

**STATE ADMINISTRATION OF SIBERIA
FROM THE END OF THE NINETEENTH THROUGH THE FIRST
THIRD OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURIES**

VLADIMIR I. SHISHKIN

1. INTRODUCTION

The state has always played an exceptionally important role in the history of Russia. Over the course of many centuries it has been the main gatherer of the lands, which make up the territory of the contemporary Russian Federation, and the founder of the basic branches of home industry and transportation; it provided the reference points and norms of behavior in the political, ideological and cultural spheres, has been the highest judge and arbiter in all socio-political conflicts, which have arisen in the country's history, and simultaneously the basic instrument of their resolution.

This is yet truer in relation to Russia's individual territories. The directions, tempo and results of their development have been determined, and today often continue to be determined not only and not so much by the objective factors which characterize the particular potential of this or the other region, as by the policy which the state - first and foremost its higher and central organs of power and administration - implemented and continues to implement in those territories.

In Russia, as a rule, state authorities' policies concerning the regions have always possessed a complex and dynamic internal structure. The ordering of its component, structural elements has changed, depending on the role and place allotted to one or another territory in the resolution of current or future tasks on an all-state scale at various stages of the country's development. Only one aspect has almost always remained unchanged: the first order attention that the central organs of state power have devoted to the problem of administrative control of the regions, over and above any other problems.

The exclusive attention of organs of governmental authority to this problem has always been conditioned, in particular, by the fact that the status of administrative organs in the center and in the localities served as the organizational prerequisite, condition and guarantor for executing government policies. As a result, the character, competency, structure and personnel composition of the state administrative organs of the territories have repeatedly undergone changes in connection with the correction or repeal of the previous government's course, and the elaboration or acceptance of a resolution to carry out a new policy in a given region.

First of all, this demands that historians take great interest in the problem of state administration of Siberia, and not only because of this. An analysis of administrative policy and practice of the organs of state power in Siberia allows investigators to draw nearer to a correct understanding of a series of other important problems, about which we do not have "direct" sources of information. Amongst these, we can name the problems of the real content and essence of government policy in Siberia, its adequacy to the circumstances of time and place, the correlation of state and public components in the opening up and development of the region, the methods of achieving proposed goals and the "price of progress," and also the place of Siberia in the make-up of the Russian state at various stages of its development.

This paper covers a chronological framework not traditional for Russian historians - from the end of the nineteenth century through the first third of the twentieth century. This period encompasses various historical periods: the last period of the Romanov dynasty's rule, two revolutions and the civil war, and the formation and first stage of soviet totalitarianism. However, this choice of chronological limits is not accidental, but is explained by several objective circumstances. On the one hand, over this period deep changes occurred in all basic spheres of life of the Siberian region - political, demographic, social and economic. On the other hand, the proportional weight and significance of Siberia in the resolution of many tasks on an all-state scale sharply grew. Thus, it becomes important to understand in what way and with the help of which organs the central authorities administered the region, what allowed them to achieve a desired result, at what price, and above all at whose expense.

2. STATE ADMINISTRATION OF SIBERIA AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

At the end of the nineteenth century Siberia had been a part of Russia for more than three centuries. Over this time the state administration of the Siberian district had been transformed repeatedly, more often than that of the central regions. Accordingly, the map of the administrative-territorial structure of the Siberian land has changed more often. One even forms the impression that the tsarist government was attempting to compensate for the absence of a regional ideology and conception of Siberia's development with frequent restructuring of its state administration.

With some variations three principally distinct approaches to the organization of administration of Siberia were attempted, each being exemplary of a different century. In the seventeenth century an extremely simple and strictly centralized system was employed, with its territorial offices (*prikazy*) located in Moscow and a local administration appointed from the center. In the eighteenth century the first attempt was made to unify the administration of Siberia with the administration of the European part of the country; to Russia's Asiatic territories were extended the norms applied in the internal provinces of the Russian empire. To the contrary, in the nineteenth century the administration

sought out, introduced and employed a special model of administration, which its drafters thought would pay maximum attention to Siberia's particularities.

The implementation of this quite complex model took two forms: the division of Siberia in territorial-administrative terms into western and eastern parts, because of the colossal size of the country and the impossibility to administrate it effectively from a single center; and the establishment of Western-Siberian and Eastern-Siberian general-governorships, at a time when in European Russia only governorships existed as the highest administrative link. The Western-Siberian and Eastern-Siberian general-governorships, in their turn, were divided into gubernii (including regional, maritime and border administration), *okrug* and *volost'* (*inorodcheskie upravly*, or non-Russian boards), which were formed on the basis of economic-geographic, military-political conditions, as well as the number and national composition of the population. Being at one level (general-governor) clumsier than the all-Russian administrative-territorial system, its Siberian branch was patently more elastic, because of a large set of structural elements.

Siberia's general-governors and especially its governors, though their competence was not legislatively defined, wielded enormous powers in the coordination of the activities and supervision of the work of local administration. In their turn the Councils of the Main Administrations and the collegial councils, created under the general-governors and governors, were distinctive counterweights and organs of local control over the activities of the general-governors - first, and the governors - second.¹

Despite the absence of the appropriate unity, consistency and continuity in government policy in Siberia, which inhibited its effectiveness and little facilitated the region's development, the most essential characteristics of state administration of Siberia, preserved over the first three centuries, can be sufficiently traced. The main characteristics were the great centralization and bureaucratization of the administrative apparatus, the high degree of its militarization, and a bureaucratic arbitrariness which completely ignored the Siberian community, elected elements and self-government both at institutional and functional levels.

The results of this policy were quite contradictory. It is necessary to acknowledge that Siberia was quite quickly, and more importantly, solidly integrated into the Russian state, and became an organic part of its regional (territorial) structure. Siberia consistently made a large contribution to the state treasury. Thanks to reforms implemented in the eighteenth and nineteenth centu-

1 See: V. K. Andrievich, *Sibir' v XIX stoletii* (St. Petersburg, 1889); S. M. Prutchenko, *Sibirskie okrainsy. Oblastnye ustanovleniya, svyazannye s Sibirskim uchrezhdeniem 1822 g., v stroe upravleniya russkogo gosudarstva. Istoriko-yuridicheskie ocherki* (St. Petersburg, 1899); *Istoriya Sibiri 2* (Leningrad, 1968), pp. 124-137, 300-312; V. A. Remnev, *Samoderzhavie i Sibir'. Administrativnaya politika v pervoi polovine XIX v.* (Omsk, 1995); and L. L. Ermolinskii, *Mikhail Speranskii* (Irkutsk, 1997).

ries, state authority was partially diffused on the all-Russian scale and centralized at first at the regional (all-Siberian) level, and then at the inter-regional (gubernial) level. This minimized the efforts that the center had to expend on Siberian matters, and brought the organs of state administration closer to the local population, the object of this administration. M. M. Speranskii's reforms made it possible to carry out the codification of Siberian laws a decade earlier than the all-Russian ones, as a result of which a serious legal basis was created in many branches of administration. In addition, Siberia for the first time received a rational territorial division.

