Chapter 14

Self-Government for the County of Murmansk — Background and Recent Developments

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THE ISSUE OF REGIONAL AUTONOMY

In many parts of the former Soviet Union, demands have been raised for increased independence from the central government. These demands often refer to very small territorial entities which were part of the old Russian republic, sometimes they are based on the earlier existence of an administrative region of one kind or another. The Soviet Union contained a number of such regions or territories which had mostly been formed on the basis of nationality. Today, many of these territories have obtained an official status (most commonly what is now simply called a "republic") allowing them a certain degree of self-government or autonomy.

No doubt, the reasons for the seemingly strong desire to obtain a form of autonomy have something to do with the history of the last 70 years of Communist Party rule. With the break-down of the traditional, long-standing communist rule a wide array of political and non-political forces were all of a sudden released and set in motion, not only in the former USSR, but all over Eastern Europe. Nationalistic tendencies could be observed everywhere. Since this happened, the East European economy has been in a state of flux with consequences from which no one could escape. In the political vacuum

after the dissolution of the communist parties came, not unexpectedly, a vehement fight for political power — a fight that will probably last for a long time to come.

In such a situation it should come as no surprise that new local and regional politicians would use the nationalistic sentiments to try to gain power. Also, it is no wonder that they would channel these sentiments into political demands for a higher degree of local and regional autonomy. Thus, aspiration for more autonomy on the part of various regional administrative areas can partly be regarded simply as a logical consequence of the fact that the strong central government disappeared.

But there may also be another, easily understandable reason for the Russian "regionalization tendency" that may be valid at least for areas with rich natural resource endowments. This reason has to do with people's ability to influence the economy, how regional incomes are generated, redistributed and used. Under the old soviet system these issues were mainly decided by the central (party) authorities, while regional political echelons were left with only a very limited power to influence decisions. In the current situation, when people are given democratic opportunities to exert a real influence on political decisions, they tend to look mostly to the effects of those decisions on their own immediate surroundings. Questions of *fairness* are brought to the fore. There is a belief (or hope) that a greater degree of regional autonomy would bring about a more fair redistribution of the national income, i.e. benefit their own region. Such issues will also bring demands for an increased regional autonomy.

In the following sections, we touch upon some questions relating to institutional change and the division of political power between the central government and the regional authorities in Russia. We look at the current political power structure of the county of Murmansk and its relation to the central authorities in Moscow and we finally discuss the rationale for demands for increased regional autonomy in the new political setting in Russia.

OVERTHROW OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM AND THE POSSIBILITY OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

It may be difficult to understand the tendency that can be observed today all over Eastern Europe of regions seeking independence from the nation states. People in these countries would, rather, have much to gain by *not* letting their political systems disintegrate. To an outside observer, it would seem that in order to get positive economic developments going as soon, and as fast, as possible, people should, rather, support a strong central government and its attempts to reform the economy and make it more competitive and profitable. This should, it seems, bring benefits also to the ordinary citizen. Instead, the result of what has actually happened (so far) is a highly unstable, politically and economically chaotic situation. Why?

If we restrict ourselves to looking only at Russia and Russian developments, one can, of course, discern a whole array of straightforward "material" reasons for this "sub-optimal behaviour". The start of the new market economy might have been more favourable. The new Russia is characterized by a striking imbalance between demand and supply, most seriously in the markets for consumer goods and services. The capital stock and the whole infrastructure are to a large extent outmoded or worn out and inefficient. The whole production system is locked into an extremely rigid technological fix with one company producing a stipulated amount of goods and delivering it in stipulated quantities to a stipulated set of other companies. This set-up does not leave much room for choice on the part of the individual company management to find the best suppliers and customers on the "free market".

However, given the opportunity provided by the radical political changes, it seems that these obstacles to improved efficiency should be possible to remove. But there is more to the picture. The 1917 revolution and the subsequent events shaped an institutional setting in the Soviet Union which gradually developed into something very different from what we in the West today consider as normal and conducive to efficient econ-

omic performance. It is essential to remember that the formal and informal constraints on people's actions that were entailed by the Soviet institutional setting were developed over a long period of time and that the type of behaviour (on the part of politicians, company managers, ordinary citizens) that was enforced by this institutional setting was also the behaviour that gave the highest pay-off in that system. This way the behaviour dictated by the system became "internalized", it became the type of behaviour that was natural and most profitable for an individual living in the specific institutional framework of the Soviet Union.

