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**“ENLIGHTENED AUTHORITARIANISM” AND THE END OF  
PRESIDENT–PARLIAMENT DIARCHY IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA  
FROM A BULGARIAN PERSPECTIVE**

**„AUTORITARISMUL ILUMINAT” ȘI SFÂRȘITUL DIARHIEI  
PREȘEDINTE-PARLAMENT ÎN RUSIA POST-SOVIETICĂ  
DINTR-O PERSPECTIVĂ BULGARĂ**

**«ПРОСВЕЩЕННЫЙ АВТОРИТАРИЗМ» И КОНЕЦ ДИАРХИИ  
ПРЕЗИДЕНТ-ПАРЛАМЕНТ В ПОСТСОВЕТОВОЙ РОССИИ  
С БОЛГАРСКОЙ ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ**

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ABSTRACT:

**“ENLIGHTENED AUTHORITARIANISM” AND THE END OF  
PRESIDENT–PARLIAMENT DIARCHY IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA  
FROM A BULGARIAN PERSPECTIVE**

The article analyses the Bulgarian perspective on the establishment of the Russian presidential system during the constitutional crisis and the October coup of 1993, based on newly discovered archival documents from the diplomatic archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria; on published documents from the Archives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria; on the Bulgarian and Russian periodicals: *Duma*, *Trud*, *24 Chasa*, *Democratsia*, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, *Kommersant*, *Novaya Gazeta*, *Izvestia*.

The main focus of the study is the ‘president-parliament’ diarchy and ‘enlightened authoritarianism’ in post-Soviet Russia. Particular attention is paid to a historical and legal analysis of the presidential constitution, as well as to diplomatic prognosis regarding Russia after 1993.

The ‘president–parliament’ diarchy during the period 1991–1993 is a reflection of the ‘RSFSR–USSR’, ‘Yeltsin–Gorbachev’ and ‘Russian-Soviet’ diarchy, which, paradoxically, was enshrined by the referendum of 17 March 1991, with a vote in favour of preserving the USSR and introducing the Russian presidential institution.

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The existence of two centres of power has always been critical to Russian (1917) and Soviet history (1991); the situation is no less critical for post-Soviet Russia (1993), when the constitutional crisis escalated into an acute political conflict with signs of a local civil war, culminating in the establishment of a presidential republic under the constitution of 12 December 1993.

**Keywords:** post-Soviet Russia, 'enlightened authoritarianism', president–parliament diarchy, super-presidential republic, constitutional crisis, events of 3–4 October, October coup d'état, Yeltsin

**JEL Classification:** N44; N45; N95; F22; F54

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РЕЗУМАТ:

### „АУТОРИТАРИЗМУЛ ИЛУМИНАТ” ȘI SFÂRȘITUL DIARHIEI PREȘEDINTE-PARLAMENT ÎN RUSIA POST-SOVIETICĂ DINTR-O PERSPECTIVĂ BULGARĂ

Articolul analizează perspectiva bulgară asupra stabilirii sistemului prezidențial rus în timpul crizei constituționale și al loviturii de stat din octombrie 1993, pe baza documentelor de arhivă recent descoperite din arhivele diplomatice ale Ministerului Afacerilor Externe al Republicii Bulgaria; a documentelor publicate din Arhivele Adunării Naționale a Republicii Bulgaria; a periodicelor bulgare și rusești: Duma, Trud, 24 Chasa, Democratsia, Rossiyskaya Gazeta, Nezavisimaya Gazeta, Kommersant, Novaya Gazeta, Izvestia.

Accentul principal al studiului este diarhia „președinte-parlament” și „autoritarismul iluminat” în Rusia post-sovietică. O atenție deosebită este acordată unei analize istorice și juridice a constituției prezidențiale, precum și prognozei diplomatice privind Rusia după 1993.

Diarhia „președinte-parlament” din perioada 1991–1993 este o reflectare a diarhiei „RSFSR-URSS”, „Elțin-Gorbaciov” și „ruso-sovietică”, care, paradoxal, a fost consacrată prin referendumul din 17 martie 1991, cu un vot în favoarea păstrării URSS și introducerii instituției prezidențiale ruse.

Existența a două centre de putere a fost întotdeauna esențială pentru istoria Rusiei (1917) și a Sovieticii (1991); Situația nu este mai puțin critică pentru Rusia post-sovietică (1993), când criza constituțională a escaladat într-un conflict politic acut, cu semne de război civil local, culminând cu instaurarea unei republici prezidențiale în temeiul constituției din 12 decembrie 1993.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Rusia post-sovietică, „autoritarism iluminat”, diarhie președinte-parlament, super-republică prezidențială, criză constituțională, evenimentele din 3-4 octombrie, lovitura de stat din octombrie, Elțin

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РЕЗЮМЕ:

### «ПРОСВЕЩЕННЫЙ АВТОРИТАРИЗМ» И КОНЕЦ ДИАРХИИ ПРЕЗИДЕНТ-ПАРЛАМЕНТ В ПОСТСОВЕТОВОЙ РОССИИ С БОЛГАРСКОЙ ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ

В статье анализируется болгарская точка зрения на установление российской президентской системы в период конституционного кризиса и Октябрьского переворота 1993 года на основе недавно обнаруженных архивных документов из дипломатического архива Министерства иностранных дел Республики Болгария; опубликованных документов из архива Национального собрания Республики Болгария; болгарских и российских периодических изданий: «Дума», «Труд», «24 Часа», «Демократия», «Российская газета», «Независимая газета», «Коммерсантъ», «Новая газета», «Известия».

Основное внимание в исследовании уделяется диархии «президент-парламент» и «просвещенному авторитаризму» в постсоветской России. Особое внимание уделяется историко-правовому анализу президентской конституции, а также дипломатическому прогнозу в отношении России после 1993 года.

Диарархия «президент-парламент» в период 1991–1993 годов является отражением диарархии «РСФСР–СССР», «Ельцин–Горбачев» и «Российско-советской», которая, парадоксально, была закреплена референдумом 17 марта 1991 года, на котором проголосовали за сохранение СССР и введение российского президентского института.

Существование двух центров власти всегда имело решающее значение для российской (1917) и советской истории (1991); Ситуация не менее критична и для постсоветской России (1993 год), когда конституционный кризис перерос в острый политический конфликт с признаками локальной гражданской войны, кульминацией которого стало установление президентской республики на основании конституции от 12 декабря 1993 года.

