

Cahiers du
MONDE RUSSE

Cahiers du monde russe

Russie - Empire russe - Union soviétique et États
indépendants

44/1 | 2003
Varia

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Édition électronique

URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/monderusse/8597>

DOI : 10.4000/monderusse.8597

ISSN : 1777-5388

Éditeur

Éditions de l'EHESS

Édition imprimée

Date de publication : 1 janvier 2003

Pagination : 5-34

ISBN : 2-7132-1812-8

ISSN : 1252-6576

Référence électronique

John P. LeDonne, « Regionalism and constitutional reform 1819-1826 », *Cahiers du monde russe* [En ligne], 44/1 | 2003, mis en ligne le 01 janvier 2007, Consulté le 02 mai 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/monderusse/8597> ; DOI : 10.4000/monderusse.8597

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| Editions de l'EHESS | *Cahiers du monde russe*

2003/1 - Vol 44

ISSN 1252-6576 | ISBN 2713218128 | pages 5 à 34

Pour citer cet article :

—P. LEDONNE J., Regionalism and constitutional reform 1819-1826, *Cahiers du monde russe* 2003/ 1, Vol 44, p. 5-34.

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JOHN P. LEDONNE

REGIONALISM AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM 1819-1826

In two previous articles I discussed the evolution of the post of governor general from the local government reform of the 1770s to the decision of the so-called Committee of December 6, 1826 to put an end to an experiment which remains one of the most original features of imperial administration during that period.¹ Regionalism can assume either one of two forms. One, for which the term regionalization may be a more accurate term, divides the country into regions and redistributes managerial responsibilities between the central government and a regional authority. It takes place within the existing political system and does not seek to alter its foundations. I used the terms “concentration” and “deconcentration” to indicate the degrees of integration of central and regional agencies. As a rule, ministerial administration was deconcentrated because there was no powerful prime minister capable of forcing the adoption and execution of a common policy without ministers being allowed to resort to a higher authority. Such horizontal deconcentration was complemented by vertical deconcentration, when individual ministers delegated certain powers to their local agents at the regional or provincial level. It remained deconcentration as long as the totality of managerial responsibilities remained within the individual services. But deconcentration became decentralization when some of these responsibilities were turned over to elected representatives, and various degrees of decentralization created various degrees of autonomy. Such decentralization, if allowed to go beyond limits acceptable to the political leadership, carried the possibility of creating autonomous regions and even a federal state. Regionalization would become political regionalism.²

1. J. P. LeDonne, “Russian governors general, 1775-1825. Territorial or functional administration?,” *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 42, 1 (2001): 5-30, and “Administrative regionalization in the Russian empire, 1802-1826,” *ibid.*, 43, 1 (2002): 5-34.

2. J. Masson, *Provinces, départements, régions. L'organisation administrative de la France d'hier et demain* (Paris, 1984): 7, 455. For an additional definition of these terms see J. Charles-Brun, *Le Régionalisme* (Paris, 1911): 229-237.

I intend to keep this discussion within the parameters established in the preceding two articles. Rather than examine the ideas and concepts which may have influenced the authors of regionalist projects — this has been done by other scholars — I will analyze them to determine how they dealt with the issue of concentration and deconcentration. These three essays seek to demonstrate that no solution was possible — or remains possible when we follow Putin’s regional policy — until a viable equilibrium was constructed between the requirements of concentration and deconcentration, of centralization and decentralization, and an acceptable solution was found to the intractable dilemma between functional and territorial administration.

Regionalism was in the air during Alexander I’s reign. It was at times very expansive, as when Adam Czartoryski and others dreamed of a federation of Slavic peoples under Russia’s leadership,³ but it acquired concrete form following the annexation of Finland in 1809 and of the Duchy of Warsaw in 1815. Regionalization, in the 1816 project for example, created administrative regions based largely on natural or geographical regions, the basins of major rivers. But Poland and Finland exhibited in addition a strong regional particularism, and it would have been politically counter-productive to extend to them the local government reforms of the 1770s which had been introduced uniformly throughout the empire by the end of Catherine’s reign. They did not have to be created by administrative fiat: they already existed, and required the imperial government to adjust its policies accordingly. It has been pointed out that the re-incorporation of Alsace-Lorraine into a unitary France after 1918 threatened to create major juridical problems, which could nevertheless be solved if the region took its place along similar units in a regionalized France.⁴ A similar situation prevailed in the Russian empire after 1815, of which Gurev⁵ was aware in his comments on the 1816 project.⁶ Three possibilities presented themselves to the imperial government: to leave things unchanged, with a sharp distinction between Poland and Finland on the one hand, and the rest of the empire on the other; to impose a uniform administrative infrastructure in Finland and Poland, thereby violating their “privileges” and arousing a dangerous reaction; to accept the implications of a uniform political regionalism by extending to the empire as a whole the constitutional system and rights of the Polish Kingdom. This third option inspired the Novosiltsev project. Regionalism was also very much a part of the Decembrist political program, despite differences among the various members of the conspiracy. Muravev and Pestel approached the political future of the empire from opposite perspectives, but both were regionalists at heart. For them, regionalism

3. G. Vernadsky, *La Charte constitutionnelle de l’an 1820* (Paris, 1933): 13-14, 16, 28-29. *Mémoires du prince Adam Czartoryski*, 2 vol. (Paris, 1887), 2: 65. See also W. Feldman, *Geschichte der politischen Ideen in Polen seit dessen Teilungen (1795-1914)* (München — Berlin, 1917): 61, 72-74.

4. H. Hauser, *Le problème du régionalisme* (Paris, 1924): 11.

5. In the transliteration of Russian words I keep the soft sign but omit it in the spelling of Russian names: Gurev instead of Gur’ev, etc.

6. J. P. LeDonne, “Administrative regionalization,” *art. cit.*

was an essential feature of a radical transformation of the empire's political constitution which went much further than Novosiltsev ever intended.

The interest in regionalism was also stimulated by the emergence of regional capitals, sharply differentiated from provincial centers in their zone of influence. Some were military headquarters, others were growing commercial cities carving out economic regions from the surrounding territory, still others were both. Odessa was becoming the commercial capital of New Russia, or the southern Ukraine, Tiflis was both a military headquarters and a regional market; so was Orenburg. During most of the eighteenth century, Siberia had been administered from Tobolsk, but by the 1810s, this "capital of Siberia" was being supplanted by Omsk and Irkutsk which looked in opposite directions: Omsk looked south toward the Kazakh steppe and the Altai Mountains, Irkutsk looked east toward the Pacific, where Russian commercial activities were increasing. In "western" and "eastern" Siberia as well as in the Caucasus — three immense territories — regionalism was associated with a perception of separateness from Russia proper.⁷ Speranskii's project for the two Siberias was the only one ever to be carried out and was even extended to the Caucasus. Let us now examine how these projects differed from the 1816 project and the Balashev experiment described in the preceding article.

I

Nikolai Novosiltsev (1761-1836) was the illegitimate son of Maria, the sister of Alexander Stroganov (1734-1811) married to Anna Vorontsova, the daughter of Mikhail, deputy, then ranking minister of Foreign Affairs (chancellor) from 1744 to 1765. After she left him, Stroganov married Ekaterina Trubetskaia, one of the great beauties of her day, a granddaughter of Nikita Trubetskoi, field marshal and procurator general (1740-1760). She too left him for a former favorite of Catherine II, Ivan Rimskii-Korsakov. Stroganov was president of the Academy of Arts and director of the Public Library from 1800 until his death. Maria died soon after the birth of her son, and Novosiltsev was raised in his uncle's house.⁸ After some military service and four years of university studies in London, he was appointed in 1802 deputy justice minister, later regional delegate (curator) of the

7. It was a common expression among travellers to say they were going to Siberia (from Russia) and to Russia (from Siberia). For a general examination of the reform projects during Alexander's reign, see G. von Rauch, *Russland. Staatliche Einheit und nationale Vielfalt* (München, 1953): 49-72.

8. Dolgorukov's genealogies show Maria Stroganov married to Nikolai Ustinovich Novosiltsev. Our Nikolai (Nikolaevich), whoever his father was, must have been recognized by Maria's husband and given his name. It was also logical that after her death, the boy should have been raised in his uncle's house. With such a troubled background, it is understandable that he never married: see P. Dolgorukov, *Rossiiskaia rodoslovnaia kniga*, 4 vol. (Petersburg, 1854-1857), here 2: 208-214. See also "Stroganov, A.," in *Russkii biograficheskii slovar' (RBS)*, 19 (1909): 485-488. On Novosiltsev, see O. Przhetslavskii, "Kaleidoskop vospominanii 1811-1871," *Russkii arkhiv*, 1872, Kn. 2: 1705-1769, here 1708-1742, 1749-1750; and "Zapiski Grecha," *Russkii arkhiv*, 1871, 289-89 (pagination is hopelessly garbled), here 302-306.

Education Ministry in Petersburg (1803-1807) and then Vilno (1824-1832). He was also president of the Academy of Sciences from 1803 to 1810. But his major appointment came in 1815, when he was sent to the Polish Kingdom as Imperial Commissioner, a post in which he became responsible for reconciling the interests of the kingdom with those of the empire, while the emperor's brother, Constantine, became commander in chief of the Polish Army. From then on, Novosiltsev operated as Alexander's civil proconsul in Warsaw, a kind of super-governor general with inspectorial rather than managerial functions. Like his uncle, he belonged to a highly educated segment of the ruling elite trained in the arts and humanities rather than administrative procedures or the rough-and-ready life of many of his peers in the army. One of his closest but much younger friends was the writer Petr Viazemskii, who belonged to another branch of the family that had given Alexander Viazemskii, Catherine II's procurator general (1764-1793), whose wife Elena was a daughter of Nikita Trubetskoi and Ekaterina's aunt. Georges Vernadsky called Novosiltsev, perhaps with some exaggeration, "un homme d'État de grande envergure, d'esprit pénétrant et de volonté puissante."⁹ He remained in Poland until the uprising of 1830-1831, and became chairman of the State Council and the Committee of Ministers in 1834, two years before his death.

