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EASTERN REPUBLIC:
REGIONALISM, SOCIALISM, AND
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The working paper offers a new interpretation of the intellectual and political genealogies of the Far Eastern Republic (1920–1922). The working paper demonstrates that the Far Eastern Republic was not a new project, as a similar formation was first proclaimed on April 10, 1918, in Khabarovsk as an autonomy within the Soviet Russian Republic under the name of the Soviet Republic of the Far East in line with the resolutions of the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets. The Soviet Republic of the Far East was a product of regionalist and nationalist discourses and built on the ideas of decentralization which were widely discussed since the First Russian Revolution (1905–1907) by liberals and socialists alike and began to be implemented after the February Revolution (1917). The Chernobyl-born and Chicago-educated Bolshevik Aleksandr Mikhailovich Krasnoshchekov, who led the establishment of the Far Eastern Republic in 1920, also headed the Soviet Republic of the Far East in 1918. Its government, the Far Eastern Council of People’s Commissars (Dal’sovnarkom) defied the authority of the Central Executive Committee of Siberian Soviets (Tsentrosibir’) and disobeyed the Moscow central government implementing thereby a regionalist approach to Soviet federalism. Krasnoshchekov’s project relied on the ideas of the Populists (Narodniki), the Socialist Revolutionaries, and the Social Democrats which were tested in the Russian Far East during the First Russian Revolution and the interpretations of Far Eastern history and interests which were put forward by regional deputies in the Russian State Duma. The formation of the first Far Eastern republic was facilitated by the activities of Deputy of the Fourth Duma and Commissar of the Provisional Government for the Far East Aleksandr Nikolaevich Rusanov who led the formation of a regional organization uniting democratically elected zemstvo and municipal self-government bodies.

Keywords: Russian Far East, State Duma, nationalism, regionalism, revolution

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Introduction

The Far Eastern Republic (FER), which was founded on April 6, 1920, in Verkhneudinsk (today's Ulan-Ude) and claimed the Russian Far East of the Transbaikal, Maritime, Amur, Kamchatka, and Sakhalin Regions and the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) Zone in the fall of 1920, is usually interpreted as a carefully organized and brilliantly implemented Bolshevik hoax intended against the Japanese intervention in the region.³ Despite the efforts of the researchers who studied Far Eastern regionalism, Korean nationalism in the region, and the Japanese intervention, pointing at other reasons for the formation of the FER and its failure to serve the intended purpose of deceiving the Pacific powers,⁴ the interpretation backed by the Bolshevik leadership since the 1920s still persists in the otherwise critical studies.⁵ Yet, the sources which allow tracing the formation of the first republic in the region to 1918 were published already during the Soviet period, though in a regional press,⁶ while the maker of the second republic, the Bolshevik remigrant from the United States of America (USA) Aleksandr Mikhailovich Krasnoshchekov,⁷ explicitly stated that the idea of the FER was “not new” and that it was the “Far Eastern zemstvos” and the Far Eastern Council of People's Commissars (Dal'sovnarkom) which laid the groundwork for creating an autonomous polity in the Russian Far East.⁸

The intellectual and political genealogy implied by Krasnoshchekov can be traced to the first generation of Russian socialists (Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin and Alexander Ivanovich Herzen), Siberian Regionalists, and exiled Populists (Narodniki) who developed earlier ideas.⁹ The notion of a Far Eastern autonomy, an autonomy of the Ussuri Territory (*krai*), was first

³ For a summary of the long-standing approach, see B. I. Mukhachev, ed., *Istoriia Dal'nego Vostoka Rossii: Ot Epokhi Pervobytnogo Obshchestva Do Kontsa XX Veka, Vol. 3, Book 1: Dal'nii Vostok Rossii v Period Revoliutsii 1917 Goda I Grazhdanskoi Voiny* (Vladivostok: Dal'nauka, 2003); V. V. Sonin, *Stanovlenie Dal'nevostochnoi Respubliki, 1920–1922* (Vladivostok: Izd-vo Dal'nevostochnogo universiteta, 1990).

⁴ Jon K. Chang, *Burnt by the Sun: The Koreans of the Russian Far East* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016); Paul Dukes, *The USA in the Making of the USSR: The Washington Conference, 1921–1922, and “Uninvited Russia”* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004); Teruyuki Hara, *Shiberia Shuppei: Kakumei to Kanshō 1917–1921 [The Siberian Expedition: Revolution and Intervention 1917–1921]* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1989); John J. Stephan, *The Russian Far East: A History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).

⁵ Richard K. Debo, *Survival and Consolidation the Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1918–1921* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 374–99; Scott B. Smith, *Captives of Revolution: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik Dictatorship, 1918–1923* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 213–14.

⁶ A. V. Semenov, *Dal'sovnarkom, 1917–1918 Gg.: Sbornik Dokumentov I Materialov* (Khabarovsk: Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv RSFSR Dal'nego Vostoka; Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Khabarovskogo kraia, 1969).

⁷ Aleksandr Mikhailovich Krasnoshchekov (1880–1937) was born in Chernobyl. In 1903 he emigrated to the USA where he was naturalized as Abraham Stroller Tobinson, graduated from the University of Chicago, and worked as a lawyer. Upon his return to Russia in 1917, Krasnoshchekov was elected to the Nikolsk-Ussuriysky (today's Ussuriysk) zemstvo and later led the formation of the Far Eastern Soviet government heading it in 1917–1918. After the collapse of the Soviet rule in Siberia in the summer and fall of 1918, Krasnoshchekov joined underground and guerilla activities. In 1920 he headed the newly formed Far Eastern Republic (FER). In 1921 Krasnoshchekov was recalled to Moscow where he worked in financial and economic agencies before his arrest in 1923 on charges of corruption. In 1925 Krasnoshchekov was pardoned, but in 1937 he was arrested again, sentenced to death, and executed. In 1956 Krasnoshchekov was posthumously exonerated.

⁸ GARF, f. R-341, op. 1, d. 86, l. 3 rev. (Minutes of the meeting of the peace delegation of the Political Center with the representatives of the Siberian Revolutionary Committee and the Revolutionary Military Council of the Fifth Army, January 24, 1920).

⁹ Mark Bassin, *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Mark Von Hagen, “Federalisms and Pan-Movements: Re-Imagining Empire,” in *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700–1930*, ed. Jane Burbank, Mark von Hagen, and Anatoly Remnev (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 494–510.

tested during the Russian Revolution of 1905 by a group of socialistically inclined intellectuals. This loose group included the Populist Nikolai Konstantinovich Sudzilovskii (Nicholas Russel), the SRs Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Volkenshtein and Boris Dmitrievich Orzhikh, and the non-partisan doctors Mikhail Aleksandrovich Kudrzhinskii and Nikolai Vasil'evich Kirilov. Although Kudrzhinskii admitted the failure of the group of newcomers to rally the people of the Far East, the peasant congress under Kirilov's presidency did launch a political movement among regional peasants in late 1905. It was at this congress where the prosperous Ukrainian settler Andrei Ivanovich Shilo started his political career. Despite his prosecution for participating in the autonomous movement, Shilo was elected Deputy of the Third State Duma of the Russian Empire from the Maritime Region in 1907. Together with other regional representatives, Shilo cooperated with the Siberian Group of Progressive Deputies, which allowed them to become practically acquainted with Siberian Regionalism, and articulated distinct regional interests of the Russian Far East. The participation in the Siberian group ensured the continuity in the position of regional deputies. Deputy of the Fourth Duma Aleksandr Nikolaevich Rusanov, who substituted Shilo as the representative of the Maritime Region, continued the distinct Far Eastern regionalist discourse in the imperial parliament. Having been appointed Commissar of the Provisional Government in the Far East during the February Revolution of 1917, Rusanov not only supervised the implementation of some of the regionalist slogans, including the introduction of democratically elected zemstvo, but also propagated the idea of forming a regional economic, administrative, or political organization. After the Bolsheviks came to power in Petrograd, Moscow, and other urban centers, Rusanov attempted to transfer his authority to the newly formed Far Eastern authority of elected zemstvo and municipal officials on December 11, 1917. Krasnoshchekov, one of these elected delegates, hijacked the project and following Rusanov's arrest reinterpreted it as the formation of a Bolshevik-dominated yet coalitional socialist government in the Russian Far East.

The FER was hence not a novelty of 1920, but a reestablishment of an earlier political project by the same actors who created it in the first place. Krasnoshchekov personally presided over the establishment of the Soviet Republic of the Far East at the Fourth Far Eastern Territorial (*kraevoi*) Congress of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants', and Cossacks' Deputies (Khabarovsk, April 8–14, 1918) and even called it a “constituent assembly” in his opening speech. The proclamation of the Soviet Republic of the Far East in the resolution of the congress on April 10, 1918, did not cause a sensation. It was not the only Soviet republic to be proclaimed in the region, as on the same day the Fifth Amur Regional Peasant and Cossack Congress

(Blagoveshchensk, April 1–10, 1918) under the Bolshevik Fedor Nikanorovich Mukhin proclaimed “the autonomous Amur Socialist Republic.”¹⁰

Both republics were proclaimed by semi-independent regional members of the recently renamed Russian Communist Party (the Bolsheviks) or the RCP(b) rather than democratically elected representatives of the population and remained elite projects (even though the elite itself was new). Their proclamation did not contradict the Soviet constitution, which before the official adoption of a written document in July 1918 relied on the resolutions of the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’, and Peasants’ Deputies (Petrograd, January 10–18, 1918). In its equivocal and self-contradictory resolutions, the congress declared Russia a Republic of Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’, and Peasants’ Deputies passing all authority centrally and locally to soviets. It proclaimed the Soviet Russian Republic as a federation of free national republics, but at the same time called it a federation of soviets with broad local autonomy for regions, in which the central Soviet authority only observed the foundations of the “Russian Federation of Soviets” and represented it as a whole. The central government was not to violate the rights of different regions which entered the federation, while the regional soviet republics were to determine their own forms themselves.¹¹

The resolutions therefore implied the right to regional self-determination and indirectly appealed to the program article by Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin, in which he favored the regionalist approach.¹² Although the formation of the Soviet Republic of the Far East may hence be seen legal from a Soviet perspective, the central Council of People’s Commissars (Sovnarkom), which relocated to Moscow in March 1918, never officially recognized the formation of the republic, though the Constitution allowed the formation of “autonomous regional unions” which joined the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (RSFSR) following “federative principles.”¹³ The Moscow Sovnarkom continued to call the Far Eastern government the “Far Eastern Regional Soviet of Workers’ and Peasants’ Deputies” and did not support its independent policies, reaffirming in this respect Vladimir Il’ich Lenin’s initial

¹⁰ Semenov, *Dal’sovnarkom, 1917-1918 Gg.: Sbornik Dokumentov I Materialov*, 123–55; S. Tsyppin, A. Shurygin, and S. Bulygin, eds., *Oktiabr’skaia Revoliutsiia I Grazhdanskaia Voina Na Dal’nem Vostoke: Khronika Sobytiia, 1917-1922 Gg.* (Moscow: Dal’giz, 1933), 57.

¹¹ *Tretii Vserossiiskii S’ezd Sovetov Rabochikh, Soldatskikh I Krest’ianskikh Deputatov* (Peterburg: Ros. sotsial.-demokrat. rabochaia partiia, 1918), 90–94.

¹² I. V. Stalin, “Marksizm I Natsionalnyi Vopros (1913),” in *Sochineniia*, vol. 2 (Moscow: OGIZ; Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1946), 290–367.

¹³ “Konstitutsiia (Osnovnoi Zakon) Rossiiskoi Sotsialisticheskoi Federativnoi Sovetskoi Respubliki, Priniata V Vserossiiskim S’ezdom Sovetov v Zasedanii Ot 10 Iiulia 1918 Goda,” *Moscow State University*, 1918, <http://www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Etext/cnst1918.htm>.

opposition to federalism and his support for “a united and indivisible Russian republic with solid authority.”¹⁴

Despite their positions in the Soviet government, with Lenin being its head and Stalin supervising the formation of the Soviet federation as the People’s Commissar of Nationalities, the two had little influence on Far Eastern affairs in 1917 and 1918. The proclamation of the Soviet Republic of the Far East owed much more to regional political context and Russian progressive civic nationalism, which became popular in the region during the First Russian Revolution (1905–1907) and loomed large among the members of the left-liberal opposition in the State Duma of the Russian Empire with the beginning of the First World War. The non-partisan Doctor Kirilov presided over the founding congress of the Ussuri Peasant Union, which discussed the formation of an Ussuri zemstvo autonomy, in December 1905. The same month Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Volkenshtein, Mikhail Aleksandrovich Kudrzhinskii, and other intellectuals organized the Union of Unions of the Ussuri Territory. Shilo, Aleksandr Nikolaevich Rusanov, Feofilakt Nikolaevich Chilikin, and Aristarkh Ivanovich Ryslev, who represented the Maritime and Amur Regions in the Third and Fourth Duma, joined the left-liberal opposition which foregrounded the need for decentralization and became vocal supporters of Far Eastern and larger Siberian interests. After being appointed Commissar of the Provisional Government for the Far East in March 1917, Rusanov headed the discussions of a Far Eastern regional entity and its autonomy in the Russian republic.