Radical political events (such as revolutions) will, of course, bring about institutional changes. But it should be noted that many features comprising the "institutional setting" of a system change only slowly and gradually (North, 1992). Changes, especially changes in the set of informal constraints, are implemented through small uncoordinated modifications here and there in the system. If this view of institutional change is correct, one should not expect to see quick, "one-blow" changes in Russian society, in the formal and informal constraints shaping people's behaviour. Given an efficient political system — which, in turn, presumes politicians and citizens with experience of the workings of modern democracy — the formal constraints lying in the way of radical institutional reform might have been changed. But without these prerequisites, one can only expect that profound institutional changes will take a long time to come about.

To be more specific: the personnel of the huge bureaucratic apparatus (largely consisting of members of the former Communist Party), which the new Russian market economy inherited from the old Soviet system, typically remained in office. Changes were made, older officials were often replaced by somewhat younger ones, some of the old officials quickly went into "business", realizing the opportunities in the coming market system, etc. But, by and large, it was the old bureaucratic apparatus that took on the administrative tasks of the new Russian society.

In effect, it is not until quite recently, as a result of the December 1993 elections and referendum, that the prerequisites of profound political changes and changes in the institutional setting of the new Russia might be created. And given the size of the old bureaucratic system and the frictions slowing down all changes, we should realize that it will probably take a long time before we can say that the system has been made more efficient, at least in the Western sense of the word. We should also expect that the emerging new system will be based on, or at least borrow many traits from, the "old" system that was never really abandoned.

Against this background it might prove interesting to look somewhat closer at the existing institutional framework of a particular region. In this case we will look at the situation on the Kola Peninsula or the county (*oblast'*) of Murmansk.

EVENTS AFFECTING THE REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF POLITICAL POWER

It is important to avoid confusion on concepts like "independence", "autonomy", "sovereignty", and "self-government". One good reason for being cautious is that there seems to be a difference in meaning between these terms in Russian and in English. In the present context we use the term "regional autonomy" as meaning *a certain degree of self-government*, the delegation of some power from central to regional authorities. We are not considering complete independence (the status of a nation) or even any formal break-away from the Russian Federation. What we are discussing is the *distribution of power* between the Russian central and the regional/local authorities. These are issues that are normally regulated in the constitution of a nation state.

One of the fundamental problems in Russian politics these last few years has been the need for a new constitution. Until the end of 1993, Russia was governed according to the old Constitution of Soviet Russia with some additions and changes. A "hot" issue in the discussion about a new constitution has not

so much been the differences of views between the democrats, headed by Yeltsin, and the former communist "conservatives", lead by Khazbulatov and Rutskoi, as the disagreements between the centre (Moscow) and the periphery (republics, *oblasti* or counties). The constitution of the old authoritarian state gave much power to the centre and only very insignificant power to the periphery. A quite animated discussion has been going on in Russia about how much power should be retained at the centre and how much should be delegated to the periphery. It seemed as if this question would be resolved in March 1992, when the Federal Treaty was signed, where the division of power between the centre and the republics and regions was settled (Federativny Dogovor, 1992). But the issue was soon raised again. While some areas, such as Bashkorkistan, want to have complete independence, others, like Leningrad and Khabarovsk, want to obtain the status of a republic. The counties (*oblasti*) of Vologda and Sverdlovsk even proclaimed themselves republics (*Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 8 September 1993).

After the April 1993 referendum, a new political situation emerged. President Yeltsin got his support in the referendum. More than 60 per cent of the electorate expressed their confidence in the President and his economic policy. But less than 50 per cent of the voters supported his proposal to hold elections also to the Supreme Soviet. The constitutional crisis was growing deeper.

Russia obviously needed a new constitution. More than 20 different drafts of the new constitution were discussed, only two of which were to be seriously considered; one was produced by President Yeltsin and the other by the Constitutional Commission of Russia. Yeltsin was heavily promoting his draft, which had a high democratic profile while at the same time allowing for very strong presidential power. Yeltsin was against pushing the adoption of the new constitution through the Congress of People's Deputies, which was, after all, the highest legislative body in the country. The reason was that it would be difficult to control exactly what kind of constitution this might produce. Therefore, on 21 September 1993, Yeltsin

issued a presidential decree "About the stage of Constitutional Reform in the Russian Federation", in which he dissolved the Russian Supreme Soviet and the Congress of People's Deputies and proposed elections to a new parliament — the Federal Assembly — to be held on December 12, 1993. With a new parliament, Yeltsin's democratic constitution would stand a much greater chance of being adopted (*Rossiskaya Gazeta*, 23 September 1993).

