

**area and administration  
in the Soviet Union,  
1917-1965:  
an historical model  
of spatial inertia**

by  
**Robert D. Picker**

*Professor of Geography  
California State University  
San Francisco*

Besides outlining the territorial boundaries of a nation's sovereignty, a map delineates those areas to which this sovereignty is delegated and within which it is exercised. The map in this sense portrays a spatial organization of the administrative process. Take the United States as an example: its governance is defined spatially by fifty states—the Federal Union. Within each state, a hierarchy of administrative responsibility is in turn mapped by counties, townships and municipalities. Accompanying these, territorial divisions at the local level—school, water and sanitation districts—integrate specialized administrative functions of governance. Functional specialization and decentralization by administrative area hold for the federal government as well: the Tennessee Valley Authority, Federal Reserve and Internal Revenue Districts. For each of these examples, at both federal and state levels, a single or coordinate administrative task is assigned to a geographic area or region.

This assignment has been and remains an «abiding administrative problem», not only for the United States, but for all nation-states.<sup>1</sup> In the past, political expedience and historical precedence provided the criteria by which administration was organized territorially; on the map, frequently the limits of authority were simply arbitrarily drawn. Once set, these ad hoc boundaries tend to create an inherent inflexibility in the administrative process; boundaries become inviolate, all too often making an administrative system non-adaptive and incapable of dealing with social and economic change.<sup>2</sup>

So, if the administrative areas of the past are considered within contemporary environments, forces of change have made some areas obsolete, and past approaches to the territorial organization of administration inadequate. With this, new scales and forms of territorial organization have been proposed whereby administrative areas are comprehensive and functional in scope and spatially related to the socio-economic forces with which they deal. Often referred to as a «new regionalism», proposals along these lines are evident throughout the world. At the international level, they underlie the European Economic Community; in the United States, the «new regionalism», originally publicized and studied by

1. James W. Fesler, *Area and Administration*, University of Alabama Press, 1964, p.1. Also see *Administration in Developing Countries, The Theory of Prismatic Society*, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964.

2. Merrill Jensen, *Regionalism in America*, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1965, p. 3b. Within this volume John Gaus raises the point: «...a system of law and administration with its network of functional interrelationships once developed comes to have great potency for its own self-maintenance and for shaping many of the other aspects of the regional complex of life which it enhances» (p. 390).

the National Resources Planning Board, gained renewed impetus through the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965. The Act provides for six to nine regional «action» commissions to plan economic development. Programs of a similar type have emerged in the United Kingdom and in Italy. But perhaps the most ambitious was that proposed for France, where administrative reforms set forth in the 1969 referendum called for twenty-one regions to which new elements of administrative authority were to be assigned. Other examples, such as metro-governments for Dade County, Florida, and Toronto, Canada, evidence similar attempts to reorganize administration along functional territorial lines.

Whether international, national or local, these examples suggest a continuing attempt to change the territorial dimensions of administrative organization to have them correlate more closely than before with socio-economic forces. And, through this reciprocity, administration supposedly becomes a more realistic instrument of direction and control.

In the Union of Soviet Republics, regionalization of this kind has influenced administrative organization for over four decades. It underlies administrative reforms in the Soviet Union implemented between 1957 and 1965; it remains a point of concern to Soviet governance: specifically, the planning and management of modernization and economic growth.

In its broadest sense, this discussion examines this idea. More directly, it traces a conflict between institutional territoriality and functional or economic regionalization in the Soviet Union which creates a counterforce to administrative change—spatial inertia.

#### conceptual framework

Assignment of administration to area in the Soviet Union differs from that of most countries. Extending beyond mere supervision and hierarchical responsibility, Soviet administration touches upon all aspects of control within a politico-economics system and the realization of that control.<sup>1</sup> For some, this point of view has fixed the operation of what they call a command economy.<sup>2</sup> The administrative process in this model displays clear-cut boundaries for behavior, and (the concept of) control focuses on the issuance and implementation of orders; pat-

terns and ranges of messages are predetermined and they are usually diagrammed as an administrative pyramid. Keeping in line with this imagery, executive authority resides in a high command which oversees operations. Its efficiency, in turn, is measured by the limited deviation of the system's performance from the orders set by the «command».

Though this command perception of the Soviet system holds to a large degree, its para-military bias is misleading and sometimes caricatures the administrative process. Too often, this popular image of the system pictures the Soviet Union as being run by pushbutton from Moscow.<sup>3</sup> Rather than assume this authoritarian concreteness and structural closure, Soviet administration, though authoritative, is more open, and structurally more ambiguous. It more closely resembles a collectivity. When this association is recognized, a different imagery is drawn. Examined from the outside, the Soviet Union displays «uniformity through collective symbols, objectives and formalization of decision-making on behalf of the system as a whole».<sup>4</sup> But when dissected, the Soviet Union presents a less orderly picture, in which complex, perhaps indefinable, associations of suppliers, customers and bureaucrats interact. Hierarchical responsibilities and commands remain pertinent to this environment, but the Euclidian orderliness implied by the command paradigm is restrained. Instead, administration becomes a constant battle to maintain and establish control over the system—setting priorities for action; mobilizing resources; measuring the success of operations; creating system objectives; and regulating change. Sometimes these tasks work in harmony, other times they oppose each other. Together they outline the sets of communications and behavioral responses which go to make up Soviet administration.