The Polish Kingdom (*tsarstvo*) created in 1815 by the Congress of Vienna was given a constitutional charter of 165 articles by Alexander I.¹⁰ It called for the appointment of a viceroy, the election of a parliament (*sejm*) and a state council, and the creation of an executive of five ministries called commissions. However, it contained no provisions for a separate commander in chief or an Imperial Commissioner, two crucial positions which were therefore "unconstitutional." The Charter also included a "bill of rights" guaranteeing freedom of the press; freedom of movement; personal security against unlawful arrest, detention, and punishment; security of property against confiscation; the use of Polish in the army, the administration, and the courts; and the selection of Poles to fill public positions in the kingdom.

The first and only viceroy, Józef Zajaczek, was a frenchified Polish general with a French wife.¹¹ He died in 1826 and was never replaced. According to the Charter, he represented the emperor in his absence as king of Poland; his person was sacred and inviolable; he was the chief executive, and justice was administered in his name; he approved the budget and appropriated funds to carry it out. But the

9. G. Vernadsky, *La Charte...*, *op. cit.*: 67.

10. The text of the Charter is in *Dnevnik zakonov tsarstva Pol'skogo* (Warsaw, 1810-1871), 1: 2-103. There was some debate about the translation of *Royaume de Pologne*. *Korolevstvo* meant nothing to the Russians (while *velikii kniaz'*, the emperor's title in Finland, had historical connotations). They eventually chose *tsarstvo*: see O. Przhetslavskii, "Kaleidoskop..." *art. cit.*: 1721-1722. More than semantics was involved: the emperor's official title placed Poland between the Astrakhan and Siberian khanates! (*tsar Kazanskii*, *tsar Astrakhanskii*, *tsar Pol'skii*, *tsar Sibirskii*). In other words, Poland had been transformed into a region of the Russian empire.

11. P. Maikop, "Tsarstvo Pol'skoe posle Venskogo kongressa," *Russkaia starina*, 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1902): 183-194, here 192-193. See also O. Przhetslavskii, "Kaleidoskop..." *art. cit.*: 1735.

command of the Polish army and the appointment of its officers; the grant of pardons; the power to make war and conclude treaties; the grant of patents of nobility; and the appointment of senators, state councillors, ministers, provincial presidents, judges, bishops, and priests belonged exclusively to the emperor.

The Polish Kingdom constituted a region of the empire, divided into eight provinces (*voevodstva*) with a population of about 3.5 million, or about the size of Balashev's region.¹² Each province was divided into districts (*povety*) and administered by a commission headed by a president, who coordinated the activities of the various services. Noble landowners in each of the 77 districts, other landowners, merchants, priests, and teachers in each of the 51 municipal communes met to elect a deputy (*posol*), and these deputies gathered in Warsaw to form the Chamber of Deputies which met every other year for thirty days. Their mandate was for six years. They passed legislation by majority vote. The Senate was the parliament's second chamber, consisting of "imperial and royal princes of the blood" — including Constantine — bishops, voevodas, and castellans. They were appointed by the emperor for life and had to meet certain property qualifications. The Senate also passed laws, but laws could not be promulgated by the viceroy unless they had been accepted without amendments by both chambers. The viceroy and the emperor had veto power. The region's executive branch was an Administrative Council consisting of the viceroy and five ministers (War; Interior and Police; Justice; Finance; and Education). It was a consultative body, in which only the viceroy made the final decisions, but each of his decisions had to be countersigned by the relevant minister who assumed responsibility for its legality. The Council also met in general assembly with a number of other appointed high officials to form the State Council: its function was to discuss and draw up legislative projects and to make final decisions on committing officials to trial, except those who came under the jurisdiction of a High Court about which the Charter had little to say. Such were the basic provisions of the Polish Charter. They must be kept in mind when we turn to Novosiltsev's project.

It was called a "constitutional charter" (*gosudarstvennaia ustavnaiia gramota*) of the Russian empire. Its origin must be traced to 1818, when Alexander I travelled to Warsaw and delivered a speech before the Parliament, in which he hinted in the most cryptic fashion that he might some day extend the liberal institutions of the Polish Charter "sur toutes les contrées que la Providence a confiées à mes soins".¹³ Novosiltsev was invited to draw up a project restructuring the management of the empire in accordance with liberal principles. The Charter was originally written in French and translated into Russian by Viazemskii, who served in Novosiltsev's chancery. It was ready by October 1819, one month before Alexander appointed Balashev to Riazan.

12. *The historical atlas of Poland* (Warsaw, 1986), text, 21. I gave the population of Balashev's region as 1.5 million males.

13. The speech is in P. Maikop, "Tsarstvo..." *art. cit.*, *Russkaia starina*, 1 (Jan.-March 1903): 419-436, here 422-425. The French original is in M. Bogdanovich, *Istoriia tsarstvovaniia Imperatora Aleksandra I i Rossii v ego vremia*, 6 vol. (Petersburg, 1869-1871), here 5, annex, 78-79.

The emperor never signed it, however. Two copies were found in Novosiltsev's papers by Polish insurgents who promptly published it in Warsaw in 1831.¹⁴

The Charter of 1819 consisted of 191 articles and took up the future organization of the empire at the central, regional, and provincial levels.¹⁵ It proposed to divide the empire into regions (*namestnichestva*), excluding Petersburg and Moscow provinces which would continue to be administered separately.¹⁶ Each region consisted of a number of provinces divided into districts (*uezdy*) managed by a board (*pravlenie*), chaired by the land captain and a number of assessors; it was subordinated directly to the governor. At the provincial level, the agents of various services were grouped into two sections, one chaired by the governor, the other by the vice-governor as chairman of the treasury chamber. Both sections met in general assembly chaired by the governor, and only his decisions had legal force: the role of the other members was purely consultative. Thus Novosiltsev went well beyond the 1816 project and Balashev's timid reforms in giving full support to territorial, concentrated, administration, in which the services were integrated into an administrative agency with universal jurisdiction. The general assembly was empowered to annul the decisions of the district boards if it found them in violation of the law and to recommend the removal of officials to the viceroy.

Concentrated and territorial administration was also evident at the regional level. The regional executive consisted of the *namestnik* (viceroy) and a council, divided into a governing council and a general assembly. The parallel with the Polish State Council was obvious. The governing council was a kind of regional committee of ministers, consisting as it did of the regional delegates of individual ministries, of which there were ten, although the foreign ministry was represented only in the border regions. Each regional delegate operated in accordance with a separate statute, but played only an advisory role: final decisions were made by the *namestnik*, but they had to be countersigned (*skrepleny*) by the relevant delegate,

14. G. Vernadsky, *La Charte...*, *op. cit.*: 72-86. The text was later published in *Istoricheskii sbornik*, 3 vol. (London, 1859-1861, reprinted Moscow, 1971), 2: 191-238. See also N. Shil'der, *Imperator Aleksandr Pervyi. Ego zhizn' i tsarstvovanie*, 4 vol. (Petersburg, 1897-1898), 4: 499-526. See also *Russkii arkhiv*, 3 (Sept.-Dec. 1905): 102-128.

15. For an analysis of the Charter, see G. Vernadsky, *La Charte...*, *op. cit.*: 131-257.

16. The various versions of the Charter refer to "an attached list" of regions, but it was not published (or was not found). There is evidence, however, that there were ten and that "les régions situées aux extrémités de l'empire et dont plusieurs sont encore habitées par des peuples nomades" would not be included: these had to be the Orenburg Territory and Siberia. Once Poland and Finland were included, there would remain only eight for the 24 provinces of Russia proper (excluding Petersburg and Moscow), the Baltic provinces, Belorussia and the former Polish provinces, the Ukraine and the Caucasus. They would be of different sizes according to "les avantages réels de chacun d'eux." See Th. Schiemann, "Eine Konstitution für Russland vom Jahre 1819," *Historische Zeitschrift*, 72 (1894): 65-70, and G. Vernadsky, "Zur Geschichte des Entwurfs einer Konstitution für Russland v. Jahre 1819," *ibid.*, 135 (1927): 423-427. Mironenko states that the list of 12 regions found among the papers of the Committee of December 1826 belonged to the Novosiltsev's project. This could hardly be true: why, for example, did the list not include Poland (and Finland) but include Siberia and the Orenburg Territory?: S. Mironenko, *Samoderzhavie i reformy. Politicheskaiia bor'ba v Rossii v nachale XIX v.* (Moscow, 1989): 181-182 and 192-198.

even if he disagreed with it: in such a case, he would not be held responsible if the decision was found to be unlawful. On the other hand, the *namestnik* could not act alone: his orders were orders in council. The governing council annulled any decision of the provincial assemblies found in violation of the laws and ministerial regulations and was empowered, in case of clear abuses and threats to public order, to dismiss and commit to trial officials in any agency, except the governor, the vice-governor, and the agents of various services: in these cases, it needed the approval of the central Committee of Ministers. As to the general assembly, it was an enlarged council consisting, in addition, of members elected in the provinces forming the region and confirmed by the emperor on the Committee of Ministers' recommendation. It was not in permanent session, but met only at the time of the election of the regional parliament.

