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**ADAPTATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE TERRITORIAL DIVISION**  
**DURING CHANGE-OVER TO PLANNED ECONOMY**

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*Abstract*

The article touches upon the changes in the administrative territorial division of Eastern Siberia occurred from 1920 to 1937; the initial incentives of the administrative decisions are compared with their actual effects. The historical experience gives the possibility to assess the influence of the administrative territorial changes on the development of the regional economy.

The Bolsheviks' first large-scale reform in Eastern Siberia was the creation of national autonomies. The second great change of the Soviet government was "regionalization" of the mid-1920s, when the division into guberniyas and uyezds was replaced by the division into districts, and the local network was transformed from the volost one into the regional one. The third reform introduced in summer of 1930 partially revoked the second one as the districts were abolished. The three-level division (krai – district – region) became two-level one (krai – region). The region became the central authority able to inform the inferior structures of the governmental and party guidelines and to control their implementation. It is found out that the geography influence was stronger than the "leading willpower of the party" and theoretical fantasies concerning the speculation that the sudden start of the economic development could be caused by the administrative measures.

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**Keywords:** Administrative territorial division, planned economy, the Bolsheviks, region, gubernia, Eastern Siberia.



## 1. Introduction

Nowadays the proponents of the market model improvement and the supporters of the Russian return to the mobilization program revived the debates. The historical experience gives the possibility to assess the opportunities and prospects of the governmental influence on the regional economy development caused by administrative territorial changes.

## 2. Problem Statement

Without isolating the processes in Eastern Siberia from the cross-national context, it makes sense to pay special attention to the local specificity. The study material provides insight into the interrelation between the initial incentives of the administrative decisions and their effects (both planned and unplanned), shows the body of the hidden hazards and side effects. The topical issue is to find out who is responsible for the controversial changes that caused only wasteful expenditures instead of the promised rise. The social implication of the administrative structure must not be underestimated..

## 3. Research Questions

In the opinion of the Bolsheviks “the administrative division of Siberia existing at the beginning of the XX century satisfied nobody. The construction of the Siberian Railway and the fast growth of the Siberian economy caused by it conditioned the movement of the administrative-cultural and economic centres and the previous borders became an anachronism” (Yurtsovski, 1929). The basic drawbacks of the previous division of Russia into gubernias and uyezds were the lack of communication with the natural economic regions, the priority of the police-fiscal interests, disregard of the ethnic composition of the population (Feigin, 1954). The Soviet authorities insistently professed the necessity of the adjustment of the administrative territorial division to the economic development prospects, worked out the rules of the territorial changes (Mints, 1976). From 1917 to 1922 within the borders of the RSFSR, the number of gubernias grew from 56 to 72, the number of uyezds – from 476 to 601 and the number of volosts – from 10606 to 12363.

“Among the rural people of (Irkutsk) guberniya, the sharp stratification and division of interests of different layers of population began. The Buryats began to form volost units with the pure Buryat population, the new-comers began to dissociate themselves from the old inhabitants, and all of them began to fragment the territory ...” (Mirotvortsev, 1919).

The Bolsheviks’ first large-scale administrative territorial reform in Eastern Siberia was the creation of national autonomies in compliance with Lenin’s conception of solving the ethnic issue. In April of 1921 inside the territory of the Far Eastern Republic, the Buryat-Mongol Autonomous Oblast was established. In January of 1922 as a part of RSFSR, another Buryat-Mongol (Buryat) Autonomous Oblast was formed uniting four aimaks of Irkutsk gubernia: Alarski, Bokhanski, Ekhirit-Bulagatski and Tunkinski.

In February of 1922, the Yakut Autonomous SSR was created and in 1923 Mukhtuiskaya and Vitimskaya volosts previously belonging to Irkutsk gubernia were attached to it. In May of 1923, it was decided to unite two Buryat-Mongol Autonomous Oblasts in the integrated Buryat-Mongol Autonomous SSR. During the process of national autonomies creation, the problem of determining the administrative borders became topical and socially-politically burning (Kazarin, 2009; Kozmin, 1928; *The Buryat-*

*Mongol*, 1927). One of the specialists wrote: “It is important to find out how stable the new division of (Irkutsk) gubernia is, and if the aim of the division is achieved – to territorially detach the Buryats from the other population and to create for them their own administrative and maintenance boards” (Sokolov, 1924).