At the same time, by its tempo and level of economic and cultural development, and by the number of rights granted to the local population in the area of civil freedoms, Siberia continued to the end of the nineteenth century to be significantly distinct (mainly - backward) from Russia's central regions. This gave the ideologues of Siberian regionalism, *oblastniki*, a basis to subject the region's system of administration, based on Speranskii's reforms, to severe criticism and to make the conclusion that Siberia held the position of a colony within Russia.²

Indeed, from a formal point of view the body of legislative acts, accepted in 1822 and known by the name, "The Siberian Establishment" (*Sibirskoe uchrezhdenie*), preserved its special juridical status in the "Code of Laws of the Russian Empire" up to the February Revolution of 1917. However, the administrative system of Siberia based on this body, as well as the administrative territorial map of Asiatic Russia, had undergone significant changes by the end of the nineteenth century. In 1882 the Western-Siberian general-governorship was abolished, and after that - the Eastern-Siberian general-governorship. In place of them the Irkutsk, Priamursk, Steppe and Turkestan general-governorships were created. The two Siberian gubernii geographically closest to European Russia - Tobolsk and Tomsk - were removed from general-governorship administration and directly subordinated to the central institutions - the ministries. The rest of Siberia's gubernii and *oblasti* were placed under the jurisdiction of the Irkutsk and Steppe general-governorships.

This variegated system of administration of various gubernii was first applied in Siberia. In principle it testified to the positive turn in the capital's bureaucracy, which had begun to realize that the Siberian provinces were distinct from each other not only by their location on the geographic map, but by their level of development. However, amongst Siberian administrators this system did not meet unanimity. While some of them from various gubernial administrations saw a reckoning with local specifics and considered such practicality

2 M. V. Shilovskii, *Sibirskoe oblastnichestvo v obshchestvenno-politicheskom dvizhenii v kontse 50 - 60-kh godakh XIX veka* (Novosibirsk, 1989); idem, *Obshchestvenno-politicheskoe dvizhenie v Sibiri pervoi poloviny XIX - nachala XX veka (oblastniki)* (Novosibirsk, 1995); L. M. Goryushkin, "Oblastniki o khoziaistvennoi samostoyatel'nosti Sibiri vo vtoroi polovine XIX - nachale XX vv.," *Izvestiya SO AN SSSR, seriya istorii*, vyp. 2 (Novosibirsk, 1990); and others.

optimal, others accentuated Siberia's loss of territorial integrity and insisted on the centralization of the region's administration and the return to a unified Siberian general-governorship. It should be recognized that both sides' arguments were weighty and each of them was in its own way correct.

However, the *oblastniki*'s aspiration to qualify Siberia's position as colonial did not have any serious basis, neither factually nor theoretically. By the end of the nineteenth century in Siberia's socio-political sphere some separate elements of discrimination of small sections of the population (for example, the special manner of administration of aboriginals or the use of the region as a place of criminal and political exile) were still in existence, but they possessed at base a rudimentary character and were dying off.

If we analyze the economic sphere, where the *oblastniki* stressed the unequal exchange between the center and Siberia, by the end of the nineteenth century the peak of such relations, earlier based on the vassal dependence of the indigenous population on the Russian state and the payment of tribute, had long ago passed away. On the other hand, the *oblastniki* correctly argued that the tsarist government did little to encourage the development of Siberian industry and the construction of factories and plants, which could satisfy the local population's demand for industrially produced goods.

These had their own causes and more than a few, including those appearing on the surface. However, shifting geopolitical factors remained decisive for explaining the situation. Siberia was not very close to the capitals - and not only geographically - but as a province vitally necessary to the country. On the contrary, Siberia was the most distant region, the frontier of the Russian Empire in the literal sense of the word, which no one pretended to the right to possess but Russia. Thus, Siberia's position in the composition of Russia was rather low. Its status could be much more exactly defined as a colonized borderland. Almost all territories which earlier entered into the Moscow state passed through this same level in their development at various times and over various periods.

The historical "turn" toward the revitalization of Siberia, employing all the might of state resource, came only at the end of the nineteenth century. From 1890 to 1910, Siberia's state administration underwent a new reformation. These reforms were called forth not by any one cause (for example, the necessity to improve the very administrative apparatus, or fiscal, military or geopolitical interests), but rather were dictated by an aggregate of objective circumstances of both all-Russian and Siberian character. Amongst these, considerations of the new role and significance of Siberia in a modernizing Russia and, even more so, the prospect of Siberia's own development had important significance.

The most crucial measures, with the help of which the government intended to change the situation fundamentally in Siberia and its place within Russia, were the construction of the Trans-Siberian railroad main line and, closely connected with this, the agricultural colonization of the region, carried out as a result of the state organized resettlement movement. Thus, at the end of 1892 a

special organ of administration - the Committee of the Siberian railway - was created in the capital for the coordination of government activities concerning the construction of the Trans-Siberian line and the opening up of the whole region.

The future emperor Nicholas II, then heir to the throne, became the committee's chairman, and its members included the chairman of the Council of Ministers, the ministers of finance, internal affairs, means and ways, war, the state controller, and the supervisor of the Naval ministry. The ministers of justice and foreign affairs, as well as the general-governors of Irkutsk, Priamursk and the Steppe were also often invited to participate in the committee's meetings. For more than ten years the highest state power for administration of the region was in fact concentrated in the Committee of the Siberian railway, possessing exceptional authority thanks to the personal leadership of Nicholas, at first as heir to the throne, and then as the emperor himself. The committee efficiently resolved the strategic questions of Siberia's development, quickly found the necessary finances, and mobilized material and human resources. The creation of such an administrative organ made it possible in the shortest period of time to implement the construction the Trans-Siberian line and to resettle millions of peasants from European Russia, which led to the "second opening" of Siberia. For the first time in all of Siberia's existence as a part of Russia, large-scale state investment was introduced into the region's development.³

The gubernial reform implemented in Siberia in 1895, that is eight years earlier than in the European part of the country, was the second important transformation. Under the governors' chairmanship were created gubernial administrations, general offices (*obshchee prisutstvie*) of which were made up of the vice-governors and the chief supervisors of the main provincial institutions: the revenue departments, administrations of agriculture and state properties, district courts, and others. Thanks to the creation of the gubernial administrations, the governors of Siberia were able to increase their influence in the main spheres of administration and to obtain better coordination of activities of local administrative organs.

