, 13 February 1993, p. 2.
42. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 12 February 1993, p. 2.
43. *Izvestiya*, 17 February 1993, p. 1.
44. Symptomatic of contemporary Russian political discourse might be a statement made at the Eighth (Extraordinary) Congress of People's Deputies by that body's "speaker," Ruslan Khasbulatov: "I'm going to bring about constitutional order in Russia . . . call the president's chancellery [*sic*] and summon him here" (cited in Len Karpinsky, "Congress as a Phenomenon of the Political Landscape," *Moscow News*, no. 13 [26 March 1993]: 1–2).
45. For the text of the actual decree, issued five days after the televised speech and making no mention of a "special order" instituting direct presidential rule, see *Izvestiya*, 25 March 1993, p. 1.
46. The most ludicrous of these would include (1) Zor'kin's 21 March speech on the floor of the Supreme Soviet that labeled Yeltsin's decree unconstitutional and an "attempted *coup d'état,*" and (2) the 23 March ruling of the Constitutional Court which repeated the unconstitutional claim and added that the decree also was contrary to the Federal Treaty. Each of these actions violated a number of provisions in the court's charter that prohibit judges from discussing outside of session any issue that is before the court, and others that require them to adjudicate only on the basis of signed legal documents. Moreover, the court's ruling that the nonexistent decree violated the Federal Treaty was another canard, inasmuch as the treaty had not been incorporated into the constitution and thus was not a matter of the court's jurisdiction. Finally, the court's decision that Yeltsin's call for a referendum on the constitution was a violation of legality because consti-

tutional issues cannot be decided in this way smacks of a certain inconsistency in view of the fact that precisely such a referendum had been engineered by Zor'kin himself as part of the compromise that he had brokered some four months earlier. For details, see *Izvestiya*, 24 March 1993, p. 2, and 26 March 1993, pp. 1, 5; *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 24 March 1993, p. 1.

47. For an outline of the various groups of delegates invited to participate in the Constitutional Convention, see *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 25 May 1993, p. 1; *Izvestiya*, 2 June 1993, p. 2. Discussions of its methods can be found in *ibid.*, 10 June 1993, p. 1; *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 9 June 1993, p. 2.
48. *Segodnya*, 13 July 1993, p. 1.
49. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 13 May 1993, p. 1.
50. See the statement of the heads of supreme soviets in Russia's republics, "Prezidentskii proekt i regional'nye interesy," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 5 May 1993, p. 1.
51. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 21 May 1993, p. 1.
52. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 26 May 1993, p. 2.
53. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 4 June 1993, p. 2.
54. See the document signed by sixteen of the twenty heads of republics in Russia that appeared in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 27 May 1993, pp. 1–2.
55. Vasilii Kononenko, "Sergei Filatov: Samoe glavnoe seichas—prikratit' protivostoyanie vlastei," *Izvestiya*, 19 May 1993, pp. 1–2; Boris Reznik, "Dal'nevostochniki podderzhali prezidentskii proekt Konstitutsii," *Izvestiya,* 20 May 1993, p. 2.
56. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 13 May 1993, p. 1. For the membership of the Constitutional Convention's inner body, "the working commission," see *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 13 May 1993, p. 1.
57. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 17 June 1993, pp. 1–3, and 18 June 1993, p. 1.
58. Interview with Viktor Kolomiets, sociologist at Moscow State University and official observer at the Constitutional Convention, 13 July 1993. For reports on this same matter, see *Segodnya*, 13 July 1993, p. 1; *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 13 July 1993, p. 1.
59. See the reports featured in *Moscow News*, no. 48 (29 November–6 December 1992): 4.
60. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 18 June 1993, p. 1; *Izvestiya*, 15 June 1993, p. 2.
61. *Segodnya*, 6 July 1993, p. 2, and 9 July 1993, p. 2.
62. *Moscow News*, no. 34 (20 August 1993): 2.
63. For a discussion of this pattern as it developed prior to the Seventh Congress of People's Deputies, see Rastam Narzikulov, "New Privileges: Post-Perestroika Variant," *Moscow News*, no. 42 (18–25 October 1992):10–11.
64. See the data assembled by Oksana Dmitriyeva, "Political Games around the Budget," *Moscow News*, no. 28 (9 July 1993): 2.