The second great administrative-territorial change of the Soviet government in Eastern Siberia was “regionalization” of the mid-1920s. During the reform, gubernias, uyezds and volosts were liquidated. The division into gubernias and uyezds was replaced by the division into districts. Volosts (with the population of 5000-7000 people) were united and enlarged and then they were transformed into regions that were initially called “regional volosts”.

In May of 1925 Yeniseiskaya gubernia was liquidated. “Sibrevkom (The Siberian Revolutionary Committee) Siberia” was transformed into Sibirski krai that included the Oirot autonomous oblast and 16 districts. Irkutsk gubernia, the regionalization of which was carried out in June of 1926, was also subordinate to the Executive Committee of Siberian krai. After its liquidation, Irkutsk, Kirensk and Tulun (abolished in 1929) districts were created and attached to Siberian krai. And again the districts fragmentation adversely affected the strong existed economic links (Novikov, 2014).

The structure of the autonomous republics, where uyezds and volosts existed up to the end of the 1920s, was changed in a different way. In Yakutia, there were districts having the uyezds rights, and in Buryatia there were aimaks with the same rights. Later the districts of the Yakut ASSR were divided into regions. Aimaks-uyezyds of the Buryat-Mongol ASSR were diminished and transformed into aimak-regions.

The Bolsheviks underlined the necessity of the initial investments concentration in the old industrial areas, where every invested rouble could cause the greater increase in output than in Siberia or the Urals (Mineev & Kolosovski, 1930). The economists of the end of the 1920s gave the following answer to the question – What prospect demands were announced by Siberia itself and by the public: 1) export of the great forest yield to the markets of Western Europe through the ports of the Arctic ocean and the Baltic sea, as well as through the estuary of the Yenisei river; 2) supply of coal and timber to the Urals where the forest yield lessened as well as supply of timber to the steppe areas of the south of Siberia, Kyrgyz krai and Turkestan; 3) development of the productive cattle breeding and cultivation of the plants used in industry for export purposes; 4) development of the mining and metallurgical industry. The potential for the economic development of the Angara region in the context of NEP (New Economic Policy) was estimated pessimistically: “The colonial prospects of Eastern Siberia are not significant despite its huge territory. Because of the remoteness from the market and superb competitive location of the bordering areas large-tonnage products can be sold only at the inner extremely small-sized market. For now, the only way of Eastern Siberia development is the enlargement of its market size by the development of railroad construction, improvement of the water-ways quality and increase of the population density...” (Yamzin & Voshchinin 1926).

The main reason of the second round of reforms was the disproportion between the old system of the administrative division and the tasks of the socialist building. It was planned to bring the “administrative-territorial areas” closer to “economic zones”. However, no positive economic effect was seen. The continuous territorial arguments of the neighbouring authorities became the unexpected effect of these changes. To make out the case, the lobbyists and specialists brought forward economic arguments (Mirotvortsev, 1925; *Central Siberian Krai*, 1925). Besides, the bureaucracy increase was noted.

The third reform carried out in summer of 1930 abolished the second one; the districts existed during five years were annihilated. The aim of the reforms was to bring the soviet-party authorities closer towards the village, collective farms (kolkhozes) and ordinary people. The transition to the mass collectivization caused a sudden growth of the administrative work at the local level and it was necessary to raise the regional administrative skill level. The region became the central authority able to inform the inferior structures of the governmental and party guidelines and to control their implementation. The three-level division (krai – district – region) became two-level one (krai – region). Simultaneously the krai items were diminished. The newly-created Eastern-Siberian krai covered the territories of Irkutsk, Kansk, Kirensk, Krasnoyarsk districts of Siberian krai, Sretensk and Chita districts of Far Eastern krai and the Buryat-Mongol ASSR.