In 1909 the managers of resettlement affairs in each guberniya also became members of the provincial administrations' general offices. Besides this, the gubernial administrations were granted rights and obligations, which in European Russia were given to the organs of gentry self-government and zemstvo institutions, which were absent in Siberia. As a result the structure and functions of provincial institutions in the center and in Siberia differed very significantly. Some special provincial institutions did not exist in Siberia, but the general provincial administration fulfilled their obligations. At the same time there were important organs absent in the European part of the country,

3 For more details see: V. A. Remnev, *Samoderzhavie i Sibir'. Administrativnaya politika vtoroi poloviny XIX - nachala XX vekov* (Omsk, 1997).

such as resettlement administrations, which were occupied with, alongside their direct obligations, also road construction, hospitals and school affairs. As a result in Siberia governors possessed a larger number of authoritative powers and obligations than in Russia's center.⁴

Consequently, some of tsarism's measures from the end of the nineteenth through the beginning of the twentieth century for improving state administration of Siberia were innovations for all of Russia, though they were implemented with delay or hesitancy; others stood apart as expressions of local particularities. With the creation of the Committee of the Siberian railway and the resettlement administrations, the tsarist government showed that it was capable of taking decisive non-standard steps and quickly producing a positive effect for the development of both the region and the country as a whole.

In Soviet historical literature the system of regional administration of Siberia was, as a rule, sharply criticized. This evaluation, however, was not the result of deep specialized study of this subject. On the contrary, it flowed out of political-ideological concerns of a broader character and the negative attitude towards everything that was in any way connected with the autocracy and its policies; it did not answer to the demands of objectivity.

It is not often the case, but Soviet historiography's conclusions were completely supported by the contemporary researcher, V. A. Remnev, in a specialized monograph published in 1997. Remnev asserts that the pre-revolutionary system of regional administration of Siberia was "hopelessly obsolete" and demanded a "root re-examination." The author's mutually exclusive judgements concerning governmental policy in Siberia serve as the direct basis for such assertions. In one case Remnev describes autocracy as carrying out a discriminatory policy with elements of colonialism and with the aspiration to solve Russia's problems at Siberia's expense. While in another case he reproaches tsarism for its intention to reproduce in Siberia the socio-economic relations ruling in Russia.⁵

In principle it is hardly possible to implement such a multidirectional policy in one and the same region. In addition, Remnev's factual material does not provide a basis for such categorical judgements. But the main problem is another: one should not extend an evaluation of governmental policy in Siberia to the system of administration of Siberia. State policy and the system of administration are two different spheres of activity. Each of them requires special analysis and corresponding evaluation.

In reality the main problems with Siberia's administration were completely otherwise. The most important of them was the hypertrophied growth of the state sector in Siberia's economy and social infrastructure at the expense of private enterprise. At the beginning of the twentieth century in Siberia, if not ev-

4 *Aziatskaya Rossiya*, vol. 2, pp. 45-50.

5 V. A. Remnev, *Samoderzhavie i Sibir'. Administrativnaya politika vtoroi poloviny XIX - nachala XX vekov*, p. 176.

everything, then almost everything belonged to the state. The lands and mineral wealth, mines and railways, hospitals and schools, the police and jails were all the state's. One could say that a consequence of the total statization of the region's economy was the underdevelopment of its social structure and the "rudimentary" size of its entrepreneurial class. And, as a result of the total statization of public life, those intermediary structures, which in periods of crisis could play a shock-absorbing role between the population and state organs, were absent.

Moreover, the tsarist administration not only could not, but did not want to transfer even a part of its functions (and, in the end, responsibilities) onto the shoulders of Siberian society, thirsting to be included in the construction of its land. As a result, organs of state administration in Siberia, having at their disposal a sufficiently complex structure and the necessary competency, did not possess, however, either a broad social base or the supplementary supports of public organizations. On the contrary, in March 1917, when news about the revolution in Petrograd arrived from the center, the very leaders of local public organizations, alongside the former political exiles, became the main usurpers of the old regime in Siberia. That regime, it seems, was so weak and bereft of authority that it did not even render timid attempts at resistance.

3. STATE ADMINISTRATION OF SIBERIA IN THE YEARS OF REVOLUTION AND CIVIL WAR

From the point of view of the problem of state administration, the period of revolution and civil war in Siberia can be conditionally divided into four basic stages, with "slippery" internal borders between them.⁶

The first stage encompasses spring-fall 1917. The Provisional Government, then ruling Russia, saw as its main task in the area of administration the further decentralization and even democratization of state power. However, in reality this policy led to the loss of control over the country and the threat of its ruin. At the end of October 1917 the Provisional Government was violently overthrown and replaced by the power of the soviets led by the Bolshevik party. This was severe, but justified, retribution, for the Provisional Government had initially allowed an unforgivable mistake, permitting the existence of various public-political organizations, which pretended to state power.

As we know, in 1917 the main organs striving to assert themselves as the state authority in Russia were the bolshevized soviets; and the main slogan of the Bolsheviks, allowing them in a short period of time to seize the administration of the country, was the slogan: "All Power to the Soviets!" Moreover, this slogan was interpreted by the Bolsheviks themselves, and understood by their

6 The third stage, dating from the summer of 1918 through the winter of 1919-1920, is not covered in this paper, in so far as over this period the region was not administered from the center, but, on the contrary, was used by various anti-Bolshevik governments as a base for struggle with the central (soviet) power.

allies and non-party supporters very different ways: the latter thought that it meant that all power - both in the center and in the localities - had to belong exclusively to the soviets of the appropriate level.

The slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" - interpreted in the lumpen-marginal milieu as "All Power to the Local Soviets!" - was a colossal political catalyst in the development of revolutionary events. It helped undermine the Provisional Government's authority, gave the initiative to the Bolsheviks' supporters, and secured for them a victorious outcome in the struggle, first of all, in the capitals, then in the central regions of the country and in the periphery.

For the short time it ruled Russia, the Provisional Government, occupied with the resolution of other important internal and external problems, practically paid no attention to Siberia, if we do not include appointing its commissars to run the gubernii and permitting the creation of organs of zemstvo self-administration. In principle, the region was left to its own devices. Events proceeding here were a belated echo of what occurred in the European part of Russia.

In institutional and informational relations regional processes were also little distinguished from the all-Russian counterparts. Two main tendencies dominated, which defined the essence of political life: the weakening of the positions of the Provisional Government's organs and the strengthening of the influence of the numerically increasing and bolshevizing soviets. Moreover, the latter intensively worked for the consolidation of their forces across the region. In the last ten days of October 1917 this activity was crowned with success: in Irkutsk the first All-Siberian Congress of Soviets was called. At this congress on 23 October, that is, two days before the armed uprising in Petrograd, an exceptionally important organizational step was taken. The congress elected the region's leading soviet organ - the so-called Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Siberia (Tsentrosibir'). The second stage in the resolution of the problems of administrating Siberia during the revolution and civil war is closely connected with its activity.