This action and other presidential decrees were not supported by Ruslan Khazbulatov, Alexander Rutskoi and many other members of the Russian Supreme Soviet. On their initiative what looked like a *coup d'état* was staged against President Yeltsin. The parliament, in fact, appointed Rutskoi as Acting Russian President. As a consequence Yeltsin ordered troops out into the streets of Moscow and on October 3–4, 1993, a bloody confrontation took place.

Shortly after the confrontation, in which, as it later turned out, many regional and local Soviets (also in Murmansk) had supported the Supreme Soviet and acted against the President, Yeltsin passed a decree about the necessity of reforming the regional power structure and the bodies of local self-government (*Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti*, 12 October 1993).

The purpose of the decree was to replace the big regional Soviets (with 200-250 members) with new legislative bodies. The former Soviets often acted without a quorum both at the regional and the local levels. They often tried to stop economic reforms in Russian peripheral regions. The new regional and local representative bodies will decide themselves about whether they would be called *dumas*, *assemblies*, or *councils*. The number of *deputies* (corresponding to the earlier *people's deputies*) will be 15–50 and they should work on a professsional basis, earning wages for their work as deputies. They will share the same staff and advisers.

After Yeltsin's decree the head of the Murmansk regional administration, E. Komarov, decided to stop the activity of the regional and local Soviets of People's Deputies in the region. The chairman of the regional Soviet, Yu. Evdokimov, sent a

protest to the prosecutor's office but the decision was not changed (*Sovetskii Murman*, 12 October 1993). As a result of Komarov's action, many people's deputies ceased their activity.

RECENT POLITICAL CONTROVERSIES IN THE COUNTY OF MURMANSK

Yeltsin's policy has been to strengthen the organs of central power in the periphery, especially in *"krai"* and *"oblasti"* (not so much in republics). In 1989, however, during the presidential campaign, Yeltsin was reported to have said that the periphery might "have as much sovereignty as they could swallow". In retrospect, it seems that this populist slogan might have caused him problems, since it supported various regional political leaders aspiring at separation from Russia and the CIS. It seems that in the prevailing unstable situation almost every region would like to have more autonomy. In fact, this "separatist movement" has threatened the stability of the entire Russian Federation.

Developments, however, have not favoured "krais" and "oblasts" which had more limited rights than republics. This led to a situation where, for example, local and regional administrations in some republics, such as Yakut-Sakha, Tatarstan and others, had been given the right to own land and water. Furthermore, their rights were to be expanded to also include the air and the continental shelf. At the same time, people in other "oblasts", like Murmansk, Arkhangelsk and Volgoda, had not been given these rights (Evdokimov, 1993; Tsygankov, 1993).

Politically, the Russian north — the Northern Territories — has always been more stable than regions in central and southern Russia. However, there was also a growing demand here for changes in the Federal Treaty. The goal was to adopt a special law concerning the status of the "Northern Territories with extended rights regarding economic and political issues" (*Izvestiya*, 12 January 1993; *Sovetskii Murman*, 9 February

1993; *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti*, 26 August 1993). The "North-West Territorial Association for Economic and Social Development" was established with the purpose of working for these goals. Two republics (Karelia and Komi) and six *oblasti* joined this association, which has several working groups meeting periodically to discuss joint problems (*Polyarnaya Pravda*, 16 February 1993).

The economy of the Northern Territories is extremely dependent on the centre, on Moscow. Being mainly producers of intermediary goods, these regions have lower profitability compared to regions with a higher share of final goods in their total production. Practically all big enterprises in the region are (entirely, or to more than 50 per cent) state owned and Moscow has a strong influence over what and how much to produce. In the Murmansk region 96 per cent of all companies are controlled by the state, only 2 per cent are privately owned. Some 7 or 8 big industrial enterprises dominate the entire region (Luzin, 1993; Artemeyev, 1993). Furthermore, there are signs that Moscow is actively trying to keep its control over new industrial activities where regional (and foreign) companies could be involved (Sagers, 1993). An example is the development of the huge oil and gas reserves on the Barents Sea shelf. The licence to exploit these resources was given to a Moscow based state consortium, *Rosshelf*, headed by Academician E. Velikhov. This consortium is closely related to the former Ministry for Oil and Gas. The Murmansk based state company "Arktikmorneftegazrazvedka" was not given any licence to participate in this exploitation (Castberg, 1992; Velikhov, 1993). In this way the profits will be realized in Moscow. A similar situation prevails in the fishing, forestry, mining and metallurgical industries.

