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ARTICLES

JOHN P. LEDONNE

RUSSIAN GOVERNORS GENERAL, 1775-1825

Territorial or functional administration?*

In May 2000, the president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, announced the creation of seven administrative regions, corresponding to the seven military districts already in existence, each to be headed by a presidential representative, dubbed “governor general” by historically minded commentators. The decision is certain to re-invigorate the old debate on the regionalization of government in Russia that began with the appointment of the first governors in 1708 and of the central colleges in 1717. Regionalization was very much a feature of Catherine II’s reforms of the central and local government. It pitted ministers against governors general in the 1810s and fell victim to the ministers’ victory. The creation of Soviet socialist republics and the debate over the nature of Soviet federalism brought the issue to the fore once again, but the victory of “democratic centralism” drained regional forms of their intrinsic content. It will take a while to assess the fate of Putin’s experiment.

The administration of any geographical area always raises two fundamental questions: one is whether the several sectors of local administration should operate independently under the guidance of their own central agencies or be primarily responsible to a local authority subordinated as a unit to the central government. The other is what kind of relationship should prevail between that authority and the central government: should this government be a coordinating body like a committee of ministers or simply individual ministers?¹ The larger the geographical area, the

* A first version of this article was delivered at the Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales in May 1995. I wish to express my gratitude to Prof. Wladimir Berelowitch for his invitation. This article is a study of the governor general’s administrative responsibilities. It follows the publication of another three dedicated to governors general as members of the ruling families: see “Frontier governors general 1772-1825,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 47 (1999): 56-88, 48(2000):161-183 and 321-340. A second part will examine the debate on regionalization during Alexander’s reign.

1. An excellent introduction to problems raised by regional administration is J. Fesler, *Area and administration* (Tuscaloosa, 1964).

more complex these relationships are likely to be, and nowhere were they more complex than in the Russian empire, spread across an entire continent and formed by the annexation of territories with distinct societies and traditions. From the annexation of the khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan in the 1550s to the near completion of the empire by the 1820s, following the inclusion of the frontiers of the Swedish, Polish, and Persian empires and the substantial penetration of the Ottoman frontier, Russia had to deal with this issue, but it was not until Peter's reign that regionalization assumed its modern form.

In the seventeenth century, the Muscovite government had been a deconcentrated type in which a large number of chanceries (*prikazy*) were responsible for the various administrative functions, each chancery enjoying considerable autonomy under the overall management of the tsar.² Their local agents were the *voevody* in charge of a town or a town with its district (*uezd*); they had few responsibilities beyond the collection of revenue and the maintenance of order. Nevertheless, the entire administration was concentrated in the office of *voevoda*, who was accountable not to the government as a whole but to the chancery which had appointed him. Such a system was centralized, because it vested all the powers of decision in the central agencies. Most of Russia was thus divided among the *voevody* of different chanceries, and there were no provinces or regions much larger than the district: *voevody* of neighboring towns could depend on different chanceries. However, in the borderlands of the north, Smolensk, the middle and lower Volga, and Siberia, clusters of towns did constitute larger territories administered by one central agency, the Siberian chancery for example.³ Area administration was vested not in a provincial or regional authority but in one of a number of chanceries. It was very much an ad hoc system, chanceries created piecemeal as circumstances required and disbanded when they were no longer needed, the elite having a vested interest in

2. Definitions are in order here to clarify the meaning of terms which are often used too loosely. A central government is *concentrated* when its agencies are made to depend on a coordinating body such as a council of ministers or a Senate. It is *deconcentrated* when those agencies operate autonomously under the guidance of, say, a tsar, who either lacks interest in day-to-day administration or is unable to coordinate their activities in his own person. A central government cannot be "centralized." *Centralization* and *decentralization* refer to the type of relationships prevailing between central and local agencies. It can be mild or extreme. Creating local elective bodies and giving them some powers is also a form of decentralization. At the provincial or regional level, administration is *concentrated* when a governor or governor general is given managerial authority over all its sectors; it is *deconcentrated* when those agencies owe their primary allegiance to their central agencies, leaving the governor in a position of watchdog over the execution of the laws but without management responsibilities. Finally, province (*guberniia*) means the second level area, above the district (*uezd*), and *region* refers to an area encompassing more than one province. These definitions were inspired by L. Aucoc, *Conférences sur l'administration et le droit administratif* (Paris, 1885), 3 vol., here 1:101, 112. See also W. Eberhard, *Conquerors and rulers. Social forces in medieval China* (Leiden, 1965), 2nd revised ed.: 63-65.

3. B. Chicherin, *Oblastnye uchrezhdeniia v XVIII-m veke* (Moscow, 1856) remains the standard work on the *voevody*. On the *prikazy* see N. Vasilenko, "Prikazy" in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (Brockgauz and Efron), 25 (1898): 186-196 and A. Chernov, "O klassifikatsii tsentral'nykh gosudarstvennykh uchrezhdenii XVI-XVII vv.," *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 1 (1958): 195-201. For the administration of the former khanate of Kazan see I. Ermolaev, *Srednee Povolzh'e vo vtoroi polovine XVI-XVII vv.* (Kazan, 1982): 52-62, 162-175.

maintaining the resulting confusion. Peter's determination to "modernize" the Muscovite government created an entire new set of demands which the old system could no longer meet.

Tsar Peter's voyage to Holland and England in 1697 strengthened his conviction that the Muscovite world had become dangerously isolated from European political, economic and cultural developments; the disastrous defeat at Narva at the outset of the war with Sweden in 1700 convinced him that the government of Muscovy could not extract the resources needed to sustain the war effort against a great power. Peter as commander in chief in the field grew accustomed to dealing with individual commanders responsible for a specific theater of war. In 1708, on the eve of Charles XII's onslaught on Russia, the tsar shifted this area, territorial, type of administration to the civilian sphere and divided the country into eight large provinces (*gubernii*) of unequal size, each one headed by a governor given full powers in police, judicial, and fiscal matters, and responsible to the tsar alone. Chanceries and *voevody* were abolished. In 1711, however, a new coordinating agency was created, called the Senate, to relieve the ruler from the burden of day to day administration. Six years later, new executive agencies were added, called colleges. This reform marked a retreat from the experiment with regionalization.⁴ From then on, and until the Revolution of 1917, tsar, Senate (later the Committee of Ministers), ministers, and governors would remain the major building blocks of the imperial government. Before turning to the two periods during which another attempt was made to regionalize the government of the empire on a systematic basis (1775-1796 and 1815-1825), let us examine the legacy of the Petrine reforms which formed the background of Catherine II's own reforms in the 1770s.⁵

I

Centralization remained the characteristic feature. The Russian government had grown out of the tsar's household and never lost traces of its origin. The tsar was the source of all legitimacy and the grand patron of the vast network of clientage that made up the imperial ruling elite and ruling class. He was also the grand treasurer of the empire and this, more than anything else, enabled him to maintain a tight control over the operations of government — or at least to imagine that he did. But a central government must also deal with organizational problems and determine the relationships among its component parts.

4. J. LeDonne, *Absolutism and ruling class. The formation of the Russian political order 1700-1825* (New York, 1991): 68-80.

5. Regional administration during the imperial period has remained almost completely neglected in scholarship. The basic work still remains A. Gradovskii, "Istoricheskii ocherk uchrezhdeniia general'-gubernatorstv v Rossii," in *Sobranie sochinenii* (Petersburg, 1899-1904), 9 vol., here 1: 301-338. It was first published in 1869 and was much colored by contemporary concerns over abuses of administrative power. See also G. v. Rauch, *Russland. Staatliche Einheit und nationale Vielfalt* (Munich, 1953): 39-72.

