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Presidential Apparatus: Constant Change

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During the Soviet era, the movements of the Kremlin elite were closely observed as a possible reflection of changes in the political tide. In the Russian Federation, the Yel'tsin administration is subject to similar observation, with criticism focused on the president's reliance on shadow advisors and former communist party functionaries. Since the adoption of a new constitution and election of a new parliament in December 1993, the presidential structures have been rapidly expanding. The result has been a substantial increase in the number of officials and organizations shielded from independent oversight and responsible only to the president.

Following the December elections, President Boris Yel'tsin began a comprehensive reorganization of the presidential apparatus, ostensibly to align executive administrative functions with the presidential powers granted under the new constitution. Concerns voiced in the media that such restructuring would act as a screen to conceal a purge of scapegoats for the apparent electoral defeat were deflected with reassurances from Yel'tsin officials that the changes were made necessary by the new constitutional order and motivated by a desire to enhance the "professionalism" of the administration. In fact, the president probably drew as much on the lessons of his confrontation with the previous parliament as on requirements of the new power relations in developing his reform plan.

Among his initial moves, Yel'tsin abolished the Security Ministry and created the Federal Counterintelligence Service (FCS), subordinated directly to the president, to assume most of the Ministry's functions. Deeming the Security Ministry "unreformable," Yel'tsin
also required a review of all its personnel by a commission of the Security Council before they would be considered for employment at the FCS. The Security Council itself, which Yeltsin heads, has expanded rapidly with this reorganization, adding commissions on defense security, economic security, and information security among others to its purview.

The Secretary of the Security Council, Oleg Lobov, is a long-time Yeltsin associate from Sverdlovsk who appears capable of re-establishing the authority of the Council, which was diminished after the departure of its creator, Yuri Skokov. However, even concern about a renewed Security Council, once perceived as a potential threat to democratic order, pales when compared with the vast array of security and protective services now directly available to the president. In addition to the FCS, the presidential apparatus includes the Main Protection Administration and the Presidential Security Service, both of which carry out intelligence functions in addition to their guard duties; the Border Guards; and the Foreign Intelligence Service. The concentration of security forces in presidential structures is rationalized both by the need for greater control over these services and by the expansion of presidential powers under the constitution, but may in fact reflect the desire to enhance the role of the services that proved most loyal to the president in October of 1993 and to contain the influence of those who wavered.

In January 1994, Yeltsin created the position of National Security Assistant, perhaps in recognition of the administration's expansion in this sphere. Yuri Baturin, who was named to the post, was previously Yeltsin's aide on legal issues and apparently won the confidence of the president during the preparation to disband the parliament in September of 1993. (1) Baturin describes his duties as "first of all to give some help to review the materials supplied to the President by the apparatus of the Security Council. Besides that, [Yeltsin] is given my estimations, proposals, ideas and drafts." (2) This appears to create an overlap of responsibilities between Baturin and Lobov, a situation certainly not unique in the Yeltsin administration.
The reorganization of Yel'tsin's apparatus is also characterized by a multiplication in the number of consultative councils to the president. The Presidential Council, which has existed in various incarnations throughout Yel'tsin's presidency, serves as an analytical and advisory board. In September, Yel'tsin restructured the composition of the Council to include more regional representatives, while retaining several long-term members, such as St. Petersburg mayor Anatoli Sobchak.

In addition to the Presidential Council, Yel'tsin has created the Public Chamber, which is an assembly of representatives from political parties, movements, and public associations whose primary function is "to draw up recommendations on political, legal, and socioeconomic matters." (3)

The Public Chamber, structurally part of the presidential administration, meets monthly to discuss issues suggested by the president, and submits written recommendations when consensus is reached. Shortly after the creation of the Public Chamber, the formation of an Experts Council was announced. Headed by Aleksandr Lifshits, the Experts Council consists of eight members who "prepare proposals on the implementation of economic policy and... forecast consequences of decisions made by parliament and the government in the socioeconomic sphere."(4) Unlike the Public Chamber, the Experts Council is part of the organization of presidential aides supervised by Yel'tsin's First Aide, Viktor Ilyushin.