Tsentrosibir', choosing Irkutsk as its place of residence, energetically and decisively initiated its activities. To a large extent due to its persistence and efforts, from the end of November 1917 to the first half of February 1918 Soviet power was established in the majority of large administrative centers of Eastern Siberia and Trans-Baikal, the armed uprising of officers and junkers in Irkutsk was put down, and the Siberian Regional Duma in Tomsk was dissolved. As a result, amongst revolutionary radicals Tsentrosibir' won high authority, as indicated by the recognition of Tsentrosibir' as the leading organ by the bolshevized soviets of Western Siberia and the Regional Executive Committee of Soviets of the Far East, and by its leadership in the preparation and carrying out of the second All-Siberian Congress of Soviets in Irkutsk from 16 to 26 February 1918.

After the second All-Siberian Congress of Soviets, Tsentrosibir's position changed in essence. If earlier it had been one of the public organs of a revolutionary type, then now it became an official organ of state power. In correspon-

dence with its new position, the number of its members was increased twofold, and its functions were changed: before mid-February 1918 its main function had been agitation; henceforth the task of organizing the region's administration became the first priority.

For successful execution of agitational work Tsentrosibir' possessed sufficiently revolutionary authority, but for implementing the administration of Siberia was necessary an organization with the proper distributive and executive apparatus. Thus, in the spring of 1918 Tsentrosibir' moved to establish various departments (commissariats). Both directly and through these departments it began to subordinate to itself all soviets and executive committees (*ispolkomy*) of soviets, both those already existing and those newly appearing in Siberia, striving to lead their activities in practice.⁷

Until the spring of 1918 the struggle to overthrow the old and assert their own power absorbed almost all the time and efforts of the capital and local soviet organs; their mutual contacts were of a sporadic character and consisted mainly of exchanges of information about current events. Tsentrosibir' did not receive any guiding instructions from the center concerning what or how to do anything and operated in all cases at its own discretion. From the spring of 1918, the central organs began to subordinate to themselves the regional organs of administration and to take over the direct leadership of their activities. A quite instructive situation arose in the relations between the center and Siberian organs of soviet administration in connection with the discussions about the conclusion of the Brest peace.

On 21 February 1918 the second All-Siberian Congress of Soviets unanimously spoke out against the Soviet government's policy concerning the Brest Peace. It announced that it "does not consider itself connected with the peace treaty, if the Soviet of People's Commissars is concluding such a treaty with the German government."⁸

The center's expected reaction was not long in coming. An instruction from the Bolsheviks' TsK recommended N. N. Yakovlev, a firm supporter of Lenin and of centralism in the sphere of state administration of Siberia, to the vacant position of chairman of Tsentrosibir'. Earlier Yakovlev had led the ispolkom of the Western-Siberian regional soviet and was a decisive opponent of Siberian autonomy. Yakovlev immediately dispatched a letter to the Yenisei provincial ispolkom of soviets, distinguished in Siberia for its great separatism, in which he stated: "We stand on the point of view of strict execution of the decrees and commands of the central state authority." Furthermore, the letter contained a comradely recommendation to the Yenisei leaders to behave in an analogous fashion.⁹

7 For more details about the organization and activities of Tsentrosibir' see: V.T. Agalakov, *Podvoig Tsentrosibiri* (Irkutsk, 1968) and *Podvoig Tsentrosibiri (1917-1918). Sbornik dokumentov* (Irkutsk, 1986).

8 *Bor'ba za vlast' sovetov v Irkutskoi gubernii. Sbornik dokumentov* (Irkutsk, 1957), pp. 214-215.

9 V. S. Poznanskii, *V.I. Lenin i sovery Sibiri (1917-1918)* (Novosibirsk, 1977), p. 217.

Henceforth, Tsentrosibir' not only submissively endured all encroachments on its prerogatives from Moscow, but itself became an active promoter of organized centralism, putting it into practice. Tsentrosibir's change of position is explained by the unprecedented pressure to which it was subjected by the higher organs of administration and which it was not able to resist without harming the general good. In addition, under pressure both from Moscow and from objective circumstances an understanding arose amongst the soviet leaders of Siberia, that it was necessary, on the one hand, to abandon illusions (or remnants of demagogy) about the full sovereignty of local soviets, and on the other hand, to strengthen the state vertically and to centralize soviet administration, in order to retain power in their hands.

A telegram dispatched on 27 April 1918 to the localities and signed by one of Tsentrosibir's leaders can serve as confirmation of that discussed above. It stated: "Considering necessary the strictest revolutionary discipline in the matter of mutual coordination of soviet organizations and the unconditional introduction into life of all commands of the higher instances of soviet power, I order all managers of administrative or organizational departments of soviet deputies of Siberia attentively to monitor for the execution by local soviet deputies of the central authorities' directives..."¹⁰

The White-Czech mutiny, sparked at the end of May 1918, led to the rapid fall of the soviets in Western Siberia and interrupted contacts between Tsentrosibir' and Moscow. In the circumstances of civil war and open intervention Tsentrosibir' still for three months, until the end of August 1918, attempted to lead the struggle of local soviets against the counter-revolution without any support from the higher organs of power. At this time the centralist tendencies in its own activities, detected in the late spring of 1918, found their logical extension. But the administrative ability of the subordinated Tsentrosibir' over a territory, where lower soviets at the volost' and village level were practically completely absent, had been left weak. Even at the gubernial level it was based not on Tsentrosibir's real strength, but on its moral authority amongst soviet radicals.

Thus, one can assert that in the late spring and summer of 1918 in Siberia, as in the central regions of Russia, the process of transforming the power of the soviets into soviet power got underway. It was concluded with the decisive subordination of the lower organs of power to the higher, of local interests to all-states ones. In this regard Siberia was no exception. However, here the process of centralization of soviet state organs was begun later, proceeded more slowly and was interrupted as a result of the counter-revolution's victory, not reaching its logical conclusion. Tsentrosibir', thus, could not completely master the situation and become the real organ of regional administration.

The fourth stage of state administration of Siberia during the period of revolution and civil war began at the end of summer 1919, when, by a decree of

10 *Zapadnaya Sibir'* 8 (Omsk, 1918), p. 8.

the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of Soviets of the RSFSR from 27 August, the Siberian Revolutionary Committee (Sibrevkom) was established for the administration of the region.¹¹

Three men were appointed to the Sibrevkom: I. N. Smirnov (chairman), V. M. Kosarev and M. I. Frumkin (members). All three knew Siberia well from exile and previous soviet work, and had occupied quite high posts in the party-state hierarchy of that time. I. N. Smirnov was a candidate-member of the TsK RKP(b) and enjoyed the unconditional trust of V. I. Lenin and L. D. Trotsky. This gave Smirnov the right to solve all questions of a political, military and diplomatic character personally, as well as to punish and pardon people in so far as he could confirm or repeal the verdicts of local organs of the Cheka (VChK). In fact, Smirnov became the first "governor-general" in Siberia, having at his disposal rights, resources and capabilities about which tsarist governor-generals, not even mentioning governors, dared not even dream.