The imperial government after 1725 became once again a highly deconcentrated structure. While the number of colleges remained more or less constant, other executive agencies, called chanceries (*kantseliarii*) and sometimes even *prikazy*, began to proliferate until their number by mid-century was about equal to that of their seventeenth-century predecessors. The Senate of about a dozen members remained the coordinating agency and appellate court for cases that could not be decided in the colleges, but its function as executive of the imperial government was taken over, during the reign of Anna Ivanovna, by the Cabinet, dominated by its chief, Andrei Osterman. Later, during the reign of Elizabeth, the procurator general of the Senate emerged as the dominant figure in the civilian establishment, and his office became the coordinating agency for all the colleges and chanceries responsible for civil administration. The colleges of war, navy, and foreign affairs had always enjoyed considerable autonomy from Senate control, and the president of the college of war gradually emerged as the counterpart (and rival), first of Osterman, then of the procurator general.⁶ And these two high-ranking members of the elite, who belonged to the ruling families, were among the closest associates of the ruler in the management of the empire as a whole.⁷ But the larger number of agencies, the fact that they were headed by men appointed by the ruler who remained determined to retain direct links with them, had the effect of creating a highly deconcentrated structure in which agencies, like the old chanceries, succeeded in gaining a considerable measure of operational autonomy. Such autonomy was made possible by the absence of a national budget; as a result, many agencies collected and disbursed funds, even if expenditures required the ruler's often nominal approval. The most convincing proof of that operational autonomy was that when Catherine II came to the throne in 1762, no one really knew how much was collected and disbursed in the empire.⁸

The provincial administration was likewise deconcentrated. Two issues require examination here: the governor's relationships with the officials and agencies of his province, and his relationships with the central government. Governors were appointed by the ruler and were nominally responsible to him, but the prevailing consensus on centralization and the resulting immensity of detailed information reaching the government required them to be in constant contact with the Senate and the colleges: it had been decreed in 1722 that the governors must send their reports to the college responsible for the subject matter reported on. Their primary operational link was no longer with the ruler, as had been the case after 1708. The governor became a delegate of the central government, enjoying, as such, a universal competence over the entire structure of provincial administration, but he was

6. J. LeDonne, *Absolutism...*, *op. cit.*: 81-93. See also W. Slany, *Russian central governmental institutions, 1725-1741*, unpub. PhD. diss. (Cornell, 1958): 557-567, and A. Gradovskii, "Vysshiaia administratsiia Rossii XVIII st. i general'-prokurory," in *Sobranie sochinenii*, *op. cit.*, 1: 39-297, here 192-195, 292-295.

7. J. LeDonne, "Ruling families in the Russian political order 1689-1825," *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, 28, 3-4 (1987): 233-322.

8. J. LeDonne, *Absolutism...*, *op. cit.*: 284.

accountable to a government already splintered among functional lines. To make matters worse, it became common practice not only for the Senate but also for the colleges to fine governors for what these agencies, possessing by definition a narrow vision of administration, considered derelictions of duty. The hostility of the governors to what they viewed as a downgrading of their position caused this procedure to be rescinded for the colleges, and only the Senate was empowered to fine governors.⁹ A model was gradually taking shape, in which the eight or nine delegates of the elite across the vast expanse of the empire were given universal competence but were in fact responsible not to the imperial executive — the Senate — but to its executive agencies with a jurisdiction defined in functional terms. The result was an asymmetrical system — functional administration at the center, territorial management in the provinces.

But the governor's effective power was threatened by certain developments. Some of the colleges and chanceries created their own provincial agencies. Their personnel were appointed by the Senate on the recommendation of the college, not of the governor. They followed the instructions of their colleges and were in fact independent from him. The effect was to encroach not so much on the universal jurisdiction of the governor as on his ability to translate that competence into managerial authority and power. As it was, that power was quite limited. The governor appointed the clerks in his chancery, but the secretary was appointed by the Senate, although he may have been recommended by the governor. Since there were no local courts, the governor was also a judge, but the 1753 decision to suspend the application of the death penalty considerably reduced his latitude in criminal affairs. In civil matters, most litigation had to take place in the colleges in Moscow; in fiscal matters, the governor was empowered to conclude contracts to the value of 3,000 rubles (while a college negotiated contracts valued up to 10,000 rubles). On the other hand, he was responsible for the maintenance of order and commanded the garrisons deployed in his province: their commandants reported to him. Only in this area did he exercise a truly managerial authority.¹⁰ Elsewhere, his jurisdiction did not translate into effective power. The governor was slowly becoming an inspector: he watched over the operations of the provincial administration, toured his provinces, looked for abuses and reported them to the appropriate college where action might (or might not) be taken, reported to the Senate in serious cases and in emergencies to the ruler himself.¹¹

9. J. LeDonne, "The evolution of the governor's office, 1727-1764," *Canadian American Slavic Studies*, 12(1978): 86-115, here 96-101 and Id., *Absolutism...*, *op. cit.*: 93-98.

10. I. Andreevskii, *O namestnikakh, voevodakh i gubernatorakh* (Petersburg, 1864): 115-120, 147-150; A. Gradovskii, "Vysshiaia...", *art. cit.*: 207-208. The basic work here is Iu. Got'e, *Istoriia oblastnogo upravleniia v Rossii ot Petra I do Ekateriny II* (Moscow, 1913), vol. 1: 401-405, 435, 457-458. See also V. Grigor'ev, *Reforma mestnogo upravleniia pri Ekaterine II* (Petersburg, 1910): 95.

11. For a description of the responsibilities of an inspector in the army see the 1731 instruction in *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii (PSZ)*, 1st series 1649-1830 (Petersburg, 1830), 45 vol., here vol. 8, N. 5900. See also K. Sokolov, "Ocherk istorii sovremennogo znachenii general'gubernatora," *Vestnik prava*, 7 (Sept. 1903): 110-179 and 8 (Oct. 1903): 39-76, here 7: 134.

It was also during this period, between 1725 and the 1760s, that the administrative region was born. The reform of 1719 had divided 9 of the 11 provinces existing at the time into 47 sub-provinces (*provintsiï*), each headed by a *voevoda*. The number of these sub-provinces varied from 2 in Riga province to 11 in Petersburg province.¹² The *voevoda* was appointed by the Senate; so was his secretary. He had even fewer powers than the governor, and in judicial and fiscal affairs almost none, beside collecting taxes and creating difficulties in judicial procedure from which he personally profited.¹³ Tradition and practice insisted that he was not subordinated to the governor, but must maintain direct relations with the central colleges through the office of the governor, unless he resided in a town closer to Moscow than the provincial capital. In such cases, he just ignored the governor. Thus, in a still very vague way, the idea of the administrative region came into being. The *provintsiia* as the basic territorial unit was part of a large province headed by a member of the elite — usually a major or lieutenant general — who outranked the *voevoda*, usually a colonel. The governor was thus the prototype of the future governor general.

Catherine II's great reforms were motivated by a number of basic considerations. There was much discontent with the operations of the administrative system created after Peter's death. That discontent must be placed in the context of a reaction against the overcentralization of government in the colleges and the Senate, against the militarization of public life. Many members of the ruling class yearned to return to the land, or at least to find a secure haven in it, and create the rudiments of a civil society, but one including only themselves and, at most, the upper levels of the merchantry. Almost everybody else was degraded to the status of dependent people. This movement was part of a larger one affecting most of Europe, in which the nobility sought to emancipate itself from the too strict control of its destiny by government officials, members of the ruling elite. It was therefore a movement seeking to decentralize the social constitution of the ruling class and thereby the operations of government, by transferring a great deal of decision-making to new local agencies.¹⁴ This widespread call for reform, shown in the *nakazy* addressed to the Legislative Commission in 1767, answered Catherine's determination to play the legislator in the name of Enlightenment philosophy — administrative uniformity, separation of the judiciary from the administration, regular procedures.

The result was a truly revolutionary transformation of provincial administration. *Provintsiï* were abolished but became the core of smaller provinces: their number grew from 9 in 1774 to 26 in Russia proper by 1784.¹⁵ Each province was headed by a governor general, assisted by a governor. The governor's chancery was expanded

12. *PSZ*, vol. 5, 1719, N. 3380; Iu. Got'e, *op. cit.*: 103.

13. See Denis Fonvizin's comedy *Nedorosl'*, Act. 5.

14. J. LeDonne, *Absolutism...*, *op. cit.*: 304-305.

15. J. LeDonne, "The territorial reform of the Russian empire 1775-1796. I. Central Russia, 1775-1784," *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, 23, 2 (1982): 147-185.

to become a provincial board, justice was administered in two chambers, and fiscal affairs in a treasury chamber. At first glance, it seemed that provincial administration remained deconcentrated, but that was not the case, because the very loose system of local agencies representing the central colleges had now been streamlined to include only three, and these were given extensive responsibilities and significant managerial power. They were also subordinated to the governor general, who became the only intermediary between them and the central government. But what made the reform truly revolutionary was the subsequent reform of the central government. Most of the colleges and chanceries were closed, their responsibilities transferred to and consolidated in the local chambers. By the time the reform was completed in the mid-1780s, the imperial government had been deprived of its executive agencies, and consisted only of the Senate, where the procurator general exercised overwhelming influence, the college of war, and the empress's personal secretariat, where one of the secretaries, Alexander Bezborodko, stood well above the others in the scope of his responsibilities. The central government had become highly concentrated in the hands of a triumvirate reporting directly to the empress. Governors general were directly responsible to her, but reported to the Senate for most matters of civil administration (and even sat in it when they came to the capital), and to the college of war in military affairs. The reform had created a remarkable symmetry between the central and local levels, and this was certainly one of its most original achievements.¹⁶

But, as often happened in Russian administrative history, the reform was barely completed when a major change was introduced. When the first list of governors general was published in 1781, it turned out that they had been appointed, not in each province but over two and sometimes three. The governor general resided in one provincial capital and continued to be assisted by a governor, but in the other provincial capital(s) the governor had become the top official: the governor general had been transformed into a regional authority. By 1795, they numbered twenty two. It is hard to determine what brought about this modification of the original intent of the Organic Statute of November 1775. A shortage of generals was a possibility, since acting governors general (*ispravliaiushchie dolzhnost'iu*) were as a rule lieutenant-generals, governors general, full generals, and in a few cases, even field marshals. But it is more likely that, in fact, tradition reasserted itself. The language of the time reinforces this interpretation: the governor was seen in the hierarchy as the successor of the *provintsii* voevoda, the governor general of the governor.¹⁷

How the reform would have developed had the empress been younger and the triumvirate remained one of outstanding individuals must remain moot. A highly concentrated government both at the center and in each provincial capital was an

16. See I. de Madariaga, *Russia in the age of Catherine the Great* (New Haven, 1981): 281-291 and J. LeDonne, *Ruling Russia. Politics and administration in the age of absolutism 1762-1796* (Princeton, 1984): 67-82.