In their abstract form, they can be arrayed as administrative spaces not unlike Boudeville's idea of programming space.<sup>5</sup> Different, however, from that by interpreting control rather than economic development, administrative space encompasses two spatial imageries: one of domains, the other of surfaces.<sup>6</sup> As an abstract space within the administrative process, a domain systematizes communication and feedback as duties and responsibilities portrayed as hierarchical relationships. For the Soviet system this sequence directs the economy. Carrying

1. Harold J. Berman, *Justice in the USSR*, New York, Vintage Books, 1963, p. 116.

2. See: Chapter One, John P. Hardt, et al., *Mathematics and Computers in Soviet Economic Planning*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1967, and Gregory Grossman, *Economic Systems*, Foundation of Modern Economics Series, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1967, Chapter 6.

3. Berman, *loc. cit.*, p. 107.

4. See Talcott Parsons and Neil J. Smelser, *Economy and Society*, The Free Press, 1956, p. 15.

5. J. R. Boudeville, *Problems of Regional Economic Planning*, Edinburgh at the University Press, 1966, pp. 16-18.

6. For background to this imagery see: Georges Matore, *L'Espace Humain—l'Expression de l'Espace dans la Vie, la Pensée et l'Art Contemporains*, Paris, La Columbe, 1961, pp. 61-83.

this idea forward, and if transposed to territorial space, domains of administrative space emerge as an ordered hierarchy of administrative areas such as the township, county and state sequence in the United States or the raion, oblast and union-republic in the Soviet Union.

The second spatial imagery of administration deals with control as a series of message surfaces. Here, the vertical linearity associated with hierarchies gives way to a horizontal surface in which spatial continuity is derived from integrating and coordinating operations among activities or message centers. For the Soviets, administrative control over these emerges out of an optimal configuration of messages which, if translated into their territorial interconnections, stands as an economic region. Long ago, the Soviets described this notion as a functional regionalization «comprising objectively existing real economic combination».<sup>1</sup> To them, functionalism or economic regionalization specified a logical union between area and administration.<sup>2</sup>

Twice in their history, 1918-1928 and 1957-1965, the Soviets moved toward this union; both times they failed because of an inherent contradiction between functional regional division and the institutional territoriality associated with political systems.

For the Soviet Union, functional regionalization touches upon three organizing constraints: (1) national development planned by a central executive authority and executed by individuals or groups either directly or indirectly responsible to that authority; (2) democratic centralism; and (3) federalism. By setting priority sequences of events beforehand, central planning frames action patterns; it guides change and maintains structure by acting as a control mechanism for the system's collectivity. Once planning sets the system's direction, then management, through the administrative process, translates plan into reality; this step, in turn, is governed by a second precept—democratic centralism. Here, administration turns to behavioral limits whereby democratic centralism regulates administration organization and response by vesting executive authority in a high command—the centrality so often associated with the command model. As the origin of the decisions which determine action, the central executive authority sets forth policy binding throughout the country. This objective confronts a third precept—an administration which is federal in form and organized along ethnic distinctions—the Union

of Soviet Socialist Republics. Fifteen in number, the union-republics of the Soviet Union are granted sweeping executive and administrative powers. They have, for example, the right to govern their foreign relations with other sovereign states; they may exchange representatives and conclude agreements with foreign governments. Union-republics can raise military forces and they are given the right to secede from the union. At first glance these powers are suggestive of an independent nation-state. But the fifteen union-republics are not sovereign, since they do not control their own destinies. Control rests elsewhere. Though they are delegated broad powers by the Soviet Constitution of 1936, that document also includes the provisos which prevent their being exercised. The exclusive right, for example, to regulate rests in the hands of the central government since it may abrogate actions of the union-republics. Furthermore, whereas federalism implies a territorial balance of administrative power in which both national and regional interests are recognized, in the Soviet Union regional interests are paid lip-service, while national interests govern administrative action at all levels. As far as secession is concerned, no comment is necessary.

Taking all these restrictions into account, one concludes that the union-republics do not form a federal union in the true sense of the phrase; rather, each represents a single domain within a centralized administrative organization.

And yet, political federalism remains a critical aspect to area and administration in the Soviet Union; for as Gaus and Jensen suggest, once purpose is assigned to area it creates a network of communication and identification which is practically self-perpetuating.<sup>3</sup> Time and again this institutional territoriality represented by the union-republics has compounded the control of planning and administration and has conditioned attempts to implement a functional regionalization of the administrative process. This conflict hindered and continues to hinder practical applications of a «new regionalism» in the Soviet Union; it is clearly evidenced by the history of Soviet administrative regionalization.

