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(E-mail: ablazhey@academ.org)***Regional and national projects of the Siberian regionalists\***

The concept of the Siberian autonomy formed around the fundamental thesis about the uniqueness of Siberia as a region. Federalism based on the idea of regional autonomy was considered as a basis for the model of the Russian statehood, and, as referred to Siberia, as a method of overcoming its colonial status. The revolution of 1917 triggered the rise of separatism and nationalism and subsequent collapse of the country, but simultaneously caused different options how to get out of this situation. The regionalists (oblastniki) believed that the state and national organization should be based either on the creation of federation (that should consist not only of Russia alone but also of Siberia, according to the territorial and national principles), or on the implementation of the ideas of territorial, exterritorial and national and cultural autonomy. On practice, these scenarios would promote all-Russian national and state, and Siberian regional consolidation that did not exclude ethnic, religious and other identities. Such scenarios created a basis for overcoming discrimination regarding the title population of national territories together with consolidation of the society on the all-Russian principles.

*Keywords:* the Russian empire, Siberia, colonial policy, Siberian regionalists (oblastniki), Siberian identity, separatism, federation, national issue.

Intra-state relations, in the first place, the mutual relations between centre and the regions, determine not only the structure of the state, but its internal political stability also depends on them. The collapse of the colonial world and growth of regionalism as a manifestation of opposition to political centre from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been dictating the tendency of the world development. On the one hand, this resulted in the need to re-interpret the theory of social mobility and integration in favour of regionalism as a tendency opposing globalism. On the other hand, regionalism in recent studies is analysed through the prism of centrifugal and centripetal mechanisms in a state, which pre-supposes its examination in the context of intra-state relations, and with this it implies either balanced inter-relations between centre and the regions or separatism.

Modern political science while studying regional development, as the starting-point in analysing regional politics, studies the «centre – periphery» problem. As it is generally known, the leadership of centre is determined by political control, economic supremacy and cultural standardisation. Thus, the «centre - periphery» relations is drawn up due to the formation of a system of political, economic and cultural links. The development of regions as an alternative to centralisation presupposes decentralisation, which ensures their participation in national internal policy on federal principles, economic federalism and national-cultural autonomy.

Throughout the entire Russian history the centre put itself in juxtaposition to the regions, which could not but help engendering among them the striving for decentralisation and yearning weakening of political and economic control of the capital. Since the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Siberia turned out the largest among the Russian regions consisting of one half of the territory of Russian Empire, but only from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century its economic development started. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Siberia attained the most intensive development, being transformed from a colonial outlying district to an industrial and agrarian region, playing a significant role in the economic and geopolitical status of Russia. Siberia and the Far East today comprise of three fourth of Russia's territory, but only one-sixth of its population. If Russia has built up and is building relations with the West through the centre, then Siberia has become the «window» in the East and a distinctive «bridge» between the countries of Asia and Europe.

During the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries the idea of building an autonomous, self-governing Siberia never became a subject of discussion on the part of the authority and the society. In the very region the striving for auton-

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\* The paper is based on the report «Regional Autonomy in the Ideology of Siberian Regionalism» delivered at the Conference «Eurasia: Regional Perspectives» in Kolkata, India // Siberia in focus. Proceeding of the Conference Eurasia: Regional Perspectives. Kolkata, 2007. P. 18–26. Translated by Susmita Bhattacharya and Evgeny Vodichev.

omy was an expression of protest, aimed against extreme centralism, predatory exploitation of the resources of this territory and cultural regionalism. For the first time in the country's politics, an attempt to substantiate the regional specificity was made by the Siberian regionalists, who developed the concept of Siberia as a special region with distinctive geographical, ethno-cultural and political features of its own, as well as a specific regional self-consciousness.