17. See for example *PSZ*, vol. 20, 1775, N. 14395, vol. 22, 1788, N. 16736, vol. 23, 1794, N. 17194.

exceptional phenomenon in Russian administrative history. A considerable degree of decentralization was achieved, especially in the administration of justice, and it was most evident in the transfer of many local activities to elected bodies with some decision-making powers, even though they were placed under strict gubernatorial supervision. The major flaw of the reform was that it made the new system highly dependent on so few individuals. Less than a decade after its completion the empress was ageing, and the successors of Grigorii Potemkin and Prince Alexander Viazemskii were men of lesser caliber. In spite of the decentralization, weakness at the top reverberated through the entire system. As rot set in, a grand duke waited impatiently in the wings, determined to do away with the decentralization of the 1780s and deconcentrate the central government once again: the model would be the military establishment, with its several functional departments operating with some autonomy under the overall supervision of the college of war and its president.

Paul's reforms are of little interest to the student of regionalization.¹⁸ The governor general was their first victim, and with him, the concept of administrative region was abandoned. Here was a paradox, because Paul developed the system of inspectors in the army, accountable to the tsar alone for keeping military units up to standard, and the deployment of troops was regionalized to a larger extent that had been the case under Catherine. Paul recreated the colleges, but it was not clear what their relationships would be with the provincial chambers. Governors were held strictly accountable to the tsar, who remodelled the central government after the military establishment while neglecting to extend the reform to the territorial administration of civil affairs. It may have been assumed that re-centralization so transformed the governor into a blind agent of the central government, dismissable at the slightest suspicion of dereliction of duty, that no intermediate, regional, authority was any longer necessary.

Paul's reign lasted barely over four years, and his impetuous and capricious behavior was not conducive to the execution of a consistent reform of the imperial government. The tsar, nonetheless, pointed the way to the future, and his son followed the direction of his reforms. But it was during the reign of Alexander I that the most interesting experiment with regionalization would take place. Dissatisfaction with Catherine's reforms among the middle levels of the ruling class and among the clerks who found themselves shipped off to the provinces; the looming struggle with revolutionary France requiring a substantial increase in the military establishment and the mobilization of resources to sustain that increase; the re-emergence of an imperial family, increasingly separated from the great families of the ruling elite and in need of a power base which it found in the army; and the re-assertion of the autocratic power of the tsar-emperor — all these factors combined to recreate a highly centralized and deconcentrated central government not unlike that of Peter I, and one, interestingly enough, willing to experiment with

18. M. Klochkov, *Ocherki pravitel'stvennoi deiatel'nosti vremeni Pavla I* (Petrograd, 1916) is still the standard study.

regional administration. It was as if the increasing size of the empire and extreme centralization combined to require the creation of an intermediate level between the imperial and provincial capitals — a need which Alexander's successors would refuse to concede.

Alexander retained his father's emphasis on the reform of the central government and his neglect of provincial administration. The reform of September 1802 created eight ministries by placing a minister at the head of the restored colleges and giving him powers that infringed on collegial decision-making, the hallmark of the old system. A second reform in June 1811 gave the minister autocratic control of his ministry, and each minister would become the emperor's chief of staff in matters pertaining to his ministry.¹⁹ The deconcentration of the imperial government continued and, with the passage of time, that government would become a conglomerate of ministries and "main administrations," each with its own selfish interests and little willingness to compromise in matters of imperial interest. From Catherine II's extreme form of concentration to Alexander's (and his successors') extreme deconcentration the pendulum had swung very widely indeed. Some attempt was made to coordinate ministerial activities and hold the ministers to account — in the Senate's First Department, in the Committee of Ministers, in the State Council — but ministers and the emperor as commander in chief of both the military and civilian establishments had a common interest in keeping open direct channels of communication. The appointment of Alexei Arakcheev and Prince Petr Volkonskii resurrected the posts of procurator general and president of the college of war, and created for a while a duumvirate, but it could never possess the exclusive power of Catherine's triumvirate because the central government was no longer concentrated as it had been under the empress.

The most telling consequence of the creation of the ministries was the systematic splintering of all governmental activities into functional clusters and their apportionment among the various ministries, not without some squabbling over turf among the most powerful ministries with the widest competence. As a result, it was logical that the Finance Ministry would claim control over the treasury chambers, the Justice Ministry over the judicial chambers, the Interior Ministry over the provincial board, although the ministry had to concede that the board would remain under the Senate's First Department, because its jurisdiction in police matters and general administration overlapped with that of the chambers. But what of the governor? He remained the tsar's delegate, his divisional commander in civil affairs, subordinated to the Senate. But the new consensus, reflecting the key position of the ministers and their hunger for power, required that the governor be placed under a minister who would be his intermediary with the emperor and the Senate. Since the governor's major responsibility was the maintenance of order, that ministry could only be the Interior Ministry. The

19. PSZ, vol. 27, 1802, N. 20406 and vol. 31, 1811, N. 24686; S. Pokrovskii, *Ministerskaia vlast' v Rossii* (Iaroslavl', 1906): 99-113, 158-162; A. Gradovskii, "Vysshiaia..." *art. cit.*: 287-292; M. Raeff, *Michael Speransky: Statesman of Imperial Russia, 1772-1839* (The Hague, 1957): 37-46, 105-117, 229-236.

inevitable consequence of this fragmentation of provincial administration along functional lines, of its deconcentration, was to destroy the administrative unity which Catherine's reform had so successfully created. A new symmetry was coming into being — a deconcentrated central government bearing down on a deconcentrated provincial administration, to the detriment of responsible and efficient government. Only a governor general could maintain a semblance of unity and stem the evolution toward administrative anarchy.

There was no attempt to recreate officially the post of governor general as it had existed between 1775 and 1796, and there was some reluctance to use even the title. We find it in some frontier regions, like Siberia. Elsewhere, we find "military governors" in command of the garrison in a major provincial capital, assisted by a governor for civilian affairs, and given supervisory jurisdiction over two or three provinces.²⁰ In the Caucasus, he was called "commander in chief" and he did command regular troops. Whatever the title, it is obvious that the governor general re-emerged as an "inspector of civil administration" over more than one province, responsible to the tsar directly, but also to the War Ministry for military affairs, to the Interior Ministry for the police and the maintenance of order, to the other ministries in matters of their respective concern. These "governors general" were found in frontier regions alone and were not re-introduced in Russia proper.

The situation changed after 1814. That year, the field army returned to the empire and was assigned permanent quarters. It received a quasi-regional organization — divided into two armies, these divided into army corps. In regions outside the area of deployment of the two armies "separate corps" were made responsible to the chief of staff directly. Corps commanders were given a set of specific powers.²¹ It is most likely that this regionalization of the military establishment renewed the debate over regionalizing the civil administration as well. A number of projects were submitted and resulted in the creation by the end of the reign of thirteen regions in both Russia proper and its borderlands, each headed by a governor general. The title was finally re-instituted.

II

Two issues require separate investigation when we turn to the place of the governor general in the hierarchy of government from ruler to governor. The first is the governor general's relationship with the central government. The Organic Statute of 1775 emphasized that he was appointed by the empress at her discretion, but left vague the nature of his relationship to her in the exercise of his duties. In urgent cases, he was allowed to contact her directly. At other times, he was required to submit periodic reports on his provinces which he had to inspect from time to time; on "events" assumed to be of interest to the ruler such as fires and floods; on

20. *PSZ*, vol. 26, 1801, N. 20004-20005.

