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Siberian Regionalism and Power in Siberia in the Second Half of the 19th Century

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This article examines the formation and development of the regional movement in Siberia in the second half of the 19th century. The author enlists basic directions of practical activity of regionalists and describes a complex relationship between the Siberian intelligentsia and representatives of central and local authorities.

The need for reform in Siberia was felt by various strata of Russian society. The autocratic authorities tried to find adequate management models. In the beginning, these were attempts to modernize the system of bureaucratic power, then under the public pressure the officials made a promise to introduce zemstvo institutions in Siberia. The intelligentsia since its appearance in the region had been proposing alternative reform projects in Siberia.

Keywords: regionalism, D.G. Anuchin, N.G. Kaznakov, G.N. Potanin, N.M. Yadrintsev, "local interests".

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Siberian regionalism (oblastnichestvo) left a deep mark in the pre-revolutionary local history of Siberia. Its appearance was caused by a number of reasons. The Siberians were frustrated by the fact that many of the reforms adopted in Russia were not extended to Siberia. Excessive centralization in management and the outflow of cultural forces from the region resulted in public discontent. Regionalism was fueled by the fact that the central administration paternalism created in practice a lot of difficulties while solving local issues. According to the Siberians, insufficient awareness of the metropolitan officials about the Siberian life

conditions led to the adoption of incompetent decisions.

After the abolition of serfdom, capitalism in Russia began to spread to the outskirts of the country, drawing them into this process and increasing the flow of migrants to Siberia from European Russia. There was a problem of land management of peasants and their mutual relations with local population. There was no smooth establishment of the relationships between the center and the peoples of Siberia. The involvement of the aborigines in the system of all-Russian state and economic ties was accompanied by an increase in the tax burden for these peoples,

which was legislated in the “Charter on the Management of Non-Russians” (Dameshek, 1988: 198). The situation was aggravated by the fact that Siberia was turned into the area of the penal colonization, the place where felons were sent to from all over Russia. From 1807 to 1899 the population of Siberia increased due to exiles and their families by 864,549 people that is almost by 1/6 (Ssylka v Sibir’..., 1900: 260). In Siberia the Russians learned from the indigenous dwellers the skills of hunting, riding dogs, making clothes, food and life customs (Lebedev, 2013: 96-104). The public indignation was conditioned by embezzlement and arbitrariness of officials. Finally, the penetration of capital from the center, especially intensified with the construction of the Siberian railway, led to a structural overhaul of the local economy, which exacerbated the contradiction between the interests of the center and the Siberian region. Meanwhile, the cultural environment of the Siberian society was developing; it criticized this kind of relationship between the center and the eastern province. This part of the Siberian intelligentsia, grouped around G.N. Potanin and N.M. Yadrintsev, received the name of regionalism.

The regional development formed a certain system of views on the past, present and future of

the region. It produced a kind of social, political and cultural movement that tried to propagate its ideas. The movement evolved for a long time, developing at various stages of its history the concept of territorial independence of Siberia led by an oblast/regional bodies – the regional Duma, endowed with a set of powers similar to the state’s competencies in the US federal system.

The activities of the regional workers in the 1870-90s were associated with the development of culture and education in the region. In our opinion, two directions can be distinguished in this work. The first of these is journalism. The media, where the supporters of the movement actively collaborated, was “The Kamsko-Volzhskaya Gazeta”, published in Kazan. Being in Nikolsk exile, G.N. Potanin (Fig. 1.) met with exiled Kazan student K.V. Lavrsky. Later, Lavrsky became an editor of “The Kamsko-Volzhskaya Gazeta” and invited Potanin and Yadrintsev to cooperate. In addition to them, V.I. Vagin (Fig. 2.) published his articles in this paper, too.