#### historical evolution

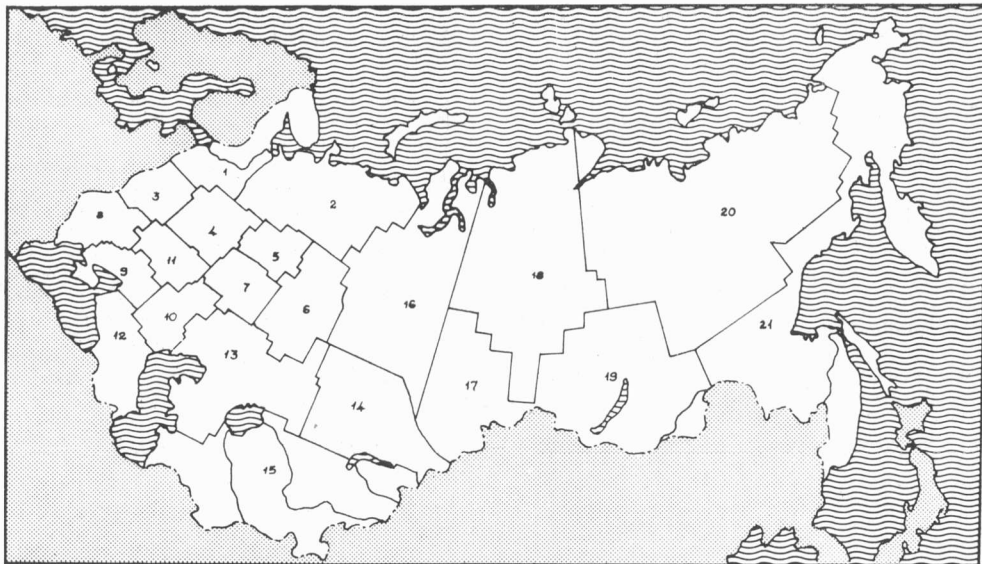
Recognizing quite early in their history (1918) that modernization produces incongruities between administrative space and the territory it serves, the Soviets saw functional regionalism as an answer to the problem. Somewhat similar to Western thought covering spatial aspects of ecological organization,

1. *Ekonomicheskoe Raionirovanie Rossi*, Moskva, 1962, p. 5.

2. See: Jean-Louis Quermonne, «Planification régionale et réforme administrative», Institut d'Études Politiques de l'Université de Grenoble, *Administration Traditionnelle et Planification Régionale*, Cahiers, Librairie Armand Colin, 1964, p. 89.

3. Jensen, *op. cit.*, p. 390.

FIGURE 1. Proposed Administrative Regions, 1921



ADMINISTRATIVE REGIONS, 1921

1. Northwest, 2. Northeast, 3. West, 4. Central Industrial, 5. Viat-Vetluzh, 6. Urals, 7. Central Volga, 8. Southwest, 9. South Mining Industrial, 10. Lower Volga, 11. Central Chernozem, 12. Caucasus, 13. Western Kirgizia, 14. Eastern Kirgizia, 15. Central Asia, 16. Western Siberia, 17. Kuznetsk-Altai, 18. Yenseisk, 19. Lena-Angarsk, 20. Yakut, 21. Far East.

early Soviet deliberations of administrative areas spoke of a spacial structure encompassing a «fundamental core» or «proletariat center»;<sup>1</sup> peripheral to this center, a territory large enough to support «normal development of large industries» within the core marked out the outer limits of the region.<sup>2</sup> This core-peripheral imagery is clearly illustrated by Soviet use of the words «tiagotenie» and «vzaimodeistvie» to explain regional interrelations. Translated literally, they mean gravitation and mutual-dependence, respectively, and bear striking resemblance to Christaller's and Perroux' imageries of regional forces or linkages.<sup>3</sup>

In an attempt by Soviet planners to carry out a territorial outline of these functional interdependen-

cies, Russia in 1921 was divided into twenty-one administrative regions (Figure 1). But given close examination, the regions are obviously more ad hoc than truly functional, many boundaries depending on parallels and meridians; nevertheless, the twenty-one regions stand as an earnest attempt to modernize administration.

Interestingly, the change in the administrative map specified to Soviet planners of the early twenties *an economic federation* within which national planning and economic management would be decentralized, regional development stressed, and territorial recognition of ethnic groups disregarded.<sup>4</sup> Somewhat similar to the regionalization proposed for France in 1969, this early Soviet plan sketched an administrative model in which spatial distinctions symbolized shared responsibility between central

1. G.M. Krzhizhanovskii, *Voprosy Ekonomicheskogo Raionirovaniia, Sbornik Materialov i Statei, 1917-1929*, Moskva, 1957, pp. 55-65.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Perroux speaks to an economic space as a «field of forces comprising centers from which centrifugal forces emanate and to which centripetal forces are attracted». Cited in: John Friedman and William Alonso, *Regional Development and Planning*, Cambridge M.I.T. Press, 1964, pp. 26-27.

Christaller talked about this centrality in terms of the relative importance of a center to a surrounding area through the «mutual dependences» between them. Walter Christaller, *Central Places in Southern Germany*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966, Chapter A.