21. *PSZ*, vol. 32, 1814, N. 25723 and vol. 33, 1815, N. 26022.

elections to the provincial and district agencies; on the fiscal condition of his provinces including the prices of basic commodities; on the strength of the garrisons.²² If such reports required action, the empress either issued a direct order or referred the matter to the college of war or the Senate's First Department for further study. His role here was that of supplier of basic information on the overall condition of his territory, so that the empress could in turn gather from the reports of a relatively small number of regional delegates of the elite a fairly accurate picture of the political, social, and economic life of her empire at any given time. Beyond this purely procedural activity, gaining the ruler's ear was not always easy: any requests had to go through the hands of Bezborodko who, by adding a negative comment or deliberately choosing the wrong time to pass on a request, could easily kill it.²³

A governor general also kept in touch with the Senate's departments: the judicial departments in his capacity as judicial officer in criminal cases, the First Department in personnel and fiscal matters. Since the agenda of the departments was tightly controlled by the procurator general and his chancery, the governor general was in fact the regional delegate of the procurator general in civilian matters and of the president of the college of war in military matters. His dependence on the procurator general was greater because his post was a civilian one, since governors general, if they had no military command, were transferred to the list of civil members of the elite.²⁴ Whenever there was a conflict of laws, whenever the application of a law raised questions about its suitability in his territory at a particular time, a governor general brought up the matter with Prince Viazemskii who settled it either in consultation with the empress or by referring it to the appropriate Senate department.

Moreover, a governor general was allowed to sit in a Senate department and the general assembly when he obtained leave to come to Petersburg — it was granted by the empress on the recommendation of the procurator general or that of her secretary. There, he was empowered to act as the spokesman (*khodatai*) for his territory if a case came up that affected its interests or those of some influential members of local society.²⁵ In these two types of activity — representing his territory in the capital and speaking for it from his regional capital through the procurator general — the governor general took part in law-making. The legislative process in eighteenth-century Russia was a confused one, since there was no

22. *PSZ*, vol. 21, 1782, N. 15721, 1783, N. 15760. The Organic Statute is in *PSZ*, vol. 20, 1775, N. 14392.

23. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov (RGADA), f. 16, d. 778, l. 218 (Rehbinder to Bezborodko, Nov. 30, 1787); d. 804, part III, l. 146-147 (Tutolmin to Bezborodko, July 28, 1788) and l. 158ob (Tutolmin to same, Dec. 13, 1788).

24. "A. Prozorovskii," in *Russkii biograficheskii slovar'*, 15 (1910): 4-11, here 7: Prozorovskii told the empress in 1781 he would accept his appointment as governor general of Kursk and Orel on condition he would remain on the army list. He received no answer, and the following year he was promoted to full general and removed from the list over his protest.

25. Organic Statute, art. 91. See also *PSZ*, vol. 22, 1785, N. 16134; V. Grigor'ev, *op. cit.*: 215-216.

institution responsible for it, and the “law” took a multitude of forms, from a Senate report approved by the empress to a personal order directed to a specific individual.²⁶ Finally, a governor general was ultimately accountable to the Senate: for serious dereliction of duty he would be tried in the general assembly of the Petersburg departments — a perfect case of the ruling elite trying one of its own, with predictable results.²⁷

A second and more troublesome issue, but one that gives us a clue to the contemporary perception of a governor general’s role, was that of his relationship with the two or three governors in his region. The issue emerged immediately after the publication of the Organic Statute. The Little Russian governor general, Marshal Petr Rumiantsev, wanted to know the extent to which governors were subordinated to him, what matters they could settle on their own authority, and what others required his confirmation. The Senate could not find an answer in the Statute but invoked the instructions to the governors of 1728 and 1764. Governors, vice-governors, and sub-provincial *voevody* were considered to be on equal footing among themselves, in accordance with an old tradition that did not accept gradations of authority between the center and the districts. The difference was only in rank and status, not in managerial power. The instruction of 1764 had placed the governor under the authority (*vedenie*) of the empress and Senate alone (and no longer of the colleges), and he could accept orders (*ukazy*) only from them. There was a precedent, however. When eastern Bielorussia was annexed in 1772, the two governors were placed under the authority of the governor general, Zakhar Chernyshev, the vice-president of the college of war. It was suggested that this precedent be used to clarify the issue, but Catherine insisted that Rumiantsev must proceed in accordance with the Organic Statute — a non sequitur since neither he nor the Senate could find any answer in it.²⁸

Nevertheless, the issue had to be faced after 1781, when it became clear that the post of governor general was evolving quite differently from what had been intended by the Statute. The governor general was no longer a provincial official but had become a regional one. A general decision was never published, but practice settled the issue. The governor was indeed subordinated to the governor general and had to report to the Senate through his office. Rumiantsev, Chernyshev and Potemkin were field marshals; other governors general were either lieutenant or full generals. As a rule, governors were major generals. In the command hierarchy in which these men had spent their entire career, they knew they had to obey their superior officers. Chernyshev treated one of his governors so rudely that the latter asked the empress to return him to active service; using improper (*neprilichnyi*) language in a

26. On this broad and complicated question see N. Korkunov, *Ukaz i zakon* (Petersburg, 1894).

27. I know of only one governor general (Ivan Iakobi of Irkutsk who was dismissed for a serious offense, here an alleged plot to involve Russia into war with China: see *Istoriia Pravitel'stviushchogo Senata* (SPb, 1911), 5 vol., here 2: 345-346, 496, 587-588, 791, and “Zapiski Derzhavina,” in Iu. Grot, ed., *Sochineniia Derzhavina* (SPb, 1868-1878), 7 vol., here 6 (1871): 633-643. There was no formal trial and the case was eventually dismissed.

28. *PSZ*, vol. 16, 1764, N. 12137, vol. 20, 1775, N. 14394.

letter to one's governor general was equated with lack of respect for one's commander (*nachaln'ik*), to whom the governor was "subordinated," and in this case resulted in removal from office and trial in the Senate's Sixth Department. But of course, governors and governors general were political managers, not bureaucrats, and their mutual relationships were very much influenced by their political connections in the elite of the capital. Governor Afanasii Zubov in Kursk sought to undermine his superior, Governor General Alexander Prozorovskii, by sending derogatory information to the procurator general. Gavril Derzhavin, annoyed at Governor General Ivan Gudovich's attitude toward him, turned to Potemkin to get himself transferred to a less troublesome post.²⁹ However, it had become an established principle by the mid-1780s that governors were subordinated to their governor general.

Yet, a certain ambivalence remained. A governor general usually resided permanently in one of the provincial capitals. There, he was the chairman of the provincial board, and the governor was merely his deputy. But what of the governor in the other provincial capital? Here, tradition remained very much alive. Thus, a Senate order of November 1775 instructed governors general and governors, "each in his province," to send descriptions of roads and the location of river crossings to facilitate the march of regiments from one assignment to another. An imperial order of August 1782 declared that if a governor resided in a provincial capital that was closer to Petersburg or Moscow than the residence of the governor general, he was to send his reports to the empress directly, bypassing the governor general's office. Such language was reminiscent of the 1730s and showed that in the eyes of some members of the ruling elite at least, the governor general was the successor of the governor and the governor that of the sub-provincial *voevoda*.

Even more indicative of the reluctance to establish a strict and uniform subordination of the governor to the governor general and thereby recognize the existence of a regional level was the answer given to the question of what happened when a governor general was absent from his two provinces. The Organic Statute provided that, when the governor general was absent, the governor would operate in accordance with the instruction of April 1764 and other appropriate regulations. As early as 1782, it was decided that in such a case the governor would send the bi-monthly reports on the condition of his province. Later, it became a general rule that whenever an order was sent to carry out a certain assignment in the province, the governor general "or in his absence the governor" would be responsible for it.³⁰ This raised a fundamental question. If the responsibilities of a governor general and

29. G. Dobrynin, "Istinnoe povestvovanie ili zhizn' Gavrila Ivanovicha Dobrynina im samim pisannaia (1762-1827)," *Russkaia starina*, II (July-Dec. 1871): 97-153, here 108; *PSZ*, vol. 22, 1786, N. 16456; *RGADA*, f. 248, kn. 6560, vol. 1, 193-196 (Prozorovskii to procurator general, Nov. 13, 1783); on Derzhavin, see E. Salias, "Poet Derzhavin, pravitel' Namestnichestva 1785-1788," *Russkii arkhiv* (Sept. 1786): 66-120, (Oct. 1786): 567-627, and "Zapiski Derzhavina," *art. cit.*, 526-528.