In historiography there is no simple interpretation of the concept «Siberian regionalism». More often regionalism is interpreted as a system of views of the Siberian intelligentsia on regional problems and specificity of the region in a broad socio-political, economic and cultural context. This pre-determined the notion of regionalism as a socio-political and cultural movement that from the moment of its origin at the threshold of the '50s and '60s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and right up to the finale in the first half of 1930's has passed through a prolonged evolution, by developing the concept of territorial distinctiveness of Siberia at various stages of its history. The movement began in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in connection with the activities of the Siberian people's association in St. Petersburg. The activity of the regionalists' groups in Omsk, Krasnoyarsk and Irkutsk led to the famous process of «Siberian separatism» in 1865. From the second half of the 1870's the propaganda of regional ideas was carried out through the newspapers established by them namely «Sibir», «Vostochnoe obozrenie», «Sibirskuyu Gazetu». The main ideologists of the movement were N.M. Yadrintsev, who developed the concept of «Siberia as a colony» [1] and C.N. Potanin, who formulated the basic approaches to found the Siberian Studies as an independent academic course and a thesis on putting together the Siberian sub-ethnos. During the period of the First Russian Revolution it was possible to successfully form a single political bloc of regionalists, socialist-revolutionaries and liberate united by regionalist slogans for a brief span. A special Siberian Parliamentary group uniting the deputies from Siberia and the Far East, functioned in the Duma, which was summoned to initiate the drafts concerning Siberia, in particular, on reorganisation of local self-government, introduction of a free-port at the mouths of Ob and Yenisei, policy for non-Russian national minorities and others. As a movement, without having any definite political colour, the regionalism was evaluated broadly foreshortened - from considering it as revolutionary to interpret it as liberal. In its turn, it gave rise to attempts to define regionalism, in findings place for it in the political spectrum of the existing political parties and groups of Russia, or, on the contrary emphasising its «above-political nature».

During 1917 and right up to November 19<sup>th</sup> the slogans of regionalism served as the foundation to build a «Siberian bloc» headed by the socialist-revolutionaries, which made the anti-Bolshevik state formations in the east of Russia (the Western Siberian commissariat, the Provisional Government of Autonomous Siberia and Provisional Siberian Government). The fight to overthrow the Soviet power took the shape of direct separatism. The regionalists once again made the principle of the region's autonomy their agenda, and its separate components were carried out. In December 1917 the Extraordinary Siberian Provincial Congress adopted the first Siberian Constitution and in January 1918 the regional Parliament – the Siberian Provincial Duma – started working. On July 4, 1918 the Provisional Siberian Government declared «Independence of the State of Siberia». In 1917 white and green colours symbolising snow and taiga, were recognised as national colours of Siberian flag and a symbol of fight for an autonomous Siberia, and since 1918 became an integral part of the state symbolism of independent Siberia. With the advent of A.V. Kolchak to power all the talks about the autonomy of Siberia came to an end. By the end of 1918, the Siberian State Institutes were transformed into ail-Russian ones. The regionalists practically left the political arena. The defeat of the white movement of Siberia in 1919 re-activated the regionalist slogans in the Far East at the final stage of the Civil war and later on in the Empire too, when attempts were made to revive the Siberian anti-Bolshevist movement under the slogan of restoring the «Siberian statehood» [2-5].

The ideological component of the movement, described by the terms «autonomy» and «federation», has not been defined with single meaning either by the regionalists or by the historians since these terms are considered beyond historical context. Primordially the Siberian regionalism bore the character of local particularism contrasting to the « province – empire» line, an assertion of the concept of regional administration of Siberia on the principles of Zemstvo model of self-government and its development on the analogy of federal system of the USA. It logically led the regionalism to formulate the concept of territorial independence of the region, i.e. making the Siberian autonomous region as a part of the Russian Empire [6]. Such an approach enabled to get over the historically formed system of centralised structure of government, by transforming the unitary model into a federal one. Several times the regionalists set out the programme to establish an independent government in the east of Russia. After the revolution the concept of decentralisation became the

central idea of the regionalism. But on the whole the regionalists thought that the «Siberian question» can and should be solved only in the conditions of federal structure of the Russian government.

Economic federalism, formulated by regionalism, was based on the availability of an entire spectrum of purely regional characteristics - geographic, socio-demographic, economic and colonisational, similar to those, which took place in the countries of the New World. Initially it oddly got along with the ideas of commune socialism. At the base of it there were the ideas that the 1890's capitalism would no way be apparent in Siberia and the Siberian economy was based on patriarchal and small-scale commodity forms of management (commune, cottage craft manufacturing, later on cooperative societies). Afterwards, at the turn of the centuries, the concept about Siberia as a colony was developed with an appraisal of the policy of the metropolis of the Empire as of economic exploitation, which in its turn served as a cause behind the emergence of the idea of counteraction against the colonialist policy of the centre. The regionalists set off free migration against penal colonisation, stood up for assistance to Siberian trade and industry. While studying colonisation the regionalists were the first to compare the «assimilation» strategies of Russia in Siberia with the European states in assimilating the American and Australian continents. They observed that with the simultaneity of the processes of colonisation, the whole set of factors pre-determined the intensification of lag in the economic development of Siberia and stabilisation of colonial status of the region including even in economic terms. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the economic platform of the regionalists embraced preservation of small-scale commodity production and co-operative societies as well, along with ascertaining the necessity of rapid development of market relations at the expense of foreign capital and creating a free trade zone.