**Ключевые слова:** постсоветская Россия, «просвещенный авторитаризм», президентско-парламентская диархия, сверхпрезидентская республика, конституционный кризис, события 3–4 октября, октябрьский государственный переворот, Ельцин

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## Introduction

The concept of ‘enlightened authoritarianism’ in relation to the Russian presidential system is introduced in Bulgarian diplomatic analyses, which identify the key feature of the ‘Russian model’ as ‘managed democracy’, in which the president governs by decrees and edicts<sup>1</sup>.

‘Enlightened authoritarianism’ is the result of the September civil war in Moscow (21 September – 4 October 1993), which constituted not only a political crisis and an unconstitutional coup, but also an ideological clash between the ‘Soviet, left-wing patriotic’ camp, represented by the institution of the ‘soviets –’ the Supreme Soviet and regional soviets, with the concept of a ‘Soviet-parliamentary republic<sup>2</sup>’ – on the one hand, and the ‘Russian, liberal-patriotic’ camp, centred on the presidential institution and the figure of Yeltsin, with the concept of a super-presidential republic, on the other.

A liberal-patriotic approach is not an oxymoron, since overcoming the diarchy through the presidential centre is the only way to stabilise the Russian Federation, which, prior to 1993, had been characterised by strong centrifugal tendencies in the regions. Yeltsin is a neoliberal when it comes to economic reforms, but takes a traditionalist, statist stance on preserving the integrity of the Russian Federation.

### Terminology relating to the events of 3–4 October 1993

Bulgarian diplomatic documents, regardless of their type—whether a memorandum, briefing note, or analytical report—tend to use the neutral terms ‘the events of 3–4 October’ or ‘the September–October events’.

Views in Russia on the events of 3–4 October 1993—pro-presidential and pro-parliamentary – remain polarised to this day, a fact reflected in the conceptual framework of politicians involved, public figures, eyewitnesses to the events, and historiography<sup>3</sup>.

Yeltsin’s political opponents describe the president’s actions as a ‘coup d’état’, a term used by the left – the Communist Party of the Russian Federation<sup>4</sup>, the Russian Social Democratic Union, to which Mikhail Gorbachev belongs, and ‘unconstitutional coup’, whilst liberal authors avoid this concept and prefer to replace it with the term ‘revolution’ – ‘the September Revolution’, the ‘Yeltsin revolution’ or the ‘presidential revolution’.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Промените в Русия след изборите и отношението на САЩ към някои от новите позиции и акценти. – АМВнР. Дело 3. Оп. 51-25. А.е. 24. София, 1994. Л. 14, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Пихоя, Р. Г. Конституционно-политический кризис в России 1993 года: хроника событий и комментарий историка. – *Отечественная история*, 2002, № 5, с. 119.

<sup>3</sup> Тарасова, Е. А. Потерянная альтернатива: становление новой политической системы России в 1990–1993 годы. СПб.: Алетейя, 2012, с. 5–30.

<sup>4</sup> Комунистическа партия на Руската федерация (КПРФ). – АМВнР. Дело 4. Оп. 51-3. А.е. 75. Москва, 1994. Л. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Шевцова, Л. Режим Бориса Ельцина. М., 1999, с. 77, 138, 142, 392.

The liberal economist Yevgeny Yasin also uses the term ‘revolution’, which encompasses the period of ‘proto-democracy’ (1989–1993), and 3 October as the ‘break with Soviet power’.<sup>1</sup>

The term ‘coup d’état’ is also used by classic Moscow liberals disillusioned by Yeltsin’s violence, such as Alexander Politkovsky and Alexander Lyubimov, journalists on the programme ‘Vzglyad’, which was popular during the perestroika era, for which they were taken off the air.

Most Russian public figures who witnessed the coup of 3–4 October 1993 form their own view depending on whether they align with the liberal, pro-presidential camp or the left-wing, pro-Soviet and pro-parliamentary camp. Somewhere in the ideological middle are the lawyers, who were directly involved in seeking a solution to the constitutional crisis, and whose positions are neither pro-presidential nor pro-parliamentary, but pro-constitutional: Valery Zorkin, President of the Constitutional Court, and Vladimir Lafitsky, member of the expert group of the Constitutional Commission of the Russian Federation (1992–1993).

Both Zorkin and Lafitsky view the constitution as synonymous with the only ideology possible for Russia: ‘We have only one ideology – the Constitution – and we need no other’.<sup>2</sup> Vladimir Lafitsky remained in the Supreme Soviet until 3 October 1993 and participated in the drafting of documents ‘on overcoming the constitutional crisis’.<sup>3</sup>

Vitaly Tretyakov, editor-in-chief and founder of the moderately liberal *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, describes the events of 3–4 October as a ‘great bureaucratic revolution Sergei’.<sup>4</sup> Shakhrai, a professor of constitutional law, regards the shelling of the parliament as the ‘suppression of an armed mutiny’<sup>5</sup> and an ‘episode of civil war’<sup>6</sup>. Yeltsin’s associates define the armed mutiny ‘beyond the scope of a political coup’ as a ‘crossroads of history’ between the Soviet past (the Supreme Soviet) and the post-Soviet beginning (the presidency), with the main outcome being the ‘destruction of the Soviet system’.<sup>7</sup>

Yegor Gaidar, an ultra-reformist and symbol of shock therapy, believes that on 3–4 October a ‘fleeting civil war’ is taking place in Moscow, threatening Russia with a ‘communist counter-reform’.<sup>8</sup>

The film director Stanislav Govorukhin, until recently a democrat and supporter of Yeltsin, but who after 3–4 October 1993 switched to the left-wing patriotic camp, described this event as ‘the apotheosis of a great criminal revolution’, ‘a military coup involving the army and Interior Ministry troops’.<sup>9</sup>

The writer and physicist Mikhail Chelnokov, a member of parliament for the ‘Civil Society’ faction (1990–1993) and a proponent of the theory of convergence between communism and capitalism, describes the events as the ‘second October coup’.<sup>10</sup>

The pro-presidential interpretation of liberal journalists covering the coup brands the defenders of the White House as ‘red-brown vampires also Luzhkov Yuri Mayor Moscow’.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ясин, Е.Г. Десяностые – годы тягот, надежд и свершений. Москва, 2019, с. 59–60.