30. See for example, *PSZ*, vol. 21, 1781, N. 15141, vol. 22, 1788, N. 16736, vol. 23, 1794, N. 17194.

a governor were interchangeable, was not the governor general becoming superfluous and the administrative region an unwanted child of the reform? The question was all the more relevant: since the governor general did not have his own separate chancery, there existed in fact no regional authority.³¹

Turning now to the actual managerial powers of a governor general, we may begin with his powers over personnel. The clerical personnel (copyists and *kantseliaristy*) were appointed by the provincial board at discretion from local people — sons of priests, sons of merchants, even people subject to the capitation, although this was frowned upon if not illegal. The secretaries were, as a rule, appointed by the Senate's First Department from a pool of candidates in the capital, but it was by no means unusual that the Senate would simply accept a recommendation of the governor general.³² Each province had a board, two judicial chambers, and a treasury chamber for a total of 5 secretaries in grade 11, the civilian equivalent of a second lieutenant, and the two elected courts had 3 secretaries in grade 12, a total of 8. At the district level, the land court and the district court had each a secretary in grade 14, the last level in the Table of Ranks. If we assume an average of 12 districts per province, this meant 24 secretaries, a grand total of 32.³³ All of them depended on a Senate appointment, which meant they could not be dismissed without Senate approval.

The managerial personnel consisted of appointed and elected officials. The board and the three chambers were entirely appointed and had a personnel of 18, all chosen by the Senate except the three chairmen who were appointed by the ruler. The two chairmen of the upper land court were also appointed by the ruler, those of the *magistrat* and the upper *rasprava* by the Senate, on the recommendation of the provincial board. Their other members were elected, but the election required the confirmation of the governor general "or, in his absence, the governor." The district and land courts were entirely elected, but their election required similar confirmation. Thus, neither the governor general nor the governor had any appointive powers except over subordinate clerical personnel outside the Table of Ranks.³⁴ They could recommend personnel in some cases, and it seems they were allowed to bring their own people with them to fill a number of posts.³⁵ Moreover, their power to confirm elections gave them influence over the elected personnel, but they had no immediate and formal power to appoint and dismiss.

31. I. Strakhovskii, "Gubernskoe ustroistvo," *Zhurnal ministerstva iustitsii*, 7 (1913): 28-92, here 53. But governors general lived in grand style: see for example, I. Meshkov, "Zapiski Ivan Ivanovich Meshkova 1767-1832," *Russkii arkhiv*, II, 5-8 (1905): 177-242, here 187; G. Dobrynin, *art cit.*, I (Jan.-June 1871): 651-672, here 665, II (July-Dec. 1871): 97-153, here 139-140, 177-222, here 207.

32. See RGADA, f. 248, d. 6519, part 2, 65-67 (Mel'gunov to procurator general, July 8, 1783).

33. These data come from the general table of organization of the postreform agencies in PSZ, vol. 44, part 2, shtaty po grazhdanskoi chasti, 1796, N. 17494 (pp. 253-268).

34. PSZ, vol. 21, 1781, N. 15193 and 15141, art 23.

35. RGADA, f. 248, d. 6560, part I, 52 (Prozorvoskii to procurator general, February 8, 1783), 59-60 (*Ibid.*, April 6, 1783).

In police matters, the governor general played a crucial role. The 12 land captains were responsible to the board for the maintenance of order, the conduct of investigations and the execution of judicial decisions as well as those of the treasury chamber. If the land captain's presence was not enough to restore order, the governor general could place at his disposal men from the *shtatnaia komanda* stationed in the provincial and district capitals. If additional force was needed, resort would be had to the garrison — if there was one in the province. All commandants were subordinated to the governor general and expected to carry out his orders (*pod orderom*). And in extraordinary cases, when the use of force by regular troops was required, requests were sent to the college of war and the empress herself, unless the governor general was a military commander.³⁶ Therefore, a governor general (and a governor) had a monopoly over the use of force, and this considerably strengthened his authority. He was first and foremost a police official.

His monopoly of force was backed by the confirmation of criminal sentences. Some of his powers were specific, others more general. Criminal chambers were empowered to impose a variety of penalties, but sentences to death, "loss of honor," and severe corporal punishment required the approval of the governor general. Since the application of the death penalty had been suspended, it was implied that the governor general either forwarded death sentences to the Senate or commuted them to severe corporal punishment and banishment to Siberia. The interposition of the governor general in criminal procedure was important, because it was generally recognized that the penal law was too harsh, and courts had no choice but to apply it to the letter. Rather than amend it to soften its provisions, it was considered profitable to let the governor general mitigate the law in the name of a more humane justice by referring to Catherine's own merciful disposition. In Russia, the law was harsh, but the ruler (and her regional delegate) were merciful: that was one of the foundations of the autocratic power. Since the instruction of 1764 said nothing about the governor's judicial powers, the governor inherited those of the governor general when the latter was away. The governor general did not formally interfere in civil procedure: if the value of the suit was under 500 rubles, it was decided by the civil chamber in last resort; if it exceeded 500 rubles, the case was automatically forwarded to the Senate if one of the parties chose to appeal.³⁷

Although the Organic Statute clearly stated that the governor general was no judge, it also gave him broad jurisdiction to ensure that "justice" (*spravedlivost'*) would be done. If he noticed something "unjust" in the administration of justice, he could stop it but had to report this to the Senate and even the empress herself. This provision gave him in fact the power to interfere in both civil and criminal procedure. Although Catherine wanted to separate the judiciary from the regular administration and give it substantial autonomy, it was also quite clear there could be no independence. While one governor general could do much good in

36. *PSZ*, vol. 20, 1780, N. 14990. For an example of such a request (denied) see RGADA, f. 16, d. 804, 253-254 (Tutolmin to Catherine II, August 8, 1785).

37. J. LeDonne, *Absolutism...*, *op. cit.*: 196-197.

humanizing criminal justice, another could do much harm by giving his personal interpretation of what was just. Personal and arbitrary power very much remained a major factor in the judicial system.

A governor general had no powers in fiscal administration. He could not raise or reduce taxes or introduce new ones. The rate of the capitation and quitrent was fixed by imperial legislation, the receipts were deposited in the provincial treasury and were spent pursuant to orders from the central treasury administered by the procurator general. Expenditures were set by tables of organization (*shtaty*), and any additional expenditures required the ruler's approval, like any other amendments to the "laws." Governors general had no power to change any of the sources of revenue, but could submit recommendations, together with those of the treasury chamber, to the Senate's First Department for decision. However, they had greater freedom of action in demanding the so-called contributions from the land (*zemskie povinnosti*): supplying carts for the transportation of officials and troops, repairing roads, billeting troops. Since the amount of these contributions was not fixed until 1803, there was great latitude for the exercise of arbitrary power, requiring peasants to leave their fields in summertime, for example.³⁸

But if the governor general had such limited fiscal powers, he was given broad responsibility for the economic well-being of his provinces: he had to prevent shortages of salt and other necessities of life, encourage agriculture and industry, keep roads in good order, protect forests, look after the poor, encourage the building of schools. He had to stimulate the production of vodka because its sale was a state monopoly, and a lucrative one. Governors general were empowered to negotiate contracts for up to 10,000 rubles, which had been a college's power before the reform. As a rule, the new provincial agencies were equated with the pre-reform central agencies whose functions were decentralized and central headquarters closed. The governor general had become a kind of regional procurator general with an overall jurisdiction over the entire public and economic life of his two provinces. He was, like the governor before and after him, the "master" (*khoziain*) of his "region."

The term, however, was misleading. Responsibility without effective power did not encourage initiative, as Governor-General Jakob Sievers found out to his chagrin in the administration of Novgorod and Tver provinces: an enterprising governor general, he found himself constantly at odds with the powerful procurator general who expected a more restrained performance from his regional delegate.³⁹ Any initiative was bound to involve the expenditure of funds, and the governor

38. *Ibid.*: 272-275.

39. R. Jones, *Provincial development in Russia* (New Brunswick, 1984): 55-56, 159-169. Gradovskii certainly exaggerates when he writes that Catherine's governors general were "a law unto themselves" who "dealt among themselves as semi-sovereign lords" but he had a point: they were members of the ruling elite and as such behaved in the same autocratic manner as their own imperial mistress: "Istoricheskii ocherk...", *art. cit.*: 312-313. For a valuable description of a governor general's activities see L. Trefolev, "A. P. Mel'gunov, general gubernator Ekaterinskikh vremen," *Russkii arkhiv* (1865): 931-978.

general was condemned to beg for them or get into trouble for juggling accounts. What kind of role, then, was a governor general actually expected to play behind the imposing facade of the Organic Statute?