Cooperation had had a short life, as in two and a half years the newspaper was closed. It is generally accepted that the closure occurred for two reasons: due to the arrest of Lavrsky (participation in an illegal Polish organization in Kazan) and the strengthening of censorship

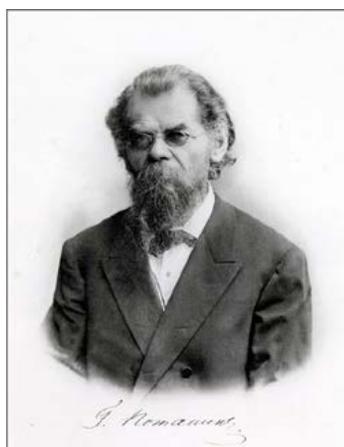


Fig. 1. Grigory Nikolaevich Potanin



Fig. 2. Vsevolod Ivanovich Vagin

related to the publishing articles that criticized the Siberian administration and the capital media. After the amnesty, in 1874, Yadrintsev came to Petersburg and began to collaborate in the magazines “Vestnik Evropy” and “Otechestvennye Zapiski”. In the same year, there appeared an idea to publish a Siberian newspaper. In Irkutsk the newspaper “Siberia” was bought, V.I. Vagin and M.V. Zagoskin were appointed its editors. This paper was published from 1875 to 1887. It specialized in the publication of readers’ letters, although there were articles that investigated general Siberian problems, including the development prospects for the region. “Siberia” was persecuted for criticism of local authorities and eventually closed down (Potanin, 1983-1986: 65-82).

In Tomsk from 1881 to 1888 “Siberian newspaper” came out, the editor of which was A.V. Adrianov. It published many materials written by political exiles. Here there were articles by D.A. Klementz, G.V. Zdanovich, S.A. Chudnovsky, K.M. Stankevich, P.A. Golubev. G.N. Potanin also took an active part in the newspaper. The orientation of this paper did not please N.M. Yadrintsev. He wrote that it was a forgery of upholding of Siberian interests, conditioned by need.



Fig. 3. Nikolai Mikhailovich Yadrintsev

The greatest popularity to the regional movement was brought by the newspaper “Vostochnoe Obozrenie” (“Eastern Review”), which was published by N.M. Yadrintsev (Fig. 3.) in St. Petersburg in the mid-1880s. This periodical came out until the first Russian revolution. The editorial staff included: V.I. Vagin, I.V. Fedorov – Omulevsky, L.F. Pantelev, V.I. Semevsky, A.A. Kornilov, A.S. Prugavin, F.F. Voronova, D.A. Klementz. N.M. Yadrintsev tried to unite the best literary forces of Siberia, not necessarily adherents of the “regionalism idea”. The newspaper was considered the interpreter of the Siberian problems. During Yadrintsev’s leadership the circulation reached 1,300 copies. Almost all the participants of the studied movement published their articles in “Vostochnoe Obozrenie”. G.N. Potanin published 17 articles, A.V. Adrianov – 20, N.N. Koz’min – 60, S.S. Shashkov – 7, P.M. Golovachev – 19.

In St. Petersburg, the editorial board of “Vostochnoe Obozrenie” began publishing supplements – collections of scientific and literary articles about Siberia. In 1885, the first book was published, including the materials of 12 authors with five articles by N.M. Yadrintsev (Yadrintsev, 1979: 145). All in all, 48 books were published (the last book was in 1905) with the publications of 200 authors. Because of censorship, the newspaper moved to Irkutsk. In the early 1890s I.I. Popov became its editor. Under him, the newspaper turned into a daily one, with the circulation reaching 20,000 copies (Svatikov, 1930: 120).

The result of journalistic activity was closer attention to Siberia from various state and public organizations. For the study of the region the Russian Geographical Society sent expeditions headed by Potanin, Yadrintsev, Adrianov, Klementz, Vitkovsky. Radlov’s expedition worked in Altai. The West Siberian department of the Geographical Society published programs on