The formation of the Soviet Republic of the Far East was part of the longer period of imperial transformation, which was marked by the crisis and collapse of the Russian Empire and the formation of the Soviet Union in 1905–1922.¹⁵ Although the decentralization aspect of the transformation is well researched in relation to minority nationalisms,¹⁶ the formation of the Far Eastern republic followed a different logic of post-imperial transformation in which a region defined through its peculiar economic and ethnographic conditions rather than a national group was to be recognized as autonomous. Although Far Eastern regionalism in the nineteenth and twentieth century attracted some scholarly attention, it remained far less researched than Siberian Regionalism (*Oblastnichestvo*), from which it derived. Larger works on the Russian Far East tended to foreground state rather than local actors (with the exception of two edited collections

¹⁴ RGIA DV, f. R-786, op. 1, d. 7, l. 136 (From Sovnarkom to the Far Eastern Regional Soviet of Workers’ and Peasants’ Deputies, May 15, 1918); V. N. Rakhmetov and Ia. A. Iakovlev, eds., *Pervyi Vserossiiskii S’ezd Sovetov*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo, 1930), 72.

¹⁵ For an excellent summary of the imperial turn in international historiography of Russia and the Soviet Union, see Willard Sunderland, “The USSR as a Multinational State from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin: Western Scholarship since 1991,” *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University: History*, no. 4 (2016): 142–158.

¹⁶ Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993).

which highlighted the issues pertaining to settlers)¹⁷ and did not address the Far Eastern regionalist project in detail.¹⁸

Siberian Regionalism, which conceptualized Siberia as a distinct region with the right to autonomy, contributed to the discussions of a Far Eastern autonomous entity, but Far Eastern regionalism was much less sophisticated than its Siberian counterpart. It did not lead to the formation of any intellectual or political groups comparable to those of the Siberian Regionalists (*Oblastniki*). Far Eastern regionalism was also much more embedded in Russian nationalism embodying its regional version rather than offering an alternative imagined community like some Siberian Regionalists did.¹⁹ Just like its Siberian counterpart, Far Eastern regionalism remained largely an elite project. In contrast to Western Siberia, the intellectuals and politicians who supported it were predominantly educated newcomers.

The Far Eastern version of Russian nationalism was progressive, defensive, and civic. Like moderate nationalism elsewhere, the left-liberal nationalism in the late Russian Empire and its regional emanation reflected the “drive towards democracy,” as Michael Mann put it.²⁰ Furthermore, it was openly hostile towards the aggressive nationalism of the imperial elites, which drove Russia into the war with Japan.²¹ The Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) itself was the formative event for the region, defining it against the backdrop of East Asian politics. Together with the widely shared conviction that it was the Tsarist policy-makers who led the region to numerous grievances, such as underfinancing in view of the Russian expansion to Manchuria, exclusion of the Russian Far East from infrastructure development, excessive militarization, and the conflicts with the Qing subjects and the Japanese Empire, democratic self-determination reaffirmed the progressive connotations of nationalism in Pacific Russia.

At the same time, the small population and the constant reiteration of Japan’s superiority in the recent war and the anticipated strength of “awakening” China²² did not make the progressive anti-imperial aspirations of the regional population anti-Russian. The anti-autocratic

¹⁷ Nicholas Breyfogle, Abby Schrader, and Willard Sunderland, eds., *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History* (London: Routledge, 2007); Stephen Kotkin and David Wolff, eds., *Rediscovering Russia in Asia: Siberia and the Russian Far East* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1995).

¹⁸ Bassin, *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840–1865*; I. L. Dameshek et al., *Sibir’ v Sostave Rossiiskoy Imperii* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2007); A. V. Remnev, *Rossiia Dal’nego Vostoka: Imperskaia Geografiia Vlasti XIX – Nachala XX Vekov* (Omsk: Izdanie OmGU, 2004); Anatolyi Remnev, “Siberia and the Russian Far East in the Imperial Geography of Power,” in *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700–1930*, ed. Jane Burbank, Mark von Hagen, and Anatolyi Remnev (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 425–54; Stephan, *The Russian Far East: A History*; Von Hagen, “Federalisms and Pan-Movements: Re-Imagining Empire.”

¹⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. and extended ed. (London: Verso, 1991); N. M. Iadrintsev, *Sibir’, Kak Koloniia v Geograficheskom, Etnograficheskom I Istoricheskom Otmoshenii*, 2nd ed. (Saint Petersburg: I.M. Sibiriakov, 1892).

²⁰ Michael Mann, “A Political Theory of Nationalism and Its Excesses,” in *Notions of Nationalism*, ed. Sukumar Periwal (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1995), 44.

²¹ David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Toward the Rising Sun: Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001).

²² Rudolf G. Wagner, “China ‘asleep’ and ‘awakening’: A Study in Conceptualizing Asymmetry and Coping with It,” *Transcultural Studies*, no. 1 (2011): 4–139.

connotations reinforced the defensive understanding of regional nationalism, but also strengthened its connection to progressive empire-wide nationalism. European Russia was indispensable to regional security, while progressive transformation of the empire was supposed to make it ever stronger. The left-liberal nationalism of the First World War was hence an alternative to and a more constructive path towards victory compared to the official chauvinist anti-German discourse.²³ This did not mean internationalism, as regional press remained patriotic like elsewhere in the empire,²⁴ but a suggestion for the society to take charge of the war and foreign policy at large.

The same anti-chauvinist stance was projected on regional affairs. Despite the official racist discourse of the “yellow peril,”²⁵ many regional intellectuals did not share the ethnically exclusive view on Russian citizenship, with Koreans and other minorities articulating their loyalty to the Russian state after the Revolution of 1917 and some Russian intellectuals acknowledging their belonging to the Russian civic nation. At the same time, regional intellectuals remained consistently conscious about their own Russianness and the status of newcomers in the region. The inclusion of ethnic non-Russians implied their cultural assimilation. Far Eastern nationalism was hence regional both in the sense of its location in East Asia, but also in its settler colonial dynamics. The settlers’ own disadvantageous position in relation to the imperial center contributed to the strategic disavowal of their colonizer status in relation to the indigenous population and underpaid Chinese and Korean workers. Unlike the cases studied by Lorenzo Veracini, the settler aspect of nationalism did not lead to secessionism but rather reinforced its regionalist connotation.²⁶

Unlike in Australia and elsewhere, the settler aspect of regional nationalism was moderated by the popularity of socialist ideas, which were first brought to North Asia by political exiles in the nineteenth century, experienced a rise during the First Russian Revolution and subsequent mass exile, and became the most numerous political group among regional intellectuals during the February Revolution. Unlike in European Russia, the much less acute situations in agriculture – thanks to the relative abundance of arable lands – and industry – thanks to the small number of factories – reinforced the inclusive rather than dialectical version of socialist discourse approximating it to the social democracy which became increasingly popular in Europe and North America at the turn of the twentieth century.²⁷ The interest in socialism was

²³ Eric Lohr et al., eds., *The Empire and Nationalism at War* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2014).

²⁴ Melissa Kirschke Stockdale, *Mobilizing the Russian Nation: Patriotism and Citizenship in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

²⁵ Eva-Maria Stolberg, “The Siberian Frontier between ‘White Mission’ and ‘Yellow Peril,’ 1890s–1920s,” *Nationalities Papers* 32, no. 1 (2004): 165–81.

²⁶ Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 107–8.

²⁷ James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

hence a continuation of the progressive inclinations, in which it took up the place of democracy as the final goal of social development and in many cases was a synonym. In the Russian Far East, like elsewhere in the former empire, democracy often meant socialism, the working masses, or socialist parties and organizations, as Boris Kolonitskii had demonstrated.²⁸

Krasnoshchekov's project of the first Far Eastern republic – the Soviet Republic of the Far East – relied on the fusion of regionalist, socialist, and regionalist discourses. There is no coincidence that the proclamation of the republic was included into the resolution on nationalization. It embodied thereby radical progressivism which translated into socialism, a regional version of Russian nationalism with its various civic, defensive, and progressive connotations, even though political progressivism was substituted with the sham democracy of unrepresentative soviets and the excessive competence of executive bodies. Krasnoshchekov later used the same ideas when building the second FER, only this time it had to drop the word “soviet” from its name due to the international conjunctures.

The First Russian Revolution, 1905–1907

When the First Russian Revolution began with the shooting of a peaceful demonstration in Saint Petersburg on January 9, 1905, the territory between Lake Baikal and the Pacific coast, which made up the Priamur General Governorship of the Maritime, Amur, and Transbaikalian Regions, still remained part of Siberia for contemporary observers. Like elsewhere in the empire, protests started with economic demands, but many newly formed local organizations also put forward political programs. The remoteness of the three regions from European Russia and the disorder of the Trans-Siberian Railway due to the movement of soldiers returning from the Russo-Japanese War hampered the exchange between local organizations and larger associations, making activists on site unaware of their objectives. This delayed the proper start of the First Russian Revolution there to the fall of 1905, to the all-Russian political strike and the adoption of the October Manifesto which granted the Russian subjects civil liberties on October 17, 1905. In Vladivostok, unrests among soldiers and sailors erupted into major riots with numerous casualties, while the revolutionary movements revolving around the ideas of turning municipal self-government bodies into revolutionary governments did not lead to violence in Chita and Blagoveshchensk. The success of the revolutionaries under Anton Antonovich Kostiuishko-Voliuzhanich and other Social Democrats (SDs) made contemporary and later commentators speak of the “Chita Republic.”²⁹

²⁸ Boris Ivanovich Kolonitskii, “‘Democracy’ in the Political Consciousness of the February Revolution,” *Slavic Review* 57, no. 1 (1998): 95–106.

²⁹ E. P. Nimander, ed., *Obzor Revoliutsionnogo Dvizheniia v Okruge Irkutskoi Sudebnoi Palaty Za 1897-1907 Gg.* (Saint Petersburg: Senatskaia tipografiia, 1908); M. N. Pokrovskii, ed., *1905: Materialy I Dokumenty: Armiia v Pervoi Revoliutsii*

Although in January–February 1906 all revolutionary groups east of Lake Baikal were violently suppressed, political discussions continued in the underground and in the neighboring Japan where many regional activists emigrated. According to Military Doctor Kudrzhinskii, he and other intellectuals discussed the perspectives of autonomy of the Ussuri Territory (*Ussuriiskii krai*), but the position of the townsmen, many of whom earned money from military contracts, and the majority of peasants, who were still isolated from political debates, made them question their plan.

There were many discussions of the autonomy in Vladivostok then, as well as later in Nagasaki, where Doctor Russel' [the Populist Nikolai Konstantinovich Sudzilovskii] came down on us [claiming] that we missed such a brilliant opportunity to lay the foundation for the "Siberian United States."

Autonomy, in my opinion, could be established only by the local settled population. We, those who started, if I may say so, a "revolution," were almost all newcomers and largely military. We could not push the local original residents even to stand up against Mr. [Ivan Innokent'evich] Tsimmerman [the Vladivostok Mayor] and his like, not to speak of conquering autonomy.³⁰

The idea of establishing an autonomy in the Russian Far East appealed to the discussion of decentralization, which in modern Russia were started by Nikita Mikhailovich Murav'ev and other Decembrists. Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin, Alexander Ivanovich Herzen, and other pioneers of Russian socialism and anarchism continued the discussion. Bakunin put forward the idea of self-organized autonomous communities to form the United States of Europe or the whole world. Herzen and Nikolai Platonovich Ogarev developed Murav'ev's idea of turning Russia into a federation by suggesting to divide it into autonomous regions (*oblast'*). Bakunin, Herzen, and other radicals welcomed the annexation of the Amur and Ussuri Territories in 1858–1860, asserting that the Amur River would detach Siberia from the conservative capital and help import democracy from across the Pacific and spread it throughout Asia. Heralding the emergence of Siberian Regionalism, Afanasii Prokop'evich Shchapov designed a project of decentralizing Russia into regions, which would govern themselves by zemstvo councils, with Zemsky Sobor becoming the supreme body of the democratic federation. The exclusion of Siberia from zemstvo self-government in the 1860s helped Nikolai Mikhailovich Iadrintsev, Grigorii Nikolaevich Potanin, and other Siberian intellectuals formulate their concept of Siberia as a colony of European Russia, which became central to Siberian Regionalism. The program of

(Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1927), 261; A. I. Spiridovich, *Istoriia Bol'shevizma v Rossii Ot Vozniknoveniia Do Zakhvata Vlasti, 1883-1903-1917* (Paris: Tip. Frano-rus. pechat', 1922), 118.

³⁰ M. A. Kudrzhinskii, "Vladivostok v 1905 G.: Iz Nabliudeniia Ochevidtisa, Part 3," *Minuvshie Gody*, no. 7 (1908): 33.

this loose intellectual movement involved the introduction of zemstvo to Siberia, establishment of a university, and regional economic and cultural autonomy.³¹

Zemstvo activists who joined other liberals in forming the Constitutional Democratic Party (KDs) also joined the discussion of decentralization. Fedor Fedorovich Kokoshkin and other KD leaders foregrounded the issue of decentralization during the Zemstvo and Municipal Congress which assembled in Moscow on November 6–13, 1905. Vladimir Matveevich Gessen connected personal freedom with local and national freedom, making regionalism and nationalism an extension of natural rights. He, nevertheless, stressed that national autonomy could only be implemented through parliamentarism and constitutionalism and limited its competence to cultural and religious matters. The main goal of decentralization was local democratization and increased participation of the society in the government. Since bureaucracy lacked information on particular affairs, it could not govern them effectively and needed to be substituted through local and professional self-organization. The liberal platform included a reform of zemstvo and municipal self-government on the basis of universal suffrage and extension of its competence. Provincial zemstvos could form unions, which made regionalism part of the program. Apart from self-administration, regional autonomy could adopt local legislation which would resolve issues irrelevant for the central parliament. In practice this meant that the liberals supported autonomy in regional legislation and cultural rights for selected parts of the empire, but did not imply its transformation into a federation.³²

The Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) and socialist nationalist parties put forward their own decentralization projects, which included the right to national self-determination, territorial or non-territorial (personal) autonomy, and reorganization of the Russian Empire into a federation. The Social Democrats (SDs) devoted little attention to the issue of autonomy in 1905–1907 focusing on class struggle, even though their program included the right to self-determination of all nations which were part of the state. At the same time, their 1903 program implied “broad local self-government” and “regional self-government for those territories, which were remarkable for their peculiar economic conditions and composition of the population,” continuing therefore the nineteenth-century debates and appealing to regionalism.³³

Adherence to regionalism did not demand clear affiliation with liberalism or socialism. The belonging of the Priamur General Governorship to Siberia was out of question for Siberian

³¹ Bassin, *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840–1865*, 168–73; Iadrintsev, *Sibir', Kak Koloniia v Geograficheskom, Etnograficheskom I Istoricheskom Otnoshenii*; Von Hagen, “Federalisms and Pan-Movements: Re-Imagining Empire,” 502.