<sup>2</sup> Лафитский, В. И., Бошно, С. А. Правовая доктрина в персональном измерении. Беседа президента клуба правовой доктрины С. В. Бошно с профессором В. И. Лафитским. – *Право и современные государства*. № 6, 2022, с. 15; Зорькин, В. Конституция — это и есть идеология. – *Коммерсантъ*, 26 юни 2024 г.

<sup>3</sup> Лафитский, В. И. Личная конституция Владимира Лафитского. – *Корпоративный юрист*, № 7, юли 2021, с. 57.

<sup>4</sup> Третьяков, В. Президент не Гамлет. Он флейта, и аппарат знает как на ней играть. – *Независимая газета*, № 220 (644), 17 ноября 1993 г., с. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Шахрай, С. Для меня главные ценности – семья, собственность, государство. – *Известия*, № 220, 17 ноября 1993 г., с. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Среца на Сергей Шахрай с преподаватели и студенти от Московския държавен университет. – АМВНР. Дело 7. Оп. 51-3. А.е. 120. Москва, 1994. Л. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Эпоха Ельцина. Очерки политической истории. М.: Президентский центр Ельцина, 2011, с. 370, 381.

<sup>8</sup> Гайдар, Е. Дни поражений и побед, М., 1997, с. 294, 365.

<sup>9</sup> Говорухин, С. Великая криминальная революция. Третье издание. Москва, 1995, с. 115.

<sup>10</sup> Челноков М. Россия без Союза, Россия без России. Записки депутата расстрелянного парламента. М., 2023, с. 427.

<sup>11</sup> Яков, В., Белых, В. Из-за безвластия властей в России мог победить фашизм. – *Известия*, № 189 (24044), 5 октября 1993 г., с. 1–2.

justifies the presidential assault on the White House by citing the threat of ‘red-brown terror’.<sup>1</sup>

For Ruslan Khasbulatov, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, the term ‘Communist-fascists’<sup>2</sup> is appropriate only when applied to Yeltsin and his entourage.

The left-wing sociologist and dissident Alexander Zinoviev regards 3 October as the end of the ‘anti-communist coup’ or ‘anti-communist counter-revolution’ that began with the August putsch. The GKChP (1991) and the ‘Supreme Soviet uprising’ (1993), according to Zinoviev, are ‘two attempts at resistance USSR. the of capitulation the gainsta’<sup>3</sup>

### The diarchy

The main destabilising factor that led to the forceful establishment of a Russian presidential republic is the president–parliament diarchy. Bulgarian diplomatic analyses, alongside the concept of diarchy, also introduce the notion of ‘triple power’, which they see in the parallel conflict between the president and parliament as a ‘struggle between the government and presidential authority’. For Bulgarian diplomats, the events of 3–4 October are ‘logical and natural’, as they were caused by the ‘collapse’ of the political system, which, alongside ‘tripartite power’, is also characterised by centrifugal tendencies of rapid ‘growth in the independence of local councils and federal entities from central authority’. According to the diplomatic analysis, the political collapse in the autumn of 1993 created a ‘real danger of the federation’s disintegration’.<sup>4</sup>

Valery Zorkin, President of the Constitutional Court, also uses the term ‘tripartite system’,<sup>5</sup> but as a synonym for a democracy based on the separation of powers, which came to an end on 3–4 October 1993. The role of the judiciary in the conflict between the legislative and executive branches, according to V. Zorkin, is for the Constitutional Court to defend the ‘moral foundations of law’<sup>6</sup> of Russian society, which are being undermined by Yeltsin’s unconstitutional Decree No. 1400.

The President of the Constitutional Court, the third-highest-ranking official in the state after the President and the Chairman of the Supreme Council, is an advocate of a presidential republic for Russia, as he is convinced that it ‘gives the state flexibility during a period of reform’, whereas a parliamentary republic is suitable for countries ‘where the storm has already passed’ and there is no danger of crises<sup>7</sup>.

Zorkin opposes a coup d’état as a political instrument for establishing a presidential republic, and also rejects ideological epithets regarding the fundamental law that justify its violation: ‘there is neither a “Stalinist” nor a “Brezhnevist” constitution — there is only the current constitution following immediately Court Constitutional the convenes Zorkin V.’<sup>8</sup> Yeltsin’s statement of 21 September on the dissolution of parliament. They held an extraordinary session at night without their robes and ruled that Decree No. 1400 was unconstitutional and ‘provided grounds for the removal from office of the President of the Russian Federation, B. N. Yeltsin.’<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Лужков, Ю. Октябрьская драма или кто сорвал переговоры? – В: Тишайшие переговоры. (1–3 октября 1993 г. Запись фонограммы переговоров в Свято-Даниловом монастыре). Москва, 1993, с. 375.

<sup>2</sup> Хасбулатов, Р. И. Великая Российская трагедия. Т. 1. М., 1994, с. 281.

<sup>3</sup> Зинovieв, А. Планируемая история: Запад. Посткоммунистическая Россия. Гибель русского коммунизма. М., 2009, с. 447, 308, 429, 437, 442.

<sup>4</sup> Русия: анализ и опит за прогноза. – АМВНР. Дело 1. Оп. 50-25. А.е. 8. София, 1993. Л. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Зорькин, В. Президент сказал, что его беспокоит “моя дружба с Хасбулатовым”. Из беседы бывшего председателя Конституционного суда с корреспондентом “НГ”, 12 ноября 1993 г. – В: Ельцин-Хасбулатов: единство, компромисс, борьба. М., 1994, с. 594.

<sup>6</sup> Эпилоговая лекция Валерия Зорькина. – *Независимая газета*, 18 май 2023 г.

<sup>7</sup> О главных замечаниях к проекту Конституции Российской Федерации. Интервью с руководителем группы экспертов Конституционной комиссии РСФСР профессором В.Д. Зорькиным. – В: Из истории создания Конституции Российской Федерации. Конституционная комиссия: стенограммы, материалы, документы (1990–1993 гг.): в 6 т. Т. 2: 1991 г. / под общ. ред. О.Г. Румянцева. М., 2008, с. 891.

<sup>8</sup> Валерий Зорькин: Я присягал не президенту, а конституцию....