the study of the peasant community, the process of resettlement and indigenous peoples' lifestyle. A number of participants in the movement wrote historical works in order to prove the ineffectiveness of administrative management methods. The situation of the Siberian peoples occupied the main place in the works of S.S. Shashkov (Yadrintsev, 1979: 145). According to his scheme, the main content of the Siberian historical process is the struggle between the Russians and non-Russians. This struggle ended with the loss of land and the slavery of the indigenous population. S.S. Shashkov saw the future prospects for the indigenous population either in the process of assimilation of the non-Russian population or in their death. Indeed, unlike G.N. Potanin and N.M. Yadrintsev, S.S. Shashkov was skeptical about the idea of self-government in Siberia. He believed that the local population was only able to illicit gain and public ideals were alien to them. Another participant of the movement V.I. Vagin published his two-volume monograph devoted to the 100th anniversary of M.M. Speransky. In this work he paid attention to the problem of the administrative management in Siberia. V.I. Vagin supported N.M. Yadrintsev's thesis about the administrative arbitrariness prevailing in the region. The main reasons for this phenomenon are the remoteness of Siberia, which creates difficulties in communication and relations, as well as control by the central authorities. To avoid such a situation, it was necessary to improve the legislation and state institutions. The historian did not touch upon the self-management problem, considering that the time had not yet come. In his opinion, it was vital to develop education and create guarantees of civil liberties (Vagin, 1881: 35-46).

In the second half of the 19th century, the City Regulation of 1870 was extended to Siberia. City government, according to this Regulation, had the right to issue resolutions, but they had no

legal force. Local self-government could not bring to justice, everything depended on the discretion of the police. All city institutions were under the supervision of the governor, and the mayor was approved by the Ministry of the Interior. Under this Regulation, there was a property qualification and only the merchants, bureaucrats, clergymen, petty bourgeois had the voting right. Criticizing the class structure of Siberian society, Shchapov declared that the Siberian bourgeoisie neglected the interests of the people, it was only able to oppress them (Shchapov, 1908: 132). Yadrintsev took a more lenient position in this matter, arguing that if zemstvo structure was extended to Siberia, the local bourgeoisie might be involved in general-Siberian problems on the basis of common interests. From the regionalists' point of view the City Regulation of 1870 did not give Siberia the right to self-governance, since the majority of the population did not have electoral rights, and the legal status of city Dumas did not allow them to influence the Siberian reality really. In general, during the period under review, the movement program still retained a democratic rationale with the elements of populism (*narodniks*). It should be stated that in addition to the *narodniks*' views, which had much of the very Russian reasoning, regionalism was seriously affected by westernism (*zapadnichestvo*). Sharing the I.N. Alekseev's view I understand under westernism a faith in the great power of culture, which is called upon to re-educate the people; a misunderstanding of the practical tasks which Russian government faces; a belief in successful transplanting of foreign institutions in Russia, which will contribute to the goal achievement (Alekseev, 1991: 41-43).

Answering the question about the reasons for the Siberian economic lag, N.M. Yadrintsev reduced all the reasons to the negative impact of the penal colonization and arbitrariness of officials. This led to the neutralization of the colonization agricultural nature and the transformation of

Siberia into the raw material appendage. It is worth mentioning that a number of the movement participants (V.I. Vagin, M.V. Zagoskin) avoided answering the question of the colonial status of Siberia and instead focused their attention on the problem of extending reforms that were implemented in the European part of Russia to Siberia. N.M. Yadrintsev showed a great polemical enthusiasm and emotionality. He drew conclusions about extinction of the indigenous population, although the census materials did not confirm this statement. S.S. Shashkov was more restrained in the matter and assessed the poor situation of the indigenous population, singling out a whole range of reasons: the administration's activities, the low level of the local population culture, oppression by the Russian population. Yadrintsev considered the main cause of extinction to be the exploitation of the indigenous population by the Russian state. Moreover, while Yadrintsev linked the probable improvement of the indigenous population situation to the state's activity, Shashkov saw a way out in the process of mutual influence of the Russian population of Siberia and the indigenous population (Yadrintsev 1979: 145).