³² V. M. Gessen, ed., *Avtonomiia, Federatsiia I Natsional'nyi Vopros* (Saint Petersburg: Narod i svoboda, 1906), 1–12, 21–28; F. Kokoshkin, *Oblastnaia Avtonomiia I Edinstvo Rossii* (Moscow: Narodnoe pravo, 1906), 3–5, 14–15; *Programmy Russkikh Politicheskikh Partii* (Saint Petersburg: Izdanie V. Kharitonova, 1905), 44–45.

³³ Partiiia Sotsialistov-Revoliutsionerov, *Nasha Programma: Obshchedostupnoe Izlozhenie* (Saint Petersburg: Partiiia Sotsialistov-Revoliutsionerov, 1908), 25; *Programmy Russkikh Politicheskikh Partii*, 55–56.

Regionalists who viewed the Pacific coast as the potential engine of regional economy,³⁴ but the First Russian Revolution featured alternative takes on regionalism in North Asia. On December 28–29, 1905, the Nikolsk-Ussuriysky congress of some 151 peasant representatives chaired by N. V. Kirilov resolved to enact zemstvo self-government immediately. Although the congress aspired to a constituent assembly, its decisions were to be sanctioned by the Tsar. The Ussuri zemstvo constituent congress was set for February 8–9, 1906, but the movement was suppressed by then.³⁵ Another attempt to articulate the Far East as a new region was made on January 6, 1906, in Vladivostok. A political rally was supposed to discuss municipal self-government along the SR Boris Dmitrievich Orzhikh's plan, but none of the locals volunteered to talk on the matter. After the violent suppression of the revolution began, many of those who cherished the idea of Pacific Russia's autonomy changed their opinion pointing at the lack of administrative expertise among the participants of the local movement.³⁶

Parliamentary opposition, 1907–1917

The elections to the State Duma were delayed in Siberia. No representatives of the Maritime and Amur Regions were elected to the first two parliaments, while the Transbaikal Region which sent three deputies to the Second Duma was excluded from the Priamur General Governorship in 1906. Their participation in legislative work was undermined by the parliament's swift dissolution and adoption of a restrictive electoral law on June 3, 1907. Although the new law shifted the balance in favor of the richest groups of voters,³⁷ all nine Far Eastern deputies in the Third (1907–1912) and Fourth (1912–1917) State Duma were part of the opposition. They continued the discussions of self-organization contributing to the conceptual birth of the Russian Far East as a new imperial region. It was defined through political representation, a shared history, and particular interests which superseded class considerations, all-Russian national unity, and all-Siberian commonalities.

The boundaries of the new region were yet to be set. In the State Duma, the Far East was generally understood as the Transbaikal, Amur, and Maritime Regions. The Kamchatka and Sakhalin Regions (detached from the Maritime Region in 1909) and the CER Zone, which had no representatives in the parliament, were also thought to be part of the region, though the latter was opposed by some deputies. The formation of the new region did not result in a new regionalism. Far Eastern deputies supported Siberian Regionalism. Furthermore, the new law which limited North Asia's representation in the Duma to fifteen deputies increased the share of

³⁴ Elbek-Dorzhi Rinchino, "Oblastnicheskoe Dvizhenie v Sibiri i Sotsial-Demokratiia (1914)," in *Dokumenty, Stat'i, Pis'ma*, ed. R. D. Nimaev et al. (Ulan-Ude: Redaktsionno-izdatel'skii otdel Minpechaty Respubliki Buriatia, 1994), 14–34.

³⁵ Nimander, *Obzor Revoliutsionnogo Dvizheniia v Okruge Irkutskoi Sudebnoi Palaty Za 1897-1907 Gg.*, 179–82.

³⁶ Kudrzhinskii, "Vladivostok v 1905 G.: Iz Nabliudeniia Ochevidtza, Part 3," 11, 32–33.

³⁷ V. Vodovozov, *Kak Proizvodiatsia Vybory v Gosudarstvennuu Dumu Po Zakonu 3 Iiunia 1907 Goda* (Saint Petersburg: Elektropечатnia Ia. Levenshtein, 1907).

the Far Easterners among them to one third and reinforced their positions in the Siberian Parliamentary Group. Nikolai Konstantinovich Volkov of the Transbaikalian Region chaired the group during the Third and Fourth Duma; Rusanov, a teacher elected from the Maritime Region, was its secretary during the Fourth Duma.³⁸

Due to the center-right majority in the Third and Fourth Duma, the proposals of left-liberal groups on self-organization did not become legislation. The unions were suppressed, no zemstvo was introduced to North Asia, and duty free trade was abolished in the Far East. Shortly before and especially during the First World War, many zemstvo and municipal liberals opted for cooperation with moderate socialists and became increasingly interested in extra-parliamentary democracy in view of the Duma's feebleness. The left KDs revived and developed the unionism of the First Russian Revolution offering a new version of progressive civic nationalism. The Russian imperial nation was to emerge victorious from the war by strengthening itself through self-organization into zemstvo, municipal, military industrial, peasant, cooperative, workers', traders', and minority national unions with subsequent establishment of a coordinating body, the union of unions, which would embody the solidarity of the society. In 1913 Rusanov accompanied the KD leader Fedor Izmailovich Rodichev during his visit to Vladivostok and Nikolsk-Ussuriysky where the latter campaigned for the trade union movement, even though Rusanov was member of the Labor faction (*Trudoviki*) in the Duma and was reluctant to sponsor the KDs' initiatives there.³⁹

The debates in local organizations, press, and in the State Duma demonstrated that despite the popularity of the empire-wide nation building, regional interests retained crucial importance. The appeals to Siberian unity (including its colonial status in relations with European Russia), specific Siberian interests, peculiarities of Siberian economy and population, and attempts at regional self-organization were voiced by numerous politicians who did not necessarily identify as Siberian Regionalists. The Transbaikalian, Amur, and Maritime deputies in the State Duma and local activists continuously articulated particular Far Eastern (or Priamur) interests, even though they hardly contradicted those of North Asia at large. Regional affiliation superseded party divisions. The Siberian Group of Deputies served as a Siberian "pre-parliament," which united elected deputies and other Siberian intellectuals, and where relevant issues, such as self-government, regional communication lines, duty free trade, and settlement, were discussed and

³⁸ T. Ia. Ikonnikova, "Uchitel', Deputat, Komissar, Emigrant... Zametki Ob A. N. Rusanove," *Rossia I ATR*, no. 2 (1998): 22–31; S. A. Safronov, "Uchastie Sibirskoi Parlamentskoi Gruppy v Rabote III Gosudarstvennoi Dumy, 1907-1912 Gg.," *Omskii Nauchnyi Vestnik*, no. 2 (106) (n.d.): 13–16.

³⁹ I. S. Kochetkova, "Vybory v Gosudarstvennuui Dumu Na Dal'nem Vostoke Rossii, 1907-1912 Gg.," *Rossia I ATR*, no. 2 (2007): 5–12.

put to vote. The Siberian Group campaigned for the introduction of zemstvo to Siberia and better representation of its population, including the aliens (*inorodtsy*), in the State Duma.⁴⁰

Far Eastern deputies used the anti-colonial rhetoric of the Siberian Regionalists during parliamentary discussions. When addressing the non-extension of the court reform to Siberia, Shilo, a settler from Ukraine who was elected from the Maritime Region to the Third Duma, evoked North Asia's perpetual exclusion from progressive change in the empire, "as if the Siberian population" was not "recognized as Russian citizens." Volkov connected the exception of Siberia from social insurance reforms to its frequent disregard in the past. Chilikin, an Old Believer and a former employee of the Settler Administration who was elected from the Amur Region to the Third Duma, described the eventual adoption of zemstvo as the day "when European Russia will evidently stop looking at Siberia as a frozen periphery and will acknowledge it as its lively and indivisible part." Criticizing the settlement policy, the lack of self-organization, and the officially sponsored desires to introduce large landownership to Siberia, Ryslev, who also worked for the Settler Administration and was elected from the Amur Region to the Forth Duma, stressed that it was still "subdued by European Russia."⁴¹

Defending the introduction of zemstvo to Siberia, Volkov emphasized that without it the administration could not meet the rising cultural and economic needs of the population. The problems with public education, agronomic assistance, food supplies, medicine, veterinary, communications, and inadequate taxation were to be solved by zemstvo. Volkov claimed that the slow administration consisting of newcomers proved useless in meeting the demands of the people, which could solve their own problems only through zemstvo self-government and other forms of self-organization. Zemstvo, even in its limited form, was the first step towards further reforms – local elected court, universal education, and *volost'* (small rural district) zemstvo – which could only be carried out through self-government bodies.⁴² The rejection of the project by the State Council in 1912 did not stop the discussions, Rusanov stressed that "broad self-organization of the Siberian population and popular education are essential for the future development of Siberia and the Far East."⁴³

⁴⁰ Safronov, "Uchastie Sibirskoi Parlamentskoi Gruppy v Rabote III Gosudarstvennoi Dumy, 1907-1912 Gg."

⁴¹ Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, tret'ia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 1: Zasedaniia 1-32, S 10 Oktiabria Po 18 Dekabria 1909 G.* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1910), 1344; Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, piataia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 1: Zasedaniia 1-41, S 15 Oktiabria Po 10 Dekabria 1911 G.* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1911), 1336; Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, piataia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 2: Zasedaniia 42-83, S 10 Ianvaria Po 3 Marta 1912 G.* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1912), 1232; Gosudarstvennaia дума, chetvertyi sozyv, vtoraiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 5: Zasedaniia 98-111, S 30 Maia Po 14 Iunia 1914 G.* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1914), 143–50.

⁴² Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, piataia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 2: Zasedaniia 42-83, S 10 Ianvaria Po 3 Marta 1912 G.*, 1216, 1219, 1222, 1225–26.

⁴³ Gosudarstvennaia дума, chetvertyi sozyv, pervaiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 3: Zasedaniia 55-81, S 27 Maia Po 25 Iunia 1913 G.* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1913), 853.

The issue which drew the Far Eastern deputies closer together was that of the Amur Railway. The discussion of the government's draft on its construction in the Duma demonstrated the unity of "the Far Easterners," as Shilo called the group, who represented the "Far Eastern Periphery" consisting of the Transbaikal, Amur, and Maritime Regions with some 1,300,000 people (in Volkov's words) to be brought close together by the Amur Railway.⁴⁴ Chilikin explicitly put the interests of the region ahead of his affiliation with the SDs. "The discipline, which I follow, does not go as far in its demands as demanding popular representatives to neglect the needs of the areas from which they come."⁴⁵ He nevertheless had to leave the party over the issue.⁴⁶

Volkov, Chilikin, Shilo, Rusanov, and Ryslev referred to the whole region (the Far East or Priamur'e) and its parts (Primor'e and Transbaikalia) especially often. They located the region in East Asia, outlined its peculiar history, and were especially critical of the Russian official policies damaging regional interests. The Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and the Triple Intervention (1895), the Boxer Rebellion (1898–1901), which in the Russian Far East involved the bombardment of Blagoveshchensk and slaughter of thousands Chinese civilians in 1900, and the Russo-Japanese War were the formative events for the Far East as a new imperial region. Shilo stressed the damage of these events for the regional population.

The Priamur population over the last 15 years went through three wars. In 1895, somewhere far away in the Chinese fields there was the Sino-Japanese War. They fought for something there, the people of Primor'e, of course, got it hot... (*Voices from the right: "Are you Russian or Chinese?"*); (*The bell of the Chairman*). Reservists were drafted to active service, other peasants provided carts; almost everyone had to waste three months during the spring field work. The second war was in 1901; there was a popular unrest in China, and our folk unfortunately started an adventure there by that time, and, of course, the great Chinese fist spurred them for that. The people of Primor'e again caught it; 10,000 of them were drafted as reservists and formed a squad of about 6,000; horses were taken from them to the army, they were paid of course 25 rubles for a horse, but that horse cost 200 rubles to each of them, and they got those 200 rubles as a loan. [...] The third war was of course the one of the Japanese with the Russians, but also in the fields of Manchuria. Some 20,000 Primor'e reservists were again drafted to active service and had to form a squad of 9,000 men. This was done. All these people of course were separated from their work. [...] Due to the lack of real troops there when the war was declared, almost all of the reservists of the Far East were placed in the first rows on the Yalu River at Juliancheng and in Wafangou, where almost all of them were killed, as it is well-known. You will say

⁴⁴ Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, vtoraiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 1: Zasedaniia 1-35, S 15 Oktiabria Po 20 Dekabria 1908 G.* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1908), 3081; Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, pervaiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 2: Zasedaniia 31-60, S 21 Fevralia Po 5 Maia 1908 G.* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1908), 1494–95.