It discussed matters submitted to its consideration by the emperor or the Committee of Ministers, such as the assessment of taxes and regional economic development. It drew up projects of laws concerning the region, confirmed decisions to commit officials to trial, examined the annual reports (*otchety*) submitted by the regional delegates, and submitted to the emperor a general report on the condition of the region. The project accepted a broader deconcentration of functional operations by the services and a greater degree of decentralization than was found in the 1816 project, which only called on the *namestnik* to invite outsiders known for their competence in matters under discussion. The willingness to concede a substantial level of autonomy to the regions found its expression in article 56, according to which the authority of the *namestnik* ended in the presence of the emperor, who then dealt directly with the separate service delegates or the council as a whole. This provision was also found in the Polish Charter: it implied that the emperor would periodically visit the regions in his capacity as inspector general of the empire, a reasoning close to that implied by Gurev in his comments on the central management of the empire.¹⁷

Novosiltsev's acceptance of decentralization was unprecedented. The region not only had a partially elected executive; it also had a bicameral parliament (*sejm*). The use of Polish terminology shows how far his project was based on the Polish Charter. The upper chamber consisted of one of the imperial Senate departments; the other was the regional Chamber of Deputies (*zemskaia posol'skaia palata*). The deputies were elected by district assemblies of the nobility at the rate of three per district and by municipal assemblies consisting of non-nobles meeting certain property requirements. In contrast with the Polish Charter, bishops and priests were conspicuously excluded. These regional parliaments examined drafts of imperial legislation (if the emperor chose to ask their opinion), but their major function was to discuss regional legislation submitted by the regional council, to apportion taxes, discuss tax cuts or tax increases, draw up a regional budget, and discuss other matters which the emperor wished to bring to their attention. The project left undetermined the extent of the region's legislative power: local laws were presumably sent to the emperor for promulgation through the *namestnik*'s office and that of the region's

17. J. P. LeDonne, "Administrative regionalization", *art. cit.*

state secretary who resided in Petersburg. Here Novosiltsev was probably inspired by the Finnish model as well.¹⁸ The role of the Senate's regional department may have been to determine if regional legislation was in conformity with imperial norms. Much was left vague in the project; subsequent statutes would fill in the details — and, in the Byzantine world of elite politics, transform it beyond recognition. What is clear, however, is that Novosiltsev was laying the foundations of a federal state, a danger which Gurev had already spotted in his comments on the implications of the 1816 project. There were even regional supreme courts (*verkhovnye sudy*), consisting of rotating senators appointed by the emperor and permanent members chosen from among the chairmen of the appellate courts whose identity was unclear. Their decisions and sentences were final, except in crimes against the emperor, the imperial family, and the state, like treason and rebellion.

Novosiltsev's project was original for another reason: it restructured the imperial government in Petersburg to create a full symmetry between central and regional agencies. A state council consisted of a governing council or committee of ministers and a general assembly. The emperor chaired the committee of ten ministers, whose role was only consultative; he could also delegate his power to whomever he chose. The committee was empowered to annul any decision made in the regional councils if it was found in violation of imperial laws and ministerial orders. Whether this power as guardian of the law extended to the annulment of local laws passed in the regional councils was unclear, although it was implied: while the committee was not a legislative agency, the presence of the emperor made it into one, since the emperor was the source of all legislation. The general assembly consisted in addition of other permanent members and the emperor's personal secretaries, presumably those who represented the regions in the capital. Its powers included the draft of imperial legislation, the settlement of disputes among the ministries, the indictment on recommendation of the committee of ministers of officials found guilty of crimes committed in office; and the discussion of general questions submitted by a minister or the emperor himself.

The imperial parliament, called *seim* after the Polish usage, or *duma*, was also bicameral. The upper chamber consisted of the Senate department sitting in Petersburg (or Moscow, implying that the parliament could meet in either capital), to which the emperor would add a number of senators from two other departments for the duration of the session. The deputies of the lower chamber were elected at the same time as those of the regional chambers. Like the Polish *sejm*, the imperial parliament was summoned by the emperor every five years and sat for thirty days. It

18. Poland and Finland were represented in Petersburg by state secretaries with direct access to the emperor: Robert Reh binder for Finland, Ignacy Sobolewski (later Stefan Grabowski) for Poland: E. Amburger, *Geschichte der Behördenorganisation Russlands von Peter dem Grossen bis 1917* (Leiden, 1966): 426 and 437. For Finland, see P. Scheibert, *Volk und Staat in Finnland in der ersten Hälfte des vorigen Jahrhunderts* (Breslau, 1941): 38-47. Curiously enough, Janet Hartley does not discuss the Novosiltsev project in her article with a challenging title: "The 'Constitution' of Finland and Poland in the reign of Alexander I: Blueprints for reforms in Russia?" in M. Branch, J. Hartley, and A. Mączak, ed., *Finland and Poland in the Russian Empire. A comparative study* (London, 1995): 41-59.

passed by majority vote legislation introduced by the emperor or the committee of ministers, and the emperor promulgated or vetoed it once it had been passed by both chambers. The imperial government also had its supreme court consisting of senators and other persons appointed by the emperor, with a procurator general as imperial prosecutor (*gosudarstvennyi presledovatel'*) to try all offenses against the imperial family and the state and those of high officials brought to trial by the Senate. The role of this new Senate was unclear. In addition to senators appointed for life who had served in the military or civil establishment and whose real property yielded a revenue of at least 1000 silver rubles, it included the grand dukes (who were three at the time) who became *ex officio* members at the age of 18. Its membership could not exceed one-fourth of all deputies elected to the imperial and regional chambers. It was divided into departments, one in Petersburg, another in Moscow, the others in each of the regional capitals. Novosiltsev made it an upper chamber only when the Chamber of Deputies was in session, while saying elsewhere that the upper chamber consisted only of the enlarged Petersburg department: some editing was needed. At other times, its duties were unspecified.

And finally, there was the emperor, the source of all authority, whether civil or military, combining in his person the legislative, executive, and judicial power, who appointed all officers, diplomatic envoys, and higher civil officials. But he also governed his empire on the basis of laws (*zakony*), both imperial and regional (*osobnnyye mestnye*) which established permanent norms (*nepremennye nachala*); organic statutes (*ustavy* and *uchrezhdeniia*); and orders (*ukazy, reskripty*). And these laws guaranteed, as they did in the Polish Kingdom, a "bill of rights" (*ruchatel'stvo*), but one somewhat less generous than the one included in the Polish Charter.

Novosiltsev's charter was a truly original document, different from the 1816 project in its ambitious scope, its internal consistency, and its determination to face the crucial dilemma between functional and territorial administration. Its center of gravity was no longer the imperial center but the regional capitals, as befitted an attempt to extend to the empire as a whole the institutions of the Polish Kingdom. Nearly half a century earlier, Catherine II had borrowed from the institutions of the Baltic provinces in her organic Statute of 1775 and the Charter of the Nobility, which were then extended to those provinces, where they modified those same institutions.¹⁹ A similar attempt was implicit in Novosiltsev's project: to use the institutions of the Polish Kingdom or "region" to draw up a regional statute for the empire which would then be extended to Poland and Finland.²⁰ Such an attempt

19. J. P. LeDonne, *Ruling Russia. Politics and administration in the age of absolutism 1762-1796* (Princeton, 1984): 329.

20. There is no doubt about this: in a 1820 memorandum Novosiltsev stated that there would be no need to retain the Polish Charter once the constitutional charter had taken effect in the empire. Poland would be administered just like any other *namestnichestvo*, but with its civil, criminal, and procedural codes and its army organization. Anyway, the constitutional charter admitted the existence of "local regional laws." See S. Askenazy, *Rosya-Polska 1815-1830* (Lwów, 1907): 188-189. The Russian edition of this work *Tsarstvo Pol'skoe 1815-1830 gg.* (Moscow, 1915) does not include the annexes of which this document was a part; see, however, 67-68 for a truncated version.

was bound to fail both in Poland and the empire because it was revolutionary and ran counter to all the traditions of Russian administrative history. The Charter of 1819 opted for territorial administration at both the provincial and regional level, concentrating decision-making in the governor and the *namestnik* in council — while the imperial government since the 1720s had emphasized functional administration by sector or service organized hierarchically under the authority of service chiefs in the capital. But Novosiltsev's views reflected similar concerns among other high officials of his day that the increasing complexity of government required greater coordination of the various services at the district, provincial, and regional levels, without which management would become leaderless. Their concerns could not break the resistance of the ministries, where the sense of turf and obsession with sectorial empire-building already threatened to become the bane of the Russian empire. And, as Gurev had warned, such attempts at creating a federal structure would violate the Polish Charter of 1815 and the settlement of 1809 with Finland, thereby arousing opposition in the model regions. There was a precedent in the turmoil caused in the Baltic provinces by the introduction of the 1775 statute.

The regional governments in Novosiltsev's charter were truly managerial — there was none of that ambivalence found in Russian discussions of "administration" and "inspection." Moreover, they were decentralized, including elected personnel who took an active part in the management of their region and who, with the passage of time, were certain to nurture in regional legislations, especially in the Baltic and Ukrainian provinces, the development of regional identities — a terrifying possibility evoking among the imperial elite nightmarish visions of the age of appanages (*udely*). Russia's political and administrative tradition called for the deconcentration of power at the center — so that the spoils could be better apportioned. Catherine's reign had been an exception: the "ministries" had been abolished and the spoils were to be had in the provinces, but the ministerial reform had returned the center of gravity to the imperial capital. The principles which inspired Novosiltsev's charter were not unlike those behind Catherine's great reforms — concentration with some decentralization, concentrated territorial administration, symmetry between the center and the provinces — but Alexander's reign was a different age, and the Charter of 1819, for all its originality and visionary scope, was an anachronism.

II

Novosiltsev's constitutional charter was a revolutionary document — in spite of the Austrian ambassador's belief that it was not so much "un projet de constitution qu'un changement de l'ordre de gouvernement"²¹ — with far-reaching implications for the management of the Russian empire. It had to appeal to an emperor who since his youth, much of which spent under the influence of his Swiss

21. A. Stern, "Ergänzung zu der Mitteilung 'Eine Konstitution für Russland vom Jahre 1819'," *Historische Zeitschrift*, 73 (1894): 284-287, here 286.

teacher La Harpe, had been receptive to lofty political ideals, but who was also intensely jealous of his autocratic power, because it so largely depended on the acquiescence of a ruling elite of which he always felt the prisoner.²² Gurev's comments on the far more modest 1816 project must have given him a sense of the opposition he would encounter, and it was revealing that Balashev was sent to Riazan in 1820 without an instruction and even without a mission to carry out the project.²³ In such circumstances, Novosiltsev's charter had no chance: Gurev had been right in pointing out that Poland and Finland were "totally independent states" with traditions alien to those of the Russian elite. On the other hand, the project did not die following Gurev's comments: it would in fact be carried out, not in the empire as a whole as originally intended, but in distant Siberia, where it may have inspired Speranskii's reforms of 1822.