Another important regional policy issue, which has had an influence on developments, concerns the taxation system. Most of the Russian northern regions are dependent on financial transfers from Moscow. Perhaps it would be better, the argument goes, to substantially reduce taxes on profits for companies in the north thus keeping more of the generated income

in the region and reducing the need for transfers. This should also provide strong incentives for increased goods production.

The division between the federal, the regional and the local budgetary systems is also a hot issue. Thirty-two regions in Russia have declared that they are not going to send any money to the federal budget, because they need the resources to meet their own expenses (Ultimatum …, 1993).

There has been a long and intensive debate concerning a proposal to reform regional taxation policy. The essence of the proposal was that of the total tax revenues collected by the local (city) authorities (from business enterprises and citizens) 50 per cent should remain with the local administration and be used for local needs, twenty-five per cent should go to the regional, and the remaining twenty-five per cent to the federal budget (Karelia, 1993, No. 26., p. 2).

In northern Russia there are no really burning nationality issues. But recently an increasingly loud opinion in favour of the rights of indigenous peoples has been voiced. In the centre – periphery discussion it is easy to forget about the small native peoples in the north. There are approximately 1,700 *Saami* on the Kola Peninsula (*Sovetskii Murman*, 29 April 1993). This group has been left far removed from political influence in the region. Not until recently, after contacts with the Saami communities in Norway, Sweden and Finland, have the Saami in the Kola area started to voice claims for having their own parliament. Such a Saami parliament would bring a certain degree of national-cultural autonomy for the Saami. But there is also a demand for stronger political action, such as Saami rights to what they consider to be *their* land, waters and natural resources. The Association of Kola Saami is the only Saami organisation active today, working closely together with its Scandinavian sister organizations.

THE POLITICAL POWER STRUCTURE OF THE MURMANSK REGION

The structure of political power is of fundamental importance for the functioning of regional government. The distribution of

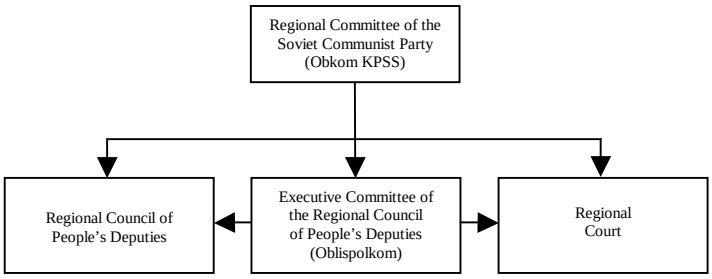


Figure 1. The division of political power in the county of Murmansk before 1985

responsibilities in regional government presents the most difficult questions. These questions have been debated for years in Russian politics. Before 1985, all political power in the USSR was strictly submitted to the centre, to Moscow, and, in effect, to the central organs of the Communist Party, the CPSU. The regional division of power mirrored that of the centre. In the county of Murmansk, for example, political power was divided as shown in Figure 1.

The most powerful organization in the region was the regional Committee of the Soviet Communist Party (Obkom KPSS) which was directly subordinated to the Central Committee of the CPSU in Moscow. The regional legislature was in the hands of the Regional Council of People's Deputies. This was a comparatively weak organisation which, in reality, left most power in the hands of the staff working in the offices of the Obkom and the Oblispolkom.

During Gorbachev's reforms the role and power of the CPSU was played down, and after the all-Russian election in 1989 a new regional power structure was introduced (cf. Figure 2).

Gorbachev's idea was to subordinate regional executive power to those wielding regional legislative power and to abolish the central control of the CPSU. This division of power lasted to the end of 1991, to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

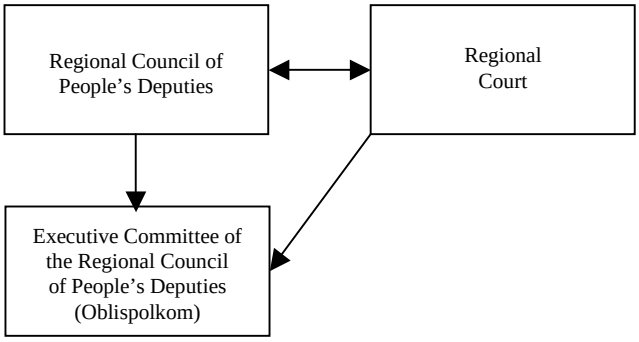


Figure 2. The division of political power in the county of Murmansk in 1989–1991

Since November 1991, after the decision of the Russian Supreme Soviet to strengthen its executive power, a redistribution process has been going on, the main characteristic of which is an attempt to strengthen executive power through the appointment from above of leaders of the regional administrations. The President appointed the heads of regions and territories. The heads of regional administration, in their turn, appointed the heads of city and municipal administrations. These measures were said to be temporary, intended to help the country out of its crisis.