⁴⁵ Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, pervaiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 2: Zasedaniia 31-60, S 21 Fevralia Po 5 Maia 1908 G.*, 971, 980.

⁴⁶ Kochetkova, "Vybory v Gosudarstvennuu Dumu Na Dal'nem Vostoke Rossii, 1907-1912 Gg."

that the Far Eastern kingpins are to blame for that, but what did the hundreds of orphans and widows who were left without their fathers and without any funds have to do with it? Of course the Russian people never imagined that it would have to sacrifice itself in the Manchurian fields for the sins of the ugly forest enterprises on the Yalu.⁴⁷

The location in the hostile East Asian environment implanted the Far Easterners with fear and uncertainty and stimulated defensive nationalism, but unlike many officials and rightists, regional deputies did not support the “yellow peril” discourse and were quite open about the responsibility of the ill-conceived Russian policies in Asia. The Priamur Territory (*Priamurskii krai*) was seen as sacrificed to Manchuria. Chilikin claimed that there were two official policies in the Far East, Manchurian and Priamur.⁴⁸ He was especially expressive when discussing the diversion of the Trans-Siberian Railway to Manchuria in 1895 and the rejection of the planned Amur Railway then. He connected the decision to the declaration of Nicholas II that he would not support the democratic inclinations of zemstvo liberals made the same year.

I remember that the decision to build the railway through Manchuria was made the same memorable year when the fragile beginnings of “baseless” dreams of the Russian society about popular representation were trampled down. As if to counterbalance these dreams about popular representation, dreams of a different sort emerged then: about warm, ice-free shores of the Yellow Sea, about new cities on these shores, about concessions, draped in the toga of providential importance of Russia for the yellow race. [...] thanks to this affair [...] the Amur Region, which in 1895 was on the eve of the construction of the railway line through it, stayed as it was – detached and abandoned. In addition, the well-known events of sad memory took place on the Amur in 1900 as the first consequence of the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway. That year, for the first time the Amur – this River “of Good Peace” as translated from a native language – had been turned red with the blood of our neighboring toiling people. And since then the uncertainty about the future of the region emerged around this blood in Priamur’e. The peaceful neighborly relations with China were violated because of those creators of the Manchurian affair who did not know Priamur’e and were not interested in it.⁴⁹

Chilikin urged to abandon the previous policies in the Far East, the “so-called interests in North Manchuria,” and make the Amur the river of peace for the sake of the Far Eastern interests and elimination of uncertainty about the region’s future.⁵⁰ Volkov supported such a view and claimed that the construction of the CER and the Russo-Japanese War were a disaster for “our

⁴⁷ Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, vtoraiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast’ 1: Zasedaniia 1-35, S 15 Oktiabria Po 20 Dekabria 1908 G.*, 3078–79.

⁴⁸ Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, chetvertaia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast’ 2: Zasedaniia 39-73, S 17 Ianvaria Po 5 Marta 1911 G.* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1911), 458.

⁴⁹ Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, pervaiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast’ 2: Zasedaniia 31-60, S 21 Fevralia Po 5 Maia 1908 G.*, 971–72.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 981.

Far East,” for the welfare of the people, and the economic situation in the whole region. He also stressed that the huge investment into Port Arthur and Dal’nii (Dairen) was made at the expense of Vladivostok and the Russian Far East.⁵¹

Locating the Russian Far East in East Asia and the larger Pacific region, Volkov, Shilo, Chilikin, and Ryslev used Japan, China, and the USA as reference points. Shilo stressed the inadequacy of the Russian political system and its Far Eastern policies in view of the competition with Japan. He connected the Japanese Constitution, under which the Japanese Diet indeed had more competence than the State Duma under the Fundamental Laws of the Russian Empire, to its successes in attracting international trade to their newly built ports in Korea. “Do not forget that the Japanese have a constitution and not such a curtailed one as ours.”⁵² Volkov claimed that despite its active population Russia was backward in the region compared to the Japanese Empire, which was quickly catching up with the European states “on the way of progress” and the Chinese Republic which “woke up to the new life.” Rusanov noted that the backwardness of the Russian Far East was to the advantage of Japan and quoted Japanese press which was attentive to regional affairs. Detailing the criticism, Chilikin pointed to the absence of physical punishment in Japan and cautioned against anti-Chinese policies, as the Chinese people was “peaceful yet now awakened in its aspiration to national independence and territorial integrity.” Ryslev applauded the American approach to settler colonization based on the “free initiative of the human” contrasting it to the complex system of “government tutelage over the settler” in the Russian Empire, which was stronger than that in bureaucratic China.⁵³

Although the Far Eastern deputies did not support the “yellow peril” discourse, they did not have a single opinion about the “yellow labor.”⁵⁴ Volkov, for instance, stressed that the restrictions imposed on the Chinese and Korean workers during the construction of the Amur Railway had to be based on subjecthood and not race allowing the access of Russians of any ethnic origin. When discussing the issue of limiting foreign sailors on Russian ships in the Pacific, Shilo suggested raising the required share of Russians to seventy-five percent as a means against takeover in the case of war and in order to limit the use of the cheap Chinese and Korean

⁵¹ Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, vtoraiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast’ 1: Zasedaniia 1-35, S 15 Oktiabria Po 20 Dekabria 1908 G.*, 1725.

⁵² Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, piataia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast’ 3: Zasedaniia 84-119, S 5 Marta Po 28 Aprelia 1912 G.* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1912), 3311–12.

⁵³ Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, pervaiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast’ 2: Zasedaniia 31-60, S 21 Fevralia Po 5 Maia 1908 G.*, 980; Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, chetvertaiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast’ 3: Zasedaniia 74-113, S 7 Marta Po 13 Maia 1911 G.* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1911), 4330; Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, piataia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast’ 4: Zasedaniia 120-153, S 30 Aprelia Po 9 Iunia 1912 G.* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1912), 3457; Gosudarstvennaia дума, chetvertyi sozyv, pervaiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast’ 3: Zasedaniia 55-81, S 27 Maia Po 25 Iunia 1913 G.*, 1740–44; Gosudarstvennaia дума, chetvertyi sozyv, vtoraiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast’ 3: Zasedaniia 53-75, S 21 Marta Po 5 Maia 1914 G.* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1914), 1651–56.

⁵⁴ Chia Yin Hsu, “A Tale of Two Railroads: ‘Yellow Labor,’ Agrarian Colonization, and the Making of Russianness at the Far Eastern Frontier, 1890s–1910s,” *Ab Imperio*, no. 3 (2006): 217–53.

labor which was detrimental for the Russian workers. After the restrictive measures on foreign sailors were royally approved, however, Rusanov claimed that Korean and Chinese sailors were needed for the coastwise navigation, since regional Russians and Ukrainians were largely unskilled for the job, and urged to delay the restrictions.⁵⁵

Despite their mixed attitude towards transboundary matters like Chinese and Korean immigration, smuggling of alcohol to the Russian Far East, and foreign espionage, the Far Eastern deputies, regional officials, and local organizations supported duty-free trade in the Far East which served settler interests.⁵⁶ The duty-free regime, which was established with the annexation of the new territories, was first abolished in 1901. After its quick reintroduction on the initiative of Viceroy in the Far East Evgenii Ivanovich Alekseev in 1904, its permanent revocation was discussed in the Third Duma. This discussion proved formative for the new imperial region. Speaking in defense of free trade, Volkov cautioned that its revocation would make life in the region more expensive and hamper colonization, while the increasing labor costs would undermine the extractive industries. He claimed that customs would not only kill competition, but also would lead to protracted bureaucracy and huge operation costs, stimulate smuggling which would ruin legal trade, and hamper post-war restoration of the economy. Volkov urged the government to respect regional interests and listen to popular representatives, stressing that even the appointed authorities of the Far East supported duty free trade. Shilo referred to the low quality of Russian goods and urged Russian manufacturers to learn how to make good products competitive against the ones imported from abroad instead of backing restrictive measures damaging the regional population.⁵⁷ Despite large-scale regional opposition on all levels, duty-free regime was permanently abolished on January 16, 1909, though some products indispensable to the settlers remained free of tariff.⁵⁸

The Far Eastern deputies opposed other initiatives which increased the state's presence in the region, including the creation of the Kamchatka and Sakhalin Regions in 1909. Chilikin compared the new Kamchatka Governor to the Viceroy of the Far East (1903–1905) which did

⁵⁵ Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, *Obzor Deiatel'nosti Gosudarstvennoi Dumy, 1907-1912 Gg., Vol. 2: Zakonodatel'naiia Deiatel'nost'* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1912), 128–29; Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, pervaiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 2: Zasedaniia 31-60, S 21 Fevralia Po 5 Maia 1908 G.*, 1503; Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, chetvertaia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 1: Zasedaniia 1-38, S 15 Oktiabria Po 17 Dekabria 1910 G.* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1910), 3265–3267; Gosudarstvennaia дума, chetvertyi sozyv, pervaiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 3: Zasedaniia 55-81, S 27 Maia Po 25 Iiunia 1913 G.*, 2226.

⁵⁶ Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, vtoraiia sessiia, *Ukazatel' K Stenograficheskim Otchetam, Chasti 1-4: Zasedanie 1-126, 15 Oktiabria 1908 G. - 2 Iiunia 1909 G.* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1909), 217–18; Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, tret'ia sessiia, *Ukazatel' K Stenograficheskim Otchetam, Chasti 1-4: Zasedaniia 1-131, 10 Oktiabria 1909 G. - 17 Iiunia 1910 G.* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1910), 235; Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, chetvertaia sessiia, *Ukazatel' K Stenograficheskim Otchetam, Chasti 1-3: Zasedaniia 1-113, 15 Oktiabria 1910 G. - 13 Maia 1911 G.* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1911), 226.

⁵⁷ Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, pervaiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 2: Zasedaniia 31-60, S 21 Fevralia Po 5 Maia 1908 G.*, 1503; Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, vtoraiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 1: Zasedaniia 1-35, S 15 Oktiabria Po 20 Dekabria 1908 G.*, 1721–24, 1738, 1754.

⁵⁸ N. A. Troitskaia, ed., *Dlia Pol'zy I Prosvetaniia: Iz Istorii Ekonomicheskikh Sviazei Rossiiskogo Dal'nego Vostoka so Stranami Aziatsko-Tikhokeanskogo Regiona, 1856-1925 Gg.: Dokumenty I Materialy* (Vladivostok: Dal'nauka, 2012), 326–334.

not strengthen Russia's position in the Far East and urged for self-government and court reform in Priamur'e instead.⁵⁹ The excessive military administration, the martial law (*voennoe polozhenie*) and the "special safety" regulations (*osobaia okhrana*), which were installed during the Russo-Japanese War and the First Russian Revolution and retained for years thereafter, also attracted criticism of the Far Eastern deputies. Rusanov, for instance, pointed at the use of the "yellow phantom" by the officials and the discourse of external defense for oppressing press and local activism and called for lifting the martial law. He sharply rebuked the military authorities in the Vladivostok. He held them responsible for the lack of sanitation as they did not care about the cultural needs of the Far East and underlined that "the purpose of the Far East" was not confined to "external defense."⁶⁰

The War Minister then pointed out that frankly speaking the Far East was a "military camp" and these two words reflect his attitude. He thinks that it would be better for defense if Vladivostok itself had no civil population at all. He believes that it would be much more useful for defense if there was no civil population at all within at least 100 *versts* of the coast. Military defense would only benefit from this. Meanwhile, it is clear for everybody that military defense strengthens proportionally to economic welfare of a territory, population density, and self-organization of the population.⁶¹

Given the region's troubled history, the issue of external defense was certainly relevant for the Far Eastern deputies, but they offered a different solution. Discussing the ultimately adopted law on conscription in the Priamur General Governorship, Chilikin and Shilo warned that it would hamper settlement and economic life without pronounced benefits for the state due to the small number of conscripts. Shilo claimed that the "confinement to barracks" for three years would aggravate the existing labor shortage. He suggested organizing universal self-defense by arming the population and providing short-term military training instead. Stressing the peaceful inclination of the Chinese authorities, Shilo cautioned, however, against possible intrusion of irregular Chinese forces to Priamur'e, against which a vigilante-style self-organization would be most effective. Such views were common for the SDs who opposed a "police army" guarding one class and supported arming the whole people, as formulated by Aviv Adrianovich Voiloshnikov, who represented the Transbaikalian Cossack Host in the Third Duma.⁶²

⁵⁹ Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, vtoraiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 1: Zasedaniia 1-35, S 15 Oktiabria Po 20 Dekabria 1908 G.*, 1752.

⁶⁰ Gosudarstvennaia дума, chetvertyi sozyv, pervaiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 3: Zasedaniia 55-81, S 27 Maia Po 25 Iiunia 1913 G.*, 1808–9; Gosudarstvennaia дума, chetvertyi sozyv, vtoraiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 3: Zasedaniia 53-75, S 21 Marta Po 5 Maia 1914 G.*, 1651–56.

⁶¹ Gosudarstvennaia дума, chetvertyi sozyv, pervaiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 3: Zasedaniia 55-81, S 27 Maia Po 25 Iiunia 1913 G.*, 1816.

⁶² Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, vtoraiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 1: Zasedaniia 1-35, S 15 Oktiabria Po 20 Dekabria 1908 G.*, 3075–77, 3080–81; Gosudarstvennaia дума, tretii sozyv, piataia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast' 1: Zasedaniia 1-41, S 15 Oktiabria Po 10 Dekabria 1911 G.*, 3062.