By this time a deep transformation of power structures had taken place in Soviet Russia, manifest in the emergence of a strictly centralized and, to a considerable degree, militarized state apparatus. The basic principle of its formation became not elections from below, though officially they were not abolished, but appointment from above. The constitutionally declared principle of double subordination of the local executive apparatus (to its own ispolkom of soviets and to the corresponding department of a higher ispolkom), in fact, ceased to be observed. Such departments of the ispolkoms of soviets, such as the military department and the department for the struggle with the counter-revolution (Cheka), continued to exist nominally as part of the ispolkoms, but essentially they were subordinated completely to the higher organs of administration: the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs, in the first case, or the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Struggle with the Counter-Revolution, in the second case. The local organs for the administration of industry and the food supply apparatus also began to work predominantly by the instructions and under the control of central institutions: the Higher Soviet of People's Economy and the People's Commissariat of Food Supply.

In the everyday activity of Soviet organs such forms of work as commands and mobilizations were widely employed. As a result, in place of the power of the soviets, retaining elements of limited democracy, was inserted Soviet power, constructed as a type of military dictatorship. The Bolshevik party, starting with its Central Committee (TsK) and finishing with the local lowest-level organizations - the communist cells - was the main stream of this rigidly organized state machine, safely concealed from outside eyes.

Concerning state administration in Siberia the Kremlin initially resolved to carry out an exceptionally rigid course. The creation of a mighty and all-embracing state apparatus, based on principles of appointment and centralism,

11 *Izvestiya VTsIK* (Moscow), 3-4 September 1919; *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti* 8 (Moscow, 1973), pp. 73-74.

became its leitmotiv. To achieve this goal Sibrevkom was endowed with the status of a regional institution to which were subordinated all local organs of civil authority besides the Cheka.

The restoration of soviet power in Siberia, carried out under Sibrevkom's leadership, had a vividly expressed peculiarity. Across the region's whole territory were created not constitutional organs of power - elected soviets - but revkoms, appointed by higher instances. As a result Siberia became the only region of the RSFSR in which revkoms were created at all levels of administration: provincial, uezd, volost' and village (township). Because they were formed by means of appointment, Bolsheviks and those sympathetic to the RKP(b) predominated amongst the chairmen and members of the revkoms. The presence of such a rigid governmental structure allowed the Red Army to successfully destroy Kolchak's troops, to bring Siberia into the orbit of communist influence in short order, and to begin to exploit actively its human and material resources to help central Russia.¹²

By spring of 1920 Sibrevkom had completed the basic tasks which had prompted the central authorities to create it. However, the question of liquidating Sibrevkom did not arise. On the contrary, with the sanction of the TsK RKP(b) in April-May 1920 under Sibrevkom were created those departments (including military) which it had previously lacked. As a result Sibrevkom became the extraordinary regional organ not only of civil, but also of military administration. In October 1920 the question about Sibrevkom's new status was twice examined at meetings of the Sovnarkom. At the second of these, taking place on 12 October, the Sovnarkom passed a special statute on Sibrevkom.

In this statute Sibrevkom was declared the highest authorized representative of the central departments and the executive organ of soviet power in Siberia. It was given the obligation to maintain revolutionary order and the right to guide all administrative-economic institutions on Siberian territory. Sibrevkom's activities had to be implemented in correspondence with the decrees and commands of the central soviet instances: VTsIK, the Sovnarkom and the people's commissariats. In its turn the decrees and comments of Sibrevkom were obligatory for execution by all of Siberia's local soviet organs.¹³ This statute, accepted by the Sovnarkom, became the foundational document, regulating the rights and obligations, the principles of organization and the structure of Sibrevkom, and for a long time determined Sibrevkom's place in the soviet state system.

Considering the question of state administration of Siberia in the soviet period, it would be a coarse mistake to forget about the existence of the structures of the ruling communist party. For Siberia this party institution, named the Siberian bureau (Sibbyuro) of the TsK RKP(b), was formed at the April 1920 plenum of the TsK of Bolsheviks. Sibbyuro existed with rights of a regional

12 V. I. Shishkin, *Revolyutsionnye komitety Sibiri v gody grazhdanskoi voyny (avgust 1919 - mart 1921 g.)* (Novosibirsk, 1978).

13 *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti* 10 (Moscow, 1983), p. 243.

department of the TsK RKP(b) and was the institution which implemented party control and leadership over Sibrevkom's activities. To wit, at its meetings the important political, military and diplomatic questions were discussed and directives were worked out for their subsequent implementation by Sibrevkom in the usual soviet manner. Sibbyuro TsK's presence was an additional guarantee that the task the center assigned to Sibrevkom would be carried out timely and completely.

The presented survey allows us to assert that the Provisional Government obviously underestimated the significance of the administration of Siberia in so complicated and crucial a period as 1917. In any case for the first time in Siberia's entire existence as part of Russia the administration of the Siberian provinces was not consolidated at a higher level, and the existing provincial administration did not have at its disposal any additional powers. Because the government undervalued the organizational factor, the great potential of Siberian regionalism, possessing a democratic character and pro-government tendency, was not employed to stabilize of the political situation and check the deepening of the revolution.

At the same time the Bolsheviks' position was undoubtedly more intelligent and effective. Already during the struggle to overthrow the Provisional government they correctly evaluated the importance of consolidating the soviets on an all-Siberian scale and they created a regional guiding soviet organ. The establishment of Sibrevkom, created by the center's extraordinary plenipotentiaries but working directly on Siberian territory, was a still more effective step. To wit, thanks to the application of this variant of state administration the region was quickly sovietized and completely integrated into the RSFSR.

4. STATE ADMINISTRATION OF SIBERIA DURING NEP

By the end of 1920 the main battles of the civil war in Russia were over. In Siberia, the foundation of Soviet power had been solidly laid. Based on the successes achieved in soviet construction, a portion of Siberia's party leaders at the provincial level considered it possible to liquidate Sibrevkom in general, or, at a minimum, its military and administrative departments. They asserted that the provincial soviet organs could independently, without Sibrevkom's assistance, carry into life the center's resolutions and effectively lead those territories under their jurisdiction. The aspiration, born amongst the party-soviet elite in Siberia, to eliminate the intermediate instance between the Siberian provinces and Moscow and establish direct contacts with the capital, and in this way to raise their own status within the nomenclature, easily anticipated this position.