4. Krzhizhanovskii, *loc. cit.*, pp. 126-28.

FIGURE 2. Administrative Divisions, 1930



ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS, 1930

1. Northern Krai, 2. Komi Autonomous Oblast, 3. Leningrad Oblast, 4. Karelian Oblast, 5. West Oblast, 6. Moscow Oblast, 7. Ivanovo Oblast, 8. Nizhniygorod Oblast, 9. Marii Oblast, 10. Chuvash Autonomous Oblast, 11. Votskaia Autonomous Oblast, 12. Central Chernozem Oblast, 13. Middle Volga Krai, 14. Mordovian Autonomous Oblast, 15. Upper Volga Krai, 16. Nemtsev Polvozh, 17. Kalmyk Autonomous Oblast, 18. North Caucasus Oblast, 19. Adygei Autonomous Oblast, 20. Cherkess Autonomous Oblast, 21. Karachayev Autonomous Oblast, 22. Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Oblast, 23. North Oset Autonomous Oblast, 24. Ingush Autonomous Oblast, 25. Chechen Autonomous Oblast, 26. Dagestan ASSR, 27. Crimean ASSR, 28. Georgian SSR, 29. Abkhaz ASSR, 30. Adzhara ASSR, 31. South Oset AO, 32. Armenia SSR, 33. Azerbaizhan SSR, 34. Nakhichev ASSR, 35. Nagorno-Karabakh AO, 36. Belorussian SSR, 37. Ukrainian SSR, 38. Tatar ASSR, 39. Bashkir ASSR, 40. Urals Oblast, 41. Siberian Krai, 42. Oirot AO, 43. Yakut ASSR, 44. Buriat-Mongol ASSR, 45. Far East Krai, 46. Kazakh ASSR, 47. Karakalpak AO, 48. Turkmen SSR, 49. Uzbek SSR, 50. Tadzhik SSR, 51. Gorno-Badakhshai AO, 52. Kirgiz ASSR.

and regional governments, not necessarily the centralized control associated with the command paradigm.

Events show that economic federation and functional administrative regions were discarded. Just as in France, spatial forces seemed to have prevented change. First, existing administrative areas carried over from Czarist times acted as a conservative factor. Though admittedly impossible to document, it seems logical to expect even a revolutionary situation to have political and economic interests linked to existing areas standing as a roadblock to administrative change. Furthermore, and more important to future events, the institutional territoriality then emerging (1922-24) as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics downgraded any major alterations in administrative areas.<sup>1</sup> Coming as it did almost

simultaneously with the formation of a federal union predicated on the territorial integrity of ethnic groups, the proposed administrative regionaliza-

tion, the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic represents the origin of the union's politico-economic power. The republic as originally framed (July 1918) covered all of what was «Great Russia». Included within these limits were autonomous regions and oblasts related to indigenous native populations. Provisional Soviet regimes also functioned in areas peripheral to the RSFSR, the Ukrainian SSR, the Belorussian SSR, the Armenian SSR, and the Azerbaizhan SSR. Actual union of these did not occur until 1923. In July of that year the USSR was officially constituted. It incorporated four union-republics: the RSFSR, the Ukrainian SSR, the Belorussian SSR, and the Trans-Caucasian SSR (the Azerbaizhan, the Armenian and the Georgian SSR's). Two groups, the Bukhara People's Soviet Republic and the Khorezm Socialist Republic, were bound by treaty to the union. In 1924 the Uzbek and the Turkmen SSR's were organized. The Tadzhik people gained union-republic status in December 1929. Great Britain Foreign Office, *Soviet Russia*, His Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1924.

1. Federal union was not immediate. It evolved gradually. Of the fifteen union-republics presently part of the Soviet

tion introduced a set of spatial entities conflicting with these groups.

Thus it is not surprising to find the Soviets hedging against administration innovation. Instead of initiating a «new regionalism», the Central Executive Committee in March of 1963 accepted the plan to reform the administrative map of Russia in principle, but postponed its implementation.<sup>1</sup> So when the Soviet Union embarked on «its great change» in 1928, its administrative map was a conglomerate of some fifty-two units, a few supposedly functional in design, others ethnic, and the remainder those held over from Czarist days (Figure 2).

Obviously the pot-pourri bears slight resemblance to the twenty-one regions originally proposed. Instead, the fifty-two units illustrate the next thirty years, when centralized decision-making structure governed and in which area was incidental to administrative control. A ministerial system managed the nation and, with the exception of the union-republics where area and administration were linked through the chance location of certain industries, administrative space translated into a discontinuous territory in which functional territorial distinctions were irrelevant.