Summing up the criticism of the Far Eastern deputies and demonstrating the unity of the Far Eastern population, including the officials, Ryslev quoted the Military Governor of the Amur Region Arkadii Mikhailovich Valuev on the problems of settlement. Attracted by religious freedom and no conscription, the Amur “sectarian peasants” led their economy the American way which made them prosper. The abolition or minimization of previous benefits, however, jeopardized the future of the Russian Far East. The drop in land allotments in 1901, introduction of conscription in 1909, and the increasing taxation and tutelage were seen as the most harmful measures. Valuev, as quoted by Ryslev, stressed that state sponsorship could not replace free will, that “the Amur Americans” emerged regardless of bureaucracy, and that this class could not grow under excessive control, while the ill-willed newcomers were unable to ensure the success of settler colonization.⁶³

The consolidation of the Far Eastern interests did not contradict either its unity with Siberia or the bottom-up self-organization model put forward by left-liberals. Rusanov, for instance, claimed that the Russo-Japanese War proved the unity of Siberia with the Russian Empire. The Russian Far East also “sent its best sons to the trenches” of the First World War, but could not participate in the All-Russian Zemstvo Union. Just like during the previous war, it received only administrative mismanagement as a colony instead of self-organization in exchange for its input into the national cause.⁶⁴

Revolutionary regionalism, 1917

The garrison uprising, the formation of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies (Petrograd Soviet) and the Provisional Government, and the abdications of Nicholas II and Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich Romanov on February 27–March 3, 1917, resulted in euphoria and optimism across the Russian Empire despite the hardships of the First World War. On receiving the news of the revolution, Far Eastern intellectuals, soldiers, workers, Cossacks, indigenous and minority activists, and to a lesser extent peasants and businessmen quickly caught up with the imperial center and joined the discussions of Russia’s future. They met for congresses and conferences, participated in rallies and demonstrations, published newspapers and pamphlets. Unions and other civic organizations familiar from the First Russian Revolution experienced a swift revival. The soviets of workers’ and soldiers’ deputies as bodies of class self-government reemerged in March 1917, but due to the small numbers of proletarians and hence moderate popularity of the SDs, they appeared mainly in urban centers along the Trans-

⁶³ Gosudarstvennaia дума, chetvertyi sozyv, pervaiia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast’ 3: Zasedaniia 55-81, S 27 Maia Po 25 Iunia 1913 G.*, 1740–1744.

⁶⁴ Gosudarstvennaia дума, chetvertyi sozyv, chetvertaia sessiia, *Stenograficheskie Otchety, Chast’ 2: Zasedaniia 17-37, S 9 Fevralia Po 15 Marta 1916 G.* (Petrograd: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1916), 2710–2713.

Siberian Railway – in Vladivostok, Harbin, Khabarovsk, Chita, Blagoveshchensk, Nikolsk-Ussuriysky, Verkhneudinsk, and other towns.⁶⁵

The discussions took a profoundly socialist orientation compared to the First Russian Revolution albeit moderate rather than radical political ideas prevailed in the Russian Far East. The SRs and the SDs were a majority in the local bodies of the Provisional Government (committees of public safety and executive committees), the soviets, and the newly elected zemstvo and municipal assemblies. The moderate socialist Rusanov was appointed Commissar of the Provisional Government for the Far East. The relative abundance of land, low population density, relative prosperity of the population, almost no large landownership, the lack of large industry, and the low profile of right-wing groups in the first months of the February Revolution made the social fractures in the Far Eastern Territory (*krai*) or Region (*oblast'*) much less acute and violent than in European Russia and even in Western Siberia. The SDs did not finish the split into the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks until the fall of 1917.⁶⁶ The success of the socialist parties during the universal elections to the newly introduced zemstvo and reformed municipal self-government demonstrated their popularity.⁶⁷

Korean, Ukrainian, Jewish, and other minority intellectuals, soldiers, and workers joined the revolution. In March 1917, the newly elected “representatives of the Priamur Koreans” Kim Chibo, Luka Innokent'evich Kim, and Nikolai Ivanovich Kim ascribed themselves explicitly to the Russian civic nation in their telegram to the Chairman of the State Duma. “The Priamur Koreans are happy about the revival of Russia together with the Russians. If the Russians are well, we are also well.” In the telegram to the Russian command, they expressed their confidence that Koreans in the Russian army would remain loyal defenders of the Motherland.⁶⁸ Those minority activists, who did not see themselves among the citizens of Russia, also fought for the rights of their communities. In April 1917, Chinese students who studied in Russia appealed to the Provisional Government for recognition of the rights of the Chinese workers and their equal treatment with the Russians.⁶⁹

Prof. Grigorii Vladimirovich Podstavin of the Oriental Institute in Vladivostok greeted the Korean population of Vladivostok, the Maritime Region, and the Priamur Territory as “citizens of revived Russia.” He supported the ethnically inclusive understanding of the Russian nation, describing the Far Eastern Koreans as those who lived within “the common for all Russian

⁶⁵ *Dal'nii Vostok*, March 5, 1917: 1; RGIA DV, f. R-2422, op. 1, d. 573, l. 6-7 (S. Kh. Bulygin, *The First Soviets in the Far East, 1917–1918*).

⁶⁶ *Priamurskie Izvestiia*, June 24, 1917: 4; Semenov, *Dal'sovnarkom, 1917-1918 Gg.: Sbornik Dokumentov I Materialov*, 7–8.

⁶⁷ *Izvestiia Vladivostokskogo Soveta Rabochikh i Soldatskikh Deputatov*, June 29, 1917: 3; July 23, 1917: 3; August 3, 1917: 1; *Priamurskie Izvestiia*, July 22, 1917: 4; July 25, 1917: 4; July 29, 1917: 3; August 8, 1917: 4; August 17, 1917: 2; August 20, 1917: 2; *Zabaikal'skii Rabochii*, June 23, 1917: 1; July 27, 1917: 1.

⁶⁸ *Dal'nii Vostok*, March 6, 1917: 2; N. A. Troitskaia, ed., *Koreitsy Na Rossiiskom Dal'nem Vostoke (Vt. Pol. XIX - Nach. XX Vv.): Dokumenty I Materialy v 2-Kh Kn.*, vol. 2 (Vladivostok: RGIA DV, 2004), 6–7.

⁶⁹ *Priamurskie Izvestiia*, April 29, 1917: 5.

citizens without discrimination on the grounds of nationality and beloved by everyone Fatherland” and those who supported the war effort proving with their blood their “endless loyalty” to Russia which gave them shelter and became “the second Fatherland.” At the same time, he evoked paternalistic attitudes to the Koreans calling them “the youngest children” in Russia’s “family” and expressing confidence that the Provisional Government would not overlook when caring for the peoples populating Russia.⁷⁰

The engagement of Siberian Regionalism with national self-determination and the broader interest in autonomy, decentralization, and federalism in the former empire contributed to its rising popularity after the February Revolution of 1917. By the late summer of 1917 the SRs appeared to remain the only state-wide party to genuinely support regional and national autonomy, which boosted their popularity both among Siberian Regionalists and minority nationalists. The SRs were a majority among party delegates at the Siberian Regional Conference of Civic Organizations (Tomsk, August 2–9, 1917) which convened on the initiative of Siberian Regionalists. The conference approved the white and green “national Siberian flag,” making Siberian Regionalism a national-like movement. The delegates of zemstvo and municipal authorities, cooperatives, minority organizations, peasant soviets, political parties, and other organizations gathered for the Siberian Regional Congress (Tomsk, October 8–17, 1917). The SRs were again a majority with around forty percent of all mandates. The congress designed a system of regional self-government featuring the legislative Siberian Regional Duma.⁷¹

Although Far Eastern press welcomed the Siberian Regionalist movement and called for the participation of Far Eastern delegates in the congress, only seven representatives from the Amur and Maritime Regions combined came to the October Regionalist congress becoming a minority among the 182 delegates. The congress split Siberia into three parts, with Transbaikal Region belonging to Eastern Siberia and the four easternmost regions to the Russian Far East.⁷² The Transbaikal Region indeed gravitated towards Irkutsk during the February Revolution, while the Amur, Maritime, and to a lesser extent Kamchatka and Sakhalin Regions were understood as the Far Eastern Territory (*krai*). Rusanov’s position contributed to the consolidation, and so did the numerous regional congresses he organized or supported, including the First Far Eastern Territorial (*kraevoi*) Congress of Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies (Vladivostok, May 1–7, 1917).

⁷⁰ Troitskaia, *Koreitsy Na Rossiiskom Dal'nem Vostoke (Vt. Pol. XIX - Nach. XX Vv.): Dokumenty I Materialy v 2-Kh Kn.*, 2:5–6.

⁷¹ I. A. Iakushev, “Fevral'skaia Revoliutsiia I Sibirskie Oblastnye S"ezdy: K Istorii Oblastnogo Dvizheniia v Sibiri,” in *Volnaia Sibir'*, vol. 2 (Prague: Izd. O-va sibirskov v ChSR, 1927), 23; I. V. Nam and E. I. Cherniak, eds., *Kul'turno-Natsional'naia Avtonomiia v Istorii Rossii: Dokumental'naia Antologiia*, vol. 1: Sibir', 1917-1920 (Tomsk: Izd-vo TGU, 1998), 276–78.

⁷² *Dal'nii Vostok*, October 6, 1917: 2; *Pervyi Sibirskii Oblastnoi S"ezd 8-17 Oktiabria 1917 Goda v G. Tomske: Postanovleniia S"ezda* (Tomsk: Gubernskaia tipografiia, 1917).

The main features of Far Eastern regionalism corresponded to the particular regional interests voiced by Rusanov and other Far Eastern deputies in the imperial State Duma. The issue of lifting customs duties for at least some groups of goods was continuously raised by regional committees of public safety since the beginning of the revolution. Some local authorities in fact even abolished the duties without prior arrangement. The Provisional Government opposed the initiative and demanded that local bodies followed customs rules. Duty-free trade was on the agenda of the First Maritime Regional Congress of Representatives from Executive Committee (Khabarovsk, April 6–12, 1917), which resolved to appeal to the Provisional Government for implementation of a duty-free zone in the Far East, but the Provisional Government insisted on keeping the customs. It also rejected a separate appeal from the Sakhalin Regional Executive Committee for limited duty-free import to Nikolaevsk-on-Amur, even though it granted Rusanov's plea to lift the duties from imported seeds. The Provisional Government also backed the initiative of the Vladivostok Stock Exchange Committee and started the discussions of making Vladivostok a free port. The business group was dissatisfied with low competitiveness of the only Russian port inaccessible to the Central Powers against those in Manchuria. Over the first six months of 1917 the number of steamers which called at Vladivostok dropped four times compared to the same period of 1916, with most routes being redirected to Dairen, which confirmed the position of the regional deputies in the imperial State Duma.⁷³

Rusanov also took the initiative of creating Far Eastern territorial (*kraevye*) organizations with the center in Khabarovsk. The official newspaper of the Provisional Government in the region *Priamurskie Izvestiia* informed the public that the Petrograd Soviet confirmed Khabarovsk as the center for regional soviets. The Khabarovsk Committee of Public Safety claimed regional leadership already in March 1917 when it accused its Vladivostok counterpart of counterrevolution prompting its reelection. The Congress of Cooperative Societies, which convened in the spring of 1917, also chose Khabarovsk as the seat for one of the two cooperative warehouses of the newly formed Union of Priamur Cooperation, with the other one to be located in Nikolsk-Ussuriysky – the agricultural capital of the Maritime Region which hosted a variety of congresses since the spring of 1917. The Far Eastern Regional (*oblastnoi*) Committee of Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies (the Dal'kom) which consisted of moderate socialists until late 1917 also used the vocabulary of Siberian Regionalists using the term *oblast'* (region) rather than *krai* (territory) in its name.⁷⁴

⁷³ *Priamurskie Vedomosti*, April 6, 1917: 2; *Priamurskie Izvestiia*, April 22, 1917: 5; April 25, 1917: 2; April 27, 1917: 7; May 16, 1917: 5; June 1, 1917: 4; July 13, 1917: 4; July 16, 1917: 4; July 18, 1917: 4.

⁷⁴ *Izvestiia Soveta Rabochikh i Voennykh Deputatov gor. Vladivostoka*, March 25, 1917: 3; *Izvestiia Vladivostokskogo Soveta Rabochikh i Soldatskikh Deputatov*, May 28, 1917: 4; *Priamurskie Izvestiia*, July 13, 1917: 3; June 24, 1917: 4; June 25, 1917: 4.