<sup>9</sup> Конституционный суд обнародовал заключение № 3-2 «О соответствии Конституции Российской Федерации действиям и решениям президента Российской Федерации Б.Н. Ельцина, связанным с его указом «О поэтапной конституционной реформе в Российской Федерации» от 21 сентября 1993 года № *RMDIRI*, 2026, Nr. 2 (Vol. 22) <https://rmdiri.md/> ; <https://www.usem.md/md/p/rmdiri>

The principle of dual power was also occasionally employed by Yeltsin as a political tool, as in the case of the constitutional crisis and the existence of two main drafts of the future constitution: the Supreme Soviet's draft on a parliamentary republic (completed on 8 May 1993) and Yeltsin's draft on a presidential republic, prepared by Sergei Shakhray and Sergei Alekseyev.

To avoid the imposition of the draft on a parliamentary republic, Yeltsin created an artificial 'diarchy' by establishing the Constitutional Council (by decree of 12 May 1993), which not only duplicated the Constitutional Commission but could also make the final decision on which draft constitution would be submitted directly to the president for approval. The Constitutional Council approved the presidential draft on 12 July 1993, but the Supreme Soviet went into recess until the autumn.

Vladimir Lafitsky, representing the Constitutional Commission, described Yeltsin's Constitutional Assembly as a 'post-socialist zemsky sobor, combining the traditions of Communist Party activists with the bodies of estate representation of the 16th–17th centuries<sup>1</sup>'. Lafitsky is a supporter of the Constitutional Commission's formula: 'a strong president – a strong parliament – an independent judiciary'.

The 'president-parliament' conflict also has socio-political dimensions directly linked to liberal reforms that lack public support. Bulgarian diplomats observe the value system and mindset of Russians, a significant proportion of whom 'perceive the modernisation of Russia as lawlessness, chaos, disintegration and an acute threat to personal safety'; hence the influence of public sentiment on parliament, which explains its 'significant evolution'. Whilst the parliament was initially 'pro-Yeltsin', it has gradually 'become a brake on liberal reforms', which is a pattern in Russian politics, according to diplomatic analysis<sup>2</sup>.

### Presidential constitution

A diplomatic review of the results of the 12 December 1993 election notes that 'voters are showing a preference for the office of the presidency, rather than for Yeltsin personally [1, <sup>3</sup> AMVnR, pp. 4, 7], although it draws attention to the fact that the restriction in Article 81 of the draft Constitution, according to which a citizen over 65 years of age cannot be elected president, was removed to ensure that Yeltsin could stand for a second term.

The diplomatic report also analyses Yeltsin's political conduct in the run-up to the elections – his refusal to openly support any party, which is perceived by Gennady Burbulis, the ideologue of the presidential party, as a 'gross error'. The diplomats note that Yeltsin is creating a different model – one that is more successful in terms of public discontent with the reformers in the president's circle – namely, a 'party in the service of the president from <sup>4</sup>' which he can maintain an outward distance whilst using it as a tool without attracting negative attention.

"Yeltsin is 'very sensitive to the voice of Russia. He sees himself as a Russian representing the whole of Russia'," stated the President's press secretary, Vyacheslav Kostikov, in an official statement on the day of the 'Choice of Russia' congress, when "despite all political sympathies, he will not be attending the congress". Sergei Filatov notes that Yeltsin 'deprives the democratic movement of a unifying centre'.<sup>5</sup>

Yeltsin wants the Russian presidency to be the imperial centre of Russia, rather than being politically and ideologically constrained – in this case, by the democrats. Yeltsin's focus is on power, not on any specific ideological movement or party, which may change in the interests of preserving the centre of power.

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1400 и обращением к гражданам России 21 сентября 1993 года». – Президентская библиотека. <https://www.prlib.ru/item/333335> [23.05.2024].

<sup>1</sup> Лафитский, В. И. Два проекта. Сравнительно-правовой анализ. – *Независимая газета*, № 147 (571), 6 август 1993 г., с. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Русия: анализ и опит за прогноза..., АМВнР. Дело 1. Оп. 50-25. А.е. 8. София, 1993. Л. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Декемврийските избори и президентът: институция и личност. – АМВнР. Дело 4. Оп. 51-3. А.е. 75. Москва, 1994. Л. 4, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, л. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Филатов, С. Совершенно несекретно..., с. 432–432.

Some researchers question the legitimacy of the Constitution of 12 December 1993 due to the low percentage of voters who voted ‘yes’ in the referendum—around 30% of the electorate. Attention is also drawn to the electoral commissions, which in April 1994 destroyed the ballot papers for the Federation Council, the State Duma and the Constitution. The decision by the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation to destroy the ballot papers was taken on 30 November 1993<sup>1</sup>. Mikhail Gorbachev describes Yeltsin’s referendum as a ‘moral defeat.’<sup>2</sup>

Diplomatic reports do not comment on the issue of legitimacy, but draw attention to the fact that referendums were not held in Tatarstan due to low voter turnout, as well as in Chechnya and seven republics: Adygea, Bashkortostan, Chuvashia, Tuva, Mordovia, Dagestan and Karachay-Cherkessia, plus ten regions, where the Constitution was supported by less than 50% of voters<sup>3</sup> [8, АМВНР, л. 19]. By way of comparison, 22.6% of Tatarstan’s voters took part in the referendum on confidence in Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation, on 25 April 1993, whilst the turnout for the referendum on the Constitution of the Russian Federation and the elections to the State Duma fell to 13.9%<sup>4</sup>.

The votes of the armed forces, 95% of whom took part in the elections and referendum on 12 December 1993, 74% voted in favour of the constitution, but in terms of political parties, over 30% of the army’s votes went to the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), which received a positive vote from the majority of the Taman Division – an indicator of ‘fragile and highly conditional support’ by the army. The support for the president was<sup>5</sup>

Diplomatic reports provide a comparative analysis of the new constitution with the draft constitution prior to the referendum, which reveals a further consolidation of presidential power at the expense of parliamentary power: Article 83 provides for presidential powers that were not included in the preliminary text (forming and chairing the Security Council, approving military doctrine, appointing the Prime Minister with the consent of the State Duma, and deciding on the resignation of the government; in the draft, the latter fell within the remit of parliament).