Mikhail Speranskii (1772-1839) was born the son of a village priest in Vladimir province, but had the good fortune to draw the attention of the Court chaplain, who was once a guest at a nearby estate. The chaplain facilitated Speranskii's transfer to the Alexander Nevskii Academy in Petersburg. After a short career teaching mathematics and philosophy, he was hired in 1796 as private secretary to Prince Alexei Kurakin, who soon afterwards became procurator general, still the top civilian post in the elite. In 1802, he transferred to one of the departments of the Interior Ministry, and in 1808, he succeeded Novosiltsev as deputy justice minister. In the meantime, he had become known to Alexander I who appreciated his sharp mind and clear prose, and he quickly became the emperor's closest adviser. In 1809, he was appointed state secretary for Finnish affairs following the annexation of Finland, while remaining chairman of a commission in charge of bringing some order in the chaos of imperial legislation. The following year, he was promoted to imperial secretary (*gosudarstvennyi sekretar'*) or chief of the chancery of the new State Council, a position which made him "dans le fait premier ministre et peut-être même Ministre unique."²⁴ But not for long. In 1812, he became the victim of a conspiracy (in which Balashev was closely involved) and banished to Perm. Four years later, he was appointed governor of Penza, and in March 1819, eight months before Balashev was sent to Riazan, governor general of Siberia. In 1821, he drafted a number of statutes (consisting of 3,020 articles!)²⁵ on the reorganization of the

22. The best example was the emperor's reaction to Seweryn Potocki's attempt to bring to his attention the Senate's objection to the *ukaz* of December 1802 restricting the right of nobles in the army to retire before their promotion to officer rank: *Sochinenie Derzhavina*, 6 (1871): 786-796. On the ruler's dependence on his court and his own appointees, see N. Turgenev, *La Russie et les Russes*, 3 vol. (Paris, 1847), here 2: 271-274. See also Th. Schiemann, "Eine Konstitution...," *art. cit.*: 69.

23. And Boris Nolde was right to point out that there was no connection, as Vernadsky claimed, between the Novosiltsev project and the Balashev experiment: B. Nolde, "Russkii federalizm 1819 goda," in *Dalekoe i blizkoe. Istoricheskie ocherki* (Paris, 1930): 11-16, here 13-14.

24. Joseph de Maistre, the Sardinian ambassador, quoted in M. Raeff, *Michael Speransky. Statesman of Imperial Russia 1772-1839* (The Hague, 1967): 55

25. I. Bychkov, "M.M. Speranskii general'-gubernatorom v Sibiri i vozvrashchenie ego v Peterburg," *Russkaia starina*, 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1902): 35-56, here 46-47.

territory, which took effect the following year. After the accession of Nicholas I, he became chief of the Second Section of the emperor's chancery for the codification of the empire's laws: his title to fame is of course the publication of the Collection of Laws in 1830 and the Digest or Code of imperial legislation in 1832.²⁶ Speranskii (like Arakcheev) was an outsider, who rose to a position in the ruling elite within the Naryshkin-Trubetskoi network (while Arakcheev was a protégé of the Saltykovs), but he never quite fitted there, at least during Alexander's reign. He was the quintessential bureaucrat who believed in the omnipotence of form and procedures "to which he could not give a soul because he himself did not have any."²⁷ At the same time, he had, at least after his banishment, a greater grasp of what was acceptable within the political establishment of the empire than Novosiltsev.

His early activities, however, show little interest in regionalism, even in regionalization. Nevertheless, some features of his work revealed a willingness to reform the management of the empire on political rather than narrower administrative grounds. How much such willingness reflected his own convictions and how much only a desire to please an emperor still toying with liberal ideas must remain moot.

The Plan of Reorganization of 1809 showed little awareness of regional differences.²⁸ The empire was divided into provinces and five *oblasti* (New Russia; the Caucasus; the Don Cossack and Orenburg Territories; and Siberia), where imperial legislation applied, but with certain restrictions justified by local circumstances. It is revealing that Speranskii did not include among them the former provinces of the Polish empire, let alone the Baltic provinces, and obvious that he looked on these *oblasti* as exceptions to the general rule that the administration of the empire was uniform and indivisible. Indeed, Peter Scheibert claims that nowhere in his early writings does one find a distinction between the core and peripheral regions in the sense that the latter needed separate regional institutions.²⁹ Here, Speranskii was a child of the eighteenth century, especially of the culture of Catherine's reign, for which uniformity was a virtue and particularism a vice to be overcome.

In other ways, however, the Plan contained an original vision. Seven years after the creation of the ministries, Speranskii had become a supporter of concentrated administration. The implications of the ministerial reform of 1802 had become evident: the specialized services, above all in the field of financial management,

26. M. Raeff, *Michael Speransky....*, *op. cit.*: *passim*.

27. "Il paraît avoir eu foi en la toute-puissance des ordonnances, des règlements écrits sur le papier, et à l'omnipotence de la forme. Il a pu donner quelques méthodes à ses créations, mais il lui a été impossible de leur donner de l'âme, par la simple raison que lui-même n'avait pas d'âme." N. Turgenev, *La Russie....*, *op. cit.*: 1: 576.

28. M. Speranskii, *Plan gosudarstvennogo preobrazovaniia* (Moscow, 1900), 107-112. For an analysis, see M. Raeff, *Michael Speransky....*, *op. cit.*: 137-153. If only for that reason, it is difficult to agree with Alexander Pypin that Novosiltsev's project developed Speranskii's ideas: *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v Rossii pri Aleksandr I* (4th ed., Petersburg, 1908): 360.

29. P. Scheibert, "Eine Denkschrift Speranskijs zur Reform des Russischen Reiches aus dem Jahre 1811," *Forschungen zur Osteuropäischen Geschichte*, 7 (1959): 26-58, here 47.

had become independent of the governor, who retained control of only the police and had become the local agent of the Interior Ministry. There was no possibility of concerted action at the provincial level. Therefore, all the agencies must be consolidated to form a provincial “government” divided into sections meeting in general assembly under the governor’s chairmanship. All ministerial orders must be sent to him, and he answered to the “ministry” in the same way the section chiefs answered to him. This concern with the necessity to concentrate territorial management in one agency runs through the entire reign of Alexander I — and would remain in evidence for a long time thereafter, indeed until the end of the imperial period. It expressed the steady resistance of some enlightened members of the ruling elite to what was becoming an irresistible current of functional administration and deconcentration at both the provincial and central levels. The two levels were indeed linked: there could be no concentration in the provinces without securing a similar concentration at the imperial center, and there could be no concentration there because of the self-interested opposition of the ministers, the emperor’s “chiefs of staff.”

Speranskii understood this. In the Plan, he skirted the issue of defining “the ministry” perhaps because the Committee of Ministers was still an informal body, perhaps because he already had in mind his 1811 project³⁰ to divide the Senate into two: a Governing Senate would be the Committee of Ministers chaired by the emperor; the Judicial Senate would remain the highest court, but there would also be four Senates in Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, and Kazan, a regionalization that would find its way into the Novosiltsev’s project. But he was not satisfied with concentrating the management of the empire in the Committee of Ministers. He also called for the creation of a State Council, which would replace the Permanent Council (*Nepremennyi Sovet*) appointed in 1801, itself the successor of the “Council attached to Her Majesty’s Court” created in 1768 at the onset of the Turkish war.³¹ The council would be an institution (*soslovie*) concentrating the legislative, executive, and judicial activities of the government, from which recommendations would be sent to the emperor for final decision. Speranskii emphasized its legislative function: all laws and organic statutes would first be examined there before promulgation by the emperor who, in the case of a new law, would state he had taken the council’s advice. It consisted of the Committee of Ministers, the Senate, and other persons. Thus, the entire imperial government became concentrated in a single agency, a perfectly symmetrical arrangement with the concentrated administration in each provincial capital. Moreover, the council had a chancery which drafted the final documents before their submission to the emperor, headed by the imperial secretary. Consciously or not, Speranskii was harking back to Catherine’s reign, when Procurator General Viazemskii had become the empress’s chief executive

30. S. Seredonin, “Speranskii, M.M.,” in *RBS*, 19 (1909): 193-241, here 204-207.

31. *Gosudarstvennyi Sovet 1801-1901* (Petersburg, 1901), I-III, 16; *Istoriia Pravitel’stvennogo Senata za dvesti let, 1711-1911*, 5 vol. (Petersburg, 1911), here 2: 359-360; *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii (PSZ)*, 1st series 1695-1830 (Petersburg, 1830), 45 vol., here vol. 26, 1801, N. 19805; vol. 31, 1810, N. 24064.

officer for the empire's internal administration, a kind of prime minister, a post which Speranskii would occupy for a very short time, which Arakcheev would occupy after 1815, until 1825, when it disappeared as an anachronistic relic of the eighteenth century, not to re-emerge until 1905.

The Plan also sketched a decentralization of imperial management. The provincial "government" was assisted by an elected council: its main functions when it met once a year was to assess the in-kind taxes (*zemskie povinnosti*)³² levied in the provinces and to examine the account of how those of the previous year had been collected and used. There was also a provincial assembly (*duma*), elected indirectly by land and other real property owners chosen at the district level. Its function was purely elective: to elect the provincial council, the courts, and the deputies to the imperial Duma, whose role was barely sketched. All this was very far from the provisions of the Novosiltsev's charter. Nevertheless, the Plan was building on the foundations of Catherine's reforms with their assemblies of the nobility, which had the potential of becoming participants in the formulation of public policy within the ruling class. They might have succeeded without the ministerial reform and with the creation of an elected chamber in the capital — a dream which returned to inspire the reforms of the 1860s.

