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**ANALYTICAL ESTIMATION OF THE STATUS OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT  
AND THE POSITION OF A GOVERNOR BY URAL REGIONAL AUTHORITIES AT THE  
TURN OF THE XIX-XX CENTURIES<sup>[1]</sup>**

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**Summary**

In the article the analysis of four projects of reform of the local government that were written by Ural's Region governors was given. Being created independently of each other, but united at the levels of time of their origin (1898-1903), of area of origin (the Urals), of authorship (civil governors), of target setting mechanism (written in the same context, as conclusions on the circular of the Minister of Internal Affairs), these documents present to a researcher the necessary basis for the correct comparison with the purpose to determine the position of the Ural Region authorities in relation to provincial reform and clarify the ratings given by the Ural regional leaders to the provincial government system. That is what this article is devoted to.

**Key words:** Governor's Status, status of the provincial government, Ural region, late-imperial Russia.

For centuries, in Russia the issue of rational establishment of vertical power structure would be raised, partially solved, postponed and again raised, including such part of it - rather significant for a huge country - as the local link of the state government apparatus. The collapse of the Soviet Party-and-State system and the formation of the Russian Federation statehood caused a natural interest in the alternative experience of state building - the experience of the Russian Empire, both positive and negative. Special interest is attracted to Late Empire period of national history (the end of XIX - early XX cc.), since many essential processes of modern Russian life have their quite obvious

analogies in it.

In the Late Russian Empire Governorship Institution as well as the whole system of local government experienced crisis<sup>[2]</sup>. It became the basis for developing by the government of Nicholas II of the provincial reform projects. It was the period from 1895 to 1904 that was characterized by a regular (after Kakhanov Commission activities in 1881-1885) wave of the active consideration of the issue of local government reform aimed at improving the efficiency of the latter.

Development of provincial reform during investigated period entailed identification and analysis of the positions of the local administrative elite. The Ural Region Administration<sup>[3]</sup> took a sufficiently active part in this process. During many years of the targeted searching work at the archives, we managed to find 4 documents in which the relevant officials expressed their viewpoints on the problem. Their authors were V.I. Ershov, Governor of Orenburg (1898), N.M. Klingenberg, Governor of Vyatka (1900), I.N. Sokolovski, Governor of Ufa (1903) and P.F. Khomutov, Governor of Vyatka (1903). It could be stated, with great degree of assurance, that the total number of their briefs to the Minister of Internal Affairs, if accumulated, represent a comprehensive list of provincial reform projects developed by leaders of the region and preserved up to our days. We'd emphasize that the conclusions of the governors of the Urals on provincial reform represent unique historical sources, first introduced in the scientific turn-over.

The logics of further discussion will be related to clarifying the attitude of the governors of the Urals to the key problems of the local link of the public administration system during investigated period: the status of the provincial government and the position of a governor. The list of these questions is formulated on the basis of preliminary study of analyzed projects and of identification of key subjects, which attracted the attention of the governor.

### **Status of Provincial Government**

In the analyzed notes, it was marked that the provincial government did not meet their nominal, legally fixed status of the main local counterpart.<sup>[4]</sup> This issue was closely linked to the previous one, being, in fact, one of its facets. All projects proposed to join the local authorities together using the provincial government as the basis for such merge, and to spread the workflow rules existing within the latter over a new institution to be created. It is interesting to note that in briefs dated 1898-1900 the above mentioned approach was presented in a veiled form, but was clearly revealed in the analysis of functions of those offices, which were proposed to be created within a new provincial authority: according to N.M. Klingenberg's proposal not less than half of 12 such units were actually repetition of the "old" provincial government (the first, the second, medical, construction, land-surveying, prison and in a modified form – economic ones); in V.I. Ershov's project - at least 9 out of 13. In the notes dated 1903, this same idea was formulated already in explicit form, since it was projected not to associate local administrative institutions into a new provincial administrative body but to adhere them to the provincial government. P.F. Khomutov expressed the idea more clearly than others: "Provincial Government as the highest institution in the province should be maintained at ... existing grounds ..., but in this case it is very important to raise its previous value by expanding its jurisdiction, and with that purpose to introduce into its framework some establishments currently removed from its authority." <sup>[5]</sup>

It is important to note that in historical science, until recently, the stereotype completely dominated according to which in the 2nd half of the XIX - early XX centuries the provincial government was not a kind of an affluent local administration body, and its very existence was archaic. One of the strongest arguments in favor of this thesis was considered to be the fact that all the pre-revolutionary specialists on this issue adhered to such opinion.<sup>[6]</sup> It is now evident that there was no consensus on this matter, and the viewpoint of local administrators - practitioners as shown in the article is one more confirmation of such.