Up to 1957, this situation characterized Soviet administration. Nevertheless, during the interim period, the Soviets continued to wrestle with the regionalization problem. At first, rather than stressing area and administration directly, Soviet attention centered on the geographic distribution of capital investments. Evidencing this, the Eighteenth Party Congress (March 10-21, 1939) spoke to the problems of territorial organization of economic growth and the definition of so-called territorial complexes as economic regions.<sup>2</sup> Unlike the core-peripheral idea applied to earlier deliberations, the Soviets viewed functional division as being predicated on two spatial constructs: a territorial industrial complex and a regional complex.<sup>3</sup> In the first—industrial nodes outlining common supply—customer relationships serve as regional criteria. For example, some capital investments were defined by planners as coal-metallurgical bases. Mirroring this nineteenth century association between industrialization, metals, and coal, a metallurgical base premised regionalization

through mapping interdependencies between certain industries such as iron, steel, coal and electric power.<sup>4</sup> Other discussions of the territorial industrial complex described them as large industrial nodes from which planners sought economic advantages in raw materials, energy resources and transport development. Where grouped together as sets of industrial nodes, these then mapped what the Soviets classified as a regional complex.<sup>5</sup>

Following this line of reasoning, planners developed a system of economic regions or «hearthths», which consolidated existing administrative areas into larger regions;<sup>6</sup> over a period of five years these included first a set of five, then nine, and finally thirteen (1944) (Figure 3).

Though these regions bore no direct involvement with the administrative process, they are important for several reasons. Their formation expanded the Soviet concept of functional division beyond what it had been in the twenties; now it clearly emerged as economic regionalization in which functional interdependencies touched upon production and market processes. Equally important, these regions presented an alternative spatial system to the one mapped by the federal union and other administrative units. Somewhat reinforcing this alternative, Soviet administration after 1942 utilized the economic regions for data collection and long-term planning. In this capacity, they were «general planning regions» and initiated a weak tie between regionalization and the administrative system.<sup>7</sup>

Up until May of 1957, when the entire administrative structure for planning and management changed, this tie remained tenuous. But with the dramatic reforms carried forward by Khrushchev at that time, the ministerial system gave way to what was called the «territorial principle». This idea draws heavily upon previous deliberations of administrative regionalization by emphasizing area as a basis for coordinating the administrative process. According

4. See N.N. Kolosovskii, *Budushchee Ural-Kuznetskogo Kombinata*, Moskva, 1932, p. 29. See also his article, «The Territorial-Production Combination», *Journal of Regional Science*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1961, p. 2.

5. Probst, *op. cit.*

6. P.M. Alampiev, *Ekonomicheskoe Raionirovanie SSSR*, Moskva, 1959, p. 174. These regions are referred to in a variety of ways: general planning regions, base economic regions and macro-regions. See G.N. Cherdantsev, *Ekonomicheskaiia Geografiia SSSR*, Moskva, 1956, p. 16; N.F. Iantiskii, «K voprosu o meodike ekonomicheskogo raionirovaniia Europerikhkh stran narodnoi demokratii», *Izvestiia Akademii Nauk, Seriia Geograficheskaiia*, No. 6, 1957, p. 128.

7. Recent discussions use the terms *large scale*, *average scale* and *small scale* regions. The first type includes union-republics, parts of union-republics and groups of union-republics. V.V. Kistanov, *Kompleksnoe Razvitiie i Spetsializatsiia Khoziaistva Ekonomicheskikh Raionov*, Moskva, 1965, p. 28.

1. Between 1923 and 1926 administrative regulation was carried out in the Urals, North Caucasus, Siberia and Far East. The oblast, raion, volost system was introduced in the Ukraine, Belorussia and Turkmenia. Henri Chambre, *L'Amenagement du Territoire en URSS. Introduction à l'Etude des Régions Economiques Soviétiques*, Mouton Co., 1959, Paris, p. 52.

2. KPSS v Rezolyutsiakh i Resheniakh Svezdov Konferentsii i Plenumov TsK izd. 7, Gospolitizdat, 1954, p. 355.

3. A.E. Probst, *Razmeshchenie Sotsialisticheskoi Promyshlennosti*, Moskva, 1962, p. 107.



FIGURE 3. General Planning Regions, 1944



GENERAL PLANNING REGIONS, 1944

1. Northwest, 2. North, 3. Central, 4. Povolzhe, 5. North Caucasus, 6. Urals, 7. Western Siberia, 8. Eastern Siberia, 9. Far East, 10. West, 11. South, 12. Caucasus, 13. Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

to Khrushchev, this involved a «shift in the center of gravity of the operational guidance of the economy closer to the enterprises.<sup>1</sup> Because of their location within a predetermined area, certain industries became responsible to the administrative machinery assigned to that area. At first the Soviets hinted that these areas would be functional regions, twenty-five to thirty in number.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, the union-republics were substituted. They were then further subdivided into 105 economic administrative regions representing the responsibility of a new administrative body—the regional economic council or *sovnarkhoz*.

Dragged literally out of the past, the councils served as a grassroots instrument for controlling the economy. For example, all industries within their territorial limits with two hundred or more employees came under the council's purview. At its onset the council selected directors of enterprises; members of the *sovnarkhoz* were appointed by the union-republic; the *sovnarkhozy* supervised fulfillment of

plans (particularly budgeting) such as enterprise accounts and investment capital construction within their boundaries; they were also responsible for research and development to improve productivity and efficiency of operation.<sup>3</sup> In reality, the council itself constituted a formidable organization which stood as a microcosm of the bureaucracy it had replaced. In this sense Khrushchev did shift the center of gravity of management.<sup>4</sup>

Whether or not the «territorial principle» truly tied administration to functionally determined areas—this can certainly be challenged. But even with the lack of a true economic regionalization, the 1957 reforms drastically altered administrative space and in the process utilized territorial space as the con-

3. For a detailed discussion of the regional economic council and its responsibilities, see: Philip J. Bernard, *Planning in the Soviet Union*, Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1966, pp. 113-18. See also: Alec Nove, *The Soviet Economy: An Introduction*, New York, Praeger, University Series, 1961, pp. 67-73.