Executive power is now no longer subordinated to the representative power, as was the case before 1992. The Regional Executive Committees were renamed and are now called "Regional Administrations" and are no longer subordinated to the

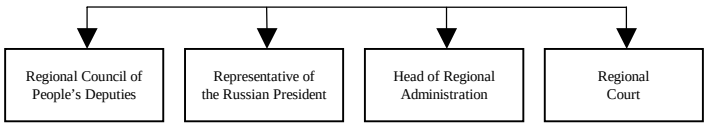


Figure 3. The current structure of regional political power in Russia in 1991–1993

Regional Soviet of People's Deputies. The latter must now be consulted only on questions concerning the budget and appointments to important staff positions. By the beginning of 1992, there were three regional organs of power balancing each other: executive power (the Regional Administrations); representative power (the Regional Soviets of People's Deputies); and judicial power (the Regional Courts).

Since October 1991, a fourth organ of regional political power has also existed, the Representative of the Russian President. Such representatives were appointed by the President for all Russian regions and territories. As of March 1994 the Regional Soviet of People's Deputies will be renamed and called the regional *Duma*.

ATTEMPTS TO REFORM THE REGIONAL POWER STRUCTURE IN THE MURMANSK REGION

In the period from December 1991 to January 1992 a proposal for a new structure of executive power in the Murmansk region was elaborated. The proposal was presented to the public in conferences arranged by the Regional Administration and published thereafter (*Polyarnaya Pravda*, 3 January 1992).

The essential feature of the proposal was an attempt to limit the power of the administrative personnel and to replace the old staff by new initiative professionals. Appointments to positions should no longer be dictated by party membership or sympathies, but be made exclusively on the basis of professional qualities. It was not, however, a question of replacing the whole staff at once.

New appointments were made and new people entered the Regional Administration. New people were appointed heads of committees and departments, as advisers and consultants.

The Presidential decree "About the reorganization of central authorities" was also taken as a basis for the reorganization of regional political power (*Sovetskii Murman*, 10 January 1992). But while the number of ministries and people employed as administration staff went down at the central level, it rather in-

creased at the regional level. While, for example, 358 civil servants worked in the 13 departments of the old Murmansk *Oblispolkom*, 594 people were employed by the 28 departments of the new Regional Administration (*Polyarnaya Pravda*, 2 April 1993). Furthermore, the hierarchical structure of the administration became even more complex than it used to be. Earlier, all departments in the administration were subordinated to a sectoral deputy chairman of the Regional Executive Committee whereas, nowadays, several departments belong to committees, which in their turn are subordinated to the deputy head of administration. (Some committees have a simpler structure, such as the Committee on National Minorities Affairs and the Committee on Physical Culture and Sports.)

The structure of the administration of the county of Murmansk is outlined in Figure 4 (page 216–17).

THE NEW CONSTITUTION

The results of the December 1993 elections in Russia are widely known. It seems that the reform movement all over the country lost the opportunity to obtain decisive political power, most likely because the movement was divided into a number of different organizations. In the politically unstable situation, with a population without experience of the workings of democracy and people feeling humiliated by the fact that the once strong and influential Russia was now considered to be weak and poor and no longer able to influence world events, politicians promising (unrealistically) a new bright future for the country had an easy task in winning votes. The results of the elections in Murmansk reflect the situation in the country as a whole. Grouping the parties and movements into a reform-friendly block and a left/right conservative "coalition" (including Zhirinovsky's "liberal democrats") we find that the votes were shared approximately equally between the two. It is, however, too early (in January 1994) to tell how these results will affect regional politics in the county of Murmansk.

However, since the proposal for a new constitution secured the necessary majority in the referendum it might be of interest to have a look at what is stated in this document about the division of power in Russia between the central organs of power and those of the periphery. One must remember, of course, that the articles of the Constitution still remain to be specified and detailed by federal jurisdiction and that the final outcome of the changed constitution is not yet clear today.