But the Plan, once again, ignored the region. With the annexation of Finland that same year (1809), Speranskii, as state secretary for the territory, had to determine its place within the empire. To someone raised, like Gurev, in the Russian administrative tradition, Finland, with its population of barely one million people, was comparable to Lithuania³³ and many a Russian province. As such, it should be administered like those provinces or perhaps the *oblasti* to which imperial legislation would eventually apply. Nevertheless, he had to accept the creation of a Finnish government and the appointment of a governor general who, at the emperor's insistence, would report not to the ministers but to him directly. The division of Finland into provinces and the existence of a governor general, whose instruction of 1811 was prepared without Speranskii's participation, created a regional administration unlike any other so far existing in the empire.³⁴

It is difficult to say whether the experience of exile far from the imperial capital and from Vladimir province where he had grown up converted Speranskii to regionalism; whether his reform of the Siberian administration resulted from an opportunity to write a statute for one of the *oblasti* he had listed in 1809; or still whether he hoped that a project of regional administration would help him regain

32. For these see J. P. LeDonne, *Absolutism and ruling class. The formation of the Russian political order 1700-1825* (New York, 1991): 269-275.

33. Michał Oginskii submitted to Alexander I in May 1811 a project to restore the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to be administered by a *namestnik*. The new grand duchy would include not only the Lithuanian provinces of Vilno and Grodno, but also Belorussia as well as the Right-Bank Ukraine which had belonged to the Polish *Korona* at the time of the partitions of 1793 and 1795: see comte d'Angeberg (L. Chodzko), *Recueil des Traités, Conventions et Actes diplomatiques concernant la Pologne 1762-1862* (Paris, 1862): 521-532.

34. S. Seredonin, "Speranskii...", *op. cit.*: 219-226 ; M. Raeff, *Speransky...*, *op. cit.*: 70-75; and P. Scheibert, *Volk und Staat...*, *op. cit.*: 50-54.

favor, at a time when the regional idea was in high favor with the emperor. Whatever the reason, the statutes of 1822 — which were not intended for the rest of the empire but would nevertheless be applied to the Caucasus, another *oblastʹ*, in 1827³⁵ — represented a landmark in the history of Russian regional administration, and would remain in effect in Siberia, with occasional changes, until the end of the imperial period.

Siberia had formed a single region since 1803, but was now divided into two, their capitals in Tobolsk and Irkutsk.³⁶ A governor general was appointed in each, that of Western Siberia being also commander of the Siberian Separate Corps, which consisted of garrisons deployed along the so-called Siberian Lines. The region was divided into three provinces, each headed by a governor and administered by a provincial board, a treasury chamber, and a court. Provinces were divided into districts, themselves consisting of towns and cantons (*volosti*). A major feature of the reform was to concentrate the territorial administration in a single agency at both the regional and provincial levels. There was a council in each provincial capital, consisting of the governor and the three chairmen, together with the provincial procurator as agent of the Justice Ministry. The agents of other services were invited when their expertise was needed. At the regional level, there was a council of six members appointed by the emperor, three of them on the governor general's recommendation as administrative officers (*proizvoditeli del*), the other three on the "ministry's" recommendation.³⁷ Other members were the Tobolsk (or Irkutsk) governor,³⁸ the three chairmen, and the agents of the various services in the provincial (or regional) capital. There were no provisions for outsiders to be invited or for elected assemblies. Concentration was not accompanied by decentralization: the statute was here more restrictive than the 1816 project. Governor general and council together constituted the Main Administration of the region. It had no funds at its disposal, and the council's activity was purely advisory: the governor general acted in council, but had the choice between accepting a unanimous, a majority, or a minority opinion, or even make his own decision irrespective of the council's recommendation.

The authority of the regional council was strengthened by the strict hierarchical subordination of lower agencies to the next higher level: district agencies to the provincial council and the governor, these to the Main Administration. But to what central agency was the latter subordinated? Here, Speranskii had to cope with the thorny issue of how to reconcile concentrated regional and provincial administration with a deconcentrated imperial government. Article 158 stated it

35. *PSZ*, 2nd series, 1830-1881, vol. 2, 1827, N. 878.

36. *PSZ*, vol. 38, 1822, N. 29125. For an analysis of the reform, see M. Raëff, *Siberia and the reforms of 1822* (Seattle, 1956).

37. The table of organization attached to 29125 clarified that the three represented the ministries of Interior, Finance, and Justice. Internal Guard units depended on the commander of the Siberian Separate Corps. The three chairmen were those of the provincial board, the treasury chamber, and the provincial court.

38. *PSZ*, vol. 38, 1822, N. 29125, art. 12-15.

was subordinated to the Senate, but this was largely meaningless. According to his own plans of 1809 and 1811, it would have been subordinated to the State Council and the Governing Senate, but they never assumed their intended form and ministers manage to free themselves from any dependence on anyone but the emperor.³⁹ The only remaining coordinating agency, especially when the emperor was away after 1812, was the Committee of Ministers. In July 1821, a Siberian Committee was appointed, consisting of four ministers, the de facto procurator general or prime minister (Arakcheev), and Speranskii himself, to review the statutes before their promulgation by the emperor.⁴⁰

The committee became the intermediate instance between the emperor and the two Main Administrations: here, the reform borrowed from Gurev's comments on the 1816 project, who had insisted that the governor general and his council must be responsible not to individual ministers but to the Committee of Ministers. There was also the precedent of the Committee on Finnish Affairs performing the same role between the emperor and his governor general and the Finnish Senate in Helsingfors, even though its members were not service chiefs but independent personalities. The Siberian Committee was a committee of service chiefs, a restricted committee of ministers, for whom Siberia was a land subject to the same imperial legislation as Orel and Tambov provinces, with some exceptions.

Nevertheless, the symmetry between Committee of Ministers and Main Administrations did not mean that management had been concentrated at both levels in a single agency. The Committee of Ministers, of which Arakcheev was not a member, did not block the individual minister's direct access to the emperor: the imperial government remained basically deconcentrated. Speranskii had to face the perennial issue of what kind of relationships had to be established between the ministers, their regional delegates, and their provincial agents, and between these and the governor general. Curiously enough, the statute does not contain any provisions regulating the relationships between the three ministries — Interior, Finance and Justice — and their local agents in the council: we must conclude that the two Siberias represented an exception, where the three ministries which did not keep regional delegates elsewhere in the empire would keep one, and that his duties would be determined by subsequent regulations. In the meantime, ministries were authorized to send orders to their respective provincial agents directly, but had to send a copy to the governor general, so that he would know what the minister expected him to supervise; and provincial agencies sent information and their business to the relevant ministries, but if they were seeking permission to decide anything out of the ordinary, they had to send their requests through the Main Administration.

39. Nikolai Turgenev, who worked in the State Council, describes vividly how the finance minister succeeded in bypassing the council when he encountered too much opposition to his financial policies: *La Russie...*, *op. cit.*, 1: 125-130.

40. I. Bychkov, "M.M. Speranskii..." *op. cit.*: 46-47. The four ministers were Viktor Kochubei (Interior), Dmitrii Gurev (Finance), Alexander Golitsyn (Education), and Balthasar von Campenhausen (State Control).

Such provisions compromised in a fundamental way the principle of concentrated territorial administration which Speranskii wanted to observe in his reorganization of the provincial government. Here, he followed very closely the guidelines of the 1816 project. At the same time, these provisions followed logically from Speranskii's intention — if it truly existed — to retain a symmetry between the three administrative levels: if ministers retained direct access to the emperor, bypassing the chairman of the Committee of Ministers, provincial agents were free to bypass the Main Administrations to retain direct contact with their respective ministers. By the time the reader reaches the end of the statute, the conclusion imposes itself that the governor general and the Main Administration were not so much managerial authorities as they were agents of supervision over the execution of the laws and ministerial orders. This no doubt explains why Speranskii devoted so much attention to explain what he meant by supervision (*nadzor*), borrowing for the essentials from the instruction of 1819 for senators sent on inspectorial missions. The Main Administration did not have the right to introduce any new rules without ministerial approval. Speranskii made it clear that the purpose of the statute was to enable the services to operate more efficiently by giving the Main Administration the power to authorize some of their decisions without referring to higher authority, and insisted that this conjunction of some managerial with full inspectorial responsibilities preserved the concentration (*edinstvo*) of regional and provincial administration, where distances made it difficult for the ministries to remain in close touch with their provincial agents.

What then were the managerial powers of the Main Administration? In personnel matters, the governor general in council appointed the clerks of the Main Administration and the graded personnel of the provincial agencies. But the governor, the three chairmen as well as the councillors of the Main Administration were appointed by imperial orders. In fiscal matters, he had no power to introduce or cancel taxes, but reviewed and confirmed the estimates and assessment of in-kind taxes submitted by the three governors; and he was held responsible for making sure that the population, and especially the garrisons, were adequately provisioned with grain and salt, two basic necessities, and with vodka, a major source of income for the treasury. He examined and confirmed contracts (for deliveries and construction) if their value did not exceed 10,000 rubles, but this power was also given to the governor. However, he also reviewed contracts valued at between 10,000 and 40,000 rubles before forwarding them to the Senate's First Department. In judicial matters, he suspended the execution of civil decisions if he found them in violation of the law and forwarded them to the Senate for final decision. If a governor disagreed with a criminal sentence in the provincial court, he sent it to the Main Administration for decision by majority vote; if the governor general disagreed, the decision was sent to the Senate. Death and other sentences requiring final Senate confirmation were sent to it directly by the governor.

Speranskii's Siberian reform of 1822 thus closely resembled the 1816 project. I included an analysis of it in this discussion of political regionalism because the great distances from the capital, the immensity of Western and Eastern Siberia, the

multiplicity of their peoples, relations with the Kazakhs and the Chinese, and the operation of a modest Pacific flotilla with its inland headquarters in Irkutsk made their governors general — and those of the Caucasus to an even larger extent — much more than mere administrative delegates of the imperial government. Even if they did not truly manage, they ruled over two large regions with a growing identity of their own, subsumed under a general Siberian patriotism which perceived Siberia as being sharply different from Russia.⁴¹ In his general comments on the 1816 project, Gurev had warned that it was laying the foundation of a federative state. Interestingly enough, one of the Decembrists, Vladimir Steinheil, wrote to Nicholas I in 1826 that the people complained against Speranskii's Siberian reforms on the ground that they introduced "an advisory and aristocratic type of administration incompatible with monarchical government."⁴² Both fears were unjustified; nevertheless, the 1816 project applied to a distant land belongs to the history of political regionalism.