In 1930, a number of national administrative-territorial units were created. In October within the borders of Khakass district, the Khakass Autonomous Oblast was created. In December, Presidium of All-Russian Central Executive Committee decreed to create several national districts in Siberia and the Far East including Eastern Siberian krai, among them there were Taimyr, Evenki, Vitim-Olyokminsk districts. However, it turned out that this two-level division was rather awkward. The krai authorities were unable to govern the numerous fragmented local administrative organizations efficiently. The improvement of the administration system was reached by the enlargement of the regions, transformation of the distant regions into districts and creation of the districts within the krai borders. In March of 1934, the Chita Oblast was created in Eastern Siberian krai.

As the process of collectivization was expanding, the region became the basic administrative unit informing the population of the Soviet authorities' guidelines. It was the region that played the part of the intermediate instance with the help of which krai (or "regional" as it's named now) authorities exercise total control (political, cultural, economic etc.) over the territory, supplied the state with the provisions. The regional authority directly controlled rural soviets, state farms, machine and tractor stations, industrial and trading organizations, social infrastructure (Feinsod, 1995).

A typical region of Eastern Siberian krai had the population of 2000-4000 people (*Economic Statistic Reference Book*, 1932). The regional centres were presented both by towns and villages. In 1931 only 21% of the krai population lived in towns. The others lived in the countryside under the government of one of 10-15 rural soviets that were the parts almost of any region.

In December of 1934, Krasnoyarsk krai was created. The Khakass Autonomous Oblast and 10 regions of the former Achinsk and Minusinsk districts were moved to it from Western Siberian krai, as well as 21 regions of the former Kansk and Krasnoyarsk districts, Evenki and Taimyr National Districts. Such diminishing of the territory of Eastern Siberian krai leads to the abolishment of the Chita Oblast. In December 1936, the Buryat-Mongol ASSR got the independent status and did not belong to Eastern Siberian krai anymore. The krai itself was transformed into the Eastern Siberian Oblast.

In September 1937, the Eastern Siberian Oblast was divided into the Irkutsk Oblast and the Chita Oblast. In the Irkutsk Oblast they created Ust-Orda Buryat-Mongol national district, and in the Chita Oblast – Aginsk Buryat-Mongol national district. The local administrative network of the Irkutsk Oblast covered 30 regions having 456 rural soviets in total. Later this structure changed a little, let alone the temporary rise

of the regions quantity (up to 39) by 1947 as four newly-created items were abolished in 1953. Thus, in 1962 there were again 30 regions in the Irkutsk oblast.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to analyze the historical experience of the administrative-territorial reforms during the period of 1920-1937 that were carried out to boost the development of the regional economy. The initial theoretical incentives of the administrative decisions are compared with their actual effects.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The methods used cover three levels: general scientific, general historical and concrete historical. During the research, the following general scientific methods of cognition were used: induction and deduction, going from abstract to concrete, analysis and synthesis, description, measuring, explanation, analogy, comparison. All of them were used as concrete means of cognition. At the general scientific level, the leading methods were the methods of historicism and objectiveness. It was tried to avoid the equation of the past and the future; the object was put into the historical context; special attention was paid to determining the cause-and-effect links of the events and processes. In the research, the following concrete historical methods were used: historical-genetic (as the basic one), historical-comparative and historical-systematic.

#### **6. Findings**

The high rate and the numerous character of the reforms of the 1920-1930s are not less surprising than the return by 1937 to the almost identical pre-revolutionary regional division as well as the rejection of the majority of innovations of the “recovering period”. During twenty years the communist authorities cut and cut the territories again and in the end they got the territorial division almost the same as it was presented in the pre-revolutionary country. It is evident that the geography influence turned out to be stronger than the “leading willpower of the party” and theoretical fantasies concerning the speculation that the sudden start of the economic development could be caused by the administrative measures.

On the contrary, at the local level of the territorial division that was done in the mid-1920s, the transition from volosts to larger regions was inconvertible and the regional centres became the key chains of the soviet administrative command system. The experience of regions functioning also showed that the separation of the new items could not help to boost the economic development of the given territory.

#### **7. Conclusion**

Nowadays the demographic compression of the regional periphery and the reduction of the economic activity space can be seen. If the given dynamics of the population density remains the same, it will become possible to govern Siberia not through the regions and districts but through the towns.

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