He was first of all responsible for the maintenance of order and, if he was given a military command as well, he was also responsible for the security of the imperial boundary in his region. In exceptional cases, he might also command troops in wartime. In this capacity, his chief allegiance was to the college of war and to the empress herself. In two cases, a governor general was also the president of that college (Chernyshev in Bielorrussia and Potemkin in New Russia). He stood higher in the official hierarchy than a mere governor, and was often a member of the great families of the elite while governors had risen through the ranks, sometimes from very modest backgrounds. The governor general thus projected the image of the Court in the provinces of the empire, gave the provincial nobility a sense of solidarity with the empress. Internal security was achieved not only by maintaining order but also by creating patronage networks in the provinces and integrating them into a vast imperial network.⁴⁰ Some 20 well-known military commanders and members of the ruling elite could much better do this than some 50 governors.

But with the passage of time it became clear that the post of governor general in the central provinces of the Russian core was becoming a temporary one. Sometimes the post was left vacant; sometimes it was filled by a general who had run afoul of another powerful member of the elite. When the post was vacant, the governor became the true “master” of his province and with similar powers.

As a result, it gradually became an inspectorial one, in which the governor general did not so much manage his region as inspect its agencies to make sure they operated in accordance with the Organic Statute and other regulations. The requirement that he inspect his territory regularly, visit the agencies, check their procedures and books, verify the holdings of the treasury, and report to the central government whatever changes he felt necessary, bears a strong resemblance to the statute of 1731 on the inspector general of the army and his three roving inspectors.⁴¹ By the end of Catherine’s reign, these dual aspects of the post of governor general — real manager in some cases, mere inspector in others — had become the characteristic features of the post.

III

Alexander’s government rejected from the very beginning the principles upon which the reform of the 1770s had rested: there would be a return to deconcentrated

40. Gavril Dobrynin who served in Bielorrussia writes that governors general were powerful because they were close to the ruler (*v doverie tsarskoe*), which is another way of saying that they belonged to the ruling elite of which the empress was the grand patron: *art. cit.*: 322. Although some of them had fallen from favor, they remained members of the elite.

41. *PSZ*, vol. 8, 1731, N. 5900. In a 1790 case, the governor general is referred to as the keeper (*blustitel*) of the laws: *PSZ*, vol. 23, 1790, N. 16861.

government, presumably unified under the leadership of the tsar-emperor and “autocrat,” and the provincial administration would similarly be deconcentrated by diluting the responsibilities of the governor. The result would be a re-centralization of decision-making in the Ministries of Interior, Finance, Justice, and Education. There would be no room for governors general as intermediaries between ministries and provincial agencies, except in border regions where political considerations required the maintenance of some kind of regional administration.

The manifesto of September 1802 announcing the creation of ministries contained an essential contradiction.⁴² It pointed out the variety of climates, peoples, religions, and ways of life and languages in the empire — in a word recognized its regional diversity. The purpose of government was to remove, nay prevent, abuses, develop agriculture and encourage manufactures. Such a truly regional perspective on the geography, ethnicity, and economy of the empire seemed to announce the creation of agencies adapted to it. Instead, the manifesto invoked the legacy (*dukh*) of Peter I, who had divided the administration into sectors (*chasti*) managed by agencies with a functional jurisdiction restricted to a number of related matters and extending across the entire breadth of the empire. It conveniently overlooked Peter’s experiment with regionalization between 1708 and 1719. Although not designed to bring out the internal diversity of the realm but aimed chiefly at facilitating the collection of taxes and the drafting of recruits, that experiment had nevertheless laid the foundation of what might have become a regional administration, to which Catherine did return in part and to which Alexander would also return toward the end of his reign.

The ministries of 1802 were loose collections of old colleges that had been restored by Paul, and the authority of a minister was by no means clear. It was certainly limited by the “collegial” way of doing business. Such practices were becoming obsolete in a political world imbued with the determination to carry out extensive reforms where each minister, selected by the tsar and enjoying his confidence, saw himself as his “chief of staff” in a specific domain.⁴³ The spirit of Catherine’s government had been clearly civilian, that of Alexander’s was military, and ministers were civilian commanders responsible to the tsar as commander in chief of both the military and civilian establishments. Their authority and power were considerably enhanced by the ministerial statute of June 1811, published at a time when war with France seemed imminent.⁴⁴ The internal structure of each ministry was streamlined, the colleges were abolished and transformed into departments headed by a director subordinated to the minister. Ministers were freed from whatever control remained over their activities: there was something unacceptable about the control by any agency of government, the Senate for

42. *PSZ*, vol. 27, 1802, N. 20406.; A. Gradovskii, “Vysshiaia...,” *art. cit.*: 287-290.

43. S. Pokrovskii, *op. cit.*: 158-162. For some valuable comments on the emergence of functions in science at the beginning of the nineteenth century, while the classical period had emphasized coordination and integration, see F. Jacob, *La logique du vivant* (Paris, 1970): 43-44, 53, 100-101, 121, 125, 201.

44. *PSZ*, vol. 31, 1811, N. 24686.

example, of the activities of a minister whose primary function was to carry out the emperor's orders.⁴⁵ The reverse of the coin, however, was that the emperor had neither the time nor the patience and capacity to enforce unity in a government which became more and more deconcentrated with the passage of time; contemporaries would henceforth bemoan the lack of unity until the Revolution of 1905. Each ministry became a functional empire within the territorial empire and each minister began to consider his ministry a kind of fiefdom.⁴⁶ It is obvious that he would look at any governor general as a potential enemy.

The 1811 statute dealt with ministries in general and set the norms for statutes issued for individual ministries.⁴⁷ It had to take up the relationships with local agencies but it did this in a very ambiguous way. It stated that agencies and persons subordinated to the *ministry* must carry out its orders unconditionally (*bezprikoslovno*), and these agencies had to include local ones. Ministers were given the authority to dismiss officials appointed by the Senate and promote others to grade seven, previously a Senate responsibility. Thus the personnel of the judicial chambers and treasury chamber became dependent on the Justice and Finance Ministers respectively, while the governor became the agent of the Interior Minister, although he also remained the personal agent of the emperor. Some semblance of "unity" was preserved by insisting that the provincial board was appointed by the Senate. The only reference to the governor was that if a ministerial order depended on the board for its execution, it had to be addressed to the governor in person. The implication was that orders dealing with the chambers' activities that did not need the assistance of the board were addressed to the chambers directly. And the only reference to a regional agent was that no ministerial order could be sent to a local agency "bypassing or ignoring" a higher authority. A copy of the order would presumably be sent to that agent.⁴⁸ There was much ambiguity in these provisions, probably evidence of a compromise between the supporters of unlimited ministerial power and those who remained faithful to the essence of Catherine's reforms. But the trend was clear.

The issue of regionalism could not be ignored, however, and it was treated in two ways. One was to create ministerial regions, i.e., multi-provincial territories in

45. S. Pokrovskii, *op. cit.*: 59-61; J. LeDonne, *Absolutism...*, *op. cit.*: 108-112.

46. J. LeDonne, *Absolutism...*, *op. cit.*: 107-108; A. Gradovskii, "Vysshiaia...", *art. cit.*: 291-292.

47. The statute of the Police Ministry (created in 1810 to take over many of the functions of the Interior Ministry and abolished in 1819) is in *PSZ*, vol. 31, 1811, N. 24687, that of the Finance Ministry in *ibid.*, N. 24688, that of the Education Ministry in vol. 34, 1817, N. 27106. No statute was published for the Justice Ministry which remained very much part of the Senate establishment.

48. *PSZ*, vol. 31, 1811, N. 24686, art. 234-236, 269-271. See also O. Zakharova, *Generalnyi svoikh sudeb* (Moscow, 1988): 17 and S. Seredonin, ed., *Istoricheskii obzor deiatel'nosti komiteta ministrov* (SPb, 1902-1903), 5 vol., here 1: 464. Governors (and governors general) retained the power to confirm contracts up to the value of 10,000 rubles, unless authorized to confirm them above that sum by imperial orders. This ceiling was raised to 25,000 in 1830. Contracts valued at between 25,000 and 50,000 rubles were confirmed by individual ministers, those above by the Senate.

which a specific sector of administration was placed under the supervision of the regional delegate of an individual minister. This was very different from the integrated, “concentrated,” territorial administration placed under the representative of the central government with a broad jurisdiction over at least several sectors of administration. This deserves separate treatment. The other way was to admit exceptions to the rule that there must be no regional intermediary between the central government and the provincial administration while postulating that the exceptions would apply only to the frontier regions: there, governors general would be called military governors and would be stationed in Riga, Vitebsk, Vilno, Kiev, Poltava and Odessa, Tiflis, Orenburg and Irkutsk. They would wear two hats: as military officers of general rank, they would command the garrisons; as civilian members of the elite, they would have supervisor authority over two or three civil governors and would be inspectors of the civil administration; they would receive a copy of ministerial orders sent to the governors, and governors would forward their recommendations and confirmations of criminal sentences through their offices or would file copies with them. In Orenburg, the military governor would command the regular and irregular troops stationed in his territory; in Tiflis he would be called commander in chief because he was a theater commander in the entire Caucasus. In these two cases, the “governor general” as military commander possessed greater powers over his military subordinates than he did over the civilian ones. His status as separate corps commander empowered him to order a court martial over any officer up to the rank of general and to confirm sentences except those to death and degradation up to the rank of lieutenant colonel.⁴⁹