However, such ambitious intentions did not find support in Moscow, continuing to fear Siberian separatism, and met decisive protest from Sibbyuro TsK RKP(b) and Sibrevkom. Siberia's party-soviet leadership put forth a series of economic and political arguments to prove the benefits of the preservation of

Sibrevkom as an extraordinary organ of civil and military administration on the regional scale. Thus, they pointed out that Siberia was an independent economic region, occupying a definite place in the system of social division of labor, had its own economic plan, as a component part of the all-Russian plan. They also noted Siberia's large portion of well-off peasants and kulaks, capable of rendering resistance to Soviet power, and also the great extent of its borders, beyond which were large White Guard military formations. This analysis of the socio-economic and political position of the region concluded that Sibrevkom was necessary "as a militant organ completely possessing all the power on Siberian territory."¹⁴

Indeed, the truth of some of these arguments was confirmed already during the work of the third All-Siberian party conference. At the end of January 1921 one of the largest peasant uprisings for the whole period of communist rule in Russia broke out in Ishimskii uezd, in a short time embracing the territory of several Western Siberian provinces. Tens of thousands of people were drawn into this struggle on both sides. The tasks connected with suppressing the revolt became the most important area of Sibrevkom's activities. Sibrevkom's opponents were forced to remove from discussion the question of its liquidation.

By the fall of 1921 the West-Siberian uprising had been basically liquidated. Not paradoxically, the question of Sibrevkom's elimination was never raised again officially until the end of 1925, when Sibrevkom passed from the historical stage, even though the objective bases for formulating this question anew were more than sufficient. For example, the RKP(b)'s rejection of the policy of "war communism" and the transfer to the New Economic Policy, to which the forms and methods of administration, practiced by Sibrevkom in conditions of civil war, poorly corresponded, could have served as a very important motive.

In reality, for communists no contradiction existed in the fact that an extraordinary organ of power in wartime continued to function in peacetime in Siberia. It did not exist, first of all, because they interpreted the New Economic Policy through the prism of class struggle, in which the retreat in the sphere of the economy had to be compensated with stricter organization, strong discipline and unity in their own ranks. Sibrevkom, as the organ of administration of a huge and potentially explosive territory, was organically inscribed into this ideology.

Besides this, motives existed of an especially pragmatic character. Over the first four years of their rule the Bolsheviki had fundamentally destroyed the productive forces of the country's central regions, while in Siberia, located for almost a year and a half under the authority of "anti-people" counter-revolutionary regimes, the situation was completely fine. By the summer of 1921 drought and failed harvests had struck the Trans-Volga. For the communists

14 *Izvestiya Sibirskogo byuro TsK RKP(b)*, 5 March 1921.

there was only one exit from this critical situation: to force Siberian peasants to give up free of charge to the state the surplus of their labor, and often, part of those products necessary for their own needs.

The clearest results of Sibrevkom's activities concerning the implementation of Moscow's policies, directed at the uncompensated extraction from Siberia of material and financial resources, can be seen in the food supply, tax and budget questions. In 1920-1923 Siberia, possessing about six percent of all the sown area of the Russian Federation and 10-12 percent of goods production, provided around one quarter of all state procurements of grain and fodder. Moreover, great portions of the foodstuffs procured in Siberia were transported beyond its borders, while in other regions foodstuffs were consumed in place.

As a result of this policy the region's economy fell into the deepest crisis. By 1923 in Russia's agrarian sector as a whole rejuvenating tendencies were noticeable, in Siberia the reduction of sown area and the decrease of head of cattle continued. The fall of agricultural production was the direct result of the foodstuff and agricultural taxes laid on the region's peasantry. It may seem paradoxical, but the fact is that, thanks to this huge tax burden, Siberia's share of the overall sum of state tax receipts was in 1923, a year of crisis for it, higher than it had been in the much better year of 1913.¹⁵

Only in mid-1923, when it became clear that the control figures of the united agricultural tax for 1923-1924, established by the center for Siberia, were beyond the peasants' abilities and could lead to catastrophe, did the region's party-soviet leadership dare to appeal to Moscow with a petition to decrease the figures. This time the Siberians' request was taken into account and the sum of the tax reduced by about 30%. However, for other forms of taxation, including the massive all-citizens and hauling (carting obligation) taxes, all-Siberian indices remained as before above all-Union ones. "The peasant population's ability to pay is stretched to the limit and to press the muzhik for more at this time is impossible," publicly announced M. M. Lashevich, then chairman of Sibrevkom, at a meeting of the Siberian economic council.¹⁶

Over the next two years (1924-1925) the tendency toward raising the region's share of the all-Union tax receipts was preserved. At the same time a directly contradictory picture is revealed in the analysis of Siberia's place in the expenditure part of the state budget. The tempo of growth assigned from the state budget for Siberia's needs fell behind all-Union receipts, and the region's share in all-state expenditures even decreased from 3.9 percent in 1923-24 to 2.9 percent 1924-25 of the state budget.¹⁷ Hence, it becomes understandable why in

15 *Otchet pyatogo Sibirskogo ekonomicheskogo soveshchaniya s predstavitel'yami gubernii i uezdov (4-7 yanvaria 1924 g.)* (Novo-Nikolaevsk, 1924), pp. 15 and 116.

16 GANO [Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Novosibirskoi Oblasti], f. n. 1, op. 2, d. 241, ll. 220-227; d. 378, l. 298; *Kratkii otchet Sibirskogo revoliutsionnogo komiteta (mai 1924 g.)* (Novonikolaevsk, 1924), pp. 25 and 43.

17 *Kratkii otchet Sibirskogo revolyutsionnogo komiteta pervomu Sibirskomy kraevomu s'ezdu sovetov*, (Novo-Nikolaevsk, 1925), pp. 60-61.

the first half of the 1920s that gap which had traditionally existed in the social and cultural spheres between Siberia and the central regions of the country increased.

One could not say that Sibrevkom did nothing in order, if not to rectify, then at least to improve the situation. It is not possible to bring such a reproof against its leadership. In January 1924, responding to proposals from representatives of the region's provinces and *uezdy* to appeal to Moscow with a request to increase the state budget financing for Siberia, M. M. Lashevich stated: "I can guarantee that Sibrevkom will petition in Moscow, but this will produce almost no results."¹⁸ In other words, for the center Sibrevkom's position in resolving all-state questions meant very little. Decisions on regional questions were determined by the strategy of development of the whole country, in which a fixed role was assigned to each region, including Siberia. The task laid on Sibrevkom was to insure that Siberia played exactly that role and played it well.

By about 1923 the military and political necessity for preserving Sibrevkom as an extraordinary regional organ of state administration already no longer existed. Soviet power's position in Siberia truly became stable. The remnants of the large white-guard formations of A. S. Bakich and R. F. Ungern, dislocated on territory contiguous to Siberia, were defeated. Thanks to the victory of so-called "people's democratic" revolution in neighboring Mongolia, a pro-Soviet marionette government was formed there. The armed resistance, which the Siberian population had rendered against the communist regime at the beginning of the 1920s, was suppressed. The Far Eastern Republic, having been a major pain to Moscow for almost three years, was liquidated. The region's lower level soviet apparatus was strengthened, and in addition, reliable control was established over it by the local organizations of the RKP(b).