Rusanov also initiated and chaired the Far Eastern Territorial Meeting on the Elections to the Constituent Assembly (Khabarovsk, August 16–17, 1917) of ten delegates from soviets and executive committees (including the Menshevik-Internationalist Konstantin Aleksandrovich Sukhanov of the more radical Vladivostok Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies). Administrative and economic organization of the territory (*krai*) was the second point on the meeting's agenda. On the second day of the congress, G. M. Kirillov offered a draft scheme for the organization of the territory to the other six delegates who were present (Sukhanov was among those absent) in order to start public discussions. He suggested keeping the old boundaries between the regions. Each of the regions was to have universally elected zemstvo bodies and commissars with councils of delegates representing higher authorities. The representatives of *uezd* (district) and *oblast'* (regional) zemstvos and the representatives of councils under the commissars formed a sessional Territorial Assembly (also referred to as the Territorial Duma in the *Priamurskie Izvestiia*). The Far Eastern Territorial Assembly was to deal with issues of principal importance for the whole territory and state economy and formed the Territorial Administration from representatives of each region. This practically meant the introduction of the fourth level of local self-government. The two bodies were not treated as a central territorial authority since it would hamper the relations of zemstvo bodies and commissars with the Russian central government. G. M. Kirillov dismissed the need for such an authority since he did not support turning Russia into a federation. The Territorial Administration was hence designed as a body of economic self-government. G. M. Kirillov also suggested retaining the soviets for uniting socialists, organizing professional life, and guarding the achieved freedoms.⁷⁵

Commenting G. M. Kirillov's plan, G. G. Kashchenko noted that the relations between territorial and central authorities were in the competence of the Constituent Assembly which was to choose between a unitary state, which included autonomies, and a federation. He also opposed the immediate transition from the absence of self-government to a federation favoring broad regional autonomy in economic matters. Kashchenko suggested convening a territorial congress of regional representatives immediately after the zemstvo elections and forming a Far Eastern territorial body. Such a body had to be established before the Constituent Assembly so that regional deputies had the forms of territorial unification in mind and knew the opinion of the whole territory on the unification. L. P. Iurchenko anticipated that the Transbaikal Region would be part of the Far Eastern Territorial Zemstvo Administration or the Far Eastern Territorial Duma, which would be in charge of waterways, roads of territorial importance, local railroads, post, telegraph, telephone, provisions, settlement, higher education, and, perhaps, even limited

⁷⁵ *Priamurskie Izvestiia*, August 6, 1917: 4; August 27, 1917: 3–4; August 29, 1917: 3–4.

legislation. The elections to the territorial authority were to be proportional to the population of each region. Veniamin Iur'evich Ulianinskii of the Khabarovsk Municipal Duma supported the form of a territorial union of democratic zemstvo and municipal self-government with the representatives of soldiers, workers, and peasants.⁷⁶

The suggested project for the Far Eastern Territory (*Krai*) was a combination of Siberian Regionalism, the state-wide discourse of decentralization, and the wartime progressive nationalism in zemstvo and municipal unions. A different version of Far Eastern regionalism was voiced at the Second Maritime Regional Peasant Congress (Nikolsk-Ussuriysky, July 1917). It reaffirmed the slogan of the “democratic federative republic” and instructed its deputies in the Constituent Assembly to demand broad autonomy for regions and nationalities and ensure that the “Far Eastern periphery” was “singled out into an independent [*samostoiatel'nyi*], quite autonomous unit.”⁷⁷ In this respect, the Maritime peasant activists continued the discussions of the Ussuri autonomy during the First Russian Revolution.

Summing up the debates at the August 1917 meeting in Khabarovsk, G. M. Kirillov used not only the language of Siberian Regionalism when concluding that economic life was different everywhere due to “ethnographic, climatic, and other conditions,” but also that of progressive nationalism claiming that zemstvo and the territorial administration were to become the “creators of local prosperity and makers of cultural and economic welfare of Russia.” The Far Eastern regionalist plan was more limited compared to the one adopted at the Tomsk congress of Siberian Regionalists, as the Far Eastern Territorial Assembly was not to issue laws but only resolutions. Rusanov suggested requesting local opinions on the issue of forming a territorial organization before the Constituent Assembly and inviting soviet, peasant, and Cossack representatives for another meeting. Compared to the Siberian Regionalist movement, Far Eastern regionalism lacked dynamics, as few politicians participated in the debates. Besides, self-organization protracted in the Amur, Maritime, and Kamchatka Regions. The Amur and Kamchatka Regions, for instance, had no Regional Commissars for most of the summer.⁷⁸

The October Revolution was not recognized in the Russian Far East. On November 9, 1917, Rusanov, the Dal'kom's Chairman Nikolai Aleksandrovich Vakulin, the leaders of Khabarovsk self-government bodies, and the joint committee of the SR and SD party organizations issued a proclamation to the “citizens” against the attempted dictatorship of Lenin and Lev Davidovich Trotskii and for a “uniform democratic [*socialist*] authority.” The

⁷⁶ *Priamurskie Izvestiia*, August 29, 1917: 3–4.

⁷⁷ *Priamurskie Izvestiia*, August 8, 1917: 4.

⁷⁸ *Priamurskie Izvestiia*, August 6, 1917: 4; August 29, 1917: 3–4; August 27, 1917: 4.

proclamation also reminded all citizens of the need to create conditions for “free and correct elections to the Constituent Assembly” and “normal flow of the electoral campaign.”⁷⁹

Even though individual rallies and some civic organizations in Vladivostok, Chita, Blagoveshchensk, Harbin, at the Manchuria Station, and elsewhere called for transferring all authority to the soviets,⁸⁰ the elections to the Constituent Assembly in the Russian Far East were conducted before any kind of Soviet authority was recognized in the region. In the Priamur Electoral District of the Maritime, Amur, and Sakhalin Regions six out of seven seats went to the SRs. The formation of the universally elected authorities of rural self-government in the Russian Far East, which coincided with the elections campaign to the Constituent Assembly, provided an alternative to Soviet rule. Rusanov supported the initiative of the Amur Regional Zemstvo Assembly to convene a territorial congress of self-government bodies.⁸¹

The Extraordinary Siberian Regional Congress (Tomsk, December 6–15, 1917) also condemned the Bolshevik coup and did not recognize the Soviet government. It called for reassembling the collapsed state by supporting municipal and zemstvo bodies and the All-Russian Constituent Assembly and stressed the role of autonomous “Great Siberia” as the core of state consolidation. The congress established the Siberian Regional Council and set the convocation of the Siberian Regional Duma. These bodies were designed as provisional before the All-Siberian Constituent Assembly. Potanin chaired the council, but the majority of its members were SRs. Their desire to establish “all-Siberian socialist” government alienated conservatives and liberals ultimately leading to Potanin’s resignation.⁸²

Rusanov’s headed a similar movement in the Russian Far East. On December 11, 1917, three representatives of the Amur Region and six representatives of the Maritime Region came to Khabarovsk for the First Territorial Congress of Municipal and Zemstvo Self-Government Bodies. Rusanov, as the Commissar of the Provisional Government, passed his authority to the Provisional Bureau of Zemstvo and Municipal Authorities of six people, each representing the Amur, Maritime, Sakhalin, and Kamchatka Regions and the Amur and Ussuri Cossack Hosts. The SR Mikhail Ioakimovich Timofeev, who chaired the Khabarovsk Municipal Duma, was elected provisional chairman before representatives of all bodies assembled for a new congress; the Menshevik Chairman of the Amur Regional Zemstvo Administration Ivan Nikolaevich

⁷⁹ *Izvestiia Vladivostokskogo Soveta Rabochikh i Soldatskikh Deputatov*, November 1, 1917: 1, 3; November 9, 1917: 1; *Priamurskie Izvestiia*, October 28, 1917: 6; October 29, 1917: 2; October 31, 1917: 2–4; November 2, 1917: 3; November 5, 1917: 2; RGIA DV, f. R-2422, op. 1, d. 573, l. 13–17 (S. Kh. Bulygin, *The First Soviets in the Far East, 1917–1918*); Tsyppin, Shurygin, and Bulygin, *Oktiabr'skaia Revoliutsiia I Grazhdanskaia Voina Na Dal'nem Vostoke: Khronika Sobytiia, 1917-1922 Gg.*, 20–21, 24.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 19–25.

⁸¹ *Priamurskie Izvestiia*, December 12, 1917: 3.

⁸² Paul Dotsenko, *The Struggle for a Democracy in Siberia, 1917-1920: Eyewitness Account of a Contemporary* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1983), 6; Nam and Cherniak, *Kul'turno-Natsional'naiia Avtonomiia v Istorii Rossii: Dokumental'naiia Antologiiia*, 1: Sibir', 1917-1920:71–72, 279; M. V. Shilovskiy, “*Polneyshaya Samootverzhennaya Predannost Nauke*”: G. N. Potanin, *Biografichesky Ocherk* (Novosibirsk: Sova, 2004).

Shishlov became his deputy; Ryslev also joined the organization. In its Order No. 1, the Bureau proclaimed supreme civil authority in the Russian Far East creating thereby the first Far Eastern government.⁸³

Krasnoshchekov, who was elected to the Third Far Eastern Territorial Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (which also proclaimed itself a congress of peasants' deputies)⁸⁴ about to start in Khabarovsk, also represented Nikolsk-Ussuriysky at Rusanov's self-government congress. He organized the arrest of Rusanov through the Executive Committee of the recently reelected Khabarovsk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and attempted to hamper the circulation of the Bureau's Order No. 1. The Khabarovsk Municipal Duma protested calling the people to unite around the universally elected bodies and reject the intrusion of the Bolsheviks. Employees of the regional administration went on strike. The Third Far Eastern Territorial Congress of Soviets opened on December 12, 1917, under Krasnoshchekov's chairmanship. The Bolsheviks held forty-six out of eighty-four mandates, while the Left SRs took up most of the remaining seats, with nine Mensheviks and two non-partisan delegates in the opposition. Vakulin protested against Bolshevik takeover and called for a solid revolutionary authority and coalition of socialist parties. Following the Bolshevik lead, the soviet congress proclaimed Soviet rule on December 14, 1917. On December 20, 1917, it reformed the Dal'kom, now called the Territorial (*kraevoi*) Executive Committee, and closed. Krasnoshchekov became its chairman.⁸⁵ Rusanov was released shortly after his arrest and moved to Vladivostok where he joined the Maritime Regional Zemstvo Administration headed by the SR Aleksandr Semenovich Medvedev.⁸⁶

The dispersal of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, shortly after it proclaimed the creation of the Russian Democratic Federative Republic "uniting in an indivisible union peoples and regions" within the boundaries of "the federal constitution" early in the morning of January 6, 1918,⁸⁷ did not destroy the hope for a broad socialist coalition, with or without the Bolsheviks, in Siberia. The Siberian Regional Duma, a pre-parliament of delegated representatives, convened in Tomsk in late January 1918. Despite the support from municipal and zemstvo authorities and cooperative organizations, the Executive Committee of the Tomsk Provincial Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies disbanded the Siberian Regional Duma and arrested some of its members.

⁸³ V. G. Popov, "Pervyi S"ezd Zemskikh I Gorodskikh Samoupravlenii Dal'nego Vostoka," *Sibirskaiia Zaimka*, accessed January 17, 2017, <http://zaimka.ru/power/popov1.shtml>.

⁸⁴ Semenov, *Dal'sovmarkom, 1917-1918 Gg.: Sbornik Dokumentov I Materialov*, 39.

⁸⁵ *Izvestiia Vladivostokskogo Soveta Rabochikh i Soldatskikh Deputatov*, December 20, 1917: 2-3; December 21, 1917: 2; December 30, 1917: 1; RGIA DV, f. R-2422, op. 1, d. 573, l. 22-23 (S. Kh. Bulygin, *The First Soviets in the Far East, 1917-1918*); Popov, "Pervyi S"ezd Zemskikh I Gorodskikh Samoupravlenii Dal'nego Vostoka"; Tsytkin, Shurygin, and Bulygin, *Oktiabr'skaia Revoliutsiia I Grazhdanskaia Voina Na Dal'nem Vostoke: Khronika Sobyti, 1917-1922 Gg.*, 29-32.

⁸⁶ Ikonnikova, "Uchitel', Deputat, Komissar, Emigrant... Zametki Ob A. N. Rusanove."

⁸⁷ Uchreditel'noe sobranie, *Stenograficheskii Otchet, 5-6 Ianvaria 1918 G.* (Petrograd: Tip. arend. akts. o-vo Dom pečati, 1918), 99-100.

The remaining delegates formed the Provisional Siberian Government under the SR Petr Iakovlevich Derber. The government, which never assembled *in corpore*, relocated to Harbin in March and to Vladivostok in June 1918.⁸⁸

The Soviet Republic of the Far East, 1918

The reelected and radicalized Vladivostok Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (Vladivostok Soviet) promised to support the Soviet authority to be formed at First All-Siberian Congress of Soviets (Irkutsk, October 16–24, 1917) already in October 1917. The Central Executive Committee of Siberian Soviets (Tsentrosibir'), which was elected at the congress, claimed the whole region between the Urals and the Pacific after the October Revolution. Although the Tsentrosibir' opposed Siberian Regionalists and their agencies, the October Siberian congress of soviets had Siberian autonomy on its agenda. Furthermore, the Tsentrosibir' behaved like an autonomous Soviet government of Siberia, which made Krasnoshchekov later accuse it of regionalism.⁸⁹

Bolshevik regionalism manifested itself even clearer in the Dal'kom's own activities. The December Far Eastern congress of soviets agreed to Krasnoshchekov's conciliatory stance towards the Amur, Maritime, and Sakhalin zemstvo despite the opposition of the radical Vladivostok Soviet and Mukhin of Blagoveshchensk. The congress created a system alternative to the one put forward by the Sovnarkom, which did not recognize zemstvo. At the same time, the seeming compromise became one of the first examples of Krasnoshchekov's take on shamming democracy. The congress reserved only five out of twenty-three seats for regional zemstvos, while the remaining eighteen were to be equally split between soviets of workers', soldiers', and peasants' deputies. This made soviet representatives a majority in the Dal'kom, especially since the soldiers' and workers' deputies were usually united into the same organizations locally, and ensured their control over the Dal'kom's Presidium of seven people. Although the Mensheviks under Vakulin protested against this undemocratic system and refused to join the committee, the Maritime Regional Zemstvo Assembly sanctioned the authority of the Dal'kom, which proclaimed itself the "supreme body of Soviet government in the territory" on January 7, 1918. The support of the Maritime Zemstvo helped Krasnoshchekov win over the Far Eastern Congress of Zemstvo and Municipal Bodies (Blagoveshchensk, January 1918). Despite Timofeev's opposition and suggestion to recognize the Siberian Regional Duma, it resolved to

⁸⁸ Dotsenko, *The Struggle for a Democracy in Siberia, 1917-1920: Eyewitness Account of a Contemporary*, 23; I. V. Nam, "Natsionalny Vopros v Programmnykh Ustanovkakh Sibirskikh Oblastnikov, Zakonotvorcheskoy I Politicheskoy Praktike Sibirskoy Oblastnoy Dumy, 1917 - Yanvar 1918 Gg.," *Vestnik Tomskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta: Istoriya, Krayevedeniye, Etimologiya, Arkheologiya*, no. 281 (2004): 47–57.