Siberia was a world in itself, and it was there that the major exception was made from the very beginning of the reign. Indeed, only there was the title of governor general officially used. The governor general of Tobolsk and Irkutsk (and of Tomsk beginning in 1804) was given an instruction in May 1803 which was understood to be a supplement to the Organic Statute of November 1775.⁵⁰ It was justified by the enormous distances and the inability of the government in Petersburg to take appropriate action when urgently needed and control Siberian officials who, it was well known, were notoriously corrupt. The governor general was of course subordinated to the tsar directly, and the two civil governors were subordinated to him. So were the functional sectors like the administration of mines, the post office, even the regular troops. Although the day-to-day administration of the Siberian Lines remained the responsibility of their commander in Omsk, the provisioning of troops, their deployment and their relations with the population were vested in the governor general as commander of all land forces in Siberia and naval forces on the Sea of Okhotsk. Since the ministries had not yet extended their tentacles to Siberia, he appointed all officials there except the governors, the chairmen of the three chambers and those in command of sectorial administration, and he was

49. *PSZ*, vol. 33, 1815, N. 26022, art. 16-17.

50. *PSZ*, vol. 27, 1803, N. 20771.

empowered to remove and transfer those he considered unfit and hand them over to trial in the criminal chamber. But sentences had to be forwarded to the Senate. Moreover, he was also empowered to confirm contracts valued at more than 10,000 rubles.

Thus the instruction created a truly regional authority, to be based in Irkutsk, although the governor general was authorized to move to Tobolsk and stay there for as long as he needed. It set aside Siberia from European Russia, but hardly produced a solution to the problems of that vast borderland. The region was too large, the distances too great between Tobolsk and Irkutsk (not to mention Yakutsk) to enable the governor general to get acquainted with its personnel and its needs. In fact, it was a throwback to the pre-reform period, even to the pre-1764 period, when the governor of Siberia also possessed great powers and the commander of the Siberian Lines reported to him. For the next fifteen years, Siberia was left to its own devices, and one of the governors general even chose not to live there but to remain in Petersburg, throwing the regional administration even farther back, to the seventeenth century, when the Siberian chancery had administered the area from Moscow.

Abuses multiplied and the return of peace in 1815 enabled the government to focus once again on tasks of internal administration. The reform of the Siberian administration was the work of Mikhail Speranskii and was embodied in a series of documents published in 1822.⁵¹ Siberia was divided into two regions, with a governor general in Tobolsk (later Omsk) and another in Irkutsk. The governor general of Tobolsk was also the commander of the Siberian Separate Corps consisting of irregular troops and garrisons on the line, but the commandants of Eastern Siberia depended on Irkutsk. The military responsibilities of these two governors general were thus more limited than those of the governor general under the 1803 instruction.

The most original feature of the reform was the creation of a regional council (*sovet*) in each city. It consisted of six members appointed by the emperor, three on the recommendation of the governor general to handle the paperwork and draw up the agenda (*proizvoditeli del*), the other three on the recommendation of the Ministries of Interior, Finance, and Justice. Other regional agents (communications, internal guard, post office) and members of the provincial administration would also be invited when their expertise and cooperation were needed. The council thus brought together in one regional agency delegates of the three ministries who elsewhere operated on their own, but it was given no executive powers and functioned only as an advisory body: the governor general was empowered to ignore even its unanimous opinion.

Each "main administration" — the name of the regional agency — was subordinated to the Senate and declared to be "a ministerial agency operating locally" in accordance with Speranskii's curious confusion between sectorial

51. The classic work on the reform is M. Raeff, *Siberia and the reforms of 1822* (Seattle, 1956). The major document is *PSZ*, vol. 38. 1822, N. 29125.

(functional) and territorial administration.⁵² The ministerial system had so mesmerized its creator that everything had to be fitted into it, even incompatible and contradictory concepts. In fact, the main administration was subordinated to a "Siberian Committee," a kind of restricted committee consisting of the Ministers of Interior, Finance, Education, the state comptroller, Speranskii, and Alexei Arakcheev, who functioned as a de facto prime minister. The committee's minutes were submitted to the emperor for his confirmation. Governors and provincial agencies received their orders from the Senate and the relevant ministry but a copy had to be sent to the governor general, and civil governors were not allowed to bypass him when they sought a ministerial authorization. On the other hand, all key personnel in the provincial agencies were appointed by the relevant minister or by the emperor on his recommendation, and the rules to dismiss and commit to trial were also determined by the relevant ministry. The main administration had no funds at its disposal and therefore no budget, but was empowered to negotiate contracts valued at between 10,000 and 40,000 rubles. In criminal cases, governors had to seek the Senate's confirmation of their sentences to death and the knout. In other cases, if they disagreed with the sentences of the provincial courts the case was sent to the main administration for final decision by majority vote confirmed by the governor general.⁵³

In the meantime, between 1803 and 1822, other attempts had been made to create regional agencies elsewhere in the empire. Russia annexed Finland in 1809 and a governor general was appointed in Helsingfors (Helsinki), the regional representative of the Russian emperor as Grand Duke of Finland. He commanded Russian troops in the territory and, after 1815, the so-called Finland Separate Corps. In 1823, he moved his residence to Petersburg. Much of his business with the emperor was handled by Speranskii in his capacity as private secretary for Finnish affairs and, beginning in 1811, by a committee of Finnish officials chaired by its own secretary. Finland was governed by a council created in 1809 and renamed a Senate in 1816, consisting of Finnish members appointed by the emperor. Two of its departments administered the court system and acted as a supreme court; another eight functioned as the civil administration of the land.⁵⁴ Although the Senate was chaired by the governor general, his influence was not determinant, in part because it was government policy to give the Finns the widest possible autonomy, in part because the Finns had a representative in the inner sanctum of power who had direct access to the emperor. However, the departments had no connection with the ministries in Petersburg. Once he had moved to the imperial capital, the governor general no longer even chaired the Senate. He would

52. *Ibid.*, art. 582.

53. *Ibid.*, art. 20, 533.

54. K. Ordyn, *Pokorenie Finliandii* (SPb, 1869) 2 vol., here 2: 283-285; "Dokumenty, otnosiashchiesia do voyny s Shvetsieiu i do prisoenineniia Finliandii 1809-1815gg," *Sbornik istoricheskikh materialov*, 3 (1890), 247-328, here 267-269, 288-290; D. Kirby, *The Baltic world, 1772-1993. Europe's northern periphery in an age of change* (London, 1995): 80; E. Thaden, *Russia's western borderlands, 1710-1870* (Princeton, 1984): 92-93.

remain an essentially military commander responsible for the internal security of the territory and, beginning in 1831, would also be chief of staff of the Navy: Russia's interest in Finland was inseparable from its naval activities in the Gulf of Finland and the overall command of the Baltic Fleet.

Another type of regional agency was created in Poland following the annexation of most of the Duchy of Warsaw in 1815. The territory was declared a *tsarstvo* with the Russian emperor as tsar of Poland. He was represented in Warsaw by a viceroy (*namestnik*) who was a Polish general with a questionable political past from the Russian point of view.⁵⁵ The *tsarstvo* was governed by a constitutional charter which established governmental agencies and guaranteed certain freedoms that were not granted to other inhabitants of the empire. There were five Polish Ministers (War, Police, Justice, Finance, and Education) who sat in a committee called the State Council chaired by the viceroy. These ministers had no contacts with their imperial counterparts, giving Poland, like Finland, a considerable amount of internal autonomy. Poland also had a parliament elected by the population of the *tsarstvo*, which met (unlike the Finnish diet which never met after 1809) in 1818, 1820 and 1825. The territory was represented in Petersburg by a secretary, after 1821 called minister-state secretary, with direct access to the emperor.⁵⁶ At first glance, there was great similarity between the regional agencies in Helsinki and those in Warsaw. But the similarity was misleading. There was considerable ambivalence in Petersburg about how much Polish autonomy was acceptable, and the Polish question was inextricably linked with that of the marches of the former Polish empire: Bielorrussia, Lithuania, and the Right-Bank Ukraine, where military governors had been appointed in Vitebsk, Vilno, Kamenets-Podolsk and Kiev. Their authority and powers were regulated by the Organic Statute of 1775 and their status as military governor.