4. Of the 105 councils, ninety-four operated within the confines of four union-republics: the RSFSR, the Ukrainian SSR, the Kazakh SSR and the Uzbek SSR. Each remaining economic administrative region coincided with union-republic boundaries.

1. *Izvestiia*, March 30, 1957.

2. *Ibid.*, Feb. 12, 1957.

trolling device to set down communication and feedback. Furthermore (and frequently overlooked), the institutional territoriality of the Federal Union exerted itself: the union-republics rose to a new level of importance, for without the ministerial system, middle management of the economy clearly fell to the union-republics and their sub-domains, the sovnarkhozy. Some Western writers interpreted this rearrangement as a decentralization of planning and management.<sup>1</sup> But the administrative changes premised a more immediate and pragmatic policy even though they drew heavily on the Soviet discussions of the twenties. Khrushchev simply juggled the administration's table of organization to effect better communication to, and therefore control from, the center.

This centralization is clearly evidenced by the planning procedures in which the burden for planning fell to Gosplan and its subsidiary agencies, the republic gosplans. Moreover, abolishing the ministries reduced the central decision-maker's span of control to fifteen (the number of union-republics reporting to the center) and, on paper at least, problems associated with the ministerial system decreased. This meant the «administrative distance» that had prevailed between the central executive and the enterprises it directed was reduced.

Great as were their expectations, the reforms of 1957 never did remedy the difficulties the Soviets faced. First of all, the union-republics failed to live up to the management responsibilities handed to them; they were equipped neither in terms of personnel nor past experience to do so. In much the same vein Gosplan either could not carry out its tremendous responsibilities, or else the leadership saw too much power vested in one agency and thus was not totally committed to the change. Another roadblock to meaningful administration touched the economic administrative regions. As arbitrary groupings of oblasti, they were a far cry from the functional divisions called for in a «new regionalism». Predictably, administrative boundaries cut across existing territorial industrial complexes. Wherever regional coherence had previously existed, the reforms disrupted, and thereby destroyed, the basic assumption for linking area with administration. Not only did these reforms disrupt existing territorial ties, but in addition the sovnarkhozy introduced a new set of regional commitments. Before 1957, planning and management had to contend with departmentalism. Now, the reforms introduced a practically identical phenomenon—territorialism, or what the

US National Resources Committee (1935) had called a «balkanization» effect.<sup>2</sup> Rather than empire building within a departmental context, each sovnarkhoz identified its operational goals with its territory. This regional chauvinism injected an unforeseen element of commitment into Soviet administration which weakened the entire purpose of the 1957 reforms.

To remove these deficiencies and perhaps to strengthen centralized control over economic affairs, the administrative changes were gradually amended so that the bureaucracy once again began to concentrate within the central government. Between 1960 and 1965 these amendments seemingly brought Soviet governance full cycle and returned it to where it had been before 1957. For example, in July of 1960, the three republics (RSFSR, Ukraine and Kazakh) which contained the largest numbers of economic administrative regions organized republic sovnarkhozy—Councils of the National Economy (VsNKh)—to coordinate the operations of the sovnarkhoz within their respective boundaries. In April, 1961, as a further hint at a rearrangement of administrative organization, Coordinating and Work-Planning Councils were established. In this move, two weaknesses in the regional economic councils were implied by the Soviets: first, the councils could not deal effectively with material and technical supply allocations; and secondly, regional administration required larger areal units for effective integration of operation. Apparently with this in mind, the jurisdiction of the new councils was set down within seventeen new general planning regions (Figure 4). The Soviets then charged the councils with studying the integrated development of the economy and working out recommendations and proposals for the USSR Planning and Union-Republic Planning Commissions.<sup>3</sup>

In a further step towards reversing the 1957 reforms, the union-republic's position within the ad-