The main point of the political program is the requirement to introduce zemstvos. In their journalistic works published in St. Petersburg the regionalists tried to draw the public and the government attention to the need for the emergence of this institution in the region as a counterbalance to the existing administrative management of Siberia. The main argument in this issue was the provision that the region was populated by the peasant population and the peasants had the long tradition of communal self-government. Considering the remoteness of the region from the center the main reason for all the troubles of the Siberian population, the regionalists fought for the fastest occupation of the huge space with human resources, therefore they criticized the government policy as regards

the restriction of resettlement. Taking into account the situation of the Siberian peoples, in our opinion, the regionalists somewhat overestimated the degree of influence of the Russian population on the natives, calling for assistance in the cultural development in this part of the Siberian society.

The second area of the regionalists' activity was participation in practical matters. In 1874, N.M. Yadrintsev wrote a note to the new Governor-General of Western Siberia N.G. Kaznakov (Fig. 4) about the necessity of founding a university. N.G. Kaznakov submitted a petition to the Emperor. Soon followed the decree of 1878 on the opening of a university in Siberia and in 1885 the first 72 students entered the university.

N.M. Yadrintsev was invited to participate in the development of the law of 1889 on resettlement. During the famine in the Tobolsk province, he was one who organized help to the starving.

Of particular note was G.N. Potanin's and N.M. Yadrintsev's participation in ethnographic expeditions aimed at a deeper study of Siberia and strengthening the reasoning of the regionalists' program. In 1878 and 1880 N.M. Yadrintsev visited the Altai. The result of his trips was the



Fig. 4. Nikolai Gennadievich Kaznakov

book “Siberian non-Russians”, where he opposed the forced transition of the indigenous peoples to a settled way of life. In 1899 G.N. Potanin published the book “Eastern motifs in the medieval European epic”, in which he proved a single source of the Asian and European epics.

During this period, as it seems to us, regionalism was understood by the active movement participants primarily as a solution to local problems by the resources of Siberian society. As for specific projects of reforming the Siberian society proposed by the movement participants in the second half of the 19th century, there was only one such project. In 1878, V.I. Vagin published an article in the newspaper “Sibir”, entitled “How to introduce zemstvo institutions?” where he described the main provisions of the project:

1. Creation of temporary zemstvo meetings in Siberia.

2. Membership:

a) From the urban population – 1 councillor and 1 councillor from each volost and nomadic peoples;

b) 1 councillor from the land owners;

c) 1 representative from the state property agency and 1 representative from each household.

According to the project, the mayor of the provincial city presides over these meetings. Districts are formed within the boundaries of the existing Siberian provinces. But V.I. Vagin believed that the decisions of the zemstvo meetings should not be binding, rather they should give the governor and the government the right to make decisions taking into account the opinion of the local population. Then, a year later, V.I. Vagin published in this same newspaper the article “Elements of the zemstvo in Siberia”, where he suggested creating an uyezd (uyezd is a district with several volosts) meeting for sparsely populated places with the chairmanship of the uyezd governor. And finally, in 1885 for

the “Sibirskaya Gazeta” this public figure wrote the article “Volosts’ budgets and the Siberian zemstvo”, where he argued that the peasant zemstvo would not be the state treasury’s burden.

Perhaps the most popular topic among the regionalists in this period was the evaluation of the administration. This is due, above all, to the fact that there was a huge amount of information on this issue. These are memories of the former governors, the publications about abuses, materials of various audits. S.S. Shashkov in his lectures assumed that the governors in Siberia were engaged only in enrichment, robbing the region and the population. N.M. Yadrintsev in the “Tomsk Vedomosti” assessed the activities of the Siberian administrators in the same way. As for the proposals how to improve the situation, regionalists (Yadrintsev, Zagoskin) unanimously declared the need to review the personnel policy towards increasing the number of Siberian population in governing bodies (Yadrintsev, 1892: 374).