The absence of consensus on the provincial government may explain the inconsistency of the central apparatus of the MIA in determining its own attitude to this issue. Thus, in the research note "on revising the statutes of the provincial institutions" dated February 27, 1903 and sent out to the governors the Department of General Affairs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs stated that "the Provincial Board is excluded from the project ... as intended to eliminate."<sup>[7]</sup> However, at the subsequent meetings of the committee, V.K. Plehve formulated an opposite statement: "The provincial government, although it lost its primary importance, but still occupies a prominent place among the provincial institutions. Its abolition would inevitably result in need for one or several installations that have the same function, so that, in essence, it would only change its name."<sup>[8]</sup> Basing on the conclusions of the Ural governors it became clear that they did not deem it possible and necessary to abandon the provincial government as an institution of power, but preferred it to improve.

### **Governor's Status**

In close connection with the above stipulated information, in each of the projects there was the idea present in some form or another that the governor of the Russian Empire was... weak. Specifically, merging of provincial boards in a single institution or their accession to the provincial government should have been accompanied by subordinating of the latter to the governor to the same extent as the "old" provincial government. This certainly would increase the value "of the Governor" in administration apparatus .

The governor was regarded as an unconditional general chairman of the general office of the projected provincial central authority in V.I. Ershov's version<sup>[9]</sup>, while N.M. Klingenberg considered him to be a chairman of not only the main board, but also of each of the boards, anticipated to be established in the new facility.<sup>[10]</sup> P.F. Khomutov stressed that "in relation to the matters referring to the governing the province, the personal orders of Governor [shall be] put to the forefront."<sup>[11]</sup> This idea was most vividly expressed by I.N.Sokolovski, who formulated the basic principle of future reforms, as he saw it: "... it is only a governor who can and should be unifying power in the province, who ... should be provided with all the means and methods to be valid, but not a nominal master and head of the province", "one should ... adequately support the governor's power by rigorously protecting it from any attempts to interfere with its integrity on the part of other departments, subordinate to the Governor, otherwise no transformation of the provincial administration would produce good results, at which such reforms are aimed."<sup>[12]</sup>

Such a radical formulation of the question received its logical development in his project. Leader of Ufa was the only governor of the Urals, who spoke strongly against the proposal of MIA to establish Provincial Council as representative collegiate body consisting of the higher province

officials and aiming at joint decision-making process in reference to the most important issues. He suggested that the new establishment "in some cases may be garbled on the legs of the Governor, and in most cases it may be a totally unnecessary institution" because "under the existing law, the Governor, whenever he experiences difficulties in dealing with any question or wishes to highlight it comprehensively to the most extent, he has the right to collect whichever council he wants to."<sup>[13]</sup> Therefore, the head of the province came to an unambiguous conclusion that "the establishment of the Provincial Council is totally undesirable."<sup>[14]</sup> Thus, I.N.Sokolovski denied the necessity of any agreement upon decisions made by the Governor with the viewpoints of other leading officials of the provincial level, insisted on subordination. Commission of V.K. Plehve also empowered the governor with enormous authorities. But at the same time it designed an additional leverage of influence upon him by the regional bureaucratic elites in the form of the provincial council.

Seeming the paradoxical at the first glance, the idea of weakness of governor's power which existed in the Russian Empire was with anger rejected before the revolution by the opposition - both liberal<sup>[15]</sup> and revolutionary ones. For example, V.I. Lenin in 1901 published an article in which there was the following phrase: "If up to now (before there appeared the circular of the Minister of Internal Affairs dated August 17, 1901. - SL) a Governor in the Russian province would be a true satrap, on whose good graces the existence of any institution or even any person in the "entrusted" province depended, now there is being created a real "martial law" in this regard."<sup>[16]</sup> Do I need to say that in the Soviet science the idea expressed by V.I. Lenin in reference to the very particular case and not aspiring to be of scientific and general character, however, for many years it used to be absolutized. And it is only in recent decades that some historians have initiated to discuss the issue that the governor's power in Russia in the late XIX - early XX centuries produced only an appearance of power and strength.<sup>[17]</sup>

When the structural-functional approach was applied to the history of the local government of the Russian Empire it helped to reveal that during this period the implementation of many of the functions entrusted to a governor was linked to the activities of such management structures which were only indirectly and relatively dependent on a governor, or were not at all dependent on him. The range of institutions subordinate to governor was deceptive; the power of governor was an illusion.<sup>[18]</sup>

American researcher Robert Robbins came to the conclusion that in the late XIX - early XX centuries legal mechanisms of implementing the governor's decisions were far from being perfect, but to some extent they were restored by "charisma" the governor's power, by way of an image of Sovereign's personal representative in the region. However, such vulgar notions had little to do with real circumstances. And the revolution of 1905 inflicted a powerful blow on this psychological factor.<sup>[19]</sup>

Thus, the position of the bureaucratic elite of the Urals at the turn of XIX-XX centuries finds today numerous supporters in academic circles, both domestic and foreign, and, therefore, does not allow to reject immediately the proposals expressed in the Ural drafts as ineffective ones. Of course, it was suggested to improve the situation by purely administrative methods, and this revealed the narrow-mindedness (or political caution?) of the authors. In their drafts the Governors, of course, did not include the crucial break of the autocratic administrative system (and it was specifically such a criterion in the Soviet science that often measured progressiveness of the reform), but we are

convinced that even within the named system their proposals could help to optimize it, to improve its efficiency. The management capacity of the proposed solutions was significant.