The economic crisis, caused by political instability during the period of Civil War in Russia, gave birth to economic realities, surpassing the most courageous expectations of the regionalists' – the economic independence from Russia. At that time, the way to come out of the crisis was seen only at the expense of the region's own resources, which entailed the need to make an independent budget, introduce regional currency and formulate regional economic priorities. Attempts were made to get over isolation, enter the world market independently and adjust inter-regional relations. For a short period it enabled to maintain the socio-economic system that had collapsed in the European Russia as a result of social outburst. The regionalists appraised the efforts to industrialise the Soviet Siberia highly positively, with the expectation that economic liberalisation would lead to degeneration of Bolshevism. They put it as a task before them to inform the world community about the prospects of economic cooperation with Siberia. In their opinion Siberia in future would determine economic development of the country as a whole, which in its turn, would put the task before Russia to consolidate its influence in the East against the background of impending rapid development of the Asia Pacific region. Consequently, it is needed to build up such a system of administration of the region, which would favour it in setting and developing the productive forces.

The cultural component of the regionalism is represented by the ideas of enlightenment and patriotism, necessity of building network of higher education and regional science, taking out the regions from cultural isolation. A concept was formulated on the formation of a new ethnographic (provincial) type of the Russian people, who in the perspective could constitute the Siberian ethnos together with other people inhabiting in the region.

Thus, the concept of the Siberian autonomy formed around the fundamental thesis about the uniqueness of Siberia as a region. This conclusion is both justified and questioned on the following grounds: 1) Siberia as a homogeneous mega-region; 2) the impact of modernization on the periphery; 3) formation of the «Siberian ethnos» (or «Siberian nation»), the carrier of the unique regional mentality; 4) «centre-periphery» dichotomy and formation of the «complex of the province». Federalism based on the idea of regional autonomy was seen a basic foundation of the model of the Russian statehood, as a method of overcoming of the colonial situation of Siberia.

1917 triggered the rise of separatism and nationalism. But at the same time, it motivated different options how to solve the issue of the state and national structure. Until 1917, the national issue was not a priority for the Siberian regionalists, although it was connected with the issue of the Siberian autonomy. Initially, they saw the solution to the indigenous people question in the framework of the concept of «cultural self-determination». In 1917, when debating the national issue, the regionalists «drifted» between the concepts of the cadets and social revolutionaries [7]. In the meantime, the «autonomous wing» of the regionalists demonstrated its sympathy to the program of the cadets (the national and cultural autonomy), while the «centralist» – to the program of socialist revolutionaries (the national-territorial autonomy). We believe that the rapid drift of the regionalists to the program of the socialist revolutionaries in terms of how to set and solve the

national issue, to the major extent was conditioned by the activity of the national elites. However, the level of development and design of the national movements was not equal. Only one party, "Alash" insisted on the territorial autonomy for the Kazakh population; national elites of the largest Siberian ethnic groups saw a decision of this issue as national-exterritorial option, but ethnic minorities – as ethno-confessional and extra-territorial approach. The decisions of the All-Siberian conference in August 1917, in addition to the all-Siberian autonomy, referred to the right of people that have a compact territory to the territorial autonomy, and to the exterritorial autonomy for those ethnic minorities that did not possess territories.

The decisions of the all-Siberian congresses in October – November 1917 were a triumph of the program of the regionalists and social revolutionaries. However, the national issue did not receive a final solution. De facto, the earlier accepted decisions were repeated again, while appeared a new idea about «federalization» of Siberia on the basis of the territorial principles. Meanwhile, in the course of discussions, a thesis about «national self-determination» was promoted. Not only national and territorial autonomy but the independence of national territories was articulated by this idea, and the Kazakhs were absolutely satisfied by that. However, some large Siberian ethnic groups, and in particular, the Buryats, opposed the idea of «federalization of Siberia» and mostly supported the position of the cadets in their approach to the national issue. The Buryats' concepts represented the «territorial-exterritorial model» aimed at the introduction of the «national self-government». It meant self-government organization on the territorial principle at the lower level, and on the exterritorial – at the all-Siberian level. For the Yakuts, the goal of introducing local self-government had the key importance. For ethnic minorities and diasporas, introducing the institute of «representative units» (or missions) at all levels of the legislative and executive power was the most important issue. The position of the Siberian Tatars that was mostly confessional and not national, was reduced to national-cultural autonomy, but in general, ideologically evolved in the direction of consolidation of the Tatar ethnic group.