With regard to parliamentary immunity, the following text has been removed from Article 97 of the draft Constitution: ‘Members of the Federation Council and the State Duma may not be held legally liable for opinions expressed, voting positions taken or other actions consistent with their status as members of parliament, including after the expiry of their term of office.’<sup>6</sup>

A legal analysis of the new Russian constitution identifies certain contentious issues regarding key provisions of the text of the fundamental law, which have been criticised by Russian legal experts. Vladimir Lafitsky strongly criticises Article 67.1 of the Constitution, which states that ‘the Russian Federation is the legal successor to the USSR and not but,’<sup>7</sup> successor to the Russian Empire, which leaves Russia vulnerable on many legal issues – both foreign and domestic: ‘the continuity of time is forcibly severed, without which no state can develop fully of Constitution the of 67.1 Article to amendments 2020 the following even And.’<sup>8</sup> the Russian Federation, the Russian Federation’s legal succession to the Russian Empire has

<sup>1</sup> Тарасова, Е. А. Потерянная альтернатива..., с. 293.

<sup>2</sup> Изборите в Русия: оценки и прогнози..., АМВНР. Дело 2. Оп. 51-25. А.е. 15. София, 1994. Л. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Резултати от референдума за конституцията на Руската федерация. – АМВНР. Дело 4. Оп. 51-3. А.е. 75. Москва, 1994. Л. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Бушувев, А. С. Политическое развитие постсоветского татарстана: от советской автономии к современной модели. – *Гасырлар авазы-Эхо веков*, № 4, 2020, с. 11–12, 16.

<sup>5</sup> Изборите в Русия: оценки и прогнози..., АМВНР. Дело 2. Оп. 51-25. А.е. 15. София, 1994. Л. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Промени в отношенията между президента и държавната дума съгласно първоначалния проект за нова конституция на Руската федерация, публикуван на 16 юли 1993 г., и конституцията, приета на 12 декември 1993 г. – АМВНР. Дело 4. Оп. 51-3. А.е. 75. Москва, 1994. Л. 7, 9, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Конституция РФ. Принята всенародным голосованием 12 декабря 1993 года с изменениями, одобренными в ходе общероссийского голосования 1 июля 2020 года. – В: *Государственная дума*. <http://duma.gov.ru/legislative/documents/constitution/>. [12.02.2024].

<sup>8</sup> Лафитский, В.И. Конституционные поправки “Судного дня”..., с. 155–156.

still not been enshrined. The question of legal succession forms part of the country's legal and historical heritage.

Soviet succession was proclaimed by the Russian Federation as early as January 1992 in a note from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to diplomatic missions, in which it was stated that 'the Russian Government intends to continue to fulfil the obligations and exercise the rights arising from international treaties concluded by the USSR, i.e. it fully assumes the rights and obligations of the former USSR under all its treaties.'<sup>1</sup>

Russian legal scholar Professor Ivan Ivannikov draws attention to the 'contradictory provisions' in the Constitution of 12 December 1993, in which he sees a threat to the disintegration of the Russian Federation: 'Formally, in paragraph 1 of Article 1, Russia is referred to as a federation, but paragraph 2 of Article 5 states that within the federation there are republics ('states') which have their own constitutions and legislation. Since sovereignty is one of the fundamental characteristics of a state, the Constitution is in fact not referring to a federation, but to a mixed federal-confederal form of state organisation'<sup>2</sup>.

Professor Ivannikov also analyses the 'inconsistency with the principle of social justice' in the Russian Constitution '–legal entities of the Russian Federation are not equal – regions and districts are formally equated with republics under Article 5(1), but in practice cannot be equal, because only republics are designated as 'states'. Ivannikov proposes removing the term 'state' from the description of republics to avoid future problems, because 'the Russian question is directly related to the state-territorial structure of Russia to amendments the following And.'<sup>3</sup> the Constitution of the Russian Federation in 2020, with paragraph 2 of Article 5 remaining unchanged, the republics of the Russian Federation continue to be 'states'.

Alexander Bastrykin, Chairman of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, proposes to remove paragraph 4 of Article 15 of the Constitution concerning the primacy of international law over national law: 'Generally recognised principles and norms of international law and international treaties of the Russian Federation form an integral part of its legal system. If an international treaty of the Russian Federation establishes rules other than those provided for by law, the rules of the international treaty shall apply'<sup>4</sup>. Bastrykin describes the inclusion of this clause in the chapter 'Fundamentals of the Constitutional Order' as 'legal subversion'; according to Article 135, this chapter cannot be amended by the Federal Assembly, but only by a Constitutional Assembly convened following the adoption of a special federal constitutional law<sup>5</sup>.

Valery Zorkin, President of the Constitutional Court, for his part, emphasises that 'the principle of the primacy of national law is clearly enshrined in Article 15(1), which states that 'the Constitution of the Russian Federation has supreme legal force.'<sup>6</sup>

Lafitsky, one of the authors of the draft constitution and a member of the Venice Commission, strongly disagrees with Bastrykin's view, which he regards as 'a modern-day erosion of constitutional law, a process of "self-isolation'. Lafitsky clarifies that in many countries, 'including the US, the UK, Canada and Australia, the primacy of international legal norms over domestic legislation is not formally recognised', but judicial practice there 'generally favours international legal norms'<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Състояние на отношенията и проблеми между Република България и Руската федерация в правната област. – АМВнР. Дело 3. Оп. 50-3. А.е. 47. София, 1993. Л. 69.

<sup>2</sup> *Иванников, И.А.* Государственно-территориальное устройство России..., с. 109.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, с. 138, 141.

<sup>4</sup> *Конституция РФ...Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Козлова, Н.* Александр Баstryкин предлагает установить приоритет национального права над международным. – *Российская газета*, № 90 (6661), 27 апрель 2015 г.

<sup>6</sup> *Скрытач, И.* Председатель КС не видит коллизии в соотношении Конституции и норм международного права. – *ТАСС*, Санкт-Петербург, 28 май 2015 г.  
<https://tass.ru/politika/2001532> [10.07.2023]

<sup>7</sup> *Лафитский, В.И.* Эрозия Конституции и конституционной правоприменительной практики..., с. 148–149.