If you turn to the historical experience of pre-revolutionary Russia, you may reckon that for the tsarist autocracy the problem of relations with Siberia was quite a complex problem. The first who tried to regulate the relationship between the center and the region was M.M. Speransky. He offered to create councils in provinces, which would include the elected members of the nobility. But the idea of the development of noble landownership in Siberia was not supported by the government. In 1849-1851 General-Adjutant N.N. Annenkov conducted a revision of the Siberian region. The main goal of Annenkov’s mission was not to remove the sly officials, but to find out the needs of the Siberians. The published report criticized the management system of Siberia. N.N. Annenkov made proposals to improve the system, recommended changing Siberian officials by involving in the system people from the nobility. N.N. Annenkov also associated

the creation of an educational institution in the region with the nobility influence. In the report he paid great attention to exile and non-Russians. Following the results of the audit, the Siberian Committee with the specialized departments to implement the reform in Siberia was established. The Committee members created a draft program for the reorganization of Siberia. This document, as it seems, is interesting as it gives an idea of regional government policy.

The draft program included eight parts:

1. Division of Siberia.
2. Management of Siberia.
3. Capital management.
4. Public education.
5. Judiciary sphere.
6. Economic sphere.
7. Trade and industry.
8. Communications.

The project was sent to interested departments and submitted to Nicholas I, who agreed with the main purpose of the government. But the draft recommended to treat Eastern Siberia as a colony. Nicholas I strongly rejected such a statement of the issue, believing that it is impossible to compare the Caucasian policy with Eastern Siberian policy.

Minister of the Interior L.A. Perovskii expressed a different opinion. He supposed that the main thing was punishment and only then the needs of the region followed. The question of the Siberian Committee's status was controversial. The liberals wanted it to be a legislative body with the problems formulated by the Siberian governors. However, the ministries tried to ensure that all decisions would be made by these departments. In general, the results of the Committee's work can shed the light on the governmental concept of the Siberian development. The Committee developed a program that included the following provisions. It was necessary to:

1. Find means for a class of officials to bring real benefits to the region.
2. Revise the provision on the exile.
3. Free this land from the accumulation of exiles.
4. Identify the means to attract non-Russians.
5. Determine whether it is necessary to establish a special educational district in Siberia.
6. Find resources for the study of minerals.

In the 1870-1880s the local Siberian administration began to play a major role. It was active to draw attention to the regional needs. This desire brought the Siberian administration closer to the regionalists, as evidenced by the cooperation of the Governor-General of Western Siberia N.G. Kaznakov and the ideologist of the regional movement N.M. Yadrintsev (Remneva, 1990: 220).

The main task of the local administration was to increase the profitability of the eastern region. Although, the Siberian administrators proposed some hypotheses, they were rejected because of the lack of money. In a report for 1875, the Governor-General of Western Siberia N.G. Kaznakov suggested improving ways of communication, building a railway, opening the Northern Sea Route, limiting the exile scope, founding educational institutions, and providing legal guarantees to local residents by transforming the court and administration system. The Governor-General of Eastern Siberia D.G. Anuchin (Fig. 5) also appealed to the Committee of Ministers with proposals aimed at strengthening local power in order to protect the local population from the arbitrariness of central departments. It is interesting that he even prepared a five-year plan for transforming the region, which needed an annual financing of 100 thousand rubles. He planned to implement the project beginning with the judicial reform, which, in his opinion, was the only one capable of quickly improving

the regional management system. Despite the support of Alexander III, the D.A. Anuchin's plan was not approved in the Committee of Ministers because of financial difficulties. In 1887 another Governor-General of Eastern Siberia A.P. Ignatiev made an attempt to repeat the initiative of D.A. Anuchin and made the 10-year program for the regional development. This program also relied on strengthening the power of Governor-General and limited influence of central departments. This time Siberian programs were denied subsidizing, too. In the opinion of the Minister of Finance I.A. Vyshnegradsky, all transformations should be carried out in the usual way through ministries while taking into account the possibilities of the state treasury. Obviously, the government departments did not want to bind themselves with any mandatory program and miss out on the initiative.

