Yeltsin And Russia Essay, Research Paper

Free-Response: Russia

1. Yeltsin’s formation of the new Russia as a presidential republic including the setting up of checks and balances on the presidency, such as the ones present in the other democracies in the world. The checks set up in the new Russian government include the following. The President’s decrees may not violate existing law and can be overridden by Parliament. Also, the Duma must approve the Prime Minister, but after three failures, the President dissolves the Duma and calls for new elections. The Duma may also hold a vote of no confidence in the government. The first time this motion occurs, the President can ignore it, but the second time he must either resign or dissolve Parliament. The President’s power to dissolve Parliament is limited by the constitution, and can’t be dissolved within the first year of the presidency. It cannot be dissolved also when the President is facing impeachment charges, when a state of emergency is declared, or within six months of the expiration of the President’s term. These checks and balances have not fully worked, however, because the President still has the upper hand in dealing with Congress. This has been especially evident as Yeltsin has wielded his power of decree heavily in recent years, and Russia resembled more of a dictatorship towards the end of his term.

2. The goals of the Soviet Government and its communist rule were based on the principles of the doctrine called Marxism-Leninism. Soviet rulers placed great emphasis from the start on getting the people to understand and commit to the doctrines of the regime. Their system wanted complete loyalty from each and every constituent living under their rule. The system of political socialization used by the Soviets embraced every setting of education and communication in society, from schools and youth activities to the mass media and popular culture. Influences that were contrary to the communist doctrine were suppressed, and the rhetoric of public life constantly reaffirmed the doctrine of the leading role of the Communist Party, the superiority of socialism, devotion to the Soviet Fatherland, and the correctness of party policies not only at home but also abroad. The Soviets sought loyalty by basically brainwashing their citizens in every possible way. Their methods did not work for a variety of reasons. An important aspect was fear. By instilling fear, the Soviets instantly detracted from what they were attempting. Forcing someone to comply with something out of fear is like torture, and the person will tell you what you want only to stay out of trouble, not because they truly believed in it. A large portion of the Russian people did not really believe in Communism, and the quick spread of ideas after Gorbachev’s glasnost campaign proved this. Also, by controlling what everyone could and could not say, the party actually helped other political attitudes, because anything that cannot be done or discussed automatically gains a lustre it didn’t have before. By ruling with fear and completely controlling everything, the Soviets efforts at socialization were counterproductive, no matter how many citizens said they believed in Communism when under its rule.

3. There are many major challenges facing Russia in its attempt to establish a democracy and capitalist economy out of a socialist base. One of the biggest is stabilizing the economy, which under communist rule was controlled by the party, but now had no legal bodies to regulate industries. Without regulation, inflation skyrocketed and the shock involved caused many to rethink capitalism. Another problem is effectively privatizing state-owned industries. How to spread the wealth of these industries that were supposed to be owned by everyone is another large challenge facing Russia in its transition. If Russia cannot establish a good economy, then there will never be support for the political institutions either. Therefore, getting the economy functioning is central to the creation of a viable political system. The other significant aspect of creating the system is the setting up of a judicial system in a country whose previous laws were made by and ruled on by the Communist Party and no one else. For the Russian government to truly become legitimate, the economy itself must become legitimate through stabilization and privatization, and the judicial system must become legitimate in the eyes of the people. If these things happen, then, and only then, will Russia have a viable political and economic system.