65. Interview with Vyacheslav Igrunov, then head of the Department for Information and Research, Russian State Committee for Affairs of the Federation (4 July 1993). See the analysis offered by Aleksei Krindach and Rostislav Turovskii, "Politicheskoe razvitie rossiiskoi provintsii," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 11 June 1993, pp. 1–2.

66. *Izvestiya*, 23 July 1993, p. 1.

67. Olga Berezhnaya, "Deputies Intend to Hold Back Privatization," *Moscow News*, no. 30 (23 July 1993): 1, 6.

68. A good overview of this phenomenon can be found in Mikhail Lantsman, "Privatizatsiya v Rossii perekhodit v rezhim avtopilota," *Segodnya*, 2 July 1993, p. 3. *Segodnya*, 9 July 1993, p. 2, noted that a Yeltsin decree issued in early July 1993 extends the control of local authorities over the privatization process for regions threatening the center with sovereignty. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 9 July 1993, p. 2, reported that the Republic of Bashkortostan had already instituted its own licensing for all trade, production, and sale of food products. According to an item in *Segodnya,* 2 July 1993, p. 2, the government in Samara arbitrarily reduced the percentage of shares in a recently privatized power company that accrue to Moscow, while rewarding itself with the difference. Finally, *Moscow News*, no. 30 (23 July 1993): 2, observed the Russian Federation's Anti-Monopoly Committee had been confiscated by regional elites who now "supervise" themselves in the course of privatization.

69. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 31 August 1993, p. 2.

70. Leonid Smirnyagin, "Politicheskii krisis v Rossii," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 23 September 1993, p. 4.

71.
Nezavisimaya gazeta, 18 September 1993, pp. 1, 3, and 21 September 1993, p. 3.

72. The seminal case in this respect involved the sacking of Yurii Boldyrev, who until March 1993 had served as head of the Control Administration in the Administration of the President. In this capacity, Boldyrev had secured the dismissal of a number of regional heads of administration and their lieutenants for engaging in corrupt practices. Unfortunately from the point of view of his tenure in office, many of the dismissed officials were allies of the president's "team." Given Boldyrev's unimpeachable reputation, his firing indicated broadly that "corruption" in Russia is not a legal but a political category. On these events see *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 10 March 1993, p. 2; *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 10 March 1993, p. 1. See also the interviews given by Boldyrev to Lyudmila Telen, *Moscow News*, no. 9 (25 February 1993): 4, and to Ol'ga Kondrat'eva, *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 6 April 1993, p. 4.

73. Lyliya Shevtsova, "From an August of Hope to an August of Awakening," *Moscow News*, no. 34 (20 August 1993): 1, 4.

74. This was in fact made explicit—albeit indirectly—by Khasbulatov, who commented on the occasion of accusations (*sans* concrete charges) made by the head of the procuracy's special commission before the Supreme Soviet

that "the single goal of [Yeltsin's] constitutional reform is to rescue the thieves from accountability" (cited in Maksim Sokolov, "Politicheskii vektor," *Kommersant,* no. 25 [21–27 June 1993]: 3).

75. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 4 December 1993, p. 1.
76. Karen Brutents, "Korruptsiya ekonomicheskaya i politicheskaya," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 25 August 1993, p. 2.
77. The first criminal charges against any of the principals were not filed until 15 September, when the Office of the General Procurator of the Russian Federation accused Yeltsin ally Mikhail Poltoranin—who had continued to serve as head of the Federal Information Center that had been formally dissolved by the legislature months earlier—of abuse of office under two articles of the criminal code (*Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 18 September 1993, p. 1).
78. Alexander Larin, "The Procurator-General Is Forfeiting Public Trust," *Moscow News*, no. 35 (27 August 1993): 1–2; *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 26 August 1993, p. 1.
79. Aleksei Kara-Murza, "Nuzhen li Rossii 'pravo-levyi sintez'?" *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 23 November 1996.