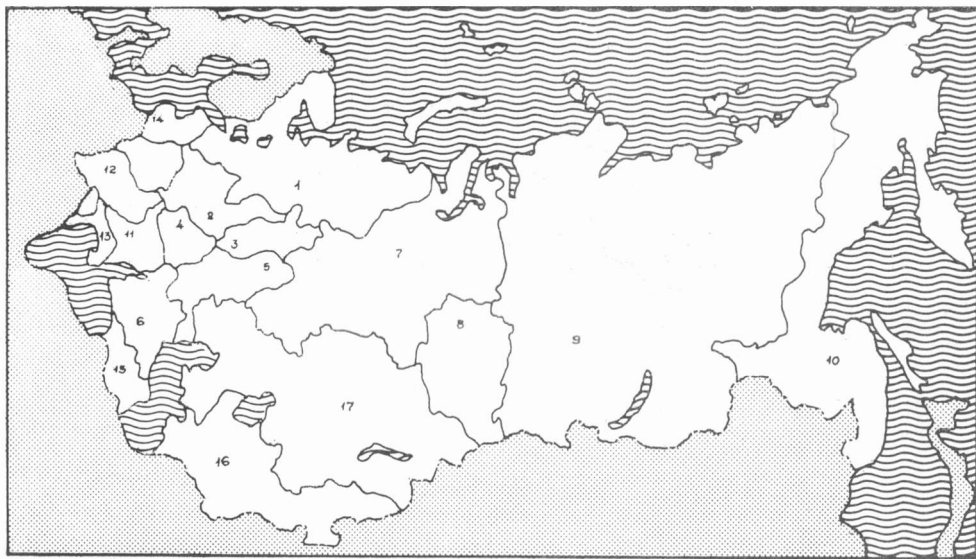
2. US National Resources Committee, *Regional Factors in National Planning and Development*, Washington, US Government Printing Office, 1935, p. 82.

3. As part of this, the thirteen general planning regions, recognized since 1944, were increased by breaking some of them down into more detail. The Western Siberia region was reduced in size and some of its territory included within the Urals region; Central Asia and Kazakhstan were subdivided into separate entities; and what had previously been the Northwest and North regions were combined into a single area. Belorussia, which had been part of the Western region, was separated from it and excluded from the general planning category—it remained simply an economic administrative union-republic region. The Central region was broken down into four parts: Central, Volga Viat, Central Chernozem, and Volga; and similarly the Southern region was subdivided into three components: Donets-Dnieper, Southeast and Southern. *Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta*, May 28, 1961, p. 2.

1. See: R. W. Davies, «Decentralization of Industry», *Soviet Affairs*, April 1958, No. 4, Vol. 9, pp. 353-67; Oleg Hoeffting, «Soviet Industrial Reorganization of 1957», *American Economic Review*, Vol. XLIX, No. 2, p. 75.



FIGURE 4. General Planning Regions, 1961



GENERAL PLANNING REGIONS, 1961

1. Northwest, 2. Central, 3. Volga-Vyatka, 4. Central Chernozem, 5. Volga, 6. North Caucasus, 7. Urals, 8. Western Siberia, 9. Eastern Siberia, 10. Far East, 11. Donets-Dnieper, 12. Southwest, 13. South, 14. West, 15. Transcaucasus, 16. Central Asia, 17. Kazakhstan. Belorussia and Moldavia SSR classified as economic administrative regions.

ministrative hierarchy was downgraded. For example, specialized committees identical to ministries were organized within the central bureaucracy. In number and complexity these rivaled the administrative units of the ministerial system. A Supreme USSR Council of the National Economy appeared in the table of organization. Acting through the union-republics, the Supreme Council directed the regional economic councils. Union-republics lost additional responsibilities when Gosplan became an All-Union operation, with union-republic planning commissions reporting directly to the central executive instead of to the union-republic Council of Ministers. A new agency, the USSR State Committee for Construction Affairs (Gostroi), assumed direction of capital construction, a job previously delegated to the republic's sovnarkhozy. Material and technical supply allocation was also centralized. Thus by 1962 the Soviets had modified the 1957 reforms to the extent that the «center of gravity» Khrushchev had defined had clearly shifted back to a central bureaucracy.

Continuing their reforms of the original reforms, the Soviet leadership carried out a consolidation of

the economic administrative regions into forty-seven areas (Figure 5). In this change some boundaries were redrawn, possibly to effect a more functional mapping of economic communities in the Soviet Union. Significantly, the Soviets appeared to be shaping a policy in which economic regionalization replaced national determination and acted as an instrument of furthering centralized control, and setting the union-republics aside. For example, in a statement appearing in the *Ekonomicheskaiia Gazeta* (May 28, 1961) writers indicated the «boundaries of the union-republics set as they are by nationality do not coincide with present day economic borders». And when the consolidation of administrative regions took place in 1962, for the first time economic administrative boundaries clearly cut across those of the union-republics and lesser nationality-based administrative units. Totally ignoring nationality and its associated institutional territoriality, one sovnarkhoz united the four Central Asian republics under a single administration responsible to the central government. In key matters of planning and management—construction, material and technical supplies and, most important

FIGURE 5. *Economic Administrative Regions, 1963*



ECONOMIC ADMINISTRATIVE REGIONS, 1963

1. Upper Volga, 2. Volga-Vyatka, 3. East Siberia, 4. Far East, 5. West Siberia, 6. Western Urals, 7. Komi, 8. Krasnoyarsk, 9. Kuznetsk Basin, 10. Leningrad, 11. Moscow City, 12. Moscow, 13. Murmansk, 14. Lower Volga, 15. Volga, 16. Oka, 17. Northeast, 18. Northwest, 19. North Caucasus, 20. Central Volga, 21. Central Urals, 22. Khabarovsk, 23. Central Chernozem, 24. Southern Urals, 25. Donetsk, 26. Kiev, 27. Lvov, 28. Podolsk, 29. Dnieper, 30. Kharkov, 31. Black Sea, 32. Belorussian, 33. Central Asia, 34. Alma Ata, 35. East Kazakhstan, 36. West Kazakhstan, 37. Karaganda, 38. Semipalatinsk, 39. Virgin Land, 40. South Kazakhstan, 41. Georgian, 42. Azerbaidzhan, 43. Lithuanian, 44. Moldavian, 45. Latvian, 46. Armenian, 47. Estonian.