According to Article 5 of the New Constitution (1993) the Russian Federation shall consist of:

> republics, territories, regions, federal cities, an autonomous region and autonomous areas, which shall be equal subjects of the Russian Federation.
>
> 2. The republic (state) shall have its own constitution and legislation. A territory, region, federal city, autonomous region and autonomous areas shall have its own charter and legislation.

Furthermore, Article 12 of the Constitution states that:

> Local self-government shall be recognized and guaranteed in the Russian Federation. Local self-government shall operate independently within the bounds of its territory. The bodies of local self-government shall not be part of the state power bodies.

Two long articles, Article 71 and 72, specify how the jurisdictional rights are to be divided between the Russian Federation and the "subjects" of the Russian Federation, i.e. the republics, regions, etc. In Article 72 it is stated *inter alia* that:

> 1. The joint jurisdiction of the Russian Federation and the subjects of the Russian Federation shall include:
> …
> c) issues of the possession, use and management of the land, mineral resources, water and other natural resources;
> …

> e) management of natural resources, protection of the environment and ecological safety; specially protected natural reserves; protection of historical and cultural monuments;
> …
> i) establishment of the general guide-lines for taxation and levies in the Russian Federation;
> j) administrative, administrative-procedural, labor, family, housing, land, water and forestry legislation; legislation on the sub-surface and environmental protection;
> …
> l) protection of the original environment and traditional way of life of small ethnic communities;
> m) establishment of general guide-lines of the organization of the system of bodies of state power and local self-government;
> n) coordination of international and external economic relations of the subjects of the Russian Federation, compliance with the international treaties of the Russian Federation.

Article 76 regulates precedences in the event of contradictions between the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation federal constitutional laws and federal laws on the one hand and the joint jurisdiction of the Russian Federation and the subjects of the Russian Federation (republics, territories, etc.) on the other. Basically, laws and regulations of a lower dignity in the system may not contravene those of a higher dignity.

As these short excerpts clearly show, the new Constitution basically leaves room for a relatively high degree of regional and local self-government. But since most of what is stipulated will be further specified through other jurisdiction, it is today too early to judge what this will mean for regional and local self-government.

Leading on to our concluding remarks we would also like to give a few citations indicating what the Constitution has to say about regional economic activities.

Article 8 and 9 of the Constitution recognize private ownership and allow for the private ownership of land:

> 1. Unity of economic space, free movement of goods, services and financial resources, support for competition and freedom of any economic activity shall be guaranteed in the Russian Federation.
> 2. Private, state, municipal and other forms of ownership shall be recognized and shall enjoy equal protection in the Russian Federation.
> …
> 2. The land and other natural resources may be in private, state municipal and other forms of ownership.

Article 34 says that everyone has a right to engage in economic activities:

> 1. Everyone shall have the right to freely use his or her abilities and property for entrepreneurial or any other economic activity not prohibited by the law.
> 2. No economic activity aimed at monopolization or unfair competition shall be allowed.

Article 35 guarantees property rights and inheritance:

> 1. The right of private property shall be protected by law.
> 2. Everyone shall have the right to have property in his or her ownership, to possess, use and manage it either individually or jointly with other persons.
> 3. No one may be arbitrarily deprived of his or her property unless on the basis of decision by a court of law. Property can be forcibly alienated for state needs only on condition of a preliminary and equal compensation.
> 4. The right of inheritance shall be guaranteed.

Article 36 states that Russian citizens are entitled to own land and natural resources:

> 1. Citizens and their associations shall have the right to have land in their private ownership.
> 2. The possession, use and management of the land and other natural resources shall be freely exercised by their owners provided this does not cause damage to the environment or infringe upon the rights and interests of other persons.
> 3. The terms and procedures for the use of land shall be determined on the basis of federal laws.

Article 42 states a right that might be of some importance for people living in an environmentally degraded area like the Kola Peninsula:

> Everyone shall have the right to a favorable environment, reliable information about its condition and to compensation for the damage caused to his or her health or property by ecological violations.

The involvement of foreign business on Russian territory is increasing and will probably continue to grow in importance. The rights and obligations of foreign companies are not directly regulated in the Constitution. All that is said is (in Article 62):

> 3. Foreign citizens and stateless persons shall enjoy in the Russian Federation the rights of its citizens and bear their duties with the exception of cases stipulated by the federal law or international treaty of the Russian Federation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE COUNTY OF MURMANSK

From what has been said above it should be clear that further changes in the regional political system in Russia will take place. The somewhat erratic development of politics and administration that we can witness in the Murmansk region is only a

reflection of what is going on at the national level. Considering the fact that institutional change in a society is a fundamentally slow process, it seems clear that although Russian political life is currently very intensive with far-reaching political decisions taken at a rapid pace, one should anyway expect that it might take rather a long time before the changes induced by all decisions lead to a state of lasting political stability.