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Analysis of the position of the Ural governors on provincial reform carried out in two major directions, suggests that, in general, the regional administration possessed the unity of views on key issues of local links of the state government apparatus and methods for their solutions.

There could be traced another common feature of the analyzed reform projects - their radicalization within the period starting from 1898-1900 and by 1903. This could be caused only by increasing problems in the field of local administration in the absence of real progress in addressing them. As well known, the situation developed by the end of XIX century in this area was not affected by changes until the last days of the Russian Empire which appeared to be an important contribution to the development of a revolutionary situation in the regions.

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<sup>[2]</sup>For more details see: Любичанковский С.В. Губернская администрация и проблема кризиса власти в позднеимперской России (на материалах Урала, 1892-1914). Самара-Оренбург, 2007.

<sup>[3]</sup>During the period under investigation the Ural Region included Vyatka, Orenburg, Perm and Ufa Provinces.

<sup>[4]</sup> «Губернское правление есть высшее в губернии место, управляющее оною в силу законов, именем Императорского Величества» ("Provincial Government is the highest place in the province that governs it as such by force of the laws in the name of Imperial Majesty") // Свод законов Российской империи. Т.2. Общее Учреждение Губернское (издания 1892 г.). Ст.436.

<sup>[5]</sup>Заключение П.Ф. Хомутова, вятского губернатора // Государственный архив Кировской области (ГАКО). Ф.583. Оп.603. Д.607. Л.1-1об.

<sup>[6]</sup>Богатырева О.Н. Эволюция системы местного управления Вятской и Пермской губерний (1861-февраль 1917). Екатеринбург, 2004. С.155; Ерошкин Н.П. История государственных учреждений дореволюционной России. Москва, 1983. С.223; Зырянов П.Н. Социальная структура местного управления капиталистической России // Исторические записки. Т.107. Москва, 1982. С.286-287; Красняков Н.И. Западные национальные регионы в системе государственного управления Российской империи в XVII – начале XX вв. Закрепление автономистской традиции в российской государственности. Екатеринбург, 2008. С. 207; Лысенко Л.М. Губернаторы и генерал-губернаторы в системе власти дореволюционной России. Москва, 2001. С.178-179 и др.

<sup>[7]</sup>Записка департамента общих дел МВД от 27 февраля 1903 г. // Центральный

государственный исторический архив Республики Башкортостан (ЦГИА РБ). Ф.И-9. Оп.1. Д.655. Л.23об.

<sup>[8]</sup>Журнал Комиссии по реформированию местного управления // ЦГИА РБ. Ф.И-9. Оп.1. Д.655. Л.70.

<sup>[9]</sup>Государственный архив Оренбургской области (ГАОО). Ф.10. Оп.1. Д.175. Л.62об.

<sup>[10]</sup>Записка Н.М. Клингенберна, вятского губернатора // ГАКО. Ф.582. Оп.43а. Д.90. Л.3.

<sup>[11]</sup>ГАКО. Ф.583. Оп.603. Д.607. Л.6об.

<sup>[12]</sup>ЦГИА РБ. Ф.И-9. Оп.1. Д.655. Л.4-4об.

<sup>[13]</sup>Там же. Л.10-10об.

<sup>[14]</sup>Там же. Л.10об.

<sup>[15]</sup> See, for example: Гессен В.М. Вопросы местного управления. СПб.: Право, 1904.

<sup>[16]</sup>Ленин В.И. Борьба с голодающими // Полное собрание сочинений. 5-е изд. Т.5. С.279-280.

<sup>[17]</sup>See, for example: Шумилов М.М. Местная администрация и центральная власть в России в 50-х – начале 80-х гг. XIX в. Москва, 1991. С.23, 188; Матханова Н.П. Губернаторская власть в XIX веке: Закон и жизнь // Проблемы истории местной администрации Сибири в XVII-XX веках. Новосибирск, 1997. С.25; Секиринский С.С. Роль губернаторов в управлении // Проблемы управления: теория и практика. 2001. №2. С.20.

<sup>[18]</sup>Любичанковский С.В. Указ. Соч. С.54-91.

<sup>[19]</sup>Роббинс Р. Сатрапы? Вице-короли? Губернаторы // Родина. 1995. №6. С.28-29.

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