⁸⁹ *Izvestiia Vladivostokskogo Soveta Rabochikh i Soldatskikh Deputatov*, October 15, 1917: 4; November 7, 1917: 3; November 19, 1917: 3; RGIA DV, f. R-919, op. 1, d. 6, l. 6, 12, 16-17 (A. M. Krasnoshchekov, *The October Revolution, the Civil War, and the struggle against foreign intervention in the Far East, 1917–1922*, dictated to A. N. Gelasimova in 1932); V. T. Agalakov, ed., *Podvig Tsentrosibiri, 1917-1918: Sbornik Dokumentov* (Irkutsk: Vost.-Sib. kn. izd-vo, 1986), 39–45.

dissolve the Provisional Bureau of Zemstvo and Municipal Authorities. The Dal'kom broadened the de facto autonomy of the Far East on January 13, 1918, by establishing the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs under the Bolshevik Nikolai Markovich Liubarskii, another remigrant from the USA, and formally abolishing the institution of commissars of the former Provisional Government. The establishment of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs was explained by the Dal'kom's need to deal with China and Japan, as well as the large number of prisoners of war who were being held in the region.⁹⁰

The Dal'kom was yet to consolidate its authority in the region as many Bolsheviks did not support Krasnoshchekov's policies towards local self-government. The reelection of the Blagoveshchensk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (Blagoveshchensk Soviet) on January 5, 1918, gave the Bolsheviks a majority, even though it still included SRs (both "right" and Left) and Mensheviks. The Bolshevik Mukhin headed its Executive Committee of sixteen Bolsheviks, six Mensheviks, and six SRs. The Blagoveshchensk Soviet proclaimed its authority in the Amur Region later the same month. The new government substituted zemstvo and municipal bodies with soviets. The success of the transition was ensured by the mistrust of the population to zemstvo, which did not manage to achieve any results in the few months since its election and only collected taxes. The support of the demobilized soldiers, many of whom returned home in February 1918 thanks to the Soviet truce with the Central Powers, gave the Bolsheviks many new allies who enforced the transition of authority.⁹¹

Anti-Bolshevik politicians did not remain passive. The Civil War east of Baikal began in the middle of January 1918 when the Independent Manchurian Detachment led by the Cossack Captain Grigorii Mikhailovich Semenov advanced from the CER Zone to the Transbaikal Region and occupied several stations. About the same time, the Third Maritime Regional Peasant Congress in Nikolsk-Ussuriysky recognized Soviet rule, but the Bolsheviks failed to attract the support of the Ussuri Cossacks who elected Ivan Pavlovich Kalmykov their Ataman at the Fourth Host Congress in Iman. The Bolsheviks also failed to win over the Amur Cossacks, despite radicalization among some of them. Ivan Mikhailovich Gamov, a deputy of the Fourth State Duma from the Amur and Ussuri Cossack Hosts, relied on the non-radical Cossacks, while the Mensheviks appealed to defensive nationalism pointing at the Chinese and Japanese threat. In Vladivostok, the Stock Market Committee began raising money for guarding the factories. Anti-Bolsheviks were supported by foreign representatives dissatisfied with the Brest-Litovsk talks, which the Dal'kom in fact rebuked as "a heavy blow to the revolution." The consuls of

⁹⁰ Popov, "Pervyi S'ezd Zemskikh I Gorodskikh Samoupravlenii Dal'nego Vostoka"; Semenov, *Dal'sovnarkom, 1917-1918 Gg.: Sbornik Dokumentov I Materialov*, 15, 31–37, 44, 47, 50–51, 129.

⁹¹ Tsyarkin, Shurygin, and Bulygin, *Oktiabr'skaia Revoliutsiia I Grazhdanskaia Voina Na Dal'nem Vostoke: Khronika Sobyti, 1917-1922 Gg.*, 36–46.

Japan, China, the USA, Britain, France, and Belgium protested against the dissolution of the Vladivostok Municipal Duma by the Soviet in late January 1918 and other policies of the new authorities before the Maritime Regional Zemstvo Administration in the middle of February 1918. The Japanese, British, and American warships called at Vladivostok in late 1917–early 1918 for guarding foreign citizens and foreign property which accumulated in the port as part of the Allied military aid to Russia.⁹²

Despite its conciliatory establishment, the Dal'kom started to introduce soviet policies, including requisitions, confiscations, censorship, and secularization of education in January–February 1918, which stimulated anti-Soviet opposition. The workers of the Amur Steamship Company opposed its nationalization, though the Dal'kom enforced it anyway. On March 6, 1918, soon after Krasnoshchekov arrived at Blagoveshchensk for the participation in the Fourth Amur Regional Peasant Congress which sanctioned the Soviet rule in the Amur Region, the forces under Gamov and Nikolai Grigor'evich Kozhevnikov, who was appointed the Commissar of the Provisional Government in the Amur Region and was elected to the Constituent Assembly, arrested the delegates to the congress and the Blagoveshchensk Soviet, took control of the city, and attempted to take over the neighboring stations. The anti-Bolsheviks attempted to create a coalitional authority of zemstvo and municipal self-governments, regional peasant soviet and the Military Administration of the Amur Cossack Host with the participation of the workers' soviets in the Amur Region, but the offensive of the 12,000-strong Red Guard under Moisei Izrailevich Gubel'man forced them to retreat to Saghalien (Heihe) on the Chinese territory across the river after they lost the city on March 13, 1918. In Saghalien, Gamov and Kozhevnikov formed the Bureau of Self-Government Bodies of the Amur Region. About the same time, on March 7, 1918, the Soviet forces under Sergei Georgievich Lazo defeated Semenov's troops pushing them to the CER Zone.⁹³

The clashes with Semenov's and Gamov's forces stimulated the attempts of the Soviet authorities in North Asia to consolidate their regime. Together with nationalizations and requisitions, the Bolsheviks and their allies in the Transbaikal, Amur, and Maritime Regions used the equivocal resolutions of the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets as the basis for action. The congress proclaimed the Soviet Russian Republic as a federation of free national republics, but at the same time called it a federation of soviets with broad local autonomy for regions. The Central Soviet authority only observed the foundations of the "Russian Federation

⁹² Semenov, *Dal'sovnarkom, 1917-1918 Gg.: Sbornik Dokumentov I Materialov*, 12–16, 59; Tsypkin, Shurygin, and Bulygin, *Oktiabr'skaia Revoliutsiia I Grazhdanskaia Voina Na Dal'nem Vostoke: Khronika Sobyti, 1917-1922 Gg.*, 35–47.

⁹³ V. M. Rynkov, "Organy Mestnogo Samoupravleniya v Antibolshevistskom Lagere Na Vostoke Rossii (Seredina 1918 - Konets 1922 G.)," in *Politicheskiye Sistemy I Rezhimy Na Vostoke Rossii v Period Revolyutsii I Grazhdanskoy Voyny: Sbornik Nauchnykh Statey*, ed. V. I. Shishkin (Novosibirsk: Parallel, 2012), 132; Semenov, *Dal'sovnarkom, 1917-1918 Gg.: Sbornik Dokumentov I Materialov*, 56, 78–81, 86, 88, 90–91, 127; Tsypkin, Shurygin, and Bulygin, *Oktiabr'skaia Revoliutsiia I Grazhdanskaia Voina Na Dal'nem Vostoke: Khronika Sobyti, 1917-1922 Gg.*, 48–51.

of Soviets,” represented it as a whole, and could not violate the rights of different regions which entered the federation. The regional soviet republics were to decide about their own forms themselves. This legal chaos implied the right to regional self-determination in line with Stalin’s program article, in which he favored the regionalist approach to decentralization.⁹⁴

Following these obscure guidelines, the Third Congress of Soviets of Transbaikalia (Chita, March 24–April 5, 1918) formed the Transbaikal Regional Council of People’s Commissars headed by Nikolai Mikhailovich Matveev. The Fifth Amur Regional Peasant and Cossack Congress (Blagoveshchensk, April 1–10, 1918) uniting Bolsheviks, Left SRs, SR Maximalists, anarchists, and other radicals, went even further. Having adopted a radical socialist program, the congress proclaimed the Amur Toilers’ Socialist Republic or “the autonomous Amur Socialist Republic” as “part of the Great Russian Soviet Federative Republic.” The republic’s Council of People’s Commissars under Mukhin started implementing a radical socialist program nationalizing businesses, establishing fix prices, and shutting down remaining opposition newspapers. Krasnoshchekov criticized the “peasant-worker” Amur Republic for “separatism,” as the Dal’kom had to compete with the Tsentsosibir’ for the influence over Mukhin’s government.⁹⁵

Krasnoshchekov’s own policies, however, can also be seen as secessionist. In April 1918, while Krasnoshchekov and his allies continued to develop the Far Eastern government, the Civil War continued as Semenov launched a new offensive and Kalmykov gathered forces. Foreign representatives also defied the Soviet government. The attack on the Ishido Company on April 4, 1918, which left two Japanese businessmen murdered, prompted the landing of Japanese troops in Vladivostok the next day. The Japanese consul refused to deal with the soviet authorities after the latter protested. The anti-Bolsheviks welcomed the Japanese landing, while the passive stance of the former proponents of the Soviet rule hinted that the radical policies had fewer backers than the Vladivostok Soviet expected. The Fourth Far Eastern Territorial Congress of Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’, Peasants’, and Cossacks’ Deputies (Khabarovsk, April 8–14, 1918) took a defensive nationalist and regionalist rather than internationalist stance. In his opening speech, Krasnoshchekov appealed to the “united toiling people of the Far East,” which was “detached from European Russia” and “surrounded by a hostile world.” Although Krasnoshchekov spoke of the Far East (which he extended to include the Transbaikal and Yakut Regions), he stressed the region’s belonging to Russia, while accusing the anti-Bolsheviks of

⁹⁴ Stalin, “Marksizm I Natsionalnyi Vopros (1913)”; *Tretii Vserossiiskii S'ezd Sovetov Rabochikh, Soldatskikh I Krest'ianskikh Deputatov*, 90–94; Mark Vishniak, “Bol’shevizm I Demokratiia,” in *Bol’sheviki U Vlasti: Sotsial’no-Politicheskie Itogi Oktiabr’skogo Perevorota* (Petrograd: Izd. t-vo Revoliutsionnaia mysl’, 1918), 85–106.

⁹⁵ RGIA DV, f. R-919, op. 1, d. 6, l. 10–12 (A. M. Krasnoshchekov, The October Revolution, the Civil War, and the struggle against foreign intervention in the Far East, 1917–1922, dictated to A. N. Gelasimova in 1932); Tsyppin, Shurygin, and Bulygin, *Oktiabr’skaia Revoliutsiia I Grazhdanskaia Voina Na Dal’nem Vostoke: Khronika Sobyti, 1917-1922 Gg.*, 51, 54, 57, 61, 63.

conspiring with foreigners. At the same time, he called the congress “a constituent assembly” of the new Far East belonging to the toiling people. In the resolution of the congress, the new polity was called “the workers’ and peasants’ Soviet Republic of the Far East,” which nevertheless remained part of Russia and sent its “eternal damnation to the traitors of the people and the Motherland.”⁹⁶

Despite its defensive nationalist stance, the Dal’kom and the fourth Far Eastern congress of soviet supported the ethnically inclusive understanding of the toiling people. The Dal’kom defended the Korean population from the attacks of the Russian peasants, who seized their lands, and appealed to the Sovnarkom for naturalizing all those Koreans who lived in Russia for many years and used their own labor to work the land. Together with the congress’s decision to grant all foreigners, especially Chinese and Koreans, access to land allotment on an equal basis with the Russians, these decisions hinted at the Dal’kom’s internationalist agenda. Furthermore, the alliance with Koreans, many of whom belonged to the poorest rural strata, contributed to the “class struggle” in the village as the redistribution of Russian peasant’ lands among Koreans, both Russian and foreign citizens, in Suchan was later interpreted as “dekulakization.” The Dal’kom’s state-building ambition was reinforced by its decision to extend the government on April 30, 1918, and rename itself the Dal’sovnarkom on May 8, 1918. Krasnoshchekov was again elected Chairman and became Commissar of Foreign Affairs. The Left SR Grigorii Iosifovich Kalmanovich was the Dal’sovnarkom’s Vice Chairman. The new government also included Mikhail Ivanovich Taishin, who left the Left SRs and joined the Bolsheviks in 1918, Filipp Ivanovich Gapon, and Moisei Izrailevich Gubel’man. Dionisii Antonovich Nosok (Turskii) became one of the six members of the Commissariat of War which took over the territorial command of the Red Army. On Krasnoshchekov’s initiative the fourth Far Eastern congress resolved to disband zemstvo and substitute it with soviets of rural deputies to be formed through unequal, indirect, and non-universal elections. As a means of consolidating its authority, which was challenged by regional bodies, the Dal’sovnarkom started abolishing regions altogether, as no regional soviet was to substitute the Maritime zemstvo. The Dal’sovnarkom also eliminated passport restrictions imposed on Chinese and Koreans making them equal to other foreigners.⁹⁷

Even though Krasnoshchekov later claimed that the Dal’sovnarkom opposed the Siberian Regionalism of the Tsentrosibir’, its policies were no less regionalist. Explaining the Dal’sovnarkom aspiration for uniting the Far East of Amur, Maritime, Sakhalin, and Kamchatka

⁹⁶ Semenov, *Dal’sovnarkom, 1917-1918 Gg.: Sbornik Dokumentov I Materialov*, 112–13, 115, 118–28, 153; Tsyppin, Shurygin, and Bulygin, *Oktiabr’skaia Revoliutsiia I Grazhdanskaia Voina Na Dal’nem Vostoke: Khronika Sobytii, 1917-1922 Gg.*, 54–56.