In the ongoing fight for power between the centre and the periphery one can find many arguments for a strengthening of central authority. Most importantly, a strong central authority could secure improved coordination between different policy areas, and it might prevent the dissolution of the whole Federation. However, given the specific features of Russian development, it seems more likely that regions – especially regions which are rich in natural resources, like the Kola Peninsula – will continue to develop and increase their degree of regional self-government, reducing the direct influence of the central authorities over the distribution and redistribution of regionally generated incomes.

The reason for this belief is that the market oriented changes that have taken place in Russia to date – primarily the changes affecting the workings of the economy – have already produced an irreversible impact on the organization of economic activity — on the institutional framework of the economy. Some of the foundations for these changes have now been entered into the Russian Constitution (cf. above), such as the right of individuals to own land and natural resources and engage in business activities. The county of Murmansk is rich in natural resources and has a geographically comparatively concentrated population of approximately one million inhabitants. This market potential has already attracted a lot of foreign investors and businesses which are now engaged in joint economic activities with Russian companies. This is an ongoing development which is engaging an increasing number of people in private enterprises and which is furthering improved living standards in the area. An increased degree ofregional self- government would probably facilitate the further develop

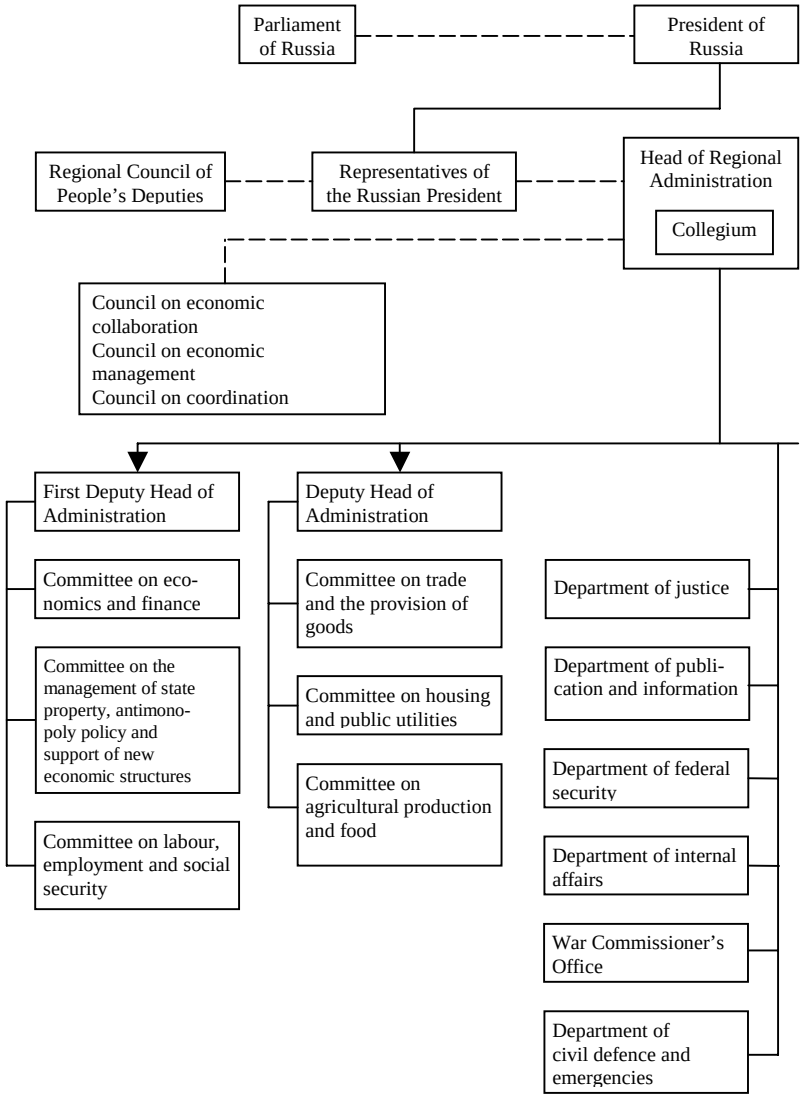
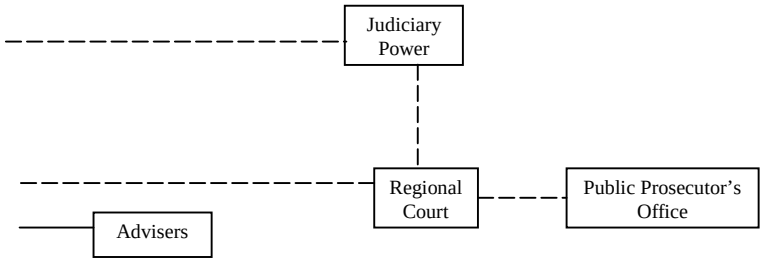
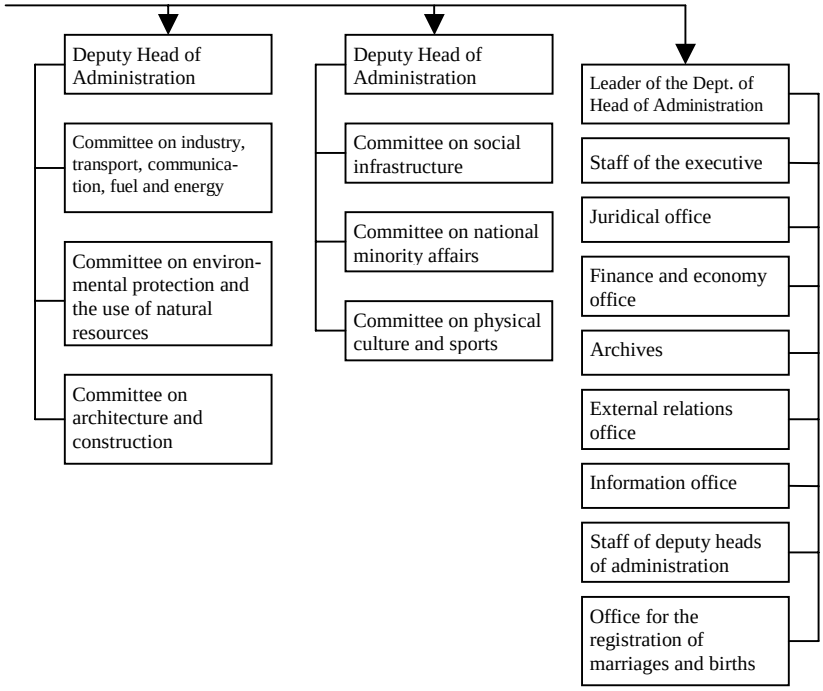