This ‘formality’ regarding the primacy of international law over national law remains unchanged in Article 15(4) of the Russian Constitution even following the 2020 amendments<sup>1</sup> [Constitution of the Russian Federation, 2020], but is circumvented in the spirit of ‘constitutional sovereignty adopted decisions which to according 79, Article to addition the in’<sup>2</sup> on the basis of international treaties of the Russian Federation that ‘contradict the Constitution of the Russian Federation shall not be enforceable in the Russian Federation.’<sup>3</sup>

### **The reaction of Bulgarian political and public figures to the events of 3–4 October 1993**

President Zhelev was the first representative of the political establishment to react to the events in Moscow in October, stating at 10.15 am on 4 October: ‘I am convinced that the communist-fascist uprising will be suppressed in the coming hours, and that democracy in Russia will prevail in the forthcoming parliamentary elections.’<sup>4</sup>

On 4 October, the Bulgarian government issued a statement noting the ‘flags bearing hammers and sickles’ without accusing Yeltsin’s opponents of fascism, but focusing primarily on how events in Russia would affect Bulgaria: ‘Whatever the outcome of the crisis in Russia, we will not allow the democratic process in our country to be delayed or halted.’<sup>5</sup>

The very next day, 5 October, Russian Ambassador Alexander Avdeev met with Deputy Foreign Minister Valentin Gatsinsky to convey “special thanks from B. Yeltsin and V. Chernomyrdin to the President and Government of Bulgaria for their support in defending democracy and order” against the “rebels”. During this diplomatic meeting, Andrei Kozirev’s visit to our country was also discussed, with the Russian diplomat emphasising that ‘Russia sees Bulgaria as a future distributor of gas supplies to Greece, Macedonia and Turkey.’<sup>6</sup>

The Mayor of Sofia, Prof. Alexander Yanchulev issued a statement on 4 October ‘in connection with the events in Moscow’ on behalf of the City Council, in which he ‘strongly condemned’ the attempt to seize the Moscow City Council and called on the mayors of all the world’s capitals to join Sofia’s appeal ‘to respect the sovereignty of the institution of the Moscow City Council.’<sup>7</sup>

The Bulgarian press is reprinting photographs of Russian Nazis greeting the ‘Barkashovites’ outside the White House<sup>8</sup>, which inevitably shapes public opinion in favour of Yeltsin, who is portrayed as the ‘suppressor of the second October uprising.’<sup>9</sup>

The role of the American side, which coordinated the Russian president’s actions, did not go unnoticed either. The newspaper ‘Trud’ reported that the US Ambassador to Moscow, Thomas Pickering, had been informed in advance by the Russian Foreign Ministry of the content of Yeltsin’s televised address<sup>10</sup>. ‘24 Chasa’ newspaper exaggerates the role of the Russian army as a factor in political processes: ‘In the Kremlin, the army has always held the key to Russian politics.’<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Конституция Российской Федерации. В соответствии с Указом Президента от 3 июля 2020 года “Об официальном опубликовании Конституции Российской Федерации с внесенными в нее поправками”. – Президент России. <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/constitution> [10.07.2023].

<sup>2</sup> Барциц, И. Н. Переосмысление соотношения международного и национального права на рубеже эпох (о поправке в статью 79 Конституции Российской Федерации). – *Государственная служба*, 2020, № 1, с. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Конституция Российской Федерации. В соответствии с Указом Президента от 3 июля 2020 года..., пак там.

<sup>4</sup> Позиции за събитията в Москва. – *Труд*, 5 октомври 1993 г., брой 232 (14111), с. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Декларация на правителството на Република България. – АМВНР. Дело 5. Оп. 50-10. А.е. 133. Л. 2–3. София, 1993.

<sup>6</sup> Среща на г-н Валентин Гатински, зам.-министър с посланика на Русия в София, Ал. Авдеев. – АМВНР. Дело 4. Оп. 50-3. А.е. 57. Л. 50–51. София, 1993.

<sup>7</sup> Декларация на проф. Ал. Янчулев, кмет на София, във връзка със събитията в Москва. – АМВНР. Дело 3. Оп. 50-3. А.е. 52. Л. 10. София, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> *Труд*, 2 октомври 1993 г., бр. 230 (14109), с. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Елцин потуши втория октомврийски метеж. – *Труд*, 5 октомври 1993 г., брой 232 (14111), с. 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Труд*, 22 септември 1993 г., брой 221 (14100), с. 7.

<sup>11</sup> *24 часа*, 23 септември 1993 г., бр. 257 (787), с. 10.

Ideological rhetoric dominates the Bulgarian democratic press: the newspaper 'Democracy' refers to the parliament's defenders as 'red-brown thugs' and welcomes the ban on opposition movements<sup>1</sup>.

The Union of Democratic Forces daily newspaper takes a critical view of the stance taken by 'former Soviet President' Mikhail Gorbachev, who criticised Yeltsin's undemocratic actions despite the Russian president enjoying the support of 'the entire democratic world.'<sup>2</sup>

The newspaper 'Democracy' presents Gorbachev and Yeltsin within the ideological dichotomy of 'Soviet-Russian', which corresponds to the opposition between 'communist' and 'democratic'.

The Chairman of the People's Assembly, Alexander Yordanov, spoke on 4 October at 7.30 pm, declaring his "full support for President Yeltsin's efforts", whilst describing the actions of the Russian parliament as a "communist-fascist attempt at mutiny and the restoration of communism in Russia". Of the political parties, SDS (Union of Democratic Forces) sent a telegram to Yeltsin as early as 3 October: 'The UDF firmly supports your efforts to suppress the criminal mutiny of fascist-communist elements. Your inevitable victory will be ours too', whilst the Bulgarian Socialist Party officially took no side, and on 4 October, following the shelling of the White House, declared that "Bulgarian socialists categorically condemn violence, regardless of which side it comes from"<sup>3</sup>.

The Executive Bureau of the Central Committee of the BSP also issued a statement condemning the violence without resorting to ideological epithets, and describing the events of 3–4 October 1993 as 'a serious clash between the legislative and executive branches of power in the Russian Federation.'<sup>4</sup>

Velko Valkanov published an analysis of the events from a legal perspective in the newspaper 'Duma', in which he examined Yeltsin's constitutional violations<sup>5</sup>.

In the newspaper 'Duma', despite its sympathies towards the Supreme Soviet, Rutskoy is not referred to as 'president' or 'second president', as left-wing newspapers in Russia do, but as 'vice-president', which was his title prior to the political crisis of 21 September 1993.

The left-wing newspaper 'Duma' does not use the term 'coup' in the literal sense in relation to Yeltsin's actions, but alludes to it by reprinting the cover of Newsweek, which reads 'Yeltsin's coup'. Duma also defends Stanislav Govorukhin's thesis regarding the 'Yeltsin–Supreme Soviet' confrontation as a war waged by Moscow against Russia<sup>6</sup>. 'Duma' also publishes analytical articles on the regional dimension of the events of 3–4 October 1993 in connection with the Ural incident<sup>7</sup>.