⁹⁷ Semenov, *Dal’sovnarkom, 1917-1918 Gg.: Sbornik Dokumentov I Materialov*, 131, 137–152, 171–75; Tsyppin, Shurygin, and Bulygin, *Oktiabr’skaia Revoliutsiia I Grazhdanskaia Voina Na Dal’nem Vostoke: Khronika Sobytii, 1917-1922 Gg.*, 55–62.

Regions under one center, Krasnoshchekov claimed that the Far Eastern government allowed full subordination of the region to Moscow without the unnecessary mediation of the Tsentrosibir'.⁹⁸ In practice, however, there was no full subordination. In May 1918 the Dal'sovnarkom received a telegram from the Supreme Soviet of the People's Economy which explicitly forbade all local bodies to engage in nationalizations reserving the right to itself and the Moscow Sovnarkom. The Dal'sovnarkom, however, interpreted the telegram as its own right to sanction nationalizations in the Far East and continued nationalizing property by its own decrees. The same month the Dal'sovnarkom openly defied the Tsentrosibir' rejecting its suggestion of "closer cooperation." It motivated the decision by the need to protect Russia's unity threatened by the formation of "large central unions" like Siberia.⁹⁹

Following the revolt of the Czechoslovak Legion in late May–early June 1918 and the offensives under Semenov, Kalmykov, and other anti-Bolshevik leaders, the Dal'sovnarkom proclaimed martial law. Although the full-scale Civil War hampered communication with European Russia, Krasnoshchekov's government continued its independent policies being aware of the Sovnarkom's orders to halt them. The Dal'sovnarkom received the regulation of the Sovnarkom, which forbade the "Far Eastern Regional Soviet" to grant permissions for export and import in the Far East, but continued to issue such permissions as the supreme authority of "the Russian Federative Soviet Republic" in the region.¹⁰⁰

The protracted liquidation of zemstvo, which survived until the summer of 1918, allowed individual self-government authorities to resume their activities after the Czechoslovaks occupied Vladivostok on June 29, 1918. The city became the seat of Derber's Provisional Government of Autonomous Siberia, while Medvedev took the authority of the Regional Commissar. The socialist Siberian Regionalist government, however, was not recognized by other anti-Bolsheviks. Kalmykov in Grodekovo declared his allegiance to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly and backed municipal, zemstvo, and Cossack self-government bodies in early July 1918. On July 9, 1918, Dmitrii Leonidovich Horvath arrived at Grodekovo from Harbin, from where he governed the CER Zone, and proclaimed himself supreme Provisional Ruler of Russia, as the last remaining Commissar of the Provisional Government. Derber's government proclaimed Horvath "usurper" and demanded his resignation. In August 1918 Horvath's forces attempted to take Vladivostok, which was effectively controlled by the

⁹⁸ RGIA DV, f. R-919, op. 1, d. 6, l. 6, 12, 16-17 (A. M. Krasnoshchekov, *The October Revolution, the Civil War, and the struggle against foreign intervention in the Far East, 1917–1922*, dictated to A. N. Gelasimova in 1932).

⁹⁹ Semenov, *Dal'sovnarkom, 1917-1918 Gg.: Sbornik Dokumentov I Materialov*, 178–79, 181–82, 185; Tsyppkin, Shurygin, and Bulygin, *Oktiabr'skaia Revoliutsiia I Grazhdanskaia Voina Na Dal'nem Vostoke: Khronika Sobytiia, 1917-1922 Gg.*, 64.

¹⁰⁰ RGIA DV, f. R-786, op. 1, d. 7, l. 136 (From Sovnarkom to the Far Eastern Regional Soviet of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, May 15, 1918); RGIA DV, f. R-786, op. 1, d. 7, l. 141 (The Commissariat of Provisions, Certificate to A. A. Losev and Co. for export from Vladivostok to Japan, July 10, 1918); RGIA DV, f. R-786, op. 1, d. 7, l. 170 (Dal'sovnarkom, Certificate to the Japanese subject Takeuchi for export from Khabarovsk via Vladivostok to Japan, July 26, 1918); Semenov, *Dal'sovnarkom, 1917-1918 Gg.: Sbornik Dokumentov I Materialov*, 194–95.

Maritime Regional Zemstvo Administration, but failed due to the position of the consular corps.¹⁰¹

Despite the Dal'sovnarkom's conciliatory stance towards minority nationalism, the Second Extraordinary All-Russian Korean National Congress of 135 delegates under R. I. Kim and honorary chairmen Yi Dong-hwi, a political immigrant, and Petr Semenovich Tsoi proclaimed its neutrality towards the fratricide among the Russians in June 1918. The Dal'sovnarkom's threats to N. I. Kim, who defended universal, direct, and equal elections, did not change the anti-Bolshevik stance of the majority. The congress met Krasnoshchekov's "long speech," in which he promised "many good things" to the Koreans, with indifference. The congress resolved to demand national self-determination on the basis of "freedom, equality, and fraternity" and defend the advance of the Great Russian Revolution, even though it also voiced its support for socialism. On July 20, 1918 the All-Russian Korean National Council in Nikolsk-Ussuriysky resolved to recognize Derber's government, which was elected by the legitimate Siberian Regional Duma from the representatives of all socialist parties, democratic organizations, and minorities on the platform of "genuine democracy." The resolution supported Siberia's autonomy and the All-Siberian Constituent Assembly. In August 1918 the Ukrainian Siberian Congress in Omsk called for Siberian authorities to proclaim independence of Siberia.¹⁰²

The Civil War and the Allied Intervention of Japanese, American, British, French, Chinese, and other troops in the summer of 1918 did not affect the Dal'sovnarkom's reluctance to cooperate with the Tsentsibir'. The two regional Soviet governments only agreed to recognize each other's separate currencies and that of the Amur Republic. The Blagoveshchensk government sided with the Dal'sovnarkom, while the Transbaikal government joined the Tsentsibir' in forming the Siberian Council of People's Commissars of Lazo, N. M. Matveev, and others in Chita. Krasnoshchekov's position allowed Vladimir Dmitrievich Vilenskii (Sibiriakov) of the Tsentsibir' to claim later that it was the "so-called" Dal'sovnarkom and Krasnoshchekov's "large personal ambition" which undermined the united front against the Czechoslovaks, Semenov, and Horvath in the summer of 1918 and contributed to the swift collapse of the Soviet governments in Siberia.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ RGIA DV, f. R-786, op. 1, d. 5, l. 8 (To the Commission of the Far Eastern Regional Committee for the Liquidation of the Maritime Zemstvo from the Olga Uezd Zemstvo Administration, June 5, 1918); G. Ia. Trigub, "Mestnoe Samoupravlenie Na Dal'nem Vostoke Rossii v Period Grazhdanskoi Voyny I Interventsii," *Oikumena*, no. 3 (2007): 64–67; Tsyppin, Shurygin, and Bulygin, *Oktiabr'skaia Revoliutsiia I Grazhdanskaia Voyna Na Dal'nem Vostoke: Khronika Sobytiia, 1917-1922 Gg.*, 68, 70, 73, 77–78, 80, 87.

¹⁰² Nam and Cherniak, *Kul'turno-Natsional'naia Avtonomiia v Istorii Rossii: Dokumental'naia Antologiya*, 1: Sibir', 1917-1920:138–39; Troitskaia, *Koreitsy Na Rossiiskom Dal'nem Vostoke (Vt. Pol. XIX - Nach. XX Vv.): Dokumenty I Materialy v 2-Kh Kn.*, 2:11–13.

¹⁰³ Tsyppin, Shurygin, and Bulygin, *Oktiabr'skaia Revoliutsiia I Grazhdanskaia Voyna Na Dal'nem Vostoke: Khronika Sobytiia, 1917-1922 Gg.*, 84–86; V. D. Vilenskii-Sibiriakov, *Bor'ba Za Sovetskuiu Sibir' (Tsentsibir')*, 1917-1918 Gg. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Vsesoiuznogo Obshchestva politkatorzhan i ssyl'no-poselentsev, 1926), 16–17.

The Dal'sovnarkom's policies of socializing agricultural lands and nationalizing other industries, gold mining and transportation in the first place, received mixed reception among regional rural population. While the Fifth Far Eastern Territorial Congress of Soviets (Khabarovsk, August 25–28, 1918) backed Krasnoshchekov's government, opposed the intervention, and vowed to defend "the socialist Fatherland" in line with defensive nationalism, the alternative Second Congress of the Amur Regional Grain Growers (Peschano-Ozerskoye, August 25–28, 1918) resolved to recall Cossacks and peasants from the Red Army and support a democratic authority to be formed with the participation of the whole population. It also welcomed the Allied forces, which were to bring "order" to the Russian Far East, and elected an alternative Executive Committee demanding the Blagoveshchensk government to give up its authority.¹⁰⁴

In the fall of 1918 the control over the region passed to the new Siberian Provisional Government, which formed in Omsk on June 30, 1918, and later the Provisional All-Russian Government, which was established at the Ufa State Meeting on September 23, 1918, and on November 18, 1918, was overthrown in a coup which installed Aleksandr Vasil'evich Kolchak as the Supreme Ruler of Russia. The fall of the Kolchak government in over a year opened the way for the revival of the Far Eastern republic, which Krasnoshchekov headed in January 1920.

Conclusion

In the spring and summer of 1918, Krasnoshchekov and his allies formed the Soviet Republic of the Far East, which had its foreign affair and military agencies, issued its own currency, engaged in nationalizations, and started an administrative reform. The formation of the first Far Eastern republic in 1918 was predated by a period of regional self-organization. The autonomy of the Russian Far East, or Siberia at large, was first brought up in the middle of the nineteenth century, but entered broader discussion in the region itself during the First Russian Revolution. The inter-revolutionary decade marked the self-conceptualization of the Russian Far East as a new imperial region. The participation of the Far Eastern deputies in the Third and Fourth Duma demonstrated that even though the Far East remained part of Siberia, its representatives articulated peculiar Far Eastern interests. The self-organization of the new region was reinforced by Siberian Regionalism, which provided the needed language and argumentation, and the left-liberal progressive nationalism, which could accommodate regional alliances and decentralization. Despite the inclusion of the indigenous peoples into the civic Russian nation, the Koreans and the Chinese were yet to be inscribed into the concept of the

¹⁰⁴ Tsyppin, Shurygin, and Bulygin, *Oktiabr'skaia Revoliutsiia I Grazhdanskaia Voina Na Dal'nem Vostoke: Khronika Sobyti, 1917-1922 Gg.*, 87–88.

Russian Far East which was located in East Asia, depended on “yellow labor,” but at the same time was threatened by rational and irrational expectations about its international surroundings.

The February Revolution continued the developments started by the First Russian Revolution. Siberian Regionalists reached the summit of popularity in 1917, thanks to their union with the SRs. The openness of the latter to national self-determination and autonomism also contributed to the political development of national movements. Although Far Eastern politicians participated in the congresses of Siberian Regionalists and used their vocabulary, they put forward an alternative regionalist project. Compared to its Siberian counterpart, the Far Eastern regional organization was far less sophisticated and predominantly relied on progressive nationalism of the war period, which foregrounded decentralization and regional economic interests. In essence, the Far Eastern entity was to finalize the newly introduced zemstvo self-government structure and could be interpreted as autonomy only in the narrow sense put forward by the liberals.

The collapse of the state structures and the interest of Far Eastern Bolsheviks in regionalism contributed to the rapid development of autonomous entities in the Russian Far East. Three regional Councils of People’s Commissars emerged in Chita, Blagoveshchensk, and Khabarovsk; autonomous republics were proclaimed in the latter two. The formation of the Soviet Republic of the Far East, both *de jure* by a constituent congress of soviets and *de facto* through the independent policies of the Dal’sovnarkom accelerated regional self-determination. Krasnoshchekov applied the ideas of decentralization to the Far East partly building on Rusanov’s efforts, but also hinting at the transnational Soviet Far East to include Chinese and Koreans along with the Russians. Despite the strong regionalist and internationalist connotations, the project of the Soviet Republic of the Far East was strongly connected to the regional version of Russian nationalism, which favored decentralization, but at the same time remained ever aware of Pacific Russia’s “hostile” international surroundings and dependency on European Russia in military sense.

The autonomy of the Far East in a reformed Russia, Soviet or not, did not bear a conflict potential of a similar approach to ethnic conflicts. The issue of inclusion of the Transbaikalian Region into the Far East was hence a technicality, especially since the region itself gravitated towards a different unity, Eastern Siberia, during the February Revolution. Unlike national self-determination, regional self-determination remained exclusive and negotiable and therefore did not belong to the “architectonic illusion” that there was a proper territorial framework for serving regional interests.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Rogers Brubaker, “Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism,” in *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism*, ed. John A. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 273.

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