III

Nikita Muravev (1795-1843) was not afraid to face, harness, and reverse the centrifugal tendencies already noticeable in the peripheral regions in order to create a new type of Russian empire, founded on political regionalism. He had something in common with Novosiltsev: he grew up not so much in a military milieu or even a bureaucratic one as in a highly cultivated environment, where learning was appreciated for its own sake and not as a tool for career advancement. His father was from the old service nobility rather than from one of the great aristocratic clans, graduated from Moscow University, tutored Grand Dukes Alexander and Constantine, and was a great believer in the brotherhood and equality of mankind. He became the first deputy education minister and the ministry's regional delegate in Moscow, at the same time as Alexander Stroganov, who had raised Novosiltsev, was the same ministry's regional delegate in Petersburg. His mother was the daughter of Fedor Kolokoltsov, who had been senior procurator of the Senate's Second Department in the 1780s and a trusted deputy to Procurator General Viazemskii. Muravev would later marry Elizaveta Chernysheva, a granddaughter of the Navy's chief during Catherine's reign, while her sister married Nikolai Muravev(-Karskii), later viceroy of the Caucasus (1854-1856), from another branch of the family. At the age of four months, Muravev was entered on the rolls of

41. On this see S. Svatikov, *Rossii i Sibir'* (Prague, 1930): 3-19 and 59-63; W. Faust, *Russlands Goldener Boden. Der sibirische Regionalismus in der 2. Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Köln — Wien, 1980): 12-17; and, more recently, M. Bassin, *Imperial visions: Nationalist imagination and geographical expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840-1865* (New York, 1999): 113-114, 122-123. See also his pathbreaking article "Russia between Europe and Asia. The ideological construction of geographic space," *Slavic Review*, 50 (1991): 1-17.

42. V. Shtengel, "O vnutrennom sostoianie Rossii pri votsarenii imperatora Nikolaia Pavlovicha," *Russkii Arkhiv*, 1 (1895): 161-176, here 166.

the Izmailovskii Guard regiment, as was often the case with the sons of well-connected noble families, but was taught at home, where he learned to love ancient history with its tales of civil courage, democratic ideals, and distrust of arbitrary power. After a brief stint in the army during the war of 1812-1815, he joined in 1816 the Union of Salvation which opposed the oppressive regime of Arakcheev, then the Northern Society with its program of emancipation, popular sovereignty, and federalism. Arrested after the Decembrist uprising in December 1825, he confessed, in true Decembrist fashion, his “odious guilt” and offered his unlimited repentance. His death sentence, following the recommendation of a commission chaired by Speranskii, was commuted to twenty years of hard labor in the Nerchinsk mines.⁴³

Muravev’s contribution to the regionalist debate was his constitutional charter (*konstitutsionnyi ustav*), first drafted in 1822, revised in 1824, followed by an incomplete version in 1825.⁴⁴ Since this article focuses on the mechanism of region-building — rather than the sources which may (or may not have influenced the authors of various projects — in order to determine the place of these projects in Russia’s administrative tradition, I shall consider the three versions as forming a single one.

Muravev divided the empire into fourteen regions called states (*derzhavy*) and two *oblasti*. The regions were divided into districts (*uezdy*) and the latter into cantons (*volosti*). Since he did not retain the existing division into provinces (which were transformed into judicial circuits) and did not provide a map, it is difficult to see exactly what territories were included into those regions, but a rough distinction can still be made between Russia proper and the peripheral regions as shown on Table 1.

Table 1. Regions, capitals, and population (male) after Muravev

Russia		
1. Oka	Moscow	2,550,000
2. Dniepr	Smolensk	2,800,000
3. Transvolga	Iaroslavl	1,450,000
4. Kama	Kazan	2,517,000
5. Southern*	Saratov	1,575,000
6. Slaviansk**	N.-Novgorod	500,000
		11,392,00

43. A. Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution. 1825* (Stanford, 1964): 86-97; P. Gronskej, “L’idée fédérative chez les Décembristes,” *Le Monde slave*, 5 (1926): 368-382, here 373-380. A more extensive biography is in N. Druzhinin, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v XIX v.* (Moscow, 1985): 48-118, 197-221.

44. The text of the three versions is in N. Druzhinin, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie...*, *op. cit.*: 253-288, 295-304. See also M. Dovnar’-Zapol’skii, *Idealy dekabristov* (Moscow, 1907): 395-423 and V. Semevskii, *Politicheskie i obshchestvennye idei Dekabristov* (Petersburg, 1909): 447-482.

Periphery		
1. Bothnian	Petersburg	850,000
2. Baltic	Novgorod	2,150,000
3. Western	Vilno	1,325,000
4. Bug	Kiev	1,850,000
5. Black Sea	Odessa	815,000
6. Ukrainian	Kharkov	2,650,000
7. Don**	Cherkassk	150,000
8. Caucasus	Tiflis	750,000
9. Ob	Tobolsk	490,000
10. Lena	Irkutsk	250,000
		11,280,000
Total:		22,672,000***

* Nizovaia

** *oblast'*

*** Muravev incorrectly gives 22,630,000 males

Source: N. Druzhinin, *Revolutsionnoe dvizhenie*, op. cit.: 257.

Their male population can be compared with that of the existing regions headed by governors general to show that Muravev's division was very different. His regions cut across ethnic boundaries to include Russians and non-Russians. That was one of its most original features. Serfdom was abolished everywhere, and everyone's personal freedom was guaranteed by law. Popular sovereignty was the foundation of Muravev's constitutional and federal state (*ustavnoe i soiuznoe*). It meant there existed a single imperial citizenship irrespective of ethnic affiliation. Here, Muravev, inspired by the ideals of the American and French revolutions, was taking a giant step toward the formulation of a civic and imperial identity transcending separate ethnic identities. Another original feature, but one related to this attempt to shape a civil identity,⁴⁵ was the downgrading of the importance of Petersburg and Moscow: the new capital of the empire would be Nizhnii-Novgorod, where the Oka flows into the Volga before the Volga picks up the Kama, the site of a famous fair, and better located than even Moscow to become the hydrographic center of a continental and federal empire.

Muravev, like some other Decembrists, was fond of using terms harking back to medieval Russia. Novgorod was called Velikii Novgorod, and each region had a parliament called the *veche*, consisting of a chamber of deputies and a *duma*. The deputies were elected for one year in the districts by property owners with an annual income of at least 30,000 silver rubles from land and buildings or 60,000 rubles from other property. Obviously, the electorate would be a very restricted one, and one wonders how many electors could meet such high qualifications in most regions. Deputies themselves had to have an annual income of at least 2,000 silver rubles. Each chamber consisted of between 25 and 280 members depending on the

45. On this see V. Tolz, *Russia* (London, 2001): 195-196, 207-208, 238, 242-247, 268-269. Charles-Brun defines regionalism as "un essai de conciliation": *Le régionalisme*, op. cit.: 65-74.

size of the region. The *duma* was elected for four years and had from 8 to 93 members with an annual income of at least 15,000 rubles. This bicameral parliament was responsible for the internal administration of the region and for supervising elections; had its own treasure (*kazna*); imposed regional taxes, but had no powers to tax imports, keep troops or warships, make war, send ambassadors, and give titles of nobility. Each region had its executive consisting of a president (*pravitel'*) and a council of from five to nine members chosen by the *veche* for four years and confirmed by the emperor. Decisions were made by majority vote. The president was the commander of the militia (*zemskoe voisko*) in the region, but could not send it outside the region without the *veche*'s approval; he appointed judges and had the power of pardon. The judicial system was not developed until the third version of Muravev's constitution, and was not well integrated into his constitutional scheme. There were "courts of equity" (*sovestnye sudy*) consisting of one elected judge for every 400 males, who met in joint sessions every three months in the district capital. They did not try criminal cases. There were also *oblast'* courts, the *oblast'* now being the equivalent of a province. They too were elected, rode circuit, and tried criminal cases with a jury and presumably civil cases as well. Muravev gave no details about their jurisdiction and appeals; judges elected in one version were chosen by the regional president in another. There was no reference to regional services such as finance, education, waterways, or forestry. It becomes clear that Muravev's upbringing did not train him well to make realistic comments on a structural reorganization of the empire. Many of the provisions concerning the regional government were borrowed verbatim from American constitutions,⁴⁶ the expression of a political system so different from that of autocratic and centralized Russia that a comparison quickly exposes Muravev's lack of political realism.

Borrowings from American sources were even more obvious in his comments on the organization of the federal empire. There was also an imperial parliament (*narodnoe veche*) consisting of a supreme *duma* (*verkhovnaia дума*) and a chamber of 456 representatives elected for two years. The *duma* was the upper chamber of three members from each region. This parliament passed legislation and determined the structure of the armed forces, declared war, imposed taxes, and drew up a budget. It was forbidden to introduce censorship and amend the constitution. The chamber indicted ministers and judges by a two-thirds majority; they were tried in the *duma*. The federal executive consisted of the emperor and heads of ministries (*prikazy*), reduced to four (Treasury, Army, Navy, and Foreign Affairs): there was none for Internal Affairs, presumably because the locus of legislation had been transferred to the regional parliaments. The executive power was vested in the emperor, whose rule was hereditary.