It was a position of title ethnic groups that provided the solution the major issue – the territorial integrity of Siberia. During the work of the Siberian parliament – the Siberian regional Duma – the solution of the national issue was treated in the framework of the socialist revolutionaries concepts of the «national self-determination». As a result, «nationalists-autonomists» (national faction in the Siberian Regional Duma) were not included in a wider Siberian government where a Ministry on nationalities was created. It was planned to widely discuss the national issue on the Congress of the peoples of Siberia in the spring of 1918. There were plans to elaborate a draft solution for each aboriginal ethnic group. It would contribute to further ethnic consolidation of the title population of Siberia. However, the discussion of the national concept for Siberia «from below» did not happen, and it determined its further decision «from above».

The regionalists considered a creation of federation as a way to solve national territorial issue in Russia, that meant federalization on not only of all the country but also Siberia based on the territorial and national principles. They saw a solution of the national issue in implementation of the idea of the territorial, exterritorial and national cultural autonomy. On practice, such scenarios might have contributed to all-Russian national state and Siberian regional consolidation, not excluding ethnic, religious and other identities. It would create a basis for overcoming discriminations regarding title population of the national regions, in parallel with the consolidation of the society on all-Russian grounds.

In the situation of collapse and crisis of the Russian state system caused by the revolutions and the Civil War, the outlying districts demonstrated all the possible potential of regional disintegration. At that time the unity of Russia for the first time was put on severe trial. The political decentralisation of the state, called forth by the October Revolution and Civil War, leading to weakening of the central power, stirred up the growth of centrifugal tendencies in the outlying districts and, as a consequence, fall of the Russian State. The regional autarchy was the fallout of unstable military and political situation and deep economic crisis. The regional authorities tried to formulate the concept of self-survival of the territories based on the idea of separatism, independence or autonomy. Both the political opposition to the Bolshevist Centre and the local economic interests were the base of this concept. During that period, the economic programme of the Russian regionalism had just started being drawn in all details. The protracted crisis intensified the destruction of peripheral connections at all levels and the way out of that was seen only at the expense of the region. The Siberian priorities dictated the necessity of maximum political autarchy, building up a system of economic management at the regional level, reviving inter-regional interaction, replacing the all-Russian relations that were lost with the fall of the country.

The ideas of regional development, formulated in the situation of crisis, surpassed the most courageous expectations formulated by regionalism for more than half a century of its existence. The political federal-

ism, without getting legal base during the period of maximum revolutionary character in Russia, at first led to the consolidation of authoritarian tendencies in Siberia, and later on gave rise to a new spurt of regionalism in the Far East at the final stage of the Civil War. Having no territorial base during this period, the regionalism could not offer a precise political concept, its ideology was abound with populist and often contradictory propositions.

After the end of the Civil War the Soviet authority undertook measures for strengthening the principles of centralisation and cementing the unity of the country, by working on the task of integration of the regions into a single space. Against the background of a common anti-Soviet mood, various circles of emigrants tried to evaluate the changes that were going on in Russia. By observing that the USSR was a federal republic in its form, the emigrants agreed upon the view that not federal, but centripetal tendencies would be prevalent. The regionalists as one of those who for the first time started to speak on the indecisiveness of the regional problems in the USSR, by emphasising the specificity of the Soviet federal system, one-sidedness of economic interaction of the Centre with the regions, non-uniformity in the development of territories, contradiction between the administrative and economic division of the provinces. In the regionalists' opinion, the Soviet policy on the regions was also made on the economic exploitation of Siberia. While campaigning for extensive local self-government, the regionalists cautioned that the interests of the region and the extent of authority conferred on it were exclusively determined by the centre, changing according to the «interests of the State». The border between a federation and a unitary government, in their perceptions, is not necessarily conditional, only strong regions are capable of maintaining the stability of the state by resisting the centrifugal tendencies and development of separatism. The regionalists opposed to unitarism and supremacy (Russian or Soviet) of the principle of federalism and regionalism as the base of a state system. The historical practice as a whole showed that the federal principles are ineffective there, where the state system try on the powerful influence of national-regional factor. The federation should only preserve the cultural-national autonomy. The experience of regionalisation from above is negative, since it is based on unitarism and centralisation, while integration coming from below, based on socio-economic cooperation between the federal centre and the regions enables to keep multi-level agreed relations. But, on the whole the regionalists did not formulate political, economic and social bases of a federal state system to the full extent.

In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the situation of the collapse of the USSR and disintegration processes in Russia, a phenomenon of neo-regionalism developed in Siberia. It was a set of political and socio-cultural approaches to the problems of federalism, regional development and interregional interaction. At the same time, there is an opinion that modern regionalism is a Siberian option of nationalism. Russian authorities approached and approach the discourse on autonomy with caution, considering it a manifestation of separatism, while the variant of «disintegration according to a regional scenario» is today considered the most destructive possible. The modern political system of the country does not permit the creation of political institutions on the basis of region or ethnicity.