Ilyushin and the head of the presidential administration, Sergei Filatov, have been at the center of speculation that the reorganization was a reflection of a bureaucratic turf battle. However it now appears that both departments have been significantly enhanced as a result of the restructuring. Filatov, despite persistent rumors of his imminent dismissal, has been consistently charged with expanded responsibilities. Indeed, in April Yel'tsin named Filatov to chair the President's Expert Analysis Council, tasked with improving "the analytical and information [material provided to] the Russian president and the quality of preparing the decisions of the president."(5) It is not clear whether this new assignment provides Filatov with supervisory powers over Ilyushin, who is
personally responsible for preparing Yel'tsin's appointment schedule and oversees the assistants who draft Presidential decrees and speeches.

The repercussions of the expansion of the presidential apparatus seem to focus greater attention on the coordinators or processors of information for the president. As the executive swells, a duplication of jurisdictions and an increase of information obtained require a more extensive screening process in presidential reports. In this regard, the personalities around the president with the greatest access to him and with most discretion in deciding what the president does and does not see become exceptionally powerful figures. Filatov, Ilyushin and Baturin, in their capacities as filters to the president, appear to be key members of Yel'tsin's entourage.

Viktor Ilyushin has been an associate of President Yel'tsin since the late 1970s in Sverdlovsk. After moving from Komsomol structures to the regional committee of the CPSU, Ilyushin has worked constantly with Yel'tsin.(6) He, along with Oleg Lobov, are stalwarts of the so-called "Sverdlovsk mafia," whose influence on the president has been frequently questioned. He is assumed to be a conservative influence on the president, encouraging the return of former Sverdlovsk colleagues Yuri Skokov and Yuri Petrov to the executive apparatus.(7)

Sergei Filatov replaced Yuri Petrov as head of the presidential administration in January 1993. Previously a deputy to Ruslan Khasbulatov in the Supreme Soviet, Filatov was instrumental in negotiations between the parliament and government in 1992. As tensions between the president and parliament intensified late in 1992, Filatov broke with Khasbulatov, joining the presidential team. In 1993, Filatov played a major role in drafting the current constitution. His duties this year have been as diverse as the oversight of executive personnel policy and negotiations with Chechnya.

Yuri Baturin, as previously noted, was legal aide to Yel'tsin. In 1991, he worked in a similar capacity for then USSR President Gorbachev during the Novo Ogaryevo negotiations with the Soviet republics.(8) While his name has been quite prominent in
1994, it is likely that he faces an internal struggle with Oleg Lobov for influence in security affairs. The issue of security policy is further complicated by the close personal relationship with the president enjoyed by both Aleksandr Korzhakov, head of the Presidential Security Service, and Mikhail Barsukov, head of the Main Protection Administration. Their departments have been expanded and strengthened over the past year, apparently in response to their crucial roles in the bloody resolution of the parliamentary crisis in October 1993.

Indeed a common thread of loyalty during the president's struggle with the previous parliament binds all the members of his inner circle. While this may be a natural development, the president's greater reliance on information filtered through these advisors from a cumbersome apparatus may eventually serve to isolate him. Once again, Yel'tsin opens himself to criticism of the possibly undue influence of personalities around him.

Recent comments from both the Defense Ministry and the presidential administration suggest that the next phase of reorganization will focus on the armed forces. Yel'tsin's disappointment in the Defense Ministry's performance last October, coupled with evidence of mounting unrest among military personnel, have heightened concerns over the political reliability of the armed forces. Projected reforms include reinforcing the Presidential Command and Control organization, and a new Military Policy Directorate in the presidential administration, overseen by Sergei Filatov. Additionally, the already formidable presidential protective services soon may be augmented through the subordination of several units from the Moscow Military District to Kremlin control.

The reorganization thus far has primarily served to assert presidential oversight of key, previously autonomous areas, increase the security and military forces of the president, and consolidate power in the hands of a few trusted advisers. The purpose of these measures has been suggested by Yel'tsin's press secretary, Vyacheslav Kostikov, who recently acknowledged that there was a struggle within the president's inner circle. Yel'tsin is facing a decision, according to Kostikov, "Will he remain the democratic
President he was in 1991 and 1993, or will opportunistic motives make themselves felt in his behavior under the pressure of certain personalities or circumstances?"(10) The consolidation and expansion of presidential control, particularly over the military, may suggest that the course has already been chosen.

Notes:
1 Yel'tsin notes in his memoirs, *The Struggle for Russia*, trans. by Catherine Fitzpatrick (NY: Random House, 1994, p. 243), that Baturin was involved in the drafting of the decree disbanding the parliament.
2 Profile of Yuri Baturin in East European Markets, June 24, 1994 (from NEXIS Information Service, a trademark of Mead Data Central).
7 Ibid.