Figure 4. Structure of the Murmansk regional administration (1992–1993). Sources: *Sovetskii Murman*, 3 January 1992; Luzin (1993)


Judiciary Power
Regional Court
Public Prosecutor's Office
Advisers


Deputy Head of Administration
Committee on industry, transport, communica-tion, fuel and energy
Committee on environ-mental protection and the use of natural resources
Committee on architecture and construction
Deputy Head of Administration
Committee on social infrastructure
Committee on national minority affairs
Committee on physical culture and sports
Leader of the Dept. of Head of Administration
Staff of the executive
Juridical office
Finance and economy office
Archives
External relations office
Information office
Staff of deputy heads of administration
Office for the registration of marriages and births

ment of such joint economic endeavours.

Given the opportunity that exists today to influence the development of future regional self-government some issues deserve reflecting upon. The fundamental question to be raised is: What is the *raison d'être* of an increased degree of regional self-government? What would be the goals and means of a more elaborated regional autonomy? The issue of regional self-government should obviously be discussed in close connection with the issue of a *regional policy*. And it should be done so against the background of the fundamental fact concerning all activities on the Kola Peninsula: The very reason for the "colonization" of the area is the existence of an ice-free harbour and the rich natural resource endowments. Both reasons are of national significance. Furthermore, while this was the original reason for colonization, it is still a valid reason for the existence of economic activities on the Kola Peninsula today. In this perspective, it is quite natural to expect that the centre (Moscow) will continue to exert a strong degree of influence over the activities in the region in the future.

An important fundamental goal for regional politics in the Murmansk region is to raise living standards among the population. By acquiring a competence for regional self-government that allows for the use of measures that will stimulate increased economic interaction between Murmansk and other Russian regions as well as interaction with adjacent foreign countries, regional politics may come to play an important role for the achievement of the goal of raising living standards. Specifically, in the Barents region context, this might mean the acquisition of competence to take decisions about close collaboration with other parts (in other countries) of the Barents region, decisions of a type that at least until now have required sanctions from central Russian authorities.

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