However, as before Moscow needed the region's food-stuffs and other material resources, first of all, grain, oil, furs and gold; only this time, they were needed not in order to save the country from hunger, but to make profits for the state budget, to acquire foreign currency and purchase machines and equipment from abroad. Sibrevkom's presence, whose strict hand was well known in Siberia, allowed the center to extract the region's resources without particular problems and delays, while preserving its image as a solicitous patron. Thus, Moscow delayed Sibrevkom's liquidation, although even the chairman of Sibrevkom, M. M. Lashevich, considered its existence by the ninth year of soviet power an anachronism.

In May 1925 a VTsIK decree declared the formation of the Siberian region (*Sibirskii krai*). In December of the same year the first regional congress of soviets, according to the constitution of the RSFSR the highest organ of local power, took place. At this congress for the first and last time over the whole time of its existence Sibrevkom gave an account of its accomplished work before the popu-

18 *Otchet piatogo Sibirskogo ekonomicheskogo soveshchaniya s predstaviteliami gubernii i uezdov*, p. 44.

lation of Siberia. In its place, for leadership of the region in the periods between regional congresses of soviets, was elected a new organ of power - the Siberian Regional Executive Committee of Soviets (Sibkraiispolkom). From a formal-juridical point of view the administration of Siberia was to be conducted in correspondence with the constitution and completely unified with the administration of Russia's other regions.

According to the decree on the Siberian region, the Regional Congress of Soviets was to discuss questions of all-state significance, to examine all local questions (including the confirmation of the budget, plans and reports of local organs of power, except for military questions and those of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs), to consider legislative proposals concerning the region, and to submit them for confirmation by the central organs of the RSFSR.

In their turn Sibkraiispolkom and its presidium were granted the right to submit to the Russian Federation's legislative organs petitions about changes to existing statutes; in exceptional cases they could on their own responsibility suspend the execution of commands from individual People's Commissariats of the RSFSR under the conditions that they informed them and immediately petitioned Russia's Sovnarkom to examine the contested question; they were also allowed to submit complaints against the Sovnarkom's resolutions to the VTsIK, but without suspending the execution of these resolutions. Sibkraiispolkom and its presidium were also granted the right to control the activities of and to inspect all governmental institutions and enterprises, directly subordinated to the center and not being a part of one of Sibkraiispolkom's departments, with the exception of military organs and institutions of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs; and, with proper justification, they could reject workers appointed by the central institutions for work in Siberia.¹⁹

All this provides a basis to assert that the system of all-Siberian organs of state administration, created in the second half of the 1920s, was unconditionally more democratic than in the Sibrevkom period. It is instructive that on the order of the day of Siberian regional congresses of soviets it was obligatory to read the SSSR government's report, concerning which the congress would express its opinion. At the same time the organs of soviet administration of the Siberian region possessed the legal basis to defend the region's interests before Moscow, and even intended to strengthen that basis. In particular, Sibkraiispolkom thought that the region's administration was still excessively centralized and that it was necessary to broaden the rights of all its administrative organs. In the spring of 1927 Sibkraiispolkom's apparatus actively worked out, for subsequent submission for the VTsIK's authorization, the question of broadening the rights of the regional executive committee itself.²⁰

19 *Proekt polozheniya o Sibirskom krae, utverzhdennyi prezidyumom Sibkraiispolkoma 4-go marta 1927 goda* (Novosibirsk, 1927), p. 124.

20 *Otchet Sibirskogo kraevogo ispolnitel'nogo komiteta sovetov rabochikh, krest'yanskikh i krasnoarmeiskikh deputatov vtoromu Sibirskomu kraevomu s'ezdu sovetov* (Novosibirsk, 1927), pp. 2-3.

However, it would be very naïve and a great delusion to accept the formal, apparent side of the soviet structure as its essence. By about the mid-1920s it had completed the next stage of its transformation. Henceforth, higher and central party, not government, structures, began to resolve the principal questions of any character and level. In fact, the congresses and conferences of the Bolshevik party and the plenums of its central committee determined the strategy and priorities of the country's development as a whole and of its individual regions. The soviets' ispolkoms were assigned the role of transmitters of party resolutions. Congresses of soviets acquired a ritualistic, decorative character, completely losing their own powers and actual legislative functions. As a result Siberia possessed neither the structures nor the mechanisms to defend its regional interests.

The best evidence of this unenviable role, which Siberia played in the composition of the SSSR in the second half of the 1920s, is its contribution to the formation of the state budget, on the one hand, and the center's participation in the formation of the Siberian region's budget, on the other. For example, in the 1924-1925 fiscal year the overall volume of revenues coming into the state budget from Siberia totaled 63.3 million rubles. The volume of financial resources, which the region received from the center for the same period, was 18.5 million rubles less. Proceeding from such a balance, the first Congress of Soviets of the Siberian region confirmed a regional budget for 1925-1926 fiscal year with revenues of 36.7 million rubles and expenses of 44.9 million rubles, counting on Moscow to compensate for the deficit of 8.2 million rubles.

However, nothing of the kind occurred. The People's Commissariat of Finance's subsidies to cover the Siberian region's budget deficit totaled in all 3.0 million rubles. As a result, the real expenses per capita for the fulfillment of administrative, economic and socio-cultural needs in Siberia made up only 65-72% of the same index for the RSFSR as a whole.²¹

At the same time, the objective pre-conditions were available to improve essentially, if not to change radically, the situation concerning the regional budget's revenues. In that same 1925-1926 fiscal year Siberia's share in the union's exports, from which the region received no monetary assignments, was 7.2 percent. The share of overall union-republic production turned out by the region's industry (whose revenues the region also did not receive, Moscow did), composed 17.6 percent of all production, turned out by state qualified (*tsenzovoi*) industry of Siberia.²² If the revenues from the realization of these resources had gone into Siberia's budget, then the problems with its deficit would simply not have existed.

21 *Doklad Sibirskogo kraevogo finansovogo otdela 4-mu plenumu Sibkraiispolkoma 1-go sozyva po ispolneniyu mestnogo byudzheta kraya za 1925/26 g. i po proektu mestnogo byudzheta kraya na 1926/27 god* (Novosibirsk, 1926), pp. 3, 9 and 24; *Otchet 2-mu kraevomu s'ezdu sovetov po ispolneniyu mestnykh byudzhetrov Sibirskogo kraya za 1925/26 g.* (Novosibirsk, 1927), p. 28.

22 *Narodnoe khozyaistvo Sibirskogo kraya (po kontrol'nym tsifram na 1926/27 g.)* (Novosibirsk, 1926), pp. 33, 65-67.

Over the course of the next three years events surrounding the budget's formation developed along a similar scenario. Time after time Sibkraispolkom's leadership appealed to Moscow, trying to obtain from the government the strengthening of the local budget through a more just redistribution of revenues, an increase in the Siberia's share of assignments from all-state taxes and receiving means from central sources of revenue. According to the leadership's data, in the 1926-1927 fiscal year Siberia gave to the center seven million rubles in revenues, in 1927-1928 - 25 million, in 1928-1929 - 34 million, not considering revenues from exported goods.²³ For its part, Moscow made minor concessions, which could not principally influence the dynamic of Siberia's cultural and economic life.