While the State Council was chaired by the Polish viceroy, its most influential member was the Russian Imperial Commissioner (Nikolai Novosil'tsev), whose post was not even mentioned in the charter, and who was not exceedingly friendly toward Polish autonomy because he saw Poland as a hotbed of subversion. Moreover, the most powerful representative of the ruling elite in Warsaw was Grand Duke Constantine, the tsar's brother, who commanded the Polish army and the so-called Lithuanian Separate Corps stationed in Lithuania and the western Ukraine. In 1822, Constantine was given the powers of a commander in chief in wartime: in accordance with the statute of 1812 on the administration of the Grand "Active" Army, all civil and military authorities in the area of the army's deployment were

55. Józef Zajęcek (1752-1826) had served in Kościuszko's army and had commanded an infantry division in Napoleon's army during the invasion of 1812: P. Maikop, "Tsarstvo Pol'skoe posle Venskogo kongressa," *Russkaia starina*, 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1902): 183-194, here 192-193.

56. The charter was published in *Dnevnik zakonov tsarstva pol'skogo* (Warsaw, 1810-1871), 1: 2-103. See also E. Amburger, *Geschichte der Behördenorganisation Russlands von Peter dem Grossen bis 1917* (Leiden, 1966): 424-427, and P. Maikop, *art. cit.*: 193-194 and *ibid.*, 1 (Jan.-March 1903): 419-436, here 419-422.

subordinated to him.⁵⁷ The effect was to create a super-region including Poland, Lithuania, and part of the Right-Bank Ukraine, where governors and provincial agencies reported to a de facto super-governor general, the intermediary between the imperial agencies in Petersburg, the governor general of Lithuania (as military governor of Vilno) and the civil-military agencies on the right bank.

These examples show that a very large part of the Russian empire was governed by governors general whose powers differed significantly from one region to another, while in still other regions (Bielorussia, Little Russia, New Russia, and the Caucasus) governors general operated chiefly in accordance with the Organic Statute of 1775. Only Russia proper did not have its regional agents: the governors general of Petersburg and Moscow were essentially provincial agents of high status in the two capitals. A major influence on the government's thinking toward the institution of governor general was the territorial reorganization of the army in 1814-1815. It created two armies each commanded by a commander in chief headquartered in Mogilev in Bielorussia and Tulchin in Podolia, each divided into army corps consisting of a number of divisions and regiments deployed in a group of provinces. In certain frontier regions, these military-territorial formations were called separate corps. The reorganization was followed by the submission of a number of projects discussing the virtues and faults and dangers of regional administration. These will be discussed in a separate article. What is important for our purpose here is that a decision was made in 1824 to appoint governors general everywhere, in both Russia proper and its frontier territories. A list was drawn up of 13 governors general, each with a jurisdiction over from 2 to 5 provinces.⁵⁸ There would be 4 in Russia proper, 1 in the Baltic region, 3 in the former Polish marches, 1 in New Russia, 1 in the Caucasus, 1 in Orenburg, and 2 in Siberia. In three cases their jurisdiction included both Russian and non-Russian provinces: Pskov was linked with the Baltic region, Kaluga and Smolensk with Bielorussia, Viatka and Perm with Orenburg. Finland and Poland were not included. By 1825, 12 of the 13 had already been appointed: in Riazan, Arkhangelsk, Kazan, Riga, Vitebsk, Vilno, Poltava, Odessa, Tiflis, Orenburg, Tobolsk, and Irkutsk. What remained unclear was the extent of their powers and how such different territories would be administered by a single-type regional delegate. There was no time to draw up an instruction: after Alexander's death, the so-called Committee of December 6, 1826, which carried out a thorough re-evaluation of the imperial administration, concluded that governors general must be appointed only in the border regions. The experiment begun in 1781 with regionalization on an empire-wide scale had come to an end.

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57. *PSZ*, vol. 38, 1822, N. 29087 and 29088. For the background of the decision see A. Pienkos, *Grand Duke Constantine Petrovich. A study in early nineteenth-century Russo-Polish relations 1815-1831*, unpub. Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1971: 104-109.

58. *PSZ*, vol. 40, 1825, N. 30516. The list actually includes 15 governors general but two of them, Petersburg and Moscow, were not regional delegates since their jurisdiction did not extend beyond one province.

Regionalization never received pride of place in Russian administrative practice. It was always assumed that central agencies must retain direct links with their agents in the field, be they the simple *voevoda* in the seventeenth century, the sub-provincial *voevoda* after 1719, the provincial governor after 1775, the judicial and fiscal chambers after 1811. As a result, it was taken for granted that regional administration could not be territorial in the full sense of the term, could not be general while also concentrated in a single official, but had to be primarily functional: the chiefs of various provincial sectors operated not as the subordinate agents of that official, but as local representatives of a central agency responsible for a definite sector of administration across the entire territory of the empire. There is everywhere a basic antagonism between area and functional administration, even in a modern navy, between a captain and the service chiefs on board his ship. In Russia, the service chiefs in the capital always won, because they were members of the ruling elite for whom the purpose of governance was the sharing of the spoils, each getting his share, which the Romanov house apportioned among them. The only example of truly territorial administration was Catherine's reforms, which lasted only about a decade before they were reversed by her son. An explanation must be found in cultural factors⁵⁹ and the strongly anti-bureaucratic and aristocratic spirit of the age, which inspired the closing of the central agencies with their large numbers of socially inferior clerks, leaving a triumvirate of highly competent individuals working closely with the empress, and relying on the governors general to manage the empire for them.

Where did governors general fit in as regional agents over two or more provinces? The answer is complicated, because a number of factors must be taken into account. One was the sheer size of the empire and its growing diversity. The Organic Statute took effect after the first partition of Poland and the treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji, and by the time the governors general became regional agents, in 1781 — and no longer provincial ones as originally intended — Russia was about to annex the Crimea and sign a treaty with Erakle of eastern Georgia. The larger the empire, the greater the diversity of managerial responsibilities, and of course, the greater the number of provinces: by 1796 there were already 50. Moreover, these provinces were themselves the result of a partitioning of natural and historical regions — the eastern marches of the Polish empire, the southern steppe — which retained much of their old unity despite the new administrative-territorial fragmentation. And after Catherine II, the empire expanded to include Finland, Poland, and Transcaucasia, where civil administration was inseparable from military command responsibilities. The provincial administration was by its very nature incapable of coping with this inter-provincial management, and the presence of regional agents was a necessity.

On the one hand, the geography of an expanding empire necessitated the appointment of regional authorities; on the other, it brought into full relief the differences between Russia proper and its peripheral regions. This in turn raised the

59. See note 43.

question whether governors general were necessary in Russia proper which had already reached, despite some inevitable regional variations, a high level of uniformity, with an overwhelmingly peasant population living in a subsistence economy. The answer would depend on what was expected of a governor general. During Catherine's reign, it became obvious that in Russia proper his administrative authority was not very different from that of a simple governor, that his post continued to bear the stamp of its origin as a purely provincial one. Thus, a governor general's activities duplicated those of a governor and the post was superfluous, unless the government was willing to transform it into a mere supervisory one. This is in fact what it became, but even that was considered superfluous, because the activities of 26 governors in Russia proper could easily be monitored by the Senate with the help of occasional so-called senatorial inspections.⁶⁰ In the peripheral regions, some of them still *terra incognita* for Petersburg, the necessity for the imperial government to gain a regional perspective on a variety of military, administrative, judicial, fiscal, and cultural issues dictated the retention of governors general. But it also became impossible to give them uniform responsibilities because the peripheral regions were not only different from Russia proper, they were also different among themselves. By the end of Alexander's reign, some governors general had become true regional managers, as in the Caucasus and the Baltic provinces; others were merely inspectors, "supervisors" over their subordinate governors, as in New Russia; still others were personal representatives of the emperor for dynastic reasons, as in Finland and Poland. In conclusion: functional administration had won across the board in Russia proper, while various shades of area, territorial, administration remained characteristic of imperial management in the peripheral regions.

Davis Center for Russian Studies
Harvard University
1737 Cambridge Street
Cambridge
Massachusetts 02138

e-mail : jledonne@fas.harvard.edu

60. On these see *Istoriia Pravitel'stviushchogo Senata*, *op. cit.*, 2: 593-599, *PSZ*, vol. 25, 1799, N. 19139 and 19212, vol. 36, 1819, N. 27722, and "Reskript imperatritsy Ekateriny Velikoi Senatoru Mavrinu po povodu zloupotreblenii v Viatskom Namestnichestve," *Russkii arkhiv*, 1 (1896): 321-325.