Such was the basic outline of Muravev's charter, the creation of an intellectual playing at constitution making, and oblivious to the realities of a political and social system which he nevertheless so sincerely wanted to reform. There was much justification in Pestel's biting criticism that Muravev project would bring Russia

46. N. Druzhinin, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie....*, op. cit.: 157-163.

back to the age of appanages synonymous with chaos and, in fact, destroy the Russian empire.⁴⁷

Pavel Pestel (1793-1826), like Muravev, a generation younger than Novosiltsev and Speranskii, also had his own project. Born in a family of Saxon origin, the son of Speranskii's predecessor as governor general of Siberia, he was severely wounded at Borodino (1812). He then rose in the suite of Peter Sayn-Wittgenstein, the commander in chief of Second Army on the Right-Bank Ukraine, to become regimental commander in 1821. A potentially brilliant career was thwarted by his interest in political history and his conviction that only a revolution could put an end to Alexander I's repressive regime. That same year, he founded the Southern Society, consisting mainly of officers from Second Army with a more forceful program than Muravev's Northern Society. Caught in the repression that followed the failed coup of December 1825, he was sentenced to death and hanged in 1826.⁴⁸

His contribution to the regionalist debate was *Ruskaia Pravda*, written between 1821 and 1825, the program of the Southern Society, an unfinished document which reads more like a tract of political theory than a project of even political regionalism. Like Muravev, Pestel called for the emancipation of the serfs and proclaimed the equality of all the citizens of the empire. He was much more aware of its ethnic fragmentation, but was logical in drawing the consequences from his basic premise of civic equality: ethnic differences must be transcended by imposing a new civil patriotism resting on full integration of all the "tribes" of the empire into a Russian people (*edinorodstvo*), with uniform laws from one end of the empire to the other (*edinobrazie*), and linguistic Russification (*edinomyслие*).⁴⁹ If, as he claimed, peoples are what their government makes them, Pestel's Jacobin program necessitated the imposition of a dictatorship and the creation of a unitary state. There was no room for a federal empire, where sovereignty (*verkhovnaia vlastʹ*) was divided, each region forming a separate state. Pestel and Muravev thus addressed the same problem of how to create an imperial identity based on civic patriotism, but offered very different solutions. Muravev hoped to create such a civic patriotism within each region, where Russians and non-Russians would develop a common identity by debating common issues and solving by compromise the problems of their respective regions. Pestel preferred to use forceful governmental intervention to achieve the same purpose. Both men, however, felt the need for a regional restructuring of the empire.

Pestel's geopolitical vision made him aware of the distinction between core and borderland. The Russian core derived its strength from its location and old independence; the frontier regions had always been under someone else's control. But Poland was a special case, another core area, the bearer of a different nationality

47. P. Pestel, *Ruskaia Pravda* (Petersburg, 1906): 23.

48. "Pestel, Pavel," *RBS*, 13 (1902): 599-615; Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution...*, *op. cit.*: 99-116; V. Mjakotin, "Les Décembristes et leurs plans de réformes," *Le Monde slave*, 1926, 5: 463-475, here 469-473; and *Dekabristy. Biograficheskii spravocchnik* (Moscow, 1988): 141-142.

49. P. Pestel, *Ruskaia Pravda*, *op. cit.*: 55-56.

(*narodnost'*), which deserved to be kept outside the Russian empire. Its government, however, must be organized along the same principles, and there must be a strong alliance between the two core areas.⁵⁰ Pestel's position was not without some inconsistency: if Poland possessed the same social and political constitution as the empire, it was certain to become sooner or later just another region of the empire. In the meantime, all the other territories which had once constituted a frontier between Russia and the Swedes, the Poles, the Turks, and Persians were to be integrated into a "single and indivisible" empire. This empire must be divided into ten regions (*oblasti*)⁵¹ consisting each of five provinces (*okruga*) divided into districts (*uezdy*) and cantons (see Table 2). Pestel's new mapping of the empire had points in common with Muravev's. In Russia proper, his regions were ethnically more compact, except in the so-called Kholm or Novgorod region which incorporated the Baltic provinces and parts of Lithuania into a single territory run from the old medieval city, which had once been the greatest city of Hanseatic trade in the eastern Baltic. The same could be said for the Smolensk region incorporating the headwaters of the Dvina and the Dniepr, including the Bielorussian Vitebsk and Ukrainian Chernigov provinces.

Elsewhere in the borderlands, Pestel's anti-Petersburg orientation was striking: the city became the regional capital of Finland. Lithuania was carved into territories, some to be given back to Poland, some to be merged with other regions. In addition, there were special territories similar to Muravev's *oblasti*, which Pestel called *udely*, a surprising use of the term representing all that he stood against. Yet both men were fond of medieval terminology, as if harking back to the pre-imperial past, as the Slavophiles would soon do a decade later.⁵² One was the land of the Don Cossacks, the other the land of the Kazakhs, which Pestel wanted to see colonized by the new Russian people. The third was the *udel* of Nizhnii-Novgorod, the capital of the restructured empire, renamed Vladimir in memory of the prince who brought Christianity to Russia, while Vladimir on the Kliazma was renamed Kliazmin. Like Muravev, Pestel saw the advantages of Nizhnii-Novgorod: geographical location; the Makarev fair linking Europe with Asia; the center from which began the emancipation from the Polish yoke during the Time of Troubles. Both men downgraded the political importance not only of Petersburg but also of Moscow and, in the case of Pestel at least, an autarkic strain was discernible: Nizhni-Novgorod-Vladimir would become the capital of a continental and agrarian empire resting on strong Russian traditions and wary of contacts with the corrupting West. There was also a strong "Puritan" strain in Pestel's thinking, chiefly in his discussion of the police responsibilities of the new imperial government: with the support of 50,000

50. *Ibid.*: 18. A recent work on the distinction between cores and frontiers is J. LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the world. The geopolitics of expansion and containment* (New-York, 1997): 1-13.

51. P. Pestel, *Ruskaia Pravda*, *op. cit.*: 26-34. There is a map of Pestel's regions in M. Dovnar'-Zapol'skii, *Idealy dekabristov*, *op. cit.*: 374-394, here 376-377. See also V. Semevskii, *Politicheskie....*, *op. cit.*: 508-554, especially 516-518.

52. For a broad survey of regional perceptions in Russian history see C. Goehrke, "Zum Problem des Regionalismus in der russischen Geschichte. Vorüberlegungen für eine künftige Untersuchung," *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, 25 (1978): 75-107, here 81-106.

gendarmes (1,000 in each region) and with the help of secret investigations (*rozyski*) and espionage, it would seek to maintain “the purest morality” and prevent the creation of large towns which are “very harmful, especially for morality.”⁵³

Table 2. Regions, capitals, and provinces after Pestel

Russia				
regions	capitals	provinces		
1. Kholm	Novgorod	Novgorod Tver	Pskov Derpt	Mitava
2. Northern	Iaroslavl	Iaroslavl Arkhangelsk	Vologda Kostroma	Perm
3. Ural	Kazan	Kazan Penza	Saratov Simbirsk	Ufa
4. Vershinnaia	Smolensk	Smolensk Kaluga	Orel Vitebsk	Chernigov
5. Slaviansk	Moscow	Moscow Vladimir ^b	Tula Riazan	Tambov
6. N.-Novgorod*	“Vladimir” ^a			
Periphery				
1. Chud	Petrograd ^c	Petrograd Olonets	Åbo Vaza	Uleåborg
2. Black Sea	Kiev	Kiev Mogilev	Kherson Odessa	Jassy
3. Ukrainian	Kharkov	Kharkov Kursk	Voronezh Poltava	Ekaterinoslav
4. Caucasus	Georgievsk	Georgievsk Astrakhan	Caucasus ^d Tiflis	Derbent
5. Siberia	Irkutsk	Irkutsk Tobolsk	Tomsk Iakutsk	Kamchatka
6. Don*	Novocherkassk		Don Cossack Lands	
7. Aral*	–		Kazakh lands	

*udel

^a – new name of Nizhnii-Novgorod

^b – renamed Kliazmin

^c – in text

^d – capital in Sukhum-Kale

Source: P. Pestel, *Russkaia Pravda*, *op. cit.*: 26-34.

53. P. Pestel, *Russkaia Pravda*, *op. cit.*: 107-119, 235-238. Pestel’s fascination with the police may have been connected with his family background: his father, the governor general, had been “postal director” (*pocht-direktor*) in Moscow (1789-1798) and Petersburg (1798-1799); his great-uncle, Boris, was postal director in Moscow (1765-1789). Another Boris was postal director in Moscow (1798-1799), and Wolfgang (Vladimir) occupied that post in the 1730s: E. Amburger, *Geschichte...*, *op. cit.*: 272. One of the major responsibilities of the postal director was to open private correspondence. It is also worth pointing out that Pestel called for 200 gendarmes in each province while the gendarme statute of 1836 appointed only 34.

Unfortunately, Pestel remained vague on the organization of the new imperial government, and chapter six of his *Russkaia Pravda* which was intended to discuss it was never published. Each region would have a governor general or *posadnik* (another medieval term), who functioned as the region's chief inspector (*bliustitel'*), and whose major function seems to have been the Russification of his region and the coordination of the operations of the regional agencies called boards (*upravy*). He had his own staff headed by a secretary (*statssekretar'*) or chief *diak*. There were six boards: for justice, police, finance, economy, church, and educational affairs. The regional delegate of the Internal Guard sat on the police board; the judicial board functioned like a Senate department, at least in the larger regions; the ecclesiastical board replaced the metropolitan sees in Petersburg, Moscow, and Kiev; and the education board was the equivalent of the regional delegate of the education ministry. However Pestel gave no details on how these boards would be appointed, their relationships with central agencies and with the governor general, and the latter's position in the administrative hierarchy. He had even less to say about the structure of the central government. There were five ministries (*prikazy*): for Foreign Affairs, the Army, the Navy, for Police and Justice. They were divided into departments (*palaty*) with a chancery run by secretaries (*diaki*). All this clearly went back to the Muscovite period save for one thing: there was no mention of the tsar-emperor. Pestel's vision on the subject may have been saved for chapter six.