for that area, irrigation and water supply—the Central Asian sovnarkhoz reported directly to the USSR Supreme Council for the Economy. This apparent usurping of certain union-republics' prerogatives suggested that the general planning regions might assume an administrative role formerly delegated to the union-republics. Indeed, administrative changes up to 1964 opened possibilities for administrative control from the center based solely on economic regionalization. On this basis, the territoriality associated with the federal union could have been eliminated entirely.

Just how far this trend might have been carried will never be known, for beginning in 1965 administrative organization performed a complete about-face. Internal and economic pressures after Khrushchev's fall unleashed additional changes in administrative and alternative paths to centralization.

As suggested earlier, Khrushchev had sought the answer to the administrative dilemma by deconcentrating and rearranging administration structure according to the territorial principle. Turning away from this approach, Brezhnev and Kosygin restored the ministerial system. Administrative space was divided (once again) into domains according to All-Union and Union-Republic ministries. Central control extended through five state committees: those for agriculture; science and technology; planning (Gosplan); construction (Gostroi); and material and technical supplies. The domain and responsibilities of the last clearly revealed the degree to which the central executive maintained its sovereignty over the economic system. Controlling over seventy per cent (by value) of the economy's supply inputs, the materials and technical supply committee, through its territorial agencies, governed the movement of

production between suppliers and customers no matter what their department subordination.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, the administration, after 1965, held even tighter control than before.

The leadership abandoned the *sovnarkhozy*, and its related central agencies, such as the USSR Council of the Economy, and, most important, indirectly returned the union-republics to the apex of the territorial hierarchy for administration. Almost tragic, perhaps comical, in its historical proportions, the significance of the union-republics was again extolled. In his initial statement, «On Improving the Organization of Management», Kosygin envisaged an «emphasis on the economies of the country's republics and regions with expansion of the economic powers of the republics».<sup>2</sup> A speech by Lepeshkin, a Soviet expert on public law, called for a «restudy of the relationship between the center and the republic, especially now when the experiment in setting up individual major economic regions and forming inter-republic economic bodies with them has

failed to justify itself.<sup>3</sup> Significantly, this public recognition of economic regionalization's failure and a possible re-emphasis on the union-republics for planning and management underscores the republics' durability over time.

### conclusions

Time and again this territoriality associated with the federal union has reasserted itself; and it remains one of the most persistent forces to be reckoned with in Soviet administration. In fact, today some Soviets indicate that even if ethnic distinctions disappeared, the federal structure might be retained for economic administrative purposes.<sup>4</sup> So, as far as administrative regionalization is concerned, area and administration in the Soviet Union remain linked by forces other than economic rationalism. And the Soviet Union's failure to implement an administrative system based on functional spatial criteria reveals what Wirth has already noted as one of the inherent difficulties of economic regionalization in any modern state. «Boundaries emerge out of social and political strife and are not always the result of rational reflection».<sup>5</sup>

1. See Iu. Koldomasov, «Razvitie priamykh khoziaistvennykh svyazei i sovershenstvovanie raspredelenie sredstv proizvodstva», *Voprosy Ekonomiki*, No. 11, 1965, p. 20; *Ekonomicheskaiia Gazeta*, No. 26, 1966, p. 4; *Pravda*, Dec. 12, 1966, pp. 2-3.

2. *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, Oct. 13, 1965, Vol. XVII, No. 38, pp. 8-13; *Pravda*, Oct. 29, 1965, pp. 2-3.

3. Cited in Alexander Balinby, et al., *Planning and the Market in the USSR: The 1960's*, New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1967, pp. 77-78.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Louis Wirth, «Localism, Regionalism and Centralization», *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XLII, Jan. 1937, p. 494.

Εἰς τὸ προσεχὲς τεύχος θὰ δημοσιευθῇ συζήτησις ἐπὶ τοῦ θέματος τῶν ἄρθρων τῶν συνεργατῶν τῆς Ἑπιθεωρήσεως Κοινωνικῶν Ἑρευνῶν, κ.κ. Κ. Παπαγεωργίου («Τὸ περιφερειακὸν πρόβλημα τῆς Ἑλλάδος», τεύχος 13) καὶ Δ. Πλέσσα καὶ Κλ. Ντάβου («The Greek regional problem: some analytic and policy perspectives», τεύχος 14).

Discussion on the articles written by the collaborators of *The Greek Review of Social Research*, Mr. C. Papageorgiou («The regional problem of Greece», issue No. 13) and D. Plessas and Cl. Davos («The Greek regional problem: some analytic and policy perspectives», issue No. 14) will be published in the forthcoming issue.