The daily newspaper of the Bulgarian Socialist Party also highlights the Russian authorities' curtailment of freedom of speech, devoting an entire article to journalists who have been dismissed—not only communists and nationalists, but also democrats such as Alexander Lyubimov and Alexander Politkovsky<sup>8</sup>.

Nikola Kicevski of the newspaper 'Trud' also voices concerns about democracy in Russia and the question of 'who will hold the nuclear briefcase' in his article 'Russia is marching towards dictatorship', in which the nuclear factor is used to justify the need for a Russian 'autocrat' who 'holds the nuclear button firmly and protects Russia from further disintegration, and thus from the emergence of new dangerous nuclear feudal lords.'<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Руските власти изловиха червено-кафявите бандити. – *Демокрация*, 5 октомври 1993 г., с. 1, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Демократичният свят изрази твърда подкрепа за Елцин. – *Демокрация*, 23 септември 1993 г., с. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Позиции за събитията в Москва..., *ibid*.

<sup>4</sup> БСП осъжда насилието. Декларация на Изпълнителното бюро на ВС на БСП и на ръководството на ПССД. – *Дума*, 5 октомври 1993 г., бр. 232, с. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Вълканов, В.* Събитията в Русия според конституцията на Руската федерация. – *Дума*, 12 октомври 1993 г., бр. 238, с. 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Попов, В.* Елцин победи в Москва. – *Дума*, 5 октомври 1993 г., бр. 232, с. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Уралска република обявиха в родния град на Елцин. – *Дума*, 2 ноември 1993 г., бр. 256, с. 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Михова, С.* Наложен е безсрочен комендантски час за демокрацията в Русия. – *Дума*, 16 октомври 1993 г.

<sup>9</sup> *Кичевски, Н.* Русия марширува към диктатура. – *Труд*, 6 октомври 1993 г., брой 233 (14112), с. 7.

On 7 October 1993, the 36th National Assembly held a debate on the events in Russia on 3–4 October, at the initiative of the SDS, on behalf of which Mikhail Nedelchev tabled a draft declaration unequivocally siding with the Russian president against the ‘communist gangs that organised an armed and, evidently, long-planned mutiny’. The SDS agreed with the ‘dissolution of a conservative parliament dominated by revanchist pro-Communist forces’ and justified Yeltsin’s actions as ‘the only way to put an end to a diarchy that was dangerous not only for the country but for the whole of Europe’<sup>1</sup>.

Stefan Savov clarifies that ‘we are prepared to condemn the Soviet Union, which is by no means the same as Russia. [...] The SDS has never been against Russia’, to which Alexander Marinov replied from his seat: ‘Then why did you translate Che Guevara? [...] You noticed the red flags, but you didn’t notice the tanks, Mr Savov! You didn’t notice the violation of the Constitution!’<sup>2</sup>

The BSP’s position tacitly sympathises with the Russian parliament, whilst officially it is one of waiting and is directed against holding debates and adopting a declaration; Nora Ananieva’s arguments, however, are of a procedural nature: ‘a scandalous breach of procedure’ on the part of the SDS, which failed to submit the declaration in good time, whilst Filip Bokov’s arguments are of an ideological nature: ‘This is the National Assembly of independent Bulgaria, gentlemen, not of the Autonomous Russian Republic. (Noise and heckling in the chamber). For quite some time in this country, Russian holidays were celebrated and declarations of loyalty were made to Russian and Soviet state leaders’<sup>3</sup>.

The Speaker of the National Assembly, Alexander Yordanov, proposes convening the Foreign Affairs Committee to discuss the declaration, a move opposed by Stefan Savov, who quotes Petko Rachev Slaveykov: ‘Refer the matter to the committee so that they may sort it out there.’ Stefan Savov is against ‘sorting out’ the declaration. The meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee is boycotted by BSP MPs, who did not attend, and in the absence of a quorum, the committee cannot reach a decision, and the debate is adjourned.

### **Bulgarian diplomatic prognosis regarding Russia after 1993**

1/ Russia is undergoing a process of ‘restorative modernisation’, which combines ‘the dismantling of old structures with their reproduction... most often in a modified form’. The ‘destruction of local councils as the mainstay of conservatism’ is identified as the most significant factor. A slow transition to a market economy is envisaged, taking the form of ‘a peculiar kind of social liberalism’<sup>4</sup>.

Against the backdrop of Viktor Chernomyrdin’s statement that ‘the era of market romanticism is over’ – a sentiment reflected in the search for a path ‘between Gaidar’s radical reforms and the anti-reforms of the left-wing forces mixed a forecasting are diplomats’,<sup>5</sup> economy with a ‘return of the state to the economy’ following disillusionment with ‘shock therapy’, which is summarised as an ‘irresponsible experiment’ for which the West also bears responsibility<sup>6</sup>.

2/ The automatic transfer of Western values to Russia ‘ends in failure’ and may turn into a ‘slow... but with a Russian twist’. One explanation offered by diplomatic analyses for the reformers’ failure in Russian society is the behaviour of Russian democrats: ‘a campaign unprecedented in its arrogance and pretentiousness... demonstrating self-assurance and infallibility... cannot escape the Eastern European epidemic of disunity.’<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Двеста седемдесет и шесто заседание. XXXVI Народно събрание, София, четвъртък, 7 октомври 1993 г. Открито в 15 ч. и 15 мин. – Архив на Народното събрание на Република България. Стенограми от пленарни заседания.

<https://www.parliament.bg/bg/plenaryst/ns/55/ID/1370> [02.10.2022].

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Русия: анализ и опит за прогноза..., АМВНР. Дело 1. Оп. 50-25. А.е. 8. София, 1993. Л. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Промените в Русия след изборите и отношението на САЩ към някои от новите позиции и акценти. – АМВНР. Дело 3. Оп. 51-25. А.е. 24. София, 1994. Л. 14–16.

<sup>6</sup> Изборите в Русия: оценки и прогнози. – АМВНР. Дело 2. Оп. 51-25. А.е. 15. София, 1994. Л. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Л. 24.