Nevertheless, even this brief sketch reveals the outline of Pestel's thinking. The new Russian empire would be a dictatorship resting on the army — Pestel called for universal military service at the age of twenty — and the police, whose tentacles in the Internal Guard and the gendarmes invaded all spheres of public life. There would not even be private schools (*pansiony*), because education must be a government monopoly. The dictatorship was intensified by the fact that economic and fiscal affairs were thoroughly decentralized at the regional level, where the governor general's office would become a vast police headquarters from which to carry out both the forceful Russification of the "tribes" and the de-urbanization of the country. The concentration of police, fiscal and judicial affairs in his office was, in fact, likely to create so many little autocrats and bring about the eventual breakup of the unitary state which Pestel wanted to create on the ruins of the old monarchy. The criticism which Pestel directed against Muravev can just as easily be directed against him. If anything, his ambition was to create a Fortress Empire, not unlike that which Nicholas I would eventually build, with all the attendant consequences. Pestel's program was certainly more realistic than Muravev's, but it could not have been transformed into a workable administrative system without describing in detail the relations between the "dictator" and his ministers, between them and the regional and provincial agencies; in a word, without tackling the perennial antinomies between concentration and deconcentration, centralization and decentralization. Pestel either did not have the time to do it or was unaware of the ramification of his revolutionary program.

These three articles examined various approaches to the regionalization of the Russian empire from the local government reform of the 1770s to 1826, in practice as well as in a number of projects submitted to the emperor after 1815. The topic had gained in urgency by then with the growing size of the empire since the partitions of Poland, the annexation of the Finnish frontier and the Polish core, and with the ongoing penetration of Transcaucasia. The incorporation of these territories raised the fundamental question whether they must be administered like the core Russian provinces or given special status. This in turn raised another challenging question of whether the empire as a whole should not be reorganized along regional principles, similar to those which informed the deployment of the imperial army in 1815 in armies, army corps and separate corps. To recapitulate the arguments made in these pages, I shall turn to three major issues.

One is the issue of concentration and deconcentration. A government is concentrated when its component parts are combined under the effective and permanent management of a single authority. Russia's administrative tradition was one of deconcentrated government, in which those component parts — the services — enjoyed considerable autonomy, refusing to accept their exclusive subordination to a single agency and insisting on maintaining direct access to the ruler, who was seldom willing or able to exercise such effective and permanent leadership, at least in civil administration. Deconcentration served the interests of elite politics, because it facilitated the distribution of the spoils, the foundation of the unwritten contract by which the elite recognized and magnified the "autocracy" of the ruler. The deconcentration of the central government entailed a similar deconcentration at the provincial level, because each service sought to create its local agencies and subordinate them to its will, a process which I have called vertical deconcentration. It was therefore in the nature of things that a certain symmetry should become evident between the structure of the imperial government in Petersburg and that of the territorial authorities from one end of the empire to the other. Those members of the elite who bemoaned the lack of leadership and "unity" at the provincial level were missing the point: only a reform of the central government seeking unity and concentration in the hands of a prime minister operating as the right hand of the ruler could bring about a similar solution at the territorial level. But it would have been politically dangerous to raise such questions because they impinged on the ruler's autocracy, as well as politically inexpedient because the elite could not forget its traditional interests. And yet, there had to be an imperial delegate in the regional and provincial capitals, if only because the authorities and the population needed the presence of a representative who embodied the ruler's legitimacy and the might of the imperial government. In the region, it was the governor general.

The second issue was the nature of his relationship with the central government and the provincial authorities. In the latter part of Catherine's reign, which represented an exceptional moment in Russian administrative history — when government was concentrated at both the central and local levels — he was responsible to the procurator general and the empress. During Alexander's reign, he could not be responsible to such a "prime minister" because there was none, at

least officially.⁵⁴ Nor could he be subordinated to the Committee of Ministers, because that agency merely took up matters of secondary importance which affected the interests of more than one ministry, and it was not a truly executive agency — although the long absences of the emperor beginning in 1812 considerably strengthened its authority. He could depend only on ministers or on the ruler himself. But ministers, except the Interior Minister, needed governors general only occasionally, because, as service chiefs, they were in direct communication with their provincial agents. If governors general had to exist, they had to be subordinated to each separate minister, like the provincial governors, since none of the services could accept that the governor general become a regional delegate of the Interior Ministry and at the same time exercise a measure of control over its activities. In other words, ministers could not accept the possibility of concentrated regional administration either. In distant Tiflis, Alexei Ermolov, the governor general of the Caucasus, saw the problem clearly: commenting on (presumably) the 1816 project, he wrote that “if the *namestniki* will be, like the governors, the slaves of every minister, then it will not work (*nikuda ne goditsia*), and it was better not to make the old mess (*bezputstvo*) even worse”.⁵⁵ But what of the emperor? The possibility that the governors general might become subordinated to the ruler, not only in words but in a real sense, greatly exercised Gurev, who feared that they might become little autocrats.⁵⁶ But for this to happen, the autocrat would have to take an active part in the day-to-day management of the empire by transforming the Committee of Ministers into a real cabinet over which he would preside, and where individual ministers could be overruled: the imperial government would have to become concentrated in the person of an effective manager. In fact, as Gurev himself hinted, the emperor was only the grand inspector general of his realm, and the ministerial establishment its real manager. And that is what the governor general became: a regional inspector representing his imperial master, touring his region, asking questions, verifying accounts, receiving complaints which he would duly refer to the relevant minister, who would respond as he pleased. Such an arrangement would preserve the fiction that both the imperial and regional authority were concentrated while, in reality, they were not. But it was not necessary in the Russian core provinces, where the governor could perform the same function. Only in the peripheral regions, where separate military command were created or where the introduction of imperial legislation had serious

54. Arakcheev was the chief of the emperor's chancery. He transmitted to him the recommendations of the Committee of Ministers, but he was not a policy-maker in the sense a prime minister would be: J. P. LeDonne, *Absolutism...*, *op. cit.*: 330.

55. Ermolov to Arsenii Zakrevskii, “général du jour” of the Main Staff, August 10, 1818, in *Sbornik imperatorskogo russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva*, 148 vol. (Petersburg, 1867-1916), here 73 (1890): 302.

56. The best candidate for the title of little autocrat would have been Filippo Paulucci, the governor general of the Baltic provinces, who was often in conflict with ministers, especially the finance minister, but who was supported by the emperor: see S. Seredonin, *Istoricheskii obzor deiatel'nosti komiteta ministrov*, 5 vol. (Petersburg, 1902-1903), here 1: 104-105. See also Ermolov's sharply worded letter to Gurev in *Russkaia starina*, 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1892): 1215.

political implications, do we find concentrated regional government, but only as an exception to the general rule that the empire must be managed by the ministerial establishment as a uniform and indivisible whole.

The third issue was that of decentralization, by which I meant the transfer of some managerial responsibilities to elected bodies. Decentralization can develop to the point where it shades off into federalism, which is qualitatively different, however: it requires the existence of strong regional forces capable of forcing upon the central government a delegation of legislative functions. Some decentralization had begun during Catherine's reign with the Noble and Municipal Charters of 1785, but elected bodies of any significance could only be the provincial assemblies of the nobility with their marshals. Decentralization thus took place largely within the ruling class, but one no less significant for its potential implications: the provincial nobility was often better placed than appointed officials to know the needs of their province and region, and had responsible advice to give a regional government. The 1816 project took this into consideration by allowing the *namestniki* to invite such people to sit on the regional council; Speranskii's statute did not, perhaps because there was hardly any landed nobility in Siberia. If the 1816 project had been carried out, even a deconcentrated regional government might have benefitted from the participation of landowners, although the cautious Gurev saw in such a development the prospect of a federative state. In fact, he had little to fear: the obsession with integrating every form of political activity into the ministerial structure was already transforming the marshals into agents of the Interior Ministry as chief of staff of the ruling class, thereby blurring the distinction between deconcentration and decentralization.⁵⁷

The Novosiltsev and Muravev projects went much further. Their two characteristic features were the creation of regional parliaments and the relegation of the ministers to their true function, which is to carry out the laws, not to make them. They had to be seen by the ministerial establishment as hostile to its vital interests: this was enough to transform them into fanciful, even subversive, utopias. Nevertheless, their implications were twofold. The election of parliaments intended to give the landed nobility, especially the large landowners, an active part in shaping government policy, thereby bridging the emerging gap within the ruling elite and ruling class between those in active service and those who merely assumed that it was their birthright to manage the empire. Such elections, beside giving a political expression to the natural and economic regions of the empire, would also give the Romanov house a political foundation and a legitimacy much deeper than one based on a growing bureaucracy and an enormous army. These two projects were also intended to apply both to the Russian core and the peripheral non-Russian territories, where parliaments would fortify regional and ethnic particularisms and

57. The Prussian consul in Warsaw, commenting on Novosiltsev's project, reported that it would establish a representation not of the people but of the nobility; that in Russia, nobility and officialdom coincided (*sich schliesslich deckten*); and that landowners who did not serve were not called upon to discuss the great issues (*die grossen Aufgaben, zu lösen, die ihnen zugeacht waren*): Th. Schieman, "Eine Konstitution....," *art. cit.*: 68-69.

become defenders of their region's interests. The pressures exercised by these new forms of concentrated government would eventually force the central government to accept some form of elective participation and greater concentration of its activities. They were certain to be unacceptable both to the monarchy and to the ruling elite, which never relished the prospect of public debates and always feared the emergence of regional sources of political power.⁵⁸ On the other hand, they were unlikely to develop in the Russian provinces, where the nobility as ruling class felt its fate to be inseparable from that of the monarchy. In the borderlands, however, regionalism carried the seeds of the empire's destruction as soon as the traditional elites found their position threatened by the rise of regional intelligentsias — with their search for an identity based on ethnic particularism. These new men no longer shared with those elites the cosmopolitan imperial consensus which the monarchy had been able to create and uphold for over a century within a single military space capable of containing the centrifugal forces that were inevitable in such a large continental empire.⁵⁹

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58. The publication of debates in the Polish Diet was banned in 1825: d'Angeberg, *Recueil...*, *op. cit.*: 747-748. The Russians seem to have been disconcerted, if not frightened, by the passionate debates in the Polish Council and parliament and never summoned the Finnish Diet after 1809.

59. A. Kappeler, *Russland als Vielvölkerreich. Entstehung. Geschichte. Zerfall* (München, 1993): 135-136. For an examination of the weakness of Soviet federalism, which helps us understand the weakness of Russian political regionalism, see A. Vichnevski, *La Faucille et le rouble. La modernisation conservatrice en URSS* (Paris, 2000): 402-410.