Thus, it is not surprising that at the third Siberian Regional Congress of Soviets, taking place in April 1929, many Siberian leaders, after hearing the SSSR government's report, again sounded reproofs about the center's insufficient attention to Siberia's needs, about its unsatisfactory financing and discrimination. Even such an experienced apparatchik as Sibkraispolkom's chairman, R. I. Eikhe, in his own report did not refrain from a critical reproach toward Moscow's address.²⁴

An answer to this criticism was sounded in the concluding word of Moscow's emissary, People's Commissar of Worker-Peasant Inspection, M.I. Il'in. He quite eloquently testified to the union center's attitude towards the requests emanating from Siberia. Il'in announced that he "does not agree with some comrades, when they, completely correctly noting a whole series of concrete examples, incorrectly come to the general conclusion that overall attention to Siberia's interests is insufficient." Il'in agreed only that "perhaps, the union government does not know Siberia's economic conditions well enough."²⁵ Of course, the real reason why the center ignored Siberia's interests until the start of the 1930s was that at this time in Moscow there were completely different priorities: the Dnieper Hydroelectric Power Plant, the Volga-Don Navigable Canal, and the Turkestan-Siberian Railroad.

In the emerging conditions many Siberian leaders saw the solution to this problem not in a change in the structure of state administration, but in an alteration of the government's policy towards the region, in its industrialization. Officials of Siberia's planning and economic organs conceived of the region's industrialization as the all-embracing development of the productive forces of the whole region, and not of any of its parts. It would have to include the reconstruction of railway transport, the construction of metallurgical complexes, factories for agricultural machine building, and the development of forest, food and other branches of industry, traditional in the region. The Siberians thought

23 *Tretii kraevoi s'ezd sovetov Sibiri (9-15 aprelia 1929 g.). Stenograficheskie otchet, part 1* (Novosibirsk, 1994), p. 145.

24 *Tretii kraevoi s'ezd sovetov Sibiri*, pp. 66, 103, 108 and 203.

25 *Tretii kraevoi s'ezd sovetov Sibiri*, pp. 158-159.

that only industrialization implemented in this way could fundamentally revive the region's economy and finances, and allow it to make progress in the socio-cultural sphere.

At the same time the Siberian region's leaders consistently stressed that Siberia's industrialization was necessary not so much for the region itself, as for the whole Soviet Union.²⁶ Emphasis on the all-union significance of the problem unconditionally increased the chances of a positive reaction from Moscow. But, it was impossible not to consider the consequences, which could flow from imparting all-union status to a regional question. First of all, it could serve as pre-condition for changing the conception and ideology of the proposed industrialization of Siberia itself; second, the leadership automatically and absolutely deprived the region of the hope of guiding its realization. On the contrary, so great was the probability of this, that redistribution of leadership functions between Moscow and Siberia would be carried out to the center's benefit.

5. CONCLUSION

As is well known, on 15 May 1930 the TsK VKP(b) passed a decree about the work of the Urals' metallurgical industry, which determined for the whole decade the economic development of the country's eastern regions, including Siberia. In the TsK's decree was set the task to create in the east of the SSSR a second coal-metallurgical center, exploiting the rich deposits of coal and ore in the Urals and Siberia. The XVI Congress of the VKP(b), taking place from 26 June to 13 July 1930, approved the directive for the accelerated construction of the Ural-Siberian coal-metallurgical base.²⁷

The center's acceptance of this new strategy for Siberia's development could be considered a long-awaited victory for the Siberian region's leadership. However, it must be recognized that this victory was somewhat "Pyrrhic".

The ascription of Siberia to those regions of first order industrialization entailed a change in its territorial-administrative structure and the reorganization of the state administrative apparatus. By a VTsIK decree of 30 July 1930, the united Siberian region was liquidated, and in its place were formed the Western-Siberian and Eastern-Siberian regions, which were headed by corresponding regional executive committees of soviets.

Siberia as a single geographic, administrative and economic whole, the integrity of which has not been doubted by the greatest authorities of the theory and practice of state and economic administration, was again destroyed. Siberia's capacity to defend its interests before Moscow through representative soviet

²⁶ See, for example: *Otchet Sibirskogo kraevogo ispolnitel'nogo komiteta sovetov Sovnarkomu RSFSR* (Novosibirsk, 1927), pp. 4 and 80.

²⁷ *KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK 4* (Moscow, 1970), pp. 398, 441-442.

organs, theoretically existing, but never really realized in the second half of the 1920s, was sharply curtailed, or perhaps, completely lost.

In the literature one can find the assertion that the cause of Siberia's division into two regions (and, correspondingly, changes in the state administrative system), and their subsequent dispersion into a series of yet smaller regions and oblasts, was the center's fear of the regional elite. Such a judgement is far from the truth. In reality, the Siberian leadership of the 1920s itself never opposed the center, in so far as it was always the center's agent in Siberia. The greatest thing that a small group of Siberia's party-soviet leaders dared to do was to attempt to remove the chief appointee and proponent of Moscow's policy in Siberia, R. I. Eikhe, in 1930. But the center did not surrender its protégé and, for the edification of all the others, severely punished the obstinate ones. R. I. Eikhe himself, who seemed to contemporaries to be the arbiter of Siberia's fate, in reality, was absolutely powerless before the center.²⁸ He could not even attempt to be the true spokesman of the Siberian population's interests.

In the 1930s the possibility of implementing a technological breakthrough in the Soviet Union was in many ways connected with the successful realization of the Ural-Siberian project. The setting of this task and the new role, which Western Siberia was charted to play on an all-union scale, stipulated the necessity of its separation from the Siberian region and the creation of a new administrative-territorial division and new organs of administration for Siberia.

It is necessary, however, to stress, that the industrial breakthrough, which Western Siberia accomplished in the 1930s, was in practice not accompanied by the improvement of its social sphere. On the contrary, exactly this sphere was deprived of attention and ended up in a retarded position. The human being living in Siberia was pushed into the background this time. And this time he was sacrificed in order to obtain coal and smelt metal, which Moscow considered the country so badly needed.

The hypertrophy of state power, the presence in it of personal interests differing or not coinciding with the interests of citizens of their own country, and the absence of state and public institutions and mechanisms, making it possible to express and defend the interests of regions' populations before the central authorities, are the most important reasons why, over the course of several centuries under various forms of state power and various political regimes, Siberia has remained a promising, but weakly developed province.

28 *Pravda* (Moscow), 2 August 1930; I. V. Pavlova, "Ob istoricheskoi otsenke R. I. Eikhe," *Problemy istorii mestnogo upravleniya Sibiri XVII-XX vekov. Regional'naya nauchnaya konferentsiya (5-6 dekabrya 1996 g.). Tezisy dokladov* (Novosibirsk, 1996).