3/ A 'soft form of authoritarianism' is being introduced in Russia as a distinctive feature of the 'Russian model of transition' (situated between the Chinese and Eastern European models), characterised by 'managed democracy, in which decrees and edicts rule', replacing the 'pseudo-parliamentary 1993).-(1991 period the of democracy'<sup>1</sup>

According to diplomatic analyses, authoritarian rule 'may prove necessary and justified at this stage of Russian society's development'. It is anticipated that authoritarian and statist tendencies will intensify without any risk of a return to the 'old totalitarian system', even from the most ardent conservatives, who are more sympathetic to the Chinese model<sup>2</sup>.

It cannot be ruled out that 'Yeltsin will resort to a last resort – the establishment of outright authoritarian rule', in which the army will be 'the most powerful political force.'<sup>3</sup>

There has been a noticeable shift in the political behavior of Russian democrats, who in October 1993 "most strongly advocated for a strong executive branch," while a year later, "finding themselves unable to influence the decisions and actions of that very same branch... became the driving force behind strengthening parliamentary oversight"<sup>4</sup>.

4/ Russia's foreign policy line 'will become more assertive' in defending its national interests, primarily within the CIS, but without confrontation with the West. A telling example of a 'clear shift' in Russian foreign policy is the statement made by Andrei Kozyrev in China in late January 1994, when he declared that 'Russia will not heed the West's instructions and reprimands', later emphasising that the Russian Federation 'will continue to defend its vital interests, even in cases where this conflicts with the interests of the West the instance, this In.'<sup>5</sup> pro-Western Kozyrev is expressing the position of the Russian president.

The diplomatic analysis notes that the concept of sustained cooperation between Russia and the US following the end of the ideological confrontation and the collapse of the USSR proved unviable, since 'geopolitical and geostrategic considerations are a constant factor in Russian politics.'<sup>6</sup>

The diplomatic prognosis predicts that Russia will 'cease its demilitarisation', and also notes a trend towards a 'resurgence of the cult of power', which could lead to a 'forceful resolution' of foreign policy issues. Diplomats identify Ukraine's special place in Russian foreign policy, namely that 'Russia cannot assert itself as a great power... without breaking Ukraine's will to resist.'<sup>7</sup>

During the events of 3–4 October 1993, Ukraine itself strongly supported Yeltsin through a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 'Democracy is in danger!' in response to the 'irresponsible and reckless calls' of the Supreme Council<sup>8</sup>. The Ukrainian position is logical given the active policy of the Russian parliament in defence of the Russian population in Donbas and Crimea and against Ukrainian national interests.

5/ The prognosis for the Balkan region is that it will remain a matter of 'shared responsibility' between Russia and the West, with 'nothing of particular significance happening without Russia's input'; as for Bulgaria, it is recommended that Russian-Bulgarian relations 'cease to be presented as an alternative to relations with the West, and vice versa they that so,'<sup>9</sup> may be of benefit.

6/ As early as November 1993, Bulgarian diplomats had also predicted Yeltsin's successor, highlighting two different views: 'a new, much younger figure from a new generation of

<sup>1</sup> Промените в Русия след изборите и отношението на САЩ..., *АМВнР. Дело 3. Оп. 51-25. А.е. 24. София, 1994. Л. 14.*

<sup>2</sup> Русия: анализ и опит за прогноза..., *АМВнР. Дело 1. Оп. 50-25. А.е. 8. София, 1993. Л. 11–12.*

<sup>3</sup> Изборите в Русия: оценки и прогнози..., *АМВнР. Дело 2. Оп. 51-25. А.е. 15. София, 1994. Л. 23.*

<sup>4</sup> Кризата в отношенията между Борис Елцин и руските прореформаторски политически формации..., *АМВнР. Дело 2. Оп. 52-3. А.е. 27. Москва, 1995. Л. 16.*

<sup>5</sup> Промените в Русия след изборите и отношението на САЩ..., *АМВнР. Дело 3. Оп. 51-25. А.е. 24. София, 1994. Л. 16.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid* Л. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Изборите в Русия: оценки и прогнози..., *АМВнР. Дело 2. Оп. 51-25. А.е. 15. София, 1994. Л. 29–30.*

<sup>8</sup> Заявление Министерства Иностранных дел Украины. – *АМВнР. Дело 12. Оп. 50-3. А.е. 217. София, 1993. Л. 27.*

<sup>9</sup> Русия: анализ и опит за прогноза..., *АМВнР. Дело 1. Оп. 50-25. А.е. 8. София, 1993. Л. 14.*

politicians<sup>1</sup>’, and Chernomyrdin, ‘who had clearly been groomed by Yeltsin as his deputy .<sup>2</sup> However, what is obvious is not always correct.

### Conclusion

The ‘president-parliament’ diarchy during the period 1991–1993 is a reflection of the ‘RSFSR–USSR’, ‘Yeltsin–Gorbachev ’and ‘Russian–Soviet ’diarchy, which, paradoxically, was enshrined by the referendum of 17 March 1991, with a vote in favour of preserving the USSR and introducing the Russian presidential institution.

The ‘president-parliament’ diarchy was also projected into an information battle, won by Yeltsin with the crucial help of CNN, which imposed the propaganda image of the demonized Supreme Soviet as a ‘communist-fascist’ and ‘brown-red armed junta’ of the Soviet past against the idealized image of the ‘democratic’ president of the Russian future.

Both in the ‘president-parliament’ battle and in the ‘centre-periphery’ confrontation, the Soviets – the Supreme Soviet in Moscow and the regional councils in the regions – opposed presidential power.

The Soviets were an archaic Soviet institution that survived the collapse of the USSR, and whose democratic character stimulated centrifugal tendencies in post-Soviet Russia. Soviets were the last element of the ‘Russian-Soviet’ battle that began during the perestroika (RSFSR vs. USSR) and ended with the establishment of the presidential republic.

The constitutional crisis in post-Soviet Russia parallels the crisis of Russian federalism. The ‘president vs. parliament’ battle is parallel to the ‘centre-periphery’ confrontation. Just as the discussion on drafts for a new Union Treaty in 1989 led to the collapse of the USSR, so the discussions on a new Russian constitution in 1992-1993 led to the fragmentation of the Russian Federation.

The existence of two centres of power has always been critical to Russian (1917) and Soviet history (1991); the situation is no less critical for post-Soviet Russia (1993), when the constitutional crisis escalated into an acute political conflict with signs of a local civil war, culminating in the establishment of a presidential republic under the constitution of 12 December 1993.

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