Judging by the resolutions that had been imposed on documents relating to Siberia since Nicholas I times, all Russian emperors realized that it would be impossible to govern the regions on the principles of bureaucratic centralism. But the policy of "decentralization" in the second half of the 19th century encountered strong resistance from the bureaucracy. Especially this resistance was manifested in relation to the zemstvos. On

January 1, 1864, the State Council instructed the Ministry of Interior to draft a provision on the introduction of zemstvos in Siberia. When again in 1866, in connection with the judicial reform, the Commission of Charters appealed to the Ministry of Interior, it turned out that this department had not yet begun to work out the provisions concerning Siberia.

Governor-General D.A. Anuchin dared only create a commission to study the local conditions. In the adopted Zemstvo Regulation of 1890 there was nothing about Siberia. Finally, when in 1899 the Irkutsk Governor-General A.D. Goremykin (Fig. 6) publicly made a proposal for the introduction of zemstvos in Siberia, he was dismissed and appointed an honorary pension member of the State Council.

Only in 1899 the Charter of Zemstvo Obligations was adopted; it determined the procedure for collecting taxes to meet the zemstvo needs in the Siberian region.

According to the Charter of 1899, the provincial adviser appointed by the governor was responsible for the zemstvo obligations. Initially, the distribution of the zemstvo obligations was made by the police department. According to the Charter of 1851, the city mayor and the city head were allowed to attend meetings, and the



Fig. 5. Dmitry Gavrilovich Anuchin



Fig. 6. Alexander Dmitrievich Goremykin

police chief was the chairman. The governorate department determined the zemstvo collections in the province under the Governor's supervision, then the cost estimates were approved by the Governor-General, and next – by the Ministry of Finance. But the Ministry of Finance was given the right to change them. Local authorities were forbidden to apply to the Ministry of Finance to demand a revision of the cost estimates, so the involved ministers could change the estimates. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Interior finally approved the estimate. The financial control was coupled with the administrative one, which dealt with local self-governance. According to the Regulation of 1890, the Governor could overturn the resolutions of the zemstvo meetings on the estimates not only for formal reasons, but also those that he thought to be violating state or local interests.

It was envisaged that the amounts received from Siberia could be transferred from one agency to another. The intangible property of the Cabinet of His Imperial Majesty, the church and monasteries was withdrawn from taxation system. The lands of non-Russians were freed from the zemstvo land tax (Potanin, 1983-1986: 65-72).

It should be noted that the regionally-minded Siberian public was wary of attempts

by the central and Siberian bureaucracy to reform the eastern province. In their view, the transformations would make sense when the government offered a sustainable program of reforms capable of putting an end to the unequal position of Siberia. Only then will these governmental measures would be supported by the Siberian society. First of all, the regionalists attributed failure of these reforms coupled with the activities of prominent Siberian administrators to the bureaucratic unwillingness to start rapprochement with the society. The newspaper "Vostochnoe Obozrenie" practically did not cover the administrative reorganization of the region. The correct organization of peasant self-government, the best system of the zemstvo economy and its separation from police supervision, the separation of administration and court functions, the reorganization of management, the development of public education were the measures the regional authorities believed to be the keys to success in changing Siberian society. The regional officials stressed the lack of a clear plan in government policy, as well as "complete confusion and dim views among the civilizers themselves, since they have not figured out the benefits that this region can bring with the normal life development".

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Областничество и власть в Сибири во второй половине XIX в.

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В данной статье анализируется становление и развитие областнического движения в Сибири во второй половине XIX в. Представлены основные направления практической деятельности областников. Показаны сложные взаимоотношения сибирской интеллигенции с представителями центральной и местной власти.

Осознание необходимости реформ в Сибири ощущалось в различных слоях российского общества. Самодержавная власть пыталась найти адекватные модели управления. В начале это были попытки модернизировать систему бюрократической власти, затем под давлением общественности было дано обещание ввести в Сибири земские учреждения. В среде интеллигенции с её появлением в регионе возникли альтернативные проекты реформ в Сибири.

Ключевые слова: областничество, Д.Г. Анучин, Н.Г. Казнаков, Г.Н. Потанин, Н.М. Ядринцев, «местные» интересы.

Научная специальность: 07.00.00 – исторические науки и археология.