It should be mentioned, that regionalism did not represents single doctrine. It is rather a sum total of the views based on different concepts on the content of the process of decentralisation. The key problems for regionalism were the formation of federal relations in Russia, shaping the foundations for a balanced regional policy and developing local self-government. Considerable influence on the development of the doctrine was exerted, on the one hand, by the idea of territorial integration, the subject of which would be entire Siberia, since the territory itself has powerful integrating potential (which arouse serious objections on the part of the opponents of regionalism), and on the other, by the idea of substantial disintegration, which would enable to build up mutual relations between the centre and the regions on the basis of dialogue, what conforms to the basic principles of federalism.

However, by the course of its history regionalism never became a single ideological-cum-political movement, by representing the totality of political and socio-cultural approaches to the problems of regional development and interregional interaction. Emerging in the 19<sup>th</sup> century simultaneously with the analogous trends in Europe, the representatives of which also campaigned for strengthening the role of province in politics and economy of one or the other state, the Siberian regionalists were able to lay down the basic contents of Russian variant of regional autonomy, after seeing not only the spatial-geographical sizes of the Russian provinces, but also the independent economic, political, historical-cultural and social formations, the distinctive nuclei of stability of the Russian state system. In the field of theory, Siberian Regionalism (Oblastnichestvo) was and remains the basis for a productive analysis of colonial problems, the problems on moderniza-

tion and utilization of resources of the autonomies, ethno-national policy and assimilation processes, as well as producing federal and regional concepts.

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Н.Н. Аблажей

## Сібір облыстарының өңірлік және ұлттық жобалары

Сібір тәуелсіздігі тұжырымдамасы Сібірдің аймақ ретінде бірегейлігінің базалық тезистеріне айналасында қалыптасқан. Аймақтық автономия идеясына негізделген федерализм, ресей мемлекеттігінің үлгісіндегі базалық тірегі болып қарастырылған, ал Сібірге қатысты оның отаршылдық жағдайын еңсеруге қатысты тәсіл ретінде қарастырылды. 1917 жылғы төңкеріс және содан кейінгі елдің күйреуі сепаратизм мен ұлтшылдықтың артуына себепкер болды, алайда түрлі шешімдердің нұсқаларының өмірде туындағанын көрсетті. Облыстар мемлекеттік пен ұлттық құрылым мәселелерінің шешімдерін федерацияны құру (тек Ресейді ғана емес, сондай-ақ аймақтық және ұлттық қағидалары бойынша федерализациялауды алға тартқан) қажеттілігінде, немесе аймақтық, бұрынғы аймақтық не ұлттық-мәдени автономия идеясын жүзеге асыруда деп ойластырды. Тәжірибе жүзінде мұндай жүйеде құру жалпыресейлік ұлттық-мемлекеттік және сібірлік өңірдің біртұтастығына, этникалық, діни және тағы да басқа бірегейлігін есепке ала отырып, ықпал ететін. Бұл жалпыресейлік негізде қоғамның ұлттық аймақтардың жергілікті халқына қатысты алауыздықты еңсеру үшін негізін құрап еді.

*Кілт сөздер:* Ресей империясы, Сібір, отаршылдық саясат, сібір облыстары, сібірлік тұтастығы, сепаратизм, федерация, ұлттық мәселе.

Н.Н. Аблажей

## Региональный и национальный проекты сибирских областников

Концепция сибирского автономизма формировалась вокруг базового тезиса об уникальности Сибири как региона. Федерализм, основанный на идее региональной автономии, рассматривался как базовое основание модели российской государственности, а применительно к Сибири — как метод преодоления ее колониального положения. Революция 1917 г. и последующий развал страны спровоцировали рост сепаратизма и национализма, но одновременно вызвал к жизни различные варианты решения. Областники видели решение вопросов государственного и национального устройства либо в создании федерации (подразумевающей федерализацию не только России, но и Сибири по территориальному и национальному принципам), либо в реализации идеи территориальной, экстерриториальной или национально-культурной автономии. На практике подобные сценарии могли бы способствовать общероссийской национально-государственной и сибирской региональной консолидации, не исключая наличия этнической, религиозной и пр. идентичностей. Это создавало бы основу для преодоления дискриминации в отношении титульного населения национальных регионов, одновременно с консолидацией общества на общероссийских основаниях.

*Ключевые слова:* Российская империя, Сибирь, колониальная политика, сибирское областничество, сибирская идентичность, сепаратизм, федерация, национальный вопрос.

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